

THE SINGING REVOLUTION



Subjects: History / English Language Arts

What is a Hero? The Life of Alfred Käärmann

Aim / Essential Question

Is it worth it to be a hero?

Overview

This lesson, over the course of two days, takes us through the important events of Alfred Käärmann's life. Käärmann's life experience will be used as a lens to understand the man himself, and to understand the inner workings of the resistance organization he belonged to, the Forest Brothers. After finishing any autobiographical or biographical work, the reader or viewer is left to judge the quality of a life, and the students will be asked to do the same by answering the following essay question: Is it worth it to be a hero?

Materials & Technology

- Forest Brother Alfred Käärmann Extended Story (from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations)
- Class set of the question sheet on the Alfred Käärmann Interview (below)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Two 50-minute periods.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the emergence of political resistance to Soviet authority
- Analyze the resistance actions of the Forest Brothers
- Evaluate the life of one member of the Forest Brothers, Alfred Käärmann

Instruction

Day 1

Opening: Do Now

Warm-up on the topic of heroism.

Have students write a detailed paragraph in response to the following question: Who would you identify as a hero today, and what has this person done that is heroic? Elaborate.

Activities

1. Preview the comprehension questions on the handout by reading each question from sections A, B, and C aloud.
2. View the first half of the Käärmann interview. Try to end this segment with Käärmann's capture, (at 26 minutes and 50 seconds).
3. After viewing this portion of the film, allow the students a few minutes to complete any unanswered questions from sections A, B, and C.
4. Have the students share their answers with the class.

Day 2

5. Briefly recap yesterday's film segment. Have the students discuss the first half of the interview.
6. Preview the remaining comprehension questions on the handout by reading each question from sections D, E, F, and G aloud.
7. View the second half of the Käärman interview.
8. After viewing this portion of the film, allow the students a few minutes to complete any unanswered questions from sections D, E, F, and G.
9. Student responses. Have the students share their responses to the questions on the second part of the interview.
10. If time allows, have the students read and discuss the essay question, included on the Question Sheet, which they will write for homework.

Homework

Answer the essay question from the Question Sheet in a four paragraph essay.

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Question Sheet on the Alfred Käärman Interview

Day 1

A. World War 2 Experience

1. During the latter part of the war, how did Käärman help his country and his fellow Estonians?
2. Why did he have cause to be fearful of the occupying Soviet forces?

B. Post-World War 2 Years – Experience with the Forest Brothers

3. When did he join this resistance organization?
4. Why did he join?
5. How did he and the Forest Brothers evade capture?
6. How did they survive and provide for their own basic needs?
7. How did they receive local support?
8. Describe what happened to Käärman's arm.

C. Capture

9. Describe how Käärman was captured and how he was betrayed.

Day 2

D. Interrogation and Torture

10. What methods did the Soviets use to get him to reveal information?
11. What information did he ultimately reveal, and what did he not reveal?

E. Punishment

12. What was his punishment, his sentence?
13. While he was in prison, how did other Forest Brothers express their gratitude and support for him?

F. Release

14. When was he released, and how much time had he served?
15. What new problems did he encounter after he returned home to Estonia?

G. Advice to Estonian Youth

16. What was his advice to the country's young people, and why do you think he felt this way?

Essay Question: Although Alfred Käärman sacrificed and suffered for fighting to free Estonia, he did live to see his country achieve independence. Is he a hero? Does the fact that he was a man who used violent means make him less of a hero? And when you take into account all that he went through and all that he missed out on in life, was his decision to fight for his country worth it? Is it worth it to be a hero?