

LESSON: Sam Althaus

Grade Level:

This unit was developed for secondary students. The approach and materials for this unit follow the [Age Appropriate Guidelines from the USHMM](#).

Subject:

History; English/Language Arts; Multi-disciplinary.

Rationale:

The stories of individuals during the Holocaust can help us understand various facets of history through the eyes of those who lived through it. This story helps to broaden understanding about the experience of a young Jewish man from Poland whose story of survival in the camps teaches us about the depths of inhumanity.

Overview:

Key Question(s):

- Who was Sam Althaus? What was his experience during the Holocaust?
- How did the structure of the concentration camp system dehumanize those who were forcibly interned?
- How did Sam's experience shape his response? How did he manage to retain his humanity during this time?

Educational Outcomes. At the end of this lesson, the students will be able to:

- Define the Holocaust and related terms such as antisemitism, concentration camp and Auschwitz.
- Identify who Sam Althaus was and what his experiences were during the era of the Holocaust.
- Compare and contrast information shared in text and in a podcast.
- Discuss the conditions created to dehumanize individuals in the concentration camp system.
- Locate Poland on a map.
- Discuss how individuals can strive to hold onto their humanity in the worst possible conditions.

Teacher preparation

It's important for teachers to familiarize themselves with the [Pedagogical Principles for Teaching the Holocaust](#). We encourage teachers to familiarize themselves with background knowledge on the Holocaust by viewing this [site](#) at the USHMM and view the [Introduction to the Holocaust](#). Additional information on teaching about this topic can be gleaned from the full-length version of [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#).

In addition, we suggest:

- Prepare access to handouts and student packets.
- Check access to related links.
- Consider having students complete the [What was the Holocaust? Activity](#).
- Identify any terms students may be unfamiliar with in the written text or the podcast.

Materials

- [Sam Althaus Chapter](#)
- Sam Althaus Podcast: Take the Gun

NOTE: Due to the content of this lesson, it is not recommended for students below the high school level.

Lesson:

INTRODUCTION

1. If students have not previously discussed the Holocaust, begin with an overview of the term, Holocaust, as defined by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored, persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945 across Europe and North Africa. The height of persecution and murder occurred during World War II. By the end of the war in 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews. The Nazis believed that Germans were racially superior.

They believed Jews were a threat to the so-called German racial community. While Jews were the primary victims, the Nazis also targeted other groups for persecution and murder. The Nazis claimed that Roma, people with disabilities, some Slavic peoples (especially Poles and Russians), and Black people were biologically inferior. The regime persecuted other groups because of politics, ideology, or behavior. These groups included Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men, and people the Nazis called "asocials" and "professional criminals."

For younger students, or students previously familiar with this event in history, you can utilize this shortened definition:

The state-sponsored systematic murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Sinti-Roma, Poles, people with physical and mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents were also targeted by the Nazis.

2. Share with students that today we will be learning about the story of Sam Althaus. Sam was a young Polish Jewish man who survived the Holocaust. He experienced persecution by the occupying Nazi regime, ultimately being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau before being sent to Dachau where he was liberated. Ask students to discuss - how this situation might have challenged Sam's feelings of being human?

RESEARCH/ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

1. Explain to students that they will be learning about Sam's experiences during the Holocaust. They will be assigned one of two ways to learn about Sam - through a podcast or through a written narrative. Each group will seek to answer the following questions:
 - a. Who was Sam Althaus?
 - b. In 3-5 sentences, describe Sam's experience during the Holocaust.
 - c. In 3-5 additional sentences, discuss the specific incidents of dehumanization that Sam experienced during the Holocaust.
 - d. Why did the Nazis and their collaborators seek to dehumanize those they viewed as inferior?
 - e. How did Sam hold on to his humanity during this time?
2. Task students to first review their sources and answers to these questions as individuals; then ask them to discuss the answers to these questions with others who shared their medium (text or podcast).
3. Once this initial period of sharing is complete, place students in heterogeneous pairs or small groups to discuss their answers to the questions. Have students place particular emphasis on discussing how their two mediums varied and what the experience was like for each individual.
4. Have students share out as a whole group discussing the key questions from above and any other observations from their work.

CONCLUSION

1. While Sam's experience was unique, it also shared the common aspect of dehumanization that was experienced by Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War.
2. Ask students to reflect on what they learned during their exploration and how it can connect to today:
 - a) What specific components of Sam's experience helped you understand the role of dehumanization in the Holocaust?

- b) Can you think of other examples throughout history when people were dehumanized in order for a group to accomplish their goals?
- c) How can we apply what we have learned about Sam's experience to the world in the present? What actions can we take based on our learnings?