



MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE  
A SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER MUSEUM

# Teacher's Guide

**Assuming Responsibility**  
Verantwortung  
مسئولية  
Responsabilidad  
Responsabilité

**number Dialogue Lobby Learn Envision Take a Stand Commit Initiate Assist speak Out Support**  
**Out Hope Lead Celebrate Listen Unite** Contribute Participate **ACT Empower Respond Create**

**The Great Tree of T**  
Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper  
Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation  
Haudenosaunee (6 Nations) Iroquois

**1. Cesar Chavez**  
Inaugurated in California, the Cesar Chavez holiday was achieved through a joint effort of brave farm workers and political leadership. Students will learn the importance of Chavez's life and self-sacrifice for social justice and receive an afternoon of social service in tribute to an American hero.

**2. Operation Understanding**  
Started in Philadelphia in 1985, Operation Understanding promotes awareness through youth encounters and dialogue. It was created to strengthen the relationships between African Americans and Jews. Young people travel to historic sites to learn about each other's religious, histories and cultures. They become ambassadors for tolerance.

**3. Long Beach**  
California, police officers participate with the National Conference for Community and Justice in a walk-a-thon to raise funds for youth programs teaching understanding and respect for all races, religions and cultures. Law enforcement, community organizations and businesses are increasingly partnering in the fight against bias, bigotry and racism.

**4. Stand Together Billings**  
A series of hate crimes in Billings, Montana, climaxed when a cross-bomb was thrown through a child's window displaying a Chenukash memorial. In response, community members placed memorials in their windows to show solidarity with their Jewish neighbors and to send the message "Not In Our Town." A documentary of the story sparked a national movement that continues today.

**5. September 11**  
In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, over 50,000 men and women of the National Guard were mobilized to provide security at home and to fight terrorism abroad. Committed to serving their nation, these citizen-soldiers leave families, businesses and jobs to respond to the call of duty in time of need.

**6. Project Lemonade**  
When the Ku Klux Klan comes to town, Project Lemonade turns something bitter into something sweet. The Boyertown Area Unity Coalition in Pennsylvania, based on an idea from Springfield, Illinois, collects pledges for every minute the hate group demonstrates and donates the money to groups that fight bigotry and intolerance.

**7. City Harvest**  
Volunteer drivers for City Harvest load trucks with frozen turkeys just in time for Thanksgiving. City Harvest delivers free of charge nearly 40,000 pounds of food daily to food pantries, soup kitchens, day care and senior centers, and homeless shelters in New York's five boroughs.

**8. Women Take Back the Night**  
An international tradition since 1978, symbolically reclaiming streets that are often places of fear and violence for women. Supporters march in candlelight vigils and share personal testimonies to promote strength through healing. The events, conducted on many college campuses and cities worldwide, empower men and women to take direct action against violence.

**9. Americans with Disabilities Act**  
With support from both major political parties, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The Act enlarged the American dream by guaranteeing the right to equal access and opportunity for people with disabilities. Celebrated as an important milestone, the ADA is a continuing struggle for people with disabilities.

## RESPONSIBILITY: THE RIPPLE EFFECT

learn from the past    engage the present    shape the future

## RESPONSIBILITY: THE RIPPLE EFFECT

### RELATED EXHIBIT: TOLERANCENTER™ ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY PANEL

**“ It is not only for what we do that we are held responsible, but also for what we do not do.”**

- Molière

### OVERVIEW

In the interconnected world in which we live, we are all part of a global community. What we do and say can impact others near and far, and we can be equally impacted by the words and actions of others. We all share the responsibility for what happens in our world, and bear responsibility for the future. This is summarized in the quote from the Constitution of the Iroquois Nations featured on the Responsibility Wall in the Museum of Tolerance:

**“O Chiefs when you sit and counsel for the welfare of the people, think not of yourself or your family or even your generation. But make decisions on behalf of the seventh generation coming.”**

In this lesson, students will define responsibility and see that global responsibility is necessary to promote values of human rights and human dignity. Students will identify how their own sense of responsibility is connected to others and how their actions or inactions impact community, society and the world.

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Responsibility is a universal topic.

Every individual has a responsibility to act in a manner that is beneficial to society and not solely to the individual.

Our interests and others' interests are interconnected

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be responsible?

What are the different types of responsibility?

What is our responsibility to ourselves, our family, school, community, nation and the world?

How do you develop a sense of global responsibility?

How are we connected through our responsibilities?

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Define responsibility.

Name different types of responsibilities.

Identify at least 3 examples of where in their lives they see themselves personally responsible within their family, school community, nationally and in the world.

Identify at least 3 examples where their family, school, community, nation and the world has a responsibility to them.



Determine whether or not they have a choice to be responsible for the actions they do or do not take.

List responses to why individuals are responsible and why they are not.

Answer what the consequences are of not being responsible for their actions.

Research current events to demonstrate where society is being responsible and irresponsible for local and global issues.

Design and create a wall display visually demonstrating acts of responsibility and irresponsibility in the community and the world.

### **KEY ISSUES / CONCEPTS**

Personal Responsibility, Social Responsibility, Collective Responsibility, Indifference, Power of Words, Social Engagement, Transforming Community, Advocacy, Interconnectedness, Speaking Up, Taking a Stand, Courage, Community, Commitment, Civic Engagement

For other definitions related to this lesson see key *Vocabulary and Terms*

### **SUBJECT AREA / CONTENT AREA CONNECTIONS**

History, Social Studies, Civics, Humanities, Service Learning, Ethics, Global Studies, Government, Debate

### **TIME / MATERIALS**

Up to three 45 minute class periods. Time frames will vary based on available hours in any given class.

1 large book, a glass of water, stack of papers in alphabetical order, 1 egg

3 video clips - links listed in Step 2.

Ripple Effect handout

blue and black pens or markers

index cards

newspapers, computers

### **STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

Have students draw a picture rather than, or in addition to, defining *responsibility*.

### **RESOURCES / LINKS**

Pachamama Alliance

<http://www.pachamama.org/social-justice/social-responsibility-and-ethics>

Universal Responsibility in the Modern World

<http://dalailama.com/messages/transcripts/universal-responsibility-modern-world>

## TOP 10 RESPONSIBILITIES STUDENTS MUST OWN

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/student-responsibility-academic-success-heather-wolpert-gawron>

1) DoSomething.org is one of the largest global organizations for young people and social change. 3.8 million Members tackle campaigns that impact every cause, from poverty to violence to the environment and more. Students pick their cause, select the amount of time they have, and get started!

<https://www.dosomething.org/>

### PROCESS:

#### STEP 1

Depending on the room set up, either have students stand in a circle, in lines, or sit at their desks. Begin by passing a book around the classroom. Inform students the object must pass through everyone's hands and be returned to the first person. Next, pass a glass of water, followed by papers in alphabetical order, then an egg.

To make the point clear, consider timing the activity or having students pass the object with their eyes closed.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What did you notice?

What was the point of this activity?

What role did you play?

Once the object left your hand did your investment in the activity lessen/strengthen?

#### NOTE:

Contextualize the responses so that they point to being responsible. Be mindful of not telling them the answer outright. Let them discover it. For example, students may say I was nervous, it was hard, I had fun, I didn't really care, or they may blame others for slowing down the process. Have them see that their responses may be directly related to the level in which they were willing to be responsible for having the task completed. Make the point that they were all responsible for the task being completed.

#### STEP 2

Choose two from the following sets of video clip selections dealing with responsibility, to show the class.

1) Standing Up for Others during the Holocaust: USHMM has a list of links to videos featuring stories of Righteous Among the Nations, including Wallenberg, Sugihara, Schindler and other stories.

<http://www.ushmm.org/search/results/?q=righteous+among+the+nations+video>

2) Ordinary people with extraordinary ideas assuming responsibility for their communities and world: They are your neighbors, your colleagues, your friends. They are CNN Heroes, each of whom shows how one person can make a difference.

<http://www.cnn.com/specials/cnn-heroes>

3) Speaking up Against Hate at school and in the community: These videos show a variety of Community Responses to Hate Groups at Not In Our Town:

<https://www.niot.org/niot-video/responsestohategroups>

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do these clips have in common?

Did the individuals in each clip have a choice to do what he did?

What was the impact of the choices made?

## STEP 3

On the board, write 'response' on one side and 'ability' on the other. Have students list definitions, synonyms and examples of each. Choose two students to record responses on the board.

EXAMPLES:

**Response** - answer, reply, react/reaction, comeback, retaliation, feedback

**Ability** - able, capacity, skill, potential, talent, aptitude

Put the words together (Response+Ability=Responsibility). In small groups, have students come up with a definition for responsibility. Encourage them to use what was brainstormed. Have each group share the meaning they developed.

Teacher shares definition.

## responsibility

noun (pl. responsibilities)

- the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone
- the state or fact of being accountable or to blame for something
- the opportunity or ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization

As students share, pose the rhetorical question: do they only have a responsibility for themselves, or do they also have a responsibility to others?

Engage students in a short discussion about the different types of responsibility.

Brainstorm with students examples of each:

social responsibility

personal responsibility

collective responsibility

global responsibility

legal responsibility

moral responsibility

mutual responsibility

Being socially responsible means that people and organizations have an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large (social, cultural, economic and environmental issues.)

## STEP 4

Have students identify someone whom they consider to be responsible.

Pair-Share: "What are some of the qualities or characteristics that person has?"

Consider examples of young people making social change. DoSomething.org is one of the largest global organizations for young people and social change. 3.8 million Members tackle campaigns that impact every cause, from poverty to violence to the environment and more.

Ask students to review examples on the website <https://www.dosomething.org/>.

Choose one campaign that resonates with them and be ready to share with the class.

## STEP 5

### Ripple Effect Activity

Distribute the Ripple Effect handout. Using two different color pens, students will answer the questions about personal responsibility (see A below) in one color and the questions about the responsibilities others have to them (see B below) in another color.

Choose a color and write your answers on the Ripple Effect handout to the following questions:

#### A. Questions about **RESPONSIBILITY**:

What are YOU personally responsible for?

What responsibilities do you have to your family?

What responsibilities do you have to your school?

What responsibilities do you have to your community/neighborhood?

What responsibilities do you have to your country?

What responsibilities do you have to the world?

Discuss what students have written in each section. Use these examples to help guide the discussion:

**Personally** - complete homework, brush teeth, chores, drive safely (texting, drunk driving, wearing a seatbelt), ask for help, mindfully choose the words I use

**Family** - show up to family events, respect parents, take care of younger siblings and/or grandparents, feed pets, uphold culture, honor family name

**School** - respect school property, uphold school rules, respect teachers, contribute positively in class, respect cultural differences, speak out against injustice

**Community** - support church or synagogue, drive safely (texting, drunk driving, wearing seat belt), vote, volunteer with organizations, respect elders, uphold culture, respect cultural differences, speak out against injustice,

**Country** - respect cultural differences, uphold the law, vote, speak out against injustice, keep history alive

**World** - preserve natural resources, advocate for human rights, keep history alive, dispel stereotypes, respect cultural differences

Now instruct the students: "Look over your circles. Are you responsible for all of these by default or by choice?"

Then have the students mark the items listed with a (C) for choice and (NC) for no choice.

## STEP 6

In groups of 3-4, students look through newspapers and online news sources citing examples of local and global events, including intolerance, injustice and inspiration that answer the following:

Where are you already or could be personally responsible locally? (e.g. recycling)

Where is the government being/not being responsible?

Where is the media being/not being responsible for creating/dispelling stereotypes?

Where is society responsible/not responsible for its natural resources?

Where is history repeating itself? (e.g. slavery/child trafficking)

Where are young people responsible or not for their actions?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is responsibility a right, a privilege or a burden?

Under what circumstances do you think it is appropriate to stand by, act as a bystander, while conflict or injustice occurs?

Under what circumstances do you think it is especially important to stand up, be an upstander, to injustice?

Distribute 2 index cards per student. On one card they will write a one word response to “Why are people not responsible?”

## EXAMPLES

apathy

indifference

fear

carelessness

harm

ignorant

in question

unaware

uninterested

disconnected

On the other card, they will write a one word response to “Why do people act responsibly?”

passion

curiosity

inspiration

awareness

caring

connected

concerned

empathy

compassion

motivated

Students will now combine all the articles they found with the words they wrote. Together they will design a wall to represent Responsibility, similar to the Assuming Responsibility panel in the Museum of Tolerance. In addition to the articles and words, they are encouraged to personalize the wall by adding quotes, drawings and the word responsibility in different languages, etc.

### **ASSESSMENT**

group discussion, active listening, defining responsibility, synthesizing information, making meaningful and relevant connections, organizing ideas, identifying current events

### **CONNECTING LEARNING AND THE COMMUNITY - EXTENSION EXPERIENCES**

Choose a current event and create an advocacy campaign educating others how they can take responsibility (e.g. raising awareness, writing letters to political officials).

Write poems about responsibility.

Create a picture book about responsibility to share with younger students.

Design a responsibility mobile app to help others make responsible choices as consumers (e.g fair trade)

Draft a Responsibility Charter for teens.

Start a Responsibility Club.

Start a Responsibility Jar where students share examples of where they witnessed people being responsible in their school and in the community.

