

The Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship

Café Conversations Teaching Strategy #1



Cafe conversations

Rationale

Understanding the past requires students to develop an awareness of different perspectives. The Café Conversation teaching strategy helps students practice perspective-taking by requiring students to represent a particular point-of-view in a small group discussion. During a conversation with people representing other backgrounds and experiences, students become more aware of the role many factors play (i.e. social class, occupation, gender, age, etc.) in terms of shaping one's attitudes and perspectives on historical events. Café Conversations can be used as an assessment tool or can prepare students to write an essay about a specific historical event.

Today we're going to focus on just one group of people: a German family sitting around their kitchen table discussing a dilemma that they must face in the wake of the newly implemented Nuremberg laws and measure introduced against Jews in Germany.

It is September 23rd, 1935 about a week has gone by since the Nuremberg laws were introduced. This family is in Berlin. They have been exposed to antisemitic propaganda. New measures and laws against Jews appear everyday. The family does not know anything about the future, only the present.

Facilitator:

1. Each group has the same story, with active 6 participants. You will introduce the background. Also present the particular question and decision that they will need to make.
2. Each participant will choose a card. On each card is a name/role they will play. Give them a second to read the card.
3. Insist that at all times the participants all stay in character. Stay in that time period. Try to think the way they would then. Not what you might think is the right thing to do today.
4. You will hand each participant a card with a specific question to the designated starter. For example, the father: "Should we invite David to Fritz's birthday party"?
5. The group has 15 minutes to come to a decision. Please make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.
6. A designated representative will disclose the decision to entire group.
- 7: If there is time you will debrief with them with the following question or two:
How did it feel for you to participate in the cafe conversation?
What did you learn about this moment in history from participating in this activity?

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