

January 17th: Raoul Wallenberg Day

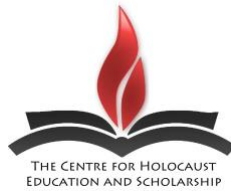
by Melany Chaiquin and Jaden Lairson
for the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES)

Raoul Wallenberg was a Swedish Diplomat who risked his life to save those of 100,000 Jews during Europe's Nazi regime. Many of those individuals moved to Canada, where they began a new life and had children and grandchildren. Wallenberg was arrested towards the end of the war, never to be seen again. His courage and determination serve as the reminder that, even in the darkest of times, light can be found in those who seek to do good. Wallenberg was declared Righteous Among the Nations in 1963, and, in 1985, was the first individual to receive Honorary Citizenship of Canada. As one learns of Wallenberg's story, one cannot help but ponder how someone who devoted his life to helping others received so little help during his time of need.

This lesson includes a [PowerPoint presentation](#), guidance for the teachers along with handouts for students. PowerPoint includes background information about the Holocaust (slides 26, 27, 28 in grey) for teachers to be used as they see fit.

Suggested Activity

1. By show of hands, ask the class to share whether they have heard of Raoul Wallenberg.
2. Display **slide 2 in the [PowerPoint presentation](#)**. Place students in small groups. Ask them to come up with the definitions for the words on the slide. Then, review the definitions by displaying **slide 3**. Students should copy down the definitions on the "Pre-Lesson" section of their Student Handout.
3. Introduce Wallenberg's background on **slides 4-5**.
4. Introduce the Holocaust via **slide 6 (You may wish to include the grey background slides 26, 27, 28 at this point)**. Students should answer the following question in the "During Lesson" section of their Student Handout.
 - "What was the Holocaust?"
5. Play the Yad Vashem video on **slide 7**. After the video, students should answer the following questions on the "During Lesson" section of their Student Handout.
 - Who was Raoul Wallenberg?
 - What did he achieve?
 - What challenges did he face?
 - Why is he an important figure for us to remember today?
6. Take up the questions.



7. Walk the students through the information from **slides 8-14**, adding onto what they have already said.
8. Watch the testimony videos on **slide 15**. Ask for volunteers to share which parts stood out to them, and why.
9. Discuss Righteous Among the Nations and honorary citizenship via **slides 16-19**.
10. Display **slide 20**.
11. Ask students to read the 2023 Prime Minister's Statement on **slides 21-22**.
Teachers may wish to have a conversation around the following two questions, or ask students to respond in writing:
Why in your opinion has the United Nations called Raoul Wallenberg 'the greatest humanitarian of the 20th century'?
What commitment is the Prime Minister calling on us for?
12. Students should answer the assigned "Questions to Ponder" from **slides 23-25** in the "Post-Lesson" section of their Student Handout. Students may hand in their work or share with the class, time-permitting.



Student Handout: Raoul Wallenberg Day — Pre-Lesson and Lesson

Pre-Lesson: After a small-group session, your teacher will display the definitions of these terms. Please write them down below.

Altruism: _____

Antisemitism: _____

Diplomacy: _____

Genocide: _____

Ghettos: _____

Honorary Citizenship: _____

Legacy: _____

Persecution: _____

Pogrom: _____

During Lesson: Answer these questions as you watch the video by Yad Vashem.

1. What was the Holocaust?

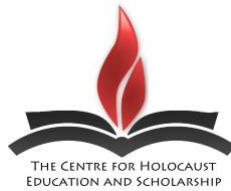
2. Who was Raoul Wallenberg?

3. What did he achieve?

4. What challenges did he face?

5. Why is he an important figure for us to remember today?

Post-Lesson: Answer the assigned questions from the section titled “Questions to Ponder.”



Student Handout: Raoul Wallenberg Day — Post-Lesson: Questions to Ponder

1. Look up information about the Righteous Among the Nations. Who does the list of recipients include? Who are these individuals? What are some of the traits that they share? Why do you think their designation as Righteous Among the Nations is fitting? Explain.
2. Why do you think the Righteous Among the Nations Medal showcases the Talmud (Jewish scripture) phrase “Whoever saves one life saves the world entire”? What does this phrase mean to you? What does the phrase mean in the context of those saved by the Righteous Among the Nations? Watch the videos of the testimonies in this presentation. Produce an answer to the questions, incorporating what you learned from the testimonies.
3. Why do you think it is important to learn about Raoul Wallenberg and other individuals declared Righteous Among the Nations? You may incorporate aspects from the testimonies and from the Government of Canada’s statement on Raoul Wallenberg Day. Extension: Look up the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and draw parallels between the content of the Charter and the actions and beliefs embodied by those who are Righteous Among the Nations.
4. Holocaust denial and Holocaust distortion are a form of modern-day antisemitism, and a real and troubling issue. In many countries (including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland) Holocaust denial and distortion are crimes punishable by law. Such actions are not only profoundly disrespectful to Holocaust victims and their families, but to the rescuers—including Wallenberg—who sacrificed their lives to help those persecuted by the Nazis. How can we combat Holocaust denial, downplaying, and distortion in our daily lives? Think of specific actions which you, as a high-school student in Canada, can take to do so.
5. Learning about the Holocaust involves a high level of not only mental but emotional stamina, as well as the ability to digest information that is, by nature, extremely difficult to digest. This lesson only begins to scratch a sliver of the surface of the vast field that is Holocaust Education. Which parts of this lesson did you find most challenging to absorb, and why? Which parts did you find most interesting, and why? What words were you less familiar with? Do you remember the context in which they were used? Write



the words down, define them, and explain what you learned about them.

6. If you could write a letter to Wallenberg and he could read it, what would you say? In what ways did Wallenberg’s story move you? In what ways did it resonate with you? How can we, in our daily lives, act in ways that we think would make Wallenberg proud of our integrity, of our actions? Answer these questions in your letter to explain how you will continue his legacy. Address your letter using an appropriate salutation and letter conventions. Organize your ideas coherently (introduction, body, conclusion) and utilize proper grammar and sentence structure.



Related Overall Curriculum Expectations

ENL1W: Grade 9 English, Destreamed:

Literacy Connections and Applications: A3. Applications, Connections, and Contributions:

Apply language and literacy skills in cross-curricular and integrated learning, and demonstrate an understanding of, and make connections to, diverse voices, experiences, perspectives, histories, and contributions

Foundations of Language: B1. Oral and Non-Verbal Communication: Apply listening, speaking, and non-verbal communication skills and strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal contexts and for various purposes and audiences

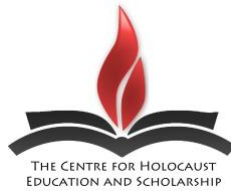
Composition—Expressing Ideas and Creating Texts: D2. Creating Texts: Apply knowledge and understanding of various text forms and genres to create, revise, edit, and proofread their own texts, using a variety of media, tools, and strategies, and reflect critically on created texts

ENG2D/2P/3C/3U/4C/4U: Grades 10-12 English, Applied & Academic:

Strand A, Oral Communication: 1. Listening to Understand: Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes; 2. Speaking to Communicate: Use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes

Reading: 1. Reading for Meaning: Read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, informational, and graphic texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning.

Writing: 1. Developing and Organizing Content: Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience; 2. Using Knowledge of Form and Style: Draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience.



ESLAO/BO/CO/DO/EO: English as a Second Language, Levels 1-5:

Listening and Speaking: 1. demonstrate the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken English for a variety of purposes; 2. use speaking skills and strategies to communicate in English for a variety of classroom and social purposes; 3. use correctly the language structures appropriate for this level to communicate orally in English.

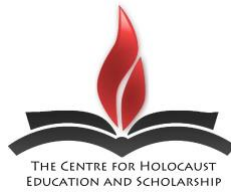
Writing: 1. write in a variety of forms for different purposes and audiences; 2. organize ideas coherently in writing; 3. use correctly the conventions of written English appropriate for this level, including grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

Socio-Cultural Competence and Media Literacy: 1. use English and non-verbal communication strategies appropriately in a variety of social contexts; 2. demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship, and of the contributions of diverse groups to Canadian society; 4. demonstrate an understanding of, interpret, and create a variety of media texts.

CHC2D, Grade 10 World History, Academic:

C) Canada, 1929-1945: C3.2. Analyse how Canada and people in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit individuals and communities, responded or were connected to some major international events and/or developments that occurred during this period (e.g., the Red Scare; the Holodomor; the Spanish Civil War; the Nanking Massacre; aggression by fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and/or imperial Japan; the Holocaust; the Manhattan Project), and assess the significance of the responses/connections, including their significance for identities and heritage in Canada

C) Canada, 1929-1945: C3.3. Analyse the impact of the Holocaust on Canadian society and on the attitudes of people in Canada towards human rights (e.g., with reference to changes in Canadians' responses to minority groups; more open refugee policies, including those affecting Holocaust survivors and other displaced persons; Canada's signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the evolution of laws against hate crimes)



CPW4U, Grade 12 Canadian and International Politics, University:

D) Non-Governmental Action on Canadian and International Political Issues: D3.1. Assess the importance of the contributions to Canada and the global community of various individuals (e.g., Louise Arbour, Stephen Lewis, Nelson Mandela, Rigoberta Menchu, Lester B. Pearson, Vandana Shiva, David Suzuki, Bertha von Suttner, Malala Yousafzai, Muhammad Yunus)

E) Rights and Power in the International Community: E3.2 explain how various factors can either facilitate or limit the ability of the international community to intervene to prevent or mitigate violations of human rights (e.g., with reference to economic, geographic, military, and/or cultural factors; public awareness and public opinion; political and public will)

CHV2O, Grade 10 Civics, Open:

B) Rights and Responsibilities: B3.5 identify examples of human rights violations around the world (e.g., hate crimes, torture, genocide, political imprisonment, recruitment of child soldiers, gender-based violence and discrimination), and assess the effectiveness of responses to such violations (e.g., media scrutiny; government sanctions; military intervention; Civics and Citizenship CHV2O CIVIC AWARENESS regional, national, and/or international tribunals; boycotts; pressure from governments and/or NGOs)