



Escape: Holocaust Testimony as Animated Film

Teacher's Guide



CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS



LENGTH

3+ class periods (45–75 minutes each)¹



AGE APPROPRIATENESS

11+



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop a greater understanding of the Holocaust through an adapted first-hand account.
- Develop media literacy skills by engaging critically with and discussing an animated short film.
- Synthesize information and practice oral communication with peers.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Student Workbook, either printed or in a digital format
- Short film — [*Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer*](#)
- Technology for viewing media in class (projector or screen)
- Paper and writing instruments for students
- Final activity (optional): internet-enabled tablets or laptops for audio and visual recording, 1 per group of 3–4 students

¹ Lesson plans are offered as guidelines and should be adapted to your specific school context(s).

INTRODUCTION

The following Education Activity was created to help educators address the difficult topic of the Holocaust in their classrooms by using an animated short film. The film is based on Holocaust survivor Morris Schnitzer's memoir, [Escape from the Edge](#) (11+), available free of charge for educators and students across Canada.

Before teaching about the Holocaust, it is important to reflect on your current level of knowledge, and on your teaching goals and methods. To help you do this, we have created a guide titled [The First Step: A Guide for Educators Preparing to Teach about the Holocaust](#). As you move through the material and short activities in The First Step, you will become familiar with the core content of the Holocaust, reflect on your teaching rationales and consider best practices in how to bring this topic into your classroom. We encourage you to explore this guide before beginning the Education Activity with your students.

OVERVIEW

The Teacher's Guide offers a recommended trajectory to explore the Azrieli Foundation's new short film *Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer*. Students will consider core questions related to the use of animation for Holocaust testimony and have the option to produce a final assignment. The Student Workbook includes activities for reflection and details for the final assignment. The lessons assume students' familiarity with the context of the Holocaust and World War II and can be used as part of a unit plan or as a follow-up to class work on these topics.

This activity is recommended for an 11+ audience (as the film and its related resources contain no graphic

depictions of violence or sexual content) and can also be delivered in high school classrooms. The level of exploration or discussion is left to each educator's discretion.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- This lesson plan can be used alongside Morris Schnitzer's memoir, [Escape from the Edge](#). For students interested in learning more about Morris Schnitzer's life, his book is available free of charge in print, ebook, PDF and audiobook formats.
- Morris Schnitzer's memoir is also featured in our Education Program [Hearing History: A Holocaust Survivor Memoir Read Aloud](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS



- The short film is available in English and French. Both versions of the film include the option for subtitles.
- A map that charts Morris Schnitzer's journey in Western Europe during World War II, which can be used to help students follow his story, can be found in Appendix A of the Student Workbook.
- A time-stamped breakdown of the film can be found in Appendix B of the Student Workbook.
- Teachers may consider distributing worksheets (or the entire Student Workbook) before the in-class lessons, so students have time to familiarize themselves with the discussion questions.

EXTENSIONS



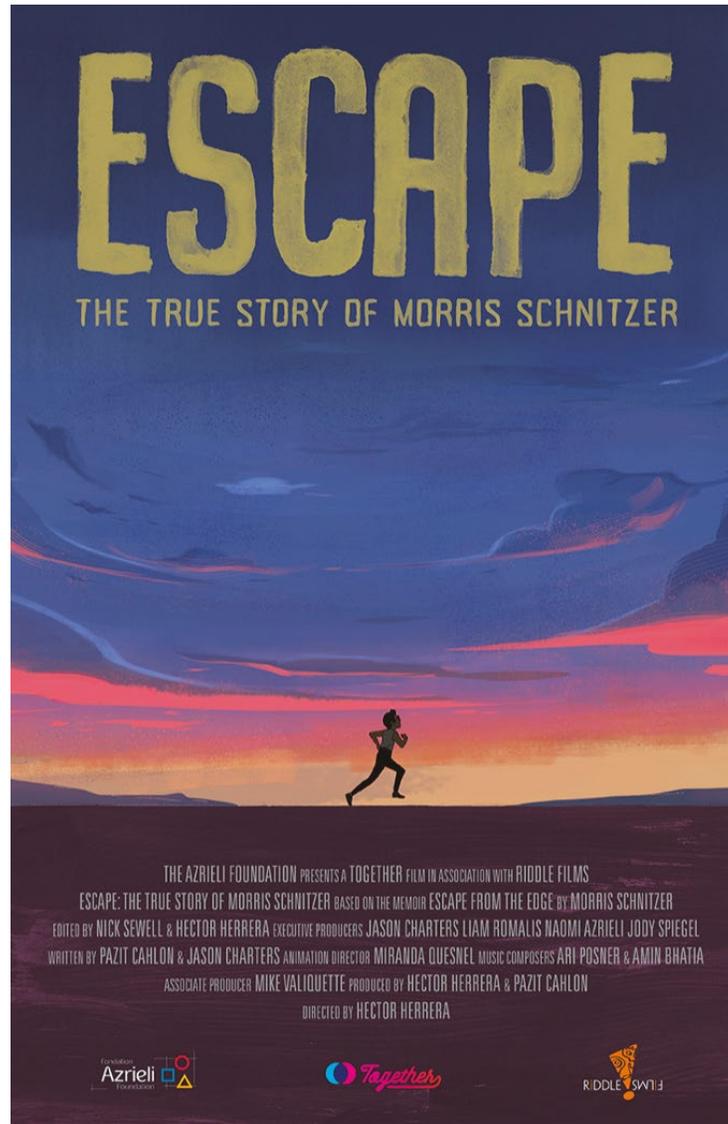
- The map in Appendix A can be used as a visual prompt for further group discussions or to build connections with previous classroom topics (i.e., early twentieth-century European history and World War I).
- [Re:Collection](#) is a free online resource that allows students to explore a vast collection of video interviews, photographs and memoir excerpts from the archive of the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program. The resource is recommended for an 11+ audience with teacher guidance to ensure that students do not access material beyond their maturity level.
 - › In Re:Collection, students can browse the stories of other survivors who fled from the Nazis. We recommend viewing [Margrit Rosenberg Stenge's](#) "recollections," which address the topic of escape.

SCHEDULE

These activities are designed to allow time for students to reflect independently and in small groups before completing their final assignment, and should occupy three or more class periods. As video production will likely require more time than one period allows,

consider making time for a fourth class (or a final class to screen each group's video response). The following is a suggested timeline for completing the Education Activity.

Period	Content	Materials
1	Short Film (21 minutes) and Reflections	<i>Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer</i> , Background Reading, Timeline, Worksheet 1, Worksheet 2
2	Discussion and Introduction to Optional Final Assignment	Worksheet 3, Worksheet 4, Worksheet 4.1
3	Work Period for Optional Final Assignment	Worksheet 4, Worksheet 4.1



LESSON 1

Introducing *Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer*



LENGTH

1 class period (45–75 minutes)



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Student Workbook, either printed or in a digital format
 - Background Reading and Timeline
 - Worksheet 1
 - Worksheet 2
- Short Film — [*Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer*](#)
- Technology for viewing media in class (i.e., projector or screen)
- Paper and writing instruments for students

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Introduce Canadian Holocaust survivor Morris Schnitzer to the class using the Background Reading and Timeline.

- The map in Appendix A of the Student Workbook can be useful for making connections with other social science subjects (geography and history) or for students to visualize Morris's journey during World War II.

STEP 2

Students complete **Worksheet 1** before viewing the short film, to review their prior knowledge and preconceptions.

STEP 3

Class viewing of the short film *Escape: The True Story of Morris Schnitzer* (21 minutes).

STEP 4

Students complete a 3-2-1 reflection (**Worksheet 2**) before the end of the period.

LESSON 2

Discussion Period



LENGTH

1 class period (45–75 minutes)



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Student Workbook
 - Worksheet 3
 - Worksheet 4 (Optional)
 - Worksheet 4.1 (Optional)
- Paper and writing instruments

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Review the activity from the previous class period. Consider having students discuss their takeaways from the last class with a peer (i.e., think-pair-share). Remind students of the short film's narrative and their responses from **Worksheets 1** and **2**.

STEP 2

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Over the next 20 to 30 minutes, and using the guiding questions on **Worksheet 3**, students discuss the short film and their personal impressions regarding the use of animation.



TEACHING TIP

Educators may consider introducing only one question at a time from **Worksheet 3** to ensure that discussions proceed at a steady pace. For further teaching strategies, we recommend the resources of our partner organization [Facing History & Ourselves](#) — their tools for competencies related to oral discussion include [resources for leading a discussion](#) and [helping students keep their conversations moving](#). A full list of their resources can be found [here](#).

STEP 3 (OPTIONAL)

Introduce the final activity (**Worksheet 4**) if time allows. Alternatively, begin the final activity during the following class period.

The activity asks students to record a response to the short film. A panel discussion format is recommended, where students discuss the film using guiding questions.

The following are Canadian examples of filmed discussions that can be used as models for students:

- For younger students, the series [Small Talk by CBC Kids](#) is appropriate for 11+ audiences and features brief interviews with children.
- For older students, we recommend segments of "The Panel" from *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*; [this example](#) demonstrates how to conduct a respectful interview using a panel discussion format.

STEP 4 (OPTIONAL)

Dedicate the remainder of the period to instructing students on how to use laptops or tablets to film and submit the final assignment. Some guiding instructions are included on **Worksheet 4**, which can be adapted to your classroom's needs. **Worksheet 4.1** contains a checklist for students to follow while working on their project and a section to complete a written reflection.

LESSON 3

(Optional)



LENGTH

1–2 class periods (45–75 minutes each)



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Student Workbook
 - Worksheet 4
 - Worksheet 4.1
- Paper and writing instruments
- Internet-enabled tablets or laptops for audio and visual recording, 1 per group of 3–4 students

INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Review the requirements of the final assignment, including how to use the recording devices and how students can submit their short films.

STEP 2

Facilitate students' production of their films.

STEP 3

If time allows, screen the students' short films.

STEP 4

After completing the activity, review students' takeaways as a group. Consider focusing the conversation around how students feel about addressing difficult subjects like the Holocaust through animation.



TEACHING TIP

If you do not have access to recording equipment, consider having a class discussion using the discussion questions on **Worksheet 4**.

We appreciate your feedback — please share your thoughts via memoirs@azrielifoundation.org to help us build better resources for educators.

