

Exploration 1A: What can bystanders do?

Exploration 1A focuses on stories about ordinary people who, on their own, in times of war or in other situations of violence, acted to protect the life or human dignity of people whom they may not know or whom they would not ordinarily be inclined to help or protect. They acted despite personal risk or loss.

These stories are drawn from real life and have no pattern in common. Each story has its particular characteristics: the time and the place, the type of violence (armed conflict, racial violence, youth gangs), the nationality of the protector, and so on.

The stories are accompanied by notes drawing attention to their special points. Useful questions, pertinent to all the stories, are presented in step 3 "Explore several stories."

Select several stories for your group. Plan to devote at least two sessions for exploring the stories. This will give you time to employ a number of pedagogical approaches (role-playing, small-group discussion, analysis and presentation) to illustrate how the courage to act develops. And that, in turn, will enable your students to receive the full impact of the experiences and actions of a variety of bystanders.

OBJECTIVES

- to understand the effect a bystander can have upon the actions of others
- to be aware of examples of bystanders acting in situations of violence to protect life or human dignity

TEACHER 1A RESOURCES

Background to the stories

- 1A.1 Aftermath of a battle
- 1A.2 A witness comes forward
- 1A.3 Alone on the bench
- 1A.4 Step by step
- 1A.5 Brave shopkeeper
- 1A.6 Villagers ease pain in camps

STUDENT 1A RESOURCES

The stories

- 1A.7 Aftermath of a battle
- 1A.8 A witness comes forward
- 1A.9 Alone on the bench
- 1A.10 Step by step
- 1A.11 Brave shopkeeper
- 1A.12 Villagers ease pain in camps

PREPARATION

Choose the stories and the sequence in which they will be used.

In the *Methodology Guide*, review teaching methods 1 (Discussion), 2 (Brainstorming), 5 (Role-playing), 6 (Using stories, photos and videos), 7 (Writing and reflecting), 9 (Small groups) and 10 (Gathering stories and news) and workshop 2 ("Role-playing: What can bystanders do?").

If possible, view the relevant chapter of the teacher video (*Organizing students' responses: Looking at humanitarian acts*) and the relevant chapter of the training film for teachers (*Module 1*).

TIME

Two 45-minute sessions

The exploration

1. BRAINSTORMING (5 minutes)

To introduce the subject, have students discuss the following question:

- > What does it take to do something dangerous or unpopular to help someone whose life or human dignity is at risk?

2. DEFINE 'BYSTANDER' (10 minutes)

Introduce the term 'bystander.' Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) defines a 'bystander' like this: "someone aware of an incident, without being involved, where the life or human dignity of others is in danger." A bystander may decide to intervene.

3. EXPLORE SEVERAL STORIES (60 minutes, additional time may be needed, depending on the stories chosen and the pedagogical approaches used)

Possible approaches:

- Students are divided into small groups. Each group reads and discusses a different story, then tells the others about it.
- Students dramatize a story; each person in the story is assigned to several different students, so that they might examine his or her motivation.
- Read a story aloud to the group, and stop at marked 'decision points' (↔) in the narrative so that the group can discuss what they think the people involved should do next.

[Suggestions for sequencing story activities begin on p. 7]

TEACHER
1A.1-6 RESOURCES

STUDENT
1A.7-12 RESOURCES

Questions for reporting and discussing stories:

- > When and where did the events in the story take place?
- > How was someone's life or human dignity at risk in this situation?
- > What obstacles did rescuers face? What were they risking?
- > Who were the bystanders and what choices did they make? Why?
- > What pressures and risks were involved?
- > What were the immediate results of the bystanders' actions? And later?

There is always a moment when the moral choice is made. Often because of one story or one book or one person, we are able to make a different choice, a choice for humanity, for life.
– Elie Wiesel, from Carol Rittner, Sondra Myers (eds), *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*

4. CLOSE – AFTER THE FINAL SESSION ON STORIES (15 minutes)

Remind students that such acts take place throughout the world, even though they are not always reported.

Ask students:

- to summarize the situations in the real-life stories that they have explored;
- to review the obstacles the bystanders had to overcome, the risks they took, and the impact they had in attempting to protect others.

Our indifference to evil makes us partners in the crime.
– Egil Aarvik, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, while awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 1986

The exploration

Possible question:

- > Do you have any examples from school, your neighbourhood or your family, in which a bystander did something to protect someone's life or human dignity?

Read the following statements by the scholar Ervin Staub about the influence of bystanders on the behaviour of others. Ask students to give instances from the stories that illustrate the meaning of each statement.

Bystanders can exert powerful influence. They can define the meaning of events and move others towards empathy or indifference.

Psychological research shows that a single deviation from group behaviour can greatly diminish conformity.

In emergencies, the likelihood of helping greatly increases when one bystander says the situation is serious or tells others to take action.

Even the behaviour of governments can be strongly affected by bystanders, individuals, groups or other governments.

– Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil*

! KEY IDEAS

- Ordinary people can, in times of violence, act to protect the life or human dignity of people they may not know or whom they would not ordinarily be inclined to help or protect.
- Bystanders often act despite possible personal risk or loss.
- Ordinary people everywhere have confronted inhumane behaviour to protect others who are at risk.

Every issue seems to affect me directly. If you tell me that a few people have been detained without trial in some village, I feel that I'm personally responsible somehow. You cannot just sit there. It cannot be none of your business.
– interview with Unity Dow, High Court judge in Botswana, Amnesty Action

About the stories

THE STORIES

A selection of real-life stories, from different parts of the world, is included (see pages 18-23). In all of them someone's life or human dignity is under threat, as a consequence of armed conflict or other situations of violence.

The bystander in each story


- is an ordinary person;
- who may have put his or her life or well-being in danger;
- to protect the life or human dignity of someone he or she may not know or would not ordinarily be inclined to help or protect.

Use some of these stories. Feel free to substitute similar stories of your own.

Each story contributes something different to the exploration of the humanitarian perspective. The chart below indicates some of the special features of the stories and their uses. It is followed by suggestions for the sequence in which the stories might best be explored, and activities to help students experience and analyse the stories.

Story features:	Story titles:	Suggested uses:
Youth in danger from threatening demonstrators	"Alone on the bench"	Good starting point for some students because they might find it easy to identify with the victim, who is in a school-related environment
Youth violence	"Brave shopkeeper"	Humanitarian response outweighing self-interest
Remarkable impact of a single bystander	"Aftermath of a battle" "A witness comes forward"	Good for tracing chain of consequences stemming from the immediate and long-term impact of just one bystander
Growth of humanitarian behaviour	"Step by step"	Opportunity to analyse an example of the incremental change in the humanitarian behaviour of the rescuers – good story for role-playing, with four clearly defined participants
Ethnic division	"Villagers ease pain in camps"	Shows people crossing the ethnic barriers that define this armed conflict to help those at risk

NOTE

Background material is provided for the setting of each story. In some stories, suggested 'decision points' are indicated by the following symbol: 

About the stories

SUGGESTED SEQUENCES AND ACTIVITIES

EXPERIENCING A THREAT TO HUMAN DIGNITY

“Alone on the bench” (35 minutes) or “Brave shopkeeper” (25 minutes)

TEACHER
1A.3/5 RESOURCES

STUDENT
1A.9/11 RESOURCES

Begin by asking students to think of experiences from their lives that echo the setting of the story (first day of school or going to a new school for the first time, being in an unfamiliar or unwelcoming neighbourhood). Elicit from them a list of the thoughts and feelings that they may have had in those situations and reasons for those thoughts and feelings.

Present the story you chose. Before discussing it, have students write down what they believe the young person at risk in the story was thinking as the situation developed.

Lead a discussion of students’ responses to the story. Help them to focus on the danger in the situation and the threat to human dignity.

Then have them write down what the rescuer may have been thinking. What was the situation for the shopkeeper or for Grace Lorch? What risks or pressures did the shopkeeper or Grace Lorch face? In either case, what might have caused each person to act?

A lack of protest can confirm the perpetrators’ faith in what they are doing.
– Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil*

Possible questions:

- > What obstacles did the rescuer face?
- > What decisions do you think each person made?
- > What do you think was going through the heads of those causing the danger?
- > What effect did the humanitarian act have? (What might the boys from the mechanics school do in the future? Why did the crowd not prevent Grace Lorch from protecting Elizabeth Eckford?)

Invite discussion on what it took for the shopkeeper or Grace Lorch to step in and protect the young person at risk.

Encourage students to find parallels to the story in their own lives. Have any of them had a similar experience? What do they remember thinking or feeling? Were any of them ever in a position to help a vulnerable person? What did they consider doing? What did they actually do?

Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going.
– Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*

About the stories

TRACING A CHAIN OF CONSEQUENCES

"Aftermath of a battle" (35 minutes)

TEACHER
1A.1 RESOURCES

STUDENT
1A.7 RESOURCES

Introduce the story as one that describes the response of someone who just happened to witness massive suffering after the battle of Solferino in 1859. Help students to picture the battlefield as it must have appeared to bystanders at the time.

Ask students what surprises them about this account, and why.

[For example, that no one was there to help the wounded and dying soldiers, or that no local people came forward to help]

Have students assess the impact that a single person had on others.

Possible questions:

- > How did the behaviour of one bystander affect the behaviour of others?
- > What chains of consequences might develop when bystanders behave in an inhumane way, when, for instance, they steal from dying soldiers or when they ignore pleas for help?

Students can draw a diagram that shows a number of chains of consequences linked to a humanitarian act. They should first write the act in the centre of the page, then draw a line to each act it led to, each act forming a link to further acts. Have them explain the 'chains' they found in the story.

Ask students to imagine the links in the 'chains' that eventually led to the activities of the Red Cross/Red Crescent around the world.

NOTE

There is an example of such a diagram in Exploration 3A (Extension activities).

HOW INCREMENTAL ACTS BUILD THE STRENGTH OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

"Step by step" (35-45 minutes) – small groups and role-playing

TEACHER
1A.4 RESOURCES

STUDENT
1A.10 RESOURCES

Begin with a discussion of what enables people to respond in a humanitarian way.

- > What does it take to do something difficult, dangerous or unpopular in order to protect someone whose life or human dignity is at risk?
[For example, personal courage, strong moral or religious beliefs, ignorance of possible danger, personal experience of suffering in a similar way.]

Encourage students to draw upon the stories they have studied as well as upon their own experiences.

Present "Step by step." Then divide the four roles among all the students (assign each student one person from the story). Ask them to imagine being the person whom they have been assigned. Have them write down what that person might have been thinking and feeling at the time.

Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born. Very often the rescuers make only a small commitment at the start – to hide someone for a day or two. But once they had taken that step, they began to see themselves differently, as someone who helps.
– Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil*

About the stories

After at least 5 minutes, group students by the roles assigned to them: all those who have thought about the same person fall into one group. Have them discuss the following questions in their small groups:

- > As this person, what are you trying to do and why?
- > As this person, what are your hopes and fears at each point in the story?

Have students act out the situation.

You might set up the role-playing exercise in this way:

The scene is Occupied Poland in 1942. Jerezy and Stefa have been hiding Irena in their one-room flat for several months. This evening, Jerezy returns from work. For him, the danger has become too much.

After the role-playing exercise, conduct a discussion to encourage students to reflect on the experience and the choices that they made.

Possible questions:

- > What do you think about the choices you made? Why?
- > What do you think of the choices made by the other three?

Trace the steps in the rescuers' involvement. To help students to recognize that individual differences (in temperament, for example) will lead people to respond differently in risky situations, discuss the following points:

- > How did each person contribute to Irena's survival?
- > How do the actions of one selfless person affect the actions of others?
- > Why is everyone not equally able to do what is needed?
- > What do you think the title of the story means?

From past experience we have learned that whenever people speak up on behalf of their more unfortunate fellow human beings, their protest does have an effect (...) But even if our efforts left the tormentors indifferent, the efforts would still be fruitful, for they bring comfort and consolation to the victims.
– Elie Wiesel, article in *Newsday*

FINDING HUMANITARIAN ACTS AROUND THE WORLD

Have students apply what they have learned to other stories about ordinary people throughout the world who have acted to protect life or human dignity in violent situations. The authors of these stories are quite different from one another, as are the settings and the contexts.

Story	Context	Place	Author
"Villagers ease pain in camps"	Armed conflict	Bosnia and Herzegovina	A journalist
"A witness comes forward"	Internal disturbances	South Africa	Adapted from an autobiography
"Brave shopkeeper" (if not used earlier)	Street violence	Thailand	A teacher

NOTE

You can gather more stories from your own history – national, regional, local, personal – and from local news sources.

Extension activities

RESEARCH AND COLLECT STORIES

Research stories from your history, legends and religion to find accounts of bystanders who acted to protect the life or human dignity of someone whom they may not know or whom they would not ordinarily be inclined to help or protect.

> What made them act? What was the result?

Illustrate and put together a book or exhibit of all the stories you collect.

SAYINGS

Give your own interpretation of the following line from the 14th-century Sufi poet, Jelaluddin Rumi:

Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder.

You can interpret Rumi's statement in a drawing, write about it or compose a song based on it.

Do a brainstorming exercise for statements or sayings that you have heard which reflect the humanitarian point of view. Explain how each saying is linked with the humanitarian point of view.

[For instance, when an EHL student proposed "Monkey see, monkey do," classmates justified its inclusion on the grounds that people follow other people's example, and that goes for humanitarian behaviour as well as any other type of behaviour.]

Collect (from your family and other sources) traditional sayings that reflect the humanitarian point of view. Collaborate on a booklet or collage made up of the sayings.

Instead of seeking vengeance, set a good example.

– a student from Djibouti

Mercy holds the world together.

– a student from Thailand

A 'Hadith' by the Prophet says: Whoever of you sees an unjust act should intervene to change it by hand, if he cannot then by his tongue, and if he cannot then with his heart and this is the minimum.

– a student from Egypt

Even a hunter cannot kill a bird that comes to him for refuge.

– Japanese proverb

TRACE THE CONSEQUENCES

Analyse the impact of bystanders on the protection of life or human dignity.

Choose one of the following acts and construct a chain of consequences:

- an act you did as a bystander on behalf of someone else;
- an act someone else did as a bystander.

Write the action of the bystander in a circle in the middle of the page. Then show the impact of that action by connecting the circle to as many other people and events as you can think of.

Aftermath of a battle

Background to the story



Solferino is a small town in what is now northern Italy. Although the people of the Italian peninsula share a common language and culture, Italy was not, during all the years after the fall of the Roman Empire, a united nation. In the period preceding the unification of Italy in 1861, the peninsula was home to a number of principalities. They were often dominated by their more powerful neighbours, mainly France and Austria. Both nations had attempted to control northern Italy. Most people living in Solferino and its surrounding villages were neither French nor Austrian. The example of the French Revolution, and almost two decades of the domination of northern Italy by Napoleonic France, sparked a movement for a unified Italian state, free from foreign control. This movement culminated in a number of revolutions in 1848. All the revolutions failed, and Austrian troops came to occupy much of northern and central Italy. One area of the Italian peninsula that retained some independence was the Kingdom of Piedmont (Sardinia), ruled by King Victor Emmanuel II.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE STORY

Piedmont and France formed a military alliance in the 1850s. Their plan was to manoeuvre Austria into declaring war on Piedmont, so that France could come to Piedmont's assistance. The plan worked, and Austria declared war in 1859. At the Battle of Solferino, the French and Sardinian armies, under Napoleon III, faced the forces of the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph I. On 24 June 1859, about 300,000 hungry soldiers, exhausted by many days of forced marches, clashed all day long, in and around the town of Solferino, until the Austrians made a desperate retreat. The plain on which the battle took place had been turned into a muddy mess by heavy rain, the struggling feet of weary soldiers and the hooves of horses. The next morning, when the curious came to view the carnage, the ground was covered with thousands of dead and dying soldiers.

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective



Sources: Infoplease (<http://www.infoplease.com>). Funk and Wagnalls (<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com>). Encyclopedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com>). Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*, Carrol & Graf Publishers, Inc., New York, 1998.

A witness comes forward

Background to the story



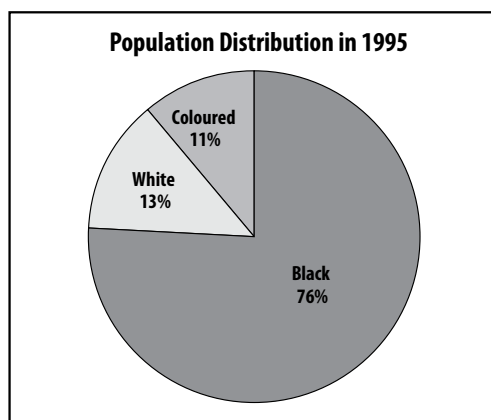
South Africa, located at the southern tip of Africa, is home to 43.5 million people. The Dutch established a colony there in 1652. Until then, the whole area had been inhabited exclusively by a number of African tribes. In 1814, the Dutch ceded the region to Britain. By the end of the nineteenth century, British rule extended north and east to the current borders of South Africa. In 1910, the Union of South Africa was created; it was a self-governing dominion of the British Empire, and would later become a member of what came to be known as 'the British Commonwealth.' Its government and economy were designed to be dominated by the white minority. The government periodically created laws to strengthen 'white rule.' The National Party, which ruled South Africa from 1948 until 1994, was responsible for the passage of many of these laws. This system of racial discrimination against non-white people was called 'apartheid.' It used racial classification to restrict the lives of non-white people: where they could live, the jobs they could hold, their education and their involvement in politics.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE STORY

The African National Congress (ANC) was founded in 1912 for the purpose of achieving equality for the non-white peoples of South Africa. In 1961, the country – now the Republic of South Africa – withdrew from the British Commonwealth, and the government took steps to further strengthen apartheid. In the 1970s and 1980s, the South African government lost a great deal of international support. World opinion turned against apartheid in reaction to media coverage of the government's use of violence.

By 1990, it had become clear that apartheid was doomed. Major anti-apartheid organizations like the ANC were legalized and their leaders released from prison or allowed to return from exile. Much of the legislation establishing apartheid was repealed. The government and major political parties worked on creating a new constitution and negotiated a process for instituting majority rule. Negotiations broke down in June 1992 when the ANC accused the government of involvement in attacks against its supporters. The process resumed in March 1993, after the government acknowledged that the police had a responsibility to protect ANC members. Apartheid was abolished, and the first free elections were held in 1994.

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective



Sources: Rita M. Byrnes (ed.), *South Africa: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC, May 1996 (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zatoc.html>). Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

Alone on the bench

Background to the story



Arkansas is a state in the southern United States of America. Little Rock is the largest city and the state's capital. In the late 1950s, the population of Arkansas was 77% white and 22% African-American.

Before 1954, most schools in the American South were racially segregated. African-American children were not allowed to attend the same schools as white children. Generally, schools for African-Americans were poorly funded compared to those for white children. They often needed repairs and lacked basic supplies. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court decided that segregating schools by race was illegal. The court ordered that 'whites-only' schools must be opened up to African-American students "with all deliberate speed."

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE STORY

To comply with the Supreme Court order, the school board of the city of Little Rock announced that the city's all-white secondary school could now accept African-American students. On the first day of the school year in September 1957, nine African-American children planned to enrol in Central High School in Little Rock. At a meeting the day before, the school superintendent had told the parents of the African-American students that he would not be able to protect them if they accompanied their children to school. The governor of Arkansas sent the state's National Guard (a military force controlled by the state government) into Little Rock, claiming that there was a danger of violence. The Guardsmen prevented the African-American children from entering the school. A large crowd of white people had also gathered around the school to stop the children from entering.

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective



Sources: Infoplease (<http://www.infoplease.com>). Funk and Wagnalls (<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com>). Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). Daniel Boorstin, Brooks Kelley, Ruth Boorstin, *A History of the United States*, Ginn and Company, Lexington MA, 1981. Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, David McKay, New York, 1962.

Step by step

Background to the story



At the start of World War II, Poland covered a territory of about 375,000 square kilometres. Parts of Poland were claimed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Before World War II, Poland had significant minority populations of Germans, Russians and Ukrainians. Historically, Jews who were persecuted in and expelled from much of Europe had been welcome in Poland. There, they had practised their religion and built their own schools. Jews in Poland continued to have a special relationship with Polish rulers. That is one of the reasons why a large Jewish community flourished in Poland. When World War II began, almost 3,350,000 Jews were living in Poland. Only 90,000 Polish Jews survived the war.

The German invasion of Poland, on 1 September 1939, marked the start of World War II. Less than three weeks later, the Soviet Union also invaded Poland. The Polish government fled to London. Much of its armed forces fled to other European countries to continue to fight the

Germans. The Polish underground, dedicated to fighting the Germans, was especially active in Warsaw. In June 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and that part of Poland occupied by the Soviet army. By the end of the month, all of Poland was in German hands.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE STORY

The Nazis created many concentration camps in Poland. These camps were used to exterminate Polish Jews, Poles who opposed the German occupation and Jews brought from other countries. Warsaw's 450,000 Jews were first crowded together into a separate part of the city, now known to history as the Warsaw Ghetto. Then they were deported to concentration camps.

On 1 August 1944, the Polish underground changed its tactics. It began an open, armed struggle against the Nazis. On 2 October, the leader of the Polish fighters surrendered. After the surrender, the Nazis transported most of the residents of Warsaw to camps in Germany or forced them to move to other Polish towns and cities.



Sources: Infoplease (<http://www.infoplease.com>). Funk and Wagnalls (<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com>). Encyclopedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com>). Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

Brave shopkeeper

Background to the story



Thailand is a country in South-East Asia. Bangkok is the largest city, and also the capital of the country.

Before World War II, Thailand's economy was based on agriculture. More recently, Thailand's economy has become more industrial and urban. While this change has increased the country's overall wealth, it has also caused difficulties. Environmental problems and a lack of access to land have forced many Thais to move from the countryside to the city. Although some find employment, many do not. This has caused an increase in urban homelessness and crime. Thailand also has a growing problem in the form of youth gangs in Bangkok and other urban areas.

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective



Sources: Barbara Leitch LePoer (ed.), *Thailand: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC, September 1987 (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/thtoc.html#th0046>). Infoplease (<http://www.infoplease.com>). Funk and Wagnalls (<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com>).

Villagers ease pain in camps

Background to the story

Bosnia and Herzegovina is bordered today by Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. The village of Batkovic is in the north-east of the country, near the border with Serbia.

At the time of the 1991 census, 4,365,000 people lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 31% were Serbs and members of the Serbian Orthodox Church; 49% were Muslims whose ancestors had converted to Islam when the area was part of the Ottoman Empire; the remainder of the population was mostly Croat Roman Catholic.

The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I, when the empire was broken up and the two provinces combined as one in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). In 1945, Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugoslavia). Yugoslavia was led by Josip Broz Tito, leader of the 'Partizans' the major armed resistance movement that fought the German occupation of Yugoslavia during World War II. Tito's death in 1980, combined with the weakening of the

Soviet Union, enabled nationalist sentiments to reassert themselves and cause tensions. In 1991, the Yugoslav Republics of Slovenia, Macedonia and Croatia declared their independence.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE STORY

In a referendum held in the spring of 1992, the Muslim and Croat populations of Bosnia and Herzegovina also voted for independence from Yugoslavia. The Bosnian Serbs, who had boycotted the referendum, established their own government. An armed conflict broke out between the Croatian-backed Muslim and Croat forces, on the one hand, and the Bosnian Serb forces opposing the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported by military units from Serbia, on the other. As a result, civilians were terrorized, murdered, detained in concentration camps and forcibly expelled from the areas in which they had been living. The war went on until the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement put a stop to the fighting.



Sources: Infoplease (<http://www.infoplease.com>). Funk and Wagnalls (<http://www.funkandwagnalls.com>). Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

The story

Aftermath of a battle

On 24 June 1859, the Austrian and the French armies clashed at Solferino, a town in northern Italy. After sixteen hours, 36,000 men lay dead or wounded. In 1859, the power of weapons to damage human bodies had increased, but the ability to care for wounded soldiers had not.

On the evening after the battle, Henry Dunant, a young Swiss citizen, arrived in Solferino on a mission unrelated to the battle. Dunant's business was failing and he believed the French emperor could help. Knowing that the war would bring the emperor to the area, he hoped for a chance to meet him. What he encountered, however, was the aftermath of the battle.

Here is some of what he remembered:

...*The stillness of the night was broken by groans, by stifled sighs of anguish and suffering. Heart-rending voices were calling for help. (...) When the sun came up, (...) bodies of men and horses covered the battlefield; (...) The poor wounded men (...) were ghastly pale and exhausted. (...) Some, who had gaping wounds already beginning to show infection, were almost crazed with suffering. They begged to be put out of their misery. (...) The lack of*

water was more and more cruelly felt; the ditches were drying up, and the soldiers had, for the most part, only polluted and brackish water...



As Dunant wandered among wounded soldiers who kept calling out to him for water, he realized how little attention anyone was paying to them. He gathered a group of local women and organized them into teams to take food and water to the wounded; he set them to washing the bleeding and vermin-covered bodies so that wounds could be treated; he organized a primitive field hospital in a church; he collected linen for bandages and brought food and medical supplies from neighbouring towns; he directed small boys to fetch water in buckets; he recruited tourists, a journalist, a count, a chocolate manufacturer; and soon these people were dressing wounds, carrying water, writing farewell letters to families of the dying men. All the helpers, Dunant observed, had forgotten the nationality of the men they tended; they were *tutti fratelli*, all brothers, now.

Dunant came across a 20-year-old corporal who had a bullet in his left side and knew that he would soon die

of his injuries. He gave some water to the young man, who thanked Dunant and said, with tears in his eyes, "Oh, Sir, if you could write to my father to comfort my mother." This was the only news they received from their son.

Dunant's business did, in fact, fail. He was diverted from seeing the emperor that day. But he wrote a small book called *A Memory of Solferino*, in which he described what he had seen and made a simple proposal:

Would it not be possible in time of peace and quiet to form relief societies for the

purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?

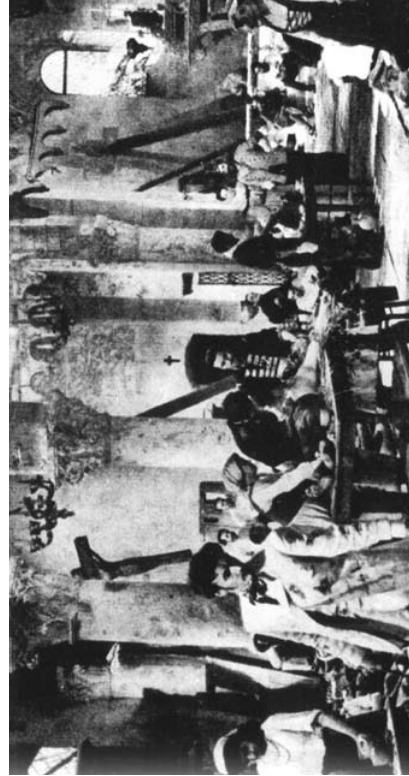
The book led to the formation of the "International Committee for the relief of military wounded," which evolved into the International Committee of the Red Cross. His vision also led to the development of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world.

Source: Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino*, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1986.

Questions:

- > What was the impact of Dunant's response at the time?
- > In the long term?

Still from the film *D'Homme à Homme*



Module 1: The humanitarian perspective

A witness comes forward

In April 1993 in South Africa, the struggle against apartheid was coming to a victorious end, without the bloodshed that had been feared and expected. Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress (ANC), widely acclaimed for his spiritual leadership of the struggle, had been freed after 27 years in prison and, with President F.W. de Klerk, was negotiating the transition to majority rule.

On 10 April, Chris Hani, a respected leader of the ANC, was assassinated. He had been shot at point-blank range in front of his home in Boksburg, Johannesburg. The perpetrators acknowledged that they had chosen Hani as a target because his death was most likely to plunge the country into chaos, allowing the right wing to seize power.

The following is taken from Mandela's account of that event in his autobiography:

Chris' death was a blow to me personally and to the movement. (...) He was a great hero among the youth of South Africa, a man who spoke their language and to whom they listened. If anyone could mobilize the unruly youth behind a negotiated solution, it was Chris. (...)

The country was fragile. There were concerns that Hani's death might trigger a racial war, with the youth deciding that their hero should become a martyr for whom they would lay down their own lives (...). The murder was an act of mad desperation, an attempt to derail the negotiation process.

That day, however, a woman phoned the police with the licence-plate number of the killer's car. It so happened that this woman was white. Mandela was asked to address the nation by radio that night. In his autobiography, he reports what he said:

I said that the process of peace and negotiations could not be halted. With all the authority at my command I said, 'I appeal to all our people to remain calm and to honour the memory of Chris Hani by remaining a disciplined force for peace'. Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman (...) risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice this assassin.

The assassination failed to produce chaos and racial war, and the process of peace and negotiations continued.

Source: Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1994.

Question: What risk did the woman take in coming forward?



Adil Bradlow/AP

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective

Alone on the bench

Until 1954, segregation laws in some states of the United States of America forbade black students from attending the same schools as white students. When the United States Supreme Court outlawed segregation throughout the country, the governor of the state of Arkansas vowed to defy the order. "Blood will run in the streets if Negro pupils should attempt to enter Central High School," he said.

The school board of the city of Little Rock, Arkansas decided otherwise. At the beginning of the 1957 school year, the all-white Central High School agreed to admit nine black students. Elizabeth Eckford was one of the nine.

The Little Rock school board asked parents of the nine students not to accompany their children to school because the board feared that the presence of African-American parents would incite the expected mob. Arrangements were made for all nine students to meet and proceed to the school together, accompanied by a lawyer. Elizabeth was unaware of the arrangements, however, so she set out alone.

When she got off the bus near Central High School, Elizabeth saw a crowd of

angry white people, and hundreds of armed members of the Arkansas National Guard whom the governor had sent to prevent the nine students from entering the school. Elizabeth thought she might be safe if she walked behind the Guardsmen to the school entrance. The Guardsmen made her turn away. She remembers the scene like this:

The crowd began to follow me, calling me names. All of a sudden my knees began to shake and I wondered whether I could make it. It was the longest block I ever walked in my whole life. Even so, I wasn't too scared, because I thought that the guards would protect me.

When I got in front of the school, I went up to a guard again but he just looked straight ahead and didn't move to let me pass. I didn't know what to do. Just then another guard let some white students through. When I tried to squeeze past him, he raised his bayonet. Somebody started yelling, 'Lynch her! Lynch her!' I tried to see a friendly face. I made eye contact with an old woman, but she spat on me. I looked down the block and saw a bench at the bus stop. I ran to the bench and sat down.

Some of the crowd followed Elizabeth to the bench, shouting, "Drag her over to the tree!" It was one way of saying that they would lynch (hang) her. As Elizabeth sat on the bench for what seemed an eternity, a white woman named Grace Lorch made her way through the crowd and spoke to Elizabeth. Elizabeth slowly lifted her

head and looked up at the stranger, then got up. Walking close beside her, the woman guided her to a nearby bus stop. Elizabeth got on the bus and escaped from the mob.

Source: Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, Penguin Books, New York, 1987.

Question: Why didn't the crowd prevent Grace Lorch from escorting Elizabeth to safety?



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Module 1: The humanitarian perspective

The story

The story

Step by step

When Nazi Germany conquered Poland in World War II, the occupying force imposed its policy of enslaving and killing Jews. Anyone who was caught hiding a Jew in Poland faced death. Some were even hanged, and their corpses left suspended in public squares, as a warning to others. Nevertheless, some chose to help save Jews. Stefa, a Catholic factory worker, went to incredible lengths to save a Jewish stranger.

In 1942, Laminski, a policeman who was in the Polish underground, asked Stefa's husband, Jerezy, to hide Irena, a Jewish woman, for 'a few days.' The couple created a hiding place for her in their one-room flat. 'A few days' stretched to a week; then the week became a month. After a few months, Jerezy demanded that Irena leave, but Stefa insisted that she was to stay hidden in their home. Jerezy left the apartment angrily, swearing to Stefa that he would tell the Nazis that she was hiding Irena.

What did Stefa do?

I called Laminski and he went to talk to my husband. He said to Jerezy 'Here is my pistol; if you tell about Stefa and Irena, you will not live more than five minutes longer. The first bullet will go into your head.' After that, my husband did not return. This ended my marriage, but the policeman Laminski kept on helping us.

Was Stefa aware of the danger to herself?

Sure I knew. Everybody knew what could happen to someone who kept Jews. Irena would say, 'I am such a burden to you, I will leave.' But I would say, 'Until now you were here and we succeeded, so maybe all will succeed. How can you give yourself up?' I knew I could not let her go.

In 1944, the Polish resistance rose up in Warsaw against the Nazi occupation, but their rebellion was put down brutally. The Nazis began forcing all civilians to leave except mothers with young children. For Irena, this was likely to mean death. Recognizing this, Stefa made a difficult decision. She cried while telling the rest of her story. ↕

When we were about to be evacuated, I told Irena to take my baby. I said, 'I will try to stay with you. In case I get lost, take care of him, like your own child.' When the German official saw her with the child, he told her to return to the flat. Somehow I was allowed to go with her.

How could Stefa risk losing her baby?

I knew Irena would take good care of him. Besides, no one knew what might have become of me. I could have died too.

Source: Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, Oxford University, New York, 1986.

Question: How did each person contribute to Irena's survival?



AP

Module 1: The humanitarian perspective

The story

Brave shopkeeper

There is a corner of a road in Bangkok where fighting among groups of boys sometimes occurred. One day, a group of boys from the mechanics school picked on a boy from another school and chased him down the road. The poor boy ran for his survival. He reached the little shop at the corner of the road. The boys giving chase were everyday customers at this shop.

The shopkeeper saw what was happening. The boy knocked on his door. ➡

Quickly, the vendor opened the back door of his shop to let the boy slip in. He let the boy hide in his shop.

The brave shopkeeper was not stopped by the thought of what could have happened if the group of attacking boys had come in and found their 'enemy' in his shop. He was not stopped by the thought of what might happen to his business in days to come when those boys would know that he had rescued their victim.

Source: Achara Permpool, Thai teacher.

Questions:

- > What choices did the shopkeeper have when he saw the boy at his door?
- > What might the consequences be of each choice?



Tanchanok Taksiri, Thai student

The story

Villagers ease pain in camps

**Batkovic, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
24 January 1993**

All last summer, buses and trucks packed with Muslim and Croat prisoners trundled down the narrow farm road past Ilija Gajic's vegetable farm. The army never consulted the villagers when it set up the camp in the state grain-storage sheds. Gajic feared that the worst of Balkan history was repeating itself.

"Concentration camps never bring anything for anyone," said the 62-year-old Serb who presides over the village assembly in this village of 4,000. "I felt bad watching this happening." ⇄

As reports emerged of beatings and deaths, he and other leaders of the village decided to protest. His is one of the untold stories in this war of unremitting cruelty – the story of Serbs who took a risk to improve conditions for their fellow citizens.

"We wanted to make a goodwill gesture. We wanted them to be treated as we would wish the other side to treat our prisoners," he said.

Early in September, Gajic led a delegation to the nearby army

headquarters in Bijelina and demanded that guards who had been beating prisoners be replaced. "They were not from around here. They had had victims in their families and wanted to exact revenge," Gajic said. "So we asked the authorities to put in local people."

The military command at first refused even to say who was in charge of the camp, he recalled. The tone of the discussion sharpened. One of the delegation told the military commanders "We don't want a Jasenovac," a reference to the concentration camp set up by Croat fascists during World War II, where tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews and gypsies were put to death.

"Any good man would say that," said Gajic. "We didn't want to let the village be blamed for whatever happened. We wanted to save the reputation of the village."

In the presence of guards, prisoners were still reluctant to talk about the cruelty of the earlier period. But they confirmed the stories told by released detainees of beatings with two-by-four,* rampant dysentery fed by terrible sanitary conditions and elaborate ruses devised to fool visiting

delegations into thinking there was no one under 18 or over 60 in the camp. According to detainees, at least 20 had died of beatings or maltreatment up to September, but conditions improved significantly after the intervention of the villagers.

The conditions remain primitive, but several hundred detainees now go to work six days a week in a nearby factory, where they have better meals, although no pay. The detainees compliment the guards, and the guards welcome the praise. "We feel we don't have to beat the prisoners," said Dragolic, one of the new local guards. "We talk to them." There is now even a television set in each of the sheds, and over the New Year, the guards brought the detainees bottles of *slivovitz*, a plum brandy. "I think Serbs are not so bad as everyone wants to make them out to be," Gajic said. "There are probably other examples of that, not only in Batkovic."

* A "two-by-four" is a thick piece of lumber.

Source: Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide: The 1993 Pulitzer-Prize Winning Dispatches on the 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Bosnia*, Macmillan, New York, 1993.

Question: What choices and social pressure did bystanders have?



Michel Comte/ICRC