

# Lesson Plan # 1: Women of the Holocaust—Hearing The Words

## Using Quotes to Explore Loss, Resistance, and Survival

Designed by Barbara White and Esther Hexter

1. *"...she was giving me a piece of her bread without me knowing so that I would have a little bit more food, so I could go on and survive. We didn't know for how long or what, or what's going to happen the very next day or the next hour...She would protect me, she would cover me when we were marching, rain, snow, cold."*

-- Madeline Deutsch, describing her mother's sacrifices at the Gross-Rosen concentration camp

[http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/phi\\_survival\\_mother\\_uu.htm](http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/phi_survival_mother_uu.htm)

2. "In a letter last year [year before she died] to the Polish Senate after her country finally honored her efforts, Mrs. [Irena] Sendler wrote, *"Every child saved with my help and the help of all the wonderful secret messengers, who today are no longer living, is the justification of my existence on this earth, and not a title to glory."*

-- Irena Sendler (1910-2008), a Polish Catholic social worker who defied the Nazis by saving 2,500 Jewish children by smuggling them out of the Warsaw Ghetto and into non-Jewish homes. These quotes come from others recalling her words in the N.Y. Times obituary: May 13, 2008, *Irena Sendler, Lifeline to Young Jews, Is Dead at 98*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/world/europe/13sendler.html?pagewanted=print>

3. *"I was brought up in the shadow of the Holocaust. My mother lost most of her family and I didn't realize how much the guilt of survivorship weighed on her until I was an adult."*

- Naomi Benaron (Author, *Running the Rift*)

Quote from interview with author Naomi Benaron: *Running the Rift*

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/one-true-thing/201201/interview-author-naomi-benaron-running-the-rift>

## **Lesson Plan:**

These three quotes reflect the impact of the Holocaust on the lives of women and those with whom they lived and worked. Represented here are the experiences of mothers and their children struggling to survive the camp experience, and the experience of Righteous Gentiles and the “Second Generation,” the children of Holocaust survivors.

1. Read all three quotes.
2. How are the three quotes similar? How do they differ?
3. In which quote(s) do you see “Loss” expressed? “Resistance?” “Survival?”
4. Considering these three quotes together, what do they tell us about experiences of women in the Holocaust?
6. Write a paragraph about a woman who has played an important role in your family, school, or neighborhood.