

## Lesson Plan: Responsibility

### Key Concepts:

Responsibility  
Obligation

### Materials:

- White board, chalkboard, overhead projector or easel with chart paper
- Downloadable testimony clips:  
*Testimony - Responsibility*
- TV and DVD player and/or a computer with a broadband connection is recommended for viewing directly from the online resource *Creating Character*
- Small Square Post-Its or Adhesive Paper Squares
- Student Handouts:  
*Circles of Responsibility*  
*Viewing Guide - Responsibility*  
*Independent Practice - Responsibility*  
(Possible alternative: use a transparency of the above student handouts in lieu of individual copies.)

### Time Required:

1-2 Class Periods

### Objectives:

- Students will develop an understanding of the concept of responsibility.
- Students will identify people, organizations or ideals for which they feel responsible.
- Students will identify ways in which they demonstrate responsibility.
- Students will work with visual history testimony.
- Students will use visual history testimony to identify examples of responsibility taken by individuals during the Holocaust.
- Students will relate their own experiences of responsibility to those presented in the visual history testimony accounts.

### Procedures:

1. In preparation for the class period, write the following category titles on chart paper or poster boards: Self, Family, Friends, Groups (or Organizations), Religious or Ethnic Community, Neighborhood, Country, Humanity, Values. Post the chart paper or the poster boards in accessible locations throughout the classroom.
2. When students first arrive, ask them to review these category titles and write definitions for each category in their notebooks. Allow a few minutes for students to record definitions and to share their definitions with the class. Record a few definitions for each of these categories on chart paper, the white board, the chalk board or the overhead projector. You may want to use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
  - What do you think of when you think of “self”?
  - How do you define “family”? Does “family” mean individual family members, the nuclear family, or extended family and friends? What sorts of responsibilities go along with family?
  - How are Groups defined? Do Groups include school groups, work groups, ethnic groups, peer groups, etc.?
  - What category is most related to your personal identity? Why?
  - How do you define an ethnic or religious community?
  - What is a neighborhood? Is it defined by streets or by something else? Why are neighborhoods important?
  - What is a Value? What is an example of a principle that would influence a person’s sense of personal responsibility?
3. When students have a clearer understanding of the various categories, they should select four categories for which they feel the strongest sense of responsibility.
4. From the four categories they selected, instruct students to rank each category from one to four, one being the category for which they feel most responsible, and four being the category for which they feel the least responsible. They can do this in their notebooks if needed.

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5. Distribute the Student Handout: *Circles of Responsibility* to each student.

*ALTERNATIVE: You may want to display a transparency of the Student Handout: **Circles of Responsibility** using an overhead projector and allow students to create their own replica.*

6. Using the categories that they selected individually, instruct students to complete the Student Handout: *Circles of Responsibility* by writing one category in each of the concentric circles on the page. The category for which the student feels the greatest sense of responsibility (this category should have received a ranking of #1) should be written in the center. The category for which the student feels the second greatest sense of responsibility is written in the next circle. This pattern is repeated until the category for which the student feels the least responsibility is written in the outer circle.
7. Next, ask the class to think of specific examples from their own lives that illustrate their own personal sense of responsibility toward each of the categories they selected. Conduct a short class discussion to elicit real-life examples. You may want to use some or all of the following questions as a guide:
- Why did you choose the category you chose for the inner circle?
  - Why do you feel such a strong responsibility in that arena?
  - What is an example of an event that might force someone to show their sense of personal responsibility to:
    - Their family?
    - Their neighborhood?
    - Their religious or cultural community?
    - Their country?
  - How might a person show their sense of responsibility in that situation?

*NOTE: You may want to use the sample model of Student Handout: **Circles of Responsibility** to assist with comprehension and to encourage ideas.*

8. Ask students to write at least one personal example that shows their own sense of responsibility in each category listed in the four concentric circles.
9. When their examples are written on their handouts, ask students to write the action they took that demonstrated their sense of responsibility in regards to their personal example.
10. When all students have completed their Student Handouts, distribute three post-it notes to each student. On each post-it note, students should anonymously write one personal example from their completed Student Handout: *Circles of Responsibility*.

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11. Allow a few minutes for students to post their examples on the corresponding category posters throughout the classroom.
12. Divide students into working groups and assign one poster to each group.
13. As a group, students should read and summarize the examples posted on their assigned poster. Instruct each group to choose a reporter for their group.
14. Allow a few minutes for discussion. Then, allow a few minutes for the reporters from each group to report back to the large group, summarizing their small group's discussion and the examples listed on their poster.
15. Return posters to their original locations throughout the classroom for later use, and ask students to return to their seats.
16. Inform students that they are about to watch testimony clips taken from testimonies given by Holocaust survivors and witnesses. Explain to students that the following clips are brief excerpts from longer interviews.

*NOTE: Some background knowledge of the Holocaust is necessary for students to understand the context of the visual history testimony clips. Some general resources are available on the USC Shoah Foundation Institute website at [www.usc.edu/vhi](http://www.usc.edu/vhi) or in the bibliography listed in the Additional Resources section. In addition, comprehensive classroom lessons that provide historical context on the Holocaust are included in **Echoes and Reflections – a multimedia curriculum on the Holocaust**, available at [www.echoesandreflections.org](http://www.echoesandreflections.org).*

17. Distribute copies of the Student Handout: *Viewing Guide - Responsibility*.

*ALTERNATIVE: You may want to display a transparency of the Student Handout: **Viewing Guide** using the overhead projector and allow students to create their own viewing guide.*

18. Play testimony clips: *Testimony - Responsibility*.
19. While they are watching the video, students should complete all columns for each interviewee on their Student Handout: *Viewing Guide*. After the videotape has ended, allow a few moments for students to individually review and reflect on their *Viewing Guide*.

*NOTE: For clarification, you may want to pause the video after playing each testimony clip or play the clips more than once.*

20. Divide the class into pairs. Allow a brief opportunity for student pairs to share their responses on the Student Handout: *Viewing Guide*.

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21. Distribute three post-it notes to each student pair and instruct them to complete the following sentence on each post-it, using the examples they cited from the testimony video, listed on their *Viewing Guides*:

\_\_\_\_\_ demonstrated responsibility for \_\_\_\_\_ when he/she \_\_\_\_\_.

22. Once each pair has three completed post-it notes, allow a few minutes for the pairs to post their notes on the category posters created during the *Circles of Responsibility* activity, which are posted around the room. Students should place their notes within the category that they feel is the most appropriate.
23. Again, divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the category posters. In their small groups, instruct students to discuss all of the examples on the posters — both those that were elicited from their classmates, as well as those that were taken from the testimony.
24. Ask students to compare and contrast the examples that were taken from the testimony with the examples provided by their peers. Encourage the student groups to consider some or all of the following questions during their discussion:
- How are the examples similar? How are they different?
  - Do the differences and/or similarities surprise you? Why?
  - What common themes can you identify among the examples on your poster?
25. Allow some time for student groups to discuss their posters and report their findings to the class.
26. Conduct a large class discussion using some or all of the following questions as a guide:
- How might we summarize the responsibilities of the members of this class?
  - How might we summarize the responsibilities identified in the testimonies?
  - Bent Lerno’s rabbi told the members of his synagogue to spread the word throughout the community about the concentration camps. Can you think of any instances where you might feel a similar responsibility toward your community?
  - Why do you think Marianne Cooper’s 13-14 year old sister made so much effort to protect Marianne’s childhood?
  - What do you think Hedy Epstein means when she says we have a “responsibility to ourselves” to get involved and make a difference?
  - Which categories have the most examples listed? Which categories have the least amount of examples listed? How might this be explained?
  - Why is honoring responsibilities in particular categories important to you?
  - How is your ability to honor certain responsibilities similar or different from the ability of the interviewees in the video?

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27. For homework or independent practice, assign one or more of the following written reflections:

*ALTERNATIVE: Have students choose the activity they would like to do for homework.*

- Distribute the Student Handout: *Independent Practice - Responsibility*. Respond to each question by writing a few sentences that explain why you agree or disagree with each of the given statements.
- Write a journal entry or reflection on the following prompt:  
In Marianne Cooper's testimony, she describes her older sister, who at the age of 13 took responsibility for protecting her. Identify someone in your life who you feel is your protector. Describe why you chose this person, how they have protected you, and what kinds of similarities and differences you see when you compare him or her to Marianne's account of her sister.
- Choose one of the following quotes and write a response to its author that explains why you either agree or disagree with his or her statement. In your response, reference your own experiences, the experiences exemplified in the testimony clips viewed, and/or the outcomes and insights garnered from class activities and class discussions of responsibility.
  - **How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.**  
— *Anne Frank*
  - **All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.**  
— *Edmund Burke*
  - **In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.**  
— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

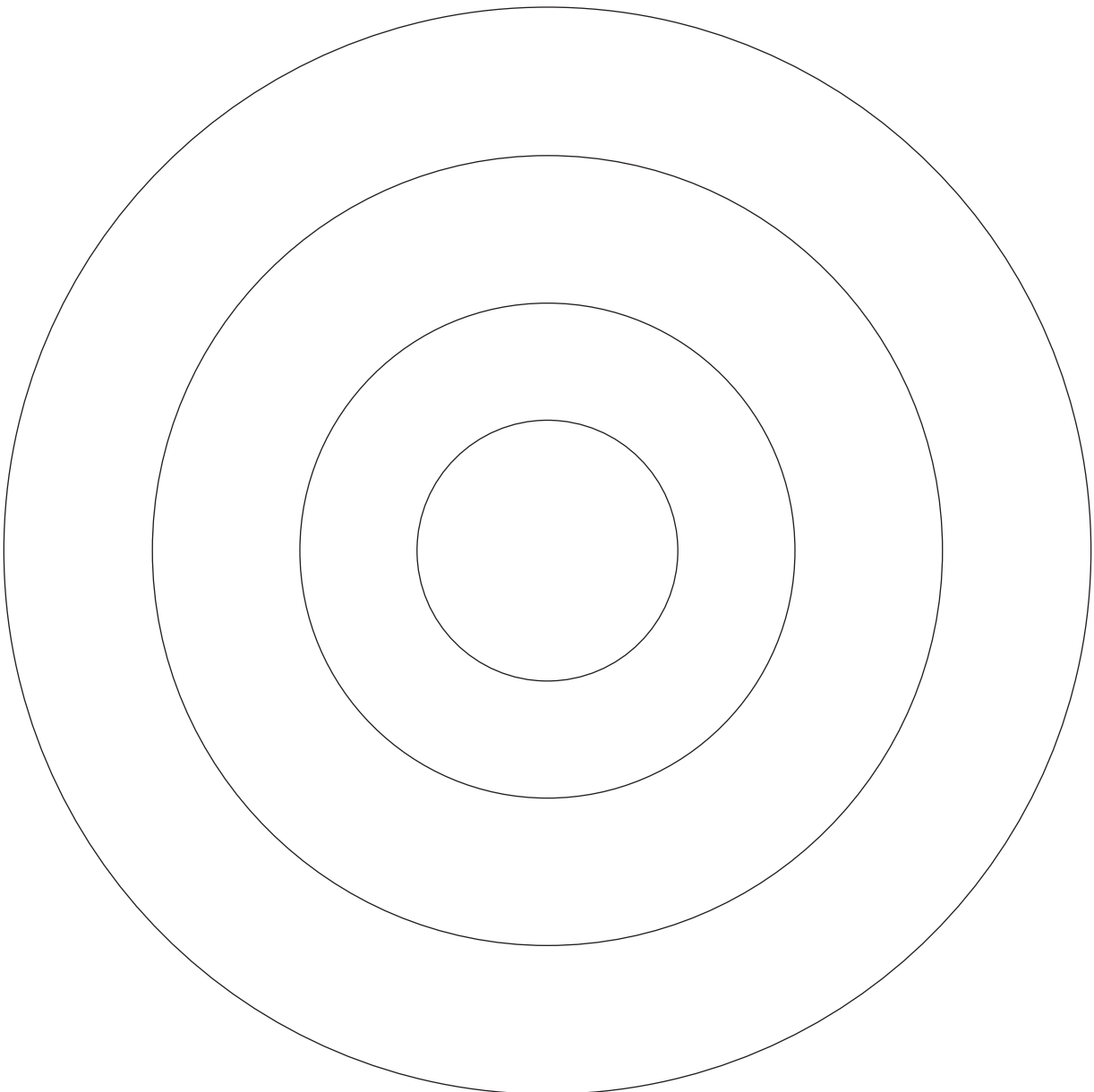
### Extension Activities:

1. Discuss ways to demonstrate responsibility in your school or local community. As a class, identify a project that will make a difference in your school or local community that can be completed within one year. Brainstorm possible project ideas. Discuss the potential efforts that your class can make in order to address this problem. Evaluate the ideas and choose a project that is feasible and meaningful for the participants involved. Initiate an action plan for your class project.
2. In Bent Lerno's testimony clip, he recalls that someone told his rabbi that the Jews in Denmark were going to be taken to a concentration camp. The historic efforts taken by the Danish to help their Jewish countrymen escape the Nazis is a powerful example of individuals taking responsibility for their neighbors. Conduct research and prepare a presentation about the unique Danish rescue efforts during the Holocaust.

## Circles of Responsibility

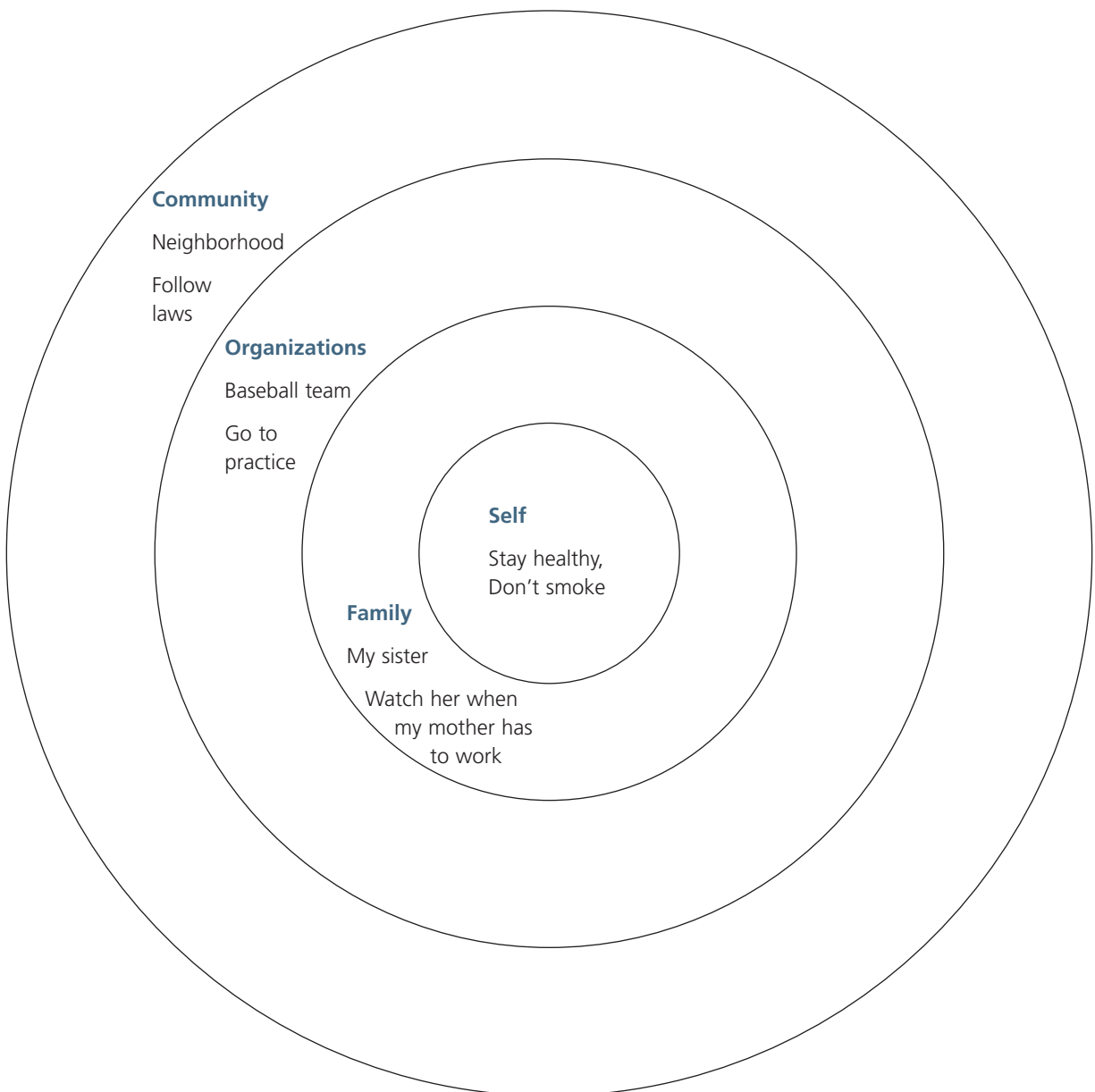
Name \_\_\_\_\_

In the center circle, write the category for which you feel the most responsibility. In the remaining three circles, write the additional categories you previously selected during class. As the circles move outward, the responsibility you feel for the categories should decrease.



## Circles of Responsibility: Sample Model

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Viewing Guide: Responsibility

Name \_\_\_\_\_

As the testimony clips for *Responsibility* are viewed, complete the three columns below:

Interviewee	Person demonstrating responsibility	Action demonstrating responsibility	Person, group or ideal being cared for
Bent Lerno			
Marianne Cooper			
Hedy Epstein			



## Viewing Guide: Responsibility

Teacher's Answer Key

Name \_\_\_\_\_

As the testimony clips for *Responsibility* are viewed, complete the three columns below:

**Interviewee**

**Person demonstrating responsibility**

**Action demonstrating responsibility**

**Person, group or ideal being cared for**

**Bent Lerno**

Bert's assistant rabbi from Denmark

The rabbi warned members they would be sent to concentration camps.  
  
He told them to call others and to spread the word to leave.

Members of the synagogue  
  
Local Jews  
  
Ideal - freedom

**Marianne Cooper**

Marianne's 13-14 year old sister

Her sister bribed a soldier to move them to another part of the city, thus protecting Marianne and her mother.  
  
She would give Marianne her food.  
  
She played with Marianne and kept her calm.

Marianne and her mother  
  
Ideal - a "normal" childhood for Marianne

**Hedy Epstein**

Hedy

Hedy becomes involved in issues where she may make a difference.  
  
She talks to students and encourages or challenges them to become involved.

Those who are suffering or in need of help  
  
"Ourselves," according to Hedy  
  
Ideal - responsibility, duty

## Independent Practice: Responsibility

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Respond to each statement by writing an explanation as to why you agree or disagree.

**1. It is important to always take responsibility for your actions no matter what they are.**

I agree/disagree because:

**2. We all have a responsibility to make the world a better place.**

I agree/disagree because:

**3. My responsibility to my country is important to me.**

I agree/disagree because:

**4. It is important to be responsible for our own education and learning.**

I agree/disagree because:

**5. My first responsibility is to myself.**

I agree/disagree because: