

Shields of Strength: Building and Inspiring Resilience

Activity Overview

Through this activity, students will explore what it means to be resilient by analyzing the story of Mona Golabek, the daughter of Lisa Jura, a Holocaust survivor. The activity begins with students reflecting on the definition of resilience by sharing personal experiences with resilience either in their own lives or the lives of others. Next, students will analyze Mona's story, exploring Mona and her mother's resilience through their experiences. Students will then analyze testimony by Holocaust survivor Esther Bem, focusing on the role of courage in resilience, and exploring the connections between courage and resilience. The activity concludes with each student creating a "resilience shield" to symbolize their own sources of strength and resilience inspired by the stories of Mona, Esther, and their own experiences.

Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be resilient?
- Why is resilience an important trait, especially for survivors or descendants of a traumatic event?
- What role do the arts play in helping an artist build resilience?
- How can art help teach about a traumatic event?

Target Audience

Elementary 3–5

Activity Duration

45–60 Minutes

Enduring Understandings

- When people face adversity, resilient individuals show strength and courage by creating art and helping others do the same.
- Making and sharing art can show and inspire strength and resilience in both the artist and others.
- Brave acts of celebrating culture, identity, and survival through art can remind us of our humanity and inspire future generations to protect it.



Materials

- Student Devices with Internet Access
- Mona Golabek Video Visual Organizer Handout (one per student)
- Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout (one per student)
- Resilience Shield Template (one per student)

Procedure

ASK

- Begin the class by displaying a student-friendly definition of resilience on the board for the whole class. Resilience is *the ability to bounce back from challenges and keep going despite difficulties*.
- Direct students' attention to the definition of resilience displayed on the board. Then, host a whole-class discussion in which students share examples of resilience using the provided definition as a guide. Record and display their talking points for the class to reference later.
- Encourage students to think of times when they or someone they know demonstrated resilience, using questions such as:
 - Can you think of a time when something was hard for you, but you kept trying?
 - Have you ever seen someone bounce back from a difficult situation? What did they do?
 - What feelings do you think are involved when showing resilience?
- As students share their responses, record and display their talking points for the class to see and reference throughout the activity.
- Next, explain the context of Mona Golabek's video by sharing with students that Mona Golabek is the daughter of Lisa Jura, a survivor of the Holocaust, and through viewing Mona's video, they will learn more about Mona, the Holocaust, and how resilience played an important role in Mona's life.

ANALYZE

- Before playing Mona's video for the whole class, provide each student with a copy of the **Mona Golabek Video Visual Organizer Handout**. Encourage students to use the visual organizer to jot down notes about the viewing questions on the graphic organizer as they watch the video.
- Play Mona's video for the whole class. First, play the full video for the whole class to watch, then, replay the video a second time, pausing to identify key points and help students record notes using the visual organizer. Questions on the handout will include:

- How was Mona resilient?
- How was Mona inspired by Lisa's story of resilience?
- Why did Mona believe it was important to share Lisa's story for others?
- What challenges did Mona face when trying to share Lisa's story?
- What can we learn from Mona about how our resilience can inspire others?
- After the video concludes, host a brief discussion to identify and unpack key themes and answer questions, such as how Lisa's story inspired Mona, how Mona's story inspires future generations, and how Mona showed resilience.
- During this discussion, highlight connections to the activity's enduring understandings by writing those connections on the board as they are shared. One such example of an enduring understanding connection may include how Mona's desire and persistence to write a book to share her mother's story inspired the students featured in the video, which reflects the enduring understanding that, "making and sharing art can show and inspire strength and resilience in both the artist and others."

APPLY

- Next, students will apply their understanding of the relationship between art and resilience by extending their thinking to consider the importance of courage as a trait in resilient individuals through analysis of the testimony of a survivor of the Holocaust.
- Organize students into groups of three and ensure each group has one device for accessing the testimony video of Esther Bem, linked below.
- Distribute copies of the **Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout** to each student and direct each small group to answer each of the individual questions on the **Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout** while they watch the video.
- Strengthen the testimony analysis experience by:
 - Sharing important biographical information for the speaker with students before they view the testimony video using the biographical information at the end of this activity.
 - Play the video once all the way through for student viewing, and then replay the video a second time, encouraging students at this point to pause and/or rewatch portions of the testimony as needed to reflect, and record thoughts, questions, and ideas.
 - Encouraging students to find connections to their own lives and experiences.
- Testimony for analysis:
 - [Esther Bem](#) (5:31) Esther describes the courage of a family to take in her and her family for a few days, then find a new place for them to live when they could no longer keep them. (Note: the **Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout** contains a definition of *altruistic*, a key term used by Esther, in student-friendly language.)

- As students work in small groups to analyze Esther's testimony, rotate around the room providing support as needed.
- Once each student within each small group has answered the individual Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout questions, challenge each group to collaborate and develop a group response to the question, "How can the courage of others help us build our resilience?"
- Conclude this activity with a brief discussion, allowing small groups to share their thinking with the whole-class. Encourage students to share responses to the following prompts:
 - How can the courage of others help us build our resilience?
 - What does courage look like in action?

ACT

- To set the stage for the concluding portion of the lesson, print out **Resilience Shield Templates** for each student. While distributing these templates, play the final two minutes (5:45 to the end) of Mona's video for the class once again.
- Once the video concludes, explain that students will create their own "resilience shield" to illustrate the things that help them stay strong and bounce back from challenges, using the lessons they learned from Mona and Esther's stories.
- Before working independently on their resilience shields, ask students to reflect on the quote from Mona's video, "If your mother could do it, then I could do it." Ask questions like:
 - What do you think this quote means?
 - How can someone else's resilience inspire you to be resilient?
 - Can you think of someone in your life who shows resilience?
- Now, explain to students that they will create their own shield that represents the things that help them stay resilient. Explain that a shield is a symbol of protection and strength, and their resilience shield will show what helps them stay strong and bounce back from challenges.
- Each **Resilience Shield Template** has four sections. Instruct each student to illustrate or write about one thing that helps them stay resilient in each section. Students can include examples of family, friends, hobbies, positive thoughts, or pieces of Mona's or Esther's stories.
- After students create their shields, ask them to pair up and share them with a partner, explaining why they chose each element for their shield and how their elements help them stay resilient.
- Collect the shields and create a "Wall of Resilience" in the classroom. The shields can be displayed and serve as a reminder of students' strengths and sources of resilience.

Connection to Students' Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will expand their knowledge of resilience and its relationship to art and courage while building understanding of the importance of art as a form for fostering resilience in themselves and inspiring it in others.	Students will analyze a contemporary example of how art has helped descendants of traumatic events build and inspire resilience by analyzing the story of Mona Golabek.	Students can use their understanding of how art fosters resilience in survivors and descendants of traumatic events to inform future advocacy efforts, build resilience in themselves and their community, and inspire resilience in future generations.

National Standards and Frameworks

College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.Civ.6.3–5: Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.
- D2.Civ.10.K–2: Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
- D2.Civ.14.K–2: Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.
- D2.Civ.14.3–5: Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.
- D2.His.6.3–5: Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.
- D2.His.16.3–5: Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.
- D3.1.3–5: Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, structure, and context to guide the selection.
- D3.4.3–5: Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions.
- D4.3.K–2: Present a summary of an argument using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- D4.7.K–2: Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3: Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.5: Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

Survivor and Witness Biographies

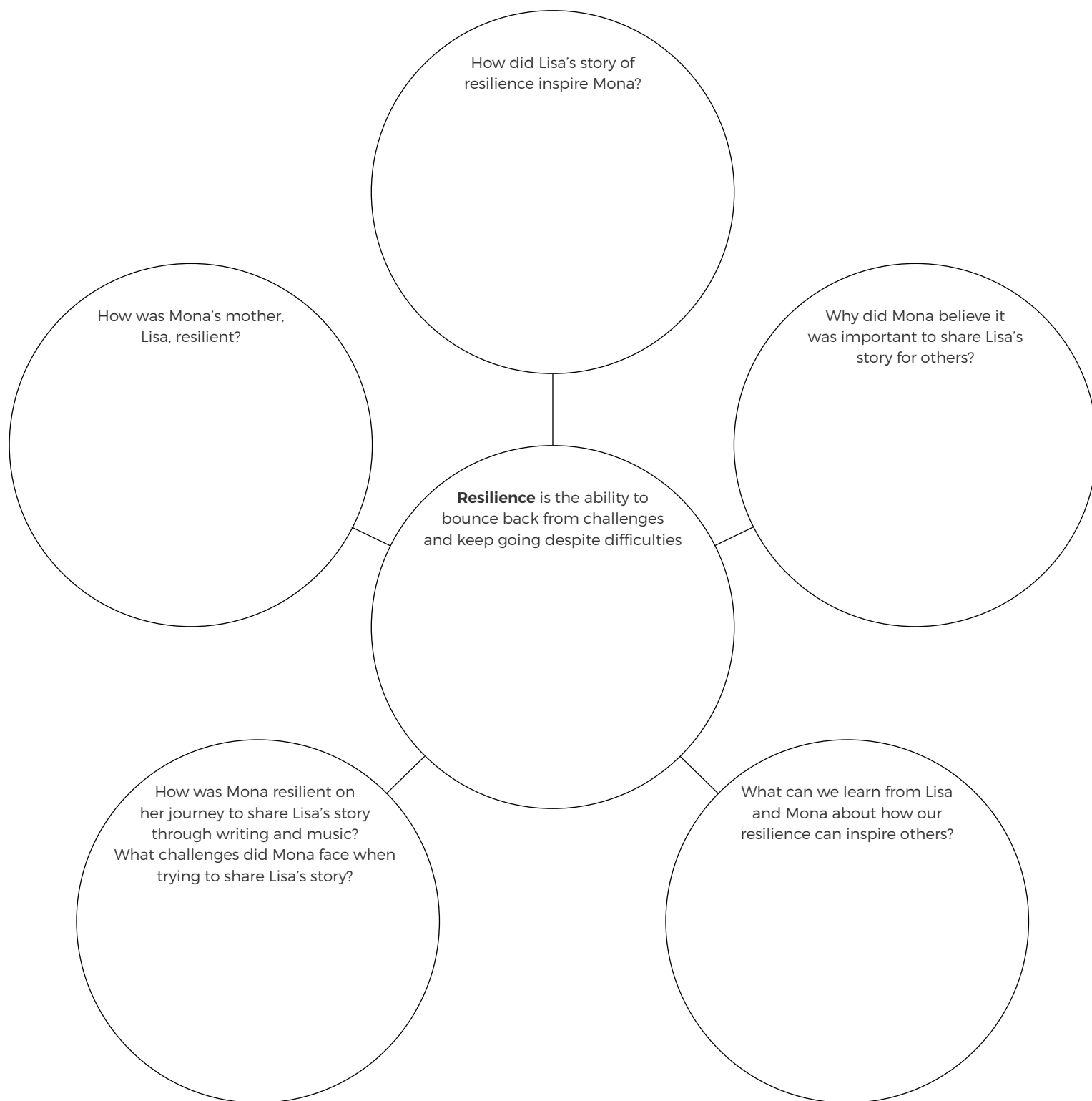
Esther Bem was born in 1930 in Osijek, Yugoslavia, and moved with her family to Zagreb, Croatia, when she was four years old. Her early years featured a happy life in a multilingual household, but her life changed dramatically in 1941 when the German army occupied Croatia, forcing them to flee to northern Italy and live under false identities. Esther, who was fluent in Italian, played an important role as the family spokesperson, ensuring their survival during the Holocaust. After the war, the family returned to Yugoslavia, and in 1950, Esther immigrated to Israel and later to Canada with her husband and children. She became a prominent speaker, sharing her story and inspiring many generations. Esther shared her testimony with the USC Shoah Foundation in 1995.

The Willesden Project is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)

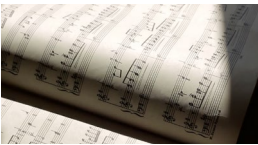
Mona Golabek Video Visual Organizer



STUDENT HANDOUT



Esther Bem Testimony Analysis Handout



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: As you watch the testimony clip, use the Individual Questions section below and record notes that help you answer the questions.

Definition: **Altruistic** means being kind and helping others without expecting anything in return.

Individual Questions: *Record your responses to the questions in the provided spaces.*

What challenges did Esther and her family face?	
How were Esther and her family resilient?	
How did the families who protected Esther show courage?	

Challenge Question: *Once all your group members have finished their questions, work with your group to answer this question: How does resilience require courage?*

Resilience Shield Template



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Using the template, draw or write about one thing that helps you stay resilient in each section. Examples could be family, friends, hobbies, positive thoughts, or pieces of Mona's or Esther's stories.

