

Armbands

**Context:**

Extending learning about the Holocaust for students in grades 8-12.

Goals:

1. Use armbands to learn how symbols impact identity
2. Use armbands to glimpse how a badge can impact a person's choices and behaviors.

Need:

- Jewish Star and Nazi armbands
 - *(available through loan from the BJE Marshall Jewish Learning Center.)*
- Poster of various Nazi insignias from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum
 - *(available through loan from the BJE Marshall Jewish Learning Center.)*
- T-shirt for each student
- Fabric markers and/or fabric paints
- Film *The Sound of Music*

Goal 1

Show and pass around armbands

Show and explain Holocaust insignia poster

Assign students to decorate the front of the t-shirt they are about to receive with symbols, pictures and words that describe who they are.

Hand out oversized T-shirts and fabric markers.

Assign the students to turn the t-shirts inside out and copy just one item from the inside to put on the visible part of the shirt. (Alternative: make the single item Jewish.)

Have students put their shirts on over their clothing. (Make sure the T-shirts are dry so that clothes are not ruined by wet markers, fabric paint, etc.)

Word Whip:

How does it feel to have just one attribute of your personality available for all to see?

Write answers on board and process.

Tell The Big Idea:

- An armband or a patch can reduce the complexity-of-you down to a single attribute. For the Nazis, the yellow star branded Jews in a way that facilitated their thinking about Jews as less than human.
- To some degree, the stars functioned that way for Jews as well, pushing to the forefront of identity one particular attribute-being Jewish. (Important: teach that Jews within their communities stressed that the yellow star was a badge of honor, not shame).

Goal 2

View 2 1/2 minutes from film, *The Sound of Music*. The clip is near the end, when the Von Trapp family is escaping, entering the monastery, and then betrayed by a former family friend.

Discuss (briefly) the effect of the armband on the young Nazi who discovers the Von Trapp family (his former friends) in hiding.

Revisit the Big Idea, but inside out:

- A badge affects not only how you view yourself and how others view you, ***it also affects how you choose to behave.***

(Optional: Ask, What are some other kinds of badges that tend to inform a person's actions?)

Examples include sporting uniforms; Police, Fire and Military badges; a kippah and Star of David necklace.

Summarize and Close