**English Teachers’ Association of Israel**

**-SHARING GREAT IDEAS-**

**Winter Conference 2011**

**Wizo Nahalal Comprehensive High School**

**In search of lessons that make a difference**

**Poem:**

**Edwin Bormann, “Kinderscene”**

**Materials written and compiled by Gunther Volk**

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| --- | --- |
| Edwin Bormann (1851 - 1912)  **Kinderscene** (1893)    Morgen zum Geburtstagsfeste  Lädt sich Käthchen kleine Gäste:  Anni Hoffmann, Suse Beyer,  Minchen Walther, Doris Schreier,  Evchen Müller, Elsa Strauch -  "Kommt denn das Rebekkchen auch?"  "Was, Rebekka Silberstein?!  Juden lad' ich niemals ein.  Gabst du in der Schul' nicht acht,  Daß sie Jesum todt gemacht?" -  "Unser Lehrer meint das, ja;  Doch es sagt mir die Mama  (Und die weiß doch vielerlei):  Silberstein's war'n nicht dabei!"  Schlichte Kinderseele du,  All mein Herz es lacht dir zu.  Besser wär's um sie bestellt,  Zöge siegreich durch die Welt  Deine Friedensmelodei:  "Silberstein's war'n nicht dabei!"  (This poem was rediscovered in Jerusalem  by the poet Elazar Benyoetz.) | **Childhood Scene (1893)**  For tomorrow's birthday party  Kätchen is inviting little guests:  Anni Hoffmann, Suse Beyer,  Minchen Walther, Doris Schreier,  Evchen Müller, Elsa Strauch -  "Is little Rebecca coming too?"  "What, Rebecca Silberstein?!  Jews I never invite.  Didn't you pay attention at school  that it was them who killed Jesus?" -  " 'Tis our teacher who's told us so  but it is my mother who tells me  (and she knows all sorts of things):  Silberstein's weren't part of it.  Oh my little child  all my heart goes out to you.  Things would look better for you  if your melody of peace  became victorious around the world:  "Silberstein's weren't part of it!"  (Prose translation: Gunther Volk) |

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**Childhood Scene (1893)**

**For tomorrow's birthday party ליום הולדת מחר**

**Kätchen is inviting little guests: מזמינה קטשן אורחים קטנים**

**Anni Hoffmann, Suse Beyer, אני הופמן, סוזי בייאר**

**Minchen Walther, Doris Schreier, מינצ'ן וולטר, סוריס שרייר**

**Evchen Müller, Elsa Strauch - אבצ'ן מילר, אלזה שטראוך**

**"Is little Rebecca coming too?" "תבוא גם רבקה?"**

**"What, Rebecca Silberstein?! "מה, רבקה זילברשטיין?!**

**Jews I never invite. אני אף פעם לא מזמינה יהודים.**

**Didn't you pay attention at school לא הקשבת בביה"ס**

**that it was the Jews who killed Jesus?" - כשלימדו אותנו שהיהודים הרגו את ישו?"**

**" 'Tis our teacher who's told us so "זה מה שהמורה אמרה**

**but it is my mother who tells me אבל אמי אומרת לי**

**(and she knows all sorts of things): (והיא יודעת כל מיני דברים):**

**Silberstein's weren't part of it.” "משפחת זילברשטיין לא היו קשורים לזה בכלל"**

**Oh my little child אוי ילדתי הקטנה**

**all my heart goes out to you. .ליבי אתך**

**Things would look better for you הכל ייראה טוב יותר**

**if your melody of peace אם תנצח מנגינת השלום שלך**

**became victorious around the world: בכל העולם**

**"Silberstein's weren't part of it!" "משפחת זילברשטיין לא היו קשורים לזה בכלל!"**

**Edwin Bormann (1851 - 1912)**

(This poem was rediscovered in Jerusalem by the poet Elazar Benyoetz.)

(Prose translation: Gunther Volk)

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# Holocaust Remembrance Day

Poem: Kinderscene (1893) by Edwin Bormann

Lesson plan by Gunther Volk ©2011

**Teaching objectives:**

* Use a seemingly naïve little poem to analyse one of the root-causes of anti-Semitism.
* Listen to a prose version of a poem in the class’s native language and be able to retell it in English.
* Work out the different roles played by the four different characters mentioned in the text.
* Apply the terms perpetrator, collaborator, victim and bystander to the characters in the poem.
* Work out from the text that the mother’s disagreement with the teacher’s view makes her a kind of ‘warning conscience’. She is not a bystander.
* Realize that evil happens if ‘good’ people decide not to become involved.
* Optional: Study an additional text and work out how Christian teachings about Jews helped pave the road to the Holocaust.

1. **Lead in:**

Today is an important day in the history of the world in general and the Jewish world in particular. Why?

Should we have a remembrance day like this in our calendar? Why? / Why not?

1. **A little poem**

I have brought a little poem with me. It is about a child’s birthday party and was written by a German non-Jewish poet in Berlin. (Don’t tell the students when the poem was written at this stage.)

Please listen to my Hebrew / German version of the poem carefully. I would like you to retell the poem in English afterwards.

🡪 Recite to class

🡪 Students retell the poem

1. **Encounter and impact**

Any comments about the poem?

Good / bad poem / like / dislike?

1. **Familiarization and understanding**

🡪 hand out poem / text

**Task:**

Re-read the prose version of the poem in English.

* Name the different people mentioned in the poem and explain their behaviour.

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**Evaluation: OHP / board** (Roles – bottom line – to be added later)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Käthchen** | **Rebecca** | **Teacher** | **Mother** | **Poet’s voice** |
| * opposed to Rebecca attending her birthday party * under the influence of her teacher | * banned from attending the party | * spreads evil ideas * holds Jews responsible for the killing of Jesus | * has her own opinion about Jews * Not influenced by what some people want her to think | * observer who warns society against the dangers of racism and discrimination |
| **perpetrator /**  **collaborator** | **victim** | **perpetrator /**  **initiator** | **not a**  **bystander** | **critical**  **observer /**  **warning**  **conscience** |

1. **Analysis and interpretation**

Here is a very famous quotation by Yehuda Bauer:

"Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; thou shalt not be a victim; and thou shalt never, but never, be a bystander."

Can we apply any of the terms in the Bauer quotation to the poem? 🡪 (bottom line)

What role does the poet himself play in this poem? 🡪 (column on far right)

1. **Evaluation**

Do you think there is a lesson to be drawn from this poem, and if so what is the lesson?

(Possible prompt:)

"All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

Is there a link between Edmund Burke’s famous adage and the message of the poem?

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1. **Optional: The tale of two teachers**

Comparison of the teacher in ‘Kinderscene’ with the teacher, Mr Whitson, in the short story ‘Best Teacher I have ever had’\* :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The teacher in ‘Kinderscene’** | **The teacher in ‘Best teacher I have ever had’** |
| * poisons students’ minds * makes students regurgitate age-old prejudices | * makes students think for themselves, question things, be inquisitive * makes students speak their own mind |
| 🡪 a force for evil | 🡪 a force for good |

\* see: Nancy Raz: *Inside Stories*. Eric Cohen Books, Onda Publications Ltd.,

Ra’anana 1992, pp. 7 – 12.

1. **Homework:**

Write a letter to a friend in which you explain

* what the poem “Kinderscene” is about (short summary)
* whether you think it is still relevant today.

(You may connect the message of the poem with two quotations we used in class

today.)

1. **Going beyond the poem (Optional)**

When do you think the poem was written? Give reasons.

(The students will in all probability say that it was written in the 1930s. It will therefore come as a surprise to learn that it dates back to 1893, a period when Germany was gripped by a spate of anti-Semitism. The religiously inspired anti-Semitism highlighted in Bormann’s poem made it easy for Hitler and his henchmen to spread their anti-Semitic Nazi ideology when they came to power in 1933. Thus centuries old Christian anti-Jewish teachings played into the hands of the Nazis with catastrophic consequences.)

Text: “How Christian teachings about Jews helped pave the road to the Holocaust”

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**Christian Anti-Semitism**

**How Christian teachings about Jews helped pave the road to the Holocaust**

by [Gabriel Wilensky](http://www.aish.com/search/?author=90559004)

When the Nazis came to power in 1933 they discovered they did not need to invent almost anything in their persecution of the Jews, because the Catholic Church had invented practically everything hundreds of years before.

The yellow badge in the garments, the prohibition to hold public office, the prohibition to have Christian employees, the burning of the Talmud, the prohibition of living next to Christians, the prohibition from belonging to guilds or work in industry, the ghettos, all these violations to basic human rights of Jews that we associate with the legislation of the Nazi tyranny was promulgated by the Catholic Church between 400 and 700 years before the Nazis. During almost two millennia Christians were taught that Christianity had replaced Judaism, and that Jews were evil, bent on the destruction of Christianity and that they were killers of Jesus.

So we should not be very surprised that when Hitler came to power, he found that the population already deeply hated Jews. That hatred had been planted and cultivated by Christianity since practically the beginning of the Christian movement in the first century of the Common Era. A verbal hatred that began as an intra-Jewish fraternal fight, with time and the distancing of the Early Christians from mainstream Judaism (as Christianity gained followers among the pagan peoples of the Roman Empire) it transformed itself in violent and irrational hatred.

The Christian movement accused Jews of killing Jesus and of rejecting his messianic mission. As a consequence, the Early Christians developed the concept of super-sessionism in which Judaism was relegated to second plane as Christianity was replacing it. Christians believed at this time that God considered Christians the “New Israel” and the new “Chosen People.” They began calling the Christian Bible the “New” Testament and the Hebrew Bible the “Old” Testament, once again suggesting that the Jewish religion had become superfluous.

Despite oppression and hardship, the Jews did not disappear. This tenaciousness to survive and their continued refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah led to an increase of Christian hatred toward Jews.

Adapted from: <http://www.aish.com/ho/i/90559064.html>

Good luck with teaching the poem. If you have any questions about or comments on the lesson plan, please do not hesitate to contact me by email:

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