

**TOPIC**

Speaking/Listening
Courage

GRADE LEVEL

3rd-5th grade

DURATION

30-45 minutes

SUBJECT AREA

ELA/Social Studies
Primary Holocaust Education

DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

This activity prepares students to view the short animated film, *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey* narrated by Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer. The film is based on her childhood memories of when she had to leave her home and family as a young girl. In this activity, students will think about a time they took a long journey and the challenges they faced and how they overcame those challenges. Students will watch and analyze the testimony of Dr. Ruth and will recognize the challenges she faced on her unexpected journey and the ways in which she showed courage. By the end of this activity, students will make connections between Dr. Ruth's journey and their own.

Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey can be viewed at <https://iwitnessbeta.usc.edu/sites/ruth>

STANDARDS ADDRESSED**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1**

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

MATERIALS

- Clip of Testimony – Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer (1:55 min)
- Biography – Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer (included in this PDF)
- Map of Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer's Journey (included in this PDF)
- *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey – Student Handout* (PDF)
- Paper, Pen/Pencil, Markers

LEARNING AIMS

As a result of completing this lesson, students will:

- Summarize and reflect on a long journey they have taken in their life
- Analyze primary source testimony and interpret how Dr. Ruth showed courage in the face of the challenges she experienced
- Draw connections between Dr. Ruth's journey and their own

Consider

Lesson Introduction: Tell students that today's lesson will prepare them to watch the short animated film, *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey*, which highlights the story of a young girl named Ruth and her experiences on a long journey. Let students know that throughout this activity they will closely think about what a journey is, discuss the different types of journeys people take, and reflect on the challenges people may face on a long journey.

Essential Question: To introduce the concept of a journey, ask students to quietly think about the question: *What is a journey?*

- › After they have had sufficient time to think, ask student volunteers to share their responses with the class. Record their ideas on the board or on a virtual document, noting any patterns that emerge.

Partner/Share/Discuss: Ask your students to think about long journeys they have taken. Have them share their experience with a partner. Tell them that their journey might be a journey to visit family or even a journey from another country they might once have lived in or a different experience that is unique to them. (Note: students can also think about journeys they have read about or learned about.)

- › Have students use the prompts below to guide their conversations.
 - › What was the reason for your journey?
 - › Where did you go?
 - › Who was with you?
 - › How did you travel? (i.e., walking, car, plane, etc.)
 - › Did you feel any emotion(s) during your journey (I.e., excited, tired, bored, etc.)?

Next, have students think about the word “challenge” and share out what the word means to them in a whole group discussion.

- › Then, ask students to think about the following question and to share their responses with their partners: *Did you face any challenge(s) on your journey? If so, how did you overcome those challenges?*
- › After each partner has shared their journey, invite students to share one thing that they learned about their partner that they did not know before with the whole class.

Courage —*Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey***Collect**

Dr. Ruth's Journey: Tell students that they will watch a clip of testimony from Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer, the narrator and actual person whose life experience the film is based on. Explain that Dr. Ruth had to leave her home and family in Germany and travel to Switzerland by train to reach safety. Explain to students that Dr. Ruth is a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. (For historical background, see the brief description of this history at the end of this teacher guide.) Then, have students read Dr. Ruth's biography on the *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey – Student Handout*, or read it to them aloud. Answer any questions that they may have about the information. Explain to students that during her journey, she faced additional challenges and had to show extraordinary courage to overcome those challenges.

Map: To see the route of Dr. Ruth's journey, ask students to help you locate the countries of Germany and Switzerland on a world map, in relation to their own geographic location. You may also use the map which highlights the two countries (see resource in this teacher guide or in the *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey – Student Handout*). Then, ask students to share what they notice about the location of these two countries.

Audiovisual Testimony: Now have students watch the clip of testimony twice.

- **First Viewing:** Have students watch and listen to Dr. Ruth's clip of testimony, paying attention to the key details and challenges Dr. Ruth faces on her journey. Then, ask volunteers to briefly summarize the story with examples of what they've observed.
- **Second Viewing:** Play the clip again and ask students to think about how Dr. Ruth showed courage in the face of the challenges she experienced.

Construct

3-2-1 Activity: Now that students have watched Dr. Ruth's testimony twice, have them summarize what they have learned from Dr. Ruth's testimony by completing the "3-2-1 Activity" on the *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey – Student Handout*. Have students write:

- **Three** challenges Ruth faced on her journey.
- **Two** examples from Ruth's journey where you think she demonstrated courage.
- **One** thing from Ruth's journey that connects to you or your own journey.

Communicate

Partner/Share/Discuss: Have students share their responses from the “3-2-1 Activity” with a partner. If time allows, ask students to respond to the following questions in their journals, as a follow up assignment.

- › How can testimony help us learn to face challenges?
- › Do you think a challenge can ever be too hard to overcome? Why or Why not?

Map of Dr. Ruth's Journey: Frankfurt, Germany to Heiden, Switzerland



Map courtesy of Google Maps, modified by USC Shoah Foundation.

Biography

Dr. Ruth Westheimer (maiden name Karola Ruth Siegel) was born on June 4, 1928, in Germany. She lived in an apartment in Frankfurt, Germany with her parents and grandmother, where she grew up as an only child in an Orthodox Jewish family. She remembers attending synagogue services weekly and having 13 dolls and a pair of roller skates.



When Ruth was ten years old, she remembers that violence toward Jews was becoming extremely dangerous in Germany. Ruth's mother and grandmother decided that Nazi Germany was no longer a safe place for Ruth to live and sent her on the *Children's Transport*, also known as the *Kindertransport*, to a children's home in Switzerland. For six years Ruth remained at this orphanage. To this day, she remains thankful that she was kept safe during this challenging time.

After the war, Ruth, learned that both of her parents had died during the Holocaust. When Ruth was 17 years old she decided to emigrate to British Palestine (now known as the country of Israel) where she studied to be a teacher. She later moved to New York City and completed her education, married, and had two children and four grandchildren. Today, Dr. Ruth is a well-known famous media personality, therapist and author. Her incredible story of survival is also highlighted in her new short-animated film, *Ruth: A Little Girl's Big Journey*. She was interviewed on June 8, 1998, in New York, New York.

Brief Historical Background of the Holocaust:

In January 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed as Chancellor of Germany. Hitler was the leader of the Nazi party; the Nazi government was in office from 1933-1945. Within months, the Nazis began making laws that targeted people they did not believe were pure Germans. Many of these laws impacted Jewish citizens of Germany. In many cases, families were taken from their homes and separated from one another and imprisoned. Many were killed. This event is known as the Holocaust.

In 1939, the German army invaded Poland, and a war broke out. This war, known as World War II, lasted until 1945. During this time, Nazi Germany invaded many countries throughout Europe.