

as seek to soften that--than which what's harder?-- his Jewish heart.” – Alan Singer

**High School Level Activity: Time Magazine’s Man of the Year for 1938**

**Instructions:** For its January, 1939 edition, *Time* magazine selected Adolph Hitler as its 1938 “Man of the Year.”

- Read the excerpts from the article that follows.
- List the key achievements of Adolph Hitler mentioned in the article.
- Based on these achievements, do you think Hitler merited selection as “Man of the Year”? Explain.
- Write a Letter-to-the-Editor of *Time* explaining your point of view.

A. When without loss of blood he reduced Czechoslovakia to a German puppet state, forced a drastic revision of Europe’s defensive alliances, and won a free hand for himself in Eastern Europe by getting a “hands-off” promise from powerful Britain (and later France), Adolph Hitler without doubt became 1938’s Man of the Year. Most other world figures of 1938 faded in importance as the year drew to a close. . . . But the figure of Adolph Hitler strode over a cringing Europe with all the swagger of a conqueror. . . . Hitler became in 1938 the greatest threatening force that the democratic, freedom-loving world faces today.

B. Rant as he might against the machinations of international Communism and international Jewry, or rave as he would that he was just a Pan-German trying to get all the Germans back in one nation, Fuehrer Hitler had himself become the world’s No. 1 International Revolutionist . . . Fascism has discovered that freedom -- of press, speech, assembly -- is a potential danger to its own security. In Fascist phraseology democracy is often coupled with Communism.

C. To this man of no trade and few interests the Great War was a welcome event which gave him some purpose in life. Hitler took part in 48 engagements, won the German Iron Cross, was wounded once and gassed once, was in a hospital when the Armistice of November 11, 1918 was declared. His political career began in 1919 when he became Member No. 7 of the midget German Labor Party. Discovering his powers of oratory, Hitler soon became the party’s leader, changed its name to the National Socialist German Labor Party, wrote its anti- Semitic, anti-democratic, authoritarian program.

D. The situation which gave rise to this demagogic, ignorant, desperate movement was inherent in the German Republic’s birth and in the craving of large sections of the politically immature German people for strong, masterful leadership. Democracy in Germany was conceived in the womb of military defeat. It was the Republic which put its signature (unwillingly) to the humiliating Versailles Treaty, a brand of shame which it never lived down in German minds.

E. That the German people love uniforms, parades, military formations, and submit easily to authority is no secret. . . . What Adolph Hitler & Co. did to Germany in less than six years was applauded wildly and ecstatically by most Germans. He lifted the nation from post-War defeatism. Under the swastika Germany was unified. His was no ordinary dictatorship, but rather one of great energy and magnificent planning.

F. Germany’s 700,000 Jews have been tortured physically, robbed of homes and properties, denied a chance to earn a living, chased off the streets. . . . But not only Jews have suffered. Out of Germany has come a steady, ever-swelling stream of refugees, Jews and Gentiles, liberals and conservatives, Catholics as well as Protestants, who could stand Nazism no longer.

G. Germany has become a nation of uniforms, goose- stepping to Hitler’s tune, where boys of ten are taught to throw hand grenades, where women are regarded as breeding machines. In five years under the Man of 1938, regimented Germany had made itself one of the great military powers of the world today. . . . Despite a shortage of

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trained officers and a lack of materials, the German Army has become a formidable machine which could probably be beaten only by a combination of opposing armies.

**High School Level Activity: What is Fascism?**

**Instructions:** Read the quotes below and explain your views on the questions below:

1. How do you define Fascism?
2. Was the Nazi movement in Germany under the leadership of Adolph Hitler a uniquely German phenomenon or was it a special case of a broader Fascist movement in Western society between World War I and World War II?

**A. The Encyclopedia of World History, 6th Edition** (Source: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001, 643)

“Fascist movements that emerged after World War I . . . shared an ideological perspective that subordinated the individual to the state, opposed class struggle, and affirmed nationalist identities and a corporate state. Structures were elitist rather than egalitarian, and there was an emphasis on the role of the great leader.”

**B. Eric Hobsbawn’s The Age of Extremes** (New York: Pantheon, 1994, 125-128)

“The optimal conditions for the triumph of the crazy ultra-Right were an old state and its ruling mechanisms which could no longer function; a mass of disenchanting, disoriented and discontented citizens who no longer knew where their loyalties lay; strong socialist movements threatening or appearing to threaten social revolution, but not actually in a position to achieve it; and a move of nationalist resentment against the peace treaties of 1918-1920.

Fascism was no more the ‘expression of the interests of monopoly capital’ than the American New Deal or British Labor governments. . . Big business in the early 1930s did not particularly want Hitler, and would have preferred more orthodox conservatism. . . . However, when he came to power, business collaborated wholeheartedly.”

**C. Program of the Communist International (1929), The Crisis of Capitalism and Fascism**

(Source: A Handbook of Marxism. NY: International Publishers, 1935, 978-979)

“Under certain special historical conditions, the progress of this bourgeois, imperialist, reactionary offensive assumes the form of Fascism. These conditions are: instability of capitalist relations; the existence of considerable declassed social elements, the pauperization of broad strata of the urban petty-bourgeoisie and of the intelligentsia; discontent among the rural petty-bourgeoisie and, finally, the constant menace of mass proletarian action. In order to stabilize and perpetuate its rule, the bourgeoisie is compelled to an increasing degree to abandon the parliamentary system in favor of the Fascist system. . . The Fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship, ideologically marked by the ‘national idea’ . . . . The combination of social-demagogy, corruption and active white terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics, are the characteristic features of Fascism.”

**D. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1941-1944)**

(Source: George Seldes, The Great Quotations, New York: Lyle Stuart, 1960, p. 156)

“I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations. . . . He (Hitler) embodied the revolt of Germany against the hard fortunes of war . . . Adolph Hitler is Fuehrer because he exemplifies and enshrines the will of Germany. . . I will not pretend that if I had to choose between Communism and Nazism, I would choose Communism.”

## Responses to “Multiple Perspectives on the Holocaust?”

**Robert Fishman, Bayside High School, Queens, NY:**

I agree with Hannah Arendt’s argument about Communism and Fascism having a number of similarities. In both pre-Communist and pre-Fascist nations in Europe, there was an absence of traditional institutions, and this vacuum gave rise to extremist parties. Unlike Communism, Fascism never had a single set of beliefs to guide its adherents. In different countries, fascism meant different things. It was loosely based on a strong connection to nationalism and militarism, and, in the case of Germany, a very strong racial element.

I agree that the potential for horrific abuses rests in the vast majority of societies, but I also think that there were two major historical factors that figured prominently in the ability of the Nazis’ ideology to take and hold total power in Germany. First, a long-time, deep-seated anti-Semitism that existed among many Germans (German Jews had done much to assimilate, but this had not erased the anti-Semitism). Second, a political culture that was steeped in autocracy and/or absolutism, with little or no experience in democracy. I do not think that there are “national characteristics” which suggest that Germans were somehow “genetically” programmed to become Nazis, but I do think that these factors played a major role in the Nazis’ ability to take over Germany.

**Joseph Corr, Shaker High School, Latham, NY:**

Alan Singer’s observations on the Holocaust as not a uniquely German event, an aberration of historical circumstances and culture, are right on. I try to teach the Holocaust and other human rights violations (especially Rwanda) as essentially a series of choices on a national and personal level. It was clear that evidence was available to indicate, to some the extent, genocide during the Holocaust. Policymakers, political and military, made conscious decisions that it was not in United States national interests to end the tragedy.

The situation was also glaringly apparent in Rwanda. Following a mismanaged intervention in Somalia, it was judged politically risky to classify events there as a genocide and intervene. Again choices were made by governments and populations not to act. Students must see the Holocaust in this light

and realize that they have a choice, and a voice, and must respond to future human rights violations.

When I teach the Holocaust, I spend a considerable amount of time focusing on the historical context of anti-Semitic behavior. This includes multiple examples of discrimination throughout history and across Eastern and Western Europe. We try to identify common elements that paved the way for the Holocaust including the facts that Jews were identifiable as a minority, were victims of prior discrimination and thus easy targets for future discrimination, and were victims of numerous examples of violence. Students quickly realize that the phenomena was not uniquely German and conclude that under similar circumstances (remember David Duke’s surprisingly strong showings in Louisiana senatorial and governor’s races in economic hard times), something like this could happen in the United States. I strongly agree that social studies teachers need to focus on the big questions, expand the content base, and promote essential social studies “habits of mind” with all our students.

**Daphne Kohavy, Manhattan Village Academy, New York, NY:**

While I commend any effort to educate students on the horrors of the Holocaust, I have a big problem with much in the curriculums that are in circulation. None seem to address the recent rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, the resurgence of Nazi propaganda flooding out of the Middle East and the dire need for a Jewish homeland. In my opinion, study of the Holocaust is incomplete unless these are considered.

Many teachers do not want to address anything too controversial in their classes. I hear stories about tremendous complacency on the part of students when the subject is the Holocaust. Some students claim they are tired of hearing about “the Jews” while others are upset that the horrors of slavery are not presented with as much emphasis. Part of the problem is that students do not learn to think of Jews as an example of a people who have been displaced and have suffered as a result. Teachers must provide them with the bigger picture, including showing how anti-Semitism dates back to Medieval times.

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### **Bobbie Robinson, Kennedy H.S., Plainview, NY:**

Last spring, as I helped prepare 8th grade New York City students for their state assessment, we raced through the last chapters of the American history curriculum. In a lesson on World War II, I included a photograph of a Jewish prisoner in a concentration camp. The picture had no caption and I asked the students who they thought this person might be, how old did they think he was, and how could they tell? Some of the students deduced that he was a prisoner of some sort by his striped shirt. Further questions asked them to think about how long he had been a prisoner, what the star on the shirt meant, and how he might have become a prisoner. No one guessed that he was a Jewish prisoner during World War II. The students simply had no prior knowledge that could allow them to figure this out for themselves, but they were quickly intrigued by the mystery this picture represented to them. Their shock turned immediately to questions about how this could happen. These questions, and their answers, took us to a discussion of the part that ordinary Germans played in turning over the Jews and other targets of Hitler's hate. The students were sitting in groups of four or five, and I moved about the room giving them roles to imagine. I described the SS and the fear the Germans had of the secret police. I told them, "You are afraid that your neighbor (pointing to a student in the group) might turn you in for breaking the law, what do you do?" Again and again, most, though not all, of the students replied, "I would turn him/her in first (as they pointed to the fellow student)."

This lesson on the holocaust touched on the complicity of ordinary people and began a search for an answer to the question that the students had raised "How could this happen?" In the 8th grade American history curriculum at the end of the year, there was barely time for more. We talked about the number of people killed by the Nazis, numbers which amazed the students and left them asking, "Why didn't anybody stop them?" What struck me was that this lesson was the first time these students had ever heard of the Holocaust. As recent immigrants to the United States from countries that played no part in World War II, they would have had no reason to learn about it. The lesson on Hiroshima shocked them as well, for the same reason. I think that as teachers in New York, either Jewish ourselves or surrounded by many adult Jews who carry an acute awareness of the Holocaust with them, we sometimes forget that children cannot

know this history until they are taught it. Many of our students may be encountering the Holocaust for the first time. At the same time, some of our students have parents who escaped other, more recent, genocides; some children may have witnessed similar atrocities themselves. This long introduction leads me to two salient issues for myself as a teacher.

First, I think we need to help students to ask and then consider the question, "How could this happen?" My experience suggests that this is the question they will come up with. If we allow the lesson to build from this starting point, it will engage the students and drive them to find out more. I think students, and perhaps some teachers, at first want to reduce the cause of the Holocaust to a simplistic answer. However, the Holocaust provides a vivid example of the complexity of history and the need to look at the multiple factors that worked together to create the Holocaust. Students will quickly come up with reasons for the genocide. Teachers must build on this to say, "Yes, but don't stop there. Keep looking. What else was happening?"

Students should learn that both nations and individuals share some measure of responsibility for this horrific event. For example, Michael Beschloss' new book, *The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman, and the Destruction of Hitler's Germany 1941-1945* presents FDR's thoughts about whether the allies should try to disable the transports or crematoriums at Auschwitz and demonstrates that culpability for the Holocaust is still a topic for debate six decades later. Students should also consider the role of the French and pro-Nazi collaborators in a number of countries. One of my colleagues presents high school students with data showing the number of people turned in to the secret police by their fellow Germans, numbers which graphically illustrate that the Nazi enforcers themselves had to do very little to find their victims. It is important to discuss the issue of responsibility, not so we can create a list of weak or evil or inhuman people to lay blame on, but so that students realize how very much like us most of these people probably were. Hitler and the Nazis successfully played on the fears of thousands to help them accomplish their goals. Unless we and our students are aware of this, we are always in danger of falling into this trap ourselves.

The second point I raise with students is the idea that the Holocaust, while almost unimaginable in its horror, is not the only, or even the worst example of genocide in modern history. Students can examine

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readily available data on genocides in the Soviet Union, China, Bosnia, Rwanda, and other regions around the world to realize the extent of killing that has occurred over the last 100 years. The website *users.erols.com* lays this information out decade by decade in easy to read format. As students move through the web pages, they can see the changing locales of genocide dramatically illustrated with skulls that have been marked on maps representing the thousands or even millions of people killed. Together, these maps show us how sadly common genocide has become. We need to help students realize that there is a continuum when it comes to hatred and organized killing. Students should discuss at what point on this continuum murder crosses over into genocide. Can we call the devastating results of the European's discovery of the America's genocide? Was the Great Irish Famine genocide? Were Pol Pot's atrocities genocide? Are the UN/U.S economic sanctions against Iraq acts of genocide? Is all "ethnic cleansing" genocide? Is some? How do we decide?

If students are taught that the Holocaust is unique, then I think it becomes too easy to label the perpetrators as "other" and to imagine that their actions can never be repeated. I think we need to examine other mass killings, their causes, and their perpetrators to look for shared reasons. We need to see the ways that we allow injustices to continue and to ask ourselves if we would do any differently than the Germans who went along with the Nuremberg Laws and Kristellnacht. Do people, ourselves included, continue to look the other way while others who are different and distant die horrible deaths from violence, disease, and starvation? If only the Holocaust were unique in human history. Sadly, it is not.

### **Lorraine Teller, Essex County Voc-Tech, West Orange, NJ:**

Since Alan Singer has presented us with multiple perspectives on the Holocaust I feel comfortable responding to the article from multiple perspectives. As an ordained rabbi, an ordained inter-faith minister and the dean of the All Faiths Seminary in New York City, my first response would be; one cannot have light and darkness in the same moment, nor can one have faith and fear at the same time. One must conquer the other. As an educator in a public school my second response would be more in concert with the needs of my students. My students see much darkness in the

world, not unlike many of us felt during the Cold War during those locker bomb drills. Do some of you remember being on the cold floor, in front of your locker, sitting cross-legged with your coat over your head and shoulders? While our students haven't had that experience they have watched the towers burn. They have seen terrorist aggression in its ugliest form, here at home. I want, with all my heart, to answer the angst of my students with light and faith.

Am I allowed to do that? Or is that where my worlds collide as a minister, rabbi and public school teacher. This month's issue of NEA Today contains an article, Navigating Religion in the Classroom. Is this the heralding of a new perspective on teaching in public schools or has someone finally realized what Social Studies educators have always know: we will be condemned to relive our historical mistakes if we don't learn our historical roots and revelations. And is it just serendipity that provides this article at the same time Alan Singer's article appears. Perhaps we have come to maturity in the world, owning up to the reality that our world does have some basis in religion and our history is not complete without it.

So we turn to Singer's article. The answers to the questions from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, as well as the essential questions presented will give our students the historical perspective they need to deal with today's historical and political realities. The answers provide a jumping off point from which our students can become critical thinkers and solid future citizens of the world, voters in the democracy. But there is something more, and it is in that something more that I find my own comfort zone between "preach" and "teach", two facets of my world that I navigate from a back and forth stance. It is the lessons learned from the study of Holocaust that seem to me, the real diamonds in the rough. As Singer quotes, "They need to understand the processes that can result in genocide, as well as the human forces that can prevent or resist it."

When our students can confidently deal with the realities, as well as the myths and legends, of the Holocaust; when they can put the atrocities in some perspective, even just to admit that evil exists in our world; when they can trace the rise of one event, not as isolated but as coming out of the life and times, the facts and fictions of a certain place, then they can truly learn the lessons of the Holocaust. And that is the juncture at which we must be there, for them, as we the

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adults give them our truth that one cannot stand in the darkness and the light in the same instance. Nor can one have overwhelming fear when faith in something beyond ourselves (different for each of us) is present. We can give our students the facts, the definitions, the realities and help them to form their own understanding of Holocaust. After they have assimilated all the “history” we must then be there to offer our students hope; the hope we hold in them, as our future. We must be those mentors for the future teachers, diplomats, politicians, historians and even generals of the world to come. Our students, ourselves, deserve no less.

### **Neal Shultz, New Rochelle H.S., New Rochelle, NY:**

I teach the Shoah, firstly, so that children may gain knowledge. Genocide it may be, but the Holocaust is still history. Children reap rewards when they struggle to get the facts straight, especially when, the facts are so twisted. It makes a difference to know the exact percentage of German citizens in the Nazi party, the reasons Treblinka closed while Auschwitz expanded, and what flavor cake a Dutch Jew ate before deportation. Close study of any history sharpens the mind, but the Shoah is the pre-eminent topic for high school students to examine because of the wealth of primary documents and details accessible to them. Scrutiny also honors the victims of the tragedy. “The big things every one knows and no one needs to write about them,” Victor Klemperer writes in his searing diary of the Nazi years, *I Will Bear Witness*. But he adds, “It’s not the big things that are important to me, but the everyday life of tyranny [which] gets forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head.” I teach so that children so that may know the bites.

I also teach the Shoah to help children learn to think. Depressingly, these days, not even the Holocaust is immune to popular culture’s war on nuance. When *Seinfeld* airs an episode about a “soup Nazi” and Rush Limbaugh popularizes the term “feminazi,” kids can easily grow up believing that every bad person is a Nazi and that every Nazi was demonically bad. This reductionism inevitably drives students to the conclusion that everyone in Germany in the 1930’s was satanic, stupid, or cowardly-and produces a sense of cultural or personal superiority that undercuts

education. Teaching the Holocaust subtly, however, can provoke students to become critical thinkers about the present as well as the past. Weighing the Nuremberg Laws against the Jim Crow laws passed in the United States 50 years earlier, for example (or reading Hitler’s praise of the United States’ policy of isolating Indians on reservations), forces students to analyze issues of law, philosophy, biology and historical context. I raise problems with my students not to overwhelm them with unanswerable questions (“Why did it happen?”) or to drive them into cultural relativism. Rather, I hope to hone their own criteria, so that when they do judge they can do it humanely and well.

I teach the Shoah to protect children, too. The Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer has written that there is nothing of value in teaching children about babies burned alive in mass graves. The implication is that educators should not be teaching the Holocaust to adolescents, and that what they are currently teaching is most likely falsely uplifting. But that criticism may be paralyzing to educators and hurtful to children. The news of the Holocaust is already out. Children will hear about atrocities. Or worse, they won’t, if some Holocaust denier is their informant.

I teach the Shoah because, as much as it is in my power to do so, I want to be the intermediary between the material and my students, not concealing the truth but paying it out at a pace that they can absorb.

Of course, in the end, I teach the Shoah to prepare my students to help save the world. Not every one believes this goal can be achieved. One of the greatest Holocaust educators I know points out that no study has ever proved any correlation between learning about the Shoah and becoming more moral and politically active. Then again, faith always eludes empirical proof. Albert Camus recognized this when he wrote that “the great tragedies of history overwhelm men with encroaching power. Paralyzed they do nothing, until one day the gorgon devours them. But I mean to convince you that there is only an illusion of impotence. That strength of character, courage and imagination are enough to stop evil . . . and sometimes reverse it.” I teach the Holocaust because I, too, have faith that my students have far more power than they realize-the powers to know, to think, to recognize evil and to speak out and act against it.

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### Wendy Lindner, Freeport H.S., Freeport, NY:

In the aftermath of 9/11/01, I think the Holocaust was supplanted in the minds of many Americans as a symbol of historic evil by the destruction of the World Trade Center. When I tried to teach about the Holocaust last year, some students protested that they had already studied about it in the fifth grade and wanted to learn more about events in the contemporary world. My students' connection with September 11 was personal, while the Holocaust seemed so far removed from them. Part of the terror of 9/11/01 is that we all seemed to have lost someone we knew. Even when we did not, names and faces covered the front-page of newspapers and we watched on television as families awaited confirmation of the death of a loved one. Their loss became our personal loss.

However, my own commitment to understanding and teaching about the Holocaust was renewed. As I watched the lines of people trying to escape from downtown Manhattan, their plight reminded me of the insanity of the displaced persons camps soon after World War II. I saw dazed and dusty survivors of 9/11/01 walking the same dusty road as the dazed survivors of Bergen-Belsen, each searching for a place to sit and a reason to continue on.

The lesson I learned is that when I teach about the Holocaust again I cannot just supply statistics of the dead or stress the methodology of extermination. In order for Holocaust Education to truly be meaningful, I have to find a way to personalize this tragic stain on the face of humanity. I must visually bombard students with names and faces. They need to see pictures, speak with survivors and learn the names of victims. The Holocaust must become a personal issue for them.

One of the things I was finally able to do successfully was to draw connections between the Holocaust and our current concern about terrorism. During the course of the year, my students maintained an internet link with a sister school in Israel. This permitted students from both groups to share their disbelief at the tragedies that happened on 9/11/02 and on a more regular basis in Israel. One morning we learned of the loss of two Israeli students to terrorists. My students cried out for this misery to stop. Pain and suffering had become a way of life. My passion for this subject runs far to deep to put into words or to frame an objective response to the essay by Alan Singer. It seems impossible when these moments in history burn in my soul.

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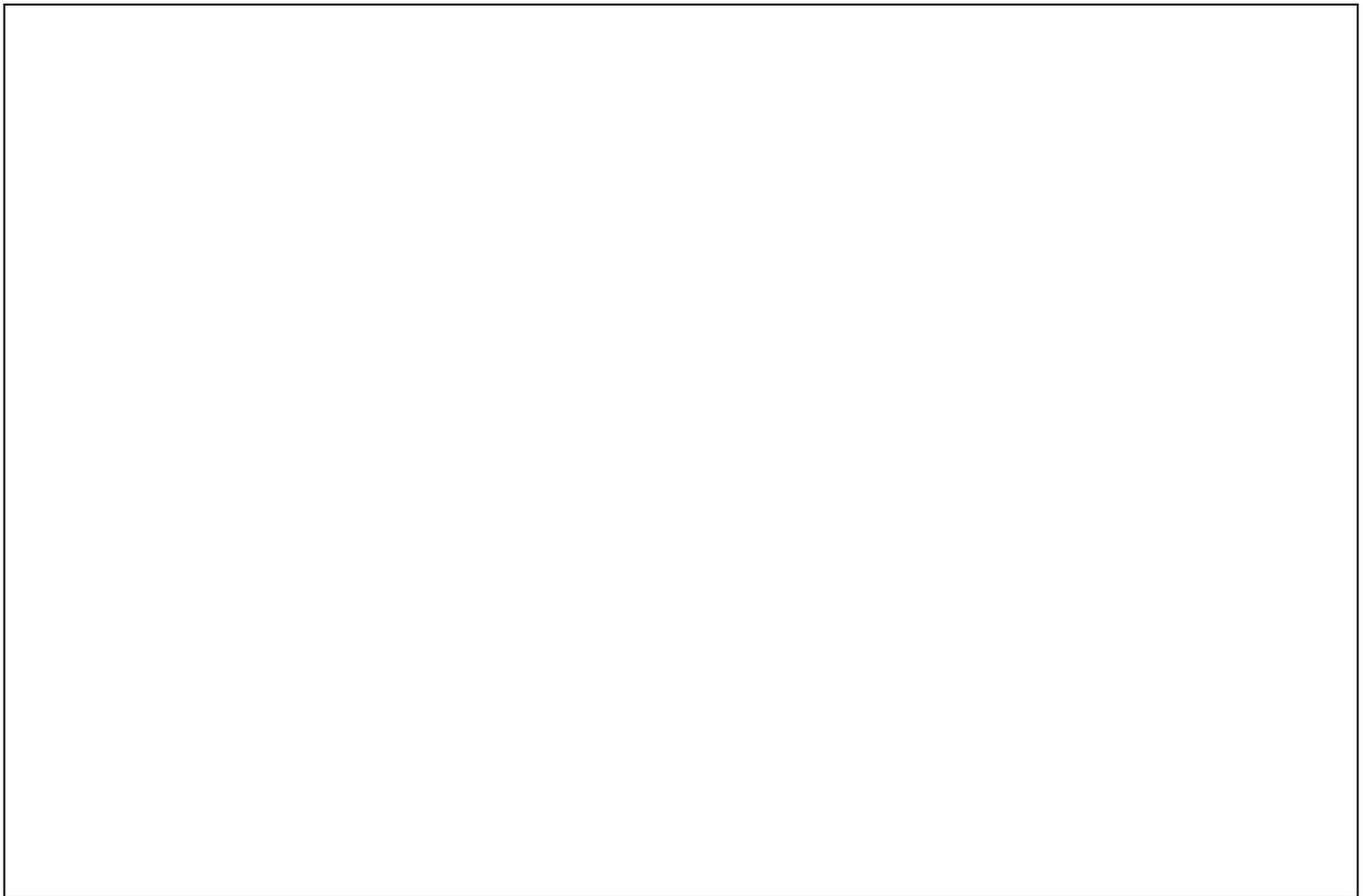
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**Bill Pesda, Ocean City High School, Ocean City, NJ:** As we begin the new millenium the urgency for Holocaust and multicultural studies has increased. The events of the past year and the growing age of Holocaust survivors make it even more important to focus study on cultural awareness and remembrance. Teachers must guarantee that students know the Holocaust, remember it, and mature into adults who will not allow history to repeat itself. We cannot rely on the regular curriculum and books. Holocaust survivor organizations offer their services for sharing facts and telling their stories in schools. As survivors reach the horizon of their lives we need to utilize their priceless value as first hand witnesses. In my experience teaching about the Holocaust, students commonly ask, "This is so sad, why do we have talk about this?" My response is that if we do not talk about it, do not learn the facts and remember, we open the door so these events can happen again. As educators we must work with the broader community to keep that door slammed shut forever.

**Lisa Ann Wohl, East Meadow, NY:** When approaching the Holocaust, I find it impossible to separate myself from my Jewish upbringing and heritage. What angers me more than anything else is that the world sat back and did nothing to save Jews from extermination. I believe that Alan Singer had only the best intentions in mind when he wrote this essay and reading it was an an eye-opening experience. However, I also have points of significant disagreement. The negative reference to Oskar Schindler is unfair. He saved over 1,000 Jewish men, women and children, who would otherwise have perished. He should be revered, not criticized. Winston Churchill, one of the most brilliant men of his time, is unfairly represented by one obscure quotation. The Holocaust is an expansive enough of a topic without adding in the specter of communism. Dr. Singer reinforces negative stereotype of Jews when he states that as a group they were identifiable by their dress and culture and therefore, easy to target for discrimination. I beg to differ. Often Jews, especially German and Austrian Jews, looked no different than their Aryan neighbors. My grandfather had strawberry blond hair and blue eyes and looked "typically" German.



## Escape to Cuba: The Story of Laura Kahn, a Holocaust Survivor

Based on an interview by her granddaughter, Jaimee Kahn

May 10, 1940. Friday, 5 A. M. I was awakened by the noise of airplanes dropping bombs. I was 14 years old and war had just broken out in Belgium. By 6 A.M., my cousins called to say that we should get out of Antwerp, it was not a safe place for Jews. My family decided to try to reach the border. We rented a truck with a driver and got the families together, a total of sixteen people. We were hoping that crossing into France would save us. Little did we know that the Germans were right at our heels. They forced all Belgian refugees in France to go home.

Antwerp had a registered Jewish community so the Germans were able to find out the addresses and occupations of the Jewish population. Slowly, groups of young men were sent to labor camps, but not out of the country. The atmosphere became tense and unbearable. We started thinking of a way of escaping again.

The main trade for Jews in Antwerp was the diamond business. One morning our doorbell rang and there stood an SS man accompanied by a Jewish "guide," a traitor who was trying to save his own skin. We heard him say to the German, "Here you will find diamonds." My father turned white, but didn't say a word. The two started looking all over the house. We were all tense, shaky, but finally the SS man left empty handed. The situation caused my father to have a stroke. After being bedridden for a few days, he had to be hospitalized. To our deep sorrow he never recovered and passed away on December 26, 1940.

In our grief we realized that we had to get out of Belgium. We decided to travel in smaller groups. My sisters Fanny and Regine were one group. I traveled with my brother-in-law, Izzy. My mother, my sister Lilly and my brother Joe all went together. In Paris, Izzy and I went to the Cuban Consul to get a transit visa to Cuba, the only country that was allowing Jews to enter. That same night we heard a scream from the window and a knock on the door. The Germans were looking for Jews. Before we were separated, Izzy instructed me to only speak in Dutch.

The Germans put me in a jail cell with 10 other women. Three days into my sentence, I fell ill and a German doctor was called in. He took pity on me and made sure that I had chicken soup. Every day I was served the nice hot soup and after the guards left I would share it with the other women in the jail. Five days later the Germans called me to court. They asked me questions in German, Yiddish and Flemish (all languages I was fluent in but refused to speak). I simply answered all questions in Dutch, saying that I could not understand them. They finally let me go because they did not know why I was arrested, besides being Jewish. On my way out of jail, I screamed for Izzy. An officer told me that he would be released in two days. I made my way to Izzy's aunt's house where I found my sister Lilly waiting for me. She was so relieved to see me and hear that her husband would be released from jail that she cried.

Three days later we went to the Cuban Consul for our passports. We met the rest of my family in Marseilles where we took a train to Spain. We were in Spain for 6 months before we went by boat to Cuba. Our arrival in Cuba will always stay in my memory. On the beautiful light blue water, people in motorboats came to greet us. Finally, freedom, and what a sight. Overcome with emotion, I cried like a baby. I found out later that the greetings were meant for Spanish personalities on the same boat, but who cared? I was part of it and felt that it was for us, the refugees. All the refugees were taken to a place called Tiscornia. Women and men were put in separate dormitories for the night. We had a common dining room and were free to walk on well-kept grounds. We were all given a physical checkup for infections. We had to stay there until we could prove that we had an apartment or some lodging waiting for us. Cuban Jewish brokers visited us with offers of apartments. For the time being, we were going to rent a large place for the whole family.

In Cuba, I worked in a diamond factory where I met my husband, Murray Kahn. We married and decided to immigrate to the United States where we settled into an apartment in Queens. The entire community was European Jews at that time and it reminded us of life back in Europe before the war.

### Questions

1. Why was Europe unsafe for Jews?
2. Describe the circumstances leading up to Laura's father's death?
3. Why do you think Laura's brother -in-law told her to speak only Dutch?
4. Why did the family go to Cuba?

**High School Level Activities: Rescuers and Resistance**

(prepared by Jaimee Kahn, Farmingdale HS, Farmingdale, NY)

**A. Resistance During the Holocaust**

(Source: The United States Memorial Museum Resource Guide)

“From the Nazis’ rise to power in 1933 in Germany to the end of the Third Reich in 1945, Jews ...as well as other victims of Nazism, participated in many acts of resistance. Organized-armed resistance was the most direct form of opposition to the Nazis. In many areas of German-occupied Europe, resistance took other forms such as aid, rescue, and spiritual resistance. Resistance by partisan fighters using “hit-and-run” guerrilla tactics during the war provides an important and necessary context for understanding the limits and possibilities of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. But one should not confuse partisan resistance to the German military effort and the German occupation of Europe, on the one hand, with Jewish resistance, on the other, even though the two sometimes overlapped. . . .

As the victims of Nazi genocide and an isolated, often scorned, minority among occupied populations, Jews were in a distinctively weak situation. Because they were doomed to destruction, they could not wait for the beginning of the German collapse in 1943 to act, as the nationalist and patriotic anti-Nazi resistance movements generally did. By the end of 1942, more than four million Jews had already been killed by mass shootings and gassings, or had died from starvation, exhaustion, and disease during their internment in Nazi ghettos and concentration and forced labor camps.

Nazi methods of deception and terror and the superior power of the German police state and military severely inhibited the abilities of civilians in all occupied countries to resist. But the situation of Jews was particularly hopeless, and it is remarkable that individuals and groups resisted to the extent they did.

In addition to many acts of unarmed resistance in the ghettos and camps and the armed and unarmed resistance of Jewish partisans operating underground in both eastern and western Europe, armed Jewish resistance took place in 5 major ghettos, 45 small ghettos, 5 major concentration and extermination camps, and 18 forced labor camps. With few exceptions (notably three major uprisings by partisans in late summer 1944 in Warsaw, Paris, and Slovakia as Allied liberators approached), Jews alone engaged in open, armed resistance against the Germans. They received little help from anyone on the outside. . . . Courageous young men and women facing certain death had little to lose.”

**A. Obstacles to military resistance by Eastern European Jews:**

1. Superior, armed power of the Germans
2. German tactics of “collective responsibility” (entire families and communities were responsible for individual acts of resistance and thus would be punished as a whole)
3. Isolation of Jews and lack of weapons
4. Secrecy and deception of deportation by the Germans

**B. Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos and Concentration Camps by Eastern European Jews:**

1. Underground schools and libraries to learn religious and secular subjects
2. Documenting the Holocaust and the world around them as evidence of the horrors taking place
3. Cultural activities such as the creation of works of art, songs, theatrical productions, concert, cabarets and lectures. One such place was Theresienstadt where adult had young children write poems and paint pictures to psychologically deal with the world around them.
4. Clandestine prayer (secret prayer)

**Questions**

1. Why was armed resistance to the Nazis by Eastern European Jews so difficult?
2. What other ways did Eastern European Jews resist during the Holocaust?
3. Write a poem or design a plaque or exhibit to commemorate Eastern European Jewish resistance?

## Holocaust and History

### **B. Appeal to Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto, January 1, 1942**

(Source: R. Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe*, NY: Barnes and Noble, 1974)

Let us not go to slaughter like sheep! Jewish youth, do not trust the deceivers. Of the 80,000 Jews in Jerusalem of Lithuania only 20,000 remain. With our own eyes we saw our parents, brothers and sisters snatched away forever. Where are the hundreds of men arrested by the police supposedly to do some job of work? Where are the naked women and children taken away in the horrifying night of the great provocation? Where are the Jews captured on Yom Kippur? And where are our brothers who were locked up in the Second Ghetto? Those who were taken from the ghetto will never come back, for all roads from the Gestapo lead to Ponary. And Ponary means death!

Cast off the illusions of people blinded by despair: your children, your wives, your husbands are no more! Ponary is no camp. They have all been shot. Hitler has invented a system for the destruction of all the Jews in Europe. It has been our fate to be the first.

Let us not go like sheep to slaughter! It is true that we are weak and we have nobody to help us. But our only dignified answer to the enemy must be resistance!

Brothers, it is better to die like free fighters than to live by the murderer's grace. Resist until your last breath!

#### **Questions**

1. Why are the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto being called on to resist the Nazis?
2. Why does the appeal demand that Jews not act like "sheep"?
3. The "Appeal" ends with the statement, "Brothers, it is better to die like free fighters than to live by the murderer's grace. Resist until your last breath!" Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. If you were in Warsaw, would you have joined the resistance? Explain.

### **C. A Rescuer Named Fiodor Kichailovitch Kalenczuk**

(Source: *The Record: Holocaust in History, 1933 - 1945*, The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and The National Council for the Social Studies)

"On a tree in Jerusalem is the name Fiodor Kichailovitch Kalenczuk. Four Jews from the Ukraine survived the war because Kalenczuk, at peril to himself and his family, hid them on his farm for seventeen long months. The Jewish survivors were Pessah Kranzberg, a grain merchant from the town of Hoszcza, his wife, his 10-year-old daughter Rasia, and Rasia's little friend Miriam. In 1942 the Nazi invaders marched across Poland and Russia. Kranzberg and the others managed to escape from the burning ghetto in Hoszcza and fled to Kalenczuk's farm. The two men had known, respected and liked each other for five years; never imagining what dark days would come. When the world around the Kranzbergs collapsed, Kalenczuk came forth with support. First he sheltered the fugitives in his own home. Then he fashioned a secure hiding place for them in his stable, bringing them meals three times a day, taking care to provide only kosher food. Kalenczuk himself had to struggle to support his wife and eight children. In 1943 he had to surrender part of his harvest to the Germans, yet he continued to feed the four who were hiding in his stable. His wife feared that the Jews were endangering a Christian household. But he refused to deny them refuge. At last, in January 1944 the Red Army advance made it safe for the Kranzbergs and little Miriam to leave their hiding place. Eventually they reached Israel. And one day in 1967 Fiodor Michailovitch Kalenczuk stood with them in Jerusalem at the ceremony enshrining his name in the Garden of the Righteous."

#### **Questions**

1. What did Fiodor Kalenczuk do for Pessah Kranzberg, his family and friend?
2. What could have happened to Fiodor Kalenczuk if the Nazis had caught him?
3. Write a report about the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.
4. Write a poem or design a plaque or exhibit to commemorate Fiodor Kalenczuk or another rescuer.

# Guidelines For Teaching About The Holocaust

Excerpts from *Teaching About The Holocaust, A Resource Book For Educators*  
Prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, DC: 2001)

In most professions, the longer you hold your position, and the more knowledgeable and experienced you become, the easier it is to do your job. I think the opposite may be true in the teaching of social studies. The longer we teach and the more information we acquire (from workshops, conferences, journals, books, and our travels), the less time we have each year to share that information with our students. Not surprisingly, when I returned from a three-day workshop at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) with a binder filled with excellent materials and notes, and a head full of new knowledge and teaching ideas, my enthusiasm was necessarily tempered by “time’s winged chariot rushing near.” I had to struggle with the dilemma of all good social studies teachers, namely, how to take a topic of enormous importance, about which whole curricula are written (not to mention entire issues of professional journals), and figure out what was essential. Probably the key to being able to teach the Holocaust in little more than a week is to do a great deal of thinking and planning prior to the teaching to develop guidelines and themes for your unit. The methodological considerations below are from materials prepared by the USHMM. Visit their website at [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) for more information. - Andrea Libresco

## Why Teach Holocaust History?

The history of the Holocaust provides one of the most effective and most extensively documented subjects for a pedagogical examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into Holocaust history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior. A study of the Holocaust also addresses one of the central goals of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. Through a study of the Holocaust, students can come to realize that:

- democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected.
- silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, can - however unintentionally - perpetuate the problems.
- the Holocaust was not an accident in history; it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately, mass murder to occur.

## Questions Of Rationale

Because the objective of teaching any subject is to engage the intellectual curiosity of the student in order to inspire critical thought and personal growth, it is helpful to structure your lesson plan on the Holocaust by considering throughout questions of rationale. Before deciding what and how to teach, we recommend that you contemplate the following:

- Why should students learn this history?
- What are the most significant lessons students should learn from a study of the Holocaust?
- Why is a particular reading, image, document, or film an appropriate medium for conveying the lessons about the Holocaust that you wish to teach?

Among the various rationales offered by educators who have incorporated a study of the Holocaust into their various courses and disciplines are:

- The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the twentieth century, but also in the entire history of humanity.
- Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and encourages tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society.

## **Holocaust and History**

- The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression.
- Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
- A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
- As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain awareness of the complexity of the subject and a perspective on how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values. Students come to understand that it is the responsibility of citizens in a democracy to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react.

When you, as an educator, take the time to consider the rationale for your lesson on the Holocaust, you will be more likely to select content that speaks to your students' interests and that provides them with a clearer understanding of a complex history. Most students demonstrate a high level of interest in studying the Holocaust precisely because the subject raises questions of fairness, justice, individual identity, peer pressure, conformity, indifference, and obedience-issues that adolescents confront in their daily lives. Students are also affected by and challenged to comprehend the magnitude of the Holocaust; they are particularly stuck by the fact that so many people allowed this genocide to occur by failing either to resist or protest.

### **Age Appropriateness**

Students in grades 7 and above demonstrate an ability to empathize with individual eyewitness accounts and to attempt to understand the complexities of this history, including the scope and scale of the events. While elementary students are able to empathize with individual survivor accounts, they often have difficulty placing these personal stories in a larger historical context. Such demonstrable developmental differences have traditionally shaped social studies curricula throughout the country; in most states, students are not introduced to European history and geography-the context for the Holocaust-before grades 7 or 8.

### **Methodological Considerations**

The teaching of Holocaust history demands of educators a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. The recommendations that follow, while reflecting methodological approaches that would be appropriate to effective teaching in general, are particularly relevant in the context of Holocaust education.

#### *1. Define the term "Holocaust."*

The Holocaust refers to a specific genocidal event in twentieth-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims; 6 million were murdered. Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

#### *2. Avoid comparisons of pain.*

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of suffering between those groups. Similarly, one cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as "the victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity."

#### *3. Avoid simple answers to complex history.*

## Holocaust and History

A study of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior, and it often involves complicated answers as to why events occurred. Be wary of oversimplifications. Allow students to contemplate the various factors that contributed to the Holocaust; do not attempt to reduce Holocaust history to one or two catalysts in isolation from the other factors that came into play.

### *4. Just because it happened does not mean it was inevitable.*

Too often students have the simplistic impression that the Holocaust was inevitable. Just because a historical event took place, and it was documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. By focusing on those decisions, you gain insight into history and human nature and can better help your students to become critical thinkers.

### *5. Strive for precision of language.*

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to overgeneralize and thus to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Rather, you must strive to help your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct orders and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

### *6. Make careful distinctions about sources of information.*

Students need practice in distinguishing between fact, opinion, and fiction, between primary and secondary sources, and between types of evidence such as court testimonies, oral histories, and other written documents. Hermeneutics—the science of interpretation—should be called into play to help guide your students in their analysis of sources. Students should be encouraged to consider why a particular text was written, who wrote it, who the intended audience was, whether there were any biases inherent in the information, whether any gaps occurred in discussion, whether omissions in certain passages were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events.

### *7. Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions.*

Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Simplistic views and stereotyping take place when groups of people are viewed as monolithic in attitudes and actions. How ethnic groups or social clusters are labeled and portrayed in school curricula has a direct impact on how students perceive groups in their daily lives. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them, without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., ‘sometimes,’ ‘usually,’ ‘in many cases but not all’) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis, nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.

### *8. Do not romanticize history to engage students’ interest.*

People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful, important, and compelling role models for students. However, given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped to rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic tales in a unit on the Holocaust can result in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. Similarly, in exposing students to the worst aspects of human nature as revealed in the history of the Holocaust, you run the risk of fostering cynicism in your students. Accuracy of fact along with a balanced perspective on the history must be priorities for any teacher.

### *9. Contextualize the history you are teaching.*

Events of the Holocaust and, particularly, how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The occurrence of the Holocaust must be studied in the context of European history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that may have contributed to it.

## Holocaust and History

Similarly, study of the Holocaust should be viewed within a contemporaneous context, so students can begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged particular actions or events. Frame your approach to specific events and acts of complicity or defiance by considering when and where an act took place, the immediate consequences to oneself and one's family of one's actions, the impact of contemporaneous events, the degree of control the Nazis had on a country or local population, the cultural attitudes of particular native populations historically toward different victim groups, and the availability, effectiveness, and risk of potential hiding places.

Students should be reminded that individuals and groups do not always fit neatly into categories of behavior. The very same people did not always act consistently as 'bystanders,' 'collaborators,' 'perpetrators,' or 'rescuers.' Individuals and groups often behaved differently depending upon changing events and circumstances. The same person who in 1933 might have stood by and remained uninvolved while witnessing social discrimination of Jews might later have joined up with the SA and become a collaborator or have been moved to dissent vocally or act in defense of Jewish friends and neighbors.

Encourage your students not to categorize groups of people only on the basis of their experiences during the Holocaust; contextualization is critical so that victims are not perceived only as victims. The fact that Jews were the central victims of the Nazi regime should not obscure the vibrant culture and long history of Jews in Europe prior to the Nazi era. By exposing students to some of the cultural contributions and achievements of 2,000 years of European Jewish life, you help them to balance their perception of Jews as victims and to better appreciate the traumatic disruption in Jewish history caused by the Holocaust.

### *10. Translate statistics into people.*

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. You need to show that individual people-families of grandparents, parents, and children-are behind the statistics and to emphasize that within the larger historical narrative is a diversity of personal experience. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature provide students with a way of making meaning out of collective numbers and give individual voices to a collective experience. Although students should be careful about overgeneralizing from first-person accounts such as those from survivors, journalists, relief workers, bystanders, and liberators, personal accounts help students get beyond statistics and make historical events of the Holocaust more immediate and more personal.

### *11. Be sensitive to appropriate written and audiovisual content.*

One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the objective of the lesson. You should remind yourself that each student and each class is different and that what seems appropriate for one may not be appropriate for all.

Students are essentially a 'captive audience.' When you assault them with images of horror for which they are unprepared, you violate a basic trust: the obligation of a teacher to provide a 'safe' learning environment. The assumption that all students will seek to understand human behavior after being exposed to horrible images is fallacious. Some students may be so appalled by the images of brutality and mass murder that they are discouraged from studying the subject further. Others may become fascinated in a more voyeuristic fashion, subordinating further critical analysis of the history to the superficial titillation of looking at images of starvation, disfigurement, and death. Though they can be powerful tools, shocking images of mass killings and barbarisms should not overwhelm a student's awareness of the broader scope of events within Holocaust history. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students' emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful of the victims themselves.

### *12. Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust.*

Often, too great an emphasis is placed on the victims of Nazi aggression rather than on the victimizers who forced people to make impossible choices or simply left them with no choice to make. Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. But it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them and, thus, to place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves.

## Holocaust and History

There is also a tendency among students to glorify power, even when it is used to kill innocent people. Many teachers indicated that their students are intrigued and, in some cases, intellectually seduced by the symbols of power that pervaded Nazi propaganda (e.g., the swastika and/or Nazi flags, regalia, slogans, rituals, and music). Rather than highlight the trappings of Nazi power, you should ask your students to evaluate how such elements are used by governments (including our own) to build, protect, and mobilize a society. Students should also be encouraged to contemplate how such elements can be abused and manipulated by governments to implement and legitimize acts of terror and even genocide.

In any review of the propaganda used to promote Nazi ideology-Nazi stereotypes of targeted victim groups and the Hitler regime's justifications for persecution and murder-you need to remind your students that just because such policies and beliefs are under discussion in class does not mean they are acceptable. Furthermore, any study of the Holocaust should attempt to portray all individuals, especially the victims and the perpetrators of violence, as human beings who are capable of moral judgement and independent decision making.

### *13. Select appropriate learning activities.*

Word scrambles, crossword puzzles, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialize the history. Thought-provoking learning activities are preferred, but even here, there are pitfalls to avoid. In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students 'experience' unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression at the conclusion of the activity that they now know what it was like during the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors and eyewitnesses are among the first to indicate the grave difficulty of finding words to describe their experiences. It is virtually impossible to stimulate accurately what it was like to live on a daily basis with fear, hunger, disease, unfathomable loss, and the unrelenting threat of abject brutality and death. Because there are numerous primary source accounts, both written and visual, as well as survivors and eyewitnesses who can describe actual choices faced and made by individuals, groups, and nations during this period, you should draw upon these resources and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

### *14. Reinforce the objectives of your lesson plan.*

As in all teaching situations, the opening and closing lessons are critically important. A strong opening should serve to dispel misinformation students may have prior to studying the Holocaust. It should set a reflective tone, move students from passive to active learning, indicate to students that their ideas and opinions matter, and establish that this history has multiple ramifications for them as individuals and as members of society as a whole.

Your closing lesson should encourage further examination of Holocaust history, literature, and art. A strong closing should emphasize synthesis by encouraging students to connect this history to other world events and to the world they live in today. Students should be encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to consider what this study means to them personally and as citizens of a democracy.

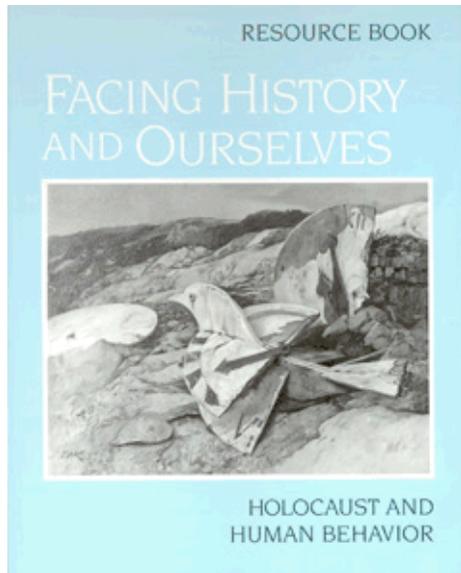
## A 5-Day Model for Teaching the Holocaust in High School Global History Classes

by Andrea Libresco

- 1. History of Anti Semitism:** Think of any hated group. What are the reasons people hate? Why were Jews hated? Connect specific to general reasons. Show a list of laws against Jews. Discuss actual percentage and number of Jews in Germany (less than 1%, or 500,000 Jews out of 60 million Germans).
- 2. Germany Between the Wars:** To whom did the Nazis appeal? Examine party platform and biographies of Germans to predict and understand who would have supported the Nazi party.
- 3. The “Final Solution”:** Look at ALL the stages, including the early laws, and the fact that many lives were lost (one and quarter million Jews were shot) prior to the death camps.
- 4. Testimony:** Can be in person or through writings or videotape. A particularly good video, and winner of best short documentary in 1995, is *One Survivor Remembers: The Gerda Weismann Klein Story*.
- 5. Your Issue:** Perhaps you want to focus on indifference using the Neimoller quote. If you wish to highlight altruism and the rescuers, the ADL’s *Courage to Care* 30 minute video is an excellent source.

## Facing History and Ourselves

For more than 25 years, the organization Facing History and Ourselves has engaged teachers and students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of collective violence, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. They learn to combat prejudice with compassion, indifference with ethical participation, myth and misinformation with knowledge.



Facing History sponsors institutes for teachers that explore Facing History's content and methodology by connecting history to the moral questions inherent in a study, not only of violence, racism, and anti-Semitism, but also of courage, caring, and compassion. Generally, the opening sessions consider individual and group behavior. How is our identity formed? How do we acquire membership in a group? Who is part of our "universe of obligation"? Participants also consider the relationships among perpetrators, their victims, and bystanders.

In the sessions that follow, participants examine the choices Germans and others made in the 1920s and 1930s. As they come to understand the way many of those choices undermined democracy, they begin to realize how hatred, indifference, denial, and opportunism, little by little, can shape a period in history. As they study Nazi policies of indoctrination and terror, participants reflect on the fragility of democracy and the importance of freedom. As they learn how the Jews, "Gypsies," and others were humiliated, isolated, and ultimately murdered, they discover that history is not inevitable.

The closing sessions consider questions of right and wrong; of guilt and responsibility. They also explore what happens to a history that is denied or revised. In these sessions, participants contemplate issues related to prevention, by returning to themes developed in the opening sessions. Those themes are explored through models of participation drawn from American society.

Throughout the institute, participants explore new Facing History resources that illuminate themes developed in Facing History's primary resource book, *Holocaust and Human Behavior* (1994). These materials include Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement, The Jews of Poland, The Armenian Genocide, and study guides to such films as *Twilight: Los Angeles* and *Facing the Truth* with Bill Moyers, a documentary about the work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Participants will also receive password access to Facing History's Online Campus at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org). The campus provides opportunities to share curriculum outlines, discuss teaching strategies, and integrate technology into the classroom.

As participants work with these and other materials, they are encouraged to make connections to their own society and recognize universal themes. They also consider how to help their students connect the past to the questions raised by tragedies such as the events of September 11, 2001. What can we learn about democracy from the violent history of a failed democracy? About tolerance from horrific examples of neighbor turning against neighbor? About responsibility from accounts of educated adults who betrayed a generation of young people? About moral courage from a society that stressed blind obedience?

**To learn more about Facing History and Ourselves, its publications and the Facing History Institutes, contact the New York regional office, 225 West 34th Street, Suite 1416, New York, New York, 10122, Phone: (212) 868-6544.**

## Using “Facing History and Ourselves” to Teach About the Holocaust

by Michelle Sarro

As a social studies teacher, the only thing more tragic than the Holocaust itself is the realization that it does not stand as the lone example of genocide. It is joined by a number of cases of mass murder, which although smaller in scope, remain equally devastating. It was with this in mind that I examined the resource guide *Holocaust and Human Behavior (HHB)* by Facing History and Ourselves as a supplemental text for teaching students about the importance of the Holocaust in history.

The greatest value of *Holocaust and Human Behavior* is the first person narratives and literary excerpts which make the events of the Holocaust palpable to students learning about it more than 50 years after it happened. No amount of statistical data, chronological timelines or “terms-to-define” capture the magnitude, complexity and human dimension of the Holocaust as these stories.

One of the things that makes *Holocaust and Human Behavior* so effective as a teaching tool is the way that it engages students in exploring the roles and choices made, not only by Nazis, but also by bystanders, rescuers and resisters. Because I found some of the passages a little too long for classroom use, I edited them to create a series of five high school level activity sheets.

**Lesson 1. Who was Responsible?** This activity begins with a look at Stanley Milgrim’s “shock experiment,” as a way of opening up the discussion of how and why individuals make the choices they do. Two excerpts from interrogations connected to war crimes trials (taken from *HHB*) follow the questions on the Milgrim experiment. Students must decide how much responsibility an individual has when institutions and societies injure people.

**Lesson 2. Do Bystanders Share Responsibility?** This lesson uses personal accounts, taken from *HHB*, to critically examine the decision made by thousands of individuals to essentially “look the other way” as the systematic destruction of Jews and other groups was taking place.

**Lesson 3. The Resisters.** This lesson uses the *HHB* accounts of the life and actions of various individuals and groups who in one way or another stood up against the Nazi regime, despite great personal risk.

**Lesson 4. The Rescuers.** This lesson uses the *HHB* accounts to draw student attention to individuals who made the choice to save another person’s life. The four passages focus on vastly different circumstances that each produced similar acts of courage and selflessness.

**Lesson 5. The Survivors.** This lesson combines material from *HHB* with passages that tell personal stories about other genocides. Students read the stories without realizing these events took place in other parts of the world at different times during the twentieth century. Passage A describes events in Armenia, 1914-1918; passage B describes events in Rwanda, 1994; passage C describes events in Cambodia, 1975-1979; passage D describes events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995; and passage E describes events in the European Holocaust, 1938-1945.

### Follow-up Activities.

- Select and then research one of the persons/events discussed in this unit. Write an editorial for a newspaper (set in the 1940s) explaining your reaction to the person’s life or death or to the event you have chosen.
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were a bystander, a resister, or a rescuer? Write an essay explaining what happened, what you did and why?
- If a group of people in your town were being victimized because of “who they are,” what would you do? Why? Design a poster expressing your views on discrimination.

## **High School Level Activities based on Holocaust and Human Behavior**

(prepared by Michelle Sarro)

### **Lesson 1. Who was Responsible?**

A. This section is based on the video of the Milgrim Experiment (Source: Holocaust and Human Behavior, 210-212), which observed the effect of authority on individual behavior. The experiment was conducted in the 1960s and consisted of a control group of participants chosen to be “learners” and another group chosen to be teachers (the teachers are the focus of the experiment). Learners are taken into another room out of view of the teacher and the teacher is instructed to ask questions and give a shock to the learner for each incorrect answer. The video shows the “teachers” reactions to the increased shocks, the apparent auditory pain it causes the learner as well as the reality that most “teachers” administered the full 450 volts possible. After watching the video on the “Milgrim Experiment” answer questions 1-4.

#### **Questions**

1. What consequences did those administering the shock face if they did not comply?
2. What reasons did they give for continuing against their will?
3. Considering that 65% of subjects administered the full 450 volts, what can you imply about the effect of authority on human behavior?
4. Is being “told to do something” a justification?

B. At the Nuremberg Trials and the other courts that tried Nazis for war crimes, the defendants argued that they were innocent of criminal charges because they were simply “following orders”. Read the excerpts below before turning to the next page (Source: Holocaust and Human Behavior, 433-436).

- “Don’t you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things: it never even occurred to us. And besides, it was something already taken for granted that the Jews were to blame for everything... We just never heard anything else... We were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody... Himmler had ordered it and had even explained the necessity and I never really gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity. - Rudolph Hoess, Commander at Auschwitz
- “I was a German engineer and key member at the Topf works and I saw it as my duty to apply my specialist knowledge in this way in order to help Germany win the war, just as an aircraft construction engineer builds planes in war time, which are also connected to the destruction of human beings.” - Kurt Prufer, designer and builder of furnaces for crematoriums

#### **Questions**

1. In your opinion, are Hoess and Prufer guilty of war crimes? Explain.
2. C. P. Snow, a writer, argues that “When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

## **Lesson 2. Do Bystanders Share Responsibility?**

**Instructions:** Read the excerpts and answer the questions.

A. During the Holocaust, railroad cars were used to transport millions of people to concentration camps. Below is an excerpt from an interview with Walter Stier, who was the person responsible for the “special trains” that transported the Jews to labor camps and an almost certain death (Source: *Holocaust and Human Behavior*, 365-366).

Interviewer: But you knew that the trains to Treblinka or Aushwitz were—

Stier: Of course we knew. I was the last district; without me these trains couldn't reach their destinations. So I had to . . . .

Interviewer: Did you know Treblinka meant extermination?

Stier: Of course not.

Interviewer: You didn't know?

Stier: Good God, no. How could we know? I never went to Treblinka. I stayed in Krakow, in Warsaw, glued to my desk.

Interviewer: You were a . . . .

Stier: I was strictly a bureaucrat.

B. Jan Karski, a courier ( someone who carries information, letters, packages, etc.) for the Polish resistance movement, talking about his conversation with United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter (Source: *Holocaust and Human Behavior*, 368).

“No one was prepared to grasp what was going on . . . not because of ill will, but simply because the facts were beyond human imagination . . . When I was in the U.S. and told Justice Felix Frankfurter the story of Polish Jews, he said at the end of our conversation, “I cannot believe you.” We were with the Polish Ambassador to the U.S., Jan Ciechenowski. Hearing the Justice's comments, he was indignant. “Lieutenant Karski is on an official mission. My government's authority stands behind him. You cannot say to his face that he is lying.” Frankfurter's answer was, “I am not saying that he is lying. I only said that I cannot believe him, and there is a difference.”

C. When the Nazi's took over Hartheim Castle in Vienna in 1939, it soon became an extension of a nearby labor camp (Source: *Holocaust and Human Behavior*, 371).

- According to Sister Felicitas, “when there was intense activity it smoked day and night. Tufts of hair flew through the chimney onto the street. The remains of bones were stored on the east side of the castle and in ton trucks driven first to the Danube, later also to the Traun.”
- Christian Wirth, the director of the operation, met with local residents. He told them that his men were burning shoes and other “belongings.” The strong smell? “A device had been installed in which old oil and oil by-products underwent a special treatment through distillation and chemical treatment in order to gain a water-clear, oily fluid from it which was of great importance to U-Boats [German submarines]. Wirth ended the meeting by threatening to send anyone who spread “absurd rumors of burning persons” to a concentration camp. The townspeople took him at his word. They did not break their silence.

### **Questions**

1. What reasons do the bystanders give for not taking action?
2. What consequences, if any, did they face by resisting?
3. Justice Frankfurter acknowledges that he does not think Karski “is lying”, but still “cannot believe him.” What do you think he means?
4. Do bystanders, such as these, bear any responsibility for the events of the Holocaust? Explain.

### **Lesson 3. The Rescuers**

**Instructions:** Read the excerpts and answer the questions (Source: Holocaust and Human Behavior, 383-393).

- The father, the two boys, and the baby girl moved in and we managed to survive the next two years until the end of the war. Friends helped us take up the floorboards, under the rug, and build a hiding place in case of raids. These did occur with increasing frequency, and one night we had a very narrow escape. Four Germans, accompanied by a Dutch Nazi policeman came and searched the house. They did not find the hiding place, but they had learned from experience that sometimes it paid to go back to a house they had already searched, because by then the hidden Jews might have come out. Then the Dutch policeman came back alone. I had a small revolver that a friend had given me, but I had never planned to use it. I felt I had no choice except to kill him. I would do it again, under the same circumstances, but it still bothers me and I still feel that there “should” have been another way.
- The people of Le Chambon, a tiny mountain town in south-central France, were also aware that Jews were being murdered and took action to save as many people as possible...Magde Trocme, the wife of a local minister explains what happened: “Those of us who received the first Jews did what we thought had to be done—nothing more complicated...There was no decision to make. The issue was: Do you think we are all brothers or not? Do you think it is unjust to turn in the Jews or not? Then let us try to help.”
- Many people attributed the success of Le Chambon to the work of “le major”, the Nazi occupation governor of the region who, although he was later replaced, stayed on as second-in-command. The Trocmes claim he was responsible for the anonymous phone calls they received just before the raid. When he was brought to trial by the French resistance at the end of the war, he was greeted with kindness and gratitude from nearly everyone in the room, despite the accusations brought against him. Of his role in helping the people of Le Chambon rescue so many Jews, he said the meeting was almost painful and that: “He was glad for their praise and their affection, but didn’t they realize decency is the normal thing to do? Didn’t they realize that decency needs no rewards, no recognition, that it is done out of the heart, now, immediately, just in order to satisfy the heart now?”
- Oskar Schindler...began by turning his factory into an official subcamp of a newly constructed labor camp at Plazow. For a time it was a haven for about five hundred Jews. Then in the fall of 1944, the Nazis ordered both camps closed and the workers shipped to Auschwitz. Schindler refused to let that happen. He put together a list of eleven hundred men, women and children that he claimed as his workers. He then used his own money and influence to transport the workers to a new factory he was building in Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia. When the Jewish women who worked in his factory were transported to Auschwitz by mistake, he accomplished the impossible. He managed to get the women back by offering Nazi officials a fortune in bribes.

#### **Questions**

1. In passage A, the “rescuer” is forced to take one life, in order that she might save four others. Do you consider her action heroic or tragic? Explain.
2. Do you think as Protestants in a nation of Catholics, the oppression felt by the people of Le Chambon influenced their decision to help the Jews? Explain.
3. Should “le major” be considered a hero, despite the fact that he served the Nazis until the end of the war and as such, was likely responsible for as many deaths as he was for lives saved? Explain.
4. Schindler has been accused of profiting from cheap Jewish labor during the Holocaust. Even if profit was his original motive, does it make him less of a hero? Explain.

### Lesson 4. The Resisters

**Instructions:** Read the chart and answer the questions (Source: Holocaust and Human Behavior, 373-377).

Who were they?	What did they do?	What was the consequence?
Hans and Sophie Scholl, Students	Formed a group known as the White Rose which published and then distributed a leaflet which exposed the death of more than 300,000 Polish Jews.	Arrested by the Nazis and brought to trial. Freely admitted their responsibility and were found “guilty.” Both were guillotined later the same day.
Helmuth von Moltke, German Aristocrat	Smuggled copies of the <i>White Rose</i> , a leaflet that exposed the he plight of Polish Jews, to friends in Allied countries. The fliers were then dropped over German cities. Worked for The Kreisau Circle, a group dedicated to fighting the Nazis and creating a new Germany.	He was executed in January, 1945, after a member of the Kreisau Circle, Klaus von Stauffenberg, placed a briefcase containing a bomb under a table where Hitler and his top officials were meeting. Hitler and the other officials survived. Twelve thousand people were put to death for this act.
On February 27, 1943, women of mixed Aryan-Jewish marriages that openly protested the kidnapping and deportation of their children and husbands.	Went to Rosenstrasse 2-4 where their “Jewish” relatives were being held. A Jewish woman married to an Aryan did not have to wear a yellow star, but a man did. Many of the women were themselves secretly Jews and risked being picked up. They stayed for days despite SS threats to shoot and chanted the phrase “murderer, murderer” in the face of machine guns.	After several days of protest Joseph Goebbels ordered the release of all Jews married to an “Aryan”. An underling of Goebbels later claimed that Jews were released “so that others didn’t take a lesson from it, so that others didn’t begin to do the same.”

**Questions**

1. Compare the experiences of the resisters. Did anyone have more at stake than the others did?
2. Is the choice to resist harder for a non-Jew like Moltke or the Scholls than it is for the women who protested to save their families? Explain your answer.
3. Does the fact that they were killed for their actions make them less successful? Defend your answer.

**Great Irish Famine Curriculum Available On-Line at [www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyssa/gif/index.html](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyssa/gif/index.html)**

The award-winning New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum makes accessible to students and teachers the history of the Great Irish Famine. The curriculum guide is specifically designed to encourage the exploration of key concepts and develop essential skills outlined in the seven New York State learning standards areas. It includes exploration of social concepts such as culture, religion, economics, scarcity, democracy, citizenship, public policy and demographics, as well as issues in science and the environment. It enables students to examine and understand the intersection of art, music and literature with science, culture and history. – Mary Daley, New York State Department of Education

**Lesson 5. The Survivors**

**Instructions:** Read the following accounts by survivors and then answer the questions below.

A. Out of convoys which, when they left their homes...numbered from two to three thousand...only two or three hundred arrive. All the nourishment they receive is a daily ration of a little meal sprinkled over their hands...a mass of about four hundred emaciated forms, the remnants of such convoys is lying in one of the [yards]...most of them are suffering from typhoid and dysentery . . . weakened by months of starvation...they just lie there quietly waiting for death . . .

B. First they asked people to hand over their money, saying they would spare those who paid. But after taking the money they killed them anyway . . . there were children begging for pity but they killed them straight away. . . for the next 43 days [I] lived among the rotting corpses, too weak to stand up and convinced the world had come to an end. . . I prayed that I would die because I could not see a future life.

C. We all sort of got used to such relocations. . . however, the place was not an ideal resting area. We have always known that it was a “processing center”. . . they called it a “work camp”, but we all knew it simply as “Death Camp” . . . There were thousands and thousands of people working...many died in front of me from heat stroke, sickness, exhaustion and starvation. . . and many were taken away during the cover of night to almost a certain destination, death. All that time I was wondering when our turn would come . . .

D. Everyday people were being brought to the camp. I knew many of them from before. As far as I know, five thousand men, two hundred forty boys age eleven to fourteen, and thirty-six women were there. The meal consisted of one piece of bread and a bit of cooked stuff, mainly beans. . . people would faint everyday from physical weakness and hunger . . . I was desperately hoping I’d be killed with a bullet. . . trucks took the bodies away, we don’t know where.

E. There were those who fell—we were not allowed to help them rise. They were shot - right there - wherever the fell. . . and finally my turn came. . . and then he turned my head. . . and shot me. . . I was praying for another bullet to put an end to my suffering. . . I felt bodies pulling at me. . . not all of them dead, but in their last sufferings . . . children crying “Mother,” “Father,” . . . I could not stand. . .

**Questions**

1. How are the stories told in these passages similar or different?
2. What words and experiences are repeated in each passage?
3. Does any one experience seem worse than the others? Why?
4. Passage A describes events in Armenia, 1914-1918; passage B describes events in Rwanda, 1994; passage C describes events in Cambodia, 1975-1979; passage D describes events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995; and passage E describes events in the European Holocaust, 1938-1945. Did you realize they were describing different places and times? Why or why not?
5. In your opinion, are these all examples of genocide? Explain.
6. In your opinion, could something like this happen in the world today or in the future? Explain.

## Choices for the 21st Century: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler

The Choices for the 21st Century Project was established to help teachers engage students in an examination of foreign policy issues, to improve student citizenship skills, to encourage discussion on public policy, and to develop critical assessment of government action. *Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler* (3rd edition, 2000) encourages students to examine the factors behind the demise of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazism under the totalitarian rule of Adolf Hitler. The student text contains readings, charts, and primary source material including cartoons, songs, poems, pamphlets and stories. They are designed to challenge students to consider multiple perspectives and to think critically about the era. Through role-playing and debate, students learn to identify policy options and express opinions based on evidence. The teachers' resource guide provides lesson plans based on the documentary material.

Written documents, examples of Weimar art and literature, and political posters engross students in German culture between the World Wars. Students discover a German society and people forced to respond to their nation's political and economic crisis. Defeat in World War I, the casualties and economic dislocation caused by the war, the punitive Treaty of Versailles, and the financial burden of reparation payments sent the German economy into a sharply downward spiral and lowered public morale to the point where the democratic Weimar Republic was seriously challenged by opposition and revolutionary parties from the left and right. This package provides students with a crucial context for understanding the collapse of parliamentary government in Germany and the assumption of power by Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party. Hitler and the Nazis preached a brand of extreme nationalism that appealed to a people threatened by economic deprivation and social chaos. This intense nationalism incorporated racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric and eventually led to both World War II and the Holocaust.

The Choices Approach draws on research showing that "students learn best when history is recreated with all of its uncertainties and tensions." Many teachers spend countless hours searching for accessible and interesting documents that present diverse views and take into account different student learning styles. These documents are provided here, making this an invaluable resource guide for the social studies classroom. - Jay Kreutzberger

**Choices Publications:** Order "Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler" or other packages at the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program web site ([www.choices.edu](http://www.choices.edu)) or Choices Department, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912. Teacher sets (student text and teachers' resource guide) are \$15 each. Student texts (15 or more student texts) are \$7 per copy. For \$12, teacher sets can be downloaded from their website.

- Caught between Two Worlds: Mexico at the Crossroads (5th edition, 2002)
- Challenges to the New Republic: Prelude to the War of 1812 (1st edition, 2000)
- Charting Russia's Future in the Post-Soviet Era (7th edition, 2000)
- China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response (5th Edition, 2000)
- Coming to Terms with Power: U.S. Choices after World War II (3rd edition, 1998)
- Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce: The Colonial Experience in the Congo (1st edition, 2000)
- Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler (3rd edition, 2000)
- The Cuban Missile Crisis: Considering its Place in Cold War History (1st edition, 2001)
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- Russia's Uncertain Transition: Challenges for U.S. Policy (4th edition, 2000)
- Shifting Sands: Balancing U.S. Interests in the Middle East (5th edition, 2002)
- U.S. Immigration Policy in an Unsettled World (9th edition, 2000)

## **1. Nazi Ideology and Popular Culture**

(Based on material from “Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler,” 21st Century Education Project)

**A. Horst Wessel Song:** Many of Weimar Germany’s political parties adopted songs as their unofficial anthems. The *Horst Wessel Song* became the Nazi anthem.

Hold high the Banner! Close the hard ranks serried!  
S.A. marches on with sturdy stride.  
Comrades, by Red Front and Reaction killed, are buried  
But march with us in image at our side.

Gangway! Gangway now for the Brown Battalions!  
For the Storm Trooper clear roads o’er the land!

The Swastika gives hope to our entrenched millions,  
The day for freedom and for bread’s at hand.

The trumpet blows its shrill and final blast!  
Prepared for war and battle here we stand.

Soon Hitler’s banners will wave unchecked at last,  
The end of German slav’ry in our land!

### **Questions**

1. Who were the “Brown Battalions”?
2. According to this song, what does the “Swastika” represent?
3. The Red Front is a communist youth group. What does the song say about these youth?
4. What is the message of the “Horst Wessel Song”?
5. In your opinion, why were songs like the “Horst Wessel Song” used to teach Nazi ideals?

**B. The Hitler Youth Quex (1931):** This book by Karl Schenzinger was written to teach Nazi political and social values to young readers. It tells the story of Heini, who is the 15-year-old son of an alcoholic, unemployed communist father. Heini’s mother suffers terrible abuse at the hands of her husband, who yells that he is a “class-conscious proletariat” while he beats her. During the book, she commits suicide. Despite the opposition of his father, Heini makes friends with members of the local Hitler youth group. He admires the Nazis because of their concept of German strength and honor, and is attracted to their military discipline. Two excerpts from the book follow. In the first excerpt, Heini describes seeing a group of Hitler Youth. In the second excerpt, Fritz, a Nazi youth leader, explains to Heini the importance of preserving the purity of the German people.

1. “He really liked the S.A. (*Strumabteilung* or Storm Detachment). They looked orderly, clean, robust, and their leather shone. They reminded him of order, good breeding, and discipline - just like it was in the old stories. . . Those lads, too, had worn leather gaiters. They marched past him one day; each one like the other, shining, lively and fresh, a flag up in front. For an hour he marched alongside them, with only one wish in his heard - to be allowed to march along in these rows, with these chaps, who were young like him, who sang songs. He was almost brought to tears with pride and happiness. These are Nazis!”

2. “I want to train, inside and out, so that I understand courage. I want to smell my blood and the blood of others who have the same blood as me. The word ‘Volk’ (people) has become ridiculous here in Germany. Man, just think! We should be ashamed whenever we see a herd of deer or an elephant herd. They don’t mix with one another. There, too, each animal has his place according to what he is and what he does for the herd. Isn’t it so? The zoo is the best university that I know of.”

### **Questions**

1. Why does Heini admire the *Strumabteilung*?
2. Why does Fritz say that “the word ‘Volk’ has become ridiculous”?
3. What does Fritz mean when he says “the zoo is the best university that I know of”?
4. In your opinion, why is Heini’s father portrayed as a brute who drives his mother to suicide?

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5. In your opinion, why were stories like *The Hitler Youth Quex* used to teach Nazi ideas?

## **2. Legal And Ideological Underpinnings Of The Nazi Regime**

(Based on material from “Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler,” 21st Century Education Project)

**Instructions:** Between February, 1933 and a series of speeches and laws established the legal and ideological underpinnings for the Nazi regime in Germany. Working in teams, examine the statements below. Identify the main idea in each passage. Select three of the speeches or laws that you believe were most important in establishing Nazi control over Germany. Explain why your team selected these passages.

**Homework:** Write an editorial for an American newspaper explaining why Americans should be concerned with events in Germany.

- **Hermann Goering, Orders to Prussian Police, February 17, 1933.** “I expect all police authorities to maintain the best relations with these organizations [S.A. and Stahlhelm, the ultra-nationalist veterans organization] that comprise the most important constructive forces of the state. . . The activities of subversive organizations are on the contrary to be combined with the most drastic methods. Communist terrorist acts are to be countered with all severity, and weapons must be used ruthlessly if necessary. . . Every official must constantly bear in mind that failure to act is more serious than errors committed in acting.”
- **Enabling Law, March 24, 1933.** This critical legislation passed with a two-thirds majority of the Reichstag. With the Center Party also voting to grant dictatorial powers to Hitler’s government. “National laws can be enacted by the National Cabinet [Hitler and his ministers] as well as in accordance with the procedure established in the Constitution. . . The national laws enacted by the National Cabinet may deviate from the Constitution so far as they do not affect the position of the Reichstag and National Council. The powers of the President remain undisturbed.”
- **Law for the restoration of the Civil Service, April 7, 1933.** “Officials of non-Aryan descent [primarily Jews] are to be retired. Those who have honorary status are also to be dismissed. . . Those officials who have indicated by their previous political activity that they may not exert themselves for the national state without reservation may be dismissed.”
- **Speech by Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, at Mass Book Burning, May 10, 1933.** Thousands of students in coordinated demonstrations in over thirty university towns burned books by Albert Einstein, H.G. Wells, Jack London, Erich Maria Remarque, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Upton Sinclair, Karl Marx, and other writers “un-German.” “You have done well in the middle of the night to throw into the flames these unspiritual relics of the past. It is a strong, great, and symbolic performance that should document for all the world that here, tonight, the spiritual foundations of the November [Weimar] Republic sink to the ground. But out of these ruins there will arise the phoenix of a new spirit, a spirit that we bear, that we demand, a spirit on which we have stamped its decisive character and its decisive features. So I beg you, my fellow students, to stand up for the Reich and for its new authorities. So I bet you to dedicate yourselves to the work and duty and banners of responsibility.”
- **Decree for the Coordination of All Activities, June 30, 1933.** “. . . all of the following are transferred to the jurisdiction of the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda [Joseph Goebbels]:. . . general public enlightenment on the domestic scene, the Academy of Politics, setting up and celebrating national holidays and state ceremonies. . . the press, the radio, the German Library in Leipzig, art, music, including philharmonic orchestras, theater, cinema. . .

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- **Law Concerning the Formation of New Parties, July 14, 1933.** “The National Socialist German Workers’ Party is the only political party in Germany. Anyone who seeks to maintain the organization of another political party or to organize a new political party is to be punished by confinement in a jail.”
- **Law for the Protection of Hereditary Health, July 14, 1933.** “Anyone who suffers from an inheritable disease may be sterilized surgically if, in the judgment of medical science, it could be expected that his descendents will suffer from serious inherited mental or physical defects. . . Sterilization may also be recommended by 1) the official physician, 2) the official in charge of a hospital, sanitarium, or prison. . . The proceedings of the Health Inheritance Courts are secret.”
- **Law to Promote National Labor, January 20, 1934.** “A labor trustee will be appointed for every large industrial area. It will be the duty of this officer to promote the maintenance of industrial peace. . . Each member of a working community is responsible for the conscientious performance of the duties entailed by his position in that community. His conduct must be such as to deserve the consideration attached to his position, and in particular he must be constantly mindful of his duty to devote his energies wholeheartedly to the service of the undertaking and to subordinate himself to the general good.”
- **Law for the Reorganization of the Reich, January 30, 1934.** “The popular assemblies of the individual states are hereby abolished. The sovereign rights of individual states are hereby transferred to the Reich. The governments of the individual states are to be subordinate to the Reich government. . . The Reich government may draw up new constitutional laws.”
- **Armed Forces Oath of Personal Loyalty, August 2, 1934.** “I swear before God this holy oath: that I shall give absolute obedience to the Fuehrer of the German Reich and people, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht [army], and as a courageous soldier will be ready at all times to lay down my life for this oath.”
- **Law Regarding Labor Service, June 26, 1935.** “All young Germans of both sexes are obligated to serve their country in the Reich Labor Service. It is the purpose of the Reich Labor Service to educate German youth in the spirit of National Socialism so that they may obtain a true national community sentiment, a free conception of labor, and above all, a due respect for manual work.”
- **Nuremberg Laws on Citizenship and Race, September 15, 1935.** “A citizen of the Reich may be only one who is of German or kindred blood, and who, through his behavior, shows that he is both desirous and personally fit to serve loyally the German people and the Reich. . . Only a citizen of the Reich may enjoy full political rights in consonance with the provisions of the laws.”
- **Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935.** “Any marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden. . . Extramarital relations between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden. . . Jews are forbidden to employ as servants in their households female subjects of German or kindred blood who are under the age of forty-five years. Jews are forbidden from displaying the Reich and the national flag and from showing the national colors.”
- **Supplementary Decree on Citizenship, November 14, 1935.** “A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot occupy public office. Jewish officials [government employees] will be retired as of December 31, 1935. . . A Jew is an individual who is descended from at least three grandparents who were racially full Jews. . . A Jew is also an individual who is descended from two full Jewish grandparents if. . . [four specific conditions are met].”

# Teaching About the Holocaust Using Literature

by Tammy Manor

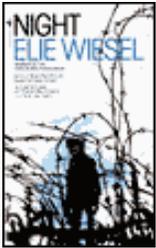
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Reading literature about the Holocaust is a good companion to a regular Global Studies curriculum. I became interested in the Holocaust because all four of my grandparents escaped from Nazi-occupied Germany. As a child, I never read a book about the Holocaust, but I lived it through stories told to me by my mother. The Holocaust occurred over fifty years ago and there are not that many survivors left. Fortunately, many of their survival stories are recorded in various forms, so by reading Holocaust literature another generation of students can learn about the atrocities and the struggle for survival.

I recommend *Night* by Elie Wiesel as the best novel for use in the social studies classroom. *Night* is very realistic and shows a lot of the horrific things that occurred in Europe during that time period. It is a memoir of Elie Wiesel's childhood in Sighet, a little town in Transylvania. Elie is twelve years old when the novel begins in 1941. Elie is the only boy in his family and the reader senses that his family has sheltered him from the rest of the world. Elie is told by his parents that his job in this world is to be a student so he spends his days studying the Talmud.

One day all foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet. The Hungarian police put the foreign Jews in cattle cars and no one did anything to stop them. Everyone said that the foreign Jews were brought to Galicia, that they were put to work, and that they were happy. One person escapes and returns to Sighet with horror stories about the Gestapo and how they were murdering Jews. However, no one believed him. Years passed and Sighet was largely unaffected by the war until the spring of 1944 when the Fascists came to power and took over the government. Soon German soldiers were in their town and the Jews of Sighet were deported street by street. Elie and his family were put in a cattle wagon, with eighty people in the car. Anyone who tried to escape was shot. They stood in the cars, barely able to move, until they arrived a few days later in Auschwitz. Elie survived the grueling torture, but unfortunately his father and mother died. After the war, he was reunited with his two older sisters.

Scholars agree that *Night* is one of the best works of literature on the Holocaust because it is both well written and historically accurate. What affects my students the most is that they know that these things actually happened to the author and that he was about their age when he experienced them.

While I feel that *Night* is the best novel to use to teach the Holocaust through literature, there are other valuable works. *Survival in Auschwitz* is the story of Primo Levi, a member of the Italian anti-Fascist resistance, who was deported to the SS death camp at Auschwitz in 1944. Levi survived to write memoirs of his life in the prison camp. It is a more difficult book to read than *Night*, so I recommend selecting passages for students to examine. *Number the Stars*, which is set in Denmark in 1943, was written for middle-level students. The main character is Annemarie Johansen, a ten-year-old girl. When Jews are forced to close their shops and get "relocated," her family helps them sneak them out of the country. *Maus* is a comic book about a family of "mice" who are Jews. The author-cartoonist's father is a Holocaust survivor who tells him stories about life in Poland during the war. In the two-volume set, German's are portrayed as cats and Poles as dogs. *I never saw another butterfly. . . Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, is a collection of poems and drawings that were done by children who lived in Terezin Concentration Camp. The forward to the book of poetry describes the camp itself, which was set up by the Nazis to show the Red Cross that conditions were bearable. As a result, this camp had nicer accommodations and the prisoners were dressed and fed better than in other camps.

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**Book Review:** Jaap Polak and Ina Soep, *Love Survives The Holocaust: Steal A Pencil For Me, Love Letters From Camp Bergen Belsen And Westerbork* (Scarsdale, NY : Lion Book Publishers, 2000), by John Osborne

For over a decade, Jaap Polak has spoken to Global History classes at North Salem High School during the students' study of World War II. He speaks about a world gone mad and his survival at the Bergen Belsen concentration camp. North Salem High School is only one of many schools, colleges, and religious groups where Jaap has conveyed his message about the Holocaust and genocide. In December 1992, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands knighted Jaap into "The Order of Orange Nassau." She commended him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Anne Frank Center, USA. In 1997, the Regents of the University of the State of New York presented Mr. Polak their highly acclaimed Louis E. Yavner Citizen Award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching about the Holocaust and about Other Violations of Human Rights.

This book is a true story told through love letters of two exceptionally strong individuals, Jaap (Jack) Polak and his wife of 55 years, Ina Soep. Their letters provided sustenance to help them endure and overcome the misery and upheaval of a real life nightmare. When would these days end and would they survive to create a new life together? It was to occur only through resilience of the human spirit strengthened by that powerful force called love. This book can provide teacher and student alike a lifelong lesson about the will to survive. As Ina states in the text, "Jaap buoyed my spirits with his indomitable self confidence." Jaap counters in one of his many letters to Ina, "that in everything, even the gloomiest things, you must look for the sunny side."

These love letters provide a diary of document-based primary source information portraying the tension, insecurity, constant fear, and hope for what tomorrow would bring for Jaap, Ina, and their loved ones. Editor Harriet Ross wrote in the Introduction, "The love that developed between them during the internment years was love in its purest form; and its strength sustained them through the miseries of disease, starvation, and despair, keeping alive their determination to survive. This enduring bond was heightened by the Letters themselves written then and there was no conception of how their lives would eventually evolve."

The story begins in 1940 when the German war machine overran Holland and occupied this western European nation. For Jaap, a Dutch Jew, the next five years were a roller coaster ride of hope and despair. For the 140,000 Dutch Jews, the process the Nazis labeled "the Final Solution" had already begun.

For Jaap, Ina, and their families, Nazi deportation came in July 1943, when they were sent to the transit camp of Westerbork in northern Netherlands. During the next 21 months in Westerbork and later at Camp Bergen Belsen near Celle, Germany, Jaap and Ina communicated with each other as often as possible with love notes and letters written on scraps of paper. Most of the letters contained in the book are from Jaap to Ina; most of Ina's letters were lost at the time of her liberation at the end of the war. The letters are often emotional accounts of the daily drudgery and inhumane conditions of the camps, but are also filled with Jaap's eternal optimism that their lives will come together in the future. The letters from the last days at Bergen Belsen are most poignant. They tell about people who struggled to avoid and survive the dreaded spotted typhus disease, but at the end, died just before liberation by the Allied forces. Jaap contracted this debilitating disease but fortunately survived after many months of care. As Ina wrote, "When you are that ill you don't get your strength back from so little food and that is what happened to so many people. They died in such large numbers everyday so rapidly that they could not clear the bodies out fast enough."

By the end of the war, only 3000 Dutch Jews of the 103,000 deported from Westerbork to the German extermination camps survived and returned to their native land. Jaap married Ina in 1946. The two remained in Amsterdam until they immigrated to the United States in 1951 where they have lived together for the past 50 years.

In our contemporary, fast-paced world of instantaneous e-mail communications, this book portrays the power, and perhaps a lost art form, of letter writing. According to Elie Wiesel "These letters, written in darkness, carry the messages of despair and hope to a world that needs to understand its own challenges." Jehuda Reinharz, President of Brandeis University, feels "this book demonstrates a triumph of human spirit."

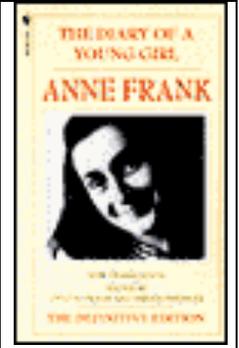
Far from a fairy tale love story, this book is an encounter with two individuals who share a deep love for one another, each sharing a belief in God's will to sustain them. This book is recommended as an interdisciplinary resource for Humanities, Global History, or Human Rights courses.

## Anne Frank, The Diary of A Young Girl : “Seeking Courage In The Face of Opposition”

by Gayle Meinkes-Lumia

“Be brave! Let us remain aware of our task and not grumble; a solution will come. God has never deserted our people. Right through the ages there have been Jews, through all ages they have had to suffer, but it has made them strong too; the weak fall, but the strong will remain and never go under!”

From *Anne Frank, The Diary of A Young Girl*



These simple yet evocative words spoken by Anne Frank summarize my mission as an English and Holocaust educator. As part of a nine-week “Courage In The Face Of Opposition” unit on tolerance and prejudice, my middle school students in Brentwood, New York, a diverse, multi-ethnic, school district on Long Island, are immersed in Holocaust literature. The theme of having courage in the face of opposition is the central driving force of our work in the classroom. This theme is personified for my students through Anne Frank's autobiography *Diary of a Young Girl*. Courage is essential to living and breathing; for if we are unable to stand up for what we believe in, we are inviting oppression. Courage comes in many shapes and forms and frequently goes hand in hand with freedom.

As educators, our responsibility is to reawaken concern for freedom as we empower the young to create a world where compassion and solidarity prevail. Students need to realize that freedom does not develop in a vacuum, it can only be attained through an awareness and an understanding of those who were downtrodden in the past.

I find that the study of literature of courage, both fictional and non-fictional, helps create a passion for freedom and change in the world. Students need to learn about individuals that fought for emancipation. They need to realize that freedom would not exist in the world without the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman and Anne Frank; individuals who courageously struggled to obtain freedom for themselves and others.

After experiencing *Anne Frank: The Diary of A Young Girl*, my students are transformed. They become different people - empathetic, considerate, and tolerant. They realize that Anne's voice must still be heard, more than fifty years later. I find that the *Diary* makes a tremendous impact on students. It provides them with the opportunity to gain insight about and reinforce the human capacity for love, understanding, compassion, faith, and respect for life. Year after year students from my previous classes return to my classroom to discuss remembrances of the activities and tales of the knowledge they acquired during the study of Anne's diary.

Perhaps it was Felipe who stated it best in his reflective journal: “This unit made me wonder about myself and the way that I treat people. Sometimes we make fun of the Dominican students, I don't really know why. What my friends think of me doesn't matter anymore, I will never make fun of anyone again. What those Jewish people went through is disgusting. Prejudice has to be stopped, it's like an evil germ spreading through the world. I will spread only hope and tolerance.”

Before introducing students to *Anne Frank: The Diary of A Young Girl*, I begin the “Courage In The Face Of Opposition” unit with a English/Social Studies roundtable discussion addressing the questions:

- What does it mean to have “courage in the face of opposition”?
- Is it important to stand up for what you believe despite opposition from others?
- What individuals in history have displayed “courage in the face of opposition”?
- Would life be the same today if it were not for freedom fighters?

During the course of the unit, students:

- Study Anne's diary as a portrait of war, a portrait of adolescence, a philosophy of life, and a study of the nature of people;

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- Complete a series of writing assignments, including research reports, short stories, letters, memoirs, interviews, illustrations, posters, bumper stickers, advertisements, poetry, persuasive and descriptive essays, journal entries, and literature circles;
- Present projects and writings orally to the class;
- Evaluate the courage displayed by Anne.
- Comprehend why discrimination is something to be fought against and eradicated.
- Learn to take notes on primary and secondary sources.
- Compare and contrast the way the Holocaust is represented in different genres (movies, documentaries).
- Create metaphors for freedom.
- Participate in a mock trial for war criminals.

### Literacy-based Social Studies-related Holocaust Assignments

**“Impact of Prejudice” Review:** I choose a particular trait that will isolate a certain percentage of students in class (e.g., students who have birthdays during the summer). Their names are announced and all of their possessions are confiscated. They are given a star to wear, a number to pin on their clothes, and must sit on the floor and face the wall (the rest of the class is not allowed to speak to them). Everyone else is given candy and is allowed to roam freely. After about ten minutes, both groups journal write about their experiences and feelings. This is followed by a class discussion.

**Library Research:** Students cooperatively work with the mission in mind of defining and describing Holocaust terminology.

**Documentary:** Students view a documentary on the rise of Hitler and take notes and discuss.

**Guided Imagery:** Students view photos and pictures of courageous individuals (police officers, firefighters, etc.) and discuss freedom, discrimination, and courage.

**Interview:** Students interview an older relative in order to find out where they were during the Holocaust and what they were thinking at the time.

**The Great Diary Project:** Students create a journal of ten diary entries. Each entry is written from the point of view of a different character in Anne’s diary. Students include pictures, words, news articles in their journals that reflect a theme or concept.

**Diary within a Diary:** Students analyze Anne’s situation and compose their own entries regarding her plight.

**Discussion Journals:** Students evaluate Anne’s state of mind during this period in hiding. They focus on various relationships within the family. Students highlight Anne’s courage and will to survive.

**Literature Circles:** Students work in groups of five and analyze and evaluate specific characters and situations in the book.

**Primary Source memoirs, Stories, and Poetry** - During the course of reading Anne’s diary, students read short story selections and poetry about the Holocaust and compare what they read with what they learned from Anne’s diary.

**Courage/Discrimination poetry:** Students read “First they came for the Jews” by Pastor Niemöller and analyze why people whether people should stand up for what they believe, even if it means standing alone.

**Discrimination - connection to others** - Students read accounts of the Gypsies oppression in the Holocaust and then compare the atrocity to that of the Jews.

**First-person “Letters”:** Students assume roles as either a prisoner in a concentration camp or a member of the resistance movement. They must compose letters home as well as letters to Winston Churchill in Britain and FDR in America, describing the horrors they see and the assistance that is warranted.

**Text Rendering:** Students become active readers by thinking while they engage with the text. They extract words, phrases, sentences, and passages that are important or memorable, highlight them and “call out” their chosen phrases to construct a collective poem.

**Wall of Remembrance:** Students use any medium they choose (poetic, artistic, and prose) to create an overall representation of the Holocaust. They create it, present it, and display it for all to praise.

**Dioramas/Mobiles** - Students create three dimensional images from Anne’s diary or other scenes of the Holocaust.

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**Theme Analysis** - Students are divided into groups of four and are asked to teach a theme to the class as it relates to Anne Frank. They locate any relevant passages from the text and instruct others. The topics and group divisions are: the Diary as a portrait of war; the Diary as a philosophy of life; the Diary as a portrait of adolescence; and, the Diary as a study of the nature of people

**Holocaust/Slavery Essay** - Students compare and contrast the Holocaust to slavery. They focus in depth on the similarities and differences of the time periods.

**Modern Day Genocide** - Students research modern day genocide and propose remedies.

**Survivor Letters** - Students write letters to Holocaust survivors.

**Mock Nuremberg Trial** - Students research articles involving reparations and war crimes. A mock trial is set up with costumes, documentation, jury, etc.

**Guest Speaker** - A Holocaust survivor is invited to speak to students as they engage in a question and answer forum.

**Final Essay** - Students write a "Courage in the face of opposition" essay that demonstrates their understanding of Anne Frank and the Holocaust.

## Recommended Bibliography/Resources for a Holocaust Unit

### Written Sources:

- Atkinson, Linda (1985). *In Kindling Flame: The Story of Hannah Senesh*. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard Books. A young woman decides to fight back to protect her family and her people.
- Arnold, Elliot (1969). *A Kind of Secret Weapon*. New York: Scribners. A Danish family joins the resistance and publishes uncensored news for distribution. The father is killed but the mother and her 11 year old son carry out the family plan.
- Anthony, Christine (1956). *I Am Fifteen and I Don't want to Die*. New York: Dutton & Company. A fifteen year old girl hides from the Nazis.
- Boom, Corrieten (1971). *The Hiding Place*. New York: Bantam Books. A woman and her sister are sent to a concentration camp for helping Jews escape the Nazis.
- Fenelon, Fania (1977). *Playing for Time*. New York: Atheneum Books. Birkenau women's orchestra plays for high ranking officers in order to avoid death.
- Leitner, Isabella (1978). *Fragments of Isabella*. New York: Dell Publishing. Isabella recalls her time at Auschwitz and the struggle of her family to survive.
- Levi, Primo (1978). *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Collier Books. An Italian chemist, Primo Levi was arrested because he was Jewish. He describes his experience at Auschwitz.
- Meltzer, Milton (1976). *Never to Forget*. New York: Dell Publishing. Meltzer uses his personal testimonies to recreate emotions of WWII.
- Rose, Leesha (1978). *The Tulips Are Red*. New Jersey: AS Barnes. A woman loses her family and lover to deportation. She is left to work in an invalid hospital and later joins the resistance.
- Sender, Ruth Minsky (1986). *The Cage*. New York: Macmillan Publishing. An autobiography of Sender's life during the Holocaust, the ghettos, concentration camps, and the loss of her parents.
- Senger, Valentin (1980). *No. 12 Kaiserhofstrasse*. New York: EP Dutton & Company. A Jewish family pretends to be Gentile in occupied Nazi Germany.
- Spiegelman, Art (1986). *Maus: A Survivor's Tale I: My Father Bleeds History*. New York: Pantheon Books. A memoir of a Jewish survivor and his son (Spiegelman). In this black and white cartoon, the Jews are portrayed as mice and the Nazis as cats.
- Spiegelman, Art (1991). *Maus: A Survivor's Tale II: And Her My Troubles Began*. New York: Pantheon Books. The continuing tale of Spiegelman's father's experience and his mother's suicide.
- Volavkova, Hana, ed. (1978). *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944*. New York: Schocken Books. A collection of children's drawings and poetry produced during the Holocaust.

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Wiesel, Elie (1965). *One Generation After*. New York: Pocket Books. Wiesel’s story of his current life. He is a survivor of both Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

Wiesel, Elie (1986). “Wiesel’s Speech at Noble Ceremony,” *The New York Times*. Elie Wiesel discusses the necessity for people to take action against things they feel are wrong.

Ziemian, Joseph (1975). *The Cigarette Seller of 3 Crosses Square*. Minnesota: Lerner Publications. A band of children try to stay alive by selling cigarettes and singing in the streets for money.

### Audio-Visual Sources:

*The Attic: The Hiding of Anne Frank* (1988). Television movies about Miep Gies, the woman who aided the Frank family during WWII.

*Au Revoir Les Enfants* (1987). The headmaster of a child school monastery protects and hides Jewish children.

*The Great Dictator* (1940). Charlie Chaplin satirizes the war as he plays the roles of a ghetto barber and a “great dictator.”

*Europa! Europa!* (1991). A 17 year old boy who conceals his Judaism and becomes a Hitler youth.

*Night and Fog* (1955). Includes footage of Auschwitz accompanied by a chilling French narrative.

*Schindler’s List* (1993). Academy Award winning film that depicts Oskar Schindler’s role in saving many Jews during WWII.

*The Holocaust: A Teenager’s Experience* (1990). David Bergman was deported to Auschwitz at the age of 12. He is the only member of his extended family to survive. His simple words make him an accessible narrator.

## Courage/Discrimination Poetry

### A. First They Came for the Jews

by Pastor Niemoeller

First they came for the Jews

and I did not speak out

because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists

and I did not speak out

because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists

and I did not speak out

because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me

and there was no one left

to speak out for me.

### B. First They Came for \_\_\_\_\_

First they came for the \_\_\_\_\_

and I did not speak out because I was not a

\_\_\_\_\_.

Then they came for the \_\_\_\_\_

and I did not speak out because I was not a

\_\_\_\_\_.

Then they came for the \_\_\_\_\_

and I did not speak out because I was not a

\_\_\_\_\_.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

1. In your opinion, aside from the fact that the man was not a Jew, a Communist, or a trade unionist, why didn’t Pastor Niemoeller speak out?
2. “Stand up for what you believe, even if you’re standing alone.” What does this quote mean? What do you think Pastor Niemoeller would think of this quote? Why?
3. Complete poem B using the names of current groups that have been targeted for discrimination.

## **Quotes from Anne Frank's "The Diary of a Young Girl"**

### **A. Hiding**

- July 11, 1942: "Our little room looked very bare at first with nothing on the walls; but thanks to Daddy who had brought my picture postcards and film-star collection on beforehand, and with the aid of paste pot and brush I have transformed the walls into one gigantic picture. This makes it look much more cheerful. . . . We have to whisper and tread lightly during the day, otherwise the people in the warehouse might hear us. . . . We're very afraid the neighbors might hear or see us. . . . Last night the four of us went down to the private office and listened to England on the radio, I was so scared."
- August 21, 1942: "Now our Secret Annex has truly become secret. Mr. Kugler thought it would be better to have a bookcase built in front of the entrance to our hiding place. Now whenever we want to go downstairs we have to duck and then jump."
- September 29, 1942: "Margot and I have declared the front office to be our bathing grounds. Since the curtains are drawn on Saturday afternoon, we scrub ourselves in the dark, while the one who isn't in the bath looks out the window through a chink in the curtains."
- January 6, 1944: "I think that what's happening to me is so wonderful, and I don't just mean the changes taking place on the outside of my body, but also those on the inside. . . . Whenever I get my period (and that's only been three times), I have the feeling that in spite of all the pain, discomfort and mess, I'm carrying around a sweet secret. . . . I'd just turned thirteen when I came here, so I started thinking about myself and realized that I've become an 'independent person' sooner than most girls."
- January 28, 1944: "Our own helpers, who have managed to pull us through so far. Never have they uttered a single word about the burden we must be."
- March 14, 1944: "As of tomorrow, we won't have a scrap of fat, butter or margarine. Lunch today consists of mashed potatoes and picked kale. You wouldn't believe how much kale can stink when it's a few years old!"

**Activity:** Imagine if your family had to go into hiding in order to survive. Where would you go? Who would go with you? Who could you depend on? What would life be like? Based on what you have learned about Anne's experience, write a story about your life in hiding.

### **B. Despair**

- June 20, 1942: After May 1940, good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the German invasion which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession and our freedom was strictly limited. Jews must wear a yellow star, Jews must hand in their bicycles, Jews are banned from streetcars, Jews may not visit Christians, Jews must go to Jewish schools and many more restrictions of a similar kind. So we could not do this and were forbidden to do that."
- September 28, 1942: "Not being able to go outside upsets me more than I can say, and I'm terrified our hiding place will be discovered and that we'll be shot. That of course is a fairly dismal prospect."
- October 9, 1942: "Today I have nothing but dismal and depressing news to report. Our many Jewish friends and acquaintances are being taken away in droves. The Gestapo is treating them very roughly and transporting them in cattle cars to Westerbork, the big camp in Drenthe to which they're sending all the Jews. . . . If it's that bad in Holland, what must it be like in those faraway and uncivilized places where the Germans are sending

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them? We assume that most of them are being murdered. The English radio says they're being gassed. Perhaps that's the quickest way to die."

- November 19, 1942: "Countless friends and acquaintances have been taken off to a dreadful fate. Night after night, green and gray military vehicles cruise the streets. It's impossible to escape their clutches unless you go into hiding."
- December 12, 1942: "I saw two Jews through the curtains yesterday, it was a horrible feeling, just as if I had betrayed them and was now watching them in their misery."
- March 16, 1944: "The brightest spot of all is that at least I can write down all my thoughts and feelings; otherwise, I'd absolutely suffocate."

**Activity:** If you were in Anne's situation, what would you do to survive? How would you handle growing despair?

### C. Hope

- April 9, 1944: "One day this terrible war will be over. The time will come when we will be people again and not just Jews! We can never be just Dutch, or just English, or whatever, we will always be Jews as well. But then, we'll want to be."
- May 11, 1944: "You've known for a long time that my greatest wish is to be a journalist and later on, a famous writer. In any case, after the war I'd like to publish a book called the Secret Annex."
- June 6, 1944: "'This is the Day,' came the announcement over the English news at twelve o'clock. The invasion has begun! English parachute troops have landed on the French coast. Great commotion in the Annex! Would the long-awaited liberation ever come true?"
- July 15, 1944: "We're much too young to deal with these problems, but they keep thrusting themselves on us until, finally, we're forced to think up a solution, though most of the time our solutions crumble when faced with the facts. It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart. . . . And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more. In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I'll be able to realize them!"
- July 21, 1944: "I'm finally getting optimistic. Now, at last, things are going well! They really are! Great news! An assassination attempt has been made on Hitler's life. . . . by a German general. . . . The Führer owes his life to 'Divine Providence': he escaped, unfortunately, with only a few minor burns and scratches. . . . This is the best proof we've had so far that many officers and generals are fed up with the war and would like to see Hitler sink into a bottomless pit."

### Activities:

- Despite the difficulties of her situation, Anne Frank maintains her hope for the future. Write Anne a letter. In your letter explain your own concerns about the present and your hope for the future.
- Create a work of art, either symbolic or realistic, that commemorates the life and death of Anne Frank.

## The New Jersey Mandate to Teach About the Holocaust and Genocide

by Barbara Lorfink Hadzima

The original effort to provide systematic instruction in New Jersey on the history of Holocaust began in 1973. The first high school courses in the United States on the Holocaust were offered in Vineland and Teaneck. The New Jersey Advisory Council on Holocaust Education was created by Governor Thomas Kean on October 5, 1982 to assist with and advise in the implementation of Holocaust and genocide educational programs in New Jersey public schools. In 1994, Governor Christine Todd Whitman signed into law the New Jersey State Mandate to teach the Holocaust and Genocide. The law states: "The instruction shall enable pupils to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; to understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; and to understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life. The instruction shall further emphasize the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens."

Because many young Americans draw bold lines between what they perceive of as "us" and "them," between people they consider like themselves and people they view as different, a major focus of the New Jersey Holocaust curriculum is "prejudice reduction" education. The middle school curriculum provides guidance, lessons, and enrichment through the use of books, poetry, art, music, photographs, and audio-visual materials. Recommendations are organized by grade level and content. Units include Prejudice and Discrimination; Rise of Nazism; Life in the Ghettos and Camps; Hiding, Escape, and Rescue; Resistance; Survival, Liberation and Legacy. Each unit is introduced by a section with background information to assist teachers. There is also a teacher information/materials section, a glossary, and an Internet site list. Two sample lessons follow. The first lesson is taken from the Resistance unit and is suggested for students in grades 7-8. The second sample lesson is taken from the Survival, Liberation, and Legacy Unit and is recommended for grades 6-8.

### **In Kindling Flame: A Biography of Hannah Senesh** by Linda Atkinson (Beech Tree Books, 1985)

**Synopsis:** Through the use of her diary, letters, poetry, interviews with her mother and brother, and official documents, this book for young adults tells the story of Hannah Senesh. The story unfolds with Hannah's happy life before anti-Semitism took hold in Hungary. Hannah decides to immigrate to Palestine. Readers follow Hannah's adventures and learn of Hannah's compelling desire to contribute to Jewish society. Readers will learn of Hannah's training through the British commandos and her unsuccessful mission to return to Hungary to save Jews who remained there.

**Quote:** "There was nothing the Jews could do to end it, because it wasn't anything they did that caused it. It was what they were in the eyes of others: strangers, outsiders, people who did not belong" (p. 36).

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

Discuss and explain *Kristallnacht*.

Review knowledge of Nazi terminology and methodology.

Identify the location of Hungary and Palestine/Israel on a world map.

Introduce and review the movement of Zionism.

Discuss the history that is included in Chapter 4 of the book.

### **Discussion Questions**

Discuss the depth of self-reflection that Hannah wrote about in her diary.

Discuss Hannah's attitude about the events that were occurring in Germany in comparison with the attitude of Catherine.

Discuss the importance and value of being a Zionist at that time and in the following period of time.

Analyze how choices and behaviors of individuals and groups influenced events and consequences.

Discuss the history of the Zionist movement.

Why did Hannah decide to leave the relative safety of Palestine to return to Nazi-controlled Europe?

How did Hannah prepare for her return to Europe?

What was Hannah's mission? What went wrong on Hannah's mission?

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Explain what is known about Hannah's fate after she was captured.

Do you think Hannah made the correct decision to become involved in the resistance and rescue efforts? Explain your answer.

How did Hannah's family respond to her decision to return to Europe? What was their response to her capture and fate?

How did Hannah's comrades view her decision and her actions after she was captured?

What is Hannah's legacy? Explain your answer.

### Activities

Create a timeline or an outline of the historical events found in Chapter 4.

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the following activities.

Research *Kristallnacht* further and prepare an oral presentation.

Identify, by listing, the barriers and sacrifices Hannah would have to overcome to join the Zionist movement.

(Research of Zionism is needed.)

Through research, identify and explain several forms of anti-Semitism that have occurred throughout history.

Investigate and then draw a kibbutz setting. Write an accompanying explanation of the illustration.

### After the War by Carol Matas (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996)

**Synopsis:** When Buchenwald is liberated at the end of World War II, fifteen-year-old Ruth is the only member of her family to survive. Ruth returns to her village in Poland hoping to find a friend or relative, but she finds that everything has changed. Ruth has no place to go, so she joins an underground organization that helps people go to Palestine. She risks her life to lead a group of children there.

**Quote:** "I know he is wrong. I haven't beaten Hitler. He's beaten me. Before the war there'd been almost eighty in my family, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Now? Am I the only one left? And if so, why me? I don't deserve it. Or maybe it is my punishment for being the bad child of the family. Doomed to live when everyone else has left me. Why did I survive?" (pp. 8-9).

### Pre-Reading Activities:

Define, discuss, and explain the background of the history of the British Palestine Mandate.

Review examples of Nazi methodology toward their victims.

Identify the location of Eastern Europe and Palestine/Israel on a map.

Provide background information on the map given on the title page.

### Discussion Questions:

Discuss the changes that occur in Ruth's attitudes throughout the book in regard to her feelings of hope and a future life of happiness.

Discuss the importance and value of "Brichah" (Rescue).

Why does Ruth initially feel that her survival is a punishment for having been "the bad child" of the family? What is meant by the phrase "survivor guilt"? What would you say to Ruth about this feeling?

Explain how Ruth becomes involved in the underground operation to take children to Palestine. Why does the operation have to be underground or secret? What fate awaits the children if they are caught?

How does involvement in this operation change Ruth's view of herself and her survival?

What were the consequences of the choices and behaviors made by individuals and groups in this story?

Identify some of the trained behaviors exhibited by the children as a result of their experiences in a concentration camp. Explain how these behaviors were a response to those experiences.

### Activities:

Draw a map of Europe and the Middle East. Draw the route taken by the Brichah on the map.

Write a letter of encouragement to Ruth as she journeys with the group.

Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast Ruth's feelings before and after joining the Brichah.

Draw an illustration to depict one of the boat scenes.

Imagine that you are one of the children on the Brichah and write a series of journal entries describing your experiences and emotions on the journey.

## “Souvenez-vous” (Remember): Using Literature to Teach Young Children about the Holocaust

by Judith Y. Singer

In Père Lachaise, a cemetery in Paris, there is a row of monuments along one wall dedicated to victims of the Nazi Holocaust, or “deportees,” as they are referred to in France. It is a peaceful part of the cemetery. Not many visitors wander here. The monuments are stark and moving. Each one represents a different concentration camp; each has ashes from the camp crematorium buried at its base. Each monument exhorts the visitor to “souvenez-vous.” Remember. Ravensbruck, Mauthausen, Flossenburg, Nevengame, Auschwitz. . . “Souvenez-vous, souvenez-vous, souvenez-vous.” Remember.

In the Holocaust Museum in Washington D. C., visitors are issued “passports” to help them imagine what it was like to be categorized as a “Jew” under the rule of the Nazis. I watched as a class of middle school students boisterously raced through a reconstructed cattle car designed to help visitors imagine one aspect of this systematic dehumanization of the Jews. No one asked the students to stop and look around them. In this carefully wrought memorial to the extermination of twelve million people, six million of them Jews, no one asked for respectful reflection on the past. How will they learn to remember?

As I immersed myself in children’s literature about the Holocaust, in preparation for writing this article, I began to feel overwhelmed at the horrors, the deaths, the cruelty and the hopelessness generated by such evil. As a Jew, born in the United States in 1943, I am keenly aware that this could have been my story. What about people born after World War II, like the children racing through the cattle car? Do they need to feel like this could have been their story, too? What about elementary school children and their teachers?

In a debate over how to frame Holocaust education for children in grades K-4, published in *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, one educator asks, “what is the point of ever subjecting such young and tender minds and hearts to such atrocities?” (Sept.-Oct. 1999: 36). Another argues that concern to develop self-esteem and respect for diversity provides “linkage between the goals and objectives of the early childhood curriculum in general with those recommended for Holocaust

education” (Jan.-Feb. 1999: P5). As both a teacher of young children and of elementary school teachers from all backgrounds, I appreciate the reluctance many teachers feel about exposing young children to the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis. At the same time, I believe learning about the Holocaust will always be too painful, no matter what age the children are that we teach. In our eagerness to protect young children, we continuously forget the past, and we end up making the world more dangerous for them in the long run.

Nevertheless, we need to be careful with what we present to young children and how we present it. I do not feel compelled to teach the entire history of fascism in Nazi Germany when I introduce young children and their teachers to this part of our history. I would rather look at the hope generated by those people, both Jews and non-Jews, who resisted the Nazis; those who fought back and struggled to retain their humanity as the Nazis were trying to take it from them. I would rather focus on what people have done and what we all can do today to make the world a place where every child is cherished. To begin, we need to teach children some very sad things. We need to remember. “Souvenez-vous.”

Many of the stories I describe below are told from the point of view of a child caught up in the Nazi Holocaust. Most are appropriate to read with elementary children of all ages. Each can be used to help teachers or parents open up conversations with children and help them imagine themselves as people who can take a stand against injustice in the world. A word of caution: Each child and each class is different. Teachers need to prepare themselves for a conversation with their students by first reading these stories to themselves. They need to listen carefully to the ways children respond and encourage their students to share thoughts and feelings about each story.

Throughout this article, I also include brief descriptions of books which are appropriate mainly for older elementary school children. At the end of the article, I list books which can be used by older children and their teachers to learn more factual background about the events of the Nazi Holocaust.