

Lesson Plan for Independence Day for grades 10-12

Responsibility of Youths Then and Now

Gleaned from the song 'Around the fire' by Nathan Alterman

Lesson Duration – 45 min.

Conceptual Preface:

- **The Palmach** – Strike Forces. The Palmach was founded in 1941 to protect the Jewish population from a possible invasion by the Nazis into the land of Israel, and was comprised of young people aged 18–22, most of them, members of Zionist pioneering youth movements. Being reliant on volunteers and lacking funds, it was forced to finance itself and therefore had an agreement with the kibbutzes by which Palmach volunteers would engage in various fields of farm labor by days, and – in combat training at night. The Palmach operated in most battlefronts following the Declaration of Independence in the United Nations and suffered about 3,000 casualties, most of them young men and women.
- **Nathan Alterman** – the greatest poet of the Jewish community in the period of the establishment of the state. In addition to advanced material, he also wrote poetry and had a regular column of current events in Davar and Ha'aretz newspapers called, 'the Seventh Column'. The poem, 'Around the Fire' was published in 'The Seventh Column'. Alterman's columns are inalienable assets of Hebrew poetry ('The Silver Platter', 'On This', etc.).

Procedure:

- **Opening Question:** What is the difference between sitting around a bonfire (such as on Lag Ba'omer) and sitting in a classroom? What does sitting around a bonfire make way for?
- **Distribution of the poem to the students and its recital.**
- **Questions**
 - According to Alterman, what are the characteristics of the Palmach?
 - What values characterize Israeli youths today?

- What are the differences between Palmach youths and today's youths?
- Discussion
 - What were the prices paid by the youths who fought the War of Independence?
 - Are the values adhered to by the Palmach youths also relevant these days?
 - For which goals are today's youths willing to pay similar prices to those paid by Palmach generation youths?

Nathan Alterman

Around the Campfire

(commemorating 7 years to the Palmach, Nissan 5708)

Their nation, unlike a mother

Didn't know as they left.

The night was deep and lungful,

As always in Nissan the month.

And a group of nameless youngsters sat there,

With their bare elbows and knees,

They listened, quietly listened,

And sometimes argued a bit.

In front, as a flaming column,

A campfire, shifting in the wind.

No more, but in the stubborn nation's history,

The night was engraved on a slate.

The burden, plain as earth,

They carried without looking back.

No horn sounded,

No one to pat their heads on a winter night.

No. Two sleeves tied in a not on their neck.

Just the sweater was left to embrace them.

Shoes thumping their satchels and bags,

A small meal of olives and dates,

And bended aluminum cups,

What more can we say; from these plain simple things

Myths are created, that's the essence.



What can we sing about them, what can we sing,
They do it much better than us.
They write their own songs for themselves,
And even their books.
That is the Palmach, it never leaves,
Any duty for an outsider.

Here is the way it should be said,
Young men, know only this.
Among this generation's big holidays,
None is more beautiful than your own humble day.
On the brink of freedom, the nation in front,
Bows and weeps, understand it.

The Seventh Column 1, the United Kibbutz Movement, Tel Aviv, 5737, pp. 309-310

