

EPISODE 2 · MICROSHORT STORIES

THE BOXER

A twenty-year-old Jewish boxing champion from Thessaloniki is deported to Auschwitz and forced to fight fellow prisoners for SS entertainment, where every victory meant another man's likely death.

QUICK REFERENCE

TIME

45 min core / 90 min with extensions

Recommended: 2 days. Day 1: Watch + Analyze. Day 2: Create + Reflect.

MATERIALS

Device to play video; printed discussion questions (optional)

CONTENT ADVISORY

Depicts forced boxing at Auschwitz and references the murder of Salamo's family. Stylized animation; no graphic violence. Preview before classroom use.

THEMES

Sport & Survival · Forced Competition · Greek-Sephardic Jewry · Choiceless Choices · Liberation

WHERE THIS FITS

Curriculum & Course Alignment

- **10th Grade Global Studies / Global History & Geography II (NY).** Unit on World War II, the Holocaust, and crimes against humanity. The Greek-Sephardic deportation and Salamo's story slot directly into the NYS Regents framework on the Holocaust.
- **9–12 World History (most state frameworks).** Causes and consequences of WWII; the destruction of Mediterranean Jewish communities; survivor ethics.
- **IB History (DP), Paper 3 Topic 11.** Causes and effects of twentieth-century wars, focusing on the Holocaust and the moral architecture the camps imposed on prisoners.
- **AP World History / AP European History.** Period 9 content on WWII and the Holocaust; Salamo's testimony as a document for analysis of survivor accounts.
- **NY State Holocaust Education Mandate** and the equivalents in 25+ states with Holocaust and genocide education requirements (full list: Standards tab, Appendix I).
- **Cross-disciplinary uses.** ELA (rhetorical analysis of the opening hook *"Win, you live. Lose, you die."*); Philosophy / Ethics (Lawrence Langer's "choiceless choices" framework, 11–12); Sports History (sport under coercion); Film Studies (the microshort as a deliberate answer to Ebert's 1989 critique of *Triumph of the Spirit*, 11–12).

EPISODE SUMMARY

About This Film



Salamo Arouch in Auschwitz, as depicted in The Boxer

Salamo Arouch was twenty years old, Jewish, and one of the finest amateur boxers in Greece. He was the son of a stevedore at the Thessaloniki port who had taught him to box as a child. By the time he was eighteen he had joined Maccabi Thessaloniki, a Jewish sports club founded in 1908. He was undefeated in twenty-seven bouts. They called him “the Ballet Dancer” for his footwork. Thessaloniki was, then, a city called the Jerusalem of the Balkans: for more than four centuries it had housed the largest Sephardic Jewish community in the world, arrived in 1492 as refugees from the Spanish Inquisition.

> THE DEPORTATION
>
> In 1943, nineteen transports carried more than forty-five thousand Thessalonikan Jews to Auschwitz. Ninety-four percent of the community was murdered. Salamo and his family were on one of those transports. His mother and three sisters were killed on arrival. His father was gassed when he grew too weak to work. His brother Avram was shot on the spot for refusing to extract gold teeth from the corpses of the dead. When the SS asked if anyone could fight, Salamo raised his hand.





Salamo in the warehouse ring with his opponent, as depicted in The Boxer

The SS forced prisoners to box in a warehouse inside the camp. Officers drank, smoked, and placed bets; a prisoners' orchestra sometimes played as the fighters entered. By Salamo's own count, he fought more than two hundred times over roughly two years. He never lost. Losing often meant the losing fighter would be killed soon after. Death came by selection to the gas chambers, by a guard's bullet, or by assignment to a lethal labor detail. Salamo understood, every time he won, what it meant for the man across from him.





Salamo shakes hands with a British soldier at Bergen-Belsen, April 15, 1945, as depicted in The Boxer

In January 1945, as the Soviet Red Army approached, the Nazis forced Salamo and tens of thousands of others onto a death march out of Auschwitz. He was transported to Bergen-Belsen, where he survived until British forces liberated the camp on April 15, 1945. He met his wife, Marta Yechiel, in the camp hospital shortly after liberation. They married in November 1945, had four children, and were married sixty-four years until his death. A severe stroke in 1994 left him dependent on Marta's care for the last fifteen years of his life. Salamo Arouch died on April 26, 2009, at the age of eighty-six. He carried the weight of every fight for the rest of his life. That is not a metaphor.

FOR EDUCATORS

Lesson Foundation

Three orienting framings (*Before You Begin*), then the planning anchors. Read these before opening the lesson; they shape every decision the four steps make. Grounded in the USHMM Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust, Yad Vashem's ISHS principles, the SAMHSA trauma-informed framework, and Touro's film-based-Holocaust pedagogy guide.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WHY THIS FORMAT

What this lesson offers that other resources do not

The **90-second compression** is an engagement scaffold, not a substitute for depth. It solves the attention-span barrier without sacrificing gravity, and turns the film itself into a hook (*"Win, you live. Lose, you die. So he never lost."*) that demands extension. The **tiered lesson plan** is where the depth lives: structured discussion, primary-source engagement, the Langer / Ebert frame at 11–12, and writing tasks scaled by band. The **one-person, one-act spine**, detailed below, gives students a named individual (Salamo Arouch) to stand inside, instead of macro-historical statistics. Together: a 90-second hook, a curated source set, and a discussion architecture designed to engineer past surface-level engagement, in a format that fits a single class period or splits naturally across two. *(Full articulation: About the Series · Why This Format.)*

THE PEDAGOGICAL SPINE

One person, one act · active agency, not passive tragedy

The Microshort Stories series teaches Holocaust history through the lens of *one named person, one specific act*. The frame shifts deliberately away from the macro-statistical "six million were murdered" treatment that dominates much of Holocaust pedagogy. It shifts instead toward what individual people *chose* under impossible conditions, and what their choices cost. The aim is a mirror, not a monument: students reflect on their own moral compass and civic responsibility through the specificity of a person they have come to know in 90 seconds.

In this episode, the spine narrows to one named person, **Salamo Arouch**, whose survival was bought, more than two hundred times, at another prisoner's death. The story is not a triumph. The framework that protects it from being read as one is Lawrence Langer's *choiceless choices* (1982). The lesson asks students to hold what Arouch did without flattening him into either victim or hero. *(Full articulation: About the Series · Pedagogical Spine.)*

WHY 3D ANIMATION · NOT ARCHIVAL, NOT AI

What the production technique actually is, and why

The films are **3D animated by a human animation team**. They are not archival footage, and they are *not AI-generated*. The choice of stylized 3D animation over actual archival material is a deliberate emotional-safety scaffold: it conveys the harsh realities of the era through high-quality storytelling while protecting younger and more sensitive viewers from the unmediated weight of graphic archival footage. In this episode specifically, that choice is what allows the forced-boxing matches to be depicted as silhouettes, fragments, and an empty floor after the loss. There is no graphic blood, no facial detail of impact, no recognizable depiction of the losing fighter's subsequent death. The destruction of Salamo's family (mother, three sisters, father, brother Avram) is named in voice-over; no act of killing is depicted. *(Full articulation: About the Series · About the Animation Pipeline.)*

DRIVING QUESTION

Can the word “survival” carry what actually happened?

Salamo never lost a fight; losing usually meant the losing fighter was killed soon after. The film refuses a triumphal close. The question this lesson sits with is whether words like survival, victory, and triumph can carry what survival in a death camp actually was, and what is owed to a witness whose survival was bought at someone else’s death.

GRADES 11–12 · LESSON OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. **Evaluate** the film's representational choices against the ethical questions the discipline asks of any Holocaust film (accuracy, representation, audience, contextual framing).
2. **Articulate**, in writing, the historiographic problem this story poses: what the archive supports, and what is at stake in calling Salamo's experience "triumph" or refusing the word.
3. **Defend** a position on form-as-ethics: how does the film's choice of medium, length, and visual style itself carry moral weight?

Verbs are drawn from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Vague mental-state verbs (*understand, appreciate, become aware of, feel*) are deliberately avoided per the practitioner-guide standard.

FRAMEWORK GROUNDING

This lesson is grounded in the **USHMM Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust** (the discipline-specific spine: Jewish specificity preserved, victims named and individuated before harm, no role-play of victim or perpetrator identity, dignity of the victim treated as a discipline). Within that spine: **Understanding by Design** (Wiggins & McTighe) for backward-planning from the closing reflection, **constructivist scaffolding** for pre-screening framing, **Lawrence Langer's "choiceless choices"** as the discipline-specific theory governing how survivor ethics are taught, and **SAMHSA's six trauma-informed principles** for the affective check-in / opt-out / response-branching architecture below.

AUDIENCE POSITIONALITY

Build for a room that contains, even if you don't know it, at least one student with familial proximity to this history: family from Thessaloniki, the broader Sephardic diaspora, or any community deported to Auschwitz. The opt-out language and check-in protocols below are designed to support that student without singling them out. This positionality assumption applies in religiously mixed, secular, and Jewish-majority classrooms equally.

WHY ANIMATION

Animation is a pedagogical choice, not a shortcut. The Microshort Stories films use restrained, stylized 3D animation to create enough emotional distance for students to engage difficult history without being exposed to graphic archival imagery or perpetrator-framed footage. The goal is not to make the Holocaust feel easier, entertaining, or fictional; it is to make accurate, teacher-guided inquiry possible without sensationalizing suffering.

The films are **not AI-generated**. They are authored through a human 3D animation process: scenes are storyboarded, modeled, staged, lit, animated, reviewed, and revised against historical research and visual-reference materials. That human review is what lets the films show sequence, setting, movement, and moral pressure while deliberately withholding details that would turn victim suffering into spectacle.

Use this framing if students ask why the story is animated: animation is the bridge into the lesson, not the lesson itself. The primary sources, testimony, historical context, and teacher-led discussion are where students test what the film introduces. *(Full articulation: About the Series · About the Animation Pipeline.)*

OPERATIONAL CONTENT STATEMENT

What is depicted: A 90-second stylized animated reconstruction of Salamo Arouch's forced boxing matches at Auschwitz, framed by his pre-war life in Thessaloniki and his liberation at Bergen-Belsen.

How: Stylized 3D animation throughout. The boxing matches (approx. 0:36–0:55) are shown as silhouettes and fragments. There is no graphic blood, no facial detail of impact, no recognizable depiction of the losing fighter's subsequent death. The losing fighter's fate is conveyed by an empty floor in the next shot, not by depiction. SS officers placing bets are visible at the edge of frame. The destruction of Salamo's family (mother, three sisters, father, brother Avram) is named in voice-over; *no act of killing is depicted*.

Most-intense moments: the line "Win, you live. Lose, you die. So he never lost." (0:00–0:08); the warehouse-ring sequence (0:36–0:55); and the closing detail of the prisoner number on his forearm. No on-screen violence and no graphic image at any point.

Opt-out language (read aloud at the start of class): "The bathroom pass is by the door. The hallway is fine to walk. If you need to step out at any point, you can do that without explanation. None of this affects your grade."

FOR EDUCATORS

About This Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is designed around a single 90-second microshort film. The format combines the emotional power of documentary storytelling with the time constraints of a real classroom. It follows a four-step structure: **Watch** (pre-viewing context and the film itself), **Analyze** (discussion and close reading), **Create** (structured creative response), and **Reflect** (personal connection and exit thinking). Each step is differentiated across three grade bands (7–8, 9–10, 11–12) so a single film can serve an entire department. The lesson introduces students to Lawrence Langer's framework of "choiceless choices," the essential concept for teaching survivor ethics without flattening them into triumph. Extension activities, facilitation protocols, and full standards alignment are available in the dedicated tabs above.

FOR EDUCATORS

About the Digital Student Experience

This episode also has an **interactive digital student module**. It is a self-paced, one-panel-at-a-time experience that students move through on a device. It carries the same Watch → Analyze → Create → Reflect spine as this lesson plan, but in student voice. It has no facilitator scripts, no standards appendices, and no opt-out language for you to read. That content lives here, with you. Use it as the in-class surface students see while you facilitate from this plan. Two grade-band versions:

The Boxer · Digital Student ExperienceGrades 9–10
The Boxer · Digital Student ExperienceGrades 11–12

How the eleven student panels map to this lesson plan

1. **Begin** opens the lesson with Salamo's bruised-face image and the headline. Pair with your opt-out language read-aloud (Facilitation tab).
2. **Before Viewing** (9–10) / **Terms of Entry** (11–12) covers content advisory, the 3D-animation framing, and explicit permission to step out. 11–12 also stages the contrast with the 1989 *Triumph of the Spirit* Hollywood feature. Maps to the Watch tab's pre-viewing routine.
3. **The People** introduces Salamo Arouch, his brother Avram, the unnamed opponents, and his wife Marta Yechiel. Names students will keep in view through Analyze.
4. **Prediction** (9–10) / **The Debate** (11–12) is the Watch tab's *Prediction Prompt* in student-facing form. 9–10 asks what survival can mean when staying alive could mean another man dies; 11–12 stages the Langer-framework vs critique debate. Give individual think time before any group discussion.
5. **Watch** is the 90-second microshort embedded with English captions enabled. Pair with the Watch tab's viewing-instruction prompt.
6. **Check-In** is a one-word affective response. The bridge between Watch and Analyze; do not skip.
7. **The Ring** is primary-source artifact analysis through a four-tab photo-explorer (the arena, the fighters, the knuckles, after the win). Pair with Analyze tab's close-reading prompts.
8. **Choiceless Choices** (9–10) / **Langer's Frame** (11–12) introduces Lawrence Langer's 1982 framework with the quote and (in 9–10) a four-step chain visualization. Pair with Analyze tab's evidence work.
9. In **Claim** (9–10) / **Position** (11–12), students take a defensible position on whether the word "survival" can carry what actually happened, then cite a specific detail. Bridges Analyze to

Create.

10. **Create** is a medium-agnostic creative or analytical response (film, micro-essay, comic, or a position paper comparing the microshort to *Triumph of the Spirit*). Pair with the Create tab's *Make Your Own Microstory* activity.
11. **Reflect** is a sentence-frame exit reflection. Close with the Reflect tab's full-class consolidation prompt for the final five minutes.

Student responses save automatically to the browser's local storage and can be copied to the clipboard from the Responses panel. Students can hand them in digitally without an account or login. The Listen button on each panel plays grade-band-specific narration that frames the panel as a teacher might, while leaving the analytic work to the student.

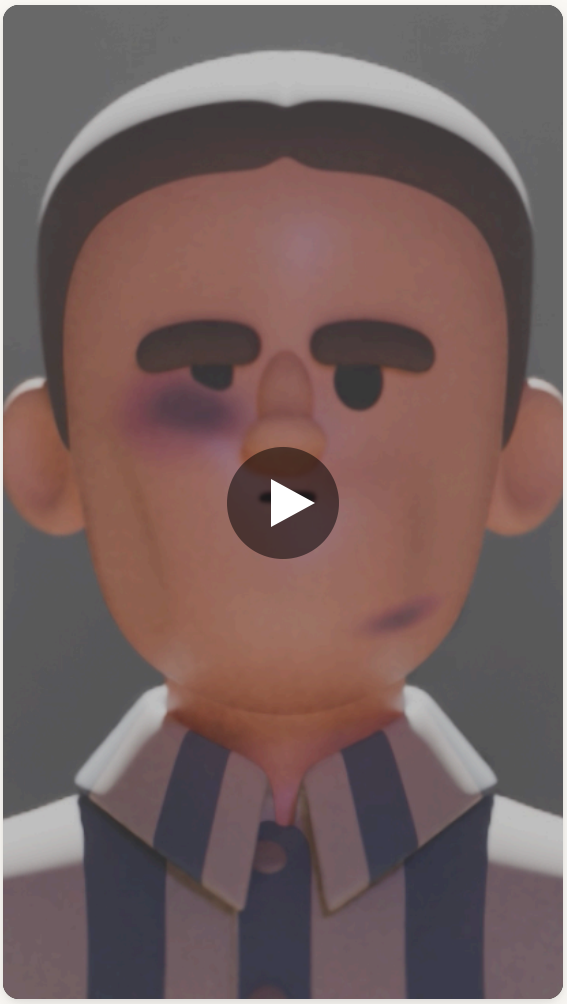
STEP 1 OF 4 · BEFORE VIEWING

Watch

Use the pre-viewing activities below, differentiated by grade band, to build context, activate prior knowledge, and frame student thinking before the film begins. Then show the 90-second microshort.

VIEWING INSTRUCTIONS

Show the film in full without interruption. Students should have their pre-viewing notes visible but should not be writing during the film. The goal is full, attentive viewing.



Watch: The Boxer · 90 seconds

BEFORE WE BEGIN

A World That Was Erased

“My grandfather said the port of Thessaloniki closed on Shabbat. He said his mother lit candles on Friday night in a kitchen that smelled of almonds and orange water. He said he was nine years old when the Germans came, and he did not know the word for what was about to happen. When he came back, there was no one to light the candles. There was no one to say the blessing. He was the only one who came back.”

Testimony of a Thessaloniki survivor, recorded in Israel, 1997 (adapted from accounts in the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive)

Salamo Arouch was one of fewer than two thousand Thessalonikan Jews who returned. His community, which had existed in that city for more than four centuries, did not.

BEFORE VIEWING

Based on what you have just read, write down one or two questions you want answered. What do you want to know about this story? Hold onto your questions as you watch.

KEY INSTITUTIONAL TERMS · FOR THIS EPISODE

Institutions you will encounter in this lesson

Students may not have prior knowledge of these institutions. Brief definitions are provided here so that students can engage with the primary sources, secondary references, and credits in the rest of the lesson without unexplained acronyms. Spell out acronyms once aloud the first time they appear in discussion.

Yad Vashem

Israel's national Holocaust memorial and research institution (Jerusalem, established 1953). The field's primary repository of survivor testimony. *yadvashem.org*

USHMM (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

The U.S. national memorial and educational institution in Washington, D.C. (opened 1993). Maintains the Holocaust Encyclopedia, the source of the Salonika / Thessaloniki entry used as a Materials reference. *ushmm.org*

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Polish state museum and memorial on the site of the former camp (Oświęcim, Poland; established 1947). Documents the camp's operational history, including the recorded existence of the forced boxing matches at the center of this episode. *auschwitz.org*

USC Shoah Foundation

Survivor-testimony archive based at the University of Southern California (founded by Steven Spielberg in 1994 after *Schindler's List*). Houses the recorded testimony of Thessaloniki survivors and of Salamo Arouch himself. The **IWitness** platform is the foundation's classroom-facing teaching tool. *sfi.usc.edu · iwitness.usc.edu*

Maccabi Thessaloniki

The Jewish sports club in Thessaloniki where Salamo Arouch trained as a young boxer (a member club of the international Maccabi movement, founded 1908). Twenty-seven undefeated bouts; nickname “the Ballet Dancer” for his footwork.

Touro practitioner guide

The curriculum-grade guide on teaching the Holocaust through film, published by the Holocaust

Education Center at Touro College. The synthesis spine for this lesson plan's facilitation architecture.

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

U.S. federal agency. The source of the six-principle trauma-informed framework (2014) cited in this lesson's affective check-in, opt-out, and Plan A / Plan B response-branching protocols.

Full canonical glossary across the series, with all institutions referenced in any Microshort Stories episode: About the Series · Glossary of Institutions.

GRADES 11–12

Primary Source: Langer on “Choiceless Choices”

“These are situations in which all available options are morally unacceptable — where the normal framework of moral choice has been destroyed. Behavior in the camps cannot be viewed through the same lens we used to view normal human behavior.”

Lawrence Langer, *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit* (SUNY Press, 1982)





The warehouse arena where forced fights were staged, as depicted in The Boxer

Prediction Prompt

PREDICTION PROMPT

Langer argues that the camps destroyed the very framework of moral choice. In his account, the Nazis constructed situations in which surviving was itself a moral injury. What does it mean to “win” in a situation engineered so that every option destroys something? Come prepared to defend your interpretation after viewing. Notice what the film does and does not give you.

PRE-SCREENING INOCULATION (READ ALOUD)

The last 60 seconds before press play

Read the operational content statement (Lesson Foundation tab) and the opt-out language. Then say:

> *"Before I press play, I want to tell you what's in the next 90 seconds. The film depicts Salamo Arouch's forced boxing matches at Auschwitz, framed by his pre-war life in Thessaloniki and his liberation at Bergen-Belsen. The matches are stylized; there's no graphic blood, no facial detail of impact, no recognizable depiction of what happens to the losing fighter. That fate is conveyed by an empty floor in the next shot, not by depiction. The destruction of Salamo's family is named in voice-over; nothing is shown. If at any point you need to step outside, you can do that without asking. You don't need to explain. You can come back when you're ready. There is no penalty. Does anyone have questions before I press play?"*

Pause. Genuinely take questions if any. *Then* begin.

STEP 2 OF 4 · AFTER VIEWING

Analyze

These discussion and analysis activities develop close reading and historical thinking skills. Use small groups or whole-class discussion formats as appropriate. Begin with the Affective Check-In; *do not* open analysis until the room has named the affective response.

AFFECTIVE CHECK-IN (30 SECONDS · BEFORE ANY ANALYSIS)

"Take a moment. One word for what you felt. We're not analyzing yet; we're noticing."

Take 4–6 words from around the room. Do not commentate. Acknowledge each. Then move into the descriptive and analytic questions below. This is the move that lets the room land before it thinks (per Dominick LaCapra's distinction between *acting out* and *working through*).

DISCUSSION STRUCTURE

Silent writing → paired share → full-class discussion

Before opening the grade-band questions to verbal discussion, scaffold individual thought first. The room will produce better discussion if every student has already committed something to the page.

1. **5 minutes · silent individual writing.** Students respond to the grade-band questions on their own, in writing. No talking, no looking at neighbors. Quieter students need this floor; louder students need this brake.
2. **5 minutes · paired share.** Students compare answers with one neighbor. Listen for divergence; the partner whose answer differs from yours is the more useful partner.
3. **Remaining time · full-class discussion.** Open the floor. Begin by inviting *differing* answers from around the room rather than the first hand up. Hold the divergence; do not race to consensus.

This is the universal scaffold for the Analyze step. Specific collaboration formats, such as Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, and Socratic Seminar, are detailed in the Facilitation tab and in About the Series · Discussion & Collaboration Patterns.



The warehouse ring where Salamo fought, wide shot, as depicted in The Boxer

GRADES 11–12

Rhetorical Analysis

1. The film imposes a 90-second constraint on a life that spanned eighty-six years and a history that implicates millions. What structural decisions does the film make under that compression? What does it include, what does it omit, and what does the compression itself argue?
2. The story is narrated in the third person rather than in Salamo's own voice. Compare this to survivor testimony you have read or watched. What does the distance between narrator and subject shape about how you receive his choices? Would a first-person narration change the film's moral argument?
3. The 1989 feature film *Triumph of the Spirit* told Salamo's story with a traditional dramatic arc. It built rooting interest, fight scenes designed to produce cheering, and a title that names the outcome. Roger Ebert gave it one star, arguing the structure made audiences "behave no differently from the Nazis in the story." How does this microshort answer that critique? What specific choices does it make to refuse triumph?

Historiographic Questions

4. Lawrence Langer coined "choiceless choices" in 1982 to describe situations in which all available options are morally unacceptable. How does the concept reshape the question Holocaust education has often asked, "What would you have done?" What better question does it make possible?
5. Other prisoners also boxed at Auschwitz: Tadeusz Pietrzykowski (a Polish political prisoner who lost a bout at Auschwitz I and survived), Harry Haft, Victor "Young" Perez (murdered on the death march), Jacko Razon (who later sued Arouch, claiming his own story had been conflated). What does the presence of these other accounts, some of them contradicting the "lose means die" framing, require of a responsible film?
6. The film centers Salamo. It does not show the opponents he defeated, and it does not name them. Is this ethically necessary, ethically troubling, or both? What obligations does a biographical film have to those who were not survivors?

Hook Analysis · the opening as rhetorical exordium

7. “Win, you live. Lose, you die. So he never lost.” In classical rhetoric, this opening is the *exordium*, the move that establishes the speaker's authority and frames the rhetorical situation before any evidence is offered. Analyze the opening's three sentences. What *ethos* does it establish for the narrator? What does the parallel structure of sentences one and two do that prose without that structure would not? What does the inversion in sentence three ("so he never lost") commit the viewer to feeling before they have seen anything?
8. The opening line is the film's argument made before its argument is named. It claims an implicit position on a question Langer raised in 1982 (above): can the camps' moral architecture be represented at all? Does the film's opening signal that representation is possible, that it is impossible, or that it is necessary precisely *because* impossible? Defend your reading with specific language from the opening and at least one move the film makes later.
9. Compare the opening line to Roger Ebert's critique of *Triumph of the Spirit* (Create tab): the 1989 film, he wrote, made audiences "behave no differently from the Nazis in the story." How does the microshort's opening line preempt that critique? Is the opening line itself a kind of warning to the viewer about how to watch the next 89 seconds?

Investigate Further · what the film does not decide

A question the film deliberately leaves open. Take it home; come back with what you found and a position you can defend. (See About the Series · Anti-Surface Engineering.)

10. Roger Ebert's 1989 critique of *Triumph of the Spirit* is the explicit interlocutor of this microshort's form. Find **one other Holocaust-related film review Ebert wrote** (his reviews of *Shoah*, *Schindler's List*, *Life is Beautiful*, *The Pianist*, *The Grey Zone*, or others are publicly archived at rogerebert.com). Read it. Identify the *specific standards* Ebert held films about the Holocaust to, in his own words, with at least three direct quotations. Then write 400–500 words applying those standards to the microshort you just watched. Does it meet them? Fail them? Move past them in a way Ebert did not anticipate? Defend a position. Cite Ebert verbatim where you draw on him.

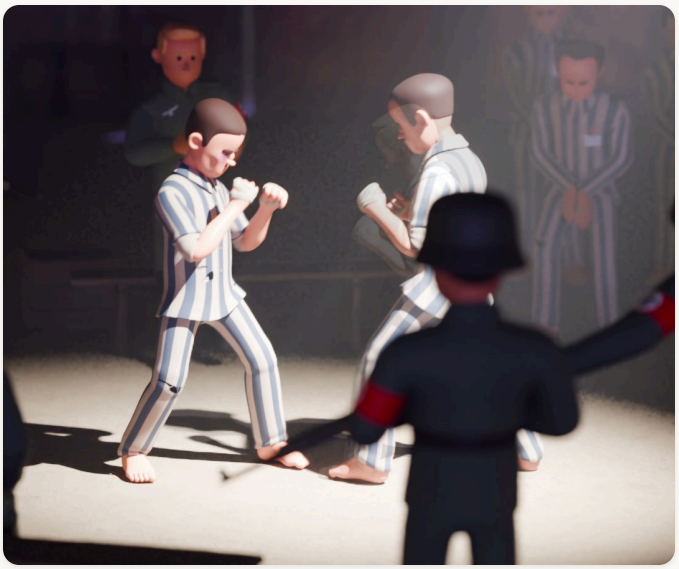
STEP 3 OF 4 · CREATIVE RESPONSE

Create

Students respond to the film through structured creative writing. Choose the option that best suits your strengths or interest. Allow 20–25 minutes for the core activity, or assign as homework for a longer response.

“We fought until one went down or they got sick of watching. They wouldn’t leave until they saw blood.”

Salamo Arouch, interviewed in *People* magazine, 1990



Salamo faces his opponent in the ring, as depicted in The Boxer

GRADES 11–12

Comparative Medium Analysis: Two Films, One Man

Two films have been made about Salamo Arouch. The 1989 Hollywood feature *Triumph of the Spirit*, directed by Robert M. Young and starring Willem Dafoe, was the first commercial fiction film ever shot on location at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It used the structure of a sports drama. It built rooting interest, fight scenes built for cheering, and a title that names the outcome. Roger Ebert gave it one star:

"By making audiences root for Arouch in the fights, the filmmakers in effect force audiences to behave no differently from the Nazis in the story."

Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 8, 1989

The 2026 microshort you have just watched is, in part, a deliberate answer to Ebert's critique. Write a comparative analysis (400–500 words) that makes an argument about the relationship between form and moral responsibility when representing Holocaust history. Your essay should:

1. Identify the specific narrative choices the microshort makes to refuse triumph (scoring, pacing, framing, what is shown and what is absent).
2. Explain how each choice functions in light of Lawrence Langer's concept of "choiceless choices" (1982).
3. Assess whether Ebert's critique applies only to *Triumph of the Spirit* or to a wider class of stories about survival. Is the sports-film structure itself ethically compromised when the subject is genocide?
4. Conclude with an argument about what the microshort asks of its viewer that the 1989 film did not.

Cite at least two sources beyond the films themselves.

STEP 4 OF 4 · CLOSING

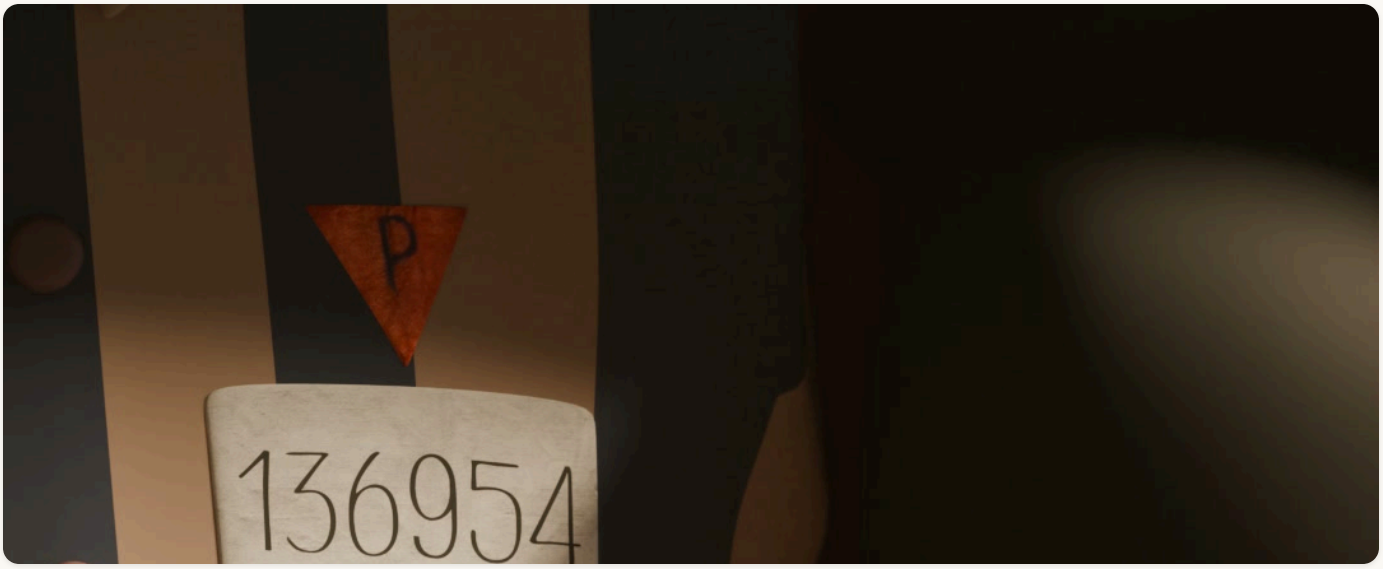
Reflect

These closing activities help students consolidate their thinking, make personal connections, and carry the lesson's meaning beyond the classroom. Allow 8–12 minutes. Begin with the Affective Consolidation; *do not* proceed to the grade-band reflection prompt until the room has named what it is carrying.

AFFECTIVE CONSOLIDATION (1 MINUTE · BEFORE THE REFLECTION PROMPT)

"Thirty seconds. One word out loud, not analyzed, just named, for what you're carrying right now."

Receive 4–6 words. No commentary; just acknowledge each. This separates the affective response from the cognitive close that follows. *Only after* this move should the grade-band reflection prompt begin.



Prisoner 136954 · a number Salamo Arouch carried on his left forearm for sixty-four years after the war

GRADES 11–12

Open-Ended Reflection: Langer, Ebert, and Us

Lawrence Langer wrote in 1982 that the Nazis "destroyed the very meaning of choice — and then asked their victims to choose." Roger Ebert wrote in 1989 that a film that makes us cheer for Salamo Arouch in the ring has asked us "to behave no differently from the Nazis in the story." This microshort, forty-four years after Langer and thirty-seven years after Ebert, is an attempt to finally tell Salamo's story without asking us to cheer.

Write a sustained reflection (one page) on the following question: Holocaust education is sometimes framed around the question "What would you have done?" Is that the right question to ask? What does Langer's framework suggest instead? And what does this film, which does not give you a hero pose, does not swell with music, and does not let you leave the theater uplifted, ask of you as a viewer, a student, and a person living in the present?

There is no single right answer. The goal is to think rigorously and honestly about the relationship between how we tell stories and what those stories do to the people who listen to them.

ETHICAL QUANDARY · WHOSE STORY SURVIVES

History is written by the winners, even when the consequences are terrible.

Salamo Arouch won more than two hundred fights, by his own count. The men he defeated, forced into the ring by the same SS and against the same threat, are not named in this film, in the 1989 feature, in the Wikipedia article on Arouch, in the obituaries. They have no obituaries. The historical record of the camp boxing matches is, almost entirely, the record of the men who won.

Sit with the quandary. The microshort gives us Salamo because Salamo survived to be given. The men he defeated were, by the very mechanism of survival, removed from the record by people who needed them removed. This is not the fault of the survivors who lived; it is the structure of how testimony reaches us. But the silence is real, and it is consequential.

REFLECT, IN WRITING

Write 300–400 words on the following: *History is written by the winners, even when the consequences are terrible.* In what specific ways does this film acknowledge that the men Salamo defeated are absent from the historical record? In what ways does it not, or cannot? What would it mean to make a microshort about one of *them*, a person we know only by the fact of his loss, and what kinds of evidence, sources, or imaginative work would that film have to draw on? Is that film possible? Is it ethical to attempt? Defend a position.

CLOSING CONSOLIDATION (3–5 MINUTES · AFTER PAIRED SHARE)

Teacher elicitation: "Name a position from elsewhere in the room, not your own, not your partner's, that you can articulate clearly and still disagree with. Who in this room took a position you can defend in their voice?"

Call on 2–3 students. Each names a position they heard, articulates it in good faith, and then names where their own position diverges. The natural pole structure in Ep.2: some students will land closer to Langer's framework (the conventional vocabulary of choice cannot describe Salamo's situation, and his survival cannot be read as triumph); others will land closer to a position that Salamo's survival is itself a form of resistance to the engineering of annihilation. A third axis is Ebert's question: can the audience be trusted with a story like this, or does the form of the telling implicate the audience in the moral structure being depicted? *Do not resolve.* Close on the divergence; refuse the synthesis. Sample close: *"The room contains positions that cannot be reconciled. Holding that, instead of forcing agreement, is what an adult intellectual response to this material looks like. You are leaving the room with the disagreement intact. That is the lesson."* *(See About the Series · Closing Consolidation pattern.)*

"We fought until one went down or they got sick of watching. They wouldn't leave until they saw blood."

Salamo Arouch (1923–2009), interviewed in *People*, 1990

GOING DEEPER

Extension Activities

These activities are designed for students who want to go further, whether in research, creative production, or interdisciplinary analysis. They are suitable for homework, independent projects, or honors-level coursework.



Salamo Arouch, archival portrait · one face of a community of fifty thousand that, within five years, largely no longer existed

GRADES 11–12

Interdisciplinary Essay: The Engineering of Choicelessness

Lawrence Langer's concept of "choiceless choices" argues that the Nazis did something more specific, and more philosophically serious, than simply killing people. They constructed a system in which the normal framework of moral choice no longer applied. A victim who participated in the machinery of murder (the Sonderkommando, the Kapos, the fighters in the warehouse) was not freely choosing. A victim who refused was not freely refusing. The system had been engineered to destroy the meaning of the word.



British forces burn the barracks at Bergen-Belsen after liberation, April 1945 (archival photograph) · what the engineering of choicelessness finally produced

Write a 600–800 word interdisciplinary essay that does the following:

1. **Explain the engineering:** Using Langer's framework and historical documentation, describe the specific mechanisms by which the camp system destroyed moral choice. Name at least three distinct mechanisms and explain how each operated.

2. **Apply the framework:** Explain what "choiceless choices" means for the way we read the actions of individual prisoners, such as Salamo in the ring, Avram refusing to pull gold teeth, the Sonderkommando, and the Kapos. Does the framework absolve? Does it explain? Does it do neither?
3. **Analyze the representational stakes:** Draw on Roger Ebert's 1989 critique of *Triumph of the Spirit* and on any theoretical text you have read (Arendt on banality, Felman on witness, Langer himself, Baron). What is the relationship between the moral structure of an event and the narrative structure of a film about it? Can one correctly represent the other?
4. **Conclude with a claim:** What does all of this mean for how we should teach the Holocaust now, eighty years after liberation, in a moment when survivors are nearly all gone and memory is passing into the hands of those who did not live it? Make an argument. Defend it.

Your essay should include a works cited section. Minimum three sources: Langer (primary), one historical account (USHMM, Yad Vashem, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum), and one critical or philosophical text.

CREATIVE PRODUCTION · CROSS-BAND

Make Your Own Microstory

A short original work, modeled on the craft principles of the microshort series, in *any* medium. The constraints are the lesson; the medium is the student's choice. The activity invites students into the same authorial position the makers of *The Boxer* occupied: one person, one act, hard compression, anchored to a real artifact, and the discipline of refusing the easy ending.

SUBJECT ANCHOR · FOR THIS EPISODE

What did survival cost? And whose loss is in the record?

The natural subject for an episode about Salamo Arouch is any person, historical or contemporary, who faced a choiceless choice and had to decide. Or, in keeping with the ethical quandary in 11–12 Reflect: any person whose *absence* from the historical record is itself part of the story. Suggested fields:

- Another camp athlete, such as Tadeusz Pietrzykowski, Harry Haft, Victor "Young" Perez, or Jacko Razon, or any prisoner forced into a system of survival that traded another's life for theirs.
- A member of the Greek-Sephardic communities lost in the deportations, such as the rabbis, the press editors, the dockworkers, or the children of Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Corfu, and Janina, whose stories the field is only beginning to recover.
- A person from history or the present who acted under a choiceless choice and either lived or did not. The framework is Langer's: situations where every option destroys something. Not "What would you have done?" That is the wrong question. The right question is: *What did they do, and what did it cost?*
- A person from the student's own family or community who carried something forward through impossible conditions.

The teacher approves the subject before students begin, to ensure the historical claims are defensible.

THE CONSTRAINTS · APPLY TO EVERY MEDIUM

1. **One named person at the center.** Not "the Holocaust," not "refugees," not "war." *One specific person*, named, whose story you can stand inside. Build outward from them.
2. **Hook-first.** Your first sentence (or first shot, or first line, or first panel) must commit. The microshort opens with *"Win, you live. Lose, you die. So he never lost."* Those are eleven words that tell the entire story before the story begins. Yours must do something equivalent. No throat-clearing, no historical preamble before the human enters.
3. **Hard compression.** Pick your medium; live inside its cap (see options below). The cap is not a target. It is a wall. Cutting is part of the work.
4. **One primary-source anchor.** Your work must reference, describe, depict, or quote *one specific verifiable historical artifact*, such as a photograph, a document, a recorded testimony, or a physical object, and credit its source (institution, accession number where known).
5. **No invented dialogue from the dead.** If a historical figure's words are not documented, you do not put words in their mouth. You may describe what they did; you may not author what they said.
6. **Refuse the easy ending.** Salamo's story has no triumphal close. The film ends on his face, alone, looking down. Your work should resist the urge to "wrap" the subject into resolution. The viewer / reader / listener should leave with weight, not relief.

PICK A MEDIUM

Any of the following count. Pick the one that fits your strengths and the story.

- **Short film or video** · up to **90 seconds**.
- **Flash fiction or micro-essay** · up to **250 words**.
- **Poem** · any form, up to **20 lines**.
- **Spoken-word or audio piece** · up to **90 seconds**.
- **Podcast cut** · up to **2 minutes**; one voice, no edits to dialogue.
- **Comic or illustrated sequence** · up to **6 panels** on a single page.
- **Photo essay** · up to **5 images** drawn from existing public archives (Yad Vashem, USHMM, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, etc.), ethically captioned.
- **Song lyric** · one verse and chorus; melody optional but credited if used.
- **Graphic memoir page** · one page.

GRADES 11–12 · WHAT TO SUBMIT ON TOP OF THE WORK

Along with your microstory, submit a **400–500 word artist's statement** that engages:

1. Your representational choices, including what you decided to show or say and what you decided to *withhold*. Engage Roger Ebert's critique of *Triumph of the Spirit* (Create tab) explicitly: how does your work guard against the failure he named?
2. Your medium choice. Defend it against at least one plausible alternative medium for the same subject. Why does this form, for this story?
3. Your engagement with Langer's "choiceless choices" framework. How does your work hold the philosophical weight of the framework without either flattening the subject into a victim or rescuing them into a hero?
4. What it would mean for your work to fail. Name the specific way your piece could go wrong, such as sentimentality, exploitation, historical inaccuracy, or the false-triumph problem, and the move you made to guard against it.

A NOTE FOR THE TEACHER

This is an authentic assessment, not a craft exercise. The goal is not to produce polished work. The goal is for students to occupy, even briefly, the position the makers of *The Boxer* occupied: choosing what to show, what to withhold, what to compress, what to credit. Imperfect work in the right register is more valuable than polished work in the wrong one. Grade for fidelity to the constraints, the specificity of the named subject, and the seriousness of the craft defense / artist's statement, not for technical polish in the chosen medium.

GO DEEPER

Video Resources

Documentary and archival material for deeper study.



Auschwitz Memorial
On Sport at KL Auschwitz · educational video from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum



Yad Vashem
The Jews of Salonika · the community that was and what was lost

FOR EDUCATORS

Facilitation Notes

Real classrooms run faster or slower than the plan predicts. Real students respond at unpredictable intensities. The branches and protocols below are the contingency moves that keep the lesson coherent under either condition and that let a colleague pick up this plan cold without improvising under pressure.

PLAN A · ONE STUDENT VISIBLY AFFECTED

Continue the lesson; let the student set their own pace. Make a quiet pass-by during the next student-led activity (paired share, individual writing). After class, brief individual check-in: *"How are you doing? You don't have to talk about the material. Just tell me you're okay. If you need someone, here's [counselor name]."*

PLAN B · MULTIPLE STUDENTS AFFECTED

Substitute the next paired-share or group discussion with silent journaling. Same prompt, different mode. Bring the room back together for the affective consolidation. If the room has not landed by the end of the period, save the cognitive close for the next session; never force closure on a room that hasn't landed.

TIME BRANCHES

If discussion is moving fast and you have ten extra minutes: extend with a paired second-pass on Lawrence Langer's "choiceless choices" concept. Students cite three other historical or fictional cases where the conventional vocabulary of choice and agency does not apply, and explain why.

If discussion is stalling and you are ten minutes behind: cut the comparative-medium analysis (11–12) or convert the MEAL paragraph to a 5-sentence structured response; the affective consolidation and the contemporary continuity bridge survive translation.

HOLOCAUST-FATIGUE NOTE

Most students arrive having received Holocaust education organized around western and central European victims (German, Polish, Dutch). The Sephardic Greek-Jewish community of Thessaloniki, four centuries old and ninety-four percent murdered, is statistically under-taught. Lean into the specificity: the 1492 origin, the Ladino-language press, the cemetery used to pave roads. The unfamiliarity is the entry the lesson trades on.

SUGGESTED COLLABORATION FORMATS · FOR THIS EPISODE

Where each collaboration format fits in this lesson

The universal three-step Discussion Structure (silent writing → paired share → full-class) lives at the top of the Analyze tab. Below: specific structured formats and where each one earns its place in *this* episode. Full pedagogical treatment of each pattern lives in About the Series · Discussion & Collaboration Patterns.

Think-Pair-Share

Use during Analyze. 2–3 minutes per pair on a single question. The most-useful prompt for this episode at 9–10 is the hook-analysis question on what the eleven-word opening accomplishes; at 11–12, the Langer / Ebert pairing on whether the form of telling can itself implicate the viewer.

Jigsaw *(cross-episode, once 2+ episodes have been taught)*

Most powerful pairings for *The Boxer*: **Ep. 2 (The Boxer) × Ep. 1 (The Forger)**, where students compare resistance under different conditions. Kaminsky chose to forge documents; Salamo was forced into the ring. What does "resistance" mean when the form of action is voluntary craft (Kaminsky) versus forced participation (Salamo)? Alternative pairing: **Ep. 2 × Ep. 3 (Four Photographs)**, on the question of what each act of bearing-witness cost the person who performed it.

Socratic Seminar *(11–12 only)*

Use for the Langer / Ebert debate in the 11–12 Analyze tab. Students prepare positions in writing first (per the Discussion Structure scaffold). Inner-circle of 6–8 students discusses; outer circle observes and writes. Switch halfway. Pairs naturally with the Closing Consolidation in Reflect, which refuses the synthesis the seminar might be tempted to force.

Gallery Walk

Use for the Create-tab outputs, such as the 7–8 Letter to Avram / Personal Narrative outputs, the 9–10 MEAL paragraphs, or the 11–12 Comparative Medium Analysis essays. Post student work around the room; students circulate silently with sticky notes, leaving one substantive question per peer. Particularly powerful for *The Boxer* because the Letter to Avram outputs frequently reveal divergent readings of what Avram's refusal meant.

ANTI-SURFACE ENGINEERING

How this lesson engineers past surface engagement

Short-form media risks shallow consumption: students who are accustomed to 90-second content may extract the surface and exit. This lesson plan engineers against that risk through three deliberate moves, all already built into the structure:

1. **Individual written response before any verbal discussion.** See the Discussion Structure card at the top of the Analyze tab. Quiet students need the floor; loud students need the brake. Both come from silent writing.
2. **The Investigate Further question at the end of Analyze.** Each grade band has a question the film deliberately does not answer. For this episode, that means a Thessalonikan Jewish life beyond Salamo (7–8), the post-war record of one of the men Salamo defeated (9–10), and an Ebert-standards application from one of his other Holocaust-film reviews (11–12). Students leave the room with a research debt to themselves; the depth happens after class.
3. **Closing Consolidation on divergence.** See the Reflect tab. The room ends not on agreement but on what could not be resolved. The discipline of staying with the unresolved is itself the anti-surface move.

Full pattern in About the Series · Anti-Surface Engineering.

FOR EDUCATORS

Materials & Primary Sources

Every primary material below is locatable in under ten minutes via the link or reference provided. Sources draw from at least two of the field's trusted institutions per the Touro practitioner-guide standard.

- **USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia · Salonika (Thessaloniki).** encyclopedia.ushmm.org/salonika

  Definitive overview of the destruction of the Thessaloniki Jewish community.
- **Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.** auschwitz.org

  Documentation of camp operations, including the recorded existence of forced boxing matches.
- **USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.** sfi.usc.edu · iwitness.usc.edu

  Source archive for the Thessaloniki survivor testimony cited in Step 1; recorded testimony of Salamo Arouch is also in this collection.
- **Yad Vashem.** yadvashem.org

  Reference for the deportation of Greek Jewry and the rebuilding of Sephardic communities after the war.
- **Lawrence Langer, *Versions of Survival* & *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*.**

  Source for the "choiceless choices" framework introduced in the 11–12 grade band.
- **Project Witness microshort · *The Boxer*.**

  The 90-second film at the center of this lesson.

CLOSING TEACHER FRAMING

Contemporary Continuity

Holocaust denial and distortion are now algorithmic. The Thessaloniki community Salamo lost, including its existence, its scale, its 1492 Iberian origin, and its 4-century life, is exactly the kind of erasure denial counts on. To remember Salamo specifically, with his Sephardic Greek-Jewish history named, is to refuse the erasure denial requires. This is not a closed historical chapter.

APPENDIX

Full Standards Alignment

Hover over any standard code to see exactly how this lesson fulfills it.

APPENDIX A

Common Core ELA Standards

Grades 7–8

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
RI.7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RI.7.2	Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text.
RI.7.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position.
W.7.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information.
SL.7.1	Engage effectively in collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues.

Grades 9–10

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
RI.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
RI.9-10.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues.

Grades 11–12

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
RI.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
RI.11-12.5	Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument.
RI.11-12.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective.
W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.11-12.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately.
SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners.

APPENDIX B

NYS Next Generation Learning Standards (ELA)

In 2017, New York State adopted the *Next Generation Learning Standards*, replacing its prior adoption of the Common Core State Standards. NY classrooms (including the 10th-grade Global Studies sections that fold this lesson into their existing curriculum) cite NGLS, not CCSS, in their pacing documents. The codes below are the NGLS equivalents most directly engaged by this lesson.

Grades 7–8

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
7R1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
7R2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. *(Engaged by tracking the dual development of "survival" and "moral weight" across the 90-second arc.)*
7R6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.
7W2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content (Letter to Avram, Personal Narrative, or "Salamo Alone" descriptive writing).
7SL1	Engage effectively in collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues.

Grades 9–10

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
9-10R1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.
9-10R3	Analyze how an author unfolds an analysis or argument, including the sequence, the introduction and development of ideas, and the connections that exist.
9-10R5	**Analyze in detail how an author's intent influences particular sentences, paragraphs, or sections of a text.** *(Centrally engaged by Hook Analysis. The opening line "Win, you live. Lose, you die. So he never lost." is a clinic in this standard.)*
9-10R6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose and analyze how rhetoric advances that point of view. *(Engaged by the historical-sourcing questions on whose stories survive and what historians owe contested testimony.)*
9-10R7	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in print, multimedia, photograph), determining which details are emphasized. *(Engaged by the comparison between this microshort and the 1989 feature* Triumph of the Spirit.*)*
9-10W1	Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant, sufficient evidence (MEAL paragraph, Create tab).
9-10W4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
9-10SL1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics.

Grades 11–12

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
11-12R1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. *(Engaged by historiographic questions about Salamo's own count of fights vs. independently documented details.)*
11-12R3	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events, including how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop. *(Engaged by Langer's "choiceless choices" framework applied to the camp's moral architecture.)*
11-12R5	Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in their exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. *(Engaged by the Comparative Medium Analysis, comparing the microshort to* Triumph of the Spirit.*)*
11-12R6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. *(Engaged by Hook Analysis as rhetorical exordium, focusing on the opening line and its implicit response to Ebert's critique.)*
11-12R7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats in order to address a question or solve a problem.
11-12W1	Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant, sufficient evidence (Comparative Medium Analysis, Ethical Quandary reflection).
11-12W2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas (Interdisciplinary Essay on the engineering of choicelessness, Extensions tab).
11-12SL1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, including seminar-style discussions, on grade-level topics.

Source: New York State Education Department, Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards (2017; implementation 2020–21).

NYS Social Studies Framework

The NYS Social Studies Framework is the official framework governing 10th-grade Global History & Geography II in New York State. The Key Ideas below are the Framework's curriculum-organizing units; the Conceptual Understandings (sub-codes) drill down to specific content; the Social Studies Practices are the universal skills students develop across the Framework. This lesson engages the codes below directly. *(Reviewer gift: Jessica Como, 10th-Grade Global History & Geography, cited 10.5 and 10.10 as the natural anchors. The full per-Key-Idea breakdown below extends her starting point to the Conceptual Understandings each Key Idea contains and the Social Studies Practices the lesson exercises.)*

Key Ideas & Conceptual Understandings

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION & HOW THIS LESSON ENGAGES IT
10.5	**Unresolved Global Conflict (1914–1945) · World War II.** Key Idea. The primary anchor for this lesson; Salamo Arouch's deportation, forced participation in the camp boxing matches, and liberation at Bergen-Belsen all sit within the WWII / Holocaust period this Key Idea covers.
10.5b	**Total war and the home front.** The deportation of the Thessaloniki Jewish community in 1943, involving nineteen transports, more than 45,000 people deported, and a 94% murder rate, is a primary example of the totalizing reach of WWII into civilian populations. The destruction of the Jewish cemetery and the use of the tombstones to pave roads engages the post-war material erasure that accompanied physical genocide.
10.5c	**The Holocaust.** The systematic murder of European Jewry, including the deportation system from across occupied Europe, the camp infrastructure of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the death marches of January 1945, is the central content of this episode. Salamo Arouch's story is also a vehicle for the under-taught Sephardic Greek-Jewish history of the Holocaust, an explicit content goal.
10.5d	**Post-war reorganization.** Bergen-Belsen's liberation by British forces on April 15, 1945; the rebuilding of Jewish communities after the war; the long-term institutional response (Yad Vashem, USHMM) to the historical record this lesson uses as primary source. Salamo's post-war life, including his marriage to Marta Yechiel in the camp hospital, sixty-four years of marriage, and the weight of the fights carried until his death in 2009, engages the question of what survival meant for the survivor.
10.10	**Human Rights Violations (Post-1945 to Present).** Key Idea. The legacy anchor for this lesson; the Holocaust is the originating case for the post-war human-rights infrastructure (Nuremberg, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention).
10.10a	**Crimes against humanity.** The forced boxing matches at Auschwitz are an instance of the camp system's deliberate corruption of human relationship, forcing victims to choose between their own survival and another victim's. The Lanzmann / Ebert / Langer framework around this episode

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION & HOW THIS LESSON ENGAGES IT
	engages the moral structure that the post-Nuremberg category of crimes against humanity exists to name.
10.10c	**International response and prevention.** The work of institutional memory, including Yad Vashem, USHMM, and the USC Shoah Foundation's preservation of Arouch's own testimony, engaged throughout this lesson is the field's ongoing response to the events Salamo lived through.

Social Studies Practices

PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION & HOW THIS LESSON ENGAGES IT
A	**Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence.** Salamo Arouch's own recorded testimony (USC Shoah Foundation), the 1990 *People* magazine interview, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's documentation of the forced boxing matches, and the Lawrence Langer / Roger Ebert critical sources are the evidentiary spine. Students must distinguish what the archive verifies from what rests on Arouch's own count (his "over two hundred bouts").
B	**Chronological Reasoning and Causation.** Engaged by tracing the chain: Sephardic settlement of Thessaloniki (1492) → pre-war Maccabi boxing career → German occupation of Greece (1941) → deportations (1943) → Auschwitz forced boxing (1943–44) → death march and Bergen-Belsen (1945) → liberation, marriage, post-war life → Arouch's death (2009) and the institutional preservation that followed.
C	**Comparison and Contextualization.** Centrally engaged. This includes the 1989 *Triumph of the Spirit* and Ebert's critique of it, compared with the 2026 microshort. The contrasting cases of Pietrzykowski, Haft, Perez, and Razon as other camp boxers. The wider geography of Sephardic Jewry compared to the Ashkenazi-centric Holocaust pedagogy most students encounter first.
F	**Civic Participation.** Engaged by the Contemporary Continuity bridge in Facilitation (Holocaust denial and the under-taught status of Greek-Sephardic memory as ongoing concerns) and by the Stinger Question at 11–12, which asks students to apply Ebert's standards to a film of their own choosing.

Source: New York State Education Department, K–12 Social Studies Framework · Global History & Geography II (Grade 10). Per the Framework, the Key Ideas and Conceptual Understandings are the content spine and the Social Studies Practices are the universal skills students develop across them.

C3 Framework for Social Studies

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
D2.His.1	Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
D2.His.3	Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of those individuals and groups is determined.
D2.His.14	Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.
D2.His.16	Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.
D4.1	Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging strengths and limitations.
D4.6	Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems and responses.

APPENDIX E

Florida B.E.S.T. Standards

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
ELA.x.R.2.1	Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey meaning (where *x* = grade band: 7, 9–10, or 11–12).
ELA.x.R.3.2	Analyze an author's choices in text structure, narration, and point of view as they create meaning.
ELA.x.C.1.3	Write and support a claim using logical reasoning, relevant evidence from sources, elaboration, and a concluding statement.
SS.912.W.7.6	Describe the causes, events, and effects of the Holocaust (1933–1945).

APPENDIX F

Texas TEKS

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
ELAR x.6(A)	Analyze how authors use language, point of view, and literary devices to create meaning.
ELAR x.8(A)	Analyze the author's purpose and message within a text and the response to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
ELAR x.10(A)	Write informational essays that synthesize and organize information from multiple sources.
WH.15(A–D)	Analyze causes and events of World War II, including the Holocaust.

APPENDIX G

California HSS Framework

CODE	STANDARD DESCRIPTION
10.8.1–10.8.6	Causes and consequences of World War II, persecution of minorities, and Allied response.
11.7	America's participation in World War II.
7.10	Medieval and early modern political developments in Europe.

APPENDIX H

CASEL SEL Competencies

> This lesson builds self-awareness through personal reflection on how we react to stories of extreme moral pressure. It develops social awareness through empathy with a historical figure caught in a situation our normal moral frameworks cannot describe. Responsible decision-making is exercised through engagement with Lawrence Langer's "choiceless choices" framework, which explicitly refuses to judge survivors for surviving. Collaborative discussion activities develop relationship skills, including listening carefully to peers who may have reacted differently to the film.

DASA · Dignity for All Students Act (New York State)

This lesson plan supports New York State's Dignity for All Students Act by engaging students in anti-bias education through the study of historical injustice and the destruction of a centuries-old Jewish community. Students examine how dehumanization operates systemically and how the representation of survivors carries ethical weight in its own right.

APPENDIX I

State Holocaust Education Mandates

This lesson plan satisfies Holocaust education mandates in 25+ states including New York, Florida, California, Illinois, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, Oregon, Colorado, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and Maine. As the number of states with Holocaust and genocide education requirements continues to grow, this lesson is designed to meet the instructional intent of those mandates: that students learn not only the historical facts of the Holocaust but also the ethical questions it poses about survival, representation, and memory.

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Project Witness is a nonprofit Holocaust education initiative dedicated to preserving memory through short-form documentary storytelling.

Microshort Stories lesson plans are developed in consultation with Holocaust educators and aligned to national and state curriculum standards.

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