

Essential Questions:

- What did the survivors face upon liberation: search for family, safety, well-being, healthcare, etc?
- What social structures helped support survivors upon liberation?
- What challenges did Holocaust survivors face after the war, and why was international aid so important?
- How did ordinary people help survivors rebuild their lives after World War II?
- How can small acts of kindness make a difference in the lives of people recovering from war and tragedy?

Subjects

ELA
Art
Social Studies
SEL

Grades

5-8

Lesson Objectives:

- Analyze the challenges Holocaust survivors faced after World War II
- Demonstrate an understanding for the difficulties survivors faced in finding the strength and courage to begin to build new lives.
- Recognize the power of empathy and small actions in making a difference.
- Connect historical examples of humanitarian aid to modern efforts by identifying ways individuals and communities can help people affected by war and displacement today.
- Engage in a creative project that demonstrates understanding of the book's themes.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

When author-illustrator Lita Judge discovered hundreds of tracings of feet in her grandparents' attic, she was intrigued. Once she learned the story behind them, she was inspired to share it.

In the aftermath of World War II, many Europeans were homeless and starving. This is the

story of one American family's triumphant effort to relieve their suffering. They sent packages of food, clothing, and shoes to their friends in Germany and offered to help others. Soon, shoe tracings from all over the continent started pouring in to the modest Midwest farm. With so many in need, the family enlisted the help of American friends. Ultimately, thousands of people on both sides of the Atlantic were touched by this remarkable process.

Illustrated with a combination of paintings and collages of original photographs and foot tracings, this moving story is a granddaughter's tender tribute to her grandparents, who organized this relief effort. By sending hope and kindness, they began healing the wounds of war. This book is a powerful reminder of the importance of humanitarianism during wartime.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Echoes and Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia [The Aftermath of the Holocaust: Effects on Survivors](#)
- USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia [Displaced Persons](#)
- *One Thousand Tracings* [Teacher Guide](#)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *One Thousand Tracings: Healing the Wounds of WWII* by Lita Judge
- Construction paper
- Markers

LESSON SEQUENCE

WARM-UP & DISCUSSION

Ask students:

- What do you know about how World War II affected families around the world?
- What does it mean to help people in times of crisis?
- Can you think of a time when an act of kindness made a big difference in someone's life?

MINI LESSON

After World War II ended, millions of Holocaust survivors faced the daunting challenge of rebuilding their lives. Many had lost their families, homes, and communities. They were left without

food, clothing, or shelter and had nowhere to return. Some were forced to live in Displaced Persons (DP) camps while they waited for permission to immigrate to new countries. Others struggled to find work or faced discrimination even after the war.

With so many in desperate need, kind-hearted individuals and organizations around the world sent supplies—like shoes, clothing, and food—to help survivors start over. Stories like *One Thousand Tracings*, based on real events, where an American family helped provide shoes and supplies to families in post-war Europe, remind us that even small acts of generosity can bring hope to those in crisis.

READING CHUNK 1

In this first section of the book, the family learns about the struggles of people in post-war Europe and receives letters asking for help. (Beginning – First Signs of Need)

Discussion Questions:

- How does the author show the impact of the war on families in Europe?
- What emotions do you think the mother felt when she started receiving letters?
- Why do you think people reached out to others across the world for help?

**To help students engage with *One Thousand Tracings* in manageable sections, the book is divided into three key reading chunks

READING CHUNK 2

In this section of the story, the family starts tracing feet, collecting shoes, and reaching out for more support. (Middle – Organizing Help)

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Lita's grandparents used tracings instead of sizes to communicate what they needed?
- Why were shoes so important for survivors?
- What else, besides shoes, did the family send? Why?
- How did small actions, like tracing feet and gathering supplies, grow into something bigger?
- What do you think motivated the family to continue helping, even though they lived far away?

READING CHUNK 3

In the final section of the story, letters of gratitude arrive, showing how the donations changed lives. (End – Seeing the Impact)

Discussion Questions:

- How do we see the impact of the kindness shown in the story?
- What emotions do the survivors express in their letters?
- How does the story demonstrate resilience and hope?
- How does this story connect to modern humanitarian efforts?

**ACTIVE
ENGAGEMENT**

- Have each student trace their foot on a piece of paper.
- Inside the tracing, students will write a message of encouragement to someone in need today (e.g., refugees, homeless individuals, disaster victims).
- Around the footprint, students will write at least three specific ways they can help others in their own community.
- Students can decorate their footprints using colors, symbols, and words that represent kindness and generosity.

**REFLECTION AND
CONNECTION**

Have students share their footprints in small groups or as a class. In these small groups or as a whole class discuss:

- How does helping others create hope?
- How can small acts of kindness lead to a bigger impact?
- What did you learn from this story that you can apply to your life?

**EXTENSION &
INTERDISCIPLINARY
ACTIVITIES**

Research modern humanitarian efforts and write a letter to an organization that provides aid to people in need, connecting it to what they learned in the book.

[“Liberation and Aftermath” Lesson](#) from the Museum of Jewish Heritage that uses artifacts, photographs, and survivor testimony to explore the unique conditions and needs of Jewish survivors at the end of World War II.

[“Liberation and Survival”](#) lesson from Yad Vashem examining primary resources including testimonies and photographs relating to liberation and survival. Can be used in conjunction with the video [“Liberators and Survivors: The First Moments.”](#)

[Understanding Displaced Persons' Camps](#) iWitness Activity exploring life in Displaced Persons' Camps (DP camps) after the Holocaust.

[Images of Life in the Displaced Persons Camps](#)
