**From “The Other” to Another**

**Lesson category:** Holocaust

**Lesson title:** From “The Other” into Another

**Teacher:** Jeffrey Ellison

**School:** Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Jewish Day School

**Type of school:** Jewish Day School

**Subject:** Holocaust

**Grade level of students:** 8th grade

**Total durations:** Ongoing, over course of year

**Introduction**

Too often, individuals or groups are labelled as **the Other**. The other is someone outside the group, they are considered diffferent; they are not wanted; they are labelled and stereotyped.  They do not belong.   The effect of this label can be disastrous for the individual or group as it may lead to ridicule, ostracism (exclusion), or in its most radical and virulent form, genocide.  The purpose of this year’s project will be to explore the meaning of "The Other” and how to combat it.  A second purpose of the project will be to enhance students’ ability to view themselves as global citizens, as we will be partnering on this project with students from two other countries, namely Poland and Lithuania.

**Essential Questions**

Why do individuals, families, communities and nations create the other and exclude them from their ‘moral universe of obligation’?

How does this label of the other impact us and them?

Who has served as the Other in the past? the present? the future?

What might we do in the future to create more inclusive communities and societies?

**Enduring Understanding**

Entering into dialogue is the only way to transform the Other into Another.  Only through dialogue is it possible to know the other; develop empathy for the other; thus see the similarities rather than the differences between us and them.

“Archaeologists tell us that the very earliest human groups were small family-tribes numbering 30 to 50 individuals. Had such a community been larger, it would have had trouble moving around quickly and efficiently. Had it been smaller, it would have found it harder to defend itself effectively and to fight for survival.

So here is our little family-tribe going along searching for nour­ishment when it suddenly comes across another family-tribe. What a significant movement in the history of the world, what a momentous discovery! The discovery that there are other people in the world! Until then, the members of these primal groups could live in the conviction, as they moved around in the company of 30 to 50 of their kinfolk, that they knew all the people in the world. Then it turned out that they didn’t—that other similar beings, other people, also inhabited the world! But how to behave in the face of such a revelation? What to do? What decisions to make?

Should they throw themselves in fury on those other people? Or walk past dismissively and keep going? Or rather try to get to know and understand them?

That same choice our ancestors faced thousands of years ago faces us today as well, with undiminished intensity—a choice as fundamental and categorical as it was back then. How should we act toward Others? What kind of attitude should we have toward them? It might end up in a duel, a conflict, or a war. Every archive contains evidence of such events, which are also marked by countless battlefields and ruins scattered around the world.

But it might also be the case that, instead of attacking and fighting, this family-tribe that we are watching decides to fence itself off from others, to isolate and separate itself. This attitude leads, over time, to objects like the Great Wall of China, the towers and gates of Babylon, the Roman limes and the stone­walls of the Inca.

Fortunately, there is evidence of a different human experi­ence scattered abundantly across our planet. These are the proofs of cooperation—the remains of marketplaces, of ports, of places where there were agoras and sanctuaries, of where the seats of old universities and academies are still visible, and  of where there remain vestiges of such trade routes as the Silk Road, the Amber Route and the Trans-Saharan caravan route.

All of these were places where people met to exchange thoughts, ideas and merchandise, and where they traded and did business, concluded covenants and alliances, and discov­ered shared goals and values. “The Other” stopped being a synonym of foreignness and hostility, danger and mortal evil. People discovered within themselves a fragment of the Other, and they believed in this and lived confidently. People thus had three choices when they encountered the Other: They could choose war, they could build a wall around themselves, or they could enter into dialogue.”

*Excerpted from Ryszard Kapuscinski’s, “Encountering the Other: The Challenge for the 21st Century,” and Fatema Mernissi’s, Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems.*

**Methodology**

All our work will take the form of photo essays.  Students from BZAEDS will take photos of themselves, their families, their schools and their communities, past and present.  They will send these photos in virtual form to students at the Sholom Aleichem School in Vilna, Lithuania and the John Paul II school in Pruszhow, Poland.  Once received, students in those schools will ask a series of questions about the photos.  Our student responses to those questions will serve as the essays which will accompany the photos.  Students from Lithuania and Poland will follow the same methodological process. To aid our students in taking photos and then in culturally interpreting photos from the other schools, Alan Teller, professional photographer, teacher, and photo anthropologist, will serve as our artist in residence during the year (h[ttp://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/jerri-zbiral-alan-teller-1940s-india-photographs/Content?oid=14721946](http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/jerri-zbiral-alan-teller-1940s-india-photographs/Content?oid=14721946))

**Skills**

Making, reading, and analyzing photos as primary documents

Promoting intercultural dialogue

Creating and designing a museum exhibition

Constructing a service learning project

**Calendar**

October-- The Other as it relates to Self

1. 3 photos of self--as an infant, in 4th grade, in 8th grade
2. photo of favorite item in house
3. photo of outside of house
4. photo of room
5. photo of student participating in favorite activity
6. photo of student wearing favorite outfit;
7. photo of a drawing showing a) how  student sees self and b) how others see the student.  Both are to be drawn by student.
8. photo of student in a group activity where they tend to be the other

November--The Other as it relates to Family

1. photo of parents
2. photo of sibs
3. photo of family including pets
4. photo of family having dinner
5. photo of family doing favorite activity
6. photo showing family tree
7. photo of a family member who is an outsider (black sheep)

December--The Other as it relates to School

1. photo of map showing where your school is located in the community
2. photo of exterior of school
3. photo of classroom with and without students
4. photo of hallways with and without students
5. photo of lunchroom with and without students
6. photo of recess with and without students

in a photo try to capture a moment in time showing someone who seems to be the other because at some time all of us are or have been the other

January--The Jew as the Other (1920’s-30’s)

Search through archives and find photos of:

a map of the country showing your community

a map of your town with important building located on the map

typical daily scenes in the life of Jews and non-Jews

Important Jewish locations in your town before the war

February--The Jew as the Other(WWII)

Search through the archives and find photos of

Events related to the Jews during WWII and the Holocaust

Events related to Jewish life today

March--Who is the Other Today?

Identify and photograph who serves as the Other in your town and country today?

Is it still the Jew or is there another Other who has replaced them?

**Outcome**

For our school,  April and May will be devoted to creating a photo/essay exhibit about the Other which will be open to the community.  Small donations will be collected from visitors to view the exhibit.  The money will be donated to JUF in order to aid Holocaust survivors living in the metropolitan Chicago area.