

LIFE IN THE CAMPS AND GHETTOS



Photo courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Unit III: Life in the Camps and Ghettos

Unit Goal: Students will develop a basic knowledge and understanding of the tragic horror and devastation of life in the camps and ghettos for the Jews and other targets of Nazi oppression and of the human spirit and creativity that persisted in the face of that oppression.

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials/Resources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine various aspects of Nazi policies and their impact on individuals and groups, i.e. laws, isolation, deportation, ghettos, murder, slave labor, labor camps, concentration camps, physical and mental torture, death camps, and the final solution. 2. Analyze why people and nations act in the following ways: bullies, gangs, rescuers, heroes, silent bystanders, collaborators, and perpetrators. 3. Discuss the impact of the separation of families, starvation, cold, disease, and isolation on the individual and on the community. 4. Examine and evaluate the influence of traditional attitudes of antisemitism in a society on the way the members responded to Nazi policies. 5. Discuss the choices made by individuals to become a collaborator, a bystander, or a rescuer and the influence that their concern for self above all else played in those decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Teacher information: Essay overview of life in the ghettos and camps. B. The Ghettos <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the excerpts from <u>Smoke and Ashes: They Story of the Holocaust</u> by Barbara Rogasky. Examine the Nazi purposes in creating the ghettos, the conditions inside, and the ultimate fate of those in the ghettos. Use the questions to help initiate a class discussion and select from the activities for the students. 2. <u>Upon the Head of a Goat</u> (Reading Two) by Aranka Siegel examines the growing repression of the fascist regime. Discuss the struggles of the parent to provide for her children and governmental restrictions that made it impossible to do so adequately. Examine the connections between the story and the biblical references. 3. Complete the reading excerpt in the guide from <u>Four Perfect Pebbles</u> by Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan. Discuss this German Jewish family's efforts to survive amidst the growing restrictions of Nazi Germany, the father's arrest, and the efforts to find a way to leave Germany. Compare incidents in the reading to a timeline of events in Nazi Germany. 4. <u>Daniel's Story</u> by Carol Matas is a 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust</u> by Barbara Rogasky. Read excerpts in guide. 2. Read this second excerpt to be found in the guide from Aranka Siegel's autobiographical tale <u>Upon the Head of a Goat</u>. 3. Complete some research on the Internet about the antisemitism and the fascist influences that existed in Hungary. 4. <u>Four Perfect Pebbles</u> by Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan. 5. <u>Daniel's Story</u> by Carol Matas. View video by same name after reading

Performance Objectives Students should be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>6. Discuss and evaluate the role of the Judenrat in the various ghettos in terms of their assistance to the Jews and the purposes of the Nazis in establishing the Judenrats.</p> <p>7. Describe the symptoms of typhus, diarrhea, and other common illnesses that ghetto and camp residents suffered.</p> <p>8. Demonstrate a knowledge of the basic needs of survival for a human being and how those basic needs compared to the resources available to the Jews and prisoners of the ghettos and camps.</p>	<p>4. (continued) fictional story that is a compilation of experiences drawn from the lives of many German Jews. Read the excerpt and complete the lesson. Consider the forms of courage the Jews and other targets of Nazi tyranny exhibited in the face of the overwhelming forces against them.</p> <p>5. "Janusz Korczak: The Father of Nobody's Children" by Jack Goldfarb. [Please note the Dr. Korczak's name is given several different spellings in various sources.] Read the article and discuss the choices that this heroic figure made. Examine the contributions he made to the treatment and education of children, to Polish life and culture, and to the people, especially the children, whom he served and tried to save. Discuss Dr. Korczak's dream for a better world for the children.</p> <p>6. Read the poem "And These Are Their Names" by Rachel Averbach aloud in class. Apply the information in the poem to the story of the children and Dr. Janusz Korczak.</p> <p>7. David Adler's <u>Child of the Warsaw Ghetto</u> is an excellent story to make further connections between the work of Dr. Korczak and life for a Jewish child in a huge ghetto. Complete the discussion questions in the lesson. In</p>	<p>6. Read the magazine article on Dr. Janusz Korczak in the guide. Consult the Internet sources in the guide for further information about this gentle, heroic figure.</p> <p>7. "And These Are Their Names" by Rachel Averbach. Located in guide.</p> <p>8. David Adler's <u>Child of the Warsaw Ghetto</u>.</p>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>9. Compare and contrast the roles of childhood v. adulthood that the children in the ghetto - and the camps - played.</p> <p>10. Explain the Nazi purpose in creating the fiction of a "Model Ghetto" at Terezin and contrast with the reality of the camp.</p> <p>11. Analyze the determination of what was and was not valuable in the ghettos and camps.</p> <p>12. Consider and explain the feelings of guilt and shame that Mary Berg experiences as she observes the treatment of Jews in the ghetto.</p>	<p>particular, note the question on toys and the effort to maintain some semblance of childhood while assuming the responsibilities of an adult.</p> <p>8. My Secret Camera with photographs Taken by Mendel Grossman in the Lodz Ghetto and text by Frank Dabba Smith provides a rich look at life in the ghetto. Students should examine the photos carefully as discuss the efforts of the victims to maintain some sense of normality in an abnormal life.</p> <p>9. Inge Auerbacher's tale I Am A Star: Child of the Holocaust is an autobiographical account of her family's experiences during the Holocaust. Using the poem "Diamonds in the Snow," discuss the horrors and terrors Of life in the Terezin camp and the risks The family members had to take to survive. Discuss what the poem tells you about what is valuable in a camp.</p> <p>10. Mary Berg was the daughter of an American Jewish mother and a Jewish Lodz businessman. In Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary she recorded her experiences and her observations. Read the excerpt and complete the lesson discussing Mary's feelings of</p>	<p>9. My Secret Camera with photographs by Mendel Grossman and text by Frank D. Smith.</p> <p>10. View an excerpt from the video on the Lodz Ghetto.</p> <p>11. I Am A Star: Child of the Holocaust by Inge Auerbach.</p> <p>12. View an excerpt from a video on "Terezin: The Model Ghetto" or a short excerpt on the camp found in the video/film "The Holocaust."</p> <p>13. Excerpt from Mary Berg's Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary.</p> <p>14. View an excerpt from the documentary film of the Warsaw Ghetto or read a description from the testimony of Polish patriot and heroic figure Jan Karski.</p>

Performance Objectives Students should be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>13. Define and explain appropriate vocabulary such of "messengers of death," <i>resettlement, relocation, deportation, etc.</i></p> <p>14. Discuss the importance of trying to maintain a sense of identity as a human and a sense of pride as a person as part of the survival process and as a form of resistance to the Nazis.</p> <p>15. Recognize the triumph of the human spirit in the drive to create in the midst of the most inhuman conditions.</p> <p>16. Discuss and analyze the significance of the determined effort by some members of the Jewish community to provide the children with an opportunity to express themselves and to have a "childhood."</p>	<p>guilt and shame at her escape from the brutal treatment other Jews are experiencing in the ghetto.</p> <p>C. Life in the Camps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the reading from Ruth Minsky Sender's autobiographical tale <u>The Cage</u>. This particular excerpt provides a descriptive bridge of the experience of the ghetto to the camp. Emphasize the importance, and the difficulty, of maintaining a person's pride and integrity in the midst of all of the degradation. A second lesson on the entire book is included in the guide following this lesson on the reading. 2. <u>The Devil's Arithmetic</u> by Jane Yolen. This fictional story provides an interesting contrast between a modern young American Jewish girl and the life of a young woman in a camp. Hannah, the young American, learns the importance of <i>remembering</i> as a result of her "dream." 3. Although the poems and readings included in the guide are sufficient to complete the basic lesson, it would be well worthwhile for the teacher to obtain the entire book by Susan Goldman Rubin, <u>Fireflies in the Dark</u>. The selections of the children's work enrich the story of Friedl Dicker- 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ruth Minsky Sender's <u>The Cage</u>. Although the reading is supplied in the guide, this is an excellent book for the students to read to gain a grasp of the horror, the sense of loss, and the struggle to remain "human" experienced by the victims. 2. View an excerpt of a documentary containing interviews with survivors. See video list for suggestion. 3. <u>The Devil's Arithmetic</u> by Jane Yolen. This story is also available in a video but the video does include some graphic footage and the teacher should consider carefully whether it is appropriate for use. 4. <u>Fireflies in the Dark</u> by Susan Goldman Rubin. A beautiful and touching book to use with students. Especially valuable because the work exhibited in the book is primarily the work of the children.

Performance Objectives Students should be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>17. Identify positive and negative types of human behavior.</p> <p>18. Explain the importance of the survival of these creative works as both a legacy and a remembrance.</p> <p>19. Define and explain the vocabulary terms such as crematorium, selection, typhus, kapo, concentration camp.</p> <p>20. Define and explain the terms <i>Sonderkommando</i>, <i>Kinderlager</i>, <i>Appell</i>.</p>	<p>Brandeis and her work with the children in Terezin.</p> <p>4. <u>We Are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin</u> and the well-known collection <u>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u>. Read the selections and complete both lessons. Compare and contrast the creative work, the spirit the created these works in the camps, and the meaning of the work as a legacy of the children as well as a remembrance.</p> <p>5. In her book <u>Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps</u>, author Andrea Warren tells the story of Janek "Jack" Mandelbaum. Complete the reading and the lesson. Consider the importance of Jack's idea of "playing the game" as a means of survival. Was that a critical factor in his survival? What would you attribute his survival to?</p> <p>6. <u>Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors</u> edited by Milton J. Nieuwsma. Read all three excerpts. Note the similarities</p>	<p>6. <u>We Are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin</u> selected and edited by Marie Rut Krizkova, Kurt Jiri Kotouc, and Zdenek Ornest.</p> <p>7. <u>I Never Say Another Butterfly</u> edited by Hana Volavkova</p> <p>8. View excerpts from a video production of <u>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u> or attend a live performance of the readings and music of the production if available.</p> <p>9. Andrea Warren's story of Janek "Jack" Mandelbaum told in <u>Surviving Hitler</u>.</p> <p>10. <u>Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors</u> with Milton J. Nieuwsma as editor.</p>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>21. Demonstrate an understanding of the Nazi Use and misuse of language to disguise The reality of what they were doing.</p> <p>22. Identify the groups who were victims of the violent, destructive policies of Hitler and the Nazis: Jews, Roma and Sinti, handicapped, anti-Nazis, Blacks, Slavic peoples, Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles, and others.</p> <p>23. Explain and evaluate the role and significance of the collaborators in the implementation of Nazi policies.</p>	<p>and connections in the stories of the three friends. If possible, have a survivor visit the classroom and talk with the students or view a video of survivor testimony.</p> <p>7. <u>Smoke and Ashes</u> excerpt on the "Other Victims." Read the excerpt carefully and consider the reasons the people became victims of the Nazis. Explain the phrase "life unworthy of life" as the Nazis defined and applied it. Explain how the Nazis used the word "euthanasia" to disguise what they were doing in many instances.</p> <p>8. Read the excerpt on Bubuli, a young Austrian Sinti. After reading and Completing the lesson, obtain a copy Of <u>When the Violins Stopped Playing</u> and read a selection from it. Compare and contrast Bubuli's various roles as victim, resister, survivor, and rescuer.</p> <p>9. <u>Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault</u> is a complete program with video and study guide. use the abbreviated readings and lesson in this guide or obtain and use the entire program. What does the refusal of the Witnesses to accept Nazi demands for release and survival tell you about the strength of their faith and character?</p>	<p>11. <u>The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis</u> by Ina Friedman. Reading in guide.</p> <p>12. Also, a copy of book <u>When the Violins Stopped Playing</u> as an additional reading source.</p> <p>13. <u>Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault</u>. Reading included. Obtain entire program from Jehovah's Witnesses. See bibliography for information.</p> <p>14. Reading on Jehovah's Witnesses can also be found in the book <u>The Other Victims</u>.</p>

Performance Objectives Students should be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>24. Evaluate and analyze the creative production that came from the camps and the ghettos as both an indicator of Jewish culture and a determination of all of the victims to leave both a record and a legacy.</p>	<p>D. Music, Art, and Literature</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Essay on Music - Read the essay and the lyrics of the various musical selections included in the section of the unit. Complete the activities in the lessons Consider and explain how the musical is both a reflection of Jewish history and culture as well as a reflection of the calamity of the Holocaust. 2. Read the essay on "Art in the Holocaust" in the guide. Examine the reproductions of the various pieces of artwork. Also, compare these pieces of work completed by adults to the art work to be found in books such as the story by Nelly S. Toll <u>Behind the Secret Window</u>; also previously identified works by children found in <u>Fireflies in the Dark</u> and <u>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u>. Go on-line to the web sites listed in the lesson and examine other samples of artists' work. 3. Essay on Jan Komski and samples of his work. Complete lesson and go to his web site to learn more about the artist and his work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Essay and lyrics from musical selections in the guide. 2. Obtain audio CD of the music or invite a musician to class to perform for the students. Recommendations can be obtained from a local synagogue, one of centers of the United Jewish Federation, or a local music store. Also may consult on-line companies such as amazon, borders, barnes & noble, etc. 3. Read the essay in the guide and exam the artwork provided. 4. <u>Behind the Secret Window; Fireflies in the Dark; I Never Saw Another Butterfly</u> 5. Internet sites listed in guide lesson 6. Essay and reproductions in guide and the artist's website as listed in the lesson.

Life in the Ghettos and Camps

When Hitler assumed power in Germany in 1933, and until his regime ended in 1945, the Nazis established a network of ghettos and hundreds of concentration and death camps that incarcerated and murdered 11 million people; six million of those murdered were Jews.

The mass arrests of trade unionists and the suppression of free speech for all political opponents marked the first hundred days of Hitler's takeover. He opened his first concentration camp in Dachau in 1933 where he held prisoners without trial. The Jews were singled out for annihilation as racially inferior and the primary adversary of the German Reich.

“When Hitler spoke about the Jew, he could speak to the Germans in familiar language. When he reviled his victim, he resurrected a medieval conception. When he shouted his fierce anti-Jewish attacks, he awakened his Germans as if from slumber to a long-forgotten challenge. How old, precisely, are these charges? Why did they have such an authoritative ring?”

The picture of the Jew which we encounter in Nazi propaganda and Nazi correspondence had been drawn several hundred years before. Martin Luther had already sketched the main outlines of the portrait, and the Nazis, in their time, had little to add to it.” (**The Destruction of the European Jews** by Raul Hilberg, p.8)

The Nazis of the twentieth century, like Jew haters of the nineteenth century, regarded the Jews as hostile, criminal and parasitic. Hitler issued antisemitic laws in 1933 that removed Jews from the civil service and teaching positions. Jews were denied admission to the bar, and a law against the crowding of German schools expelled Jewish children from schools. Hitler created boycotts of Jewish stores and laws for the "protection of German blood." He arrested people and denied them a trial, and he made a mockery of the judicial system that was answerable only to his administration.

In September of 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and, within two days, Great Britain and France declared war against Germany. Jews had lived in Poland for eight centuries and numbered 3.5 million, 10% of the total Polish population. Two weeks prior to invading Poland, Hitler had signed a secret non-aggression pact with Stalin, the Soviet leader, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

In 1939, through ghettoization, the Jews of Poland became isolated from the regular community and from each other. Most of the ghettos were located in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) (1939-42) and one in Hungary (1944). In 1940, Piotrkow Trybunalski became the first ghetto created by the Nazis followed by Lodz, Warsaw, Lublin, Radom, Bialystok, Lvov and Rovno. Ghettos in the Baltic States were Riga, Kovno, and Vilna (that was part of Lithuania at that time). The Minsk Ghetto was the largest in the Soviet Union with about 80,000 Jews,

By 1942, Jews in Poland, in German-controlled areas, and in the Soviet Union were confined to ghettos. Victories of the German armies early in the war brought the majority of Jews under Nazi domination. Jews were deprived of their civil rights, had their properties confiscated, and were herded like cattle into ghettos and camps.

Prisoners in the ghettos and camps were classified according to their categories with their own badges of identification. The Jews were forced to wear

yellow stars, a practice stemming from medieval days, to distinguish them from others.

Germany divided Poland into ten administrative districts. The western and northern areas were Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony, and Upper and Lower Silesia. Danzig was annexed to Germany, and the eastern part of Poland fell under Russian control (until Germany turned on the Soviets in June, 1941). The largest district, containing the cities of Lublin, Cracow and Warsaw, became a German colony headed by Governor Hans Frank. The "government" of this colony was known as the General Government and controlled 2.5 million Jews. The first task the Germans had to perform in order to gain *Lebensraum*, living space, was to remove the Poles and Jews from the countryside as well as Jews from Germany and to resettle them in the cities of the General Government.

In the beginning, mobile killing units known as *Einsatzgruppen* were at work decimating the Jewish communities. Within 18 months, the Nazis shot or annihilated by mobile gas vans 1.3 million Jews. The mobile killing units continued to reduce the Jewish population of the ghettos.

As the war progressed, old words assumed new meanings and new ones were coined. Words like *Lebensraum*, *Reich*, *Einsatzgruppen*, *resettlement*, *gas vans*, ghettos (new 20th century version), concentration and death camps, *Zyklon B* pellets, *Judenrat*, *Judenrein*, *Final Solution*, *genocide* and more.

The *Einsatzgruppen*, mass killing units, were slow, messy, too public and demoralizing to some of the troops. One of the most notorious massacres was at Babi Yar in the Soviet Union, where tens of thousands of Jews were shot within days. The Nazis also murdered Roma (Gypsies) and Soviet prisoners at Babi Yar.

Since 2.5 million Jews lived in the General Government area and the Germans needed to ghettoize them in order to annihilate them, they needed a mode of inexpensive transportation. They engaged the railroads to help with their demonic plans. The railroads connected the multitude of ghettos and the hundreds of camps transporting victims to their deaths. The Jews were herded into railroad cattle boxcars that measured 30x8 feet with 100 -125 people packed into one car. The transportation alone killed thousands because of the harsh traveling condition. Millions of Jews didn't know what resettlement meant and some even paid for their rail passage. They had no idea about the death camps.

What was the structure of the ghetto? Ghetto is defined as a separate living quarter for a "racial or ethnic" group. The ghettos created by the Nazis also had another meaning. They were transition places between the assembly of the Jewish population and their deportation to extermination camps. Each ghetto under Nazi control had its own Jewish Council - called the *Judenrat* - which was made up of influential leaders and Rabbis who had to administer Nazi policy. Food and medical supplies were restricted in each of the ghettos. Hunger and disease among the populace led to widespread suffering and death. All towns that had more than 500 Jews had to be dissolved. Some ghettos had walls built around them while others did not, but they were all heavily guarded.

Twenty percent of the Jewish population of the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos were starved to death between 1941-42, and over 122,000 Jews were used as slave labor to help the German war effort.

In 1942, at the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis planned the "Final Solution" to make Europe *Judenrein* - free of Jews. All ghettos were to be liquidated.

There were hundreds of concentration and death camps where the inmates were murdered and worked to death, fed starvation rations, demoralized and dehumanized. The most horrible and notorious of the camps was Auschwitz in Poland. It was started in 1940 in the Zasole suburb of Oswiecim, a former Polish military army barrack.

Auschwitz was a complex of camps and the largest established by the Germans. It consisted of 3 main camps and lots of sub camps. Auschwitz I was primarily a concentration camp that had a gas chamber and a crematorium. It carried out medical experiments and "pseudo-scientific research on infants, twins and dwarfs, forced sterilization, castration and hypothermia experiments" (Historical Atlas of the Holocaust by Martin Gilbert. P.8)

Auschwitz II, known as Auschwitz-Birkenau, began in 1941 and had the largest prisoner population. The camp was divided into nine parts with barbed wire, while SS guards and dogs were used to patrol the camp. It had men, women and children, Gypsies and deportees from the Terezin Concentration Camp in Czechoslovakia. Zyklon B gas pellets were adopted in Auchwitz as the method of inexpensive gassing. Railroads connected almost every part of Europe to Auschwitz and daily trains brought their human cargo for annihilation. It is estimated that 1.1 million Jews, 70,000 Poles, 21,000 Gypsies, and 15,000 Soviet prisoners died in Auschwitz. Gassing operations ran until November of 1944.

Auschwitz III - known as Buna or Monowitz - was established to provide laborers for the Buna Synthetic Rubber Works. I.G. Farben, the German conglomerate, also established a factory in order to use the free slave labor. They invested huge sums of money in the camp.

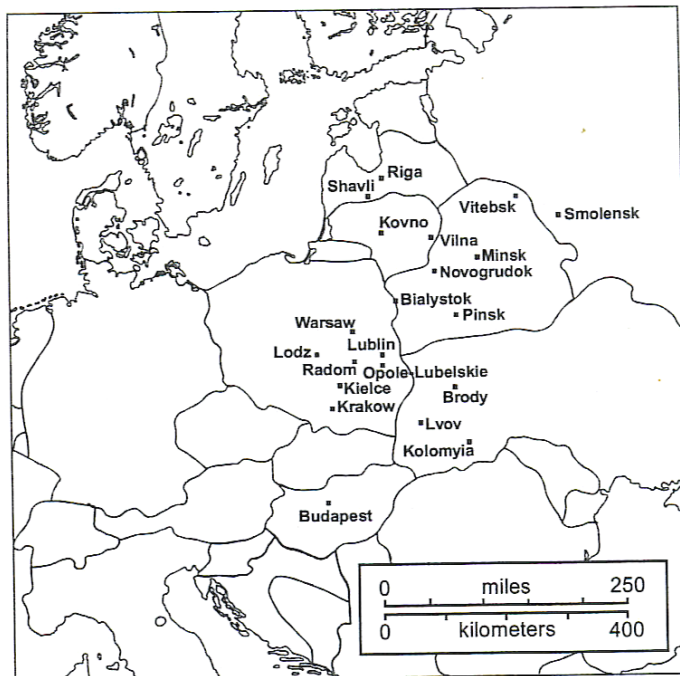
There were many other camps known for their brutality, starvation and forced labor - Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, Dachau, Ravensbruck, Gross-Rosen, Sachsenhausen, and Stutthof just to name a few.

The following were some of most notorious death camps: Treblinka, where the Jews of the liquidated ghettos were killed; Sobibor in central Poland where 700-850 thousand Jews were murdered; Belzec in Southeastern Poland; Chelmno in Western Poland; Majdanek, located near Lublin; Zamosc, where 360,000 Jews perished. Four million Jews were annihilated in the camps as part of the Final Solution.

In some camps, as the Allies were approaching, the Nazis fled and left the camps unattended. In others, they took the inmates on long death marches of hundreds of miles still trying to fulfill the "Final Solution." When the war ended, 300,000 Jews had survived the camps and 1.5 million European Jews had survived the war despite Hitler's efforts to annihilate them.

As one reads some of the touching stories of the eyewitnesses, one realizes that it took courage, endurance, fortitude, and a strong will to survive the living hell of the ghettos and camps. Today, those courageous people have survived to bear witness to an indescribable period of history in the hope that it will never happen again.

Ghettos in Europe



Source: [A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust](#). Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida, 2000.
<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/MAPS/>

189A

Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust

by
Barbara Rogasky

Excerpt from the chapter "The Ghettos," pp. 40-47

Starvation

Starvation was the deliberate Nazi policy. The amount of food the ghetto was allowed could change from week to week, sometimes from day to day. But the official weekly ration for the Jews in the General Government - described as "a populace that does no work worth mentioning - was very small. At its very best, it was no more than 1,100 calories a day. But there were long periods when not even that much food was made available. For one week that was not unusual, these were the amounts each Jew was allowed:

Bread	14.0	oz.
Meat Products	4.5	oz.
Sugar	1.75	oz.
Fat	.9	oz.

At its worst, that meant the Jewish ration was only about 350 calories a day. An adult who sits at a desk for eight hours a day needs about 2,000 calories to keep his weight. A thirteen-year-old boy needs about 3,000, and a baby needs 1,200. With much less than those amounts, the body loses weight quickly. After a certain point, it begins to feed on itself, and muscle disappears. The body melts away. Painful death from starvation comes not long after that.

Starvation was the Jews' greatest torture. It was endless and could not be escaped. It shaped the lives of all who lived within the ghetto walls. From an inhabitant, here is a description of the conditions it created:

"Starvation was the lament of the beggars sitting in the streets with their homeless families. Starvation was the cry of the mothers whose newborn babies wasted away and died. Men fought tooth and nail over a raw potato. Children risked their lives smuggling in a handful of turnips, for which whole families were waiting."

When the begging failed, people died in the streets. A woman seen begging in the morning would be found dead in the same spot in the evening. Passersby covered the bodies with newspapers until the hearse - a flat wooden cart - could come and remove them.

The elderly and the sick suffered the most and died the soonest. And the children, "the countless children, whose parents had perished, sitting in the streets. Their bodies are frightfully thin, the bones stick out of a yellow skin that looks like parchment....They crawl on all fours, groaning...."

In 1940, the first year of the Warsaw ghetto, 90 people died of starvation. In 1941 the figure rose to 11,000. At its height, starvation killed 500 each week.

Let the Nazis' own figures tell the story. Here is the Warsaw ghetto death rate from all causes for the first eight months of 1941, as reported by Heinz Auerswald, Nazi commissioner for the area:

January	898
February	1,023
March	1,608
April	2,061
May	3,821
June	4,290
July	5,550
August	5,560

The Cold

Poland's winters are cold - bitter cold. January temperatures in Warsaw can drop to under 20 degrees below zero. If the Nazis would not allow Jews food, they surely would not allow them fuel. They even took away the warmest clothes. All sheepskin and furs, even fur-lined gloves, had to be turned in for the use of the soldiers at the front or civilians back home in Germany.

There was not enough kerosene, coal - "Black pearls" - or wood. Anything that would burn was used for a moment's heat. Old buildings were dismantled. Mobs swarmed over them, taking them down piece by piece, knocking apart walls that sometimes collapsed and injured or killed.

Wrapped in rags, bundled in pieces of worn clothing too big for them or too small, paper stuffed into jackets and pants, they huddled in the streets. "The most fearful sight is that of freezing children, dumbly weeping in the street, with bare feet, bare knees, and torn clothing."

A child wrote in her diary, "I am hungry. I am cold. When I grow up I want to be a German, and then I will no longer be hungry or cold."

Disease

Weakened by starvation, ghetto inhabitants made easy victims for disease. The great number of people crammed into an area intended for only a fraction of that amount overwhelmed what limited sanitary facilities there were. Sewage pipes froze in winter and burst. Human waste was put in the streets with the garbage, and the starving homeless had to use the streets themselves as toilets. Little water was available, and soap was a luxury few could find or afford.

People who died of so-called natural causes - heart disease, cancer, pneumonia - died sooner and in greater numbers because of the lack of sufficient food, drugs, and decent dwellings. But typhus, a disease directly connected with overcrowding and filth, took by far the greatest number.

During 1941 in the Warsaw ghetto, almost 16,000 people died of typhus. That is the official number. But the Jewish Council had good reason not always to report the true number. Typhus is highly contagious, and the Nazis were afraid of epidemics. Soldiers would come unannounced into the ghetto and remove those sick with typhus, and they would never be seen again. The council lied so that at least some would have time to get well again. The correct number of those who died of typhus in that one year is thought to be closer to 100,000.

The Streets

Jews from all over Eastern Europe were brought to the biggest ghettos, which would have made them crowded enough. The next stage of the Nazi plan brought Jews from all over the continent - from Austria, Holland, Germany, France, Greece - from all the countries under German control. They were being held in the ghettos, although they did not know it, until the Nazi "Final Solution" could be brought into action.

The terrible overcrowding, with seven to ten or more in each room, brought inhabitants outside in the daylight hours. There they joined the homeless in aimlessly walking through the streets.

* * *

Smuggling

If the ghetto can be said to have a life's blood, then the smugglers kept it flowing. It is even possible that if it had not been for the smugglers, the Nazis would have succeeded in starving the ghettos to death.

There was some large-scale smuggling, but most of it day by day was small. Workers outside smuggled in whatever they could. Those who could afford it bribed guards not to notice.

If the Jews were caught smuggling anything - no matter how small - the penalty was death, sometimes by being shot immediately.

* * *

Some were not so lucky as to be killed right away. A Jewish mother was caught buying an egg from a Polish peasant. Both were held until ghetto inhabitants could be gathered to watch. Then they were hanged.

* * *

Most of the smugglers were children ten to fourteen years old. Their small, thin bodies could slip under a hole in the barbed wire or through a chink in the wall and get back the same way. If they were successful, then starvation was postponed for another day. If they were not, they might be shot as their mothers watched. Sometimes they too were not lucky enough to suffer the penalty right away.

* * *

Jewish Life

The ghetto was a giant cage, its thousands of imprisoned inhabitants forced there from all walks of life, from all occupations, skills and abilities.

In the midst of the vast Nazi terror, suffering from starvation and disease, and with death all round them, these doomed people gave the ghetto some of the variety and vitality of a true city.

Teaching was forbidden, yet there were secret classes in history, languages, the arts - with examinations, grades and even diplomas.

Theatrical groups, professional and amateur, put on plays.

Noted authorities and scholars gave lectures.

Musicians gave concerts, singers put on recitals.

Scientists conducted experiments.

Operas were composed and performed.

Secret libraries sprang up, with long waiting lists for books - history, political science, cheap novels, classics, poetry, romances, adventure stories.

How very alive they were, these Jews, in the face of the Nazi desire for their deaths.

The End of the Ghettos

It has been estimated that one-fifth of ghetto inhabitants died of disease and hunger-related illnesses. At that rate, the entire population of all the ghettos would have died out within five or six years. But that was not fast enough.

Chief of Security Reinhard Heydrich explained: "The evacuation of the Jews to the East...is already supplying practical experience of great importance, in view of the coming Final Solution of the Jewish Question.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the terms: ghetto, starvation, typhus, Final Solution, smuggler
- On a map of Poland, locate and identify the towns and cities where ghettos were established.
- Find a description of a "Judenrat" or Jewish Council and read about the Nazi purposes in establishing these councils. What were some of the reasons a person might have for agreeing to serve on such a council?

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the reasons the Nazis established the ghettos. Describe the physical appearance of a ghetto.
2. Analyze some of the things a Jewish Council might try to do to help the people in a ghetto. What responsibilities were assigned to them by the Nazi conquerors?
3. Hunger, cold, and disease were the constant enemies of the Jews in the ghettos. Discuss methods they used to try to fight back against these enemies. The efforts to survive in the face of overwhelming odds were a form of resistance. What other forms of resistance were shown by the Jews in the ghettos?

Activities

1. Write a poem about a young smuggler in the ghetto - or - make a charcoal or colored pencil drawing of a young smuggler at work.
2. Find a story about the young smugglers of the ghetto. Read the story and then tell your class about what you learned. Explain how you feel about these smugglers. Were they heroes? Explain your answer.
3. Find a piece of music that was performed in the ghetto. Sing or perform the music for your class - or find a recording of the music to play for the class.
4. Read about one of the ghettos that the Nazis established in Poland and prepare a report on life in the ghetto and what eventually happened to the ghetto.
5. People frequently were taken from the ghetto by the Nazis and forced to do hard labor. Find out what kinds of work these laborers had to do and what happened to the workers. How were they fed, etc. while they were on these work details?

6. Read about the Jewish Councils that were established in the ghettos. Find examples of the kinds of daily decisions that they had to make. Why did the Nazis want to establish such councils in the ghettos?

Other Sources

- **The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance** by Bea Stadler.

Upon the Head of the Goat

by
Aranka Siegel
Reading Two

Puffin Books, New York, 1981
Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

Piri Davidowitz and her family find themselves caught up in the war that begins to swirl around Hungary in 1939. Her stepfather and brother-in-law have been called into the military and her strong, clever mother struggles to hold the remaining family together as the regulations restricting and repressing the Jews of Hungary grow ever stronger. Piri is a young girl approaching her teenage years, eager for life but bewildered by all of the changes occurring around them. The author (Piri of the story) recounts their lives from 1939 until the Nazis and the Hungarian police forcibly gathered the Jews of Beregszasz into the brick factory to await the arrival of the trains that would take them away. Although they did not know it, Piri and her family would be transported to Auschwitz where Piri and her sister Iboya were separated from the rest of the family. The two sisters never saw any of their family again. This is the story of the troubled, dangerous last five years they had as a family living in Beregszasz, Hungary.

Chapter "Beregszasz," pp. 76-81

Lilli [Piri's older married sister] had been spending more and more time on the bread lines. Often, after she had stood in line for over an hour, the store would run out of bread. We had the same problem with other staples....

* * *

Mother was still able to bake bread from the small supply of flour that she had, but she could not use the bread oven in the yard because of the suspicions of the neighbors. She wakened at dawn on the mornings that she baked and used the oven in the kitchen stove, stretching the flour with whatever starchy vegetables she had on hand. She also spent a lot of time gathering food for our meals, and put in long hours peeling and chopping at night so that she could cook while the stove was on in the morning. We were running out of firewood, with little hope of replacing it.

Since Lilli was now spending most of her time with us, Mother had convinced her to give up her apartment.

* * *

Then Mother thought that she might be able to provide milk for the children by buying a goat and keeping it in the empty woodshed. She knew a farmer outside of town who had been a customer at the store [a shoe store taken away from their family] for over fifteen years, and she thought that she could convince him to sell her a goat.

* * *

Mr. Baltar delivered the goat at dusk on the following Wednesday. As Mother led the way to the woodshed with all of us walking behind, I heard him say to her again, "You certainly are a very determined woman." With reluctance he left after the goat had been installed. We all helped to bring the sacks of feed to the

woodshed and, when we had finished, stood and admired the goat. She had a round white body and thin limbs. Her well-shaped head was dotted by several black markings, which Lilli called her beauty marks. Her large black almond-shaped eyes had a dreamy look. Her ears pointed straight up, and down from her chin hung a smooth white beard.

Manci [Lilli's little girl] laughed as she noticed the goat's beard. "A lady goat with a beard," she exclaimed.

"Ladybeard," said Lilli, "what a name. That's what we'll call her. Ladybeard."

Slowly the children -Manci, Sandor, and Joli- approached the goat, and then hesitantly they began to pet her. Lilli took a few chunks of hay from the feed and let the goat eat it from her hand. Each one of us, except for Mother, then took a turn at feeding her. The children were delighted.

* * *

Mother's attention was more practically focused. To her, Ladybeard's udder was of primary importance. She saved all of the vegetable peelings, which she cooked well, seasoned, and mixed with the grain husks of the goat's feed, giving Ladybeard rich nourishment. The goat thrived and even surpassed Mr. Baltar's promise of a liter of milk a day. But to all of us, even Mother, Ladybeard became more than just a source of milk and cheese. She provided us with a new interest, and we all cared about her well-being and contributed to her comfort.

In the weeks that followed the coming of Ladybeard, Mother and Lilli worked side by side preparing winter provisions. Somehow they were able to fill a large box in the kitchen with potatoes. They put up carrots and parsnips in wet sand for soup greens and dried several batches of noodles, which they stored in sacks.

* * *

[That December, the police came to the Davidowitz home with Lilli's husband Lajos in handcuffs. They took Lilli and her young daughter Manci away with them. Later they learned that the three were taken to Poland. Although Mrs. Davidowitz took great risks to go after them and rescue at least her granddaughter, her efforts were unsuccessful.]

* * *

pp. 98-101

...One afternoon in May [1942], a knock sounded at the kitchen door. Mother opened it to see two strange men standing on the threshold.

"Are you Mrs. Davidowitz?" one of them asked in a formal tone of voice.

Mother's answer, a breathless "Yes, yes," indicated to me that she hoped these men had come with news, either of Lilli or of Father.

"We are inspectors from the city housing bureau," the taller of the two men said solemnly, "and we have come to investigate a complaint that you are keeping a goat on the premises. This is, as you know, a strictly residential neighborhood! No animals other than dogs and cats are allowed!"

"You don't have to investigate," said Mother, lingering a little over the last word. "I admit that I have a goat in my woodshed. But, gentlemen, this goat is not bothering anybody, and she provides milk for my children. I'm sure you are reasonable men with children of your own. You can't blame a war mother whose husband is in a Russian prison camp for trying to feed her young children, can you?"

"We are inspectors from the Housing Department and we have nothing to do with the conditions of war. Where is this goat?" the taller man demanded.

"I'll take you there, and you can see for yourselves what a gentle and quiet animal she is. She could not disturb anyone." Mother led the men off the porch into the yard and returned a few minutes later for the milking bucket. "I'm going to milk her at least; she is so full that she can hardly walk."

"Don't let them take her away," Sandor [Piri's younger brother] pleaded.

"They won't listen to me," she answered him gently. Then she turned and left the kitchen, carrying the milk bucket. Sandor and Joli [Piri's youngest sister] ran out after her. I grabbed our coats and followed them.

When I got to the woodshed, I saw Joli had thrown her arms around Ladybeard's neck. "She is mine," she screamed at the two men who towered over her. "She is mine!" I saw them exchange glances. Mother pulled up the milking stool and proceeded to milk Ladybeard while I struggled with Joli to leave Ladybeard long enough for me to be able to put on her coat. Sandor stood at the woodshed entrance and looked at all the somber faces without giving a hint of what he felt. I had always been struck by the way Sandor, even as a small child, could hide his feelings. Was this, I wondered, what was meant by the expression *being a man*. I looked at the two inspectors' faces. "Stone," I said silently to myself. Mother and Joli had enough expression for all of us; both of them were crying uncontrollably. But the only sound we could hear in the woodshed was that of the squirts of mild rhythmically swishing into the bucket. When Mother finished, she picked up the bucket and started to walk off, not saying another word to the men.

"Do you have a piece of rope?" the shorter man asked her.

"In the kitchen."

All of us followed Mother into the kitchen. She put the bucket down on the kitchen table and tried again to persuade them not to take Ladybeard. "Couldn't you just forget that you saw her?"

"We have to do our job, lady," the shorter man snapped at her. "Just give us the piece of rope, and we'll be on our way."

Mother started toward the drawer where she kept string. Joli grabbed at her skirt; Mother picked her up, opened the drawer with her free hand, took out a long, frayed piece of rope, and held out her hand. As the shorter man walked over to take the rope, he passed the opening into the salon, glanced through it, and saw the radio.

"Didn't you know that you were supposed to turn those in last January?" The other man walked into the salon and unplugged the radio. He wrapped the cord around it and put it under his arm. Then he joined his companion, who was standing on the threshold, holding the piece of rope. Without saying another word, they walked off.

Mother put Joli down, closed the door after them, and stood facing us with her back against it. After a few minutes she walked out of the house, went down to the gate and bolted it, came back into the kitchen, and picked up Joli, who was still crying.

"What will they do with Ladybeard?" I asked.

"Send her into the wilderness with their sins, I suppose."

"I don't understand."

"It doesn't matter," she said as she went into the bedroom.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Investigate the decision by the Hungarian government to become an "ally" of Nazi Germany. When did this occur? How much influence did Nazi Germany have in Hungary even before they occupied the country? When did they actually take over complete control of the Hungary? What was the official title of the Hungarian collaborators?
- Read about the history of antisemitism in Hungary.
- Define the terms: collaborator; perpetrator; bystander; rescuer; resistance
- Investigate the nature and purposes of the Nuremburg Laws. What were some of the things the laws specifically said about Jews? Make a chart showing some of these laws and the dates they were adopted.

Discussion Questions

1. Hunger was a constant problem for the Jews in Eastern Europe even before they were forcibly transported to the camps. What were some of the things Piri's mother did to try to feed her family?
2. What risks did Mr. Baltar face in selling the goat to the Davidowitz family? What risk did owning a goat pose for the family? Why would each of the people involved take those risks?
3. What special meaning did the goat Ladybeard have for the Davidowitz family?
4. How did the government officials learn about the goat?
5. What does Piri observe about the expressions of various members of her family and the government officials when they are in the woodshed?
6. Why do you think the officials were so determined to take the goat? Why did they take the radio? Why do you think the Nazis and the Hungarian government did not want the Jews to have any radios?

Activities

1. Make a chart listing all of the things that you can find that the Nazis and the collaborator government officials forbade to the Jews. Indicate the year that these items were forbidden. Why do you think the Jews were forbidden to have them?
2. Draw a map of Germany and Eastern Europe (including what was then the Soviet Union). Mark and label each place where the Nazis established a camp. Why were so many camps and ghettos established in Poland?
3. When Piri's Mother responds with the comment "Send her [Ladybeard] into the wilderness with their sins, I suppose," she is making reference to a belief about goats and the sins of mankind. Tell the story to your class or work group. What is the meaning of the term "scapegoat"? Does it have any connection with this story?
4. Piri's mother displays considerable courage and resourcefulness in trying to care for and feed her family as well as helping friends. Make a list of some of the things she does that reflect this courage and resourcefulness.

Four Perfect Pebbles
A Holocaust Story

by

Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan

Greenwillow Books, New York, 1996

Recommended for Grades 5-8

Synopsis

Marion Blumenthal was born into a German Jewish family shortly before the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. For a time, she and her family were forced to remain in Germany under the Nazis regime before successfully escaping to Holland. However, their escape from Nazi rule was short-lived as Holland was invaded and conquered by Nazi forces. The Blumenthal family was among the many Jewish families rounded up and forced into concentration camps. Two of the camps where they were imprisoned under horrible conditions were Westerbork in Holland and Bergen-Belsen in Germany. Somehow, against all odds, all four members of the immediate family managed to survive the horror of the Holocaust. However, the father never completely regained his health and died a few years later. In 1948, Mama, Albert, and Marion were permitted to emigrate to the United States.

Chapter "A Small Town in Germany" - pp. 12-22

"That man Hitler." He had been around for ten years or more by the early 1930s, when Albert and Marion were born. As a leader of the National Socialist German Workers' party - the Nazi party, for short - he ranted against Communists, Jews, and Gypsies, and against Slavic peoples, such as Poles and Russians, all of whom he considered inferior. He also denounced any Germans who were crippled, deformed, or mentally ill as being unworthy of existence.

Such nonsense, most people thought at first. The man was nothing more than a political crackpot with a small band of followers. In 1923 he had served nine months in jail after a crazed attempt to overthrow the government. His Nazi party was only one of many political parties that were represented by popular vote in the Reichstag, the lower house of the German parliament.

Yet by 1930 the Nazi party had gained an alarming number of deputies in the Reichstag. In a little more than a year its representatives had increased from 12 to 107. And two years later, in 1932, the Nazi party, with 37 percent of the vote, was the largest in Germany. Too splintered politically to form a united front against the Nazis, the other parties had become small and helpless.

* * * *

Hitler insisted that he had the remedy for all of Germany's woes. Through his frequent public speeches at massive Nazi-sponsored rallies, he made his message clear. He would restore Germany's honor, increase its territory, and bring back its lost prosperity. His attacks on its "enemies within," especially the Jews, grew more and more frenzied. Once again the long-smoldering hatred of the Jews, known as anti-Semitism - one of the oldest prejudices in the world - was fanned into flames.

In one way it seemed strange that Hitler should pick on Germany's Jews, because there were so few of them. They numbered only about 500,000 in a population of 67 million, less than 1 percent of the German citizenry....

.... On January 30 [1933] Adolf Hitler, as the leader of the majority party, was appointed chancellor, or prime minister, by Germany's president, the aged Paul von Hindenburg. The chancellor lost no time in putting his new powers to work. On April 1 he ordered a nationwide boycott of all Jewish-owned businesses. Signs reading DON'T BUY FROM JEWS were posted on shopwindows in major cities and in towns large and small. Hitler's order was enforced by the presence of brown-uniformed Nazi storm troopers who blocked the entrances to Jewish-owned stores, medical offices, and law firms.

"Did we find this surprising?" Mama remarked as she recalled the 1933 boycott. "Yes, in a way. How could it be that people in that small town of Hoya would turn away from us so quickly? Walter's parents had been in business there since 1894. They always gave good service and value and were highly respected by their customers from both the town and surrounding countryside."

"Walter grew up in that town. In 1914, at the age of seventeen, he volunteered for the German Army. He served his country in the Great War [World War I] for four years and was awarded the medal of honor known as the Iron Cross. But all this was immediately forgotten when Hitler took power. As early as April 1933, a few days after the Jewish boycott began, children ran through the street throwing stones at Albert's baby carriage."

As the boycott continued, business dropped off at the store. So Walter bought a small car and began to make deliveries to people in the town and on the farms. "Our customers still wanted the merchandise we sold," Mama explained, "but they were afraid to be seen entering the store."

The discussions around the Blumenthals' dinner table grew more intense. Walter thought that the family should make plans to leave Germany at once. But Oma and Opa [Grandmother and Grandfather], already elderly, could not imagine leaving the business and moving away. "You will see," the older Blumenthals counseled. "This Hitler won't last. Before long things will come back to normal."

.... The future held no real hope for improvement. Already, children, like those who had stoned Albert's baby carriage, were being groomed for the Hitler Youth. Even three-year-olds were given Nazi banners to wave....

German schoolchildren wearing uniforms with swastika armbands were soon organized into formal groups and trained in the Nazi creed....

The following year Hitler made anti-Semitism part of German law. The so-called Nuremberg laws of September 15, 1935 were passed by the Reichstag at its meeting in the southern German city of Nuremberg. These rulings stripped Jews of their German citizenship and prohibited marriage between Jews and non-Jews or other "pure" Germans, known as Aryans. Germany's Jews were now completely cut off from any hope of receiving just treatment under the law.

The boycott, which aimed at destroying all Jewish businesses in Germany, had, of course, continued. At the same time non-Jewish firms were pressured to dismiss their Jewish employees. Signs in shop windows, advertising for help, clearly read JEWS NOT WANTED.

With the takeover of Jewish businesses and jobs, property and bank accounts, Germany's economy was already beginning to improve. But Hitler planned to go much further. Germany, he declared, was to become *Judenrein*, or totally free of Jews. Meantime, disobedience or even the suspicion that a Jew was not complying with the laws could lead to beatings, arrests, imprisonment, and even death....

In 1933 Germany's first concentration camp, Dachau, was opened near Munich. It was run by Hitler's *Schutzstaffeln*, an elite protection and security service, known as the SS. Once confined behind the camp's barbed wire, "critics" of the regime - both Jews and non-Jews - received brutal and savage treatment. At Dachau the pattern was set for the operation of the dozens of concentration and extermination camps to which prisoners from all over Europe were to be sent in the near future....

....by the end of 1937 about 130,000, a quarter of Germany's Jews, had emigrated. Many made their way to Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, France, England, or the Americas. Some managed to enter Palestine, while others even relocated in the distant city of Shanghai in China. The United States was the most favored destination. But documents for that country were the most difficult to obtain because its immigration quota was very limited.

Leaving Germany was both painful and costly. Family and friends remained behind. Jewish properties and businesses had to be sold to Germans for far less than their true market values. And the German government demanded compensation for the privilege of emigration.

* * * *

.... Four months after Opa's death [Oma had died of cancer] the store and its contents, the building, and most of the Blumenthal's household goods were sold, for a fraction of their worth. In the spring of 1938 Ruth and Walter, five-year-old Albert, and three-year-old Marion left the small town of Hoya and moved into an apartment in the city of Hanover.

"Why did we go to Hanover? For one purpose," Mama explained. "To work on getting papers for the United States and to leave for there as soon as possible."

"Soon," however, did not mean within a couple of months. Ruth and Walter knew all too well that the process could be painfully slow, taking as long as two years.

The United States, once a haven for immigrants, had tightened its admissions policy during the 1920s and had kept its doors virtually shut through the depression of the 1930s....

* * * *

In addition to getting on a quota list, a foreigner needed an affidavit - a written guarantee from a relative, a friend, or some other acceptable sponsor already living in the United States - that the newcomer would be cared for financially and would not become a public charge.

Lastly, the would-be immigrant had to obtain a visa. This all-important document was the actual permission to enter the United States. Often the visa was stamped directly into the person's passport, another document that had to be in perfect order.

"We already had the affidavit," Mama said. "It was from Tante[Aunt] Clara, a sister of Walter's who lived in New York City. So you can imagine our joy when we were notified in Hanover that on September thirteenth, 1938, we had been placed on the quota list for the United States!"

There, indeed, was the official notice, with the four quota numbers running in sequence from 7375 to 7378, one for each member of the Blumenthal family. Now all that was lacking was the visa.

How soon would it come through? With luck it might be issued within a year. But it would be a dangerous year...

Chapter: "Get Dressed and Come With Us" pp. 23-36

.... But the autumn of 1938 was a frightening time to be waiting for a way out of Germany. During the summer organized gangs of Nazis had set fire to and destroyed the main synagogues of Nuremberg and Munich, another important city in southern Germany.

The government claimed that such acts were merely "random" violence against Jews. But at the same time Hitler was introducing new measures to identify Germany's Jews and to isolate them from the rest of society. On August 17 a law was passed that forced all Jewish females to take the middle name of Sarah. All males were to be given the name Israel, and these names were to be added to existing legal documents, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, and passports. Not long afterward, October 5, it was decreed that all passports and other documents held by Germany's Jews must also be marked with a large letter **J**.

* * * *

The expulsion of thousands of Jews who had been born in Polish territory but had lived in Germany since 1918 was another of Hitler's measures to make Germany racially pure. The roundup of this group had begun on October 28. Swiftly and brutally 18,000 Polish-born Jews were torn from their homes and businesses, packed into trains, and dumped just short of the Polish border. There they were stripped of all their belongings except ten marks and forced to walk the rest of the way into Poland.

Many lived in the stables and pigsties of farms on the Polish frontier until they could find relatives or friends to take them in...

* * * *

.... All that day [November 9] things were strangely quiet in Germany. Hitler was in Munich for his political victory celebration. Many people expected he would make a frenzied speech on the radio, calling for severe new anti-Jewish measures. But evening came, it grew late, and people began to prepare for bed. In the Blumenthal apartment all was still except for the spasms of coughing from the sick children [who were recovering from whooping cough].

Then, an hour or so after midnight, Nazi marching songs and the sharp rhythm of hobnailed boots began to be heard in the streets of Hanover. These were followed by sounds of shouting, the crack of pistol shots, and what seemed to be the crashing of broken glass. Occasionally, too, the sky flickered with tongues of orange light from distant fires.

The sounds of terror rose and fell, well into the small hours of the morning of November 10, as the rampaging storm troops drew closer to the Blumenthal

building, only to retreat in some other direction. Then, sometime between 4:00 and 5:00 A.M., there was an explosion that rocked the entire city. Nazi demolition teams had blown up the Central Synagogue, a thick-walled building that was one of the largest religious structures in Hanover.

In the Blumenthal apartment, and even at a much greater distance from the synagogue, the windows rattled violently. "It was soon afterward, sometime around five A.M.," Mama related, "that we heard the thud of rifle butts at the downstairs entrance to the building." A few moments later the bell rang and there was a sharp rapping at the door of the Blumenthals' second-floor apartment.

"It was the Gestapo, the secret state police," Mama said. "They asked for Papa by name. 'Get dressed,' they said, 'and come with us.' Just like that. 'Get dressed and come with us.'

"While Walter was hastily putting on his clothes, they searched the apartment. At that time the Nazis were taking away only men, not women or children....

"When Walter was fully dressed and ready to go, he asked the officers, 'May I go to the synagogue first to say my morning prayers?' 'No!' they replied angrily. They had searched the apartment but had found nothing of value. 'That car out front,' one of them asked. 'Is it yours?' 'Yes,' Walter answered. 'Give us the keys,' the officer demanded. Walter handed them over, and of course, we never saw the car again. But that was the least of it. The question was, Where were they taking Papa? Would we ever see him again?"

All over Germany and Austria the outburst of violence against the Jews continued throughout November 10....

In Germany alone, some eight thousand Jewish-owned shops had had their windows smashed and their contents looted. Two hundred synagogues had been destroyed, their Torah scrolls and holy books burned. Unoccupied Jewish houses and apartments had been entered by force. Furniture and even pianos were heaved from balconies into the streets below. Possessions of every sort crackled in the bonfires that leaped up on numerous street corners. But it was the vast amount of shattered glass that gave the infamous night of November 9-10 the name *Kristallnacht*, Night of Broken Glass.

The human toll was the largest to date. Ninety-one Jews were known to have died in the street violence alone, and more than thirty thousand Jewish men were taken away to concentration camps. Since Germany's Jewish population had declined from 500,000 to 300,000 by late 1938, the prisoners represented one of every ten Jews.

Many men from the Hanover area were taken to Buchenwald. This camp, near Weimar, to the southeast of Hanover, had been patterned after Dachau. It was run by the SS and was used as a concentration and forced-labor camp for political and racial prisoners. Those arrested were taken by truck to the railroad station, transported to Weimar, and then by truck to the camp itself.

Was Buchenwald where Papa had been taken? But wherever Walter had been taken, it was important that Ruth go immediately to Gestapo headquarters in Hanover and present the document of September 13, 1938, from the American Consulate in Hamburg, stating that the Blumenthal family had been placed on the quota list for immigration into the United States.

* * * *

As the days passed and there was no sign of Walter, Ruth began to go each evening to the Hanover railway station to meet the incoming train from Weimar. Some of those arrested on *Kristallnacht* returned, but Walter was not among them. And each day the news of what went on at Buchenwald grew worse. It was reported that new arrivals were made to stand at attention for hours. The slightest movement could mean a blow with a rifle butt or even a prolonged beating. The men slept in narrow barrack bunks atop one another, and were given little food or water. Some were put to work in a nearby stone quarry. It was shattering for Ruth to think of Walter, always dignified and deeply proud of his ability to protect his family, so helpless and degraded.

When her spirits were lowest, a postcard arrived from Walter. It was dated November 18, and it was indeed from Buchenwald. A printed notice on the card warned the prisoner to use large, clear handwriting, or the censors would not pass it on for delivery.

"My loved ones," Walter had written, " I am, thank God, healthy and hope the same of you. Don't write to me because there is no incoming mail.... Don't send money. Hope our two darlings are well again. Hugs and kisses to you all. Walter, Papa."

He had written nothing about when he would be released. Had the Gestapo officer broken his promise to forward notice of Walter's status as the holder of an American quota number to the camp? What should Ruth do? That night and the next she went again to the railroad station in vain. On the night of the twenty-first she remained at home.

Very late that evening the doorbell rang. Fearful of bad news, Ruth went to the door. It was Walter, wearing the same clothes in which he'd been arrested, now dirty and rumpled. He had not been able to bathe or shave during the eleven days he'd spent in the camp. Not that evening or at any future time did he speak of what his life in Buchenwald had been like. The only thing he told Ruth and the children was that before being discharged, he had been required to sign a document stating that he had been "correctly treated." Also, according to the terms of his release, he and his family were to be out of Germany within three months.

* * * *

On November 12, as an immediate aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the government levied a fine of one billion marks on its Jewish population for the damage caused by the Jewish presence in the country. The real purpose of this enormous "expiation payment" was to make sure that no Jews profited from any insurance claims for destroyed property and to drain off as much as possible of any remaining Jewish wealth. This money and similar levies were to help Germany rearm itself for the war it was planning to wage for the conquest of Europe.

...."We were lucky," Ruth said, "to get a permit to leave for Holland, where Tante Rosi, Walter's youngest sister, who had married a Dutch citizen, lived. Not everybody could get a permit just to pick up and go to another country."

.... These [furniture and other possessions] were to go into storage in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, for it was from there that the Blumenthals planned to sail to the United States. Meantime, they would wait in Holland for the still-lacking visa.

* * * *

In January 1939, carrying only the small departure allowance of ten marks in cash [the Nazis had inspected the apartment and their suitcases to confiscate any item they deemed of value, including such things as blankets, coats, etc.] Ruth and Walter, four-year-old Marion, and six-year-old Albert boarded the train for Holland...

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the terms: antisemitism, boycott, swastika, Reichstag, Aryan, *Judenrein*, *Schutzstaffeln*, immigration, emigration, immigration quota, affidavit, sponsor, visa, passport, *Kristallnacht*, forced-labor camp, Gestapo,
- Locate the following on a map: (In Germany) Nuremberg; Munich; Dachau; Hanover; Buchenwald; Bergen-Belsen; (In Holland) Westerbork, Rotterdam.

Discussion Questions

1. Identify the various groups of people that Hitler and the Nazis viewed as "enemies" of Germany. What reason(s) did Hitler give for viewing these people as "enemies?"
2. What percentage of the population of Germany did the Jews represent? Why did this make it strange for them to be selected as a target of Hitler's hatred?
3. Why do you think Hitler called a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses? How did he attempt to enforce the boycott?
4. Explain how Hitler's rise to power affected the lives of the Blumenthal family in the small town of Hoya where they lived.
5. Why were Oma and Opa Blumenthal reluctant to move from Germany? What evidence exists in the reading that indicates that the Blumenthal family was proud of its German heritage? How had they served their nation and community?
6. Why do you think so many people throughout Germany began to follow Hitler's antisemitic orders so willingly and so quickly?
7. What were the Nuremberg Laws? As time passed, more and more laws were added to the Nuremberg Laws. What drastic ideas and actions were included in these laws?
8. What was the *Schutzstaffeln*? What was their role in the establishment and operation of the concentration camps?
9. Some Jews of Germany did manage to find a way out of Germany. Where did these emigrants go? Why was immigration to the United States so limited?
10. How did Germany make it difficult for Jews to leave Germany?
11. In 1938, conditions for Jews in Germany steadily worsened. Explain some of the events and laws.
12. What was *Kristallnacht*?
13. What happened to the Blumenthal family, and many Jewish families, on the nights of *Kristallnacht*? Where was Walter [Papa] taken? How many Jewish men were taken as prisoners to concentration camps?
14. What did Ruth [Mama] Blumenthal do to try to help her husband although she could not be positive where he was being held or what had happened to him?

15. What stories were Jewish families hearing about the conditions in Buchenwald and Dachau?
16. What were the conditions of Walter Blumenthal's release from Buchenwald? Why do you think the Nazis imposed such conditions on the prisoners they were releasing?
17. What was the "expiation payment?" What purposes did the Nazis have in demanding this payment from the Jews?
18. The Blumenthals could not travel to the United States until they received one more document - a visa. Where did they go to wait for it? How did they manage to gain permission to go to that country?
19. What were the Blumenthals permitted to take with them when they left Germany? Why do you think the Nazis kept all the rest of the Blumenthal property (and that of other departing Jews)?
20. What happened to most of the Jews who fled Germany to go to Holland, Belgium, France, Poland, etc.?

Activities

1. When the Blumenthal family arrived in Holland, they were sent to a refugee camp along with many other Jews fleeing from Germany. Eventually, they settled in a camp called Westerbork while waiting for a visa to the United States. Do some research on the Internet or in your library to discover what happened to Westerbork when the Nazis conquered Holland. Make a chart of information describing life in Westerbork before and after the Nazi conquest.
2. Many people mistakenly believe that the Jews of Germany did not try to leave Germany during the 1930s and early 1940s. Write a "newspaper article" correcting this misinformation and providing a good overview of Jewish efforts to depart Germany and the problems that hampered this effort.
3. The author describes an incident where her brother Alfred (as an infant) was being pushed in a baby carriage by her mother and they were attacked by young people throwing rocks. Imagine how you would feel if you were a parent and this happened to you and your child. Write a poem expressing your emotions and/or draw an illustration of the incident. Why didn't anyone come to their rescue or try to stop this type of behavior by the children? What was the role of the adults in all of this?
4. Read about the immigration laws of the United States during this time. Explain the idea behind the quota system. Was this law discriminatory? Explain your answer.
5. Obtain a copy of the book **Four Perfect Pebbles** and read the rest of the story. Explain to your class what happened to the Blumenthal family during the Holocaust and explain the origin of the title for the book.

Daniel's Story

by
Carol Matas

Scholastic Inc., New York, 1993
Recommended for Grades 5-6

Synopsis

Daniel's family had lived in Frankfurt, Germany for generations; his father had served in the German army in World War I. They considered themselves Germans but that would change under the Nazi government. Under Nazi law, they were Jews and everything they had could be taken away. The whole family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, were deported to the Lodz ghetto in Poland. Daniel was fourteen. Although this is a work of fiction, the events and experiences of Daniel's life are similar to those suffered by the victims of Nazi terror and atrocity.

Chapter 5, pp. 38-50

How long has it been since that last train ride? Almost three years. We left Frankfurt in October 1941, when I was fourteen, and I'm seventeen. I suppose I'm lucky to have lived this long.

Again I am on a train. Again I don't know where I'm going, only where I'm coming from. We left Lodz at around four o'clock this afternoon.

The Nazis told us we were going to a work camp, but I know that, for the Nazis, lying is as natural as murder. People moan, children cry for water; there is only an open bucket for a toilet, and the stench is unbearable. Unbearable. What a word. Is there nothing we haven't learned to bear? A hundred people are packed into this closed freight car, and I know that many won't survive if this trip is a long one.

I think back to that first train trip, the one from Frankfurt to Lodz, and how terrible I thought it was. But now, stuck in this freight car, I know what true terror and misery are. I didn't bring my album. But I brought some of my pictures. The rest I hid.

Memories. Pictures. That's all I have left. How will they murder me? A shot in the head? Buried alive in a pit? Some other way I cannot even imagine?

No. I will not spend my last hours dwelling on that. The train rocks and sways. I lean against the filthy wall and jealously guard my spot. A small crack in the wood allows a faint beam of light to sift across my hands. I look at the pictures I have just removed from my boot. They are so worn and I have looked at them so often, I can tell them apart almost by their feel - this one of Erika and me has a small piece torn off the corner, this one of Rosa is frayed at the bottom, and on and on. But I don't want just to feel them, remember them; I want one last look, one last good look. I will go over them one by one, and I will remember.

I look at the first picture, the ray of light slanting across it. I know this one so well. Mother and Father and Erika have looked at it so often that it is practically wrinkled.

I call it the Family Reunion. We are all there - except Uncle Aaron and his family and Uncle David and Aunt Lotte. Uncle Leo and Auntie Anna, and their children Nathan, Jakob, and Georg, arrived in Lodz from Berlin just after we arrived. Auntie Leah is there with her four children; Uncle Walter and Auntie Hannele and their three children; Oma Rachel and Opa Samuel. No one is smiling. Erika is twelve in this picture and very pretty.

The Jewish authorities [the Judenrat], who were forced by the Nazis to organize the ghetto, put us in an old school. There were about sixty people per room. We slept on wooden planks and were given soup from a soup kitchen that was set up. We still had food with us - Mother had insisted on bringing all the food we could carry. She'd also insisted that we pack our warmest clothes, and our best winter coats, and wear our ski boots! I had laughed. "Ski boots, Mother?" I'd teased. "I don't think they're sending us on holiday."

"What are the warmest boots you own?" she'd asked.

"The ski boots," I'd admitted. They were also practically brand-new, as we'd never had the chance to wear them - I'd grown into Father's and Erika had grown into mine by the time we left. Mother and Father took their old ones. I'm wearing Father's now. They still have no holes in them. They may have saved my life. While others tried to struggle through the winters in shoes, we had warm boots.

Sometimes when it was winter in Frankfurt I'd run out to do something with my friends, leaving my winter coat behind on purpose. It was the fashionable thing to do in our age group - coats were considered strictly for adults. Mother used to scold me and swear I'd catch pneumonia. I never did. I enjoyed the cold, boasted to my friends how red my feet were, how little I needed to wear when I was outside. But how different to be running from one warm house to another than to be trapped day and night in an unheated school when the temperature is twenty-five degrees and people are suffering from frostbite and malnutrition. We'd been there only a week when our own food supply ran out. Many people in the school started selling their clothes for food. Uncle Leo did that, thinking that at any minute these conditions would improve. Father forbade any of us to sell anything.

"We don't know how long we will be here," he said one night at a meeting of the entire family in a corner of one of the large, cold rooms. "We must behave prudently at all times. Never lose our heads. Keep all your warm clothes. Ration your food carefully. We are given one loaf of bread each, which must last us six days. No one is allowed to finish that loaf on the first or even the second day. It *must* last or by the end of the week we could easily starve.

Starve. Everyone shifted uncomfortably. And yet we knew it was true.

The shock of what we saw when we first entered the ghetto will never leave me. People were actually starving to death. Lodz was a city that had hundreds of thousands of Jews in it before the war. Many fled east when the war began; the rest had been pushed into the poorest, dirtiest area of the city. They had tried to clean it up to make it habitable, but it would never be anything but a slum full of old apartment buildings and small wooden houses, only a few with running water, heat, or plumbing. Many streets were made of mud, and you sank into it when you walked. The smell of all those people crammed together in such a small area with no sanitation was terrible. Over that winter, people died in the streets and lay unburied for days.

And Uncle Leo, who had stubbornly refused to listen to Father, sure that things would improve, learned that Father had been right when his youngest son, Georg, developed frostbite in his hands and feet because Leo had sold some of their warm clothes. The frostbite got infected. Georg got thinner and thinner. We all did, of course. When all you have to eat is a few ounces of bread a day and a bowl of soup, what can you expect? One cold February night Georg went to sleep and never woke up. We had to wait three days for them to come and bury him because the waiting list was so long. Three days. Auntie Anna didn't cry. She just sat with him day and night until they took him away. After that she seemed to lose the will to live. She got thinner and thinner and one morning she too didn't wake up. We were surrounded by death. I remembered when one death would be such a tragedy the whole community would mourn. Life was normal, death for a young child or an adult in middle age was not. But suddenly everything was wrong, upside down. It seemed more normal to die than to live.

I look at the picture again. So few of us left. In the spring the Germans decided to ship out most of those newly arrived from Germany once again. Transports from Lodz had been leaving all winter. They were dreaded because people didn't know where they were going, but they feared the worst.

And then the notices came for Uncle Leo and his two sons and Uncle Walter and his whole family and Auntie Leah and her children, but not for us. Because Father was a World War I hero, he was exempt. The Jewish authorities in charge of housing found us an apartment, and we were finally able to move out of the school. Father begged them to let Oma Rachel and Opa Samuel stay with us. And he begged for the rest of the family too. In the end they let Oma Rachel and Opa Samuel stay. And Auntie Leah was able to convince them she could be of use to them as a nurse, so they let her and her children stay. The others were shipped off. I remember the hugs and kisses, the tears. We never heard from any of them again. Are they all dead? Or have they somehow survived until now, like us? I don't think the Nazis will let any of us survive. If they can manage to finish the job, they will.

* * * *

We counted ourselves fortunate. We had our own apartment - only one room - which we shared with Opa Samuel and Oma Rachel. Mother had managed to get a job at a bakery and was able to bring home a loaf of bread every few days. A loaf had to last each person seven days by then, and this extra bread gave us enough energy to carry on. Also, since we were all working, we managed to get enough ghetto money to buy vegetables and canned meat when they were available. Our rations were a vast improvement over those we were given while we were stuck in the school. We made sure that Auntie Leah and my cousins always had some to share as well. They also had a room in our apartment block. We were on the second floor; they were on the first. Because Mother was so frugal and clever at stretching our rations, none of us were yet suffering from the effects of starvation. Not that we weren't always hungry and often weak. We were. Father worked in a carpentry workshop, I worked at a metalworks factory in an apprenticeship program, and Erika worked at a sewing factory. Everyone worked. That's what the ghetto was for. Slave labor. Those who didn't work were deported out. Oma Rachel worked sorting feathers and Opa Samuel, who

had been a dentist before he retired (he was already seventy-five), worked at the hospital.

And then Oma Rachel got sick. Auntie Leah was sure it was a form of starvation - Oma's legs swelled up and she couldn't walk. She had terrible rashes on her skin that quickly got infected. She developed a fever. Opa Samuel realized that she'd been secretly giving away her food - to us. She'd add a slice of bread to the family stock, or her ration of vegetables would find its way into someone's soup bowl. That was Oma Rachel. Everyone came before her. She had always fussed over us all and spoiled us...

Auntie Leah and Opa Samuel used all the pull they had in the hospital and managed to get Oma a bed. This was a great triumph. It was almost impossible to get a bed in the hospital. She was given some vitamin injections and everyone hoped she would be all right.

And then one morning, as I was working in the shop, terrible news spread from one person to the next. There were gasps and cries and people left their work and ran. I remember that, even though it was September, it was terribly hot. We'd been in the ghetto almost a year by then, and I'd seen terrible things - but I was unprepared for what happened next.

"What is it?" I asked a small group that had gathered by the door.

"They're evacuating the hospital."

Oma. On no. All I could think of was to run, to get there, to try to save her. It didn't take a genius to realize that they weren't evacuating the hospital to take all these sick people to a work camp. There could be only one reason - they were too sick to work and therefore they must die. I ran along the narrow crooked streets with throngs of others. And when I neared the hospital, I saw that I was cut off. Hundreds of policemen and guards kept people well back from the hospital.

It was a pitiful sight. Those who could walk were pushed out into the waiting trucks; others were carried out in stretchers. I could see people trying to escape, some running, some jumping from windows. Everywhere around me people screamed, called out to relatives hoping at least to say goodbye, seeing them one last time, but we couldn't, we were too far away. And then, the worst,...German soldiers threw babies, newborns, little children, out of the windows and into the trucks below. I could stand no more. I turned, weeping, and stumbled back to our apartment. And who was there? Oma Rachel! Wearing a white gown and holding a surgical mask in her hand.

She grinned at me. "I had to think fast, Daniel. But I kept my head. I grabbed this and walked out as if I were a doctor." Soon the whole family was there, and despair turned to joy on each face as they walked in and saw Oma Rachel.

But the next morning, before we had even gotten up, there was a terrible banging on the door. And when we opened it, a policeman stood there and demanded that Rachel Aronsohn go with him to the transport.

"No!" Father objected. "She is all better. It's true she was at the hospital, but she's fine now."

"That may be," the policeman answered, "but it's no concern of mine. We have strict orders to take her. We are taking everyone who was listed at the hospital yesterday."

Father begged and pleaded, but it did no good. And then Opa Samuel got his things together and hers and announced that they would go together.

"No!" Father cried.

Opa Samuel gave Father a big hug and kiss. "We've been together all our lives. Should I let her go off alone now?"

So Father had to let them go. I felt so sad, I thought my heart would break. Of course, I'd felt terrible when little Georg died and Auntie Anna. But I hadn't known them well, hadn't grown up with them. Hadn't loved them the way I loved Opa Samuel and Oma Rachel. I only hoped that Oma and Opa wouldn't be made to suffer too much. But if they were sent on a trip like the one I am on now, that hope was in vain.

Still, the worst was not over yet. Oh no! Two days later the chairman of the ghetto made a terrible announcement. All children under ten and all old people were to be sent away. Again it was obvious that only those who could work for the Germans would be saved. But these deportations would also take people who were working but who looked weak or frail - those who obviously soon wouldn't be able to work. There were rumors that those who were deported were taken to a place called Chelmno, where they were killed.

We had a family meeting in our apartment. Mother, Father, Auntie Leah, and myself. Erika looked after the children downstairs.

"They may well take Erika," Mother said. "She's thin and pale and small for her age."

Erika was actually very strong, but she didn't look it.

"Friedrich, too," Auntie Leah said. "He's just like Erika. Small and skinny, and with that rash on his face....And what about Gertrude? She's only ten. And Brigitte. She's nine. They'll certainly take them. Only Mia is tall and healthy looking." Tears came to Auntie Leah's eyes. She fought them back. "I won't let them take my children," she said quietly.

"We can hide two in the cupboard," Father suggested. "It'll be dangerous. Almost no air. If they're there too long..."

Mother nodded. "Dangerous. But maybe their only chance. The police will search the apartment. They'll have to be quiet. Not a word."

"So, Gertrude and Brigitte?" Father said.

"No," Auntie Leah replied, much to my surprise. "They're too young. They'll get scared. They'll cry out. And they'll be caught, and so will Erika and Friedrich. It must be the older children. Only they have a chance."

Father sighed. Were they choosing who would live, who would die? How do you make those choices about your own children? What if Erika and Friedrich suffocated in the cupboard?

"Gertrude and Brigitte are big for their ages," Auntie Leah said. "Perhaps that will be enough." And quickly she got up and left.

All ghetto residents were ordered to stay indoors after five p.m. For days we were forced to stay home. The hunger was terrible, because we were deprived of our work rations and we were afraid even to go to the ration center for food, as people were being plucked off the streets and sent away. It was hot, too. Terrible hot.

News of the raids, when they began, spread like wildfire. We waited for them to get to us. I tried to read, but I couldn't concentrate. We tried to talk, but

conversation died quickly. And then, one afternoon, Friedrich ran into our apartment. "They're coming!"

Swiftly we helped him and Erika into the little cupboard. We took off the door handle and covered it with tape Father had taken from the workshop. Then we placed the bed in front of it and covered the bed with a huge comforter. Trembling, we went downstairs, all of us rubbing our cheeks so they would have some color and we would look healthy. They ordered everyone into the courtyard, and the Gestapo - the Nazi secret police - barked orders at us to line up. There was no medical inspection, as I had heard there had been in other streets. Just the whim of the Gestapo officer. He was a tall fellow, almost elegant. To him we were no more than insects. He sent people either to the right, away from the trucks, or to the left. Little children were ripped away from their parents, people wept and pleaded. The children cried, terrified. Our turn came. I stood up very straight and tall. I was sent to the right. So was Mother. So was Father. All the time I was listening for sounds from the apartments, because other police were searching them for hidden children. And then it was Auntie Leah's turn. She too was spared. As was Mia. But Gertrude and Brigitte were sent to the trucks. Auntie Leah ran after them and grabbed their hands.

"You may not go with them," the Gestapo officer said.

"I will not leave them," Auntie Leah replied.

"You must."

"I will not." She held on to their hands. Casually the officer raised his pistol and shot. First the two girls, then Auntie Leah. In the head. Mia screamed and ran toward them. Mother ran for Mia, but Father pulled her back because Mia was already too far away. The Gestapo officer gestured with his thumb at Mia and the police threw her into the truck. She was crying, "Mama, Mama," and then the truck drove away and the Gestapo officer left, and we were alone in the square with the other survivors.

Mother ran to Auntie Leah and the girls. She sank to her knees. She didn't cry. She just stared at them. Father went after her. And I thought of Erika and Friedrich. I turned and ran back to the apartment. I took the steps two at a time, barreled through the door, pulled back the bed, scraped the tape away, and reattached the door handle, my hands trembling. I opened the door and the two children tumbled out. They were weak and woozy, but alive. Mother ran in then and fell on them both, crying out, kissing them. Then Father came in. We sat and stared, and no one knew how to tell Friedrich he was an orphan. And that his two baby sisters were dead, the other deported from the ghetto. Finally Father said, "Friedrich, I want you always to remember that your mother was a true hero. She was brave and had the spirit of a lion." And then he told Friedrich what had happened.

A couple of days later the curfew was lifted. Twenty thousand people had been transported out of the ghetto. It was Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Services sprang up everywhere, in little houses, in old sheds converted to prayer halls. And for ten days people prayed to God. As for me, I had always believed in God, but at that point I didn't know what to believe. What kind of God could allow such things to happen? I was angry. Angry at the world. I thought perhaps it was time for another flood - perhaps this was a species that didn't deserve to exist....

Pre-Reading Activities

- Located the following on a World War II era map of Europe: Frankfurt, Germany; Lodz, Poland; Chelmno, Poland.
- Define the terms: Gestapo, slave labor, sanitation, frostbite, malnutrition, ghetto, slum, deportation, typhus

Discussion Questions

1. Daniel says that he knew that "for the Nazis, lying is as natural as murder." What experiences led Daniel to this conclusion?
2. Why are the photographs he has hidden so important to Daniel? Why does he call the one photograph the "Family Reunion?"
3. Describe the first "home" Daniel and his family are assigned in the Lodz ghetto. How many people are in your classroom? What would it be like if 60 of you had to *live* in your classroom?
4. Why did Daniel's mother want the family to take their ski boots when they were deported from Frankfurt, Germany to the Lodz ghetto in Poland? Why did his mother's decision prove to be so important?
5. Daniel contrasts the cold of happier years in Frankfurt to the cold in the Lodz ghetto. Why is the cold so different for people in the ghetto? Do you or your friends ever go without a coat on a cold day to prove that the cold doesn't "bother you?" Why is that so important? How would a forced experience of cold and exposure affect your attitude?
6. How much bread did each person receive per week in the ghetto? About how many slices of bread are there in a standard-sized loaf of bread? (Think of a loaf of bread from a bakery.) How many slices of bread would you have per day? Imagine that is all you will have to eat except for one small bowl of thin watery soup, usually with a few pieces of some scrawny vegetables and seldom any meat. About how many calories of food per day would this be? How many calories a day should the "average" person of your age eat per day to be healthy?
7. Why does Daniel say that everything was wrong, "upside down?" What led him to this view? Do you agree with him? Why? How do you think the adults would respond to Daniel's comment?
8. Why were Daniel's family and Auntie Leah's families exempted from the transport? Why does Daniel say their lives were more "fortunate" following that particular transport?
9. Daniel said the purpose of the ghetto was "slave labor." What does he mean by this? What evidence does he have for this? What were some of the different jobs performed by members of his family?
10. How had Oma [Grandmother] Rachel attempted to help her family at her own expense? What were the results for Oma?
11. When Oma was admitted into the hospital, the family was very relieved. Why did that view change?
12. What did Daniel witness when he tried to run to the hospital?
13. How does Oma Rachel show that she has a quick mind and clever wit? What is the response of the Nazis to her escape from the hospital? Why

- does Opa [Grandfather] Samuel decide to go with Oma? What conclusions can you draw about Oma's and Opa's characters based upon their actions?
14. Why does Daniel wonder if he, his father and mother, and his Auntie Leah are choosing which children should live and which would die? Why were the adults even having such a conversation? Did they have any other options that would be less horrific? Explain your answer.
 15. Father tells Friedrich, "I want you always to remember that you mother was a true hero. She was brave and had the spirit of a lion." What evidence is there of this throughout the reading? What would you tell Friedrich about his mother's choices and actions?

Activities

1. Resistance may occur in many ways, both large and small. Define the term "resistance." Give a number of examples of resistance that can be found in this reading.
2. Daniel's family tried to plan and develop strategies to survive this terrible life in the ghetto under the Nazis. Explain some of the things they did. What strategies or tactics would you have tried to keep your family together and alive? At the beginning of the chapter, Daniel and his family are on a freight train going to another destination as he looks back over their lives in the ghetto. Where do you think the Nazis are taking them?
3. Oma Rachel, Auntie Anna, Auntie Leah, and Daniel's mother all do things that reflect the importance of their families to them. Make a chart with their names and list some of the things they did next to the appropriate name. What conclusions could you draw from this about the roles women played in the ghettos and camps? Write a poem about one of these women and her determination to help her family.
4. Imagine that you were a member of one of the families living in the same schoolroom where Daniel's family lived. Write several journal entries describing the day-to-day life you are living and what you see around you. Draw some illustrations in your journal.

"Janusz Korczak: The Father of Nobody's Children"

by

Jack Goldfarb

World Over magazine, April 5, 1974

Recommended for Grades 5-8

Pp. 6-7

When Henry Goldschmidt was a young schoolboy in Warsaw in the 1880's, he often got hurt in fierce fights with bullies who picked on the smaller and timid children. Henryk, who came from a well-to-do Jewish family, always sided with the weaker boys. He learned to fight back at an early age.

Years later, when he was studying to become a doctor, he chose to live in the backstreets and slums of Warsaw, where again he often fought and got a black eye for the sake of justice or in promoting a cause. This lively young man with a reddish beard and a collection of cheerful jokes, decided to become a physician so that he could do something practical to help poor people. In the grimy courtyards of Warsaw's poorest neighborhoods, he became a friend to ragged and homeless children whom no one cared about. He entertained them for hours with stories of heroic patriots and poets.

When he was twenty years old, Henryk entered a play he had written in a national drama contest. He sent it in under the pen name of Janusz Korczak, a name he had taken from an old Polish tale. He won first prize and kept the name Janusz Korczak. For the rest of his life, as a doctor, author, educator, and director of orphan homes, Henryk Goldschmidt was known as Janusz Korczak.

Although his books and magazine articles were widely-read and he became a successful physician, Janusz Korczak was much more interested in the care of deprived and unwanted children. Eventually he gave up his comfortable life as a doctor and child specialist to become the director of a newly-opened orphans' home in the slums of Warsaw.

In Dr. Korczak's orphanage, the children were taught to build their lives on honesty, justice, and kindness. He firmly believed that children should be treated with respect. This was a new idea compared to the severe discipline with which children were brought up in most European countries a century ago. There were no physical punishments or threats in Dr. Korczak's orphan home. But helpful acts and good deeds, done voluntarily, were given awards, and notices praising them were posted on the Report Boards. The children had their own self-government and a Court of Honor which settled disputes, gave advice, and decided on punishments.

All this time Dr. Korczak was writing, mostly for children now. One of his books, *King Matt the First*, which became popular in many languages, was about a wise little king who wanted to make a better world. King Matt had hopes of seeing all the children of the earth marching together united under a green flag.

In 1926 there appeared on the newsstands of Warsaw the first weekly newspaper written by and for children ever published in Poland. It was called *The Little Review* and it had three editors: a boy for the Boys' Section, a girl for the Girls' Department, and "an old bespectacled and bald gentleman," as Dr. Korczak described himself, to see that everything worked together smoothly. All

Railroads Leading to Auschwitz (With City Names)



Source: [A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust](#). Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida, 2000.
<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/MAPS/>

children were invited to send in articles and letters. They were always welcome

to come to the newspaper offices and say what was on their minds. Shy children were encouraged to contribute written pieces no matter how bad their spelling or handwriting might be. Over two hundred young reporters were on the staff of the paper, all getting paid a salary.

The Little Review became tremendously popular and received thousands of letters each year. At a time when racism was spreading out of the neighboring country of Germany, the newspaper persisted in its noble aim of brotherhood for all children.

Dr. Korczak also had a radio program of his own on the government radio station in Warsaw. The program was for children and all about children. On the air he was known as "The Old Doctor." He was heard regularly by an audience of millions, adults and children alike. He read from his stories and books and told of his many experiences with the children he knew.

But because of the rising anti-Semitism in Poland, "The Old Doctor" was asked by radio officials not to reveal his true identity. Although he was well known throughout the country, he agreed to remain anonymous, believing that his message of tolerance and better understanding between peoples was more important than his personal prestige. Eventually, certain government officials, who disliked his program, caused it to come to an end.

World War II began in September, 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. The Polish Army was quickly driven back from the nation's frontiers by the much stronger German Army. As the Nazis closed in to capture the capital, Warsaw was heavily bombed by waves of airplanes.

In those dark hours "The Old Doctor" was recalled to Warsaw Radio to talk to the citizens of Poland. While German bombers flew overhead, his calm voice and brave comments helped to raise the spirits of the people. With Warsaw about to fall, Dr. Janusz Korczak stood at his post before the microphone until the studio was shattered by a direct hit. Fortunately, he escaped unhurt.

Even before the ruined city came under Nazi occupation, friends urged Janusz Korczak to flee the country. The Nazi policy of persecuting the Jews forecast a dangerous situation for him and the 200 children who lived in the Orphans' Home on Krochmalna Street. But Dr. Korczak knew the children needed him now more than ever before.

Putting on his old Army uniform, he went out into the destroyed streets of Warsaw searching for ill and forsaken children and brought them to his orphanage. To help support them, he knocked on the doors of rich people and went into cafes begging and insisting on donations for his orphanage.

Food became scarcer as the months went by, and Dr. Korczak became ever more concerned. When the Nazis built a high wall around an entire district of Warsaw to enclose the Jewish inhabitants, Dr. Korczak feared the worst. But he kept on cheering the children with jokes and stories. He organized plays and singing sessions in the Home.

He wanted the children to have a symbol to unite and encourage them. A flag was chosen. It was a green flag with chestnut blossoms like the one Young King Matt had hoped for to unite the children of the world. On the other side of the flag was a blue star of David on a white field, to remind them of their ancient heritage at a time when Judaism was being attacked and its followers put to shame.

The Nazis forced the Orphans' Home to move its quarters inside the walls of the newly-made Ghetto. By now the food given to each child a day was down to one slice of bread, a little jam made of beets, a potato, and few spoonfuls of cabbage.

In the midst of the cruelty and suffering, he wrote in his diary, "I do not wish anyone evil...." He was never known to have spoken a single word of hatred.

Early on Wednesday morning, August 5, 1942, the children of the Orphans' Home were ordered to assemble and march to the railroad station inside the Ghetto, to be sent out to a camp somewhere east of Warsaw.

Dr. Korczak walked to the head of the procession and gave the green banner of King Matt to the oldest boy to carry.

When the column of children arrived at the station, a Nazi officer called Dr. Korczak aside and told him he did not have to go with the children. He could go free.

But Dr. Korczak immediately turned away from the officer. He would go with his children wherever it was they were being sent.

None of the children ever returned from their destination. Nor did Dr. Korczak. But his devotion, kindness, and courage have been left behind as an unforgettable legend.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Warsaw, Poland and Treblinka, Poland on a map.
- Define the terms: racism, antisemitism, persecution, ghetto, orphanage, tolerance

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Henryk Goldschmidt change his name?
2. What was Janusz Korczak trained to be? How did he use his abilities to work with children?
3. Describe the main ideas that Dr. Korczak had about the way to treat and to teach children. How did this differ from the common ideas of his time?
4. Who was King Matt? What did King Matt want? How were Dr. Korczak's ideas reflected in the story of King Matt?
5. What was the role of the children in *The Little Review*? How did people respond to the newspaper?
6. How did Dr. Korczak use the radio to spread his ideas? Why did radio officials want to keep his identity a secret? Why did the radio program end?
7. Why did government officials bring "The Old Doctor" back to broadcast on the radio?
8. How did Dr. Korczak use his experience in the military and his reputation to try to help the children?
9. What symbol was selected to help the children in the orphanage to feel united? What did the symbols on each side of the flag represent?
10. Describe the diet of the children when the Nazi officials moved their Orphans' Home into the Warsaw Ghetto.
11. Dr. Korczak was given the opportunity to escape from Warsaw and later to avoid the transport to the east. Why did he refuse both opportunities?

12. What role did the flag play in the departure of the doctor and the children from the ghetto? Why do you think he chose to have the flag displayed as they marched to the train platform?
13. What happened to Dr. Korczak and the children?

Activities

1. Define the term "hero" and list the characteristics of a hero. (Do not confuse the term "hero" with being famous.) Explain how Janusz Korczak exhibited these characteristics.
2. Write a poem in honor of Dr. Korczak and his work with the children.
3. Draw an illustration of the two sides of the flag designed for the children of the orphanage as it is described in the article. Why do you think chestnut blossoms were chosen to be displayed on the green field of the flag?
4. Do an Internet search for more information about Dr. Janusz Korczak and the way he has been viewed in Poland since the end of World War II.

Janusz Korczak

(1878-1942)

Study Center

"Under identical clothes beat a hundred different hearts, and each one is another difficulty, another task, another worry and care"
Janusz Korczak



Janusz Korczak with children and teachers at Dom Sierot orphanage.

Janusz Korczak walking ahead of his children to the Treblinka extermination camp on August 5th, 1942 remains one of the most powerful symbols of the atrocities of the Holocaust. Considered to be one of this century's greatest educators, Janusz Korczak's legacy, which stands for humanity and the recognition of children's rights, still lives on around the globe.

"And These Are Their Names"

by
Rachel Averbach

And these are all their names

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah

Reuben, Simon, Joseph, and Benjamin

Let us tell of the glory of these eternal youth.

Let us not weep for them.

Love them, as though they were all still with us today.

The entire nation could have been renewed by them.

The urge for a passionate and exciting life -

They experienced everything in one spring.

The loves and the friendships, they fulfilled them in brief years,

in a few months.

Till the end.

There is nothing that can compare with the glory of their destiny.

Bravery, sadness, passion, everything.

(May be viewed at Internet site: http://www.gfh.org.il/partizan/EPD_song_1.htm)

Discussion Questions

1. What does the poet mean by "the glory of these eternal youth?"
2. Why does the poet write "they experienced everything in one spring?"
3. Describe the mood that the author has created in this poem.
4. What is the poet trying to say to today's generations about the children in the poem and the way they children should be remembered? Do you agree? Explain.

Child of the Warsaw Ghetto

by
David Adler

Holiday House, New York, 1995
Recommended for grades 5

Synopsis

Shortly after the Great Depression, felt worldwide after World War I, Froim's father died, leaving his mother, six siblings, and Froim homeless. Since Mrs. Baum had no means of support, Froim and one brother were sent to a home for orphans run by Janusz Korczak, a famous Jewish doctor/teacher/author. The orphanage was taken over by the Nazis and the children were forced into the ghetto. "It was forbidden to study in the ghetto, but still, there were secret schools. People set up libraries."

When his family of orphans and the beloved director were forced onto a train headed for Treblinka, "Froim tried to join them. He wasn't wearing his armband and a Polish policeman didn't think he was Jewish. He chased Froim away." Later, when Froim arrived at Auschwitz, he "was sent with the old men and children who would be gassed. When the guards weren't looking, he ran to join his brothers."

Froim survived the atrocities of the Holocaust to tell his story.

Historical Perspective of Warsaw

Janusz Korczak was a famous Jewish author, teacher, and doctor. Once recognized by the authorities at the train, he was asked if he would care to step out of the line headed for Treblinka. Instead, he chose to remain with his "children" and later faced his death.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Briefly discuss why World War I was an expensive war followed by a depression and political unrest. This allowed the Nazi party to come into power using the Jews as scapegoats for economic problems.
- Discuss basic human needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, and love).
- Discuss the genres of non-fiction and biographies.
- Discuss time order.
- Discuss the vocabulary words and definitions:
Depression - economic crisis and decline of the 1930's
Nazi party - the political party: National Socialist German Worker Party
Hitler - Chancellor of Germany who came to power
Ghetto - a wall surrounding an area in Warsaw and other cities, confining

Jews

Smuggler - someone who takes a product into an area unlawfully

Synagogue - house of worship for Jews

Discussion Questions:

1. With what kinds of toys did Froim play, and how did they compare to the toys with which you play?
2. Why would people lose their jobs during a depression?
3. Why would a leader "blame" a certain group for the problems of the whole country?
4. What were the effects of Froim's father dying?
5. What is a pen name, and why would a person choose to use one?
6. What would the Nazis do with the stolen valuables from Jewish homes?
7. Why were secret schools and libraries established within the ghetto?
8. Why was there little food, coal, or medicines within the ghetto, and what were the effects of the lack of these?
9. Why did Janusz Korczak refuse to leave the orphans?
10. Why weren't the resistance fighters able to stop the Nazis?

Activities

1. Sequence the events of the story. As a class, create a timeline of Froim's early life, including the important historical events. Each student can then create his/her own timeline.
2. Discuss basic human needs (with emphasis on shelter and warmth) and how Froim provided these for himself. Create a class quilt that signifies Froim's early years and the story's events. An ABC quilt will likely allow each student to create his/her own square contribution. Brainstorm ideas as a class before beginning the project.
3. Each student writes an ending to the story. Begin at the moment of liberation. Share the story endings. Compare and contrast them.

Other Suggested Readings

- **Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust** by David Adler. New York: Holiday House, 1994.
- **Ten and Twenty** by Claire Huchet Bishop. New York: A Puffin Book, a Division of Penguin Books, 1991.
- **Flowers on the Wall** by Miriam Nerlove. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1996.

My Secret Camera

Photographs by
Mendel Grossman

Text by
Frank Dabba Smith

Gulliver Books Harcourt Inc, New York, 2000
Recommended for Grades 5 and up

Synopsis

During his confinement in the Lodz Ghetto in Poland, Mendel Grossman secretly took thousands of photographs that he intended the world to view. Grossman distributed them and also hid the best negatives in a wall in his apartment. His death in 1945 occurred just days prior to the German surrender. Frank Dabba Smith uses Grossman's photographs as a communication tool to convey to the reader a look into life in the Lodz Ghetto.

Quote

"I must keep on taking pictures - how else can I tell the real story of the thousands of men, women, boys, and girls trapped with me in this terrible place."

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define, discuss, and explain the background of the Holocaust, in particular, "ghetto." (The book jacket provides a grade appropriate definition.)
- Review examples of Nazi methodology.
- Identify the location of Lodz, Poland on a map of Europe (or the world).
- Provide background information about the photographer Mendel Grossman.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the events leading to the creation of a ghetto.
2. Discuss the bonding that occurred among the people within the Lodz Ghetto.
3. Discuss the importance and value of "Passover" as experienced by the people in the ghetto.
4. Discuss and analyze how choices and behaviors of individuals and/or groups can impact upon consequences for those within the ghetto.
5. Analyze the treatment and behaviors of the children within the ghetto.

Activities

1. Write a descriptive paragraph detailing the meaning of freedom before and after reading the book for contrast and comparison.
2. Identify the photograph in the book that had the most "feeling" for you and explain why it had such an impact on you.
3. Working in small groups, identify and list the values exhibited by the people within the Lodz Ghetto.
4. Do some independent research to investigate other ghettos.

Suggested Readings

- **Inherit the Truth: A Memoir of Survival and the Holocaust** by Anita Lasker-Wallfisch.
- **Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Freidl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin** by Susan Goldman Rubin.
- **Thanks to My Mother** by Shoshanah Rabinovits, et al.
- **The Poetry of Solitude: A Tribute to Edward Hopper** by Gail Levin (Compiler).

I Am A Star: Child of the Holocaust

by
Inge Auerbacher

Puffin Books, New York, 1986
Recommended for Grades 5-8

Synopsis

Inge and her family were German citizens. Her father had served in the German army during World War I and he was a respected businessman in their small German hometown. The family lived a contented, happy life until the Nazis came to power.

During Kristallnacht, her father and grandfather were taken prisoners and sent to Dachau. A few weeks later they returned home but soon her father's business was taken away by the Nazi government. The family moved to the village of Jebenhausen to live with her grandparents where they continued to live as quietly as possible. However, the government continued to pass ever more restrictive laws against the Jews. Eventually, the family was stripped of the home in Jebenhausen and was sent to live in the "Jewish houses" in Goeppingen. At last, deportation could be avoided no longer and they were transported to Terezin.

Quote

"There was no longer any way to avoid a transport. I was now number XIII-1-408, a person without any citizenship." P. 32

Pre-Reading Activities

- Identify some of the basic rights the Nuremberg Laws stripped away from the Jews. The Nazis continued to add to these laws throughout their rule in Germany. Discover when the first and the last laws were passed.
- Define the terms: *bully*, *rescuer*, *bystander*, *collaborator*, and *perpetrator*.

Discussion Questions

1. How did *Kristallnacht* impact directly on the lives of Inge and her family?
2. The Nuremberg Laws radically changed the lives of Inge's family. These changes were both small and large in nature. Explain some of the changes.
3. How did some neighbors and friends continue to try to help Inge and her family despite the danger in doing so? How did the woman stranger on the train try to help Inge?
4. What further humiliation and fear did the Nazi officials heap upon Inge as the family waited in the school gymnasium for the transport to Terezin?

Activities

1. Throughout her book, Inge expresses many of her emotions and experiences through poetry. Imagine that you and your family have had your home taken away and are being sent to an unknown destination far away. Write a poem expressing how such an experience would make you feel.

2. Make a chart listing some of the laws that were part of the Nuremberg Laws. Next to each law, explain how it would affect your life if you were forced to live under such laws today. Explain why it is so important for people to work to have their government pass laws that are good and fair to everyone.
3. Define the terms prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. How and why do the attitudes and behaviors described by these terms do harm not only to the persons who are the targets of these attitudes but also to bystanders, rescuers, and our society as a whole? Write a poem or draw a picture expressing the dangers of prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry.
4. Explain how you as a citizen can try to influence the laws that are passed by the government (local, state, or national). Consider things you can do as an individual and as a member of a group. What are some of the laws that exist in the United States that you believe are the most important to people in terms of fairness and protection of human rights?
5. What is meant by the term "human rights"? Make a list of people and groups today that are working to protect these rights in the United States and around the world. Why should the loss of human rights in other places in the world be a concern to people living in places where they are free and treated fairly? What are some of the things that individuals can do to help in the struggle for human rights for everyone?

Diamonds on the Snow*

by
Inge Auerbacher

Winter had come; the earth lay frozen,
To be in Terezin, we had not chosen.
Snow covered up blight with a veil,
Bad times for hardy; worse for the frail.
Mama had gotten some valuable jewels,
Endangered her life by breaking the rules.
She entered the cellars during camp's curfew,
A certain death sentence, if anyone knew.
Oh, what great wealth and secret we kept,
While on those precious diamonds we slept.
Rumors abounded of our block's inspection,
We must conceal them before their detection.
In the rubbish Papa found an old suitcase,
There wasn't one minute to waste in this race.
His ingenuity produced a master plan,
A spot under rag heap that no one would scan.
He threw them all into the cavernous box,
To keep them safe, despite broken locks.
He peered out the door - the time was right -
And ran with the treasure through the night.
One must not hesitate, be fearful, or stall,

Running on icy snow soon made him fall.
The suitcase opened, its contents all around,
Cushioned by the snow, not making a sound.
They lay like gems in a store on display,
Their contrasting hue made them easy prey.
Papa carefully picked up everyone one,
In a few minutes, his job would be done.
Placing the valuables in the chosen spot,
A deserted place that everyone forgot.
Nervously, we awaited Papa's quick return,
His safety our chief worry and concern.
The door opened, his mission a success,
Next day's search would bring much distress.
In a few days the coast was clear,
We would again have our valuables near.
Each and every "diamond" on the snow,
To us a treasure - a precious potato.

*from **I Am A Star: Child of the Holocaust** by Inge Auerbacher.

Discussion Questions

1. The author and her parents were among those who were imprisoned in Terezin. Why does she refer to the potatoes as "precious", a "treasure" and as "diamonds"?
2. Why does the possession of these "diamonds" bring Inge and her parents both pleasure and fear?
3. Hunger, disease, and fear were the constant companions of prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps. How does the author convey these emotions in the poem?
4. In her book **I Am A Star**, the author refers to Terezin as the "antechamber to Auschwitz." Explain what she means by this phrase. What happened to most of the prisoners of Terezin?

Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary

by
Mary Berg

L.B. Fischer, New York, 1945
Recommended for Grades 7-8th grade

Synopsis

In autumn of 1939, the Nazis began the establishment of ghettos in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe. The areas chosen and designated as ghettos were rundown neighborhoods. The purpose of the ghetto was to collect the Jews and isolate them. The Warsaw Ghetto was the largest with half a million Jews. *Judenrat* (Jewish Councils) were appointed to run the ghettos and had to execute Nazi orders. If the *Judenrat* didn't obey, it meant severe punishments.

Mary Berg was unique among the witnesses of the Warsaw Ghetto. The Germans exempted her from the threat of deportation and extermination because her mother was an American citizen. The rights of Jews who were enemy nationals (to the Reich) were respected by the German Foreign Office until mid-1943. Jews who were nationals of occupied nations had no rights. Mary was a fifteen-year-old girl in 1939, and the daughter of a prosperous Lodz art dealer. The family had come to Warsaw in an effort to escape the terror of Lodz. The family endured the tightening vice of terror in Warsaw until Mrs. Berg overcame her fear of registering with the German police when she realized that their only opportunity lay in claiming special privilege as foreign nationals. They were removed from the ghetto by the German authorities before the deportations, temporarily interned, and later transported to Lisbon and freed in a wartime exchange. Mary Berg and her family came to the United States before the war was over in 1944 and her diary was published in 1945.

The American flag on her lapel and another on the door of the apartment protected her like a talisman against the enemy. Mary was among those who suffered least, although day after day, she was shaken by the tragedies of her schoolmates, neighbors and family.

Each day the young adults and children of the Warsaw Ghetto faced ultimate death. The children formed a network of young smugglers who supplied the ghetto with food and other supplies. They risked their lives traveling through sewers, digging tunnels under walls and sneaking in and out of the sealed ghetto while living in fear of the Nazis. Some of these teenagers lived as Aryans with false identification papers on the other side of the wall.

“WARSAW BESIEGED”

Excerpts taken from: Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary

by
Mary Berg

October 10, 1939

Today I am fifteen years old. I feel very old and lonely, although my family did all they could to make this day a real birthday. They even baked a macaroon cake in my honor, which is a great luxury these days. My father ventured out into

the street and returned with a bouquet of Alpine violets. When I saw it I could not help crying.

I have not written in my diary for such a long time that I wonder if I shall ever catch up with all that has happened. This is a good moment to resume it. I spend most of my time at home. Everyone is afraid to go out. The Germans are here.

April 10, 1940

The spring is beautiful, but we dare not go out into the streets. Everywhere people, including women and children, are being snatched up by the Germans and driven off to do hard labor. But it is not so much the labor as the tortures.

July 12, 1940

There is no ghetto here in Warsaw as in Lodz, but unofficially there are boundaries that the Jews voluntarily refrain from crossing in order to avoid being hunted by the Germans or attacked by Polish hooligans.

There are now a great number of illegal schools, and they are multiplying every day. People are studying in attics and cellars, and every subject is included in the curriculum, even Latin and Greek. Two such schools were discovered by the Germans some time in June; later we heard that the teachers were shot on the spot, and that the pupils had been sent to a concentration camp near Lublin.

November 2, 1940

A persistent rumor is circulating that the Jewish quarter will soon be locked up. Some people say that this will be better for us, because the Germans will not dare to commit their crimes so openly and because we will be protected from attacks from Polish hooligans. But others, especially those among us who escaped from the Lodz ghetto, are aghast: they have already tasted life in a secluded Jewish quarter under German domination.

February 15, 1941

One after another the ghetto streets have been shut off. Now only Poles are used for this work. The Nazi no longer trust the Jewish masons, who deliberately leave loose bricks in many places in order to smuggle food or to escape to the "other side" through the holes at night.

Now the walls are growing taller and taller and there are no loose bricks. The top is covered with a thick layer of clay strewn with glass splinters, intended to cut the hands of people who try to escape.

"Life Goes On"

February 28, 1941

The shortage of bread is becoming more and more acute. One gets very little on the official ration cards, and in the black market a pound of bread now costs ten zlotys. All the bread is black and tastes like sawdust. White bread costs as much as fifteen to seventeen zlotys. On the "Aryan" side prices are much lower. Many of our students come to class without having eaten anything and every day we organize a bread collection for them.

April 30, 1941

Artistic life flourishing in the ghetto. On Nowolipie street a tiny Yiddish art theater called "Azazel" is functioning under the direction of the actress Diana Blemenfeld, Jonas Turkow's wife. On Nowolipki street, which runs parallel to Nowolipie, the Cameral Theater gives performances in Polish. For the last four weeks they have been playing the popular comedy, "Dr. Bergho's Office Hours are from Two to Four", by the Czech playwright, Polaczek, The chief actors of this theater are Michal Znicz, Alesander Borowicz, and Wladislaw Gliczynski.

Recently it stages Baron Kimmel and a revue in which a prominent place was given to skits and songs about the Judenrat. There were biting satirical remarks directed against the ghetto "government" and its "ministers". These included many apt references to certain bureaucratic gentlemen of the community administration, but on the whole I felt that the attitude of this group was exaggerated and perhaps even unfair, especially with regard to the president of the community, engineer Czerniakow, whose position is far from enviable. True Czerniakow often rides in a car to meet with Governor Frank, but each time he returns a broken man. He carries the heavy burden of responsibility for everything that takes place in the ghetto. For instance, as soon as the Germans discover that someone is circulating illegal newspapers, they take hostages among the members of the community administration, which they have deliberately expanded and which now includes the most prominent personalities. These people display extraordinary pride and courage and often pay for it with their lives. All this is surely not an appropriate subject for satire.

June 13, 1941

The ghetto is becoming more and more crowded: there is a constant stream of new refugees. These are Jews from the provinces who have been robbed of all their possessions. Upon their arrival the scene is always the same: the guard at the gate checks the identity of the refugee, and when he finds out that he is a Jew, gives him a push with the butt of his rifle as a sign that he may enter our Paradise....

These people are ragged and barefoot, with the tragic eyes of those who are starving. Most of them are women and children. They become charges of the community, which sets them up in so called homes. There, they die sooner or later.

Mortality is increasing. Starvation alone kills from forty to fifty persons a day. But there are always hundreds of new refugees to take their place. The community is helpless. All the hotels are packed, and hygienic conditions are of the worst. Soap is unobtainable: what is distributed as soap on our ration cards is a gluey mass that falls to pieces.

July 10, 1941

I am full of dire foreboding. During the last few nights I have had terrible nightmares. I saw Warsaw drowning in blood: together with my sisters and my parents, I walked over prostate corpses. I wanted to flee, but could not, and woke in a cold sweat, terrified and exhausted. The golden sun and the blue sky only irritate any shaken nerves.

July 24, 1941

President Adam Czerniakow has committed suicide. He did it last night, on July 23. He could not bear his terrible burden. According to the rumors that have reached us here, he took his tragic step when the Germans demanded that the contingents of deportees be increased.

August 1942

I saw from my window several trucks filled with people, and I tried to distinguish familiar faces among them. Some time later, the prison guard came panting to us and told us that the Jewish citizens of neutral European countries had just been taken to the *Umschlagplatz* to be deported. So our turn may come soon, too. I hope it will be very soon. This waiting is worse than death.

Dr. Janusz Korczak's children's home is empty now. A few days ago we all stood at the window and watched the Germans surround the houses. Rows of children, holding each other by their little hands, began to walk out of the doorway. There were tiny tots of two and three years among them while the oldest ones were perhaps thirteen. Each child carried a little bundle in his hand. All of them wore white aprons. They walked in ranks of two, calm, and even smiling. They had not the slightest foreboding of their fate. At the end of the procession marched Dr. Korczak, who saw to it that the children did not walk on the sidewalk. Now and then, with fatherly solicitude, he stroked a child on the head or arm, and straightened out ranks. He wore high boots, with his trousers stuck in them, an alpaca coat, and a navy-blue cap, the so-called *Maciejowka* cap. He walked with a firm step, and was accompanied by one of the doctors of the children's home, who wore his white smock. This sad procession vanished at the corner of *Dzielna* and *Smocza* Streets. They went in the direction of *Gesia* Street, to the cemetery. At the cemetery all the children were shot. We were also told by our informants that Dr. Korczak was forced to witness the executions, and that he himself was shot afterward. [Mary's information regarding the fate of Dr. Korczak and the children of his orphanage do not concur with other records. The records show that Dr. Korczak and the children were sent to a death camp.]

June 15, 1943

I have not written anything for a long time. What good does it do to write; who is interested in my diary? I have thought of burning it several times, but some inner voice forbade me to do it. The same inner voice is now urging me to write down all the terrible things I have heard during the last few days.

We, who have been rescued from the ghetto, are ashamed to look at each other. Had we the right to save ourselves? Why is it so beautiful in this part of the world? Here everything smells of sun and flowers, and there- there is only blood, the blood of my people. God, why must there be all this cruelty? I am ashamed. Here I am, breathing fresh air, and there my people are suffocating in gas and perishing in flames, burned alive. Why?

On the night between April 18 and 19, 1943, on the eve of Passover, which is for the Jews a feast of liberation, armored units of SS guards, Ukrainians, Latvians, and Lithuanians surrounded the "Big Ghetto" area bounded by *Leszno*, *Nowolipie*, *Bonifraterska*, and *Smocza* Streets. By daybreak of April 19, the German guards in armored cars entered the ghetto through *Zamenhofa* Street

and began to bombard the houses. The barricaded Jews replied with hand grenades and gunfire. After a few hours, the Nazi withdrew from the ghetto.

From every window and roof, from every ruined wall, the Nazis were met with a hail of bullets from automatic rifles. The signal for the fight was given by a group of young people who pelted the approaching German tanks with hand grenades. The Nazis returned after lunch with field artillery, and opened a barrage on Nowolipie, Bonifraterska, and Franciskanska Streets. The pitched battle began.

The Jewish women took an active part in the fighting, hurling heavy stones and pouring boiling water on the attacking Germans. Such an embittered and unequal battle is unprecedented in history. The Germans finally decided to use their heavy artillery.

The bombardment was particularly heavy on the nights of April 23, 24 and 25, when the whole ghetto was turned into an enormous conflagration. The burning houses formed an impenetrable wall of fire which made escape impossible, and thus the heroic fighters were doomed to perish in the flames. Those who by miracle managed to get through were shot by Nazi guards outside the ghetto walls. The shooting also found many victims among the Polish population on the “Aryan” side, adjoining the ghetto walls.

My Rutka, tell all those who are still alive that I shall never forget them. I shall do everything I can to save those who can still be saved, and to avenge those who were so bitterly humiliated in their last moments. And those who were ground to ash, I shall always see them alive. I will tell, I will tell everything, about our suffering and our struggles and the slaughter of our dearest, and I will demand punishment for those German murderers and their Gretchens in Berlin, Munich, and Nuremberg who enjoyed the fruits of murder, and are still wearing the clothes and shoes of our martyred people. Be patient, Rutka, have courage, hold out. A little more patience, and all of us will win freedom!

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the terms: ghetto, resettlement, “Aryan”, *Judenrat*, *Umschlagplatz*
- Through maps trace how Germany divided Poland
- Familiarize students with Germany’s takeover of Poland in 1939

Discussion Questions

1. Why were Mary Berg and her mother exempt from roundups and deportation?
2. What problems of the ghetto concerned Mary, and how does she describe them?
3. What cultural activities went on in the ghetto?
4. Why did the Germans ghettoize the Jews?
5. How does Mary describe the *Judenrat* and its leader Adam Czerniakow?
6. Why does she feel guilt and shame when she leaves the ghetto?
7. Many diaries and descriptions of the Warsaw Ghetto were written. How do Mary’s descriptions compare to other chroniclers?
8. How does she describe Dr. Korczak’s walk with his children?

Activities

1. Compare some of the diary entries of Adam Czerniakow, President of the *Judenrat*, and Mary Berg
2. Compare Mary Berg's excerpts with Uri Orlev's novel The Island on Bird Street and his descriptions of the Warsaw Ghetto
3. Watch a Video : The Warsaw Ghetto. 51 min (show in parts to allow discussion). Available through the Social Studies School Service. Based on the book Life in the Warsaw Ghetto. Book: The Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs, Ed. by Ulrich Keller. DoverPublication. photos taken by Nazi officials.

Suggested Readings for Students and Teachers

- Bartoszewski, Wladyslaw. The Warsaw Ghetto: A Christian's Testimony. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. 7th and up
- Berheim, Mark. Father of Orphans: The Story of Janucz Korczak, NY: Dutton, 1989. 5th and up
- Eisner, Jack. The Survivor of the Holocaust. New York: Kensington. 8th and up
- Ringelblum, Emmanuel. Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum. NY: Schocken, 1974. 8th and up
- Borkas-Nemetz, Lillian. The Old Brown Suitcase: A Teenager's Story of War and Peace, Port Angeles, WA: Ben-Simon, 1994. 5th and up

The Cage

by

Ruth Minsky Sender

Bantam Books, New York, 1988

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

Riva (Ruth) Minsky and her family were moved into the ghetto in Lodz, Poland by the Nazi forces. Under their mother's guidance and encouragement, the family held together. During the early days of Nazi rule, Mama had helped her three oldest children run away to Russia. Then the Nazis took her mother away and sixteen-year-old Riva found herself responsible for protecting her younger brothers in the cruel and terrible world of the ghetto. Then, after the harsh struggle to combat starvation, illness, and cruelty in the ghetto, life takes an even more horrific turn as the surviving family members are deported to Auschwitz where Riva is separated from her brothers. Under the harshest of conditions, moved from camp to camp, Riva is determined to survive, to bear witness to what has happened to her family and to her people.

Chapter 6, pp. 29-32

September 1942. The ghetto walls are closing in. Terror and panic fill every home. Nazis are inside the ghetto, taking away the sick, the old, and the children.

The streets are deserted. The deadly silence is broken by the sound of the Nazis' marching and their commands: "Jews, out! Jews, out!" Sudden horrified cries let us know that the messengers of death are here.

Mama stands near Laibele's bed, caressing with trembling hands his delicate, pale face. [Laibele has tuberculosis.] His frightened eyes search Mama's face, looking for an answer: How can he be saved from the Nazis? They want to take him away from us. "There are hospitals, better places for the sick and the old," they say.

"They will not take you, my child. They will not take you," Mama says with determination. "Motele," she calls frantically, "open the trapdoor to the cellar! Riva, get blankets! Moishlele, bring pillows! We are hiding Laibele. The Nazis will not get him!"

Motele opens the trapdoor to the cellar, which is used for storage. We throw the blankets and pillow on the clay floor. Mama places Laibele gently on the pillows and closed the cellar door. We cover the trapdoor with a rug and put a table and chairs over it.

I look at Mama. The horror in her eyes, the ash-gray color of her face fill me with panic. "Please, mama," I beg, "hide with Laibele in the cellar. You look sick. Please don't go out now."

Motele and Moishlele take her by the hand. "Please, Mama, stay here with Laibele."

"No, my children. I must go outside with you. Maybe they won't search the house if they see a family walking together. They don't know we have a sick child. Maybe Laibele will have a chance."

"Jews, out! Everyone, out! Line up! Faster! Faster!" German commands mix with the whistling sound of their whips.

Scared and trembling, people come out from all the apartments. Some older people are dragged by the Nazis.

We line up together, Mama, Motele, Moishele, and I. I press Mama's hand. I feel her body trembling, see her fearful eyes fixed on the door of the house.

I stare at Mama's worn, tired face. The lovely, gentle face has lost all trace of liveliness. Her pretty blue eyes are red and swollen from sleepless nights and endless tears; her dark hair is woven with gray now. I want to scream, scream, scream.

Our line is moving forward. "Right. Left. Right. Left. Left," command the Nazis. How easy it is for them to separate families. "Faster, Jews! You, old man, to the left! You, you, you, right!"

Motele and Moishele are in front of Mama. The Nazis look closely at them. I hold my breath. Motele is fifteen, Moishele is only eleven. They hold their heads high, trying to look older. "To the right," he says after a moment - or was it a lifetime? They are safe.

Mama is before me. Her eyes are glued to the house. The Nazis are searching our apartment.

"What work do you do?" asks the Nazi. She does not answer; she cannot speak. She pulls out her workman's card. She is head instructor at a tailor shop. She is an excellent worker and is needed, says the card.

He gives her a cold stare. "You can't work; you are sick. Left." He pushes her aside.

We run after her. She holds us for a split second - the last time.

The soldiers pull us back. Our screams don't bother them. We run toward the wagon, pleading, begging. "Please, let her go. She is a young woman. She is not sick!"

Mama stretches her loving arms toward us. Motele is standing near the wagon, calling, "Mama, jump. Mama, jump!"

She is trying to jump into Motele's arms, but the two steel hands of a ghetto policeman hold her back. Motele tries to pull her away from the policeman, pull her off the wagon. The policeman kicks him to the ground and speeds up the wagon.

I hear Mama's agonized scream, and the wagon disappears from sight. Moishele and I help Motele up. He is bleeding. I wipe the blood with my sleeve. We stare at one another in shock - three bewildered kids in the middle of an empty world.

"Laibele, is he safe?" I hear Moishele's voice. We run to the house. The table and chairs are in the same place over the trapdoor. They did not find the cellar. We pull the trapdoor open: Laibele is safe.

How do you tell a sick child that he has no mother? How do you tell it to yourself? I am sixteen, and I feel so lost and helpless.

We do not have to say anything to Laibele. He reads it in our faces. His eyes grow bigger and bigger; his mouth twists in pain. He whispers, "No. No."

I put my arms around him, pressing him tightly to me. "Cry, darling, cry."

With his hot tears pouring over my face, I know I am no longer a sixteen-year-old girl. I am a mother now.

For days the four of us hardly eat or sleep. We huddle together on Mama's bed and cry.

Outside the days are warm and sunny. I look at the sky and wonder. How can the sun still shine?

Part Two - Chapter 25 pp. 117-121

[The deportation train arrives in Auschwitz]

"Men to the right! Women to the left! Quickly! Quickly!" The guards push us with their rifles. "Faster! Move! Faster! Move! Left! Right! Left! Right!"

Everything is happening so fast, like in a horrible dream. The people behind me are pushing me forward toward the women's group, but where is Moishele? Where is Motele? They were near me only a moment ago!

"Moishele! Motele!" I cry out hysterically. "Where are you? Don't leave me. Let's stay together. Don't leave me alone. Motele! Moishele! Motele! Moishele!"

They are lost in the crowd of dazed people. I cannot see them anymore. I keep on calling, "Where are you, my brothers? Where are you, my children? Don't leave me alone. Motele! Moishele!"

I hear names being called out all around me. Children calling their mothers. Mothers calling their children. Husbands calling to wives their last good-byes. And above it all the German commands: "Left! Right! Left! Right!"

A man in a Nazi uniform is pointing with a white baton toward Mrs. Boruchowich. She is pulled out from our group and to the left of us, where a large group of older women and mothers with small children are gathered. Her daughter follows her and is kicked back by a Nazi guard toward our group. I grab Rifkele before she can fall and get trampled by the moving crowd. I hear Mrs. Boruchowich's cries as she, too, disappears from sight.

"Faster! Faster! Left! Right! Faster! Faster!" I am being carried forward.

"I think I saw my brother, Berl, with Motele and Moishele. They marched by with a group of men." I hear Karola's voice behind me. "They will try to stay together. We must also try to stay together."

Karola is holding her mother's arm. Then we hear "Left!"--and her mother is pulled away from her. "Hold on, my child. Don't lose your courage. Hold on, my child!" And she, too, is gone.

From all sides I hear people calling: "You must not lose hope! You must not lose hope!"

"You must live!" a woman calls to her daughter as she is pulled toward the group on the left.

My eyes are blurred from burning tears. My head is spinning. And through it all come the voices of strangers calling, commanding, "You must live! You must hope!"

I hope that it is all a horrible nightmare. I'll wake up soon. The nightmare will be gone. My brothers will stand beside me. We will be in a free world.

But the nightmare continues. We are pushed forward toward the unknown by whips whispering in the air, their sharp blows landing on the heads and shoulders of the women. Outcries of pain echo all around us.

Karola, Rifkele, and I try desperately to hold on to one another. We are pushed into a long barrack and ordered to undress: "Drop all your clothes and

put them in neat piles! Leave all your belongings! Remove your eyeglasses and leave them here! Move forward! Move!"

I move like a zombie. I remove my eyeglasses, which I have worn for the last few years, and feel as if I am suddenly blind, left all along in the darkness. I am pushed forward, forward.

My head is shaven by a woman in striped prison clothes. "This is to keep the lice out of your hair," she says sarcastically, while cutting into my long, brown hair with her shaver. I stare at her without really seeing her.

There are mountains of hair all around us: blond, brown, black. Piles of shoes, clothing, eyeglasses surround us, each pile growing bigger and bigger with each passing row of new arrivals.

"Quickly! Quickly! Forward to the showers! Move!" We are pushed into a large room filled with showers. Suddenly the water from the shower head comes at me in full force. The cold spray helps to bring me out of the stupor I have been in. I look at my friends, at their shaven heads, at their horror-filled eyes.

I grab Karola's hand. "Karola, is that you?" I whisper. We stare at each other for a long moment.

"Is that you, Riva? Is that you?" She gasps, transfixed by the sight of my shaven head.

"Out! Out! Quickly! Out!" We are herded outside. The sound of the whips makes us move as fast as we can. We are pushed into the bright sunlight of the warm August air stark naked. With my arms I try to cover my nakedness. My cheeks are hot from embarrassment. I feel so degraded.

Someone is handing out one piece of clothing to each girl to cover our naked bodies. I receive a petticoat big enough to wrap myself in. I look at Rifkele next to me. She is tall, and the blouse she received hardly reaches to the end of her buttocks. I pull off my petticoat and hand it to Rifkele. "I am small, Rifkele. Take this. Your blouse will be big enough to cover me to the knees."

She takes off her blouse and puts it on me lovingly. With tears in her eyes she says, "We are not animals yet. We still have our pride."

"March into the barrack! Quickly!"

We walk hurriedly into the huge barrack. It is filled with triple-decker bunks. On most decks lie five shriveled bodies with hungry, horror-stricken eyes. Some bunks are not filled yet.

"Where are you from?" parched lips whisper. "Are there still Jews alive outside this hell? Did you see the smoke? Did you see the chimneys? Do you feel the Angel of Death touching you? Can you smell the burning flesh?"

Those eyes, those voices are so unreal, so ghastly. This has to be a nightmare.

"Leave them alone." The voices go on and on. "Leave them alone. They will know soon enough about the smoke, about the smell...."

Why doesn't the nightmare end? It cannot be true. I will not listen to them. I will not look at them. I cover my ears, but the voices are within me now. I am part of them now.

Rifkele grabs hold of a small, skinny woman in her late twenties wearing a dress that is much too big. She looks familiar to her. They stare at each other in disbelief. "Tola? Tola?" Rifkele cries out. "Is that you? I am Rifkele, Rifkele Boruchowich. My God, what did they do to you?"

Tola's eyes fill with tears. "Rifkele? Rifkele? The beautiful, elegant Rifkele without hair, wrapped in rags. This cannot be you."

They fall into each other's arms, sobbing: "What did they make of us? What did they do to us? Dear God, help us remain human. Help us."

"I lost my children, Rifkele," Tola says suddenly through her tears. "They took them from me. I lost them." She buries her head in Rifkele's chest, howling like a wild animal.

Rifkele hugs her close. "I'll stay with you, Tola. We'll stay with you, Riva, Karola, and I."

She is the only one in her bunk. We slide into her bunk and hold one another close.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Lodz and Auschwitz on a map of Poland. Label other cities the Nazis made into ghettos for the Jews. Label the major concentration camps in Poland.
- Explain the terms as they were used under the Nazis: ghetto, deportation, relocation, concentration camp, slave labor.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the author refer to the Nazi soldiers as "messengers of death?"
2. Why does the family try to hide Laibele? Why does Mama insist on marching out with the other children despite the fact that she is not well?
3. Why do Motele and Moishle want to appear older?
4. What work does Mama do? Why does the Nazi officer ignore the message on the card? How do her children try to rescue Mama? What is the result of their efforts?
5. Where are Mama and the others being taken? Do the Jewish people left behind have any idea where the prisoners being taken from the ghetto are going?
6. Describe the scene when the train arrives at Auschwitz. How would this affect a person who has been jammed into a dark, airless freight or cattle car for some time without food or water?
7. Why is it so important for family and friends to try to stay together?
8. Why do the Nazis separate them so ruthlessly? What do you think this could do to the morale of a prisoner?
9. Many parents being taken in a different direction call out to their children to "Hold on!" and not to lose hope. What is the importance of that message? What effect do you think the loss of hope had on a prisoner?
10. Why did the Nazis remove all outward signs of individuality from the prisoners? What was the effect of the shaven heads, ill-fitting clothing, hunger-weakened bodies, and lack of basic facilities?
11. What does Rifkele mean when she tells Riva "We are not animals yet. We still have our pride?" What does she mean by this use of the term "pride?" Why could this be considered a form of resistance?
12. Why is the friendship among the young women so important to them?

Activities

1. Courage is an important element in the author's story. Write a brief newspaper story recounting examples of courage that are shown by different individuals in this story.
2. The Nazis tried to break the spirit and sense of identity of their Jewish prisoners. Give a number of examples of the methods they used to do this. Explain ways that the Jews resisted these efforts to dehumanize them.
3. Riva wrote letters and poetry to leave behind in the ghetto as a record for the family members who had gone to Russia to find if they every returned. After she was sent from Auschwitz, Mittelsteine and other camps, Riva continued to struggle to find paper and pencil to write poetry. Other women in the camp helped her find these things and urged her to read her poetry to them. Why do you think Riva's poetry was so important to her and to the other prisoners?

*Camp Mittelsteine, Germany.**

September 23, 1944

Riva Minska, Number 55082

**When my tormented heart can't take any more
The grief within rips it apart;
My tears flow freely - they can't be restrained
I reach for my notebook - my friend.
I speak to my friend of my sorrow
I share my anger, my pain.
I speak to my friend of tomorrow
Of a future we'll build once again!
The pillars I build for the future to come,
I knock down and build once again.
I share all my dreams, share my hopes with my friend
Share the pain that is filling my heart.
(p. 154)**

When Riva shared this poem with her fellow prisoners, they cried. Tola said to Riva, "You speak for all of us. They cannot kill our spirit, our hunger to survive." What does Tola mean by this comment? What is the message in Riva's poem? Why was it a form of resistance? Why is Riva's poetry and the response of her fellow prisoners to it a form of victory over their Nazi persecutors?

4. Write a letter or poem for Ruth Minsky Sender expressing your reaction to her story.

The Cage
by
Ruth Minsky Sender

Bantam Books, New York, 1988
Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

A Survivor's Story

The author's memories takes the reader to Lodz, Poland in 1939. Riva is one of seven children cared for and supported by her widowed mother. Their happy, contented lives are abruptly shattered with the coming of the Nazis in September, 1939. From the betrayal by their neighbors and former friends, the author tells the story of their imprisonment in the ghetto, the loss of their mother and other family members and friends, and the struggle of those remaining to survive. From Lodz, eventually, those remaining are herded into cattle cars and transported to Auschwitz where the tale of horror continues. Later, Riva is moved to several other camps where, along with some of her friends, they struggle against all odds to survive.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the status of Riva's family before the Nazi conquest of Poland?
2. Riva's mother struggles to help her children live. What are some of the choices, tactics, and strategies she uses to do so? How does Riva's mother continue to influence the children even after she is taken away?
3. "Family" was essential to those struggling to survive. Discuss the nature of "family" at the beginning of the story and the nature of "family" as it evolves throughout the story. How did family help some to survive?
4. The role of young people in resisting and struggling to survive is often underestimated. Explain some of the many forms of resistance used by the young, both organized and individual.
5. One of the terrible costs of the Holocaust was the loss of childhood for the young. Use examples from *The Cage* to illustrate the lost childhood and the forced movement into adulthood.
6. Dehumanization, to reduce the victims to less than humans, was an important part of the Nazi strategy to destroy the Jews. Why was this so important? What were some of the methods and tactics used to do this? How did this affect the perpetrators? The bystanders? The victims?
7. Within the ghetto and the camps, there was an effort to provide "organization" among the prisoners. Some formal organization was imposed by the Nazi perpetrators; some informal structure was created by the prisoners themselves. Why did the Nazis want the organization of prisoners? What purposes were served by the informal organization created by prisoners among themselves?
8. Occasionally, a "rescuer" offers assistance to Riva and others. Why did so few rescuers appear? Who were some of those who offered assistance in *The Cage*? Why do you believe the rescuers offered their assistance? A number of the bystanders became collaborators and perpetrators themselves.

What did they do to aid the Nazis with their plans for human destruction? Why?

9. Ruth Minsky Sender titled her book **The Cage** and uses the reference a number of times in the book. Explain the meaning of "the cage."
10. Resistance is a constant theme in **The Cage** and can be seen in many forms. Analyze the meaning of "resistance" in the context of the Holocaust. Give examples of these forms of resistance that are found in **The Cage**.
11. Memory and hope were extremely important to the victims of the Holocaust. Riva and her family and friends take considerable risks at times to provide a written record in the form of poetry, journals, letters, music, etc. Why is this written record so important to them? What does it represent? For whom is it intended? What is the impact of the writings on others? How does it represent both memory and hope? What is its importance to us today?

Other suggested sources:

- **I Never Saw Another Butterfly**
- **The Upstairs Room** - Johanna Reis
- **Upon the Head of a Goat** - Aranka Siegel
- **Fragments of Isabella** - Isabella Leitner
- **Kindertransport** - Olga Levy Drucker
- **I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly** - Naomi Morgenstern

The Devil's Arithmetic

By
Jane Yolen

Puffin Books, New York, 1990
Recommended for Grades 7-8

Synopsis

Hannah, a young girl living in New Rochelle, goes with her family to her grandparent's house for Passover Seder. Hannah is tired of remembering and is embarrassed by her grandfather who rants and raves at the mention of the Nazis. As she is instructed to open the door to symbolically welcome the prophet Elijah, Hannah finds herself mysteriously transported to Nazi occupied Poland in 1942, where she is known as Chaya. Her memories of 1990s America fade away, replaced by the horrors of life in a concentration camp. What she learns in this camp tells her why she must "remember" and will haunt her always. If she survives, her life will be altered forever.

Quote

"We all have such stories. It is a brutal arithmetic. But I - I am alive. You are alive. As long as we breathe, we can see and hear. As long as we can remember, all those gone before are alive inside us." (p. 113)

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define, discuss, and explain the importance of the Passover Seder and its traditions.
- Review knowledge of Nazi terminology and methodology.
- Identify the location of Lublin, Poland; identify the location of New Rochelle, New York.
- Provide background information regarding occupied Poland.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the analogy of Lublin to New Rochelle and Krakow to Siberia.
2. Discuss Hannah's attitudinal changes throughout the book in regard to her family, to her friends, and to her Jewish traditions.
3. Discuss the importance and value of "remembering."
4. Explain how choices and behaviors of individuals and/or groups can impact upon consequences.
5. Analyze the rationale of the title of the book.
6. What does Hannah recall about her "dream" that reveals information about her Aunt Eva's life? How does her Aunt Eva react to Hannah's question?

Activities

1. Create and maintain a reference journal, inclusive of Yiddish vocabulary.
2. View the video, "**The Devil's Arithmetic.**"
3. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the book to the video.
4. Create several diary entries of Hannah's life and draw pictures to express her feelings.

Suggested Readings

- **Jacob's Rescue: A Holocaust Story** by Malka Drucker, et al.
- **I Am a Star: Child of the Holocaust** by Inge Auerbacher.
- **After the War** by Carol Matas.
- **Daniel's Story** by Carol Matas.
- **Permanent Connections** by Sue Ellen Bridges.
- **When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit** by Judith Kerr.

Teacher's Resources

Video: "The Devil's Arithmetic." Dir./Prod.: Donna Deitch, Dustin Hoffman (Exec.), Jay Cohen, Murray Schisgal. 1999.



Portrait of two-year-old Mania Halef (#03256)

Date: 1936

Photo Credit: Yelena Brusilovsky, courtesy of USHMM Photo

Photographer: No photographer recorded

Photo description

Portrait of two-year-old Mania Halef, a Jewish child, who later was killed during the mass execution at Babi Yar.

Fireflies in the Dark

by

Susan Goldman Rubin

Holiday House, New York, 2000

Recommended for Grades 5-8

Synopsis

This is the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the children of Terezin. Dicker-Brandeis was a designer, artist, art therapist, and teacher. In 1942, when she was ordered to prepare to be moved to Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, Friedl had to pack carefully and thoughtfully. However, she did not think of things to bring for herself but of things to bring for the children who would also be in the camp. She packed paint, paper, brushes, and books so that she would be able to teach the children despite the terrible conditions of the camp. Friedl was determined to offer the children the opportunity to express themselves through the words and pictures they would create under her guidance. Of the 15,000 children who passed through Terezin, only 100 children survived but they left the world a legacy of hope and spirit expressed through their words and art work. Through the author's text and the surviving words and paintings of the children, the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the children of Terezin is told.

Chapter 5: Drawing Dreams (pp. 25-28)

"I feel like a bird trapped in a cage with other birds." -- The Diary of Helga Pollakova-Kinsky

In September 1943, transports to the East included 285 children under the age of fourteen. Friedl must have felt heartsick when she sent to give drawing lessons and found some of her beloved students missing. She and the other tutors tried to protect the children. Yet there was little they could do except work with the ones who remained and keep up their strength through activities.

On Saturday, September 4, five girls in Room 28 of L410 were ordered to leave on a transport. One of them was Helga Pollakova-Kinsky's best friend, Zdenka. Helga and the other girls in the room collected food and clothing in their free time for those going away.

"Saying good-bye was hard," wrote Helga. "We all cried."

That night she had nightmares. What would happen to Zdenka? No one who went to the East ever came back. "Transports, transports, that awful word terrifies the Jews of Terezin," she wrote.

Some children expressed their fear by writing poems in their free time. Hanus Hachenburg, a teenager, wrote *Terezin*:

*I was once a little child
Three years ago,
That child who longed for other worlds.
But now I am no more a child
For I have learned to hate.
I am a grown-up person now,
I have known fear.*

Concentration Camps in Europe



Source: [A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust](#). Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida, 2000.
<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/MAPS/>

Other children couldn't put their feelings into words, so they used a secret code--the secret code of drawing that Friedl understood. Under her guidance they drew pictures showing what they dreaded most: transports. And to comfort themselves, they drew their dreams. Helga painted a meadow at sunset. In the world of her drawing there was no danger, no threat of transport, and while she was drawing she felt safe and good. From morning till night, in their free time, the children kept drawing. Friedl encouraged the children to talk about their artwork. Discussion helped calm them and restore their hope.

At the end of the workday, the children were allowed to visit their parents and relatives for one hour. Sometimes there were longer visits on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. But there were no visits at all when the SS withdrew passes and confined the children to quarters. This happened when prisoners tried to escape or when a high-ranking SS official visited.

Helga, like many of the others, spent much of her free time reading. Her favorite books were *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, an English edition of *Pollyanna*, and *The Gold Rush*, an exciting story about an American boy who ran away from home and traveled to the Yukon to look for gold.

Reading, like drawing, helped children forget where they were and took them to faraway places where there were no transports. The Nazis stocked a small community library with books written in German that they had stolen from Jewish homes. "People were literally starving for any kind of reading," recalled Dr. Emil Utitz, the professor in charge of the library. A group of teenagers even assembled a young people's library with an art exhibition.

Some children created their own reading materials. Kurt Jiri Kotouc and some of the other boys in Home One of L417 secretly published a magazine called *Vedem (In the Lead)*. Boys in another home, Q609, wrote a magazine called *Kamarad (Friend)*. They read these out loud every Friday night after work to welcome the Sabbath. The magazines contained their observations of and comments on life in the camp.

The SS did not want prisoners to know what was happening outside Terezin, and they did not want anyone from the outside to know what was going on inside the camp. They tightly controlled communication with the outside world. They censored the mail. There were no radios, newspapers, or magazines. But prisoners smuggled in radio parts. Men in the electrical workshop risked their lives by building a radio receiver and passing on news about the progress of the war.

Prisoners had coupons that entitled them to receive one package two or three times a year. Usually the packages contained food, clothes, and medicine sent by non-Jewish relatives and friends.

Friedl mailed her coupons to her friend Hilde and asked for special things to use in her work with the children. Once she asked Hilde to send her a book that she needed for a puppet show. Hilde refused because the Nazis had burned books by that author. Hilde knew that the SS searched packages. If they found the book, they might hurt Friedl. "Friedl was mad at us," remembered Hilde. "That was her - fascinated with an artistic idea, she wanted to put it into practice as soon as possible regardless of circumstances."

Chapter 6: *Fireflies* (pp. 29-35)

"Terezin was a unique place: a piano concerto on a rooftop one night, and a transport to death the next day." --Alfred Kantor, *Terezin Diary*, documentary / videocassette

When Friedl packed for Terezin, she stuffed her suitcase with dyed sheets. She planned to use them as scenery and costumes for plays the children would perform. Friedl knew that children loved acting, and she thought it would be good for them to do group projects. At first it was against the law to put on plays and give concerts. Then the SS relaxed the rules. There were many professional actors, directors, musicians, and university professors imprisoned at Terezin. Every night the prisoners put on entertaining programs for themselves - concerts, plays, poetry readings, and lectures. On one November evening, for instance, there were eleven different cultural offerings to attend.

Friedl often gave lectures on teaching art to children. She emphasized the importance of allowing young children to freely express themselves. "Why are adults in such a hurry to make children like themselves?" she wrote in her lecture notes.

At Terezin in 1943, Friedl worked with other tutors to help the children put on a production of a Czech fairy tale called *Fireflies*. It was a musical with dancing and singing. Under Friedl's direction, the children designed and made their own costumes. They used her dyed sheets and any scraps of material they could find or borrow - underwear, shirts, and even shrouds, which were used for wrapping corpses. Rehearsals and performances of *Fireflies* and other shows took place in dusty attics, dimly lit basements, and halls. Children and adults eagerly crowded in for performances. For an hour or two, actors and audiences forgot where they were. "We were in a dream world," recalled Ela Steinova-Weissberger.

Another favorite event was the children's opera **Brundibar**, composed by Hans Krasa. Krasa was a prisoner in Terezin and came to every performance. The story told of a brother and sister and their friends - a dog, cat, and sparrow - who outwit an evil organ grinder named Brundibar. "The final song, 'Brundibar Is Defeated, We Have Won,' had a special meaning for us," recalled Ela, who had played the cat. Brundibar reminded everyone of Hitler, and when the children triumphed over him at the end of the opera, the audience cheered and clapped. Friedl probably attended at least one of the fifty-five performances of **Brundibar**. The large cast included Dita Polachova-Kraus and many other students she knew well.

Friedl and her fellow tutors wanted the children to live as normal a life as possible at Terezin, despite the miserable conditions. Once Friedl held an exhibition of the children's artwork in the basement of L417. Seeing their drawings up on the wall made her students feel proud. It also gave them a chance to view and appreciate one another's work.

It was Friedl's birthday on July 30, 1944. Her students knew that she loved flowers, so they picked some for her while they were working in the fields and gardens of the SS. The girls smuggled the flowers into the camp under their blouses.

Ten-year-old Erika Taussigova made her own gift. She drew a heart with flowers and wrote the words, "For Mrs. Brandeis."

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Czechoslovakia on a map of Europe showing the area in 1942. Name the two countries that formed from Czechoslovakia after the "Cold War." Identify the countries of Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Locate the cities of Prague and Terezin on the map.
- What was the German name for Terezin? Research and discover how many people were sent to Terezin.
- Friedl was trained as a Bauhaus artist as well as being a designer, art therapist, and teacher. What does "Bauhaus artist" mean? What does an art therapist do?
- Define the terms: "transport"; "resettlement to the East"

Discussion Questions

1. Breaking any rule made by the Nazis could mean severe punishment, even death, for the prisoner. Why did Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, the other teachers, and the children take the risk of writing and painting to express themselves knowing what could happen if they were caught?
2. Resistance can occur in many forms. Discuss the nature and methods of resistance shown by Friedl and the children. Why was this resistance so important? What does it tell us about the Jewish victims, children and adults, of the Nazis?
3. Explain what people mean when they say that the art work and literature created by the prisoners of Terezin is a "living legacy."
4. Why did the Nazi SS want to keep the prisoners isolated from the outside world and even to limit the communication among prisoners in the ghettos and camps? What was the *Vedem*? Who prepared and distributed it?
5. Terezin is sometimes referred to as the "Model Ghetto." What does this mean? Why did the Nazi SS try to disguise what was happening in Terezin and to deceive the outside world?
6. Why was reading so important in the camp? What other things did prisoners do to try to hold onto some sense of an orderly life? Why did the SS separate the children from their parents?
7. What are some of the common themes in the work of the children? Why do you think they focused on these themes so often?
8. Why did Friedl want the children to act and perform? What were the results of this performing for the children and the adults in Terezin?

Activities

1. Prepare a bulletin board containing some of the poetry and art work of the children of Terezin. Next to this bulletin board, prepare a second bulletin board containing the poetry and art work of the students of this class expressing their thoughts and emotions about what they have learned about Terezin.
2. Write a newspaper story or editorial describing the work of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis.
3. Make a Venn diagram identifying the characteristics of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis as a person, as an artist, and as a teacher.

4. Define the term "hero." Explain how and why Friedl Dicker-Brandeis should be considered a hero.
5. Explain why reading was such a valuable activity to the prisoners. If you were going to be kept isolated from the rest of the world for a long time, what would be some of the books and magazines that you would want to take with you? Create a class reading list and post this list on a large chart in the classroom. Form "reading circles" to read and discuss some of these books.
6. Find a copy of the Czech fairy tale ***Fireflies*** and read it in class. Why did the children enjoy performing it so much?
7. *Brundibar* has been identified as one of the most frequently performed operas in the world. Find out more about this opera and its history. Learn and perform some of the songs from the opera. What other plays and pieces of music were very popular in Terezin?

Other Sources

- **I Am a Star: Child of the Holocaust** by Inge Auerbacher.
- **I Never Saw Another Butterfly...Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944.**
- **We Are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin** prepared and selected by Marie Rut Krizkova, Kurt Jiri Kotouc, and Zdenek Ornest.
- **Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries**, Laurel Holliday, editor.

We Are Children Just the Same
Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin

Selected and edited by

Marie Rut Krizkova, Kurt Jiri Kotouc, and Zdenek Ornest

Translated from the Czech by

R. Elizabeth Novak

Edited by

Paul R. Wilson

The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1995

Recommended for Grades 5-8 and up

Synopsis

Vedem (**In the Lead**) was a magazine created by boys aged thirteen-to-fifteen-years old living in Home One in House L417 in the Terezin Ghetto from 1942 to 1944. Most of them died in the Holocaust as did their beloved mentor and leader, Professor Valtr Eisinger. The editor of **Vedem** was young Petr Ginz, a talented and energetic young teen mature beyond his years. Petr and most of the boys in L417 with him were deported to Auschwitz. Miraculously, unknown to the other boys, one of them [Zdenek Taussig] had managed to hide their work and would survive to recover it after the war. Approximately 800 pages of the magazine were preserved. **Vedem** was filled with the artwork and written work of the boys, all laboriously produced and gathered into a single copy and displayed in one room. Over a period of two years, the boys produced a copy of the magazine every Friday. The boys of the house took turns visiting the room to read the magazine. Each knew that discovery by the guards would mean execution yet they persisted. Kurt Kotouc and Zdenek Ornest, two of the editors of this book, were among the boys who created the original magazine in Terezin and are two of only a small number who managed to survive the Holocaust.

P. 75 - Excerpt from the recollections of Petr's [Ginz] mother Miriam Ginzova

When large groups of Jews started being deported to Terezin, Petr kept an eye out for older and weaker people and helped them carry their luggage as close to the assembly point as possible, though he wasn't particularly strong himself. The Germans strictly forbade others to come to the assembly point, and sometimes they detained such people as well.

In October, 1942, Petr was taken by transport to Terezin. When saying goodbye at home he was brave about it, so as not to make things more difficult for me, and he even consoled me: "Don't cry, Mummy," he said, "and don't worry about me, I'll come back to you."

He was in Terezin for two years, and Eva [his young sister], who was taken from us in May, 1944, when she turned fourteen, met him there. That's what the Germans did with Jewish children from "mixed marriages." [Petr's mother was not Jewish; his father was Jewish.]

As long as my children were in Terezin I consoled myself with the thought that they would come back. When I learned from friends - it was in the street in Prague - that Petr had been deported from Terezin, I fainted dead away. I felt that something terrible had happened.

That was only confirmed ten years later. Until then, I was still hoping for a miracle. Jehuda Bacon, who left Terezin on the same transport as Petr, told us that at the Auschwitz station, immediately upon arrival, they sorted the prisoners out into two groups. To the left and to the right. Those to the left went into the gas chambers. And he saw Petr going that way.

You, who are called Merciful, how could you let that happen!

We try not to think about it, not to remember, so that we can go on living at all.
[Petr's mother, father, and sister Eva survived.]

Remembrance (p.93)

In that gray house, an old woman
Suffered on her bed. No one knew her.
And as she shriveled away, with God her only succor
She secretly hugged something to her.

A kind of cardboard box, and when she dies
The ghetto will be her only heir.
And how she cried, that helpless woman.
She wanted to live to see her children one more time.

She did not want to die;
She wrung her hands (or clung to her faded souvenir)
Then in the night, dry for lack of water, died.
I was upset for full half a day.

When they came for her things in the morning -
Such a beautiful balmy day -
All they found was four simple flowers
And a picture of her son clasped
Tightly in her twisted, stiffened hands.
They took it from her, clumsily, roughly,
And tore it up.

I look at her.
I learned nothing more. But I believe -
I hope,
That mother and son were burned together.

-Ha- (Hanus Hachenburg - perished)

Farewell to Summer (p.111)

I should like to write as you do, poets,
Of spring's end, of love and sunny days,
Of tender evenings spent in the moonlight
Of birds and flowers, of trees in bud.

I should like to say farewell, as you who are free,
With a walk in the woods, with a river, and fruit,
As in times of old when we were like you are
When I was not, as today, broken and forlorn.

I would like to take leave of the summer as you do,
In the sun, stopped short by my prison grate,
To fondle a fading bud for a while-
I cannot, I cannot - for I live behind bars.

Orce (Zdenek Ornest, survived)

Friday Evening (p.109)

How long since I saw Hradcany, bathed in the sun?
How long since I was a human being?
But I wonder today, was it all just a dream?

A year now I've been in the Terezin ghetto,
A year now I've watched a people destroyed,
A year now I've stared at walls cracking and peeling.

Before, when the constable guarded the barracks,
And no one could enter, and no one could leave,
His bayonet fixed, and his eyes full of anger,
He stared at the streets of Terezin.

Saturday...
The barracks seething with people,
The yard full of children.
What's going on?

The children will go
To their waiting mothers
When the "forward march" is given.

The constable walks by them
With rifle and bayonet.
At last they stand by the women's barracks
But the command is now given - "Go back."

Sadly the children leave their mothers,
Mothers they did not even see.
It's always this way, with everything,
Daily portions of turnips and coffee,
Daily, dozens of people die.
Why?
Why? Why do the innocent die?

But the day will come when all this will end,
The day will come when we shall live again,
The day will come when we shall settle accounts.

Kangaroo, (Zdenek Weinberger, perished) written while he had typhoid

Questions and Answers (p.142)

What good to mankind is the beauty of science?
What good is the beauty of pretty girls?
What good is a world when there are no rights?
What good is the sun when there is no day?
What good is God? Is he only to punish?
Or to make life better for mankind?
Or are we beasts, vainly to suffer
And rot beneath the yoke of our feelings?

What good is life, when the living suffer?
Why is my world surrounded by walls?
Know son, this is here for a reason:
To make you fight and conquer all!

-Ha- (Hanus Hachenburg, perished)

Untitled (p.29)

Broken people,
Walking along the street.
The children are quite pale.
They have packs on their backs.
The transport is leaving for Poland.

Old ones go,
And young ones go.
Healthy ones go,
And sick ones go,
Not knowing if they will survive.
Transport "A" went,
And more went too.
Thousands died
And nothing helped.
The German weasel
Wants more and more blood.

Klod (Zdenek Weinberger, perished)

Pre-Reading Activity

- On a map of Europe (or Czechoslovakia) during the period of World War II, locate the following places: Czechoslovakia, Poland; Terezin, Auschwitz.

Discussion Questions

1. The men, women, and children in Terezin were each housed in separate barracks. Why do you think this was done?
2. The "Boys of Terezin" in room L417 produced an issue of the magazine **Vedem** every Friday for two years. Why was this such an amazing accomplishment? What does this tell you about the boys who produced this work?
3. Petr Ginz was the editor and driving force behind **Vedem** until he was sent to Auschwitz. He was not yet 15 when he first arrived in Terezin. Based upon the information in his mother's recollection and his work with the other boys to produce the magazine, what kind of boy do you think Petr was?
4. What risks were the boys taking to create the magazine? Why was the magazine an important example of resistance?
5. Why do you think the artwork, poetry, stories and columns in the magazine were so important to the boys?
6. Read the two poems of Hanus Hachenburg (**Remembrance** and **Questions and Answers**). What feelings and experiences does he express in these poems? What do they tell you about the Holocaust?
7. Zdenek Weinberger (Kangaroo) describes the atmosphere in Terezin ghetto on a Friday evening and a Saturday morning in his poem. What emotions does he convey in the poem? Why don't the mothers and children see each other? What feeling does Kangaroo express in the last three lines of the poem?
8. Zdenek Ornest (Orce) was one of the few boys to survive the Holocaust. In his poem **Farewell to Summer** written while he was a boy in Terezin, what does he have to tell us about his life in the ghetto and its affect on him?
9. Why was the preservation of the 800 pages of **Vedem** so important as a document of the Holocaust? As a record of the importance of hope, courage, and resistance in human nature? As a connection between the Boys of Terezin and today's world?

Activities

1. Examine a copy of the book **I Never Saw Another Butterfly**. This book also contains examples of the artwork and poetry created by children in Terezin. How are the works in this book and the works in **Vedem** similar? Are they different in any way? What do both of these works tell us about the importance of expressing feelings and experiences through literature and art? What do they tell us about the children who created the works?
2. Write a poem or create an illustration that expresses your feelings about the children of Terezin and the record of literature and art they left behind them.
3. Many of the adults in Terezin were determined to provide the children with the opportunity to continue to learn and to express their creativity. In addition to the poetry and stories written and the artwork produced, there were plays performed with costumes and sets designed. One of the most famous of

these was "**Brundibar**" which continues to be performed throughout the world today. Read a description of "**Brundibar**" and the story of its performance in Terezin. Write a short summary of what you learn. Why was the performance of plays and music so important to the people of Terezin? Why was their ability to produce these performances a kind of miracle?

I Never Saw Another Butterfly
Children's Drawings and Poems
from Terezin Concentration Camp
1942-1944
Edited by
Hana Volavkova
Translated by
Jeanne Nemcova

Schocken Books, New York, 1978
Recommended for Grades 5-8

Synopsis

Terezin is located approximately 60 kilometers from Prague in what was the country of Czechoslovakia in the 1940s. It had been founded as a garrison town or fortress during the days of Emperor Joseph II of Austria. When the Czechs were conquered by Germany, the town was turned into a ghetto/camp for Jews. The first Jews brought to Terezin came from Bohemia and Moravia. It was to be a "model camp" that could be shown to foreigners to hide the truth of the Nazi terror but everything in it was a charade. However, time would reveal the truth. This camp became only a stopping place for the Jews who were brought here, a temporary way station before being sent on to other camps to be murdered. Some died in Terezin before they could be transported elsewhere.

Among the many thousands who were sent to Terezin, 15,000 were children. They were forced to live in overcrowded, humiliating conditions. If they reached the age of 14, they were forced to work and live the life of the adults. As the transports to the east continued to grow in number and frequency, more and more of the children were taken away - most never returned. By the end of the war and liberation, only 100 of the 15,000 children who passed through Terezin survived.

However, in the years that these children lived in Terezin, they created a miracle, a testament to the will and strength of the human spirit. With the assistance of adults determined to give the children the opportunity to learn and to express themselves through the arts, the children performed in plays and operas and created a collection of poetry, stories, and art that is their lasting legacy to the world. These works have provided us with a record of what the children saw and heard and experienced and of what they dreamed and hoped - a record, a remembrance, and a legacy. Despite the horror and tragedy of their fate, the children's voices speak to us across the years through their own words and drawings.

p. 14

...We got used to standing in line at 7 o'clock in the morning, at 12 noon and again at seven o'clock in the evening. We stood in a long queue with a plate in our hand, into which they ladled a little warmed-up water with a salty or a coffee flavor. Or else they gave us a few potatoes. We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks and then again to walk on the sidewalks. We got used to undeserved slaps, blows and executions. We got accustomed to seeing people die in their own excrement, to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick

amidst the dirt and filth and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to it that from time to time, one thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away...

From the prose of 15 year-old Petr Fischl (born September 9, 1929) who perished in Oswiecim [Auschwitz] in 1944.

At Terezin (p.10)

When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not !!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor - why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!

Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug?
Here in Terezin, life is hell
And when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.

"Teddy" L410 - 1943

The Butterfly (p. 33)

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.

4.6. 1942 Pavel Friedmann

Homesick (p. 36)

I've lived in the ghetto here more than a year,
In Terezin, in the black town now,
And when I remember my old home so dear,
I can love it more than I did, somehow.

Ah, home, home,
Why did they tear me away?
Here the weak die easy as a feather
And when they die, they die forever.

I'd like to go back home again,
It makes me think of sweet spring flowers.
Before, when I used to live at home,
It never seemed so dear and fair.

I remember now those golden days...
But maybe I'll be going there soon again.

People walk along the street,
You see at once on each you meet
That there's a ghetto here,
A place of evil and fear.
There's little to eat and much to want,
Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.
But no one must give up!
The world turns and times change.

Yet we all hope the time will come
When we'll go home again.
Now I know how dear it is
And often I remember it.

9.III. 1943 Anonymous

The Garden (p. 50)

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like the growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

Franta Bass

Fear (p.45)

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of its shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps it's better - who can say! -
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away.
We want to have a better world,
We want to work - we must not die!

Eva Pickova, 12 years old, Nymburk

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Terezin and Prague on a map of Czechoslovakia (or a modern map of the Czech Republic).
- Define the terms: ghetto, garrison, fortress, way station, testament, legacy, queue, coffins, excrement, homesick, typhus, scythe, transport.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it was so important for the children and young people to have an opportunity to write and draw when they were suffering from hunger, cold, disease, and the loss of loved ones?
2. Why did Petr Fischl repeat the phrase "we got used to?" What is the affect of that repetition on the reader? How does it make the reader feel?
3. "Teddy" uses the poem "**At Terezin**" to describe the impact on a new child. What are some of the things that shock the child? What do you think was the worst of the horrors described?
4. Pavel Friedmann, author of "**The Butterfly**", died in a death camp but his poem is one of the most famous produced by the children of Terezin. What are some of the things that Pavel mentions that tell us that this young man destined to die in a Nazi death camp was a sensitive person who enjoyed beauty and people?
5. Why is the image of the butterfly a particularly poignant one for a child trapped in the Nazi-made ghetto?
6. Have you ever been homesick? Describe some of the "symptoms." How did being taken away from home affect the author's attitude toward home? How does the author describe the days at home?

7. The author of "**Homesick**" wrote "But no one must give up!" What is the author trying to say in contrast to the description of Terezin that was written? Why was hope so important in the ghetto?
8. Poet Franta Bass compared a little boy to a blossom in "**The Garden.**" What does she have to say about each?
9. What is the different fear that Eva Pickova is talking about in her poem "**Fear?**" What does she mean by "a bitter tax?" What does Eva wonder about as she watches what is happening? What conclusion does she reach?
10. How does the poetry and prose of these children - all under 16-years-of-age - represent resistance to the Nazis? What does it tell us about these children?

Activities

1. Write a poem of your own about the spirit and will of the children of Terezin and other ghettos and camps - and/or- draw an illustration that communicates this spirit and will to resist and survive.
2. Write a short essay or several paragraphs on the importance of poetry, art, and music to the human spirit. Why are such creative expressions of the human spirit so miraculous and wonderful to us?
3. Make a collage of butterflies taken from illustrations in magazines, personal drawings, photographs, etc. Write a poem or prose description of the many colors and movements of a butterfly.

Other Suggested Sources

- **Fireflies in the Dark** by Susan Goldman Rubin.
- **We Are Children Just the Same: *Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin*** selected and edited by Marie Rut Krizkova, Kurt Jiri Kotouc, and Zdenek Ornest.

Surviving Hitler
A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps

by
Andrea Warren

Harper Collins Publishers , New York, 2001
Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

This is the story of Janek "Jack" Mandelbaum who was thrown into the Nazi concentration camp at the age of fifteen. His family lived in bustling port city of Gdynia, Poland where his father owned a fish cannery. The Mandelbaums led a happy, prosperous life filled with friends and family. That life came to a rapid end under the threat and subsequent conquest of Poland by Nazi Germany. The family was separated by the invasion and Nazi rule and Jack became the main support of his mother and younger brother Jakob by working as a substitute for civilian contract laborers. When the Nazis rounded up all the Jews in the village where they were living, Jack was separated from his mother and brother. Jack was horrified by the conditions in the concentration camp where he was sent. Horrible food and little of it, filth and disease, backbreaking labor, brutal treatment by kapos and Nazi guards, grief over the loss of family and friends, and the constant fear of death were the ever present companions of the prisoners. Despite all of this, Jack determined that he would "*play the game*" where one misstep could mean death and somehow survive.

Chapter 8: *Hour by Hour* - pp. 72-80

* * * *

Jack lost track of passing days. By watching the seasons, he knew he had been in captivity almost a year. He had become sixteen when winter turned to spring in 1943, but he had no way of knowing which day was his actual birthday.

"In a concentration camp, you could think only of staying alive," Jack said. "Every day, every hour was a new challenge. You had to be constantly alert, and protect and care for yourself the best you could. You were always on the look out for a scrap of food. It was very stressful. The only relevance weather had for us was what obstacles it presented. Were we freezing, wet, or suffocating from heat? We were always hungry and exhausted - that never changed. We had no knowledge about the war or who was winning or losing. The guards told us nothing."

Rumors were part of daily life. Prisoners lived on them. Rumors about the war, rumors about upcoming "selections," when SS officers would weed out the weakest prisoners and ship them off somewhere. Rumors about transfers to other camps.

.... In a short space of time, Jack was moved twice to other camps. "They took us where they needed us to work," he said. "The camps were different, yet alike. Same overcrowded barracks, each with a number. Same food - thin soup, bad bread - same rules, same lice, same filth. Same guard towers with searchlights where guards watched you with binoculars, their machine guns at the ready. Always a crematorium with its black smoke. You went to bed in the

dark and awoke in the dark and were counted in the dark so you would be ready to work when it was light. They beat you for any tiny thing."

One of the worst camps Jack was in was called Gross-Rosen. He and the other prisoners arrived late at night. No barracks space was available to them. They were ordered to sleep on a cold concrete floor with no pillows or blankets.

"We were so crowded, we were forced to lie on our sides. If one person turned, we all had to turn. But even in *this* circumstance, sleeping was not a problem. Not ever. We could have slept standing up," Jack said.

The camp had a granite quarry, where many prisoners lost their lives. While carrying heavy pieces of granite up the steep sides, they could slip and plunge to their deaths. "Every week, at least a dozen prisoners committed suicide by hurling themselves into the pit," Jack said. "Fortunately, I was only in that camp a short time. Conditions were brutal, and I saw many terrible things there."

* * * *

The worst part of the day was roll call. Not only did it mean standing at attention for hours on end, but it was also when prisoners were punished for some slight infraction, or simply terrorized at random. Everyone was forced to watch when a prisoner was beaten, whipped, shot, hanged, or torn apart by the dogs.

In one camp, six Russian prisoners of war managed to escape, but they were caught later on. Their bullet-riddled bodies were dumped in the middle of the parade ground, and the prisoners had to march around them.

"We were warned this would happen to us if we tried to escape," Jack said. "Every single one of us fantasized about escaping, but to where? All of Europe was occupied by the Nazis. There was no safe place for anyone Jewish. The Russians had a homeland to return to. We Jews did not."

What also kept many from trying to escape was knowing that even if they succeeded, many fellow prisoners would be killed in retribution. "The Nazis terrorized us into doing what they wanted," Jack said. In photos, you can see the dirt and the starving skeletons of prisoners in the concentration camps, but you cannot smell the fear. Fear is so devastating. To survive the Nazi death camps, you had to be very clever and very lucky."

Chapter 10: *Moniek* - pp. 85-90

Sometime in the fall of 1943, Jack was transferred again. Like all the other camps he had been in, this latest one was in Germany. He stood in line to get a haircut, weary with fatigue. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw someone approaching him. He was surprised to see it was a boy as young as he was. Even though the boy's head was shaved, Jack could tell he had bright red hair to go with his freckles and blue eyes.

"My name is Moniek (MOAN-yek)," the boy said in Polish. He smiled. "Do you have a name, prisoner 16013?"

Jack looked at him warily. No one smiled in camp, and only rarely did they exchange names. But he liked Moniek's friendliness and was pleased he was Polish. "Yes, prisoner 13683," he responded, looking at Moniek's number. "The name is Jack."

* * * *

The next morning, they lined up together at roll call so they would be sent on the same work detail. That evening, they waited in the food line together. The food here was as awful as everywhere else, but with Moniek around, even this seemed more bearable. He was always clowning around. He had a smile and joke for every occasion. To Jack's amazement, even when the guards overheard him, they did nothing. Once, he even saw a guard smile at something Moniek did.

"You are too serious, Jack," Moniek would often tell him. And then he would do something to make Jack laugh. Gradually, Jack felt his mood of despair lift. Moniek could actually make him feel lighthearted, and it was helping him.

* * * *

Once again, Jack's April birthday passed unnoticed. He was now seventeen. Rumors were rampant in the camps that American troops were gaining ground in Europe. In May 1944, Hitler ordered that all Jews in Hungary be deported to the camps, crowding them so much that conditions became even more intolerable. Prisoners died of disease and starvation in ever-greater numbers. The crematoriums operated around the clock. Selections during roll call to eliminate the weakest and most unhealthy prisoners became even more frequent.

"We would stuff paper in our mouths and rub our cheeks to look more healthy," said Jack. "I thought back to how our young housekeeper in our apartment in Gdynia had rubbed her cheeks with red paper to look pretty. Now I tried to make my cheeks red so I could live another day."

Both Jack and Moniek were growing weaker. On work detail, they stayed constantly alert, watching for anything edible they could slip into their pockets and share that night. "You never saw grass in a concentration camp, because the prisoners ate it," Jack said.

Chapter 11: *The Miracle* - pp. 92-97

Every morning, Jack woke up starving. "It is almost impossible to describe this hunger that consumed us," Jack said. "It was a pain in the stomach so severe, it altered the mind. We could not think or talk of anything but food."

Food. Prisoners would say that if once - *just once* - they could feel full, then they could die happy. Moniek's fantasy was to have a whole loaf of bread all to himself. "When I am a free man," he would say, his eyes twinkling with anticipation, "I will have a big round of bread and I will cut it up piece by piece and eat it just as slow or fast as I want."

Jack's fantasy was more elaborate:

My perfect meal, prepared by my mother, of course, begins with rich chicken soup brimming with fat handmade noodles. This is followed by succulent roast duck, all you can eat. There are so many side dishes, you can hardly count them - potatoes of all kinds, and cabbage and every other vegetable, and delicious breads. By then, we have eaten so much, we are in a daze, but we finish with some delicious apple strudel and a glass of lemonade made from real lemons.

As his stomach ached from hunger, Jack's memories were of wonderful family dinners, when his mother would beg him and his sister and brother to eat more, even though they were already stuffed.

When his reveries ended, he was still in a filthy, threadbare, lice-infested uniform in a miserable camp crowded with starving and dying prisoners. Each

day, prisoners got the thin soup and foul bread, but portions grew smaller and smaller.

Typhus was taking many lives. Moniek worried he would catch it, because he had never had it. Jack's fear was not typhus, since he had already had a light case, but starvation. Either he would actually starve to death or become so weak that he could no longer work, and then he would be shipped to the gas chambers.

* * * *

Jack could feel his strength ebbing away. He did not know his weight, though he knew it was well under one hundred pounds. He had been lean since the early days of the war, but now he was emaciated - so thin that his bones stuck out and his face looked craggy and old. It would take a miracle for him to survive much longer, and miracles were in short supply in the concentration camps.

Then one occurred.

First, Jack and Moniek were ordered to report to a storage room next to the kitchen to peel potatoes for the guards' soup. With an SS guard standing over them, they peeled all day long. The dirty discarded peelings were put in the prisoners' soup. As Jack and Moniek worked, each managed to make a few peels extra thick, so they contained some potato, and then slip these into their pockets to eat later. Even this tiny bit of nourishment, they knew, would help them stay alive a little longer.

They worked hard and tried to be cooperative and likable. Moniek was soon telling jokes, determined to get the guard to smile. Each day, it was the same guard. Like all guards, he acted stern and unfriendly and often threatened to beat them if they did not work faster.

But he never hit them, nor did he ever tell Moniek to shut up. And then one day, after several weeks of peeling potatoes - weeks they were grateful to have the peelings and not to be working outside in the freezing cold - they reported to work and were told by this guard that the cook and his helper had come down with typhus. Jack and Moniek, he said, must take over the cooking.

"We could only stare at him in astonishment," recalled Jack. "Had he gotten us this job? But he would not look at us, and we did not see him after that."

Being a cook was the most valued job in the camp. As long as there was any food at all, bad as it was, the cooks would not starve. You did not need to know *how* to cook. All you did was boil water and vegetables together to make the thin soup.

The boys immediately moved into the kitchen, fearful that if they were not there every moment, someone would take over their jobs. The kitchen was a big room, and it was warm. In the center were three huge kettles, each four feet tall, hung over beds of hot coals. Soup ingredients were whatever had been scrounged up: turnips, potatoes, beets, spinach. The boys were not allowed to wash or peel these items or even to cut off rotten parts. The spinach was full of sand.

"It felt like grit in your teeth. The soup always smelled and tasted horrible, but we were all used to it," Jack said. "The soup cooked slowly all night in those huge pots. We made up a little bed in the corner and took turns sleeping, making sure one of us was always awake and alert. We took our job very seriously. The guards came and went from the kitchen, but there were times when no guards

were actually in the room. When we were alone, we stole what we could for ourselves and to give to our friends."

The guards' food was cooked elsewhere and brought to the camp for Jack and Moniek to heat and serve. "When we dared, we took some of it and made a little soup for ourselves in a small pot we had found," Jack said. "There were shortages of food everywhere, and the guards' food was not much better than ours, but at least their vegetables were clean and not rotten, and their bread was not made with sawdust."

One time, they had their little pot cooking when they heard the guards coming. In a split second, the boys grabbed the pot and plopped it deep into one of the big kettles of soup. Once when loaves of the sawdust-filled bread - which was baked away from the camp - were brought into the kitchen, Moniek distracted the guard who was counting them. Because of this, the guard ended up undercounting the delivery by ten loaves. The boys hid the extra bread under the coal beds. They kept some for themselves and slipped the rest to starving friends.

Food had become so scarce that each prisoner was issued a monthly meal ticket, which was punched when he went through the food line to prevent the possibility of someone going through the line twice. Jack and Moniek had tickets but did not need them. They gave them to friends so they could eat twice. Jack's ticket went to a tailor named Salek, who in return helped Jack by keeping his uniform clean and repaired.

Someone told camp authorities what the boys were doing - probably a prisoner who got extra bread for informing on them. The boys were pouring water into the huge soup kettles when guards descended on the kitchen.

"We heard their boots stomping toward us outside the building," Jack said. "They stormed through the door and surrounded us, their guns pointed at us. We threw our hands in the air, certain we were going to die, though we did not know why."

"A minute later, the head commandant of the camp came in. I will never forget him. He was all shiny boots and official uniform. He was an older man, tired-looking, thin, with gray hair."

He glared at the boys. "Give me your meal tickets!" he demanded gruffly.

"We had them in our pockets," Jack said, "because we both insisted our friends give them back to us each time they used them just in case this very thing happened."

With shaking hands, they handed over the tickets. Jack knew they could still be shot. Any excuse - even an accusation that could not be proved - was enough.

But the commandant looked satisfied, perhaps even relieved. He signaled the guards, and they left without a word. Jack and Moniek collapsed in relief.

"I do not know why he spared us," Jack said. "Prisoners were killed all the time for far less. But he could tell by the low camp numbers on our uniforms that we were both old-timers. He was one himself. Maybe that was why."

Note:

Before the Holocaust, Jack's family include eighty people - his parents, a brother and sister, a grandfather, uncles, aunts, and cousins. After he was liberated on May 7, 1945, Jack tried to find members of his family. All that

remained alive were two second cousins, his Aunt Hinda, and his Uncle Sigmund. In 1946, Jack was able to move to the United States where he worked hard, became a family man and a prosperous businessman.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate the following on a map of Europe: Gdynia, Poland; Gross-Rosen
- Define the terms: kapo, concentration camp, crematorium, typhus, commandant.

Discussion Questions

1. What did Jack say was the dominant thought in a concentration camp? Why did a prisoner need to think about it constantly?
2. What did the term "selection" mean in the camps?
3. According to Jack, why were the prisoners moved to other camps? How were the camps similar?
4. Describe Jack's arrival in Gross-Rosen. Why was this camp especially horrendous?
5. Why does Jack say that roll call was the worst part of the day?
6. Why was a successful escape so difficult for the Jews even if a prisoner managed to escape from a camp?
7. Many photos reveal horrible conditions that existed in the camps but Jack says there is one thing the photos cannot tell. What is it? Why was this particular horror so overwhelming?
8. How did his acquaintance with Moniek help Jack? How was Moniek so different from the other prisoners?
9. As the years in the camps passed, Jack and Moniek and the other prisoners steadily weakened. What were some things a prisoner would do to try to avoid being selected? Why was there no grass visible in the camps?
10. Food was a major "fantasy" of the prisoners in the camps. How did the constant hunger affect the prisoners? Compare and contrast the food fantasies of Jack and Moniek.
11. What was typhus? Why was Jack not concerned about it as Moniek was?
12. What "miracle" saved Jack and Moniek? How was it an example of the "luck" that made the difference between life and death for the prisoners?
13. How did Moniek and Jack move from kitchen helpers to cooks? Why was the job as cook so highly valued by the prisoners?
14. Why did the two young men actually move into the kitchen? What did they cook?
15. How did the food brought in for the guards differ from the food for the prisoners? Why was the condition of the food an indication of what was happening to Germany in the war?
16. What was one of the main "ingredients" in the bread given to the prisoners? Why was even such a miserable "bread" as this so valued by prisoners?
17. How did Jack and Moniek use their positions in the kitchen to help their friends as well as themselves? Give several examples.
18. Why could the behavior of Jack and Moniek in the kitchens be considered a form of resistance?

19. At one point, the two young men are in danger of being shot. Describe what happened. Why does Jack think their lives were spared?
20. Jack says that he survived by a combination of luck and learning to "play the game." What does he mean by "playing the game?"

Activities

1. Write a poem describing the food given to the prisoners in the camps. Write a second poem describing a prisoner's fantasy meal. Draw an illustration for each poem.
2. Prisoners were given numbers and were expected to reply to their numbers rather than their names. Why was the use of numbers part of the Nazi treatment of the Jews and other prisoners? Why are names so important to people. Even if you are not fond of your name, how would you feel if it were taken away from you and replaced by a number? Make a list of some of the other things the Nazis did to try to remove any sense of individuality from the prisoners.
3. Typhus was a disease feared by both the prisoners and the guards. Read about this disease and write a brief story about it. Describe the causes, the characteristics, and the treatment for the disease. Why was Jack not worried about the disease?
4. Bread - even bread that was mostly sawdust - was very important to the prisoners. Bread is often called the "staff of life." Explain what this means. Find out the names of as many types of bread as you can and make a list of these breads on poster paper using your best penmanship or calligraphy. All around the list of breads draw different shapes and types of bread. You may also create a collage using illustrations from magazines, etc. Have a special feast day in your classroom with each student bringing a different type of bread to share. Have only bread and butter and perhaps some jelly for the feast. Create a bulletin board of bread recipes. Write a short paragraph or essay explaining why such an event would seem like a "miracle" to those who were imprisoned in the concentration camps.

Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors

by

Milton J. Nieuwsma, ed.

Holiday House, New York, 1998.

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

These are the recollections of three women who were friends in the town of Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Poland. Each of them would end up as child prisoners in a special section of Auschwitz-Birkenau that the Nazis had created for children. It was called the *Kinderlager*.

Tova (Tola) Friedman, Frieda (Fryda) Tenenbaum, and Rachel (Rutka) Hyams tell their stories in this volume edited by Milton J. Nieuwsma.

Tova's Story

pp. 20-24

At the end of July 1944, the Germans liquidated the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz; the last three thousand Gypsies were taken out of their camp in the middle of the night. Most were gassed and cremated. Others were led to a wooded area where they were shot and dumped into pits. All the next day black ashes rained down from billowing red clouds. Prison crews swept up the ashes and spread them over the paths.

The remaining children at Auschwitz were transferred to a section of the Gypsy camp, which the Germans called the *Kinderlager*. Mama cried when I left. I followed a *Kapo* through a gate in the barbed wire fence and across the tracks. A few hundred yards later we entered a building.

I was surprised to see so many other children. One of them was Rutka, my friend from Tomaszow whose father died in the cattle car. I didn't know if she knew about it, so I didn't say anything to her. We just sat on the floor until the guards told us to get up. We were to be given tattoos.

I wanted to be the first in line. So did Rutka. We got into a fight. But I was not a match for her, since she was a year older and taller. I tried to look over her shoulder as a woman in a yellow dress tattooed a number on her arm.

When Rutka was finished, it was my turn. The woman looked at me and said in Polish, "You're very young. You're such a small child. Maybe you'll survive this. So I'm going to make you a very small number and write very carefully. That way it won't be so noticeable."

Then she said, "It's going to hurt, but it won't hurt for long."

I told myself, *I will not cry*.

The woman took her needle, reached for my left arm, and tattooed my number: A-27633. Afterward she said, "Take this rage, put some water on it, and keep it on. Don't rub it. That way the swelling won't be so bad."

Her words were the kindest I had heard from any stranger in that place. Then she said, "Memorize your number, because you no longer have a name."

For me, the real war began at the *Kinderlager*: I wasn't yet six, and I was completely on my own. I no longer had Mama to protect me. How I missed her - and Papa too. Most of the children brought to the *Kinderlager* were teenagers.

A few like Rutka and me were much younger than the other children, but I was the youngest, at least the smallest.

I didn't know it was my sixth birthday until a woman came to the *Kinderlager* and handed me a cloth bag that was sewn shut. When I opened the bag I found a piece of bread wrapped in a note: "Tola," it said, "tomorrow is your birthday. I love you. Mama."

That night I hid the treasured food under my dress. I would eat it the next day, on my birthday. In the middle of the night, I woke up to the sound of squeaks. Rats were crawling all over me. Terrified, I lay frozen until they finished nibbling the bread. After they crawled away, I looked at my dress; it was torn. But my visitors left me without a scratch...or a spare crumb.

The days were getting colder and shorter. Smoke billowed constantly over the camp, squeezing out what little sunlight we had left. The acrid, ash-laden air left my throat so parched and raw I wanted to choke. The smell of burning permeated everything. Every day, Rutka and I saw fewer and fewer children in the *Kinderlager*. I sensed we too were waiting for something.

Rutka had just scooped a drink out of a rain barrel when two SS guards entered our barracks. All the children filed out. The guards motioned us to follow them. We crossed the railroad tracks and headed toward my mother's camp. I looked at Rutka and said, "Where are we going?"

"Someone said we're going to the crematorium." She looked scared.

"What's a crematorium?" I asked. She didn't reply. We looked at the smoke.

A few minutes later we passed the women's camp. I spotted my mother in a line of women behind the fence and yelled, "Mama!"

"Tola! Rutka! Where are you going?"

"To the crematorium," I said.

A chorus of screams rose from behind the fence. I thought, Why are they screaming? So we're going to the crematorium. Doesn't everybody go to the crematorium? Don't all Jews go to the crematorium? I knew that something happened to you and you never came back. This one went to the crematorium, that one went to the crematorium, all Jews went to the crematorium. Jews always would be going to the crematorium, and they would not be coming back.

When we arrived, the guards told us to undress. Then they gave us towels. They gave me an orange towel. And we waited and waited. It was freezing cold. People came, people left. Finally an SS guard came in with a clipboard, flipped some pages, and screamed at another SS guard in German, "*Daraus!*" [Get them out!] "This is the wrong block! Send them back! We'll take them next time!"

So we put our clothes on again and marched back. The women in my mother's camp were still standing at the fence. I saw my mother again and she saw me.

"What happened?" she yelled.

"They couldn't do it now. They'll take us next time."

I remember saying those words: *They'll take us next time.*

Back at the *Kinderlager* my friend from Tomaszow, Frieda Tenenbaum, showed up. I hadn't seen her since I had gotten on the truck to go to the labor camp. Frieda looked so much older now; somehow that made me feel less

alone. But I wondered where her little sister, Dorka, was, the one I played dolls with under the kitchen table.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Auschwitz-Birkenau on a map. Identify other camps in Poland.
- Investigate and make a list of the many divisions and satellites of the camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Research the effort to round up and destroy the Roma and Sinta (Gypsies) by the Nazis. What are the estimated numbers of those who were imprisoned and killed? How many were probably enslaved, tortured, and killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau?

Discussion Questions

1. What were the purposes of the numbers tattooed on the arms of the prisoners?
2. The Nazis often separated parents and children in the camps. Why do you think this was done?
3. Other prisoners were surprised to see children in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Why do you think that they were surprised?
4. Tova said that the real war began for her at the *Kinderlager*, yet she had already been in the ghetto and smaller camps. Why does she feel this way?
5. What impact (long and short range) do you think the march of the children to the crematorium had on the minds and hearts of the women watching behind the wire? Although the children were returned from the crematorium the women knew that the struggle to survive was far from over. How do you think the constant threat to the children affected their lives **after** liberation?

Activities

1. Write a letter or poem to Tova (Tola) telling her how you feel after reading her story.
2. Draw an illustration of the *Kinderlager* as you think it must have looked to the eyes of the very young Tova.
3. Write a journal or diary entry explaining how important it is to you to have friends and how it makes you feel to know that they are close by. How did you think it made the three young girls feel to see the faces of friends in the camp with them after losing touch with them when they were transported to other camps earlier?
4. Small efforts to be kind and the courageous efforts to maintain contact with family members were important signs of humanity that the Nazis were unable to crush. Identify some of these kindnesses and acts of courage that were made by the prisoners in defiance of the Nazis. What other acts do you think might have been made by the prisoners?

Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors

by
Milton J. Nieuwsma, ed.
Frieda's Story

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Synopsis

Frieda and her mother are rushed through the shock of processing at Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and receive their prisoner numbers, A-15828 and A-15829. Along with the other prisoners, they struggle to survive amidst the cold, hunger, and brutal treatment. They are spared the gas chambers through the actions of other prisoners.

pp. 79-80

August 1944. Our stay at Blizyn ended where it began: at the railroad station. Once again we were herded into a cattle car. The trip took a few days, as the train stopped repeatedly. Because so many people were crammed in, only a few could sit down at a time. A single chamber pot stood at one end; halfway through the first day it overflowed. Somebody tried to empty it through a barred window, but most of the waste spilled back on the floor. The heat and stench were unbearable.

The barred windows were too high for me to see out, but I knew we had reached our destination when the train jerked to a stop and I heard dogs barking. Then I heard someone in the car say, "Oswiecim," the Polish name for Auschwitz.

When the door slid open I saw a column of SS guards on the platform, their German shepherd dogs straining at their leashes. Shouts of "*Raus! Raus!*" [Out! Out!] increased my fear. When I got to the door I looked down and froze; my legs wobbled so much I couldn't jump. Mama got out first and helped me down. My aunts and cousin Renia followed.

We entered a building where a female guard told us to undress and leave our clothes on the floor. Prisoners in striped uniforms checked us from head to foot. Many of us had our heads shaved. Then we entered a huge room with showerheads in the ceiling. We waited, looking up at the showerheads. My body shook with tension and fear. What would happen next? We waited and waited. Finally ice-cold water sprayed down and everyone screamed.

After we dried off, the guard told us to line up again. Women prisoners tossed dresses to the new arrivals. When the woman in front of me asked for underwear, a curt reply came back, "Be glad you're getting a dress."

When it came my turn for clothes, the prisoner who had just spoken looked at me, startled, then at my mother: "I haven't seen a child in so long," she said, her voice much softer now. "Pick out a dress for yourself."

I searched through the pile and found a navy blue dress with white polka dots. It reminded me of a dress I had worn in happier days. I put it on. It was a summer dress and much too short, but I wanted it desperately. Mama looked at me and said, "Take something warmer."

"No, I want this dress."

It was no time for argument. "Okay, take it," she said.

Next came the shoes. There was no choice that time. I took the first pair thrown to me. They didn't match and one hurt my foot.

After we got our clothes and shoes, the guard led us outside the building. By then it was dark. We were led into a floodlit yard where prisoners queued up at high wooden tables. When we arrived at our table, a women prisoner reached for my left arm. She held a round-tip pen and jabbed it into my forearm. It hurt, but I knew not to cry out. When she finished, I looked at my number: A-15828. Then Mama received her number: A-15829.

pp. 83-84

September 1944. The rains came, turning the ground into a sea of mud. My shoes made a sucking sound when I trudged through the mud. After a few days the soles pulled off. Mama told me to go to the warehouse barrack and beg for another pair.

After she saw me off, I lingered outside the warehouse barrack, ashamed and afraid to go in.

"Well?" Mama said when I returned.

"They refused."

Mama knew I was lying. "We'll go together," she said. When we came back, I had not only a new pair of shoes but a wool flannel dress to replace the skimpy polka dot dress I had been wearing all along. It was warm and soft and wonderful.

One day, after the morning *Appell* I was surprised to see my cousin Renia and several other children running through the camp. I called out to her, "What's going on?"

"They're giving us food!"

I ran to catch up with her. I followed her into a barrack near the gate where a table surrounded by four wooden benches had been set up. When I looked at the table, I couldn't believe my eyes: there sat several huge loaves of white bread sliced into thick slabs and slathered with butter, the likes of which I hadn't seen since the war started. Was I imaging this? Or was it real?

Several women prisoners stood at the table. "Sit down," one of them said. Then she and the others reached over the table and handed each of the children a thick slab of bread. It even had sugar sprinkled on it. Renia and I sat in stunned amazement as we gorged ourselves on the wonderful bread.

Nobody explained our good fortune, what occasioned this feast. Was it some kind of holiday? Or just a random act of kindness? Surely Magda wasn't responsible. Maybe it was Aranka, our *Blockälteste*. She was much nicer than Magda. She was a Czech Jew and seemed to be kind. Yes, maybe it was Aranka. Then again, how did I know? Nobody bothered to explain. Like a lot of other things there, maybe it just happened. No reason required.

What I do know - what I remember now - is how sad I felt when our feast was over, sad I hadn't been able to share the good fortune with my mother.

As Renia and I walked back to our barracks, I knew she felt that way, too.

pp. 85-87

October 1944. Magda came into our barrack and announced that we were being moved to another camp, the F.K.L. Mama said it stood for *Frauenskonzentrationslager*; the women's camp. It was located on the other side of the railroad tracks. We were marched there in a large group, including my aunts and cousin Renia.

Two days later Mama came into our barrack and exclaimed, "I just saw Raizl Grossman, Tola's mother!"

"Where?" I asked.

"Just outside the fence. I spoke to her through the wires. She's in the next section of the F.K.L.

"What about Tola?"

"Her mother said the SS transferred her to the *Kinderlager*, the old Gypsy camp. She hasn't seen her since, except when..." Mama's voice trailed off.

"Except when what?"

"Except when she saw her in a group of children walking along the tracks."

"Where were they going?"

"Never mind," Mama said. "The main thing is they came back."

At dawn the next day the *Kapos* came into our barrack and told us to follow them. A few minutes later we arrived at a building with a sign over the door that said *Badeanstalt* [bathhouse]. An SS guard told us to line up. I stood in line with Mama. Renia and her mother were right behind me, the rest of my aunts ahead of us. A few minutes later an SS officer in a black uniform arrived, impeccably dressed with a gold rosette in his lapel, white gloves, his boots smartly polished. The SS guard addressed him as *Hauptsturmfuhrer* [captain], and I overheard someone mutter, "Mengele." Mama squeezed my hand.

Dr. Josef Mengele turned and faced us from the head of the line. He began motioning people to the left and to the right. Each passed through, one at a time. I noticed that the younger women were going to the right and the older women and children to the left. When Mama and I came to the front of the line, he motioned me to the left. Mama refused to let go of my hand.

"No, you go to the right," Mengele said, but Mama held fast.

The SS guard stepped forward and tried to pull us apart.

"No, no!" Mama called out. "I want to go with her."

"You heard the *Hauptsturmfuhrer*," the guard said. "Go to the right!"

Mama still refused to let go. When the guard saw we were holding things up, he slammed his truncheon on her shoulder and said, "Then go with her!"

Renia was next in line. Her mother refused to let go, too. The SS guard, apparently not wanting to hold up the line again, motioned them to the left saying, "Okay, go with them."

It was afternoon when the selection ended. My aunts who had gone to the right were nowhere in sight. The rest of us, mostly elderly women and a few children, stood shivering in our nakedness.

I looked around the room. On one side, I saw an iron door with a peephole near the top. We waited for hours.

Finally a guard told us to get dressed. I found my shoes and gray flannel dress and put them on. Mama took my hand again, and I followed her up the stairs.

Nobody told us why we didn't go through the iron door. We just lay in our bunk and waited for the next day to come.

Years later I learned what saved us. On October 7, 1944, the *Sonderkommando*, a prisoner detail charged with cremating the corpses after gassing, blew up the ovens in Crematorium IV. Several prisoners, including a woman named Roza Robota, had smuggled dynamite in for that purpose. They were condemned to death by hanging. Before the trapdoor opened, Roza shouted in Hebrew, "*Hazak v'ematz!*" [Be strong, have courage!]

Thanks to Roza Robota and her fellow saboteurs, six hundred prisoners were spared the gas chamber that day, including my aunt Hinda and cousin Renia and my mother and me.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Investigate the nature of the portion of Auschwitz that was called "Canada." What were its purposes? What occurred there? How did it receive its name?
- Investigate the Nazi practice of assigning numbers and tattooing those numbers on prisoners of the Nazis. How widespread was the practice? What was its purpose?
- When was the Kinderlager established in Auschwitz? What was the purpose of that area of the prison before that time? What happened to the Roma and Sinta (Gypsies)? Why was the Kinderlager established?
- Research the names and purposes of other sections of the camps Auschwitz-Birkenau. Make a chart of the camp sections or draw a diagram displaying the names and locations of the various parts of the camp.
- Identify Joseph Mengele and explore why his name became so despised and feared.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Frieda want the too small summer dress rather than one that was better fitting and warmer? Why was she ashamed to go to the warehouse barrack when her mismatched, ill-fitting shoes fell apart and she needed a different pair?
2. Frieda states that things often happened for no apparent reason and with no explanation. How do you think this lack of control of their own lives affected the attitudes of the prisoners, especially the children?
3. Although Frieda and Renia eagerly ate the buttered and sugared bread, they felt sad about their feast. Why did this unexpected good fortune sadden them?
4. Mama is determined to stay with Frieda when they go through the selection line and Mengele sends them in different directions. Why was Mama so especially determined to stay with her daughter at this time? Who else was with them?
5. After a long wait, the prisoners were told to dress and were returned to their barracks. Again, no explanation was given for this strange event. How did this senseless action affect Frieda and the other prisoners? How do you think it would affect you if you had not choices or control over your life and you were never given any explanation for the things that were happening to you?

6. Roza Robota and other prisoners had plotted and planned to blow up Crematorium IV and succeeded. They were executed for this. Why do you think they took such a great risk in a camp situation where their lives were already at such risk? What impact do you think the destruction of the Crematorium IV had on Nazi operations at the camp?

Activities

1. Gather information about Roza Robota and write a newspaper story about her and her fellow prisoners. Explain how they managed to gather the explosives to blow up Crematorium IV. What was the fate of the courageous saboteurs? What does their effort to resist tell you about these prisoners of the Nazi system of human destruction?
2. Write a letter to Frieda's Mama explaining how you feel about her actions in the camp as she struggled to protect and remain with her daughter Frieda. What were some of Mama's actions that would make you think that she was a very good mother? If Frieda's Mama was nominated for a "Mother of the Year" Award, what are some of the things that you think the award should say?
3. Write a poem expressing the confusion and terror you think Frieda must have been experiencing as she passed through the warehouse after arriving at Auschwitz.
4. Research Dr. Mengele and his background. What happened to Dr. Mengele after the Nazis were defeated and the concentration camps were closed? Was his fate unusual or common for Nazi war criminals? What is a war criminal?

Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors

by

Milton J. Nieuwsma, ed.

Rachel's Story

Synopsis

Rutka [Rachel] is only seven years old when she arrives at the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and is sent to the Kinderlager. It is a desolate world that the young Rutka finds confusing and terrifying.

pp. 128-129

Fall 1944. An SS guard comes into my barrack and tells everybody to stand up. He leads us into a building where there is a semicircular door. I don't dream about it but I see it in my mind's eye. It's bolted and has a peephole near the top.

There are children undressing. Tola is standing there with an orange towel wrapped around her. And the SS guard shouts, "*Daraus!*" and sends us back to the *Kinderlager*.

The sun is almost down; a lightbulb hangs near the door. I am lying in my bunk, trying to keep warm under my rug. Then I hear Tola's voice call out, "Frieda!" I look up from my bunk and see Frieda Tenenbaum standing under the light and Tola reaching for Frieda's hand and leading her to the empty bunk.

From the moment Frieda entered the *Kinderlager* she was central to my life. I hadn't seen her since we had left the ghetto, but I had a great need for her because she was older, almost like an adult, and I hadn't seen my mother since she tried to throw me that parcel of food.

Later. Mama showed up at the *Kinderlager*. It was very cold. She said she was helping sick children in a nearby barrack. She climbed in my bunk to warm me up. I don't remember being elated or relieved when I saw her. I was just in my own little world, huddled in my bunk, trying to keep warm under my dirty blanket.

Mama came into the *Kinderlager* again and said we were going on a march. Snow covered the ground. I had no warm clothing, no shoes. I sensed for the first time, from her reaction, that this was the end. There was no moving to another venue to save ourselves. We were at the end of our tether. I was scared.

Mama said if we were going to die we might as well stay put. So we hid under the bottom bunk and covered ourselves with blankets. After everybody marched out, there was total silence and the sense that this was good-bye.

Mama and I crawled out from under the bunk and looked out the window. There was an incredible brightness; against the sunlight we saw ghostlike figures moving toward us.

The apparitions turned out to be Russians, not Germans.

There was disbelief and great rejoicing...and then the sense that we were lost again because we had no home to go back to. What good was it to be free if we had nowhere to go?

Pre-Reading Activities

- Research and read a description of conditions suffered by the prisoners in the concentration camps.
- Locate Auschwitz-Birkenau on a World War II map. Compare and contrast the distances from Auschwitz to the following: Warsaw, Poland; Cracow, Poland; Moscow, USSR; Kiev, USSR; Berlin, Germany; the eastern border of Germany.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Rutka (Rachel) so pleased when Frieda arrived in the *Kinderlager*? As the youngest child in the desolate world of the *Kinderlager*, how do you think Rutka felt to be alone without a parent or relative to be with her?
2. Rutka states that she was "in my own little world" when her mother slipped in to the barracks to be with her. What do you think she means by this? Why do you think she was in this mental state?
3. Describe some of the risks Rutka's mother takes to try to help her daughter. What could have happened to either or both of them if her mother had been caught? Do you think her mother did the right thing in deciding to take these risks? What choices did she have?

4. Why did Rutka and many of the other prisoners feel so lost even after their liberation?

Activities

1. Make a list of adjectives and descriptive phrases that you think express and describe the state of mind of the young Rutka while she was in the Kinderlager. Write a brief paragraph in which you create a description that communicates the depth of cold the little girl must have felt in that strange lonely environment.
2. Select one of the following and make a drawing based on Rutka's description.
Rutka in her bunk when Mama joins her
 - Rutka with Frieda in the Kinderlager barrack
 - Mama and Rutka hiding as the other prisoners are marched away
 - Rutka watching the Russian soldiers appear
3. Write a short description of what you would say and do to console a young child that you find lost, alone, and frightened in the dark and cold parking lot outside a mall that is closing.
4. Working in a small group, create a strategy that you would use to welcome a younger child into your neighborhood. Assume that the child's family has recently emigrated from another country and knows very little English and that the child seems timid and frightened of her/his new world.

Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust

by
Barbara Rogasky

Holiday House, New York, 1988
Recommended for Grades 6-8

Excerpt from the chapter "Other Victims" - pp. 59-63

...Any group the [the Nazis] found inferior to themselves was treated with the greatest brutality. Even within their own country they found groups to rout out, all for the betterment of "fatherland, folk and Fuhrer."

Only Jews were to be wiped from the face of the earth. But four other groups were also marked for what the Nazis called "special treatment," The four were the incurable sick, Gypsies, the Polish leading classes and Russian prisoners of war.

The Incurable Sick

Hitler signed an order on September 1, 1939 that called for the start of Operation T4. Doctors were allowed to select the incurably sick so that they could be killed. The order described them as "life unworthy of life." The "mercy killing," or euthanasia, was carried out on the following:

- the senile
- the mentally retarded
- all Jews in mental hospitals
- individuals who had been treated in any hospital, asylum, nursing home and so on for at least five years
- deformed new babies
- epileptics
- invalids unable to work
- victims of any incurable disease that made them unable to work.

For the purity of Aryan blood, these sick people had to die. Keeping them alive was also uneconomical, because they produced nothing and were examples, the Nazis said, of the "useless eaters" in the nation.

At first, some were starved to death, especially children; others were given lethal poisonous injections. But this was inefficient. Two years before their use by the Special Action Groups in Eastern Europe, mobile killing vans made their appearance. Operation T4 marked the first use of gas chambers during the Third Reich as well, nearly eighteen months before the "successful experiment" in Auschwitz involving large groups. Exhaust fumes were piped inside sealed rooms, either from a truck's engine or from tanks of carbon monoxide. At special centers set up for the purpose, small groups were gassed to death.

The two SS men in charge of this operation - Christian Wirth and Victor Brack - used the experience gained here when it was time for the mass murder of Jews in 1941.

After the patient was dead, a letter went to his or her family saying that their relative had died of "heart failure," and "considering his grave illness, life for the deceased meant torture. Thus you must look upon his death as a release." The bodies were cremated.

But the German people had come to understand what was happening. Hundreds of letters of protest were written and condemnation came loudly from the church. On Hitler's order, the program was stopped in 1941.

Operation T4 had killed 90,000 or more "unworthy lives," including over 3,000 children. There is evidence that the program would have begun again if Germany had won the war, this time including the civilians and soldiers who were made invalids by the war Germany had started.

The Gypsies (Romanies)

Gypsies had been in Germany since the fifteenth century, which made them citizens under Nazi law. Not comfortable with that, Nazi lawyers broke them into two categories, "sedentary" and "nomadic." The first were Gypsies who had settled down in homes and held steady jobs; these were permitted to remain where they were. The second were Gypsies who wandered from place to place in the traditional Gypsy way; they were imprisoned in concentration camps as "asocials," a Nazi-invented category of people unfit for civilized society.

* * *

Still, official policy called their presence "the Gypsy menace." They faced restrictions similar to those placed on the Jews although they did not have to wear identifying marks or badges on their clothes. They were settled in ghettolike camps or areas within Jewish ghettos. Thousands were sent to concentration or death camps, where many were gassed; the Special Action Groups took their toll among Gypsies, too.

...Based on population figures in all the countries involved from before and after the war, the estimates range from 300,000 to over one million Gypsies killed by the Nazis.

The Polish Leading Classes

The Nazis believed that some people were beneath the true human levels. They called them *untermenschen* - subhumans. The Jews, considered not quite human, had to be destroyed completely. The subhumans would be allowed to live, but only without any power of their own and only as slave labor for Germany.

All Slavic peoples were included. This meant Eastern Europeans - Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Ukrainians and Russians. The Nazis planned to move them out of large areas and move in Germans, either from Germany itself or ethnic Germans, those born outside the country but raised as Germans.

Probably because Poland was the largest single population and greatest land area entirely under their control, the Nazis began the operation there; Russia and the other countries would follow when Germany won the war.

If the people were to be a moldable mass under German domination, doing only as their conquerors wanted, it was necessary to begin by removing all leaders living among them. That meant the creative and educated - artists and writers, officers in the armed forces, doctors, lawyers, priests, teachers and so on. They were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Most died of camp conditions or were shot.

The Nazis had plans to go on from there. Future generations would be prevented from rising above the subhuman level, at least as Poles....The Germans had even given thought to Polish schools. As described by Himmler,

they would include only "simple arithmetic up to 500; writing one's own name; the lesson that it is a divine commandment to be obedient to the Germans; and to be honest, hardworking and good. I do not think reading is required."

The Nazis lost the war before they could bring their full plan into effect. What they did manage to carry out was terrible enough.

Of the three million non-Jewish Poles killed during World War II, over one million were the most educated and creative people in the nation.

Russian Prisoners of War

The Russians people were slated for "special treatment" for two reasons. First, as Eastern Europeans, they were subhumans. Second, they came from a communist country, and communism was almost a synonym for Judaism to the Nazis.

The Germans had not yet conquered the country, but prisoners of war camps made an easy place for them to start carrying out their plans. Not only were the capture soldiers Russian; they had actively fought the Nazis as well. They therefore required especially harsh treatment.

In May 1944, the German army estimated that it had captured 5.16 million Russian prisoners of war, most in the first campaigns of 1941. Only 1,871,000 were still alive; 473,000 were listed as "executed," and 67,000 had escaped. The arithmetic yields about 3 million dead.

Most Soviet prisoners of war were kept in large cages, open pens with no shelter, surrounded by fences or barbed wire. They died of exposure or starved to death. When they did not die in the so-called camps, they were used for medical experiments or as guinea pigs in the first gas chambers built in the killing centers.

That was how the Nazi "bringers of civilization" treated the "inferior peoples" in the parts of the world held under their control.

Pre-Reading Activity

- On a map, locate and label the Eastern European nations. Shade those countries and areas that the Nazi forces conquered and occupied. Indicate the year(s) that they held each of the areas.
- Identify those areas controlled by the Soviet Union in 1938.
- Define the terms: Roma; Sinti; "special treatment"; Operation T4; euthanasia; sedentary; nomadic; "asocial"; Gypsies; Special Action Groups (Einsatzgruppen); *untermenschen*; Slavic peoples; communist; concentration camp; prisoner of war camp
- Identify these people: Heinrich Himmler; Joseph Goebbels; Herman Goering; Christian Wirth; Victor Brack
- Read a description of Roma (Gypsy) life in Germany and Eastern Europe before the rise of the Nazis to power.

Discussion Questions

1. What did the Nazi view of "life unworthy of life" mean? The T4 program was halted, at least for a time, when many German people and church leaders

protested against it. In this instance, the "bystanders" had decided to take action and become "rescuers." What lessons does this offer to you about the importance of the role of the bystander and a decision to "take a stand"? If other people and nations had decided not to be "bystanders" but to become "rescuers," how do you think it may have affected history?

2. Discuss the reasons identified by the Nazis for their policy toward the Roma and Sinti (Gypsies). How were they viewed by the Germans and other Europeans before the rise of the Nazis to power? Had they been victims of prejudice and discrimination before the Nazis?
3. What was the relationship between the Slavic peoples of Europe and the Germans before the Nazis rose to power? Why did the Nazis decide that they were only fit to live as slave laborers for the Nazis?
4. Why did the Nazis try to round up, remove, and execute political leaders and the educated people first? Why did the Nazis plan to limit the education of the "slave peoples" in the future? What does this tell you about their view on the dangers of education to the Nazi way of rule?

Activities

1. Look up information about the "Geneva Convention Rules of War." According to the rules affecting the treatment of prisoners of war and civilian peoples, how should they be treated? When were these rules written and adopted by countries of the world? Was Germany one of the countries who agreed to them? Why did the Nazis believe that they were free to ignore the Geneva Convention rules? Are there "rules of war" for the treatment of prisoners and civilians that are supposed to be enforced today?
2. Draw a map and label areas where the Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) have lived and traveled for many years. Indicate those areas where they are still found today. Prepare a brief report for your class about the culture and traditions of the Roma and Sinti. Examine the attitudes that other governments and societies have shown toward them. How has prejudice and discrimination affected the history of these people?
3. Imagine that you have traveled back in time to the late 1930s and have just learned about the T4 program in Nazi Germany. Write a letter of protest to one of the following demanding that something be done to stop the T4 program. (1) League of Nations (2) President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States (3) the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, or (4) the religious leader of another religion or church.

Other Sources

- **The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance** by Bea Stadler.
- **"Sinti and Roma."** A pamphlet produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150.
- **"Handicapped."** A pamphlet produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150
- **"Poles."** A pamphlet produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150.

"Bubili: A Young Gypsy's Fight for Survival"
from
The Other Victims:
First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis
by
Ina R. Friedman

Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1990
Recommended for Grades 6-8 and up

Synopsis

The victims of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime came from many backgrounds and descriptions. However, only two, the Jews and the "Gypsies," were identified for complete extermination. There were to be no exceptions.

The "Gypsies" were descendants of ancient tribes that had migrated from Northern India into Europe. They were actually from a number of Romani tribes, the largest being the Sinti and Roma. However, throughout their history in Europe, they generally had been grouped into a single category -"Gypsy"- and persecuted. Like the Jews, the Romani were seen as "outsiders" because they were "different" and were made easy scapegoats. The Nazis were able to capitalize on this history of fear and persecution of the "Gypsies" and to carry it to new extremes. The "Gypsy Menace" was to be exterminated. Although exact figures for the numbers of Romani murdered by the Nazis remains in question, there is no doubt that the number includes a half million at the very least. Of those who did survive, many bear the scars of the physical abuse, medical experiments, and mental and emotional anguish to which they were subjected. Sadly, the Romani remain a persecuted people throughout many nations today.

pp. 11-24

I cried when the prison barber clipped my hair and threw the locks in my lap. "A souvenir, Gypsy." At sixteen, I was very vain. My black wavy hair had reached to the nape of my neck. How could the Germans do this to me, Bubuli, an Austrian Sinti? The barber put his hand on my shoulder to keep me from rising. "I'm not finished." With a dull razor, he shaved the rest of my head, my chest, my whole body. When he finished, my whole body ached. I stared at those standing next to me. My father, my uncles, and my cousins were unrecognizable, plucked birds from some strange planet.

And I? Without my hair, I was no longer Bubuli. I was a piece of wood.

No, worse. Even a piece of wood could be used for something. We were trash, something to be thrown away. Why did the Germans have to strip us of our humanity?

...How did I arrive at Dachau concentration camp? I had never heard of the place...

* * * *

[After escaping from jail in his hometown of Klagenfurt, Austria, Bubuli had journeyed through Slovenia and Yugoslavia, constantly on the run, before returning to Austria to look for his father. His father sent Bubuli to join an uncle's

family in the Austrian Alps believing he would be safer there. However, they were all rounded up by the SS and shipped to Dachau in railroad boxcars.]

...."Line up. Faces to the sun." The whole square was filled with prisoners in striped uniforms. Many of them wore yellow stars on their shirts. The others had different colored triangles on their uniforms.

We stood on the assembly place, the sun beating down on us from early morning until three in the afternoon. If someone dropped, we were not allowed to pick him up. Then an SS man with a whip drove us into a building.

"Sit down," the guard said. He held a board with my name and number 34016 across my chest. The photographer snapped my picture. With his foot, the photographer pushed a lever that punched a nail into my rear. Like a trained monkey, I jumped through the small window leading to the property room. Why couldn't they just tell us to get up instead of punching us with a nail?

In the property room, the guards shouted at us, "Take off all your clothes. Put everything else in the two baskets -- your jewelry, your papers, your money." We stood there naked as the guards led us toward the showers. It was after the shower I lost my hair. I wondered what more could the Nazis do to us?

The prisoners in charge of the clothing laughed as they threw it at us. If you were tall, you got striped pants that were too short. If you were short, you got striped pants that were too long. I would not look any more ridiculous. I "found" thread and shortened my pants.

The shoes were even worse. Only the *kapos*, the prisoners in charge of other prisoners, and the block "elders" had leather shoes. The rest of us were thrown wooden clogs. The wooden shoes hurt and bruised my feet. I had to figure out how to get a pair of leather shoes. It was summer, and we were taken out to help the farmers bring in crops. At the risk of my life, I smuggled potatoes in my shirt into camp. The big commodity was *schnapps* (whiskey). By bartering, I got *schnapps*, which someone had stolen from the SS. The *schnapps* I traded for leather shoes. We Romani have always been concerned about our hair, our teeth, and our shoes.

Inside Dachau, the prisoners were a mixed lot. The triangle on his uniform marked each man. Gypsies had brown triangles; political prisoners, red. The greens were the most feared. They were criminals who had been sent to Dachau. Often they were the block elders or worked in the administration. Jehovah's Witnesses wore purple triangles; homosexuals, pink. The Jews had two yellow triangles arranged into a Jewish star.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Many of us were shipped to Buchenwald. Little did I know that I would consider Dachau heaven compare to Buchenwald. In Buchenwald, everything had to be done on the run. "*Schnell, schnell* (faster, faster)" the guards shouted as we struggled to haul trees or dig trenches. Blows fell on our backs and necks. One of my uncles could not move quickly enough. An SS man bludgeoned him to death....

....One morning, as we stood at roll call, shivering in the snow, the SS man shouted, "Everyone count out loud from one to seven. Every seventh man step forward." My father was lined up next to my mother's youngest brother. I was near the end of the line.

I began to sweat. Out of the corner of my eye, I tried to figure out whether my father and uncle were safe. I heard my father shout "Five." I breathed a sigh of relief. The counting grew closer. "Three," the man next to me called. "Thank God." I had survived the selections for death this time.

In December 1941 all Austrian Gypsies were shipped to Gusen 1, a labor camp in Austria. There, I was put in a separate barracks from my father and uncle. By luck, I had a good *kapo*. But I was concerned about my father. Though he was a powerful man, much taller than I, he had been weakened by lack of food. One day, when I returned from a work detail, I went looking for him. Five times I walked past him as he stood in front of his barracks, but I didn't recognize him. He had shrunken to half his size. I finally recognized him by his big nose. I was shocked when I realized his physical condition. I lifted him in my arms. He was as light as a child.

A week later, the *kapo* assigned me to work in Gross-Rosen, another labor camp. When I saw the Germans were loading my father and one of my uncles onto a truck, I held back, saying "I want to go with them."

"No, Bubuli," the *kapo* snapped. "You go where I tell you."

When I came back that evening, I couldn't find my father. I ran into his barracks. He wasn't there. I ran through the grounds like a madman shouting, "Father, father, where are you?"

My block elder grabbed me. "It's too late, they were gassed on the truck. Calm down, otherwise you're finished."

For several days, I couldn't eat. The block elder talked to me. "If you don't eat, you'll be 'on the road to eternity.' Your father and uncle are gone. You have to do everything you can to stay alive."

Yes, I had to live to bear witness to this senseless machinery of human destruction. Again, I was lucky. The *kapo* helped me to get a job cooking for the SS. They liked the stews I had learned to make over the campfires. At last, I had enough to eat. I smuggled food to the Sinti.

The days and years run together. In six years, I was in a total of ten camps. From hell to hell. In Mauthausen I was put in a punishment camp for fighting with another prisoner. Mauthausen was famous for its quarry with 180 steps, ironically called "stairway to heaven." The prisoners had to carry stones up the steps. We were so weak, skeletons. The stones rubbed against our skin and left our legs raw. ...the guards shouted, flailing us with their whips. The steps were covered with the blood from wounded prisoners. Those who slipped fell to their deaths. I always tried to be in the center of the column so if I slipped, I wouldn't plunge over the side.

Toward the end of the war, I was sent to Gusen 2, another labor camp. I was surprised to find Jewish children in the camp. I thought they had all been killed but here were sixteen children from eleven to sixteen years old. These children had been marked for death. Hitler wanted no one alive to bear witness.

I thought of my brother and my sisters, my nieces and my nephews, and wept. Somehow we had to save these few surviving children. Where they came from, where their parents were, nobody knew. By this time, there was no longer tight supervision in the camps. The younger, highly disciplined SS men had fled. Older, less murderous men now held command.

I went to my barracks elder, Juckel. "Juckel, how can we let the Germans murder these children? The war is almost over. They don't have to die."

"But their numbers have already been assigned for the transport to the crematorium. There's no way I can save them. Their numbers are down."

I shook my head. "No, Juckel, there are old people here who won't make it to next week. Trade their numbers for the children's numbers. You can hide the children until the Allies arrive. The new guards don't check like the others did."

He folded and refolded his blanket. "Where would we hide them? It's impossible."

"You're a good man, not like the others. It will be on your conscience," I said, turning toward the door. "Maybe you should talk it over with your friend, the camp elder, in the administration building. Records can be altered."

I went outside and began to play with the children.

Juckel left the barracks. A short while later he touched my arm, "Switch the numbers. If we're caught..."

Was I any better than the Nazis deciding who should live and who should die? These were older people, skeletons, barely able to walk. People without hope, *mussulmen* (zombies). Who had the greater right to live? The children or the *mussulmen*? I thought of my sisters and brother.

"Don't say anything," I told the children when I changed their numbers. "Just memorize your new number."

Juckel and the camp elder led the children away. Where they hid them, I don't know.

The fighting grew closer. More and more guards disappeared. When the Americans marched into the camp, I was hysterical with joy. I had survived. More than that, I had helped to save sixteen children.

Historical note:

As early as 1933, the Nazis were planning to eliminate the "Gypsy Menace." It was suggested that 30,000 Romani be sent to sea in ships to be sunk. The plan was never implemented. However, plans to sterilize the Romani were carried out under a law permitting the sterilization of "mentally defectives."

In 1935, the Romani, like the Jews, were declared "second class citizens." Four hundred Bavarian Romani were sent to Dachau in 1936 and by 1938 mass roundups of Sinti had begun. A law requiring all Romani to register at the "Central Office for the Fight Against the Gypsy Menace" was adopted in 1939. All Sintis serving in the German army were removed from their units and sent to Auschwitz in 1942. Some arrived in their uniforms bearing the medals they had been awarded for bravery. Most were gassed. Those Sinti and Roma who were not gassed were used in medical experiments.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the terms: concentration camp, Sinti, Roma, Romani, *Schutz-staffel*,
- Locate the following on a map of Europe for the years 1933-1946: Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia; Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Gusen.

Discussion Questions

1. Why were the "Gypsies" and Jews viewed as "outsiders" by other Europeans?
2. Explain the term "scapegoat." Why were the two groups frequently treated as scapegoats in history?
3. Why did the Nazis shave the heads of prisoners and place them in uniforms that were so ill-fitting? What was the purpose of the numbers?
4. Why was so much of Bubuli's self-identity wrapped up in his appearance? How do you feel when you believe that your clothing doesn't fit properly, that you are having a "bad hair" day?
5. Life for Bubuli and the other prisoners was filled with humiliations large and small. Why do you think the Nazis did things such as the incident with the photographer where you were punched with a nail in the rear after the photo was taken?
6. What were some of the symbols for various groups of prisoners that Bubuli saw in the camps? Why did the Nazis force the prisoners to wear these visible symbols of group identification?
7. Bubuli said that those with the green symbols were most feared by the other prisoners. Why was this so?
8. How does Bubuli react when he realizes the small, frail man is his father? Why was it such a shock to him?
9. Why do you think some prisoners sought the position of *kapo* and block elder? How did the other prisoners view them?
10. In a number of survivor stories of camp life, the job of cook is identified as a good one. Why was it such a desired job whether it meant cooking for the other prisoners or for the guards?
11. What was the "punishment camp?" What were some of things that could bring special punishment to a prisoner? Did there have to be a reason for a guard to decide to punish a prisoner or inflict special humiliation?
12. Why was Bubuli surprised to see children in the last camp where he was sent? What was his reaction to the children?
13. How did the Bubuli and the other prisoners save the children? What would have happened to them if they had been caught hiding the children?
14. Bubuli asked himself if he was any better than the Nazis deciding who should live and who should die. How does he answer his own question? What is the basis for his answer?

Activities

1. The Romani have never received a formal apology or any compensation from Germany for the abuse and murders of their people during the Nazi regime. Why do you think this is so? Why has the experience of the Romani received so little attention? Read more about the Romani people. Describe the way the "Gypsies" are viewed and treated in society in Europe and the United States today.
2. Read about the culture and traditions of the Romani peoples. Create a chart, bulletin board mural, or poster describing and/or illustrating some of their customs and traditions.

3. Make a map identifying the regions of the world where the Romani can be found today. What population figures exist to tell us their numbers today?
4. Imagine that you are one of the sixteen children who were saved by Bubuli. Write a letter to him and his family describing your feelings about his actions. How do you think his action might influence your own view of the Romani?
5. Bubuli questions whether he is any better than the Nazis when he makes a decision to save the children while sending the *mussulmen* to the transports in their place. Compose a letter in which you explain your reaction to his question and explain what you would have done in the same circumstances. At a time when the end of the long, cruel imprisonment was so close and you were still alive, do you think most people would have decided to risk their lives to save the children? Why or why not?

Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault **A Study Guide for the Documentary Video**

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Brooklyn, NY, 1997
Recommended for grades 7-8 and up

Synopsis

Jehovah's Witnesses represented a very small portion of the population under Nazi rule and are but a tiny portion of those who became the victims of Nazi persecution. However, unlike most of the other targeted prisoners, the Jehovah's Witnesses had a choice. If a Witness would sign a document renouncing his or her faith, the person would be set free. Very few of the Witnesses ever signed this document despite the horror of their mistreatment in Nazi hands. This religious group took a determined stand against the Nazi regime and stood firm in both written and spoken word against Nazi policies. In the camps, Witnesses were identified by the purple triangle that they had to wear.

This study guide provides introductory material, lesson plans and activities, survivor profiles, a chronology, a glossary of terms, and a video transcript as well as the video itself. Inquiries about the study guide can be made to the Watch Tower, Public Affairs Office, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Below are survivors' stories from two Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Simone Arnold Liebster: Taken From My Family"

pp. 22-24

From as far back as I can remember, art and music were part of my life. Father was an artist, and I loved going with him on walks through the woods because we enjoyed nature together. In 1938 my mother became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and my father was baptized as a Witness soon after. In 1941, I also decided to become a Witness.

Three weeks after I was baptized, my father was arrested for being one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I was at home waiting for him to come from work. The doorbell rang. As I ran to the door and jumped into my father's arms, I heard someone behind him say, "Heil Hitler." Then I realized that I had hugged an SS soldier. They had come to say that Father had been arrested. They questioned and threatened my mother for four hours.

We learned that they had taken Father's salary, closed our bank account, and refused to give Mother a working card, so that she could not get a job. Father was sent to prison at Schirmeck, then to Dachau concentration camp, later to a concentration camp known as Mauthausen-Gusen, and finally to Ebensee. I didn't see him again for four years.

During the next two years, Mother and I lived as best we could. Friends helped by giving us food in exchange for little jobs. Mother taught me to knit, wash, and cook, since we didn't know what would happen to either of us.

At school I was under more and more pressure to hail Hitler. But I refused because in my heart I could never honor a man in this way as if here were a god who could save people. Several times the teachers stood me in front of the whole school and tried to force me to say "Heil Hitler." One time, I was beaten unconscious, since I wouldn't do work to support the war. Finally I was expelled.

One day, I had to see two "psychiatrists." They put me in a room with a bright light in my face and asked me question after question. They tried to get me to tell the names of other Witnesses I knew. I wouldn't do it; I didn't want these Witnesses to be arrested as my father had been. The two "doctors" turned out to be SS soldiers.

I was arrested at the age of 12 and was sent to a penitentiary house in Konstanz, Germany, where the Nazis intended to reeducate me. Before they actually took me away, Mother had some photographs taken of us. We didn't know if we would ever see each other again.

On the way to this place, my mother told me, "Always be polite, kind, and gentle, even when suffering injustice. Never be obstinate. Never talk back or answer insolently. Remember, being steadfast has nothing to do with being stubborn."

At the home we had to wash, sew, cook, garden, and even cut down trees. We were not permitted to talk. We had a bath twice a year, and washed our hair once a year. For punishment they would take away our food or give us a beating.

I was assigned to clean the room of one of the teachers, and she demanded that I clean the springs under the bed every day. I had a small Bible that I had smuggled into the house, so I wedged it into the springs. Thereafter, I was able to read parts of the Bible every day while lying on my stomach under the bed. When it came to cleaning, they thought that I was the slowest child they ever had.

Several months after I entered the penitentiary school, mother was arrested and was sent Schirmeck, the same camp my father had been sent to. Later she was transferred to Gaggenau. While being moved to Ravensbruck, she became very sick. She could have died, but at the time the Germans fled, and the prisoners en route to Ravensbruck were suddenly free.

As the war came to an end, my mother came to get me. Her face was cut and bruised. They told me it was my mother, but I just didn't comprehend it. Mother was told she needed a paper from the judge to secure my release. She took me by the hand and off we went to a building to get this paper. The judge was not in, so she went from office to office insisting on getting this document. It was when I saw her fighting for my freedom that I fully realized that this was my mother. I held her tight and cried. It seemed like all the feelings I had held in for the last two years just came out. France was liberated a few days later.

We went back to our apartment. There we got news that Daddy was listed as dead. But one day he came home! He was in terrible shape. He could hardly make it up the stairs to our apartment, and he had lost his hearing. The first two years after we were reunited were very hard. But with time, our physical and emotional condition improved; we were a family once again.

"Louis Pie'chota: The Death March"

pp. 28-30

In 1939, I was imprisoned by the Nazis in France, then in Belgium, and in the Netherlands. But when the war started going badly for the German army, the SS started moving prisoners to camps in Germany. So in January 1944, along with 14 other Witnesses, I was transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. There, my purple triangle was accompanied by the number 98827.

By April 1945 the western Allies were pressing in on the Berlin area from the west, and the Russians were advancing from the east. The Nazi leaders studied various ways of liquidating the prisoners. It would have been impossible to kill off hundreds of thousands of people and dispose of their bodies in a hurry without leaving behind any evidence of the murders. So they decided to kill off the sick and march the rest to the nearest seaport. There the remaining prisoners would be loaded onto ships and taken out to sea. The ships would be sunk, sending the prisoners to a watery grave.

From Sachsenhausen, we were supposed to march about 250 kilometers (150 miles) to Lubeck. We left on the night of April 20/21, 1945. The SS grouped the prisoners by nationality. But the SS let all of the Jehovah's Witnesses stay together. There were 230 of us, from six different countries. Any sick prisoners in the infirmary were to be killed before the evacuation. So some of our group risked their lives to rescue other Witnesses, too sick to walk, and carried them out of there.

It was chaos in the camp. Prisoners were stealing supplies to take on the march. Soon our turn came to begin the long march. They told us we were going to a reassembly camp, but actually we were headed to a planned watery death. The prisoners left in groups of 600 - first the Czechs, then the Poles, and so forth - about 26,000 in all. The group of Jehovah's Witnesses was the last to leave. The SS had given us a cart to haul. I learned later that it contained some of the loot the SS had plundered from among the prisoners. They knew that Jehovah's Witnesses would not steal it. That cart turned out to be a big help. The old and sick ones took turns sitting on top of it for the 14 days of the death march.

It was in every sense a death march not only because our destination was to be a watery grave but because death lurked along the way. Those who could not keep up got an SS bullet immediately. We would not leave any of our group on the roadside to be shot. But some 10,700 others were killed before the march ended.

The first 50 kilometers (30 miles) were a nightmare. The Russians were so near that we could hear their guns. Our SS taskmasters were scared of falling into the hands of the Soviets. So that first lap, Sachsenhausen to Neuruppin, turned out to be a forced march that lasted 36 hours.

I had started out carrying a few meager belongings. But as I grew more tired, I threw away one thing after another until I had nothing but a blanket to wrap myself in at night. Most nights we slept outdoors, with just twigs and leaves to keep us from the damp ground. One night, however, I was able to sleep in a barn. The following morning our hosts gave us something to eat. But that was exceptional. After that, for days on end we had nothing to eat or drink, except for the plants we were able to obtain for use in making herb tea at night, when we

stopped to sleep. I remember seeing some prisoners rush over to a dead horse and devour the flesh in spite of the blows of the SS, who hit them with their rifle butts.

All this time, the Russians were advancing on one side and the Americans on the other. By April 25, the situation was so confused that our SS guards no longer knew where the Soviet or the U.S. troops were. So they ordered the whole column of prisoners to camp in a wooded area for four days. While there, we ate nettles, roots, and tree bark. This delay proved to be lifesaving. If they had kept marching us, we would have reached Lubeck before the Germany army collapsed, and we would have ended up at the bottom of Lubeck Bay.

The Russians and the Americans were closing in on the remnants of the German forces, and shells were whistling over our heads from both sides. An SS officer told us to walk on unguarded to the American lines, about six kilometers (4 miles) away. But we were suspicious of this, and we finally decided to spend the night in the woods. We later learned that those prisoners who had tried to get through to the American lines had been shot by the SS. About 1,000 of them died that night.

As the fighting grew nearer, our SS guards got panicky. Some of them slipped away into the night. Others hid their weapons and uniforms, donning the striped garb taken from dead prisoners. Some prisoners recognized the guards and shot them with weapons that had been left behind. The confusion was indescribable! Men were running back and forth, and bullets and shells were flying everywhere. By morning the SS were gone. The death march was over!

We had marched about 200 kilometers (120 miles) in 12 days. Of the 26,000 prisoners who had left the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on the death march, barely 15,000 survived. Amazingly, every last one of the 230 Witnesses who had left the camp came through that ordeal alive.

"Franz Wohlfahrt: We Did Not Support Hitler's War"

pp. 31-38

Franz Wohlfahrt was born in Austria in 1920, the first of six children. Although several members of his family had become Jehovah's Witnesses, Franz was a Catholic at the time the Nazis took power in Austria. His priest in religious instruction class did not approve of the Nazis and opposed the war. With the Anschluss (merging of Nazi Germany and Austria), this priest was quickly replaced by one who was more than willing to raise his arm in salute and say "Heil Hitler!"

When Franz greeted people with "*Guten Tag*" (Good Morning) instead of "Heil Hitler," they became angry and he was reported to the Gestapo often. Despite the increasing pressure to do as the Nazis wanted, Franz decided to be baptized as one of the Jehovah's Witnesses in August 1939.

His father, in poor health, had been called for military service. When he was excused from service because of his health, he made it clear that he would not have served anyway because his conscience would not permit him to take up arms against his fellowmen. He would remain neutral no matter the cost.

Shortly thereafter, Franz's father was arrested and taken first to Vienna and then to Berlin where he was sentenced to be executed. He remained in chains day and night in the prison. Despite the efforts of a former mayor and a petition by villagers attesting that his father was a good citizen, the sentence stood. In an exchange of letters, Franz and his father reassured each other and encouraged family members to remain faithful to their principles. In December 1939, Franz's father and about 24 other Witnesses were executed.

Franz was called for "work service" only to discover that it was primarily a military training program. He explained that he would not fight and refused to sing Nazi fighting songs. When he appeared in civilian clothing rather than his military uniform, Franz was placed in the dungeon where he had to subsist on bread and water.

At a flag saluting ceremony involving about 300 recruits and military officers, Franz was commanded to walk by and give the Hitler salute. When he simply said "*Guten Tag*," he was ordered to repeat the process. This time he only smiled. Needless to say, Franz was returned to the dungeon and warned that he would probably be shot. Over the next few days, he was visited by two different high-ranking officers from Berlin and warned of the consequences of his refusal. Franz assured them that he understood and told them of his father's execution only a few weeks prior. Eventually Franz was sentenced to five years of hard labor in Graz.

During this time he was moved on several occasions to different prisons. Finally, in 1941, he was placed on a train to Rollwald, a hard-labor camp. There the day began with a 5:00 a.m. roll call where prisoners had to stand motionless for two hours. Any movement resulted in a severe beating. Breakfast was bread made from flour, sawdust, and potatoes (usually rotten). Work was digging trenches in the swamp to turn the land into agricultural land. By the end of the day, the prisoners' feet were badly swollen. Lunch was a so-called soup flavored with turnip or cabbage and sometimes the ground carcasses of diseased animals. The evening meal was more "soup." To keep from losing his teeth, Franz chewed on a piece of pine wood or hazel twigs.

Franz was generally kept isolated from other Witnesses in an effort to break his faith. Letters from family members were infrequently permitted. Two of these brought more sad news. One, that his brother Gregor had been executed by guillotine for being a conscientious objector and the second, that his fiancée Maria's brother also had been executed for the same cause. Two younger brothers and two sisters were arrested also and severely beaten.

In late 1943, a new camp commander improved conditions somewhat for Franz and, as he later learned, other Witnesses in other sections of the camp. On March 24, 1945, the camp was surrendered to the American troops that had surrounded it. After five years of imprisonment, Franz was freed and began his journey home to St. Martin, Austria.

Franz wrote the poem "I Stand Firm" in 1944 while in the Rollwald labor camp. At the time, he expected to be executed as were his father and brother.

"I Stand Firm"

by

Franz Wohlfahrt

In my faith, I will always stand firm,
Though this world may taunt and cry,
In my hope, I will always stand firm,
For a beautiful better time.
In my love, I will always stand firm,
Though this world repays with hate,
Devoted, I will always stand firm,
Though this world disloyal stays.
From God's Word, flows the might of the strong,
And the weak ones it powerful makes,
In God's grace I will always stand firm,
On my own I could never remain.
With my life, I will even stand firm,
And as I last breath confer,
You should with that dying gasp hear:
I stand firm, I stand firm, I stand firm.

Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the terms: Jehovah's Witnesses, conscientious objector, the purple triangle, concentration camp, Nazi salute, hard-labor camp, passive resistance
- Locate on a map of Europe in 1938-1946: Austria and Germany; Lubeck Bay, Schirmeck, Dachau, Mauthausen-Gusen, Ebensee, Ravensbruck, Sachsenhausen, Graz, Rollwald.

Discussion Questions

1. Since the Jehovah's Witnesses were such a small number in the population, why do you think the Nazis were so determined to force Witnesses to renounce their faith?
2. Describe the various methods used by the Nazis to try to pressure the Witnesses into yielding to Nazi ideals and programs.
3. Simone Arnold Liebster was only twelve years old when she was arrested and taken for "reeducation." Why were children so important to Hitler and the Nazis? What did the Nazis mean when they spoke of "reeducation" of the children?
4. What specific reasons did the Witnesses identify for their opposition to Nazi operations and Nazi ideals? Were there other religious groups, as a whole, that publicly condemned what the Nazis were doing?
5. How do you think the attitudes and actions of parents and other family members influenced the children? How do you think the actions and attitudes of the children influenced adult family members?
6. Simone's mother advised her to "resist without being rude." What evidence exists in her testimony that indicates she succeeded in doing this? Do you think it would be hard to respond in this manner to the terrible treatment Simone received?

7. Explain the meaning of the term "passive resistance." Give examples of how Louis Piechota and Franz Wohlfahrt used this technique in their relations with the Nazis.
8. Why did so many people seem to be infuriated to be greeted with a pleasant, smiling "*Guten Tag*" (Good Morning)? Why was this simple, pleasant and common greeting viewed as a form of resistance?
9. What was the "purple triangle?" Why did the Nazis force people to wear symbolic markings such as the purple triangle?
10. If you had been a classmate of Simone or a co-worker of Louis or Franz, how do you think you would have reacted to them? Do you think their behavior was foolish or courageous? Explain your answer. What do you think would have been the result if more people had acted as they did?
11. One of the goals of the Nazis was to break the spirit of those who stood against them. Why was this so important? Why did the Nazis often carry out the punishment of prisoners while forcing other prisoners to watch?
12. As the Allied forces moved to crush the Nazi armies, the efforts of the SS to murder their prisoners became increasingly frantic. Why, when it was obvious that they were going to lose the war, were they so determined to spend so much effort to kill their starved and battered victims? Give examples from the readings of these last efforts to kill the victims.
13. What were some of the things that made it possible for some of those on the death march to survive?
14. Some people, from time to time, did try to help those being persecuted. Give some examples of this taken from the readings. Why do you think these people tried to help?
15. Read Franz' poem again. What can you find in the poem that explains why he is "Standing Firm?" Franz wrote the poem at a time when he knew family members and friends had been executed and he was expecting to be executed himself. Why do you think he wrote it at that time? Had you been in his place, what kind of poem do you think you would have written?

Activities

1. People often think of resistance as something physical and violent. Explain why people think of resistance in this way. Give some examples of this form of resistance and the results of it. Examples may be taken from past and recent history.
2. Define the terms "passive resistance" and "non-violent resistance." Look for examples of other times, groups, and individuals who have used these methods of resisting or opposing a powerful group or government. Select one of these and explain how they resisted, what they were trying to accomplish, how they were treated, and the long term results of their resistance.
3. Imagine that you were a classmate of Simone's. Write a series of journal entries recording your observations of what is happening to her at school and how you feel about her and what is happening - or - Create a similar journal as if you are a co-worker of either Louis or Franz.
4. Select one of the three authors of the above works. Compose a letter describing your reaction to his/her decision to resist and what happened as a result of that decision.

The Music of the Holocaust: The Songs of the Ghettos and Camps

When Hitler invaded Eastern Europe in 1939 and Western Europe in 1940, he set into motion the machinery to annihilate the Jewish people, their institutions, their culture and their spirit. The Yiddish folk songs that emanated from the war were ballads, prayers, lullabies, and satirical songs that arose because of daily struggles, heroism, degradation, fear, and resistance. They reflected the innermost feelings of the victims. There were no songs on love and marriage, humor or merriment but there were songs that came from the martyrdom of the victims. These songs were poetry set to music and expressed a strong will to live, reflecting the Jewish traditions that had existed for many centuries. In the repertoire of Holocaust music, many songs came from the camps and ghettos. Some authors were unknown, many were well known.

The Jews put on plays, gave concerts and even wrote an opera named **Brundibar** (meaning Bumblebee). **Brundibar** was performed by the children in Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia to uplift morale and keep up a semblance of normality in the ghettos and camps. Since the war, this opera has been performed all over the United States and Europe.

Some of the best known songs came out of the ghettos and camps of Warsaw, Kovno, Vilna, Lodz, Bialystok, Riga and Cracow. They tried to bear witness to the horrors and slaughter of innocent men, women and children.

One of the best-loved Yiddish poets was Mordechai Gebirtig (1887-1942) born in Krakow, Poland. He wrote many songs that dealt with the Holocaust. One example is the song **S'brent** (It Burns) that told the story of a bloody riot in a little town called Przytyk in central Poland where Jews were killed and maimed. The folk poet warned his people in 1938 of an upcoming disaster in which he anticipated that a great tragedy would befall his people and the town. In the song, Gebirtig summoned his brothers to action and not to stand idly by. As one reads the words carefully, one can feel the flame leaping and burning and warning his people.

In this tragic setting of cruelty, starvation and gas chambers, "**Ten Brothers**" was written by Martin Rosenberg, a Polish Jewish musician, while he was incarcerated in Sachsenhausen. He was beaten and brutally tortured but managed to organize a chorus of 25 prisoners. The chorus told the story of "**Ten Brothers**" who are murdered. Before the last one perished, he said, "We hurt no one, we did no wrong." Rosenberg perished in 1943 after he was transferred from Sachsenhausen to Auschwitz, a death camp located in Upper Silesia .

Another well known song to come out of this period was "**Zog Nit Keyn Mol**" (Never Say it is the final road we tread...) by Hersh Glick (1920-1944). It is a partisan song of courage. This song became the official hymn of Eastern European partisans later and became famous with the first fighters of Israel in the Independence War of 1948. Hersh was born in Vilna, Lithuania and was an accomplished poet who started writing at the age of thirteen. Hersh became ill with typhoid fever in the Rzesheke camp in Vilna. After suffering and being taken from one camp to another, he died in 1944 as the Russians approached. Never Say is set to a Russian melody and is written in a marching tempo. It was translated into many languages.

A dirge that is particularly touching and sad is a song called **Under the Little Green Polish Trees** which talks about the death of children in Poland. The children no longer play under the trees and bushes for their laughter has been silenced. The House of Israel has lost its children. There are a few children left in holes who live in fear and one can see the terror in their eyes. The songs that were written about children were especially heartbreaking because they told of little ones who suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazis.

Sometimes songs told stories of children like **Yisrolik**, a young twelve-year-old peddler, who lived in the Vilna Ghetto and risked his life daily to gather food and bring back smuggled goods. This song was the first one to show a ghetto theme that originated in Vilna Ghetto and was first performed in 1942. It was written by the poet and playwright Lev Rosenthal. Composer Misha Veksler (1907-1943) added the music. Yisrolik became the representative child who stood for the Jewish people, a tough little guy who symbolized spiritual resistance.

"Ani Ma'amin" is based on the Thirteen Principles of Faith formulated by Maimonides, (1135-1204) a famous Jewish Medieval Philosopher. It is a prayer that was set to music. It means " I Believe with a perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah." The victims during the Holocaust sang this song as they marched to their death. Today it is sung at memorial services to commemorate souls who departed.

Songs are taken from:

Yes, We Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps by Shoshana Kalish and Barbara Meister. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985. pp.13,48,64, 125-129

Remember: Songs of the Holocaust by Sidor Belarsky. Published by World Federation of the Bergen Belsen Survivors

We Are Here: Songs of the Holocaust. Compiled by Eleanor Mlotek and Malka Gottlieb. Published by the Educational Dept. of the Workmen's Circle, NY and Hippocrene Books, Inc. NY, 1983.

Teacher References

- **Children of a Vanished World-Roman Wishnia.** Edited by Mara Wishniac Kohn and Miriam Hartman Flacks. University of California Press, 1999. Tells the story of life in the Shtetl (towns) and cities of Poland and celebrates the life of the children with photos and the songs.

Internet

- **The Music of the Holocaust** by Ruth Rubin
- **<http://www.remember.org/hist.root.music.html>** -Opera Brundibar (Background history, message of tolerance and standing up against tyranny, performances and more)
- **<http://yahoo.com>** - type in words "Brundibar Opera" to come up with many sites. For Additional Music about Life in Europe and Eastern Europe and the Holocaust get in touch with Tara Publications, NY.

"Yisrolik"

Lyrics by Leyb Rozental

Misha Veksler, Composer

Hey, come and buy tobacco,
Come by my saccharin,
These days the stuff is selling cheap as dirt.
A life for just a penny,
One cent is what I earn-
About the ghetto peddler have you heard?

Refrain:

I'm called Yisrolik,
A kid right from the ghetto;
I'm called Yisrolik,
A reckless kind of guy.
Though I'm left with less than nothing.
Still a whistle and a song is my reply!

A coat without a collar,
A shirt made from a sack;
I have galoshes - haven't got the shoes.
Whoever finds this funny,
Whoever dares to laugh-
I'll show them that I'm not one to abuse!

Don't think the gutter spawned me,
Don't think I have no claim-
A mother and a father loved me too.
Both were taken from me,
It's useless to complain,
But like the wind I'm lonely, it is true.

I'm called Yisrolik,
And when no one is looking,
From my eyes
I wipe away a tear.
But this anguish-
Is not for speaking,
Why remember,
How much can one heart bear?

"I Once Had a Home"

Lyrics by Mardecai Gebirtig

Music by Emil Gorovets

Once I had a home to comfort me
And made a living as a poor man should,
My roots were tightly wound around a tree,
In poverty lived there as best I could.

They came with malice, hatred and with death
And took the humble home that once was mine,
The years I spent to build it, in one breath
To rubble smashed it in a moment's time.

Once I had a place to eat, a house,
So quietly lived there for many years,
And there I had good comrades all about,
A house that overflowed with song and cheer.

And then they came along, a plague of pests,
They chased me from my town with wife and child.
Left without a home, without a nest,
Not knowing why or what I had defiled.

Once I had a home, pain's left for me.
My ruin was their ultimate design.
To find another home now hard to see-
Where to go or for how long a time.

It Burns!

Mordekhai Gebirtig

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our poor little shtetl is on fire!
Furiously angry winds storm,
Madly around the whipped flames swarm,
Even wilder grows the fierce blaze-
Everything's on fire!

Refrain:

And you stand around and stare
While the flames grow higher.
And you stand around and stare
While our shtetl burns.

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!

Our poor shtetl is on fire.
Tongues of fire have swallowed down
Houses, streets, our whole little town,
And the angry winds are howling-
Our shtetl is on fire.

(Refrain)

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our little shtetl soon will be on fire.
This our village in which we dwell
Will be a fiery hell,
Blackened as after a battle,
Walls like a burning pyre.

(Refrain)

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
If we don't help ourselves, our fate is dire.
If you love your poor little town,
Please don't let them burn it all down.
Put out the flames with your own blood-
Only you can squelch the fire,

(Refrain:

Brothers, don't just stand and stare
While the flames grow higher.
Brothers, don't just stand and stare
While our shtetl burns.

Ten Brothers

Music by Rosebery D'Arguto

After an old Yiddish folksong

Ten happy brothers were we together,
We lived by dealing in wine.
One of us died early-
And so we remained nine.
Oy, oy,oy,oy.

Refrain:

Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Play for us a little,
The gas chamber we face.

One brother only I remain.

With whom shall I sigh?
All the others coldly killed-
Remember them and cry.
Oy,oy,oy,oy.

Refrain:
Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Let me sing my last song,
The gas chamber I face.

Ten brothers were we together--
We hurt no one and did no wrong.

"Under the Little Green Polish Trees"

Under the little green Polish trees growing
No more at play little Moyshelkh, Shloymelekh,
No more at play little Sorelekh, Leyelekh,
Not on the gentle grass, not when it's snowing.

No more are young Jewish voices heard shouting,
Motelekh, Shimelekh, rascals carousing;
Battered and bruised with their woes so beguiling,
Strutting courageously, daring, delighting.

The little green trees in Poland are mourning,
Gone Jewish homes and their houses and dwellings,
Gone are old alleys, in shambles residing,
Children like little mice, scurrying, hiding.

Dear little children with eyes large and staring,
Black with a dark devastation enfolding,
Eyes full of fear, full of terror conveying,
Despair, disaster beyond all comparing.

Under the little green Polish trees growing
No more at play little Moyshelkh, Shloymelekh,
No more at play little Sorelekh, Leyelekh,
Not on the gentle grass, not when it's snowing.

The Art of the Holocaust

The art that came out of the ashes of *Auschwitz* showed the world the determination of the Jews to survive their oppressors. In their art, the Jews lived on. Their art would bear witness to a story of horror for generations to come. Between the years of 1933-45, these valiant victims told their tale meticulously and carefully. The artist became a chronicler.

“ The artists of the Holocaust were victims-until they picked up their pencils and began to draw. They were doomed-until they immortalized themselves in their work. They were powerless-until they mastered the scraps of paper on which they drew.”

(From the cover of **Art of the Holocaust** by Janet Blatter & Sybil Milton)

The spiritual resistance and defiance to the Holocaust were expressed through art, literature, theater, music, study groups, newspapers and more. Thousands of pieces of art have survived and represent hundreds of artists. Many times, the art survived the artist. The Holocaust artists labored under the most horrible conditions- materials were a problem, hiding the art was a problem and transforming the experience became extremely painful for the artist who became the victim.

The first ones to receive materials were the Jewish artists of the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz. Artists were required to create personal portraits, decorated genealogical charts, and simple gifts for their German persecutors. The Jews stole some of the materials. Art supplies became important underground commodities. The Jews were also very creative. They scavenged empty toothpaste tubes from the officer's garbage and used them to store and mix paints. They made brushes from human hair and plucked hair from the fur coats of visiting Nazi officials and created brushes. Artists also became the master forgers of the ghettos and camps as they created false papers. Art supplies were an extravagance. Many times the artists improvised and risked their lives to steal a sheet of paper, to carve a piece of wood, to engrave an aluminum dish, or to make a religious object such as a *chanukah* menorah.

There was a new approach to art - art for history's sake. The art showed hunger, terrors, homelessness-all of which could not deter the Jews from putting down their images on paper. Artists in the ghettos drew exactly what they saw while others in the camps recorded the horrors there. The media wasn't important. Sometimes it was pen and ink, oil, crayons, or paints; it mattered not what the media was as long as the art pieces were produced. Many artists depicted reality beyond belief - pictures of the camps, the forced labor, the starvation, the degradation and the extreme cruelties of their oppressors.

Artists like Leo Haas, a caricaturist, infuriated the Nazis by portraying them as grotesque, but he also had a very humanistic side to him. Haas portrayed touching impressions of ghetto life. In Theresienstadt, he hid illegal drawings in the replastered walls of the camp. In 1944, the Gestapo questioned him for "smuggling atrocity propaganda abroad." He was transferred to *Auschwitz* then to *Sachsenhausen* and eventually moved to *Mauthausen* in April of 1945. After the war, he returned to Czechoslovakia with Bedrich Fritta's son Tommy, whom he raised as his own son. He managed to retrieve and save over 400 drawings from the walls in *Theresienstadt*.

Bread became a constant focus of art, scenes of people queuing up for food, eating their meager rations. There were also scenes of roundups, deportations, mass shootings and mass graves, haunting pictures of those waiting for the showers which signified death. There were drawings of barracks, dying, corpses and more corpses. There were many pictures of resistance where Jews were shown praying or putting on a *tallit* (prayer shawl) or observing a Jewish ritual.

Jews painted all the background scenes for theater productions or when choirs sang or orchestras played. Underground newspapers were run to inform the Jews of what was happening.

The children of Terezin (Theresienstadt), Czechoslovakia ran a literary newspaper called **Vedem** in which they published stories, artwork, and poetry. Many of the children drew happy pictures of what their lives used to be or what they dreamed and yearned their lives would be again.

“Terezin was a curio in the Nazi cabinet of horrors. The Germans seem to have been fascinated with it, particularly the varied, vigorous cultural life the Jews nurtured in the shadow of death. Who but Jews would bother staging *Carmen*, *Bartered Bride*, or performing Verdi’s *Requiem* on a diet of stale bread and thin soup, in a place where your first violinists or leading soprano might be at rehearsal one day-and in a filthy train bound for Auschwitz the next?”

The Artists of Terezin p.32

It is interesting to note that, when Hitler came to power, the movement known as Expressionism came into being in Germany. It was a movement born at the turn of the century, deeply rooted in social ferment, rebellion against formalism and sterility of academic art. It promoted ideals of the bourgeoisie and the German Empire. This art media substituted bold colors, agitated lines and energetic brushwork and articulated the social times. Above all, it expressed compassion for man. The tradition of expressionism and social criticism were inherited by many Holocaust artists. Many of the most famous expressionists were Van Gogh, Gauguin, Lautrec and Picasso whose *La Guernica* depicted the Spanish Civil War of 1936. Many Jews who attained fame were artists like Leo Haas, Bedrich Fritta, Otto Unger, Karel Fleischman, Felix Nussbaum and many more who expressed reality in their work.

The Nazis condemned Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) and banned it from museums and art schools; they especially banned the works of Jews. By 1933, the term “Degenerate”, “Jewish” and “Bolshevik” were used interchangeably by the Germans to describe all modern art. The Degenerate Art was exhibited throughout Germany and Austria. It was ridiculed, poorly exhibited, badly lit and many times had graffiti next to the art pieces. Today, these ridiculed artists are considered masters of the twentieth century - artists like Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Kathe Kollwitz and many more.

The Nazis had a new plan for their artwork. They now depicted the myth of the noble, Aryan race, the heroic German. The Nazis also stole and pilfered the museums of the world and hid their treasures in underground bunkers to be displayed after the war.

Most of the art created in the ghettos and camps disappeared with their owners in the smoke and ashes of the crematoria.

Some artists like Esther Lurie, who was an artist prior to the war, continued her artwork when she was incarcerated in the ghetto of Kovno, Lithuania. She

was lucky to survive and managed to rescue her drawings of pen and ink and water-colors when the *Kovno* Ghetto was liquidated. She was sent to a labor camp in E. Prussia and then set free by the advancing Russian army. Her good fortune brought her together with a transport of liberated British prisoners of war. With these men, she traveled to Odessa and by sea to Naples. She wanted to go back to *Kovno* to retrieve the drawings that she had hidden but she couldn't go. The Secretary of the Ghetto managed to save her drawings, came to Israel and gave them to her intact. Her drawings depicted daily life in the ghetto with all its cruelties.

There were a number of concealed cameras to keep records such as the camera of Mendel Grossman, the photographer of the Lodz Ghetto. His documentary photographs were a historical source of great importance because the whole community of Lodz was liquidated in the middle of 1944. David Szmulewski took pictures of the Auschwitz extermination compound. These photographs provided the outside world with proof of what the Nazis were doing.

“ The art depicts ‘a landscape of screams’ and, like a scream, affirms the individual soul of the artist whose being was being threatened by an anonymous death, whose voice the Nazis sought to condemn to eternal silence. Through art, through the reflective act of creation, the victim asserted his uniqueness. The art of the Holocaust breaks the silence with resounding beauty of the defiant human spirit, which, although assaulted and weakened, is ultimately vindicated.” (p.35, Art of the Holocaust.)

When the war ended in Europe in 1945 and the Allies liberated the camps, the world suddenly realized the horrors the Nazis had perpetrated on mankind. Photos, newspaper articles and newsreels appeared showing the atrocities that were committed in camps like *Auschwitz*, *Buchenwald*, *Maidanek*, *Bergen Belsen* and many others.

Now the artists who survived had a new role to fulfill, that of bearing witness, giving testimony and creating memories of the terrible period of history where one nation tried to annihilate another and tried to break the spirit that kept the victims alive and resisting.

Discussion Questions

1. What type of art emanated from the Holocaust?
2. How were the artists able to express themselves?
3. Where did they get supplies to produce the art?
4. Why was the Holocaust artist seen as a chronicler?
5. What is considered “Degenerate Art”?
6. What is propaganda art?
7. How did the Nazis use political art such as cartoons and posters to further their cause?
8. What is considered as victim art?
9. Why do we have a category, art as memory?
10. What is considered as ‘clandestine art’?
11. How did the children express themselves in art? What were their concerns?
12. What were some of the themes the artists portrayed in their art?
13. How did the artists contribute to resistance efforts?
14. Why was the art work itself a form of resistance?

Teacher Resources

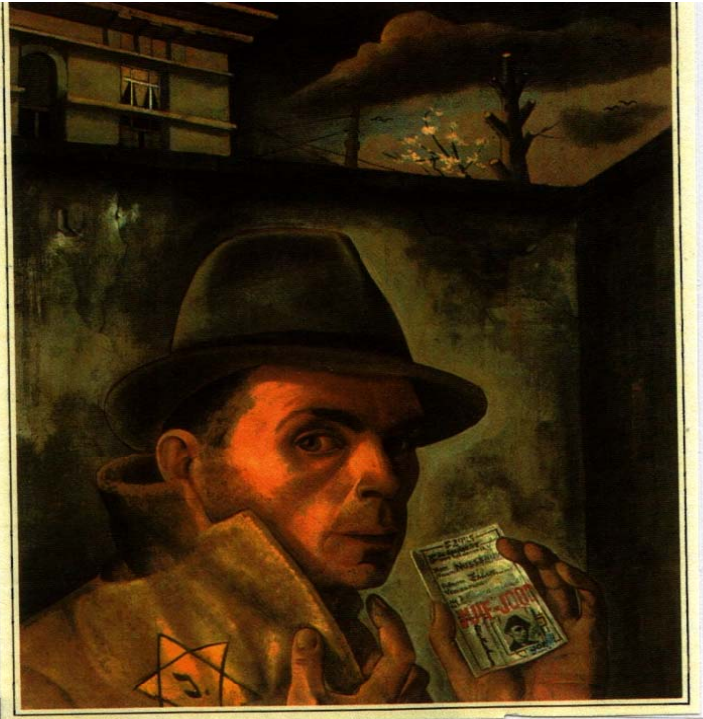
- Bilski, Emily D. **Art and Exile**. New York: The Jewish Museum, 1985. Felix Nussbaum 1904-1944. Felix Nussbaum has been called the “Mirror of His Time.” He tried, through his artwork, to reflect the mood and interpretations of what was happening in the Holocaust. Grades 7 and up
- Blatter, Janet and Sybil Milton. **Art of the Holocaust**. New York: Routledge Press, 1981. The definitive book on Holocaust art that presents the works of 350 artists who were victims of Nazism in the camps, ghettos and in hiding. Grades six and up.
- Czarnecki, Joseph P. **Last Traces: The Lost Art of Auschwitz**. New York: Atheneum Press, 1989. Provides an insight into how resourceful the inmates of Auschwitz were in expressing their art. Examples of artwork show the barracks, the offices and the gas chambers.
- Green Gerald. **The Artists of Terezin: Illustrations by Inmates of Terezin**. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1969. The Terezin ghetto is described and art work from this ghetto is emphasized in the book. It includes over 100 black and white reproductions of art by survivors. Grades 6 and up
- Krizkova, Marie Rut and Kurt Jiri Kotouc, Zdenek Ornest. **We Are Children Just the Same**: *Vedem*, The Secret Magazine by the Boys of *Terezin*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1995. This book contains a lot of art work done by children of *Terezin* who had a secret magazine called *Vedem*. Grades 6 and up
- Rubin, Susan Goldman. **Fireflies in the Dark**. New York: Holiday House, 2000. Through the author’s words and the surviving words and paintings of children, the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the children of *Terezin* is told. *Terezin* was a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia where 15,000 were incarcerated and only 100 survived. Grades 5 and up.
- Toll, Nelly S. **Behind the Secret Window**: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood during World War II. New York: Dial Books, 1993. Author/illustrator, Nelly Toll tells of her life in *Lwow*, Poland under the Russian and Nazi occupation and how she hid in a secret window to stay alive. While she was hidden, she drew and painted from her happier life and her imagination. Grades 6 and up. A New Jersey author and artist.
- Totten, Samuel and Stephen Feinberg. **Teaching and Studying the Holocaust**. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001. Resource book for teaching the Holocaust. Chapter: “*The Inclusion of Art in Studying the Holocaust*.” Teach
- Volavkova, Hana and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. **...”I Never Saw Another Butterfly”** Children’s Drawings and Poems from Terezin Camp 1942-1944, expanded edition. New York: Schocken Books, 1993. Friedl Dicker Brandeis, a trained artist, was a teacher in Terezin and she collected the art work of the children. Grades 5 and up.

INTERNET

The Arts- <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/arts.html>

FELIX NUSSBAUM

**Self portrait with Jewish
Identity card
Brussels 1943**



“Death Dance”

Brussels 1943-44

Taken from: **Art of the Holocaust**

Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton

p. 131 and Cover

Distribution of the Soup Life in the Camps



204 WALTER SPITZER Distribution of Soup
Buchenwald, 1945. Ink, 4 x 6". Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.



224 MAJA BEREZOWSKA Distribution of Soup
Ravensbrück, 1944. Pencil and watercolor, 6 x 7". Janina Jaworska, Warsaw

Taken from: **Art in the Holocaust**
Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton
p. 147 and 159

One Loaf of Bread and Roll Call

Life in the Camps



131 KURT CONRAD LOEW "Six Men - One Loaf of Bread"
Gurs, 1940. Brown wash, 12½ x 10". DOW, Vienna.



203 AXEL MUNK-ANDERSEN Roll Call
Buchenwald, 1944. Pencil, 6 x 7". Buchenwald Museum.

Taken from: Art in the Holocaust
Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton
p. 147 and 105

TEREZIN

40 LEO HAAS Payer
Nisko, 1939. Pencil, 11 x 9". Terezin Memorial.



70 CHARLOTTE BURESOVA Mother and Child
Theresienstadt, 1944. Monotype, 16 x 11". Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

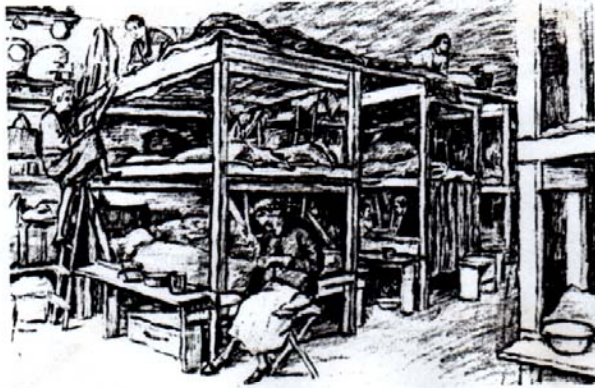
101 KAREL FLEISCHMANN Infirmary for Children
Theresienstadt, 1942. Charcoal, 12 x 18". SZM, Prague.



3, Nov. 39.

Taken from:
Art of the Holocaust
by Janet Blatter
and
Sybil Milton
72, 59, and 86

TEREZIN



69 MALVINA SCHALKOVA Sleeping Quarters
Theresienstadt, 1944. Soft pencil, 12 x 17". Ghetto Fighters' House, Israel.

1.



2.



97 BEDRICH FRITTA Life of a Ghetto Prominent
Theresienstadt, undated. Ink, 10 1/2 x 29". SZM, Prague.

3.

TERESIENSTADT

Taken from: **Art of the Holocaust**
By Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton

1. Malvina Schalkova

2. Bedrich Fritta –Lodging in Attic
Terezin Undated

3. Bedrich Fritta

Discussion Questions

1. Examine the Felix Nussbaum "Self portrait" carefully. What items are included in the painting that provide the observer with information about Nazi rule and the Holocaust?
2. How does the artist portray the horror and the destruction of the Holocaust through the images created in "Deathdance?" Give a number of specific examples.
3. Compare the two drawings of soup distribution. Other than the similarity of theme, what mood or theme is portrayed in the drawings? In the second drawing, how does the artist Maja Berezowska convey to the observer the sense of domination and intimidation the prisoners suffered? Examine the drawing carefully for a complete answer.
4. In "One Loaf of Bread," how does the artist Kurt Conrad Loew convey to the observer the sense of importance that the bread has for the prisoners?
5. Axel Munk-Andersen creates a grim, bleak picture in his drawing "Roll Call." Describe aspects of his drawing that creates this image.
6. The six drawings of Terezin are each very different yet they each leave the observer with a sense of despair. Examine each drawing and explain what contributes to that sense of despair in each one.
7. In the last drawing, the artist addresses the false image of Theresienstadt as a "model ghetto" that the Nazis had tried to create for the outside world. It had even been referred to as Hitler's "gift to the Jews." How does the artist address both the falseness of that image and the grim reality of life in the camp?
8. Considering what is revealed in only these few drawings shown here, explain how valuable the overall production of the artists is as documentation of the Holocaust. Analyze the reasons the artists felt a compulsion to record the images despite the additional risks it represented.

Jan Kowski: Artist and Survivor

Jan Kowski was captured by the Nazis as he attempted to cross the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia enroute to volunteering in the newly-formed Polish Army in France. At the time he was captured, Kowski was traveling under the fictitious identity of Jan Baras. On June 14, 1940, he was transferred from Tarnow prison to Auschwitz.

Kowski and the other 727 Polish men were in the first prisoner transport to arrive in Auschwitz. The numbers assigned to the men ranged from 31 - 758; his number was 564. As would later prove to be most fortunate for Kowski, the numbers were not tattooed on the prisoner's arms.

Few prisoners successfully escaped from Auschwitz. Kowski and three of his comrades would be among those few exceptions. It occurred on the morning of December 29, 1942 and was one of the first to be organized by the illegal camp resistance movement. A few people in the local population provided assistance to the four escaped prisoners.

It was a cleverly arranged escape plan. One of the prisoners, Boleslaw Kuczbara, was dressed in a stolen SS uniform and riding in a two-wheeled cart. Beside the cart as it passed through the camp gate walked three inmates, Otto Kusel, Mieczyslaw Januszewski, and Jan Kowski. Kuczbara displayed a forged pass to the guards at the gate and, combined with his uniform, any suspicions the guards might have harbored were lulled to rest. The men walked out of camp.

Resistance women met the four in the village of Broszkowice and provided them with civilian clothing. Abdrzej Harat kept them in his apartment overnight.

Eventually Kowski reached Krakow. There he was caught in a routine roundup as he was waiting in the station for a train to Warsaw. Fortunately for Kowski, he had no betraying number tattooed on his arm. Had he been returned to Auschwitz as an escaped prisoner, a horrible and painful death would have been his fate. However, lacking a number and carrying false identity papers, Kowski was placed on a truck with the other men rounded up and taken to Montelupi Prison. The last in line as the prisoners were marched through a gauntlet of guards, Kowski attempted to escape rather than run the risk of being returned to Auschwitz. The guards pursued him as he bolted through the streets and he was brought down by a rifle bullet to the ankle. Despite his ill fortune, Kowski was saved from immediate execution when the guards decided that they couldn't just shoot him in the street. Instead, they beat him into unconsciousness before returning him to the prison. There, his luck holding to some degree, the guards decided to send him to the prison hospital rather than shooting him. At the hospital, his wounded ankle was bandaged, a bandage that was never changed. Despite this, his ragged luck held again and Kowski managed to avoid infection.

Three months later, his wound healed, Kowski was returned to Auschwitz under his fictitious name. Fearing that he would be recognized by a member of the SS or a kapo, Kowski waited for disaster. However, again, his bizarre luck held and the prisoner who recognized him, usually an informer, chose to tell the prisoners who ran the office rather than the SS. The men in the office, secretly

part of the camp resistance movement, cut orders that immediately sent Komski to Auschwitz II [Birkenau] where he was unlikely to be recognized.

Komski continued to live and work in the horrendous camp conditions until he was transported to another camp. This time it was Buchenwald in Germany. Later he was transferred to Krakow for interrogation then on to Gross Rosen camp in Poland. From Gross Rosen he was transferred to Sachsenburg and finally to Dachau where he remained a prisoner until General Patton's forces arrived to liberate the camp on May 2, 1945. During his transfer from one camp to another, Komski, like many other prisoners, suffered terribly on what became known as the death marches. At one point, he and a few fellow prisoners survived by eating a bucket of potatoes that they had purchased from a German farmer. The money for the potatoes had been found sewn into the seam of some clothing.

After the war ended, Mr. Komski immigrated to the United States and found employment working for the *Washington Post* as an illustrator. However, he also created works of art that are a moving record of what he saw and experienced in the concentration camps

Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate Krakow and Warsaw, Poland on a map.
- Locate the following camps on a map: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, Gross Rosen, Sachsenburg, and Dachau.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how Jan Komski experienced both good and bad luck in his escapes and his imprisonments.
2. Analyze the information about Komski and explain what his behavior during the Holocaust and after the war ended tell you about his strength of character. Give examples to support your explanation.
3. Explain why art work such as Komski's and diaries, letters, poems, etc. are so important to providing history with an accurate record of the Holocaust.
4. Examine the following illustrations very carefully. They are four of the illustrations created by Jan Komski. Answer the questions about each.
 - a) *Panorama of Birkenau* - (Jan Komski lived in one of these barracks after his recapture.) Write a description of the camp based upon what you can see in the illustration.
 - b) *Canada* - ("Canada" was a slang expression coined by the prisoners themselves for the part of Birkenau containing the horse-stable-barracks converted into warehouses. Tons of personal possessions taken from Jews and Roma [Gypsies] were sorted and stored there. Workers on the ramps of the arriving transports often tried to "organize" necessary items for barter and survival. Men of the SS, despite regulations to the contrary, routinely took things from the booty for themselves.) What are the workers loading on the carts? What is causing the smoke in the background? Compare and contrast the appearance of the guard with that of the prisoners.

- c) *The Identification* - (Arrivals at Auschwitz were tattooed soon after arrival and this number became more important than their name in the camp. For the Nazis, it became the identification of the prisoner and each prisoner was expected to respond with his/her number when asked for identification. With so many prisoners and so many deaths, it was a much more "organized" method for the Nazis to keep a record of the prisoners. The skin on the left forearm was punctured with individual needles and indelible ink was rubbed into the bleeding wounds. The process was one more painful and humiliating part of the prisoners' introduction to Auschwitz.) How is the guard maintaining control of the confused and dazed prisoners? What is the line of planks seen in the background? What can you tell about the reaction of the prisoners based on the body language exhibited in the illustration? What can you tell about their physical condition based on the illustration?
- d) *The Loser* - (Stronger prisoners such as the Kapos often took advantage of the prisoners badly weakened by hunger, exhaustion, and illness.) What can you learn about the method of feeding prisoners from studying Komski's illustration? Study the body language and appearance of the prisoners. What do they tell you about their treatment and their physical condition? Why do you think none of the other prisoners are interfering with the kapo's seizure of food from the prisoner on the ground? What can you conclude about the likely fate of the prisoner on the ground?

Activities

- Select a reading or description of a camp, a ghetto, or hiding experience during the Holocaust. From that description, draw an illustration of how you think it would have looked.
- Select one of the four illustrations and write a poem or a short newspaper feature article about the illustration you selected. What does the illustration reveal? What does the very existence of the illustration tell you about the artist's character and skill?

For the Teacher:

You may choose to visit or have the students visit Jan Komski's web site on the Internet at <http://www.remember.org/komski>. There you will find more examples of his drawings and paintings as well as more information Mr. Komski and the Holocaust.

Panorama of Birkenau – a drawing by Jan Komski



Panorama of Birkenau



irkenau (Auschwitz II). Komski lived in one of these barracks after his
-capture.

[Home](#) | [Drawings](#) | [Paintings](#) | [Komski's story](#) | [Contact](#) | [Cybrary of the Holocaust](#)

All art in this exhibit is copyright © Jan Komski. All rights reserved.

<http://www.remember.org/komski/komski-drawings1-003.html>

Canada



'Canada' was a slang expression coined by prisoners. It designated the part of Birkenau (Auschwitz II) containing horse-stable-barracks converted into warehouses. Here, tons of personal possessions taken from Jews and Gypsies upon their arrival in the camp were sorted and stored. The Canada Kommando (work group) are loading luggage and other items for transport to sorting and warehousing. Workers on the ramp often "organized" necessary items for barter and survival. Although there were regulations prohibiting them from such actions, SS - like the man in the foreground helping himself to a jewelry box - routinely stole from the booty. So the items were stolen from the Jews more than once.

[[Home](#) | [Drawings](#) | [Paintings](#) | [Kowski's story](#) | [Contact](#) | [Cybrary of the Holocaust](#)]

All art in this exhibit is copyright © Jan Kowski. All rights reserved.

<http://www.remember.org/kowski/kowski-drawings1-002.html>



The Identification



Women are tattooed soon after arrival. This was a shocking greeting for new arrivals. This number was more important than a family name. "... *Auschwitz was the only [camp] to tattoo prisoners for identification. The underlying cause was the high death rate among prisoners, which sometimes surpassed several hundred a day. With such a large number of deaths, there were difficulties in identifying all the corpses. If the clothes with the camp number were removed from the corpse, one could no longer establish what the number of the deceased had been.*"* Tattooing was done by puncturing the skin on the left forearm with individual needles and rubbing indelible ink into the bleeding wounds.

*Iwaszko, Tadeusz. 1996. "Deportation to the Camp and Registration of Prisoners" In *Auschwitz: Nazi Death Camp*, by Danuta Czech, Tadeusz Iwaszko, Barbara Jarosz, Helena Kubica, Aleksander Lasik, Franciszek Piper, Kazimierz Smolen, Irena Strzelecka, Andrzej Strzelecki, Henryk Swiebocki. Oswiecim: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim. pp 60, 61.

[Home | Drawings | Paintings | Kowski's story | Contact | Cybrary of the Holocaust

All art in this exhibit is copyright Jan Kowski. All rights are reserved.

<http://www.remember.org/kowski/kowski-drawings1-004.html>

The Loser



their struggles with stronger prisoner functionaries called Kapos, the prostitute lost the race to the bowl.

[Home](#) | [Drawings](#) | [Paintings](#) | [Komski's story](#) | [Contact](#) | [Cybrary of the Holocaust](#)

All art in this exhibit is copyright © Jan Komski. All rights reserved.

<http://www.remember.org/komski/komski-drawings1-005.html>