

Teach the story of Jewish prisoners of the Nazis who used **music to defy their oppressors, find courage and sustain hope.**

**How and why did a group of Jews in Terezín Ghetto** learn to sing Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem* in the original Latin? What did it mean to them and what does it mean for us? This is the story of *Defiant Requiem*.

The 45-minute documentary film is designed for classroom use and accompanying curriculum modules provide lessons adapted to a variety of disciplines. The modules have been developed through a rigorous process of conceptualization, critical review and evaluation, and revision based on feedback from ten highly experienced teachers from public, private, charter and parochial schools in the DC and MD area.

Features include:

- Flexible modules that provide multiple points of entry and allow teachers to adapt lessons, combine subjects, and work collaboratively across disciplines with other teachers.
- Alignment with Common Core State Standards
- Clear objectives, lesson materials, background for teachers and resources, step-by-step lessons, and objective-based assessments.
- “Essential Questions” with the aim of helping students apply what they have learned in the lesson to larger historical and literary topics and themes.
- Resources for learning more about the Holocaust, World War II, the *Verdi Requiem*, and creative resistance.
- Lessons that incorporate knowledge acquisition (e.g., studying a new aspect of history) and skills development (e.g., strengthening critical thinking, analysis, reasoning, etc.)
- Teaching strategies that use interdisciplinary approaches, primary sources, and elements of hands-on learning.

The four modules are designed for teachers of Social Studies, English Language Arts, and Music or Art but can be adapted to additional disciplines such as World History, Religion, Ethics, and Geography, among others.

### **Social Studies I**

#### **The Story of *Defiant Requiem*: The Holocaust and Creative Resistance**

In this three-part module, students will view the documentary film *Defiant Requiem* and learn the little-known but meaningful story of Jewish conductor Rafael Schächter and a group of prisoners in the Terezín ghetto who learned to sing Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem* as an act of creative resistance. They will build upon what they know about the Holocaust and consider the nature of creativity as defiance in oppressive times.

## **Social Studies II**

### **Propaganda and Deception: Terezín as a “Model Ghetto” and the Red Cross Visit**

In this two-part module, students will study the story of Jewish conductor Rafael Schächter and a group of prisoners in the Terezín ghetto who learned to sing Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem* as an act of creative resistance. Students will study the complex nature of Terezín, exploring the harsh reality of daily life there and how, at the same time, the Germans used it as an effective propaganda tool. They will learn about the visit of the International Red Cross on June 23, 1944 and the “beautification” efforts the Germans undertook to conceal the reality of conditions in the ghetto and its role in their genocidal plans. Students will also consider the final performance of the Verdi *Requiem* in Terezín and its meaning in this context.

## **English Language Arts**

### **The Rhetoric of Verdi's *Requiem*: Reading the Libretto in Three Contexts**

In this module, students will engage in close readings of excerpts of the Verdi *Requiem* libretto considering how the same words sung in different contexts can yield different meanings. Using the elements of rhetorical situations as a starting place (text, speaker, audience, purpose, and setting), students will study the meaning of the libretto in three contexts: a Catholic funeral mass, a Jewish chorus singing for an audience of fellow imprisoned Jews in a Nazi ghetto, and a much-reduced Jewish chorus singing for an audience of Nazi authorities and members of the International Red Cross sent to inspect the Terezín ghetto in the final year of the war.

## **Music and Art**

### **Resisting Oppression: Music, Art, and Creativity in Terezín**

In this module, students will consider the story of conductor Rafael Schächter and his chorus in the context of other musical, artistic, theatrical and intellectual efforts in the Terezín ghetto. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to the material, students will learn about a variety of artists working in different media and consider the significance and meaning of their work in that unique context.

In addition to the four instruction modules, teachers can watch the documentary film *Defiant Requiem*, explore an **interactive map of Terezín** ghetto, and access **stories of Holocaust survivors** through links on the home page.

Visit the Defiant Requiem Curriculum at  
<https://education.defiantrequiem.org/>