

10. *Interpreting Symbols and Metaphors* A Jewish partisan song by Hirsch Glik, "Zog Nit Keinmol" ("Never Say That You Are Treading the Final Path"), provides a unique view into the history of the Holocaust, and offers students an opportunity to learn how symbolism and metaphor were used by the partisans. As noted earlier, the partisans were resistance fighters, Jews and non-Jews, in different countries who fought the Nazis in the forests and lived by their wits. (Some of the Jewish partisans had to endure periodically the antisemitism of peasants and other partisans on whom they depended for support.) "Songs were one of their weapons . . ." (Belsky, 1979, p. 92), and Glik's song became their official hymn. ". . . [with] almost magical speed it was caught up by all the concentration camps . . . and by a score of other peoples as well" (Belsky, 1979, p. 92). Glik's song reflected his own experience as a partisan in the Vilna Ghetto where he was killed during an encounter with Nazi troops in 1944.

In an excerpt from "Zog Nit Keinmol" (a song associated with the Youth Club in the Vilna Ghetto), students can be helped to interpret what the "sun" stands for (victory), "leaden skies" (despair), "days of blue" (a better future, freedom), as well as other terms and lyrics. Before providing students with the answers, the students should be asked to respond to the song in terms of what they see, hear, and feel. They could also be asked to "rewrite" the song by replacing certain words (e.g., sun, leaden skies, days of blue, etc.) with what they symbolize or stand for. A discussion could ensue to ascertain the different students' interpretations, and then the latter could be compared and contrasted with the above meanings.

Using this song as a springboard, students could also do research on the resistance movements of the partisans. They could be required to discuss the roles played by young people in these movements.

"Zog Nit Keinmol"
("Never Say")

Never say that there is only death for you
Though leaden skies may be concealing days of blue—
Because the hour we have hungered for is near;
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We are here!

We'll have the morning sun to set our day aglow,
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe,
And if the time is long before the sun appears,
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

So never say that there is only death for you.
Leaden skies may be concealing days of blue—
Yet the hour we have hungered for is near;
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We are here!

(Friedlander, 1968, pp. 280–281; Meltzer, 1976, p. 159;
Silverman, 1983, p. 203. Translated from the Yiddish by Aaron Kramer.)

11. "Choral" Reading Students can also read one or more of the songs in unison, as opposed to singing them together. For example, a choral reading of "Ofyn Pripetshok" (On the Hearth) or "Zog Nit Keinmol" ("Never Say") can often help students experience the emotions in the songs and share in common the hopes and the determination expressed in the songs, which, in many cases, is what Jews and others did when they sang together.