

Lesson Plan: **Memorials- Then and Now**

GUIDING FOCUS: Exploring the complexities of memorials- their intention, importance, and legacy.

LESSON EXPLORES: Critical thinking about history and historical figures, design thinking for memorials, the public's role in public spaces, what happens when our understanding of history and its key figures changes.

AGE- This lesson is best for grade levels 7-12. A glossary can be found at the end of the lesson for younger age groups.

Lesson components:

1. Warm Up Activity
2. Read, Research, Respond- Discussion
 - a. Background
 - b. Critical questions
3. Optional: Virtual OR in person site visit of the Horwitz-Wasserman Memorial Plaza
 - a. Teacher and students should download the IWalk app ([instructions](#))
4. Reflection
5. Independent research
6. Additional reading
7. Glossary

1. Warm Up Activity (10min)

Bring up images of the [Washington Monument](#), Washington DC and [Octavius V. Cato Memorial](#), Philadelphia (or two others) and have students compare and contrast the two in small groups or in pairs. Have groups share with the class and create a Venn Diagram as a whole class.

2. Read, Research, Respond- Discussion (30min)

Tell students or have students read the history of the Horwitz-Wasserman Memorial Plaza. Do the critical questions in small groups.

Background on the Monument to Six Million Jewish Martyrs

On April 26, 1964, a group of Holocaust survivors and community leaders together with the Association of Jewish New Americans and the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia, presented to the City of Philadelphia a towering bronze sculpture that constituted **the first public monument in North America to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust**. Titled Monument to Six Million Jewish

Martyrs, this sculpture was created by internationally renowned artist Nathan Rapoport, who was also a Holocaust survivor. He designed and fabricated the sculpture in Europe over several years before it was unveiled in Philadelphia in 1964.

Philadelphia had a large community of Holocaust survivors, as there were networks of Jewish immigrants in the City before the start of WWII. Following the War, many displaced European survivors came to the United States and many to Philadelphia to build new lives and a new community.

Located at 16th and Arch Streets at the head of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the Memorial remains the only major public monument in Philadelphia dedicated to the remembrance of the Holocaust. Until 2018 the space had been used for annual memorial ceremonies for Holocaust survivors. The Plaza's expansion was completed in 2018, centered on the original sculpture and expanded to include educational exhibits, artifacts and reflective memorial space.

If the teacher chooses not to go on tour, please show students images of the Hortwitz Wasserman Plaza. Photos can be found on the Philadelphia Holocaust Remembrance Foundation's [website](#) under Plaza Features. Students can also [listen](#) to Museum Without Walls recording about the 1964 Memorial.

Critical Questions: Critical thinking about monuments and memorials

Compare monuments and memorials (can be done as a class or in smaller groups)

- Monuments are spaces or sculptures created to represent and honor a person or event. Memorials are also spaces or sculptures but are representative of a group of people or an event in which people have died or suffered.
- *this activity would be well suited to making a Venn diagram

Why and how are memorials and monuments made?

- What is the purpose of a memorial or monument?
- Who decides what is memorialized and how a person or event is portrayed?
- What challenges might come up in making a monument or memorial? (political, design, maintenance, space etc.)

What happens when our understanding of history or historical figures changes?

- Consider that many monuments are being taken down or are being challenged because of ties to a painful legacy.
 - o What should happen to those statues? Do they go into a museum? Should they remain but be changed or reinterpreted? Should they be destroyed?
- Consider how do people view monuments and memorials in the present as they reflect on the past vs how people thought about the monument or memorial when it went up.

Show students pictures of memorials and monuments to compare and contrast different kinds as a group... have students think about what history they present and whose history they present. Below are several examples to choose from.

In Philadelphia:

- Horwitz-Wasserman Memorial plaza- pictures on [website](#) (students can [listen](#) to Museum Without Walls)

- [All Wars Memorial to Colored Soldiers and Sailors](#) 1934 (students can listen to Museum Without Walls)
- [Octavius V. Cato Memorial](#), 2017
- [Tamanend](#), 1994
- [Benjamin Franklin](#), Craftsman, 1981
- [Smith Memorial Arch](#), 1897-1912 (students can listen to Museum Without Walls)
- [Tomb of the Unknown Soldier](#), 1957

Outside Philadelphia:

- [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#), Washington DC
- [Irish Hunger Memorial](#), Battery Park NYC
- [National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#), Montgomery, AL
- [Washington Monument](#), Washington DC

3. Optional Site Visit (1.5 hours)

Teachers may choose to add a virtual or in person tour of the Horwitz-Wasserman Memorial Plaza to enhance student understanding of the lesson context. Below find guidance for which tour to take and some reflection questions. The reflection can be done without having completed the tour of the site. Note that a tour will add an additional 45 minutes to 1.5 hours to the lesson.

In order to complete the lesson, have students download the IWalk app (instructions found [here](#)). If the class is at the Memorial Plaza together have students walk around as they complete the tour. The lesson can also be completed virtually.

Going to the Plaza or visiting virtually gives students the opportunity to see and explore a memorial space. They should think about the expansion from the 1964 sculpture to the full Plaza, which incorporates educational components, artifact and public seating areas. Students should complete the *History of the Holocaust* IWalk and explore the different elements of the Plaza including the spatial layout, the Six Pillars, train tracks from Treblinka, and Theresienstadt tree.

4. Reflection (20min)

After looking at pictures of monuments and memorials, have students consider the spatial layout and designs, thinking particularly about the Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza:

- How does the Memorial make you feel? Sad? Playful? Thoughtful?
- How does the space make you act? Do you walk around exhibits? Do you sit and think?

Reconsider the previous critical questions:

- What is the difference between the 1964 memorial and the larger 2018 Plaza? What has changed and how has it changed?
- Who is the memorial for? Who decided this was important to put up?
- Why is this memorial in Philadelphia? Why is it fitting for Philadelphia to have the first public Holocaust memorial?
- As the number of living Holocaust survivors becomes fewer and fewer, what is the importance of this memorial and how should it change, if at all?

- Using your critical thinking skills, how do you think you will approach seeing memorials in your neighborhood or when you visit new places?

5. Independent Research- Teachers may choose to use these suggestions for in class assignments or homework.

As a homework or independent assignment students can research the history of a monument or memorial. They should choose one that is important or interesting to them and should look for:

- Is it a monument or a memorial?
- What does it represent?
- Who designed it?
- Were there any conflicts when it was being planned? (people who did not want it in their neighborhood or political barriers to its creation?)

Design a memorial- This could be done in small groups or individually.

- What is the memorial for? (an event in your life, your city, your family, etc.)
- Who is your audience and how do you want the audience to feel when they see it or are in it?
- What will it look like or what will it include to convey those feelings?
- Sketch or plan the design

Have students compare Holocaust memorials. Have them compare another Holocaust memorial to the Horwitz-Wasserman Memorial Plaza or choose two new ones.

- Where are the memorials and how does their location change the audience?
- How do the designs change the ways people interact with the memorial?
- What story are the memorials trying to tell? What do the memorials leave out of the story?

6. Additional Reading

- Additional source to look at as a class (middle school) or independently (high school) about the Catto monument at City Hall <https://catto.ushistory.org/>
- Additional reading for high school students: [Monument Lab's Report](#)- students could choose a section to read (or divide class to read different sections and report back on their findings)
- If students want to go on a field trip to think even more about monuments, Monument Lab has a [downloadable field trip](#)
- This [article](#) from CNN has several good infographic about when Confederate monuments were created- it is a good source to discuss the potentially political nature of some monuments and memorials.

7. Glossary

Legacy- The way people or events are remembered.

Memorial v. Monument- A memorial is a space or a statue remember a person or a group of people who died in an important past event. A monument is a structure, statue, or a building that is built to honor someone notable or a special event.

For any questions about this lesson plan please reach out to Operations Manager, Sophie Don at sdon@philaholocaustmemorial.org