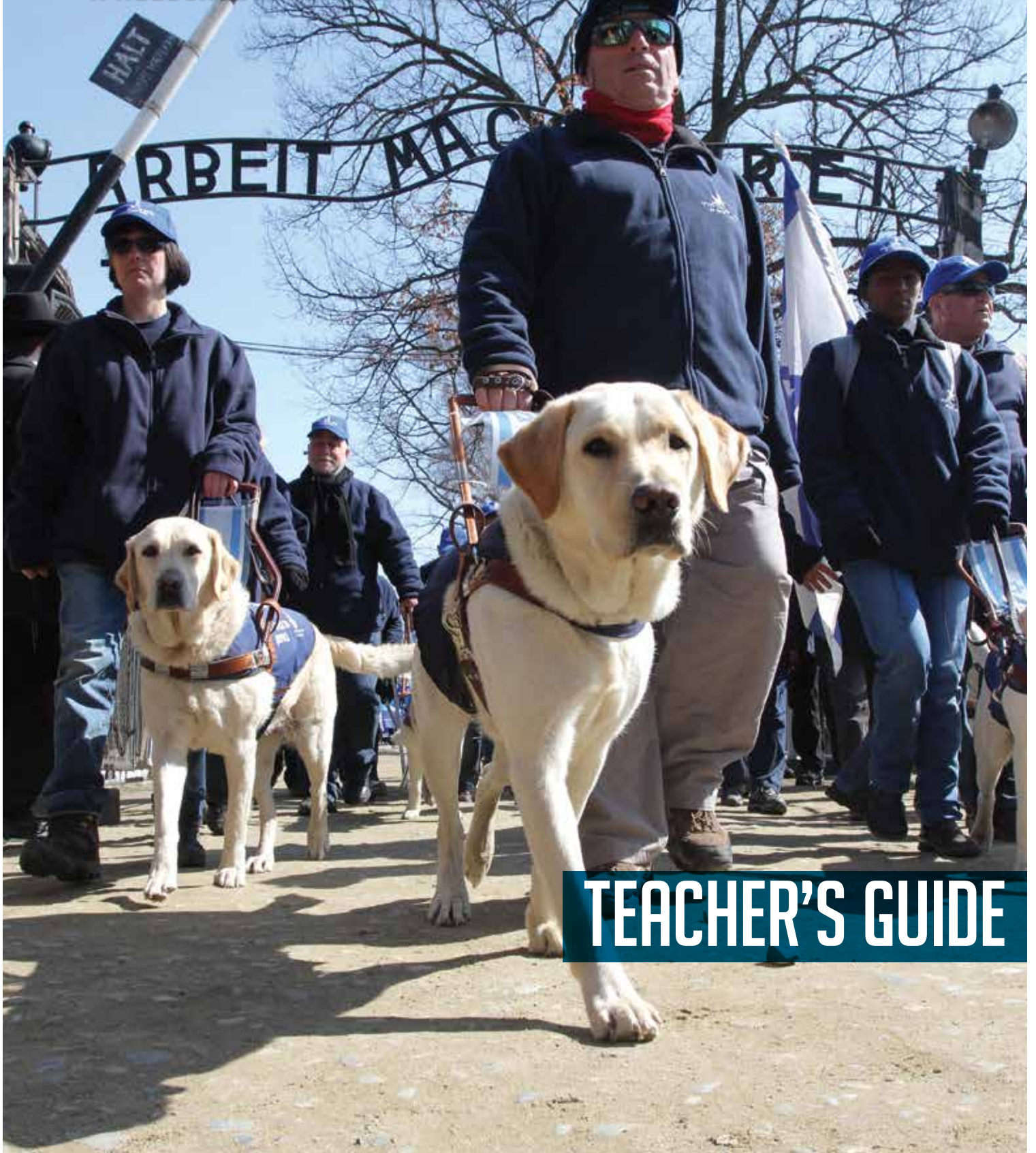


# BLIND LOVE

A HOLOCAUST JOURNEY THROUGH POLAND WITH MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Photo: Jack Bendarczyk/EPA



TEACHER'S GUIDE

# BLIND LOVE:

## A HOLOCAUST JOURNEY THROUGH POLAND WITH MAN'S BEST FRIEND

### A. INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

This guide is designed for use for students in grades 8 to 12, and meets curriculum guidelines in those grades. As well as a specific guided viewing exercise designed to be used along with the documentary itself, there are several activities which explore universal themes in the film. Those themes include developing sensitivity to visually impaired people, the importance of inclusion, cultural sensitivity and combatting racism and intolerance. Through guided viewing of the documentary and Internet research, students have the opportunity to hone key media literacy skills.

Students in Grades 11 and 12 History courses will find the film and the guide useful in enhancing their knowledge of Holocaust history. Also, it will help students understand the modern response to the Holocaust and its relevance for our times. They will appreciate the strong desire of people all over the World to remember the Holocaust as the most tragic example of genocide in history.

All of the activities in this guide include suggestions for lesson timelines, and appropriate use for specific grades. It is, of course, each teacher's decision to use activities appropriate to her/his students' needs and grade expectations.

Most activities require students to integrate their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Finally, teachers can use many activities to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of students with different learning styles.

### B. STORY SUMMARY

Blind Love is a 2015 documentary film which recounts the journey of a small group of blind and visually impaired Israelis, and their guide dogs, who travel to Poland to learn more about Jewish life before the Holocaust and the devastating impact of Nazi persecution of Jews during that horrendous time in our history.

The film focuses on the experiences of these six adults — all native born Israelis — who participated in a worldwide multigenerational program called "The March of the Living" in 2011 and 2012. All of them have their own unique reasons for going on the March. Holocaust survivors — one from Belgium, and the other from Poland — who participated in the March of the Living also appear in the film.

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The twenty-six minute documentary recounts their two-week guided tour visiting Jewish educational and religious landmarks in Poland, culminating in a silent memorial march on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, from Auschwitz to Birkenau.

In a deeply moving fashion, the film depicts how these six participants learn their rich history through visits to a former synagogue in a small Polish village to Warsaw, Poland's capital — which once housed the world's largest Jewish population, as well as various sites of Jewish martyrdom.

Equally significant, through integration in the March of the Living, the six blind and visually impaired people and their guide dogs develop a strong bond with the other participants.

Blind Love was directed by Eli Rubenstein. Rubenstein first became involved with the March of the Living in 1988, and is currently the National Director of March of the Living Canada, the March of Remembrance of Hope Canada and the Director of Education of the March of the Living International. Since 2013, he has been the co-director of the March of the Living Digital Archive Project which gathers testimony from Canadian Holocaust survivors who participate on the March of the Living.

The recipient of countless awards and honours, Rubenstein has authored several books including "Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations", which details the personal stories, testimony and reactions of multi-generational and multicultural participants on the March of the Living.

Since 1988, Eli Rubenstein has also served as religious leader of Congregation Habonim, located in Toronto. He is also the Co-Chair of the Canadian Friends of the Israel Guide Dog Center Board of Directors.

The documentary is narrated by CBC radio journalist Michael Enright. Some of the dialogue is in Hebrew with English subtitles.

## C. ABOUT THE MARCH OF THE LIVING

"The March of the Living", established in 1988, is an annual educational program which takes place every year in Poland and Israel for two weeks in April or May. The timelines are significant. It begins shortly after Passover, the Jewish liberation holiday which celebrates when Moses led the Exodus of Jewish slaves out of Egypt to begin their free life in Israel. The program in Poland culminates on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, when the many thousands of participants commemorate the day by marching silently from Auschwitz to Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp built in World War II.



The program is designed for teenagers and interested adults from many nations, cultures, and religions. Since its inception, “March of the Living” groups from over fifty countries have travelled to Poland where three of the total six million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust, perished. The mission of the March is manifold. As they tour the vestiges of Jewish life throughout Poland, knowledgeable guides who speak many languages educate participants about the richness of Jewish cultural, religious, and educational life before the Holocaust.

Following the ceremony in Birkenau, I thanked the delegation of blind marchers for joining us on our journey through Poland. One of the women softly uttered profound words which I carry with me always and which I shall never forget:

“I saw nothing.....but I felt everything”.

Those words, I believe, symbolize the essence and the impact of the March of the Living.

Phyllis Greenberg Heideman  
President, International March of the Living

The second goal is to pay homage to the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide on the sites where so many perished. Equally important program goals include, learning the lessons of the Holocaust, combating all forms of racism and intolerance, and building a better world for all humanity.

For more information, contact March of the Living International at [motl.org](http://motl.org) or March of the Living Canadian Organization at [marchofthelivingcanada.org](http://marchofthelivingcanada.org)

## D. ABOUT THE ISRAEL GUIDE DOG CENTER

The Israel Guide Dog Center breeds and trains dogs that change Israeli lives!

Since 1991, over 900 Israeli lives have been profoundly changed with our guide dogs, PTSD dogs and emotional support dogs. Our dogs are lovingly trained using positive reinforcement and reward techniques, and are provided free of charge to Israelis with special needs — such as blindness, autism, psychological trauma, brain injury, cerebral palsy, or paralysis. For more information about the Israel Guide Dog Center, please visit [israelguidedog.ca](http://israelguidedog.ca)



## E. PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be used with students before their guided viewing of the documentary. Since the film is appropriate for students from grades eight through twelve, each activity is designated for different levels.

### ACTIVITY 1: BLINDFOLDED (20-30 MINUTES)

GR 8–9

This activity can be used by Grade 8 and 9 students to sensitize them about the challenges faced by blind and visually impaired people. Provide students with blindfolds or scarves which can be used to cover their eyes.

Choose objects which are used in everyday life, such as household items, tools, clothing, school supplies, and personal electronics. If possible, change the configuration of your classroom and have your students sit in a circle so they can easily pass objects to each other. Begin by passing around the same object to each blindfolded student one at a time. Encourage them to use their other senses to identify the objects. Select objects which become harder to name, and which can be identified using more than one of the remaining senses. Give them only 30 seconds to identify each object, moving on to the next item quickly. Make a master list of the objects identified, and the sense or senses used to identify them.

### **Blindfolded: Follow up Discussion (20 minutes)**

After completing **ACTIVITY 1**, have a discussion using these questions. Make notes on your master list using your class discussion of these questions.

1. Were these objects easy or difficult to identify? Because you couldn't use your eyes, what other senses did you use to identify them?
2. How did you feel about having such a short time to identify each item? If it took longer than you thought to identify each item or you couldn't name it, how did you feel about how long it took?
3. Do you have any friends or family members who are visually impaired or blind? If you do, how has this activity made you more aware of some of the challenges and feelings that they face?

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## ACTIVITY 2: OBSTACLE COURSE: PAIRS ROLE PLAY (60 MINUTES)

This activity can also be done by grade eight or nine students as a follow up to **ACTIVITY 1**. Move chairs, desks, tables, smart boards and other items, changing the layout of your classroom to create an unfamiliar obstacle course.

This is a role play where your students do this activity in pairs. One student wears the blindfold and holds on to the arm or shoulder of his sighted partner. As a pair, they negotiate the obstacle course where the sighted student gives their partner verbal directions to complete it. Before doing the exercise, take a few minutes to suggest some of the language or cues that the sighted partners would give their blindfolded partners to help them. For example, some language that can be used can be “left turn”, “right turn” or “straight ahead”. Another strategy could be to use “clock language” such as “3 o’clock”.

Allow the pairs to complete the obstacle course while the rest of the students observe them. To make the activity even more challenging, change the configuration and layout of the obstacle course each time one pair has completed it.

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## ACTIVITY 3: OBSTACLE COURSE: INDIVIDUALS (20 MINUTES)

A variation of **ACTIVITY 2** is to have individual blindfolded students negotiate the obstacle course by themselves. Since this activity could be more stressful than **ACTIVITY 2**, ask for volunteers to complete it. Again, have blindfolded students negotiate the course one at a time while their classmates observe them. Ask for only a few volunteers to complete this activity.

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## ACTIVITY 4: OBSTACLE COURSE: CLASS OR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30 MINUTES)

These questions explore students’ feelings and opinions about issues faced by blind people. Depending on the size and composition of your class, you can present them to the entire class, or in small groups. If they work in groups, assign each student a specific responsibility. For example, one student can be the note taker, another student keeps the others on task, a third proofreads notes to improve and correct spelling and grammar, and one or two students can be in charge of presenting their findings to the whole class.

The worksheet below can be photocopied and used for students to organize and record their ideas.

After giving students time for their group work, each group presents its findings.

You may also wish to create a class master chart which can be displayed visually in the classroom or on a class website.

# WORKSHEET: OBSTACLE COURSE DISCUSSION SHEET

## Directions

- A. Organize yourself into groups of four or five students.
- B. As a group, discuss and write point-form notes to answer these questions. You will have 30 minutes to complete this task.
- C. Proofread your answers to correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary.
- D. When your group is finished, choose one or two group members to present your answers to the whole class.

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- 1. In your opinion, what were the difficulties or challenges of being blindfolded while doing the obstacle course? Make a list of those challenges.
  
- 2. What were the responsibilities of the sighted guide in this activity? Was it easy or hard to be the sighted guide? Why or why not? Give reasons for your opinion.
  
- 3. In your opinion, was it easier or harder to complete the course blindfolded by yourself versus blindfolded with a partner? Give your opinion and reasons for it.
  
- 4. How did you feel as you watched blindfolded people do the obstacle course or completed it yourself? In your group create a chart where you list your feelings about this activity and reasons for your feelings. Your chart could look something like this.

BLINDFOLDED IN THE OBSTACLE COURSE	
Our feelings	Reasons

- 5. What did doing this activity show or teach you about the challenges faced by blind and visually impaired people?
  
- 6. Often blind people do not have sighted people to help them. What are some other ways that blind people go places by themselves?

This activity would be appropriate for students in grades 9 and 10 who have limited or no background about the Holocaust. Doing this research will give them a deeper understanding of the themes of the film.

Give one copy of this worksheet to each student. The activity has them research and answer basic questions about the Holocaust. Use any search engines approved by your school. The Holocaust is an extensively researched and written about topic, so treat this as a “skim and scan” activity which can be done fairly quickly. There is also a personal reflection question where students are asked to express their feelings about the information they’ve learned, and so addresses the affective domain and values education.

There are many films on the Holocaust which teachers may show as an introduction. However, before considering showing any movie, preview it to ensure that it is appropriate for your students’ grade.

**Warning**

*We are all aware that the Internet does contain anti-Semitic websites. If this is a homework assignment, parents should be advised that their children are researching the topic. Ask parents to monitor their screen time to ensure that they are accessing factually correct resources.*



# WORKSHEET: UNDERSTANDING THE HOLOCAUST

## Directions

- A. Using any search engine and websites approved by your teacher, research the Holocaust and answer the questions below.
- B. Choose two or three short resources to read. Skim and scan the resources to find the information that you need to answer the questions.
- C. Write short, point-form notes to answer the questions. Complete sentences are not necessary.
- D. If you are not sure that the resource you've chosen has correct and truthful information, please check with your teacher, a librarian or a parent.
- E. You will have 60 minutes to do this activity.  
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1. What are the dates of the Holocaust? When did it begin and when did it end?
  
2. What is the name of the man who began the Holocaust? What country's government did he head and control? How did he become the leader of that country?
  
3. Explain that dictator's plan to conquer Europe.
  
4. Name at least five countries in Europe that were invaded and occupied by that dictator. You can name more countries if you know them.
  
5. How many innocent people in total were killed during this time?
  
6. How many Jews were killed during the Holocaust?
  
7. Other than Jews, name 5 groups of people who suffered discrimination and cruel treatment during this time.
  
8. What were 5 examples of discrimination and cruel treatment done to Jewish people?

9. What is deportation? What happened when Jewish people were deported?
10. What was a ghetto? Why were Jewish people kept in ghettos? Name one Jewish ghetto which was created during that time.
11. In your own words, give a short definition of these places as they were used during the Holocaust. If you can, give the actual name of one kind of camp.
- Labour camps:
  - Extermination camps:
  - Concentration camps:
12. Personal reflection — Please answer the following questions. Do not copy any information or opinions from a source. Describe your own feelings and opinions about what you've read and researched. Write a short paragraph of 4 to 6 sentences.
- How do you feel after completing this research about the Holocaust?  
Describe two feelings that you have and give some reasons for them.
  - Also, what are some opinions that you can share about your research?  
Give some reasons for these opinions.

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### ACTIVITY 6: RESEARCH AND NOTEMAKING: THE LIFESTYLE AND CHALLENGES OF BLIND PEOPLE (60-90 MINUTES)

GR 10–12

This exercise would be appropriate for students from grades 10 to 12. You could assign it before viewing the documentary, or alternatively as an extension or enrichment activity after seeing the film. If it is a previewing activity, it will give senior students more knowledge of Blind and visually impaired people.

The activity is a research worksheet where students use primarily Internet or hard copy resources to find information about blind and visually impaired people. Also, if they have visually impaired or blind friends or family members, students may ask them for help to complete the assignment.

Provide your students with a copy of the assignment sheet below.

# WORKSHEET: THE LIFESTYLE AND CHALLENGES OF BLIND PEOPLE

## Directions:

- A. This is a research assignment to help you learn important facts about blind and visually impaired people.
- B. There are several sub-topics below. Go online or choose books to find information about them. If you use a book, make sure that it is not more than five years old. Read and make notes from 3 resources which provide information about these sub-topics.
- C. If you have a friend or relative who is blind or visually impaired, or know a parent of a child with these challenges, you may interview them and ask some or all of these questions.
- D. Make point-form notes under each of these sub-topics. Do not copy words from your sources. Rewrite information in your own words.  
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- 1. The Causes of Blindness
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. The Differences between being Blind and Visually Impaired
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Special Education for Blind and Visually impaired People
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. Assistive Devices (special accommodations) needed by Blind People (in homes, schools, jobs and the community)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Guide Dogs (training, responsibilities, relationship)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6. List the resources you used to get your information.  
(book titles, links, and names of people interviewed)



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## ACTIVITY 7: REPORT WRITING: THE LIFESTYLE AND CHALLENGES OF BLIND PEOPLE (60-120 MINUTES)

This activity can be used as a follow-up to **ACTIVITY 6**. Students use the information they researched in the previous activity to write a short report. They could complete the research and note making before viewing the documentary. However, they can add to their notes as they watch the film. Then, they write the report after viewing and discussing the film. In this way, the documentary becomes an additional resource for their report.

Give the students these directions.

Using your notes from **ACTIVITY 6**, write a short (600-800 word) research report entitled “The Lifestyle and Challenges of Blind and Visually Impaired People”. Include information under the sub-topics given. The information for each sub-topic can be written in one or two paragraphs.

At the end of your report, include the list of resources you used to write your report. Your report will be evaluated for content, organization, and original and correct language use.



## F. FOCUS ON THE DOCUMENTARY: BLIND LOVE

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### ACTIVITY 8: GUIDED VIEWING OF THE DOCUMENTARY (60-90 MINUTES)

This is an activity where students view the film, *Blind Love* which is a 26 minute documentary narrated in English. However, the six visually impaired and blind participants on the March of the Living featured in the film are all Israelis who speak Hebrew. English subtitles appear on the screen whenever Hebrew is spoken.

Students should watch the film 2 or 3 times. The activity could be done in two lessons. For example, it could be introduced in one lesson to gain overall knowledge of its themes and content.

After the initial viewing, check their comprehension by having a discussion and asking fairly basic content questions which begin with Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

For their second viewing, give students the Guided Viewing worksheet to be completed as they watch the documentary. If they are unfamiliar with this kind of task, explain the concept and purpose of guided viewing. If necessary, they can watch the film a third time, either as a class or independently.

Before assigning the guided viewing activity, you could also organize your students in small groups and assign each group a specific number of questions. After guided viewing, allow the groups time to discuss their assigned questions. Finally, have a class discussion where each group has a chance to report on the answers to their questions.

# WORKSHEET: GUIDED VIEWING

## BLIND LOVE: A HOLOCAUST JOURNEY THROUGH POLAND WITH MAN'S BEST FRIEND

### Directions:

- A. You have seen the film at least once. Now, watch it again.
- B. As you are watching, answer the questions below using the best details you can.
- C. Write point form notes. Don't worry about writing complete sentences, just focus on correct details.
- D. After this guided viewing, you will have the chance to fill in any missing information by discussing your answers with partners or in small groups, or by viewing the film a third time if necessary.

1. How many blind or visually impaired people are travelling on this journey? What country are they from?

2. What do you think might be the difference between being blind and visually impaired? Try to infer this information from what the participants say.

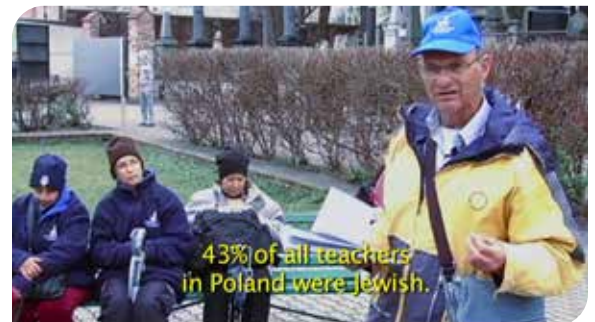


3. Where is Poland? In which continent is it located. What countries are near it? Look on a map if you aren't sure.

4. Why do the participants on the March of the Living go specifically to Poland?

5. The blind and visually impaired participants are on the trip with many thousands of sighted people. In your opinion, why have they chosen to be part of such a huge group? Give your opinion and reasons to support it.

6. What kind of information does the March of the Living tour guide give everyone? Why is he doing this?



7. Are the visually impaired and blind participants similar or different in their backgrounds? Are their reasons for going on the March similar or different? Explain.

8. Name some of the cities that the participants visited? Why did the tour organizers choose these cities?
9. How did the tour guides do their best to include the visually impaired and blind participants on the March? Give specific details.
10. Describe the relationship between the guide dogs and their owners. Are the dogs treated as pets? Or do they have a different relationship with their owners and a different purpose? Explain.
11. What do the visually impaired and blind participants do at the large Jewish cemetery in Warsaw? Why do they do this?

12. What do the tour leaders and participants do at the site of the mass murder at the memorial in the forest near the town of Tykochen? Why does everyone become so emotional?



13. Do you know the meaning of the word "irony"? Explain the sad irony of the blind participants visiting Auschwitz with their guide dogs?

14. Why did the March participants visit Lublin? Explain the importance of Lublin as a stop on the March.

15. Give specific examples of how the visually impaired and blind participants use their other senses on the March.

16. How did the guide dogs help their owners during the March?



17. How did the Nazis use dogs during the Holocaust? How does this contrast with the relationship between dogs and people now?



18. What is Yom Hashoah? Why and how do people observe that day?

19. Max Glauhen, a March participant and Holocaust survivor, has been on the March ten times. Why do you think he has been on the March so many times? In your opinion, is it important that he keeps going on the March? Give reasons for your opinion.



20. How would you describe the relationship between Max, the Holocaust survivor and the visually impaired and blind participants, and their guide dogs, who he meets on the trip? How do they each give each other comfort?

21. One of the blind participants says, "We felt as though the entire group hugged us." What do these words tell us about how the blind and visually impaired participants felt about being on the March?

22. Why do you think one of the blind participants is asked to light the torch at the Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony? How would that person feel? Give reasons for your answer.

23. Why can we say that the guide dogs also experienced the March of the Living?

24. Why do we think that the relationship between the guide dogs and their owners may have changed during the March?



25. "If you're confronted by Holocaust deniers tell them that blind people accompanied by their service dogs can 'see' and feel the evidence. But Holocaust deniers are 'blind' to the Holocaust even though they can see with their own eyes," said survivor Sol Noyman with tears in his eyes after viewing the film. Explain the irony in this statement.
26. Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel once said: "When you listen to a witness, you become a witness." One of the prime goals of the March of the Living is to become a witness to the events of the Holocaust. Is it possible to become a witness, if you cannot see? Are there other ways of becoming a witness, besides for using one's vision?
27. Why do you think the film's title chose the words "Blind Love"? Does this refer to the love between the guide dogs and their blind masters? Or does it refer to a way we should look at the entire world?

## G. POST VIEWING AND ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

These are suggestions for activities which can be used as a follow-up to viewing the documentary.

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### ACTIVITY 9: WRITING A RESPONSE JOURNAL (15-20 MINUTES FOR EACH QUESTION)

If your students are accustomed to response journal writing, either on a class website or in individual journals, the following are a list of questions that they can answer. Rather than having them answer all questions, allow them to choose one to three to answer.

1. In your opinion, did the visually impaired and blind participants on the March gain a real appreciation of their culture and history, even though they cannot see? Give your opinion and reasons to support it.
2. Do you personally have a wish or desire to go on a special journey to discover your religious, historical and cultural roots?
3. Why would you do that? What places would you visit if you had the chance?



4. In the film, we saw several guide dogs. Do you think that every dog can be trained to be a guide dog? In your opinion, what are several personal qualities that a guide dog would need to have to do that important job?



5. What are some specific ways that the blind and impaired participants on the March of the Living benefited from being on the March?

6. What is your opinion of the documentary “Blind Love”? Do you think that the film did a good job of describing the mission and experience of the March of the Living? Give your opinion and specific reasons to support it.

7. Do you think that the sighted participants on the March benefitted from sharing their experience with the blind and visually impaired participants? What are some ways that the sighted participants benefitted?



#### ACTIVITY 10: CLASS VISIT OF GUIDE DOG TRAINERS, OWNERS AND THEIR DOGS (60 MINUTES)

If your students are interested, contact the Canadian National Institute for the Blind at [cnib.ca](http://cnib.ca) (in Canada), the National Federation of the Blind at [nfb.org](http://nfb.org) (in the USA), or a comparable organization in your area. Request a guest speaker to come to your class, or better still, for your students to visit a guide dog training program.

#### ACTIVITY 11: MARCH OF THE LIVING SPEAKER

GR 11–12

Any student who is sixteen years or older is eligible to go on the March of the Living. If your students in grade 11 or 12 are interested in knowing more about the March, invite guest speakers to your class who are past participants on the March.

Past participants of all ages, including students, adults, and Holocaust survivors will speak to your students about their experience. Contact March of the Living Canada at [marchofthelivingcanada.org](http://marchofthelivingcanada.org) or March of the Living International at [moti.org](http://moti.org) for more information.

#### ACTIVITY 12: ISRAEL GUIDE DOG CENTER VISIT

ALL GRADES

The Israel Guide Dog Center is located in Beit Oved, Israel, just outside of Rehovot. Please visit the Center the next time you are in Israel for a memorable and meaningful experience. More information can be found here, [israelguidedog.ca](http://israelguidedog.ca).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Helen Wolfe has been an educator for over 40 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education and has earned professional certification in Senior English, ESL, Law, Special Education and a Guidance Specialist. She has taught extensively in all of these areas.

Helen has written over 30 teacher's guides, including several for Holocaust children's literature such as "Hana's Suitcase", "The Secret of Gaby's Dresser", and "The Promise". Previously, she wrote the teacher's guide for Eli Rubenstein's comprehensive book "Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations", a detailed recounting of the participants on the March of the Living.

As the child of Holocaust survivors, Helen has a fervent belief in educating students of all ages, faiths and cultures on this devastating period in human history. Her hope is not only to make students more knowledgeable, but also to impart the values of humanism, inclusion and anti-racism.