

Entry Points for Ethical Witnessing Through Writing

1. Short Excerpts from Survivor Narratives

These brief moments of testimony allow students to encounter a human voice before encountering the broader history. The goal is not analysis at first, but listening.

Examples:

- Holocaust Testimony – An excerpt from Elie Wiesel describing his first night in Auschwitz from *Night*.
Example excerpt and teaching resource:
https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/EchoesAndReflections_Lesson_Five_Memoir-ExcerptFromNight.pdf
- Bosnian Genocide – Testimony from the Mothers of Srebrenica describing the continued search for their sons after the Srebrenica massacre.
Survivor stories and testimony archive:
<https://srebrenica.org.uk/category/survivor-stories/womens-testimonies>
- Rwandan Genocide – A testimony from Immaculée Ilibagiza describing the months she spent hiding during the Rwandan genocide.
Interview and survivor reflection:
<https://johnlearyinspires.com/podcast/archive/immaculee-ilibagiza/>
- Armenian Genocide – Survivor testimony from descendants recounting family memories of deportation during the Armenian genocide.
Oral history collection:
<https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/armenian>
 - Also see these short essays by living descendants:
 - "[Compulsory Service](#)"
 - "[Zilelian from Zile](#)"
- Cambodian Genocide – A passage from Loung Ung describing childhood under the Khmer Rouge from *First They Killed My Father*.
Survivor interview:
<https://www.bananawriters.com/loungunginterview>

These small excerpts remind students that history begins with a voice.

2. A Photograph Accompanied by a Personal Story

Images can create an immediate emotional connection, but pairing them with a personal narrative helps students move beyond viewing toward understanding.

Examples:

- Shoes of victims at Auschwitz from Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum Photo archive and stories:
<https://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-museum-has-launched-a-two-year-project-for-the-conservation-of-childrens-shoes-belonging-to-victims-of-auschwitz,1609.html>
- Women of the Mothers of Srebrenica holding photographs of their missing family members after the Srebrenica massacre. Photo and story archive:
<https://www.icmp.int/what-we-do/srebrenica-genocide>
- Rwandan genocide memorial photographs from the Kigali Genocide Memorial paired with survivor narratives. Photo and testimony archive:
<https://kgm.rw/learn/survivor-testimonies>
- Cambodian genocide photographs preserved at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum showing prisoners before execution. Archive and context:
<https://tuolsleng.gov.kh/en/archives>
- Family photographs preserved by Armenian genocide descendants through the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. Photo archive:
https://genocide-museum.am/eng/photos_of_armenian_genocide.php
 - The Story of a Doll's Dress from The Genocide Education Project

In these moments, the photograph becomes not just an artifact but a doorway into a life once lived.

3. Brief Historical Context Before Encountering Testimony

Before reading personal narratives, students benefit from a small amount of grounding. The purpose is not exhaustive history but ethical orientation—helping students understand the gravity of what they are about to read.

Examples:

- Overview of the Holocaust from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:
<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/>
- Context explaining the breakup of Yugoslavia and the events leading to the Bosnian War and the Srebrenica massacre. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Srebrenica-massacre>
- Background on the causes and timeline of the Rwandan genocide.
<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/rwanda>
- Overview of the rise of the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian genocide.
<https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia/case-study>
- Historical background of the Armenian genocide.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Armenian-Genocide>

This grounding helps students approach testimony not as isolated tragedy but as human lives shaped by history.

These materials are not meant to be exhaustive historical units. They serve as quiet openings—moments where students encounter voice, image, and context before responding through reflective writing.