



HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

"A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE"

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
65 McCampbell Road
Holmdel, NJ 07733
tel: 732-946-1800
fax: 732-946-1875

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steven Tetreault, 732.946.1808

TEACHER AWARDED GRANT TO DEEPEN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

HOLMDEL (December 19, 2016) - Satz English teacher Marissa Crimoli recently received some good news - she has been awarded a grant from the Joan Lavine Keats Social Justice Institute of the Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust and Genocide Resource Center at Rider University.

Mrs. Crimoli has long been a passionate teacher of Holocaust topics, and she does it well. Her students come away from her classes not only with a deeper knowledge of this dark period in history, but also with a greater appreciation of how literature and literacy can bring people together across time and location. Mrs. Crimoli uses her Master's degree in Holocaust and Genocide studies to help her students take lessons from the past and apply them to the present and the future. This, in turn, is a way to help students think about, recognize, and confront prejudice and intolerance in the world around them.

In the past, Mrs. Crimoli has drawn not only on nonfiction literature such as Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl and Elie Wiesel's Night, but also on a vast array of other materials, such as first-hand testimonies from Holocaust survivors and from soldiers who helped liberate survivors from the camps; historical pieces that detail particular events during the time period, such as the voyage of the St. Louis, a ship carrying Jewish refugees that was turned away from the United States; fictional pieces that provide students with different perspectives on what it might have been like to live through this ordeal, such as Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl"; and a variety of poetry from both survivors and others that resonate with the historical impact and myriad of emotions from this important historical time period. By exposing students to a wide variety of materials, Mrs. Crimoli ensures that every student can find a text through which they can connect and learn.

In applying for the grant, Mrs. Crimoli completed a three page proposal describing how she includes the topic of the Holocaust and other genocides in her classroom and how she would use the grant to assist her in engaging students. Because the Holocaust is a state-mandated topic in all Language Arts classes, teachers are always looking for ways they can help their students wrap their minds around this difficult issue. Therefore, Mrs. Crimoli's grant application focused on her desire for additional materials to make this difficult topic more accessible and engaging for her students.

As Mrs. Crimoli puts it, “Recognizing that intolerance is a problem that has plagued mankind for centuries allows us, and particularly students, to recognize that this is not a new issue; by learning from the past we have the opportunity to ensure that the same mistakes are not made in the future, encouraging us to promote tolerance in our current society.” To this end, she has applied the grant proceeds to increase her classroom library’s resources with copies of high-interest materials such as *Prisoner B-3087*, a slightly dramatized account of a real Holocaust survivor’s struggles as a 10-year old in a concentration camp; *The Bielski Brothers: The True Story of Three Men who Defied the Nazis, Built a Village in the Forest, and Saved 1,200 Jews*; and the critically-acclaimed, award winning graphic novels *Maus I* and *Maus II*, which paint an allegorical picture of the rise of the Nazis and the Holocaust.

Mrs. Crimoli plans to use these materials to engage students at a variety of levels as she continues to expand her students’ knowledge and encourage empathy and understanding for the plight of those who may be seen as different, but who are simply human- just like her students.