



Thematic Activities: Kick-Off Activities

Title of Kickoff: *Traces of Life*

Cycle Theme: Foundations (last quarter) bridging over to ***Perspectives***

Duration: 30 minutes

Gateway: The yearning for deep connection

Materials Needed: Tracing paper, black framing paper, pencils, and index cards

Connections to the Theme: The foundations of our biological life are formed in childhood. These years give us a framework for order and empathy and the learning we'll build on the rest of our lives. Similarly, you need a foundation to learn about the humanities, and the best foundation is to understand that the humanities are aptly named: you have to see the humans in the humanities. You can't understand history or literature or even foreign language without studying people and realizing that the world is simply a mosaic of individuals who are affected by one another's choices. The next step is seeing, as much as possible, through the eyes of other people: considering their experiences and perspectives.

Objectives: To make our studies of the Holocaust less sweeping and impersonal and more about how hate affects individual lives. To consider the perspectives and experiences of others. To encourage a respectful witnessing of these experiences. To connect and empathize with the people affected by the Holocaust.

Directions for the activity:

- Choose a picture from the front of the room.
- Pick up a sheet of tracing paper, scissors, and a sheet of black cardstock.
- ***Do this part slowly and thoughtfully.*** Trace the picture as faithfully as possible on tracing paper, and in replicating it, notice every detail.
- Using the index card, write a paragraph-long reflection about what you noticed in the work of art. Consider the following questions:
 - How old do you think the artist must have been, and what clues exist in the picture that indicate age?
 - Are there any clues that indicate the setting of your picture? Explain your answer.
 - What is the tone of this picture? Does it feel happy? Wistful? Sad? Carefree? Warm? Or something else? Justify your answer with descriptions of the picture.
 - Why did you choose this picture? What connected you to it?
- Frame the work simply and neatly with the cardstock, attach your index card to the back of the picture, and hang it in a classroom gallery.
- Peruse the gallery when you are finished.

Mini Lecture: Michel Rovner's *Traces of Life: The Children's Art Installation*

Processing Discussion: How does knowing the background of these pictures change your interpretation of them? How do you "read" them differently now?