

THE HOLOCAUST: A HUMAN TAPESTRY OF VOICES IN HISTORY

A Class Museum Publication

A publication of work by students of Year 12A Modern History (2020)

This publication is the culmination of a Project Based Learning unit, inspired by and following the pedagogical philosophy of *Yad Vashem – The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre*, Jerusalem, and is a product of this educator's experiences during the *Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators* at *Yad Vashem*, Jerusalem, Israel, December 2019 - January 2020

Lauren Hovelroud | Kelvin Grove State College



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PLEAS NOTE:

This edition has been edited (with some sections taken out and some links disabled) and de-identified for inclusion in the ***Expeditionary Learning Models of Excellence*** collection - what a proud honour. Thank you all! :)

~ Miss H (January, 2021)

COVER PHOTOGRAPH image "*Frosted Fences and Never-Forgotten Faces*" (morning frost on barbed wire fence with camp barracks in the distance) taken by Lauren Hovelroud at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, including the Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau camps (former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps), on 17th January, 2020.

HOLOCAUST PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Origins of the Project

I have always been passionate about studying History, and the Holocaust and the history of World War Two in Germany has always been important to me, since I was a student myself in history class at school, and as Modern History and English teacher too.

From a historical point of view, the study of the Holocaust is vital in its significance of shaping the Modern World. Throughout my career I have incorporated a study of the Holocaust into my history teaching, as well as my English classroom. From the systematic persecution and extermination of the European Jewish population, as well as other groups considered enemies of the Nazi regime, to the rise of the Third Reich and their institutions of terror, teaching about the Holocaust has involved a critical examination of the complex causes and effects of Nazi Germany and their ideological state. I also think teaching about perspectives, historical empathy, contestability and consciousness are essential here in understanding the Holocaust.

*"My eyes are riveted upon the expanse of destruction -
does nothing really remain?"*

Of all the masses, has not a person survived?

Of my entire family, only I remain?

*How did it happen that all of them are dead and only I
am alive? I the weakest of them all..."*

~ Dov Freiberg, a survivor of Sobibor

Personally, even a critical historical understanding is underpinned by a human one. I have always felt that my students in both middle and senior contexts have had difficulty grasping how the systematic mass murder of millions took place. So I have always sought out ways to make the perspectives and experiences of the people and their real human stories behind the numbers a reality to them. Drawing on a wealth of personal and oral histories, and immense documentation that exists around perpetrators, victims and survivors of the Holocaust has been vital in my teaching.

This all however was revolutionised by my participation in the 2019-2020 Gandel Holocaust Program for Australian Educators, participating over two weeks of intense experiences at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem – the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem, Israel. This

project is the direct result of all that I have learnt from this amazing one-in-a-lifetime opportunity that has further cemented in my mind the importance of teaching about the Holocaust and my belief that it has a place in every classroom.

By adopting the pedagogical philosophy of Yad Vashem that I learned during this program, I sought to give my students a similar experience that I had in understanding the many voices and stories about the Shoah, to use this as a powerful lens through which students can learn about empathy, morality and mortality, and ultimately what it means to be human. This was the foundation for my focus on our project based learning (or PBL) unit, as I wanted my students to gain a greater understanding than just some dates in a textbook, but to take their learning beyond the classroom and to be able to become, themselves, messengers entrusted with this important message of hope, humanity and Holocaust awareness now and into the future.

"Resistance does not have to be with a gun and a bullet"

~ Roman Kent, Jewish survivor

My aims for participating in the program included the following: to continue to broaden my perspectives of the Holocaust; to learn from leading scholars in the field; to develop a greater understanding of the personal and religious significance of the experiences of the Shoah; to engage with different, challenging and exciting new pedagogies to enhance my own teaching of Holocaust studies; to learn more of the healing process that has lasted for generations; and how I can be a better educator and better agent for change myself in ensuring the Holocaust never happens again, and why action must be taken against crimes of genocide and crimes against peace in our modern world today. My time at Yad Vashem and in Jerusalem, Israel, both met and exceeded these aims, and was so enriching both professionally and personally that I wanted to very much share my teaching and learning experiences with others.

HOLOCAUST PROJECT INTRODUCTION

An Overview of the Project

THE HOLOCAUST: A Human Tapestry of Voices in History is inspired by and follows the pedagogical philosophy of Yad Vashem and is a product of my experiences during the *Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel, 2019-2020*.

Perspective has always been key to the teaching and learning of history. In some form or another, historical contestability and historical consciousness have been key concepts and tools for us, as educators, and our students to critically understand and study the past. Historical empathy has also always, either implicitly or explicitly, been vital to engaging our students deeply and authentically in the subject of history, to unpack the historical narratives of the past, locally, nationally and globally.

However, if my time at Yad Vashem had taught me anything is that we must remind ourselves of something important that I hope – with the current curriculum pressures, systemic demands and the state of our world in a time of COVID-19, of continuing tensions and complexities today – we haven't forgotten and should never forget: What is HISTORY except the story of our past, the story of humanity?

"The people are gone, but their traces remain..."

~ Ida Fink, "Traces"

I wanted my students to take away from our unit of work and PBL project not something that had to complete for their ATAR and QCE in Year 12, but a more critical but also empathic understanding of the human history of the Shoah – the Holocaust – and Nazi Germany.

The Holocaust was unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people. The primary motivation was the Nazis' antisemitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and their property, followed by the branding and concentration of the Jewish population. This policy gained broad support in Germany and much of occupied Europe. In 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis and their collaborators launched the systematic mass murder of the Jews. By 1945, nearly six million Jews had been murdered.

This unit embraces the importance of teaching Historical empathy through the lens of PBL (using the framework of PBL Works with the design pedagogy of John Spencer's The LAUNCH Cycle to structure the unit), and is firmly grounded in promoting students' meaningful engagement with 21st century skills. For more information on this please see my Queensland History Teachers Association (QHTA) 2020 State Conference Presentation on this unit of work.

The Pedagogical Philosophy of the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Israel chiefly underpins this unit, and includes the following core concepts, that also support how we should approach teaching about the Shoah across all of our classrooms:

- The Human Being as the Center
- Inter-Cultural Dialogue
- The Survivors' Heritage → Survivor testimony

- Inculcation of Jewish and Universal Values → Jewish faith and culture
- A Multi-Level Approach
- An Interdisciplinary Approach
- The Righteous among the Nations
- Safely in and safely out – let's not traumatise our students in teaching about the historical trauma of the Holocaust.

I spent many, many hours in the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem, a leading world-class institution, and it was through the very first exhibit in this museum that was the inspirational foundation for the project. When you walk through the doors of the museum you encounter the opening installation of Michal Rovner's "*Living Landscape*", a digital compilation of "hundreds of life fragments woven to become a human tapestry, longing for life and a landscape that no longer exists". This moving montage was part of the opening entry event for my own students in this project, as it was for my own experience of the museum and its historical narrative of the Holocaust, as it was for this whole unit of work in that is similarly mirrored my own learning journey.

What Yad Vashem also powerfully reinforced through the emotional, powerful and poignant interactions in hearing first-hand testimony from survivors, was the importance of the human being at the centre and the importance of the words and stories from the Shoah. One such human story that also formed the foundation of this project was that of Abramek (Abraham) Koplwicz, a child in the Lodz ghetto. Abramek was born in 1930. In the ghetto he worked in a shoemaker's workshop. He was taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau with his mother and father in 1944. Abramek was murdered in Auschwitz at the age of fourteen. His father was the only survivor in his family and saved his artwork and book of writing, including this poem written by young Abramek:

Dream

*When I grow up and I get to be twenty,
I'll travel and see this world of plenty.*

*In a bird, with an engine, I will sit myself down,
take off and fly into space, far above the ground.*

*I'll fly, I'll cruise and soar up high
above a world so lovely, into the sky.*

~ Abramek (Abraham) Koplwicz (variously translated)

On the last day of our program, Yael played another extremely moving video for us in Elie Wiesel's 2005 speech and address at the New Museum's inauguration at Yad Vashem. His words stayed with me, as we reflected on the experiences we had in the program and all that we had learnt. The weight of this new-found knowledge and responsibility that came with it sat profoundly with me so much that his words and the weighty sentiment they carry also became the foundation for my own students' journeys through this project:

"You read and you read, and you say to yourself: Where did they have the strength to write, to use words, destined to whom? ...There are no words... All we know is that it happened. And now the question is: What does one do with memories? ...We must become the messengers."

~ Eli Wiesel, Romanian-born American writer, professor, political activist, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor, 2005

The driving question of our PBL unit of work and project was the following:

What can we learn about humanity by examining the experiences of life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany?

This ***PBL Unit + Teaching and Learning Publication*** will go further in-depth into the teaching and learning of the project.

Whereas the ***Class Museum Publication*** aims to present (in written/digital form what COVID would not allow for us to do in person) the culmination of the students' work.

In considering looking to the future, I hope it is one where antisemitism and in fact any form of discrimination or injustice is fiercely challenged.

I'm hoping it is a world where my students are empathetic human beings that strive to champion and work to promote peace, hope and justice.

I also hope that this project is just one more way that myself, my students and all of us can continue to be the messengers of hope, humanity and Holocaust awareness now and into the future.

"Remember only that I was innocent and, just like you, mortal on that day I too, had had a face marked by rage, by joy and pity, quite simply, a human face!"

~ Benjamin Fondane, "Exodus", murdered at Auschwitz, 1944

Year 12 Modern History, 2020

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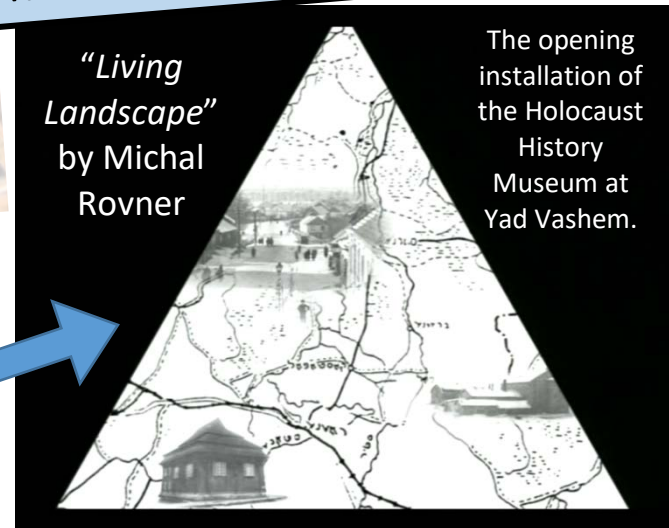
“You read and you read, and you say to yourself: Where did they have the strength to write, to use words, destined to whom?
...There are no words... All we know is that it happened. And now the question is: What does one do with memories? ...We must become the messengers.”
~ Elie Wiesel (Romanian-born American writer, professor, political activist, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor, 2005 at New Museum's inauguration, Yad Vashem)



This project is inspired by Michal Rovner's "Living Landscape", a digital compilation of "hundreds of life fragments woven to become a human tapestry, longing for life and a landscape that no longer exists".

This project invites you to consider the following:

What can we learn about humanity by examining the experiences of life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany?



Project Based Learning with The LAUNCH Cycle

- L:** Look, Listen, and Learn
- A:** Ask Tons of Questions
- U:** Understanding the Process or Problem
- N:** Navigate Ideas
- C:** Create a Prototype
- H:** Highlight and Fix
- Launch to an Audience!

This project based learning unit follows the framework of:



CREATED BY Lauren Hovelroud, Kelvin Grove State College | lhove6@eq.edu.au

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INVESTIGATE AND EXPLORE

We will apply historical concepts and historical skills to:

- Explore the nature, origins, development, legacies and contemporary significance of the Holocaust and national experiences in Nazi Germany, with a focus on the aspect of life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust in Germany from 1933-1945.
- Investigate the extent to which the national experiences of those in Nazi Germany during the Holocaust help to shape the Modern World.
- Explore how these national experiences during the Holocaust influenced the development of the Modern World.
- Explore, analyse, synthesise and evaluate a range of perspectives and voices, as well as primary and secondary sources from a variety of historical contexts.
- Explore a range of concepts and issues that are linked to the Holocaust and national experiences (including concepts of the Shoah, antisemitism, Nazi ideology, *volksgeist*, spiritual resistance, the Final Solution etc.)
- Investigate the changes and continuities over time in relation to antisemitism, Nazi ideology and racist attitudes; and interrogate how historians or other commentators have interpreted contestable and historical features linked to the Holocaust, including collective remembrance and its memorialisation.
- Investigate and experiment with critical and creative responses to make historical judgements about the Holocaust and national experiences in Nazi Germany using PBL and design thinking with the "Launch Cycle" → And link to contemporary events and perspectives! (see below)



Individually and collaboratively you will be involved in the **launch of our "Holocaust: A Human Tapestry of Voices" pop-up museum to our KG school community and to the public.** We will also share the culmination of our project work through publishing **class museum publication**, inspired by *Yad Vashem* and in conjunction with the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, to coincide with the *Holocaust Memorial Week* during **4-8 May 2020** in Australia.



CREATE

- An **individual independent source investigation on a topic of your choice that responds to your task and driving question.** You will develop your own inquiry question and sub-questions that will drive your historical inquiry and source investigation response (including a rationale, source interrogations, and a critical summary of evidence). This will also form the basis of your "*Holocaust: A Human Tapestry of Voices*" pop-up museum exhibit and narrative experience.
- **Working with the support of your launch pair/trio you will design and craft your own multimodal museum exhibit and narrative experience** that brings together your understanding of the connections made between your choice of sources, giving a voice to the Shoah, and sharing this historical narrative experience in our "*Holocaust: A Human Tapestry of Voices*" pop-up museum.
- **Working as a whole class you will contribute to our "Holocaust: A Human Tapestry of Voices" pop-up museum** that engages with our driving question of exploring humanity, as well as life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust.
- **Individually, you will reflect** on your own attitudes, values, beliefs, ideologies, experiences, knowledge and understanding, research, prototyping and project work **through a series of FlipGrid video reflections** throughout the unit. You will also need to reflect on the moral, ethical and empathetic considerations of this topic, the evolving historical consciousness and historical narratives surrounding the Holocaust, and memorialising the Holocaust today, determining how it continues to shape our Modern World.

QUEENSLAND SENIOR MODERN HISTORY SYLLABUS OBJECTIVES:

2. devise historical questions and conduct research linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World (the Holocaust in Nazi Germany)
3. analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding that is linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World (the Holocaust in Nazi Germany)
5. evaluate evidence from historical sources to make judgments linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World (the Holocaust in Nazi Germany)
6. create an independent source investigation that communicates meaning to suit purpose that is linked to a topic focused on national experiences in the Modern World (the Holocaust in Nazi Germany).

21ST CENTURY SKILLS:

Critical thinking | Creative thinking | Communication | Personal and social skills | Collaboration and teamwork | Information and communication technology skills

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

10. Reduced Inequalities | 16. Peace and Justice



Dehumanisation, Extermination and Terror of the Jewish people in Auschwitz, Nazi Germany

To what extent is the Auschwitz concentration camp from 1940-1945 historically significant as a site of dehumanisation and mass extermination in the pursuit of the Final Solution, that brought about extreme terror and sought to stifle any resistance, during the Third Reich in Germany (1933-1945)?

By Student 1

“After the revolt the Germans found this little handmade grenade and they identified the gunpowder which of course we didn’t know. that gunpowder has some kind of special characteristic. They identified this gunpowder that was coming only from the union and only from Pulveround, where my sister worked.

They started an investigation, they imprisoned four girls: Rosa Roberta, Alla Gardener, Regina Saperstein and Ester Weissbloom. They tortured them mercilessly, and eventually hang them publicly on January 5th, 1945.”
(Heilman, 1996)

“We worked on roads, trenches. I worked sorting clothes and found my father’s prayer shawl. There were five crematoria. They burned day and night. Transports kept arriving and there was no room in the crematoria, so the children were thrown into pits and burned- little children. We saw them. Yes, alive!”

~ Zanne Farbestein

(Farbestein, 2008)

Auschwitz is known as the most lethal Nazi extermination camp in Germany during WWII. Its significance is immortalised through survivors’ recounts both in the past and still living in the present. These act as a reminder of the dark times humanity faced during this historical period. Even though society, for the most part, has moved past this era its consequences are still felt by many, as its important legacy must still be kept alive today.

“Today I can hardly believe that I began to live again like a normal human being, that I got married, and that I have children and grandchildren. Sheer joy.”
(Farbestein, 2008)

By using a range of reliable and relevant primary and secondary sources a historiographical approach to the investigation was conducted. By critically analysing the sources, the inquiry question and sub-questions posed were answered. Zanne Farbestein’s testimony above explores a primary Jewish perspective of a survivor of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Through the explanation of her lived experiences, we are able to understand the extent of the terror and dehumanisation those lived under during the Third Reich in Germany.

“The women went in first with their children, followed by the men, who were always fewer in number. This part of the operation nearly always went smoothly since the Sonderkommando would always calm those who showed any anxiety or perhaps even had some clue as to their fate. As an additional precaution, the Sonderkommando and an SS soldier always stayed in the chamber until the very last moment.”

(Höss, 1956)

“The victims became unconscious after a few minutes, according to the distance from the air shaft. Those who screamed and those who were old, sick, or weak, or the small children died quicker than those who were healthy or young.”

(Höss, 1956)

“The lice, the scabies, and the lack of water were not the worst thing. There was one more nightmare... It is impossible to remain silent about the everyday torment, repulsive and disgusting, caused by the latrines. They were in a small separate block. Down the middle ran a concrete perch, or bench, furnished with two rows of opening... Next to the doors at both ends of the block, the stinking abyss of the sewer channel, uncovered and filled to the level of the floor, gaped open.”
(Swiebocki, Swiebocki, Bujak & Brand, 2019)



“On October 1944 there was a revolt in the crematorium. The Sonderkommando- those were the people who were manning the crematorium- knew that from time to time after a certain period of where they were being murdered as not to bear witnesses and that particular group decided that they are going to rebel. They used this gunpowder and manufactured little hand grenades made out of the metal around boxes of shoe polish with the weed and fulfilled with the gunpowder and when you leave, they did explode. I don’t know how much damage it did, or it didn’t.”
(Heilman, 1966)

Since being asked to explore the topic of the Third Reich in Germany (1933-45) it has come to my attention that many instances of hardship faced at the time of the Holocaust are still experienced and are highly relevant to today. I have chosen to focus on the Auschwitz concentration camp, a vital instrument for the execution of the Nazi Party's 'Final Solution'. It was designed to systematically exterminate the Jewish population. Those who were not immediately killed were subjected to extreme terror and dehumanisation.

I thought it would be interesting to explore the aspect of human treatment within concentration camps and the impact it had on both Jewish individuals and population as a whole. Auschwitz is known as the most lethal Nazi extermination camp. Its significance is immortalised through recounts both past and present, including survivor testimony. These act as a reminder of the dark time humanity faced during this period. Even though society, for the most part, has moved past this era its consequences are still felt by many as its important legacy must still be kept alive today.



My historical investigation focused primarily on how the lived experiences in the Auschwitz concentration camps played a significant role in maintaining the historical consciousness surrounding the Third Reich in Germany, which is evident in the spoken word performance and collaboration "Never to".

Edith Eger is an Auschwitz survivor, who aspired to be a gymnast - that was until her instructor told her that he had to train someone who was not Jewish. Edith was eventually carted to Auschwitz, she says "... We were all shmooshed up, you know, very small, little place, in the cattle car, on the floor, sitting down ... We don't know where we're going, we don't know what's going to happen, just remember no one can take away what you put here in your own mind." (Hollander, 2020)

When she arrived in Auschwitz after the terrible ride there, she saw the most despicable actions towards many Jews by the Nazi SS soldiers, she describes the selection process - "Men and women were immediately separated. I never saw my father again. After the war, I met someone who told me that he saw my father going to the gas chamber." Edith had lost her father and to make it worse an SS soldier told her that "... 'You're gonna see your mother very soon, she's just gonna take a shower,'" (Hollander, 2020) she was deceived to think that her mother would come back.

She describes the conditions she and the other captured people were under saying that "We were completely shaven, and then we were in our nakedness... In Auschwitz you couldn't fight, because if you touched the guard you were shot—right in front of me I saw that. You couldn't flee because if you touched the barbed wires, you were electrocuted. When we took a shower, we didn't know whether gas is coming out or water." (Hollander, 2020)

You can find out more about Dr Eger from her website:
<https://dreditheger.com/about/>



Edith Eger's story and voice inspired Student 2 and I to write this poem, to display a perspective from the time in our own creative way that is emotive and would capture the audience's attention, in keeping Edith's voice alive as part of the legacy of the Shoah. Though our source investigation, many primary perspectives were investigated. In this way, Student 2 and I tried to understand the impact that this event in history had on these survivors and attempted to incorporate it in our poem and spoken word performance.

Never to ... By Students 1 & 2 (2020)

1933, the start of a living hell.
 In 1944, Edith was only seventeen.
 Comforted, reassured,
 Then hauled into a cart,
 Everyone left with broken hearts.
 Never feeling more apathetic.

Tracks headed straight to Auschwitz.
 Clunking and squeaking.
 Families praying,
 Their silent murmur deafening.
 Stripped of identity.
 Never to recover mentally.

Poked and prodded,
 Hauled out of the cart.
 Separated - scared, shivering.
 Yelling, screaming,
 Thumping heartbeats silencing the crowd.
 In 1944 Edith had entered hell.
 Never to get out of this expansive cell.

The Nazis said her mother went to shower,
 There was no sign of her for hours.
 Black snow all around,
 The next victims soon to be found.
 Shivering, frozen,
 Forced to obey.
 Never to foresee another day.

1945, the year of liberation.
 1945, the year of salvation.
 And she was only eighteen.
 Comforted, reassured,
 Embraced by hope.
 Everyone left thinking how they ever coped.
 Never to be forgotten.



Access the video of this performance

Dehumanisation, Deception and Terror of the Jewish people in Auschwitz, Nazi Germany

To what extent is Nazi German ideology representative of antisemitism and the Final Solution, and how is this exemplified through their endorsement of dehumanisation, deception and terror of Jewish people in the Auschwitz concentration camp from 1940 to 1945?

By Student 2

"It all happens quickly, as if on a conveyer-belt. It's something that, one can't even start imagining.

That's what happened that night, an unforgettable night. It's the night on which I effectively lose my whole family." ~ Jaki Handali

"Those who couldn't walk – old, sick, tired, weak people – were thrown off the wagon; they came up and threw them off the train." ~ Rita Weiss

(Yad Vashem, 2010)

*"We were pushed through to the main gate, and once we entered there, **we thought we'd entered hell.** There were bodies everywhere, and there were these watch towers with machine guns pointing at us... this terrible grey ash falling around us. There were the barking dogs, viscously walking around, there were loudspeakers always, and these SS men walking around, with shiny boots and guns on their back. I mean, **we were just frightened out of our wits.**"*
~ Mindu Hornick

(Hollander, 2020)

It has become prevalent to me the utter *destruction* of millions of innocent Jewish people – women, men and children, whole families were ultimately killed. The very few numbers of Jewish people who lived through the Nazi regime were *eternally traumatised*. The dehumanisation, deception and terror of the Jewish people through these concentration camps is indescribable.

"A minority of Jews was selected for forced labour; their personal belongings were confiscated; their hair was shaved, and a registration number was tattooed on their left arm."

(Yad Vashem, 2017)

By using a historiographical approach, relevant and reliable sources were found. Through critical analysis, these sources aided to answer the focus question. This is represented through Mindu Hornick's testimonies, quoted above. Hornick is a Jewish Auschwitz camp survivor, and through her testimonies we are able to more clearly fathom the extent of the Third Reich's reign of terror.

"Separation of four thousand Jewish children from their parents and their transport in sealed trains to Auschwitz where they were of course immediately murdered. The brutal deportations seem to have caused a revulsion of feeling against the Nazi policies."
(Bauer, 1965)

"Every yard or so an SS man held his gun trained on us, hand in hand we followed the crowd." 'Men to the left women to the right' – "eight words spoke indifferently without emotion, eight short simple words... I did not know that in that place at that moment, I was parting from my mother and my sister forever." ~ Elie Wiesel

(Yad Vashem, 2017)



(Yad Vashem, 2017)

"Auschwitz became a center for the murder operations; if we are to believe its commander, Rudolf Hoess, he received Himmler's directives to establish Auschwitz as a killing center in the summer of 1941... In July 1942, Himmler ordered the destruction of Polish Jewry by the end of the year and the concentration of remaining working slaves, whose services could not be dispensed with temporarily, in a small number of concentration camps."
(Bauer, 1965)

"For the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offense, the demolition of a man, it is not possible to sink lower than this. Nothing belongs to us anymore... if we speak, they will not listen to us and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name ... It is in this way that one can understand the double sense of the term extermination camp." ~ Primo Levi

(Yad Vashem, 2017)

From the beginning of this unit on the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, it has become prevalent to me the utter destruction of the millions of innocent Jewish people – women, men and children, whole families were ultimately killed. The very few numbers of Jewish people who lived through the Nazi regime were eternally traumatised. The largest concentration camp run by Nazi Germany was Auschwitz (1940-1945) which particularly stood out to me, the absolute dehumanisation, deception and terror of the Jewish people through these concentration camps is indescribable.

I was particularly interested in the Final Solution and Nazi ideology as a focus for my source investigation, and the overarching racist philosophy of antisemitism. The scale of these Auschwitz camps was immense, design for the purpose of dehumanising prisoners, many who were Jewish people who were sent on the train to Poland to end up in concentration, and victims of these forced labour camps and of extermination.



My historical focused primarily on how the lived experiences in the Auschwitz concentration camps played a significant role in maintaining the historical consciousness surrounding the Third Reich in Germany, which is evident in the spoken word performance and collaboration “Never to”.

Edith Eger is an Auschwitz survivor, who aspired to be a gymnast - that was until her instructor told her that he had to train someone who was not Jewish. Edith was eventually carted to Auschwitz, she says “... We were all shmooshed up, you know, very small, little place, in the cattle car, on the floor, sitting down ... We don't know where we're going, we don't know what's going to happen, just remember no one can take away what you put here in your own mind.” (Hollander, 2020)

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 Never to recover mentally.

Poked and prodded,
 Hauled out of the cart.
 Separated - scared, shivering.
 Yelling, screaming,
 Thumping heartbeats silencing the crowd.
 In 1944 Edith had entered hell.
 Never to get out of this expansive cell.

The Nazis said her mother went to shower,
 There was no sign of her for hours.
 Black snow all around,
 The next victims soon to be found.
 Shivering, frozen,
 Forced to obey.
 Never to foresee another day.

1945, the year of liberation.
 1945, the year of salvation.
 And she was only eighteen.
 Comforted, reassured,
 Embraced by hope.
 Everyone left thinking how they ever coped.
 Never to be forgotten.



Access the video of this performance



Nelly Sachs, the German-Swedish poet, who would later find sanctuary in Sweden from Nazi persecution, expressed the horror of the Holocaust in verse through her poetry. Her most famous poem, "O Die Schornsteine" translates as "O the Chimneys", and addresses the camps where the rest of her Jewish relatives would meet their end.

This was inspiration for our spoken word performance "Never to..."

O Die Schornsteine (O the Chimneys)

By Nelly Sachs (1967)

O the chimneys
On the carefully planned dwellings of death
When Israel's body rose dissolved in smoke
Through the air –
To be welcomed by a chimney sweep star
Turned black
Or was it a ray of the sun?
O the chimneys!
Paths of freedom for the dust of Jeremiah and Job –
Who dreamed you up and built stone upon stone
The path of smoke for their flight?
O dwellings of death
Set out so enticingly
For the host of the house, who used to be the guest –
O you fingers
Laying the stone of the threshold
Like a knife between life and death –
O you chimneys
O you fingers
And Israel's body dissolves in smoke through the air!



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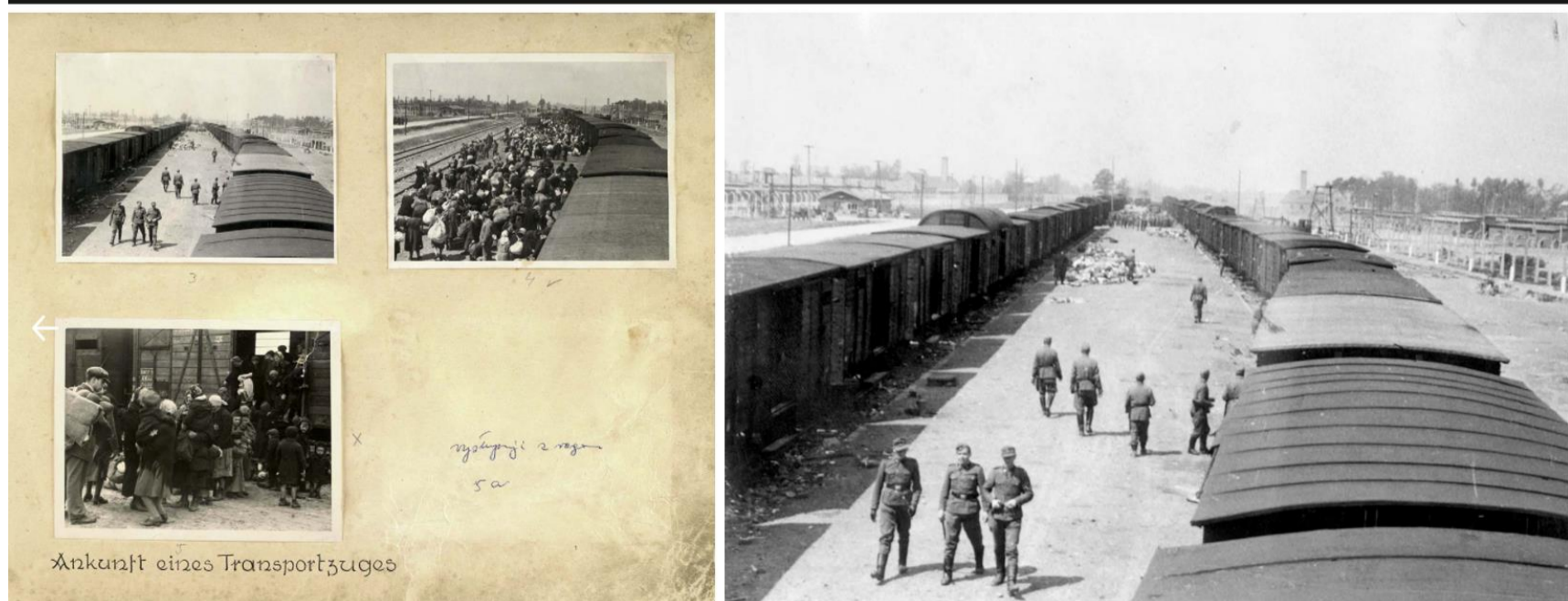
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The Auschwitz Album Arrival



In the photos we see the men, women and children step out of the overcrowded train, traumatized and fearful after their horrendous journey. They have no clue that they have just been delivered to a death factory and that few of them will survive.

Persecution, Dehumanisation and the Courage of Children

To what extent did the persecution and dehumanisation of Jewish children during the Holocaust by the Nazi regime during 1933-1945 have a terrifying impact on their lives and experiences at this time, and how did they respond to such terror, including their ongoing struggle for survival?

By Student 3

“Parents, children, and rescuers faced daunting challenges once the decision was made to go into hiding. Some children could pass as non-Jews and live openly. Those who could not had to live clandestinely, often in attics or cellars. Children posing as Christians had to carefully conceal their Jewish identity from inquisitive neighbours, classmates, informers, blackmailers, and the police. Even a momentary lapse in language or behaviour could expose the child, and the rescuer, to danger.”

~ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

“July 15th 1944: “It’s utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too will end, that peace and tranquillity will return once more. In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I’ll be able to realise them.”

~ Anne Frank

It’s hard to read all the stories about how Jewish people suffered at the time. Watching videos, movies and researching all that pain makes you wonder how could people allow something like that to happen.

It’s important for society to know everything that happened because those who have died in this tragic time need to be remembered. It is also important to know about how many people suffered due to prejudice, so that something like this will never happen again.

In my source investigation I found that the children that went into hiding had hope that they would survive the terrors that they were facing. Even though they were struggling for survival, they still believed that there would be a future for them. There were many ways that they approached in dealing with the situation, but most of them, it is clear, still held onto their sense of hope.

The above diary extract was written by Anne Frank, a German born, Dutch, Jewish diarist. Anne was born in 1929 and died in 1945. She is one of the most discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust. She went into hiding in Amsterdam and their you can visit the house she and her family hid during that time.

In this passage, Anne is talking about her hopes and dreams for the future. She shows that she’s aware that it’s going to be hard to overcome the hardships she’s been through, but she still has hope for a better future.

“I have come like a robber, to take from you what is dearest to your heart. I tried everything I knew to get the bitter sentence cancelled. When it could not be cancelled, I tried to lessen the sentence. Only yesterday I ordered the registration of a nine-year-old child. I wanted to save one year – children from nine to ten. But they would not yield.”

~ Rumkowski, the head of the Jewish Council of Elders in the Łódź Ghetto appointed by Nazi Germany during the German occupation of Poland.

I am a Jew

“I am a Jew and will be a Jew forever.

Even if I should die from hunger, never will I submit.

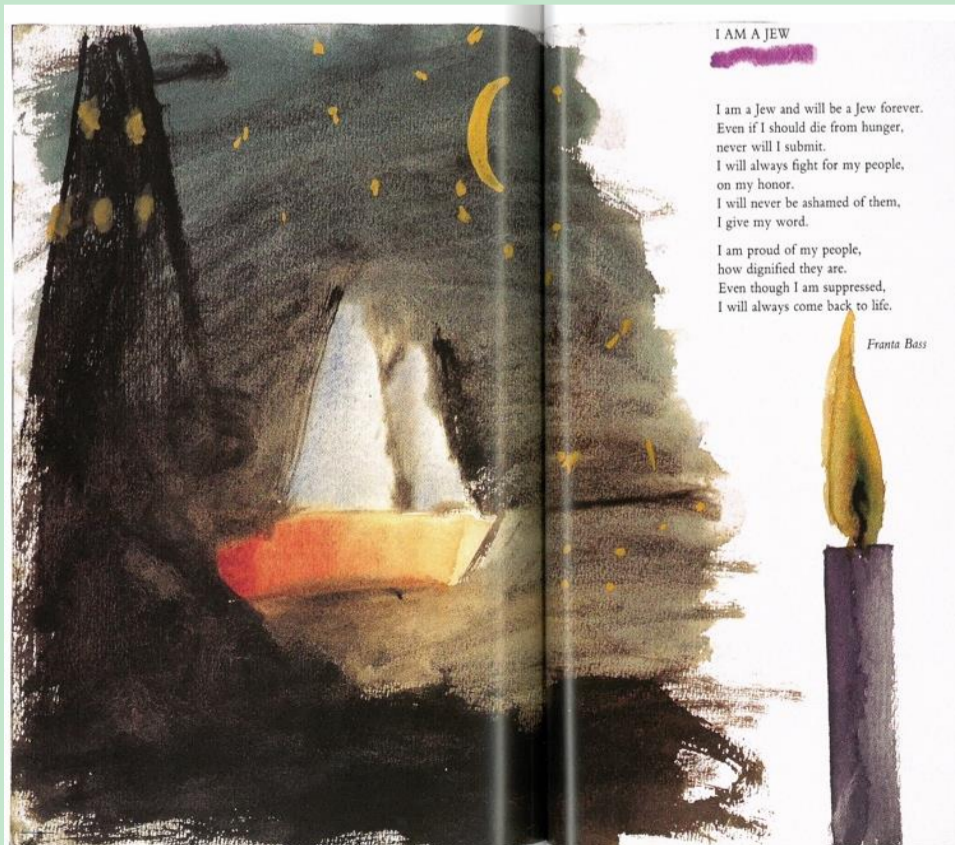
I will always fight for my people, on my honour.

I will never be ashamed of them, I give my word.

I am proud of my people, how dignified they are.

Even though I am suppressed, I will always come back to life.”

~ Franta Bass (a Jewish boy from Czechoslovakia)



[as published in “I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children’s Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–1944” - a collection of works of art and poetry by Jewish children who lived in the concentration camp Theresienstadt].

“I see myself as if I were a traitor, who fled from his people at the time of their anguish. Moreover, it sometimes seems to me that only those Jews who have suffered, who have carried the heavy and bitter burden of exile, will be saved in the redemption of our people; but those who remained here, hidden, will perish like the Jews who perished in the darkness of Egypt.”

~ Moshe Flinker (Dutch Jewish boy, in January 19,1943)

This passage was taken out of his diary and he talked about his opinion on the Jews that fled Nazi persecution.

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Remembering Jewish Courage and Resistance in the face of Nazi Terror in the Theresienstadt Ghetto

What consequences did the Jewish Children of Camp Theresienstadt endure, and how did the Nazi regime further impact the children throughout the liberation of the camp?

By Student 4

The poem "Terezin" by Hanus Hachenburg – a child within the camp, introduces the audience to a person who has had to quickly grow up in order to survive, and explains how this person has lost their childhood, which was stated in the poem:

"But anyway, I still believe today, that I'll wake up, a child again, and start to laugh and play... But now I am no more a child, for I have learned to hate".

This poem gives readers an insight to camp Theresienstadt and how the children of the camps freedom has been taken from them. In response to this poem 'Terezin', a child's illustration is included, which shows a child potentially impaling a Nazi officer with a knife, expressing how the person feels towards Nazi officers of the camp.

This collection of poems reveals what life was like within the camp and how debilitating and dehumanising it was to have lived within the camp. It is clearly evident that the process of ghettoisation had an overall negative impact on these children, which would further impact them in their later lives.

"Some days in the camp you prayed to live; some days you prayed to die quick. Some days you didn't bother praying, knowing there was no sense to anything."

~ Allan Dare Pearce

Although the ghetto and transit camp Theresienstadt was shown to be a happy place for those who lived there (in propaganda), it was actually intensely depressing and dehumanising, due to the lost homes, lives and families of the victims, who had also be greatly marginalised by the Nazis.

The experiences of the Jewish Children in Theresienstadt have proven to be greatly negative through the historical sources available. These Jewish children have had their childhood taken away and have shown great courage in order for them to survive in the ghetto. Many long-term effects would have taken place on those who survived.

TEREZIN

That bit of filth in dirty walls,
And all around barbed wire,
And 30,000 souls who sleep
Who once will wake
And once will see
Their own blood spilled.

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.

Bloody words and a dead day then,
That's something different than bogeymen!

But anyway, I still believe I only sleep today,
That I'll wake up, a child again, and start to laugh and play.
I'll go back to childhood sweet like a briar rose,
Like a bell that wakes us from a dream,
Like a mother with an ailing child
Loves him with aching woman's love.
How tragic, then, is youth that lives
With enemies, with gallows ropes,
How tragic, then, for children on your lap
To say: this for the good, that for the bad.

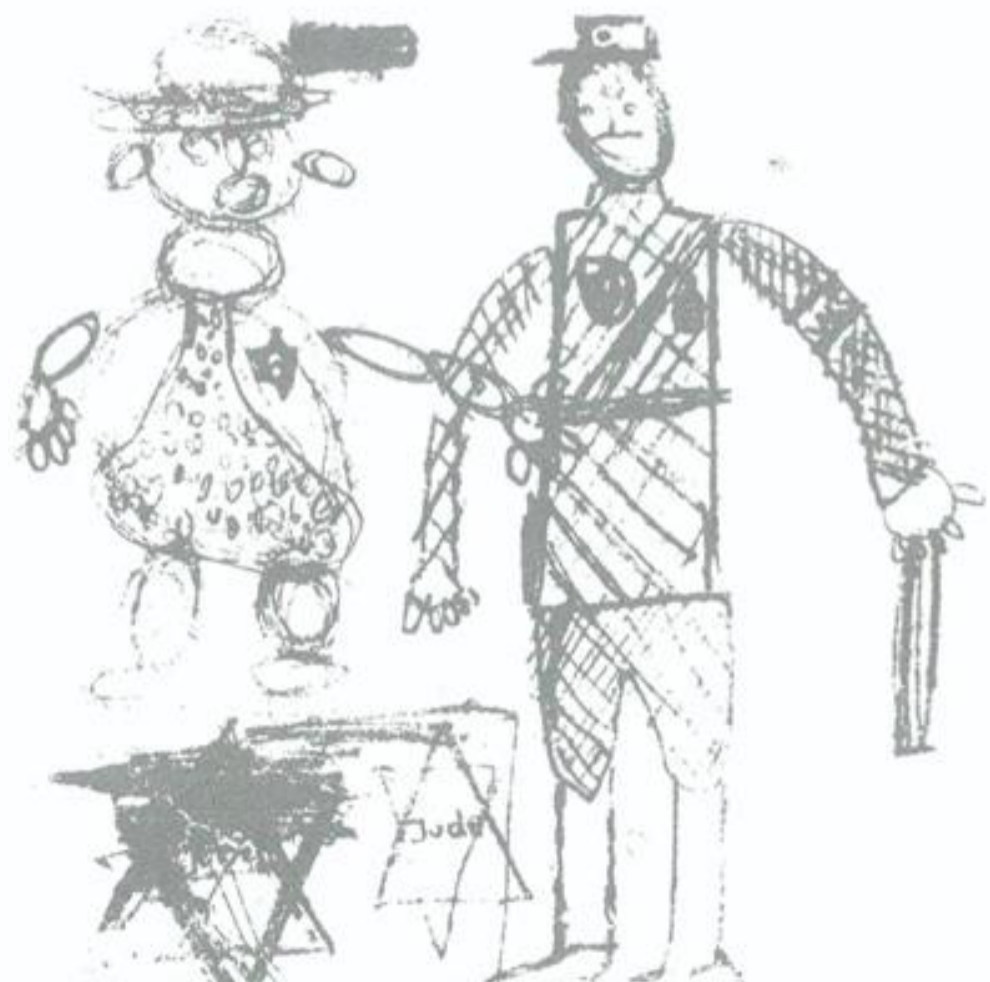
Somewhere, far away out there, childhood sweetly sleeps,
Along that path among the trees,
There o'er that house
That was once my pride and joy.
There my mother gave me birth into this world
So I could weep . . .

In the flame of candles by my bed, I sleep
And once perhaps I'll understand
That I was such a little thing,
As little as this song.

These 30,000 souls who sleep
Among the trees will wake,
Open an eye
And because they see
A lot

They'll fall asleep again . . .

Hanus Hachenburg
IX. 1944



"I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944" is a collection of works of art and poetry by Jewish children who lived in the concentration camp Theresienstadt.

Collage by Student 4



What can we learn about humanity by examining the experiences of life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany?

Tomasz (Toivi) Blatt, a Holocaust survivor would share his experiences on the Sobibor Uprising.

Tomasz was born to a Jewish Family in Izbica. After the war began in 1939, the Germans established a ghetto in Izbica. Toivi states the the rebels who took part killed practically all the Germans.

A specific quote was also remembered by Toivi, said to him by a resistance fighter: "If some lot of you do survive, remember to tell the world about Sobibor".

Within the camps, Nazis established a hierarchy system and prisoners were organised as soon as they entered the camp based on nationality and grounds for incarceration.



This source shows the names of all 56 concentration camps appear on the poster in Hebrew letters.

The union of names create a monument of belonging, of the individual among the collective, each story in the book of Jewish history and mankind.

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The Rise of Nazi Terror and Anti-Semitism that resulted in the Holocaust

From the rise of Nazi Germany in 1933 to the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945, to what extent did the Nazis seek to exploit, damage and destroy Jewish livelihoods, traditions and basic human rights through methodical and discriminatory actions, such as 'Kristallnacht - The Night of the Broken Glass', leading to the Holocaust?

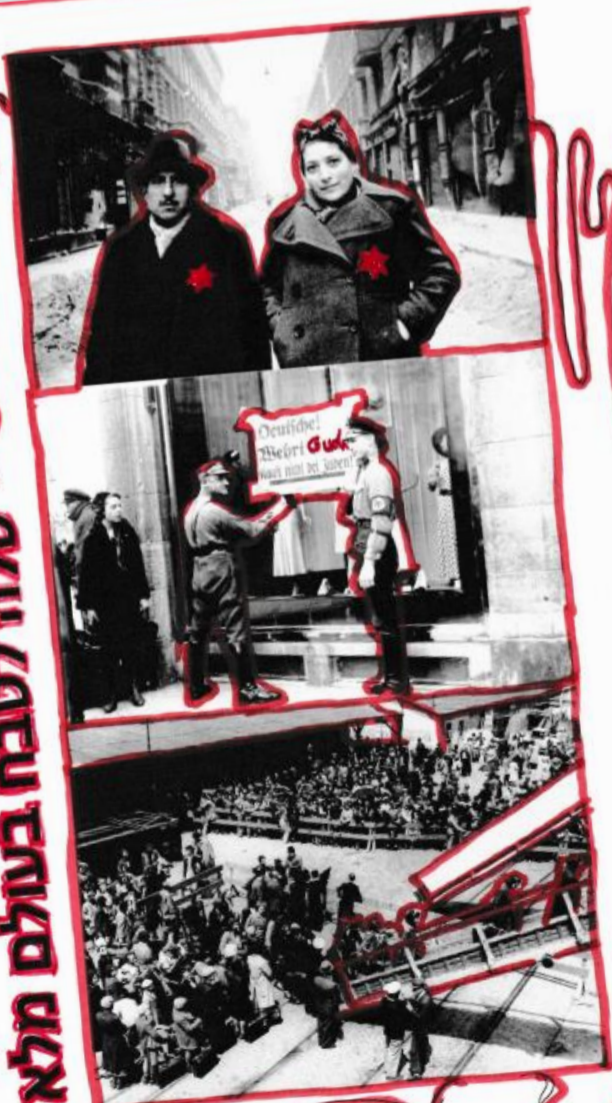
By Student 5

The measures taken to dehumanise Jewish communities were varied, deliberate and effective. Jewish people were socially ostracised, through discriminatory laws, the burning of synagogues, homes and businesses and confiscation of property. Jewish people were forced to wear the star of David to identify, target and isolate them in everyday life. They were stripped of rights, opportunities to work or maintain social standing. They were marginalised from mainstream German society and forcibly moved into ghettos with sub-standard and cramped living conditions.



The Nazi state-run propaganda campaign, run and organised by Joseph Goebbels, drastically contributed to a growing negative attitude and antisemitic sentiment among Germans toward the Jewish people. This poster is an example of the propaganda material generated during this time - a primary source, dated 8 November 1937, a year before Kristallnacht – the 'Night of the Broken Glass', representing racist Nazi ideology.

מלאה לטובת בעולם מלאה



The Nazi War Machine, the Final Solution and the Holocaust

To what extent did the systematic nature of the Nazi War Machine through their use of rail systems, propaganda, extermination and inherent deception of the Jewish population, directly and indirectly affect the life of Jews between 1933-1945 and cause terror during the Second World War, ultimately in an attempt to achieve their 1000 Year Reich and Final Solution?

By Student 6

"The Eternal Jew" is a 1940s antisemitic propaganda film, orchestrated by Joseph Goebbels (Nazi Propaganda Minister) made to radicalise German Nationalists and normalise the hatred of Jews and support Nazi Ideology.



The film falsely labelled the Jews in order to coerce the German people to see them a certain way. Ultimately this movie was poorly made and did not succeed in its intentions, but regardless, did not stop antisemitic policies of the Nazi regime.

“The sadistic machine simply rolls over us”
~ Victor Klemperer (1939)

From this quote above, as well as the personal interest and emotional attachment I felt to this topic, did I then decide to research further into the Nazi War Machine.

The study of Nazi Germany between 1933-1945 forcibly opened my eyes to the nature of war. This being a broad topic, I wanted to especially focus on propaganda, systematic ‘machine efficiency’ through railways and mass extermination, and how it evolved to become as large scale of an operation as it was.

It was especially important for me to find out how the SS and German Army disconnected themselves from Jewish people completely and thought of them as so low in society to somehow justify their mass murder.

From an analysis of historical evidence, it is quite clear that the systematic nature of the **Nazi War Machine**, to an extreme extent, directly and indirectly affected the lives of Jews between 1933-1945 and resulted in large scale terror during World War Two.

“Jews Represented ‘racial policy enemy number one’ for the National Socialists, however. Radical and violent antisemitism had been an indispensable political element of the Nazi Movement since its inception. The concept of the ‘*Volk Community*’, which the Nazi Party had propagated along with the democratic parties of the Weimar Republic, was defined from the outset less by the question of who should belong to it than who was to be excluded at all costs”
~ Topography of Terror (2010)

The Wannsee Conference was held in January of 1942 between the senior government officials and members of the Nazi Party, including the Führer himself, where they began to discuss the implementation and laws going into **the Final Solution – the answer to the ‘Jewish problem’ being the mass execution of the Jews**. The meeting’s minutes were discovered post-war by Robert Kempner in 1947 making them a significant primary source of evidence in demonstrating Nazi ideology and the Nazi War Machine.

The final solution of the Jewish question without regard to geographic borders...

a) the expulsion of the Jews from every sphere of life of the German people,
b) the expulsion of the Jews from the living space of the German people...
The aim of all this was to cleanse German living space of Jews in a legal manner. Approximately 11 million Jews will be involved in the final solution of the European Jewish question...

Oskar Groening (then aged 21) was posted to Auschwitz as an SS officer and recounted his experiences in a 2015 documentary: He almost immediately witnessed a transport arriving at “the ramp” — the platform where the Jews disembarked.

“I was standing at the ramp,” he says, “and my task was to be part of the group supervising the luggage from an incoming transport.” He watched while SS doctors first separated men from women and children, and then selected who was fit to work and who should be gassed immediately. “Sick people were lifted on to lorries,” says Groening. “Red Cross lorries — they always tried to create the impression that people had nothing to fear.

“This process [of selection] proceeded in a relatively orderly fashion but when it was over it was just like a fairground. There was a load of rubbish, and next to this rubbish were ill people, unable to walk, perhaps a child that had lost its mother, or perhaps during searching the train somebody had hidden — and these people were simply killed with a shot through the head. A child was simply pulled on the leg and thrown on a lorry ... then when it cried like a sick chicken, they chucked it against the edge of the lorry.”

“And there we were in that train, over a hundred people... Me being among the youngsters, I was asked to climb up... and look out to see where we were going. I start reading signs. One recognised those names. He said that we are moving south towards Krakow. I also saw some Polish peasants lining the road. They were probably used to those scenes, those trains. Some made signs to us, pointing to the sky. And some went with the fingers across the throat, the throat. I didn't tell the people [in the train car] what I saw...”

~ Leo Schneiderman (oral testimony describing conditions on a cattle train during deportation from Lodz to Auschwitz in 1944, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019)

The rail system of exportation was one most utilised for its efficiency, following the *Gleichschaltung* principals of the Third Reich and the Nazi SS, and dramatically increased the large-scale success of the Final Solution, instilling great confusion, fear and terror.

Untitled Musical Composition

Written, arranged, performed and recorded by Student 6 (2020)

The piece I have written and recorded has no title. Not because I couldn't think of one but rather because it's indescribable by nature. It begins with a small little duet prelude to represent the life of many people prior to the war, primarily the Jewish population. This is done with 2 cello parts and 6 vocal tracks all harmonising in the major key of G to give the perception of happiness. Throughout it slowly becomes more and more dissonant and out of key to show to the listener something is going wrong. From there you hear the little whispers and percussive hits on the instrument to represent manual labour and the sound of hammers, shovels, and pickaxes. At this point it transitions into a D minor key, with chromatic elements to sway the tonal centre and keep it unpredictable.

The repetitive nature of the accompany part is to give the listener a tedious feeling, much like that of waiting around for long periods of time in anticipation for something bigger and sinister to occur. It could also be seen to represent the continuous nature of the transportation of Jewish people. At the piece's climax, it has duelling melodic parts causing further confusion while also introducing 2 percussive parts in a 2/4-time signature, common to that of a march. This section is to show the Nazi perspective, or more accurately an outside perspective of the Nazis during the war. The constant changing time signature and counteracting parts doesn't allow for the listener to grasp onto a steady beat and understand fully what is occurring, similar to how I felt learning the true nature of the Holocaust in this unit of work.

The end of the piece returns back to the 3/8-driving line re-introducing elements of the composition such as the march beat randomly. This was intentionally added, as more of a personal reflection, looking back upon everything I'd learnt in what is meant to feel like a short period of time. Being the shortest section of the composition it's purpose was to make you think of how you can't grasp years of the war within such a short period and understand each person's perspective fully – especially not within 1 minute of a 5 minute composition. The piece abruptly ends out of nowhere with no real resolution because it's not resolved. In reality, the effects of the Holocaust live on and always will and there was no appropriate ending to what had occurred. This is meant to encourage the teaching of the holocaust to continue, in the same principles of the ANZAC's "Lest we forget..." acknowledgment.

[Access the audio of this performance](#)



Student 6 drew initial inspiration for his inquiry and musical composition from a class activity at the start of our unit.

As the class explored the Holocaust and the importance of memory and memorialisation, the class responded with a "See, Think, Wonder" to a series of posters from the "Keeping the Memory Alive" Poster Project of the Department of Public Information's Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme and the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

He was inspired by this poster by Veronika Šišková (Czech Republic), which he saw as evoking the **Nazi War Machine**:

"The main motif of this poster is the swastika symbol in a spinning motion which aims to evoke a picture of a mill, wheel, or a grinder [the **Nazi War Machine**]. We see tiny Jewish stars (representing individual people) falling from the left corner into this evil machine. They come out as single triangles – nothing compared to their former shape – dead or completely devastated. The poster symbolises the victims of the Holocaust and the horrors they went through."

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Determination and Resilience: A Lesson We Can Learn From

Remembering the Holocaust

To what extent were the experiences of women during the operation of the Auschwitz concentration camp (1940-1945) under the Nazi regime indicative of a struggle of life and terror during the Third Reich in Germany, and how did this contribute to the Nazi pursuit of the Final Solution?

The annihilation of Jewish people by Nazi Germany in the Holocaust is history that should never be repeated. As humanity, we must listen to Elie Wiesel's wise words "to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time" (Tognotti, 2016). In order to remember the horror and terror victims faced during the Holocaust, we must listen, learn and cherish their stories, as they are teaching us what others cannot.

By Student 8

Whilst antisemitic attitudes were present for centuries, Nazi ideology created a new form of antisemitism, viewing Jews as a racial archenemy.

Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp, including labour and death camps, became a symbol of terror.

"Question: Can your focus on what motivated [the perpetrators]?"

Mommsen: Undeniably, there existed a consensus about getting rid of the Jews. But it was a different question whether to kill them or to press them to leave the country...ethnic cleansing"

~ Gordon, Reich and Goldberg's interview with Hans Mommsen (1997), renowned functionalist Holocaust historian.

"Women actively participated in mass murder because they saw an opportunity for economic and even social equality to that of their male counterparts..."

In a post-war memoir written by Dr. Gisella Perl, she recounts her time spent at Auschwitz ... Perl describes [Irma] 'Greze,' the highest ranking woman in the SS at Auschwitz, as one of the most beautiful women she had ever seen, and yet, as one of the most 'depraved, cruel, imaginative sexual pervert [she] ever came across'."

By privileging women perpetrator perspectives, it contributes to the growing historical consciousness of the Holocaust - Jewish women were sexually abused by female perpetrators (not just males), suffering cruelty at the hands of the Nazis regardless of gender.

~ Haley Wodenshek (Trinity College, 2015 in a senior thesis titled *Ordinary Women: Female Perpetrators of the Nazi Final Solution*)

"I feel very strongly that we should warn and educate our youth... what could happen to people who are innocent...because antisemitism is always somewhere and we have to be on guard and this is the only thing, is education."

~ Yehudit Rubinstein

"They told us to get undressed and they shaved us. They shaved my beautiful blonde hair and my two sisters' hair and we were standing naked before the soldiers"

~ Tova Berger

"The camp was no maternity ward. It was only the antechamber to hell."

~ Yehudit Rubinstein

"Life doesn't have the meaning, the joy that life had when we were young... They still shoot me and it still hurts... We didn't survive the misery."

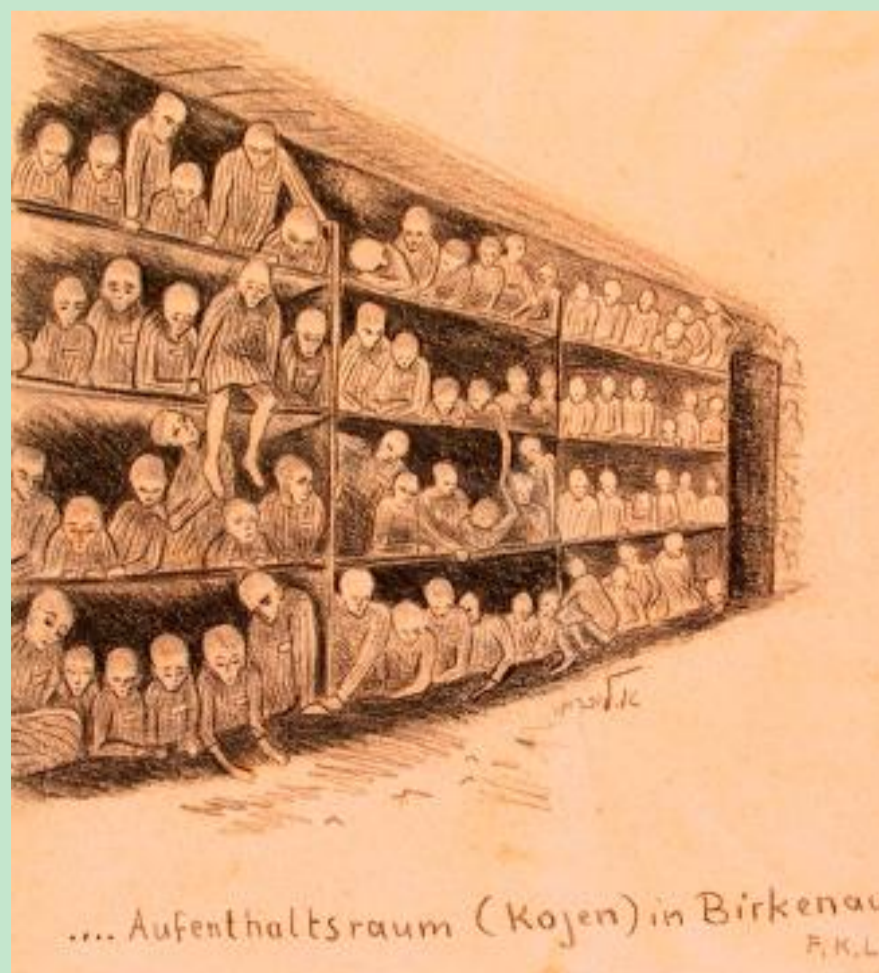
~ Miriam Buki

These quotes above are from women's testimonies who were inmates at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, published in an educational ceremony by *Yad Vashem*, the world's leading Holocaust historical institution & Remembrance Centre.

Privileging Jewish perspectives, including Jewish women, ensures the collective and individual memory of their ongoing struggle of life remains for future generations, demonstrating their remarkable acts of resilience – something we can all learn from.

This artwork was created by **Ella Liebermann-Shiber** after she was released from the Auschwitz concentration camp (1945-1949). Through a piece of beautiful art, we can see that despite the cruel conditions and dehumanisation faced by victims, humanity was upheld through acts of kindness, where they reached out to each other. A small, simple gesture meant the world.

~ Dr Mor Presiado, lecturer in Jewish art and the Holocaust



"I am completely calm... Have a fabulous life, we must board the trucks. Into Eternity, Vilma."

This excerpt from a letter written by **Vilma Grunwald** to her family moments before entering a gas chamber in Auschwitz is incredibly inspiring – we must privilege previously silenced and marginalised perspectives.

This ensures the individual and collective memory of victims of the Holocaust lives on. Innocent people who experienced what no one should have to...



These images are from the **Auschwitz Album** – the only surviving visual evidence of the process, including arrival and selection operations, leading to the mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau, accessed through Yad Vashem (it is a unique document and was donated to Yad Vashem by Lilly Jacob-Zelmanovic Meier).



These photos taken by two SS officers explicitly demonstrate the dehumanisation processes evident in the camps. This is seen through their shaved heads and same prison uniform, with the horror and fear of the unknown whilst being trapped in electrified barbed fences.

“In isolation we are waiting for darkness...The famous trucks are already...I am completely calm... Have a fabulous life, we must board the trucks. Into Eternity, Vilma” (Mowat, 2020).

This excerpt from a letter written in 1944 by Vilma Grunwald to her family moments before entering a gas chamber in Auschwitz has really put into perspective, on a personal level, the antisemitic ideologies present in society during the Third Reich in Germany from 1933-1945. Whilst antisemitic attitudes were present for centuries, Nazi ideology created a new form of antisemitism, viewing Jews as a racial archenemy. The quote inspired me to focus my source investigation on the Auschwitz concentration camp, through focusing on the motives of the Nazi Party in pursuing the Final Solution, and women’s roles and experiences as both victims and perpetrators.

In terms of the project, in collaboration with Students 8 and 9 we designed our **interactive poster** based on a tree to symbolise life, and how new victim perspectives continue to emerge and the ways we can remember them is always growing and changing. The roots symbolise Jewish life before the Holocaust, and the leaves represent life afterwards. We used barbed wire to wrap around the tree roots and up the tree, to symbolise the Holocaust and terror faced by victims, and the ongoing effects it has today. The blue butterflies, dove and Star of David all have significance to the Jewish culture.

We incorporated multiple forms of media in our interactive poster to link our three inquiry topics - Warsaw ghetto uprising, women in Auschwitz and Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz. We included other stories that do not directly relate to our topics but work to link them together, to address the complexities of the Holocaust, the interconnectedness of voices and experiences of the Shoah and in sharing the human story.

By Student 8



Access this interactive poster

The Fighting Spirit of the Individuals: The Importance of Sharing Holocaust Stories (including Ghetto Life and Resistance)

To what extent was the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943 indicative of a significant act of Jewish resistance against the Nazi Party and their ideologies, including antisemitic values, attitudes and beliefs in response to the implementation of the 'Final Solution' during the Third Reich between 1933 and 1945?

The Holocaust signified a period of terror under the Nazi Regime where nearly six million Jews were murdered. Each of those six million Jews and the ones that survived had a unique story that we as humanity must remember. It is those people that we must turn to in order to truly understand this horrific period and what it means to be human.

By Student 8

"No act of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust fired the imagination quite as much as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943. It was an event of epic proportions, pitting a few poorly armed, starving Jews against the might of Nazi power..."

The uprising represents defiance and great sacrifice in a world characterised by destruction and death...

The Warsaw ghetto uprising is a historical event, but it also has become a symbol of Jewish resistance and determination, a moment in history that has transformed the self-perception of Jewish people from passivity to active armed struggle"

~ Israel Gutman

(Academic advisor and previous chief historian at Yad Vashem and Holocaust survivor)

"The January 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising teaches us a great deal about the human spirit, about resilience, and about courage..."

In taking up arms against those who considered them less than human, the men and women on January 18, 1943 in the Warsaw Ghetto issued a resounding, clarion call asserting their humanity. It is this, above all, that we must remember and hold dear"

~ Robert Rozett

(Senior historian at Yad Vashem)

Perpetrator perspectives and reports are useful in demonstrating their motives, particularly in contributing to the 'Final Solution'. From a contemporary perspective, it can be seen how their decisions contributed to the terror experienced which became part of everyday life for the Jewish community. Jürgen Stroop stated the following in the *Stroop Report* following the beginning of the Warsaw ghetto uprising on April 19, 1943:

"I therefore decided to destroy the entire Jewish residential area by setting every block on fire, including the blocks of residential buildings near the armament works... In this way, it should be possible to keep the small remainder of Jews there, if any, under constant pressure and to exterminate them eventually."

"I believe that human language is incapable of describing the horror which we have known in the ghetto... we were obliged to heap the corpses that were piled one on top of the other ... we were cut off from everything ... we were completely isolated from the world."

~ Simha Rotem

"During the first three days of combat, the ghetto was nothing but fire, the Germans bombarded the exterior to try to destroy all that existed in the ghetto. It was the Jews, however, who had the [advantage] the first three days..."

~ Yitzhak Zuckerman

The selected quotes were from a translated transcript of an interview between Simha Rotem, Yitzhak Zuckerman and Claude Lanzmann in 1979 for the documentary *Shoah* about the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Zuckerman and Rotem were two Jewish survivors of the uprising, both playing key roles in the uprising including smuggling weapons into the ghetto and leading a mass escape through the sewers. By privileging these primary Jewish perspectives, it can be explicitly seen the terror they faced and survived despite being "completely isolated from the world."

This is why their perspectives should not be silenced.



~ *Witkiewicz* aus *Brüder in der Not*

"Forcibly pulled out of the dug-outs"

This photograph was part of the *Stroop Report* that was released by Jürgen Stroop, an SS commander, in 1943 about the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. The report contained 53 photographs and included 31 daily reports of the operations from the uprising. It is explicitly seen the terror that the Jewish community faced. It is important to recognise and remember and that Jewish women and children were also impacted by the terror and actions of the Nazi Party.

The Holocaust was not an event that can be forgotten. It is important to remember that there is always more than one perspective, not just the 'victors.'

We need to consider not only the perpetrators and bystanders, but the victims – those who have previously been marginalised and silenced.

Without their stories of life, terror and resistance we cannot fully understand the individual experiences of the everyday people who lived through this significant period in history.

We need to ensure that their perspectives are no longer silenced and that their stories will forever be remembered in historical consciousness.

"I can't describe to you the conditions in which the Jews are living. Only a few individuals will hold out. All the rest will be killed sooner or later... In all the bunkers... you can't light a candle at night for lack of oxygen... The main thing is the dream of my life has come true. I've lived to see a Jewish defence in the ghetto in all its greatness and glory."

~ Mordechai Anielewicz

(in a letter sent to Yitzhak Zuckerman during the Warsaw ghetto uprising)

"We knew we were going to die. The question was only when and how to finish... What did we want to do? To save most of the people. What did we demand from the outside world? To save our people any way they could... But I couldn't get rid of the past. After the Holocaust, it gets worse and worse..."

There were few people who knew the full scope and horror of what happened as I did. But, in January 1945, when I saw the vacuum left after the murder of my people, I broke down... Twenty, thirty years have gone by, and things still bubble up in you."

~ Yitzhak Zuckerman

(from his memoir, "A Surplus of Memory Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto")

“We, who have been rescued from the ghetto, are ashamed to look at each other. Had we the right to save ourselves? Here everything smells of sun and flowers and there—there is only blood, the blood of my own people” (Berg, 1942, cited in Bard, 1996, online).

This quote by Mary Berg broadened my awareness of the lives of many Jewish people during the Holocaust. Specifically, ghettoization and how it encompassed life, terror and resistance. I found most interesting resistance, particularly the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising which was one of the largest acts of Jewish resistance. I wanted to explore the varying perspectives, including those of perpetrators and victims to determine their significance in shaping the historical narrative surrounding the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945.

In terms of the project, in collaboration with Students 7 and 9 our poster was designed based off a tree as a symbol of life and the ongoing emergence of new victim perspectives and how we remember these to be forever growing. The roots symbolise Jewish life before the Holocaust, including their culture, the trunk represents their experiences during the Holocaust and the leaves represent life afterwards. The barbed wire that wraps around the roots and up the trunk symbolise the terror that many of the victims experienced, as well as how that aspect of their life will never be forgotten. The fauna, including the blue butterflies, dove and Star of David are all significant to Jewish culture.

The interactive element is the links that relate to each of the key areas which link to our inquiry topics- I investigated the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Student 7 investigated Women in Auschwitz and Student 9 explored Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz. Through the combination of these topics, we were able to address the complexities of this period, the interconnectedness of voices and experiences of the Shoah, and share the human story of those whose lives were forever changed.

By Student 8



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Stories of the Forced Workers of Auschwitz: The Sonderkommando

To what extent was the exploitation of the Sonderkommando as forced participants in the destruction of their own people during the operation of Auschwitz concentration camp (1940 – 1945), motivated by the pursuit of the Final Solution, and what contestation remains in viewing them as victims or perpetrators under the terror of the Nazi regime?

The Auschwitz Concentration camp, the largest mass extermination camp of Jewish people in Poland, aimed to bring pain, suffering and terror to those who arrived. Although the majority did not survive past the Selection process and were led directly to their deaths through the gas chambers, those who were selected to work at the camp lived under extremely inhumane conditions. The prisoners of Auschwitz was mostly made up of forced labour groups, with the one of the most dehumanising, terrifying and diabolical being the **Sonderkommando**: the men forced to remove and take care of the cleaning out of the gas chambers.

By Student 9

Buried in the grounds of Crematorium III, the **'Scrolls of Auschwitz'**, a documentation of stories, records of locations, number of people killed each day of October 1944 and other records of the **Sonderkommando experiences**, were written by many Sonderkommandos who did not survive to experience liberation.



"Didn't you know that the Germans gave precise orders about what to say and when to say it—and that disobedience could cost you your life?"

~ Josef Sackar

"We'd become robots by then. We couldn't expose ourselves to the intensity of the emotions that we experienced in the course of our work...during that time we had no emotions. We were totally drained. We blocked up our hearts; we were dehumanised. We worked like machines. We were human beings devoid of human emotion. We were really animals, not people."

"You have to realise the system was too sophisticated for us to interfere in any way. The people were doomed to die, and we couldn't do a thing about it. The Germans lied in the cruellest ways. We had no choice but to do what we were told... Escape was impossible."

~ Leon Cohen

Through the rising historical consciousness and remembrance of this era of terror which many people experienced, it is extremely important to understand and acknowledge the perspectives and voices of victims of this mass terror machine which were silenced.

With history mainly focusing on only one perspective and the Holocaust as a whole event, these personal experiences of life and terror can often be overlooked, however, they play just as a significant role in our understanding of these events today.

Not only does this assist us in understanding these victim experiences, but also ensuring that their stories will live on for further generations to understand the underserved treatment these people were accustomed to.

"When they came to me and told me they wanted to rebel I said, 'I'm with you, 100 percent.' Four girls who worked in the factory brought explosives. My job was to make hand grenades... At least we did something."

~ Eliezer Eizenschmidt

In October 1944, a group of over 250 Sonderkommando rebelled against the SS guards. This resulted in the murder in all of the people involved, including a further 200 surviving Sonderkommando and the interrogation and torture of other members who were suspected to be involved.

"When we reached our 'workplace,' the Germans divided into groups, five men in each group. When someone in my group saw what the work consisted of – cremating dead Jews – he threw himself into the flames. He couldn't bear the thought of having to cremate the bodies of his Jewish brethren... The veteran crematorium prisoners told us about the work we'd have to do. But those stories paled in comparison to the reality."

~ Leon Cohen

The above quotes from the testimonies of Josef Sackar and Leon Cohen, were part of a collection of Sonderkommando survivor testimonies by Gideon Grief, in his book *'We Wept Without Tears'* (1999).

Sackar and Cohen, selected to work as **Sonderkommando** upon arrival to Auschwitz concentration camp, are able to describe their personal experiences of life, terror and resistance during their experience of life under the terror of the Nazi Regime, providing important voices that have often been marginalised in history.



This photograph is one part of a four-part collection of the only photographic evidence of the extermination process within Auschwitz. The photograph was taken by an unknown Sonderkommando, working with Polish Resistance fighters to smuggle a camera into the camp and photographs out, in order to capture visual testimony to share with the world and to document the terror of what was occurring within Auschwitz.

The experience of Auschwitz has been understood through many survivor testimonies, describing the forceful and unjustifiable treatment millions of Jewish people experienced upon arrival and imprisonment within the extermination camp. Although the camp was predominantly a death camp, due to the vast size, these facilities were concealed, with many victims being deceived of their fate until the last moment of their lives.

"We didn't know anything. There were rumours that we were going to be rounded up and moved to a sealed ghetto, but nothing special happened... We went in cattle cars, packed in horribly, under disgraceful conditions."

"Shortly after we left the train, the Selektion began. They sent our parents to one side and my two sisters and me to the other side. My sisters and I were selected for labour. The rest of them, I think, were incinerated that very day."

~ Josef Sackar

“You have to realise the system was too sophisticated for us to interfere in any way. The people were doomed to die, and we couldn’t do a thing about it” (Cohen cited in Grief, 1999).

When selecting my topic choice, I was particularly drawn to investigating the operation of Auschwitz. After further research, I became aware of the dehumanising and dreadful processes within the camp that allowed for ‘efficient operation’ in working toward the goal of Jewish extermination for racial purity of the Aryan race. It was clear that there were many processes allowing Auschwitz to operate at the mass level it was, and I discovered that the Sonderkommando played a significant role in this. Further research led me to understand the role Sonderkommando had within the camp, and the extent to which they were manipulated, lied to and forced to complete inhumane work. I wanted to know more about what these people went through as people, as individuals, not just as ‘workers of Auschwitz’, but as people with unique stories and experiences.

With Auschwitz being mainly an extermination camp, individual and lived experiences of Jewish people within these camps who assisted with the operation is extremely valuable to understanding the Holocaust. Through these people, historians have been able to collect evidence to analyse, through survivor testimonies as well as primary documents from the time such as the ‘Scrolls of Auschwitz’ and the photographic collection taken in 1944. After understanding the importance of the Sonderkommando, I wanted to learn more and investigate further personal experiences, hence, I chose this topic to gain a greater understanding of these people within Auschwitz and help be a messenger for their human stories of the Holocaust.

We incorporated multiple forms of media in our interactive poster to link our three inquiry topics - Warsaw ghetto uprising, women in Auschwitz and Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz. We included other stories that do not directly relate to our topics but work to link them together, to address the complexities of the Holocaust, the interconnectedness of voices and experiences of the Shoah and in sharing the human story.

By Student 9



Access this interactive poster

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Survival and Resistance to the 'Final Solution'

To what extent is the survival of victims of the 'Final Solution' – implemented from 1941– a contested form of resistance against the Nazi Regime and the Third Reich?

Many people's lives were overturned in central and eastern Europe under the rule of the Third Reich, figure-headed by Adolf Hitler, from 1933 to the conclusion of World War II (WWII) in 1945. The Nazi – National Socialist Workers' Party – regime promoted ideologies of a superior Aryan race and antisemitism. Severe discriminatory measures were imposed on select minorities – in particular the European Jewry – that culminated in the 'Final Solution', a cold-blooded mass murder.

The term Holocaust refers to this attempted genocide, which is still hauntingly relevant in contemporary society.

By Student 10

"I can see their faces they simply did not grasp it. I think it was one of their first encounters with the German horror in our image."

~ Survivor Walter Zwi Bacharach

Functionalist or Intentionalist?

Historians remain divided regarding the motives underpinning the implementation of the 'Final Solution' by the Nazis. Some argue it was the product of a "cynical rationalisation for genocide" in response to the practical difficulties of hosting vast numbers of prisoners. However, the extract (below) of Himmler's thinly veiled orders for the extermination of the Jewish population, is indicative of the ingrained ideals of racial discrimination and superiority that likely also played a deciding role in this decision.

"These measures are required with a view to the necessary ethnic division of races and peoples for the New Order in Europe, and also in the interests of the security and cleanliness of the German Reich and its sphere of interest. Every breach of this regulation spells a danger to quiet and order in the entire German sphere of interest, a point of application for the resistance movement and a source of moral and physical pestilence."

"For all these reasons a total cleansing is necessary and therefore to be carried out."

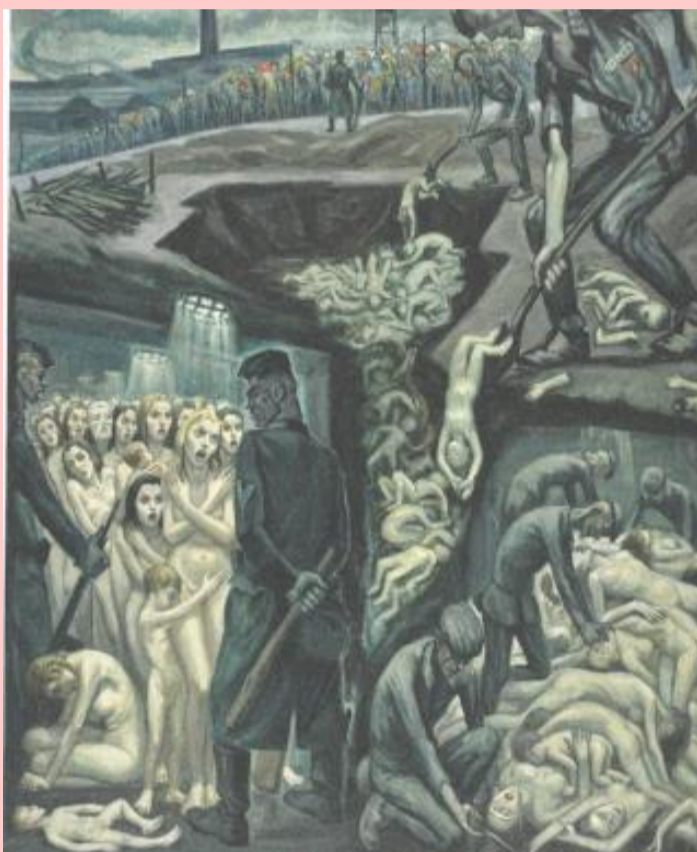
~ Himmler, 1942

(Reich Leader of the SS, who is corroborated to have been a powerful figure of the Nazi regime and played a key role in executing the Final Solution)

To Bear Witness

"I must do everything I can to live, to be able to tell people what I experienced here."

~ Jakov Silberberg, Sonderkommando



This artwork shows the tasks Sonderkommando members were forced to carry out, painted by survivor David Olère (based on his own sketch from 1943).

"Life was not easy... He remained behind the barbed wire and we, on the outside, could not reach out through that barbed wire to him." ~ David Olère's son, Alexandre

Whilst the Holocaust took a lasting toll on the lives of survivors, their eye-witness testimonies represent a significant form of resistance against the 'Final Solution'.

Through their stories we are able to keep the flame of memory alight.

Spiritual Resistance

"In Holocaust terminology, 'spiritual resistance' refers to attempts by individuals to maintain their humanity and core values in spite of Nazi dehumanisation and degradation. Such unarmed resistance came in many forms, religious and non-religious, cultural, and educational. It proved that physical survival was not the only decisive quality of a person and it certainly was not the only matter of importance even to people in the most dire conditions."

"In ghettos and camps, Jews struggled for humanity, for culture, for normalcy, and for life."

~ Yad Vashem

David Olère devoted his later life to depicting scenes of the almost unimaginable horrors of life and death at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where he was forced to work as a Sonderkommando. His artworks tell his story – too terrible for words.

Return to Life

Liberation offered little relief to survivors of the Holocaust. Conditions were dire, with several thousands of people perishing from malnutrition and disease. Countless were exposed to the bitter revelation that their loved ones had been murdered. There was no returning to life as they had known it before the war.



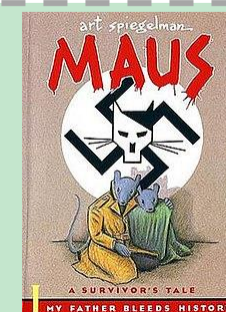
To the right, an image courtesy of the British Army in 1945 shows sisters Ita Deutsch (later Hoffman) and Friedel Deutsch receiving clothing. Friedel Deutsch (left), died of typhus three days after the photograph was taken. This source is paired with the verbal testimonies of Holocaust survivors, sharing their lived experiences of liberation.

"We had a large family. No one came back." ~ Nachum Bandel

"I always say (liberation) came too late. I didn't know how to be happy anymore." ~ Rita Weiss (from Bergen-Belsen, Germany, 1945)

"It wasn't the BEST people who survived, nor did the best ones die. It was RANDOM!"

~ Art Spiegelman in *Maus* (1980), (his Pulitzer prize winning graphic novel based on interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor.)



In the autobiographical comic *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, a series of panels documents a conversation between the author and a Holocaust survivor. Spiegelman is asked whether he admires his father for his survival of Auschwitz concentration camp. When he tentatively answers in the affirmative, he is challenged, "Then you think it's admirable to survive. Does that mean it's NOT admirable NOT to survive?... it wasn't the BEST people who survived, nor did the best ones die. It was RANDOM!" (Spiegelman, 1980).



This debate captures the contestability surrounding the concept of survival as a form of resistance against the Nazi's regime and the 'Final Solution' during the Holocaust, and piqued my interest in exploring this topic for my source investigation. A significant challenge in devising historical interpretations about the Holocaust is the sensitivity of the subject for many people today. It was important for me to provide a breadth of victims' perspectives, and ensure that their testimonies are appropriately represented for the purpose of this investigation. Furthermore, it was vital to include perpetrator perspectives from the time of the Holocaust, especially regarding the motives and ideologies driving the 'Final Solution', as recounts given after World War II may have been falsified in order to avoid punishment. The archives of Holocaust education centres such as Yad Vashem proved highly useful in locating reliable primary sources and survivor testimonies.

Whilst many survivors suffered greatly in their return to life, their mere survival undermined the Nazi goals for complete extermination of the Jewish population, and further, their testimonies may be seen as a form of resistance in promoting remembrance of the Holocaust, and this formed the basis on my musical composition response.

"What happened in the camps is more than an artistic phenomena.

We have to think of this music as a last testament.

We have to perform this music like Beethoven, Mahler, Schumann.

These musicians, for me, wanted only one desire: that this music can be performed."

~ Francesco Lotoro

(a composer, pianist and musicologist who has done extensive research in uncovering the lost compositions of the Holocaust)



I wanted to perform the music of the victims of the Holocaust as testament to the legacy of their spiritual resistance. Through my research I was fortunate to find some recordings, and I personally arranged a song written by an unknown composer in Treblinka.

My performance of this musical composition represents the human quality of creativity and gives a voice to the musicians whose melodies were lost to the Holocaust, but that remain as evidence of their courage and spiritual resistance, keeping their human stories alive through music for generations to come.

By Student 10

Oyb Nit Keyn Emune ...

Arranged and performed by Student 10
(2020)

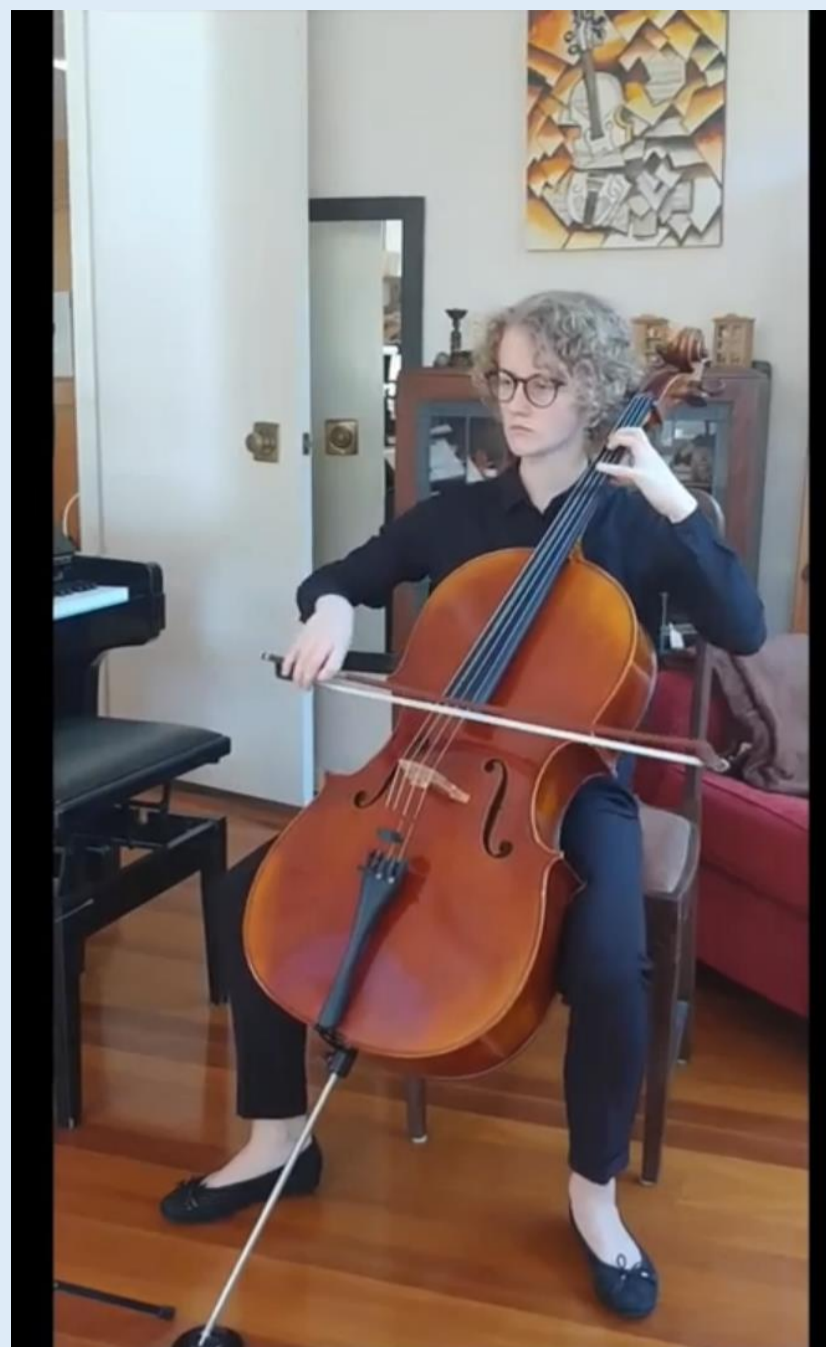
“Oyb nit keyn emune in got borukh-hu, vos zhe toyg mir ales vos ikh tu?”

**“If I do not have faith in God blessed be He,
what's the use of everything that I do?”**

This song was written by an unknown composer in
Treblinka death camp.

It stands testament to the flame of human creativity and
the strength of faith in the face of even the most terrible
suffering and cruelty.

Access video of this performance



Student 10 found further inspiration for her own musical arrangement and performance in the work being done to recognise spiritual resistance in the Holocaust through music.

Prisoners in Nazi concentration camps made music; now it's being discovered and performed

More than 6 million people, most of them Jews, died in the Holocaust. The music they wrote as a temporary escape, however, did not, thanks in part to the efforts of an Italian composer and pianist.

The sign above the steel gates of Auschwitz reads "*arbeit macht frei*" – work sets you free. It was, of course, a chilling lie, an evil hoax. But there was one surprising source of temporary escape inside the gates: music. Composers and singers and musicians, both world-class and recreational, were among the imprisoned. And what's not widely known is that under the bleakest conditions imaginable, they performed and wrote music. Lots of it. More than 6 million people, most of them Jews, died in the Holocaust, but their music did not, thanks in part to the extraordinary work of Francesco Lotoro. An Italian composer and pianist, Lotoro has spent 30 years recovering, performing, and in some cases, finishing pieces of work composed in captivity. Nearly 75 years after the camps were liberated, Francesco Lotoro is on a remarkable rescue mission, reviving music like this piece created by a young Jewish woman in a Nazi concentration camp in 1944.

Francesco Lotoro examines music that he is helping to save from being lost from the Holocaust).

“The miracle is that all of this could have been destroyed, could have been lost. And instead the miracle is that this music reaches us.

Music is a phenomenon which wins. That's the secret of the concentration camps.

No one can take it away. No one can imprison it.”



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Student 10's work was further inspired by that of Dr Tamara Freeman, a Holocaust Ethnomusicologist, Teacher, Viola Recitalist, and Singer. Dr Freeman is a concert violinist and violist, and her 1935 Joseph Bausch viola was rescued from the Holocaust. The Bausch viola serves as a voice of remembrance that she plays to help keep alive the personal stories of composers interned in the ghettos and concentration. Each folk song and instrumental piece serve as legacies for humanity, character education, spiritual resistance, and hope.

Freeman, T 2011, *Holocaust Music Education and Performance by Tamara Freeman*. Viewed April 2020, < <http://holocaustmusic.org/MEDIA.aspx> >

Tamara Freeman

Holocaust Music Education and Performance

Contact Dr. Freeman

HOME

ABOUT TAMARA

SERVICES

TESTIMONIALS

MEDIA

CALENDAR

DISSERTATION

MEDIA

Welcome to my performance of Holocaust songs on my 1935 Joseph Bausch viola, a relic of the Holocaust. Each piece expresses events of ghettos and concentration camps, as well as the composers' feelings of longing, suffering, and hope.

The original owner of the viola perished in the Holocaust. Fortunately, her instrument lives on, musically honoring those whose lives were forever changed during WWII.

German Resistance and the White Rose Movement

To what extent did the White Rose Movement of 1942 and 1943 demonstrate a marginalised German perspective through resistance against the Nazi Regime in Germany?

By Student 11

“That the accused have in time of war by means of leaflets called for the sabotage of the war effort and armaments and for the overthrow of the National Socialist way of life of our people, have propagated defeatist ideas, and have most vulgarly defamed the Führer, thereby giving aid to the enemy of the Reich and weakening the armed security of the nation.”

~ White Rose Trial Sentencing Transcripts (1943)

“...now in investigative custody regarding treasonous assistance to the enemy, preparing to commit high treason, and weakening of the nation's armed security...”

~ Trial Sentencing Transcripts (1943)

“As an old National-Socialist, I must also say that if the pack of Jews were to survive the war in Europe, then this war would still be only a partial success. I will therefore, on principle, approach Jewish affairs in the expectation that the Jews will disappear. They must go...”

~ Hans Frank (on the Extermination of the Jews, 1941)

“The reasons behind my philosophical alienation from the League of German Girls, and therefore the NSDAP, beginning around 1938, have as primary basis the fact that my sister Inge, and my brothers Hans and Werner were arrested in the autumn of 1938 by officials of the Secret State Police [Gestapo] because of so called bündische activities. They were kept in custody for several days or weeks. I am still of the opinion even now that the proceedings against us as well as against other children in Ulm were completely unjustified.” ~ Sophie Scholl (1943)

“Since the conquest of Poland three hundred thousand Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way...”

~ Second White Rose Leaflet (1942)

“The endless, senseless drilling, the hate-filled aggressive speeches, the stupid conversation, the vulgar jokes—a concentration of all this at Nuremberg had finally focused his mind on what Nazism really meant.” ~ Gill (1994)

It was important for me to collect primary sources as well as secondary sources that could offer a perspective that would not be biased by the prominent ideologies and fearmongering of the time. Voices such as Sophie Scholl's provides an important German resistance viewpoint and youth perspective from the time.

The White Rose Movement is historically significant as it offers an insight into the experiences of life and terror of young German people during the Second World War. It is important that experiences like these are remembered so that we can make sure they are not repeated.

Personally, I found the movement interesting as I was able to see how the everyday lives of these young people differ from the lives of young people from my generation and from my country.

The White Rose Leaflets

“It is certain that today every honest German is ashamed of his government.”

“The German people slumber on in their dull, stupid sleep and encourage these fascist criminals.”

“For us there is but one slogan: fight against the party!”

“Our people stand ready to rebel against the National Socialist enslavement of Europe in a fervent new breakthrough of freedom and honor.”

Fascism: A far-right authoritarian political ideology, usually characterized by dictatorship and suppression of opposing views.

National Socialism: Also known as Nazism. A National Socialist is a member of the Nazi party and supporter of their antisemitic ideologies.



“Our people stand ready to rebel against the National Socialist enslavement of Europe in a fervent new breakthrough of freedom and honor.”

~ White Rose Leaflet (1943).

The White Rose Leaflets were created in 1942 and 1943 in the middle of the Second World War. They were written predominately by Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, and George Wittenstein, all students of the University of Munich.

They were created to inform students and staff of the university about the immorality of the Third Reich. Now they stand as historically significant youth voices in German resistance against Nazi terror and oppression.

“I would like to add as an additional and (in the end) the most important reason for my antipathy to the [National Socialist] movement: I perceive the intellectual freedom of people to be limited in such a manner as contradicts everything inside of me.”

~ Sophie Scholl (1943)

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The conviction with which the founders of the White Rose movement resisted the Nazi regime and their attempt to 'exterminate' the Jewish people and anyone who spoke up against their ideologies, demonstrated how perspectives which differed from that of the Third Reich were marginalised through experiences of life and terror.

The fact that members of the movement had to die for resisting the Third Reich to spread their message shows the extent to which the Nazi Regime went to silence their perceived enemies, and the terror that must have been experienced by the German people, as well as those in the German occupied territories.

Jewish Women's Experiences of Terror and Resistance during the Holocaust

To what extent did Jewish and other marginalised women take part in forms of resistance against Nazi terror within the concentration camps and ghettos, as a result of the Nazi regime's pursuit of the 'Final Solution' from 1941-1945?

By Student 12

Women were heavily involved in the resistance movements and everyday resistance through many different ways.

"Some women were leaders or members of ghetto resistance organisations. Among them was Haika Grosman in Bialystok. Others engaged in resistance inside the concentration camps."

"Other women were active in the aid and rescue operations of the Jews in German-occupied Europe. Among them were Jewish parachutist Hannah Szenes and Zionist activist Gisi Fleischmann."

"Woman served as couriers who brought information to ghettos."

"Sophie Scholl, a student at the University of Munich and a member of the White Rose resistance group, was arrested and executed in February 1943 for handing out anti-Nazi leaflets."

"Other women were active in the aid and rescue operations of the Jews in German-occupied Europe. Among them were Jewish parachutist Hannah Szenes and Zionist activist Gisi Fleischmann. Szenes parachuted into Hungary in 1944. Fleischmann, the leader of the Working Group (Pracovna Skupina) operating within the framework of the Jewish council in Bratislava, attempted to halt the deportations of Jews from Slovakia."

~ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (online)

"In Auschwitz I, five Jewish women deployed at the Vistula-Union-Metal Works detachment— Ala Gertner, Regina Safirsztajn (aka Safir), Ester Wajcblum, Roza Robota, and one unidentified woman, possibly Fejga Segal—had supplied the gunpowder that members of the Jewish Sonderkommando (Special Detachment) at Auschwitz-Birkenau used to blow up a gas chamber and kill several SS men during the uprising in October 1944."

~ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Women prisoners pull dump cars filled with stones as forced labour in the camp quarry, Plaszow camp, Poland, 1944.

Jewish and other marginalised women partook in significant forms of resistance against Nazi terror within concentration camps and ghettos, as a result of the Nazi regime's pursuit of the 'Final Solution' from 1941-1945. This included many forms, from leadership and involvement in organised resistance movements, to secret communications and couriers of important information to resist Nazi oppression, to active and violent resistance, as well as everyday acts of spiritual resistance.

"Formal burials of partisans were rare. Faye Schulman took this photograph to show the first time her detachment's casualties were buried in caskets.... "

The source below can be considered reliable as it is a primary visual source captured by Faye Schulman, a Jewish partisan, in 1944. This photograph is published in Schulman's book 'A Partisan's Memoir', depicting the uncommon burial of four Partisan's, two of whom were Jewish that were key to the resistance movement against Nazi terror and oppression.

"It is frequently claimed abroad...that the politically undesirable are hauled up for sterilisation. Anyone versed in German Law and the thoroughness and precautions attendant on the whole procedure knows full well the absurdity of such allegations and that no one can be sterilised simply on request or as a result of political pressure".

"German physicians and medical researchers used Jewish and Roma (Gypsy) women as subjects for sterilisation experiments and other unethical human experimentation."

~ Ribbentrop (1938, "Germany Speaks")



"These are two Jews and two gentiles, all four buried in one grave together.... They fought together against the same enemy, so they are buried together."

~ Photograph from 1944 (Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation, online)

"The suffering of the People of Israel stands above any personal pain."

~ Gisi Fleischmann

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Petals

By Student 12 (2020)

My digital creative interactive piece was based around the idea of a flower and its petals as a symbol central to commemoration. As the centre of the flower in each petals I have incorporated the Star of David (which is also a hyperlink to further articles, stories, survivor testimonies and information). Each petal is almost like a head stone, representing courageous women who resisted Nazi terror during the Holocaust, but consequently lost their lives despite their efforts.

The barbed wire is representative of the concentration camps, ghettos and Nazi terror.

Each one of the petals connects to the next, and together form a beautiful flower, which can also be interpreted as unity and strength. This also symbolises how the brave actions of many in coming together meant that they were able to unite, and it led to the ultimate freedom of their people, after the demise and fall of Hitler and the Nazi regime.

In designing and creating this, I thought of incorporating something living from contemporary society. I think the process of going out to my garden and collecting the fallen flowers from my backyard as a 'therapeutic' activity and admiring the beauty of them shows our appreciation of the little things during these dark times our society is experiencing in 2020. It is also this appreciation of the beauty in the mundane and every day, our appreciation for the little things during the worry and panic of such horrific and worrying times is something we can all appreciate. The victims of the Holocaust and the survivors would also have search for these everyday moments, and held onto beauty and hope, in experiencing such terror, in order for them to resist, survive and endure. We can all remember this.

הגבעולים שלהם עשויים
לדעוך, אך עלי הכותרת
שלהם ישגשחו לנצח

~ "Their stems may fade,
but their petals will
forever flourish" ~



The Voices of the Women of the Nazi Concentration Camps and their Holocaust Experiences

To what extent did the women held captive in Nazi concentration camps between their first opening in 1933 and the liberation of the camps in 1945, suffer through everyday life, terror and resistance in regards to birth, sex and abuse?

By Student 13

Olga Benario Prestes and Kathe Pick Leichten were both women who were gassed at Bernburg euthanasia facility attached to Ravensbrück. However, they are remembered today for their solidarity among the women in the camp.

They organised extra bread and margarine for women in the infirmary, and also ran an underground newspaper. Kathe also wrote a play which enabled the women to make costumes and offered a few moments of emotional and intellectual escape. Today details about both Olga and Kathe are displayed in the exhibit at Ravensbrück.

Stanislawa Leszczyńska was a Polish midwife, who during her two-year internment at Auschwitz, delivered at least 3,000 babies. Of the 3,000 babies delivered by Leszczyńska approximately half were drowned, 1,000 died quickly of starvation or cold, 500 were sent to other families and 30 survived in the camp. It is believed that all of the mothers and all of the babies survived childbirth.

The Germans invaded Poland in 1939 and established a ghetto in Warsaw in 1940. After her parents were deported, Doris Greenberg hid with her sisters and other relatives. Doris' sisters and uncle were killed, and she learned that her parents had been killed. Her grandmother committed suicide. Doris was smuggled out of the ghetto and lived as a non-Jewish maid and cook, however, she was ultimately deported to Ravensbrück camp. Upon arrival there, Doris and her friend Pepi contemplated swallowing poison but decided against it. This is her testimony:
"We were given the striped uniforms. And then I understood why we wanted to take the poison before we went in. Because each group that went in ahead of us, we never saw them coming out. We never recognised them. They were shaved and wearing stripes... We had our numbers and a triangle and assigned to barracks... On the walls... names... and heartbreaking messages... 'We are here. We are alive. Tell others to remember us'."

"They told us we were in the camp brothel, that we were the lucky ones. We would eat well and have enough to drink. If we behaved and fulfilled our duties nothing would happen to us." ~ Frau W. (a prisoner of the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbrück)

Let's no longer silence their voices!

"Exhausted, cold and hungry the women would talk endlessly about the food they had shared and the dishes they planned to make if they survived the war... each woman would share recipes in a paradoxical effort to stave off hunger."

~ Rebecca Buckman Teitelbaum
(a Belgian Jewish woman and Holocaust survivor)

The testimony above was from Rebecca (Becky) Buckman Teitelbaum, a Belgian Jewess, who was in Ravensbrück (a German concentration camp exclusively for women from 1939 to 1945, located in northern Germany) for 17 months.

Her nephew discovered her recipe book after the war, when she was in the hospital. She sold food to get needle and thread to sew the paper pages of her recipe book together. The women in the barracks took turns talking about the recipes and Becky wrote them down.



It wasn't until recently that women started opening up about their own experiences as survivors, and also the experiences of the many who did not survive.

I chose this topic because, through the analysis of both primary and secondary sources, using reliable sources as well as survivor testimonies, I wanted to uncover the horrors women endured in the camp systems.

I wanted to give these women a voice.

"The non-surgical method of sterilising women that I have invented is now almost perfected... If the research that I am carrying out continues to yield the sort of results that it has produced so far then I shall be able to report in the foreseeable future that one experienced physician, with an appropriately equipped office and the aid of ten auxiliary personnel, will be able to carry out, in the single course of a day, hundreds, or even thousands of women."

~ Nazi Dr Carl Clauberg communication to Heinrich Himmler, who was Reichsführer-SS, head of Gestapo and the Waffen-SS, Nazi Minister of the Interior from 1943 to 1945 and organiser of the mass murder of Jews in the Third Reich.

"But you know, we were so numb that we just thought, 'Get stuffed you bastards'."

"Sometime, the men just wanted to talk."

"I received up to ten men in two hours."

~ A new exhibition at Ravensbrück Nazi concentration camp details the fate of women forced to work as sex slaves for fellow prisoners – shining a light on an until-now largely taboo chapter of World War Two history.

Based on my source investigation and my analysis of a range of sources, it can be argued that, to an extraordinary extent, women held captive in Nazi concentration camps did have to suffer and struggle through everyday life. Terror was forever casting a shadow over them, especially when it came to not only their own wellbeing, but the potential wellbeing of a child.

These women suffered through experimentation – specifically regarding sterilisation; as well as forced abortion; pregnancy and giving birth in unfathomable conditions; having to kill their own babies or watch them be killed; being victims of sexual assault and forced prostitution; not to mention the constant fear of wondering if they'll be the next to die.

However, they also showed great strength in their resistance.

For some, **resistance was simply surviving**, for others it was **sisterhood** or **helping other women**, but overall the resistance shown in every one of these source perspectives was **the power to have voice, to pass on their stories or to have others pass them on for them.**

Due to the **bravery, courage and resilience of these women**, people all across the world **can be educated on the horrors of the Holocaust**, and we might also be **more hopeful that talking about these kinds of things – previously taboo, we will no longer silence their voices** – and will be able to bring some closure to victims of such evil and heinous crimes.

By Student 13

Imprisonment

An illustration by Student 13 (2020)

This work captures a visual representation of how the prisoners of Nazi Concentration camps were punished for being themselves. In the background lies a rough representation of some of the buildings that could be seen in concentration camps (such as Auschwitz).

There is a faceless prisoner in the lower right corner, clad in his striped uniform, with nothing but the number sewn to his chest as identification. In front of all this there is a barbed wire fence, like the ones seen surrounding the camps, twisted into words. The words represent a small selection of the reasons why people were taken prisoner. The purpose of this artwork is for people to remember that even though today people are widely accepted for who they are, no matter what their religion, sexuality, political views or general identity are, not long ago Nazi Germany entrapped and slaughtered people for just that. For those people, their identity was what sent them behind the barbed wire, their identity was what imprisoned them. We must not forget this, but we must ensure we liberate ourselves and learn from the past.



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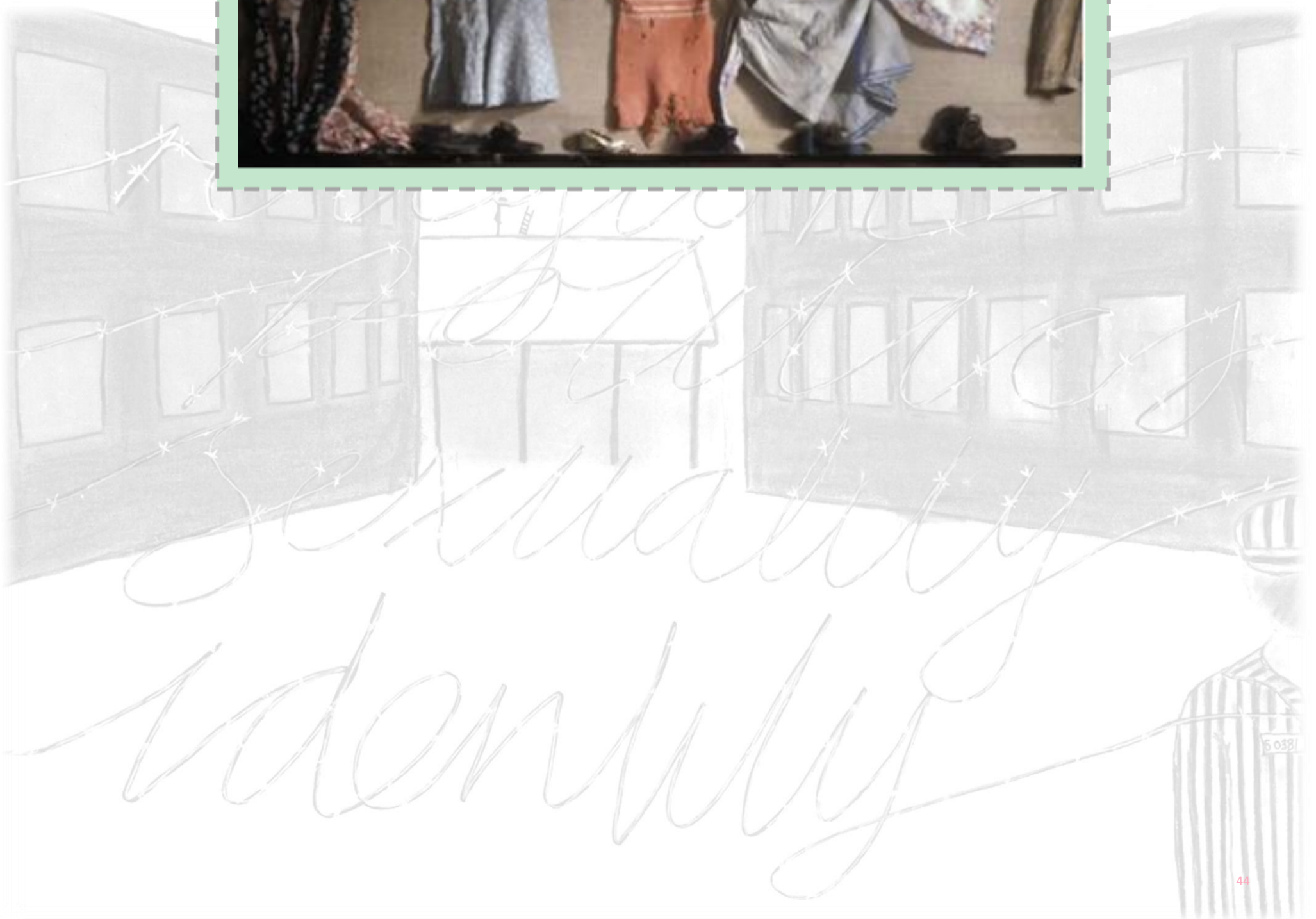
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Photos of children and items of clothing found at Auschwitz:



Child Experiences of the Holocaust

What can we learn about humanity by examining the experiences of life, terror and resistance during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany?

Although the Holocaust is considered one of the most catastrophic and painful events in modern history, it is also important that it becomes a part of *our* history, so that we can learn from it **what it means to be a human**. During the Holocaust, approximately 6 million European Jewish people were systematically murdered for their identity, leaving us to determine how that can be reconciled, and how we can determine a new definition for being human and the rights each human should have to their own life.

By Student 14

““The days are long gone when historians believed that it could be reduced to a single decision taken on a single day by Hitler. Instead, the Holocaust was the culmination of a dynamic murderous process, propelled by increasingly radical initiatives from above and below.”

“...the Nazi pursuit of the Final Solution moved from increasingly lethal plans for Jewish ‘reservations’ to immediate extermination.”

“In addition to hunger and thirst, there was crippling fear. Most men, women, and children on this and other deportation trains did not know that they were heading to Auschwitz, and to their deaths.”

~ Nikolaus Wachsmann (from *KL: A History of Nazi Concentration Camps*)

“... as many as 1.5 million Jewish children were dead, targeted victims in the Nazis’ calculated program of genocide...But the Hitlerian beast is quite different. It would devour the dearest of us, those who arouse the greatest compassion—our innocent children.”

“...Jewish children who survived the Holocaust... many would face the future without parents, grandparents, or siblings... Most of these youngsters survived in hiding.”

“All Jews were targeted for death, but the mortality rate for children was especially high. Only 6 to 11% of Europe’s pre-war Jewish population of children survived as compared with 33% of the adults. The young generally were not selected for forced labor...”

~ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

I Survived the Holocaust Twin Experiments

“...People were selected to live, or to die.”

“...another Nazi came, pulled my mother to the right, we were pulled to the left, we were crying, she was crying. And all I ever remember is seeing my mother’s arms stretched out in despair as she was pulled away.”

“...all that took 30 minutes from the time we got down from the cattle car and my whole family was gone.”

“But what is my forgiveness? I like it. It is an act of self-healing, self-liberation, self-empowerment. All victims all hurt, feel hopeless, feel helpless, feel powerless. I want everybody to remember that we cannot change what happened. That is the tragic part. But we can change how we relate to it.”

~ Eva Kor (Candles Holocaust Museum, 2017)

The primary source used above as my focal point here is representative of **survivor testimony** from the perspective of Eva Kor, a Jewish child. Eva’s story is just one of many which is representative of the children’s experiences during the Third Reich’s reign of terror (1933-1945). **This source is not only representative of a child’s experiences at Auschwitz concentration camp during the Nazi Final Solution (1941-1945), but also demonstrative of the importance of survivor testimony and its significance in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.**

The Holocaust is considered one of the most horrific events in modern history effecting millions of people in Europe alone. Sadly, this was an event that not only affected adults but also the lives of many children.

As children are often seen as innocent to many this perspective could seem even more horrific. Many children who were taken to death camps such as Auschwitz were separated from their families and taken to the gas chambers to be murdered, and the ones who were not often had to endure a life of torture in the concentration camps.

The children who did survive the Holocaust have since become important in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive today.

“Children were torn from mothers. Most mothers wanted to join their children even if this meant death.”

“...when a woman looked especially young and strong, she had to hand her child to an older, weaker woman. After all, she could yet have enough strength to work for these bandits.”

“The wretched people were unrecognisable. I kept looking at my child, could barely recognise her and reapproached myself for not having spared my children such dreadful events.”

“...and again endless standing, undressing and standing naked before so-called doctors who sort us out. Again tearing mother from daughter, sister from sister or other relatives. We certainly could not admit to being with anyone because then we’d be separated for sure...”

~Flora Herzberger on her and her daughter’s experiences at Auschwitz concentration camp



An older Jewish woman takes care of the younger children as they are forced to walk towards the gas chambers, from the **Auschwitz Album** (Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, online)

For my multimodal response I wanted to craft a monologue that captured the perspective of a child. I was inspired by a quote from Auschwitz survivor Eva Kor: "*People were selected to live or to die.*"

I have chosen this quote because it seemed so raw and links to the idea of choiceless choices that we learnt about during this unit. The fact that these children, some who were barely old enough to be in school, had the choice of life and living taken away from them.

I feel like a voice needs to be given to those who did not get the choice to live, and those who faced choiceless horrors. The one's allowed to live, those who endured and survived, did not truly get the life a child deserves, and even more painfully, those who were killed, never even got a chance.

To all these children, and all those lost and those who survived the Holocaust, you will never be forgotten.

Choiceless Choices

By Student 14 (2020)

I remember there was no choice.

We were either chosen to live or to die, either way we had no say. No voice.

I remember the soldiers taring my arms from my Mother's grasp. I remember the tears and my Sister; my only remaining family member.

I was not alone.

Children standing, removed, some with elderly women too fragile to be of use. Women being led away in the opposite direction, the fit one's at least.

My Mother's eyes were not the only stained with sorrow.

I remember fighting an internal enemy. Fighting to stay alive to convince myself that I could live. That I could survive.

When they came and said we were safe it wasn't true. Although there was no longer a visible memory, there were still the memories that lived within us.

There were the people that we had lost.

Our parents.

Our friends.

Our communities.

There was still disease which many were still suffering from.

And then there was the visions we had to live with.

I remember my sister's inability to describe her treatment and my inability to share my own.

Still now it is hard.

I remember the day my sister died. It was cancer caused by some unknown substance they had pumped into her veins.

It was hard to create a new life. To learn how to survive in a new world again. A world where the memories of the old still terrify me at night.

I had to create a new normal, but I could not forget my past.

I decided to forgive them. But it was not to forgive what they had done to my family and to many others.

It was for me. I forgave them so that I could live a new life. So that I could safely remember my past.

My community.

My family.

My Mother.

My Sister.

I forgave them for myself, but I will never forget.

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“...I should’ve been more of a help to Mama, been the man of the house, looking after her instead. But I couldn’t. Not as a girl. Not as a boy who’d die if he were discovered.”
~ Selzer (2018, p.189)

This quote from *I Am Sasha*, a novel, by Anita Selzer, based on the story of the author’s Jewish father and grandmother in Poland, formed my interest in the experiences of Jewish Children in Nazi-occupied Europe. This novel drew my attention particularly to the forms of resistance taken by the parents in order to prevent their children’s capture by the Nazis.

It can be argued that the experiences and treatment of Jewish children in Auschwitz concentration camp (1940-1945) was the result of the Nazi regime of terror, as well as their antisemitic ideologies, in their pursuit of the Final Solution (1941-1945).

The Auschwitz Album “is the only surviving visual evidence of the process leading to the mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The photos were taken at the end of May or beginning of June 1944, either by Ernst Hofmann or Bernhard Walter, two SS men whose task was to take ID photos and fingerprints of inmates (not of Jews who were sent directly to the Gas chambers). The photos in the album show the entire process except for the killing itself. The purpose of the Album is unclear... Assumes that it was prepared as an official reference for higher authority, as were photo albums from other concentration camps.”
(Yad Vashem, online)

The intentionalist Holocaust historiographical perspective can, therefore, be implied through an analysis of these photos, as the systematic approach of people being lined up, grouped together through ‘Selection’ and taken to their deaths (‘Extermination’) implies that the **Final Solution** was an intentional and planned approach taken by Hitler and the Nazi party. The implied dehumanisation of Jewish children and their families in this album is also extremely useful in demonstrating the antisemitic Nazi ideology and the cruelty in which men, women and children had to face at the hands of Nazi terror.



Jewish women and children on the selection platform. A prisoner from the "Kanada" kommando (in striped uniform) stands near the train (to the right) at Auschwitz.

Remembering Jewish Courage and Resistance in the face of Nazi Terror in the Theresienstadt Ghetto

To what extent did the Nazi regime use tactics of terror and deception in the Theresienstadt ghetto and transit camp from 1941-1945 to exploit the Jewish people, and what actions of resistance were taken by those in the ghetto in response to the actions of the Third Reich?

By Student 15

PREPARING FOR THE COMMISSION'S VISIT

... The commission, because of which a transport left and the three-layer bunks were torn down, has departed, and I believe they were satisfied. They didn't see through very much, stayed scarcely a half day, but that seems to have been only a rehearsal. The camp command issued new orders about the "beautifying campaign" that must be finished in two months.

It's ridiculous, but it seems that Terezin is to be changed into a sort of spa. I don't know why I was reminded of the fairy tale "Table, Set Yourself!" But that is how everything seems to me. The orders are received in the evening, and in the morning everyone's eyes are staring with wonder, where did this or that thing come from? For three years it never occurred to anyone that streets might be named anything but Q and L. ... But all of a sudden the Germans had an idea, and overnight signs had to be put on every corner house with the name of the street, and at crossroads arrows pointed: To the Park, To the Bath, etc. ...

The school building that had served as hospital up to today was cleared out overnight and the patients put elsewhere while the whole building was repainted, scrubbed up, school benches brought in, and in the morning a sign could be seen afar: "Boys' and Girls' School." It really looks fine, like a real school, only the pupils and teachers are missing. That shortcoming is adjusted by a small note on the door: "Holidays." On the square the newly sown grass is coming up, the center is adorned by a big rose plot, and the paths, covered with clean, yellow sand, are lined with two rows of newly painted benches. The boards we wondered about for so many days, trying to puzzle out what they were for, turned into a music pavilion. We even have a café with the fine sign "Coffeehouse."

... They have already got quite far in painting the houses. ... In two of the barracks some bunks and shelves were painted yellow and they got blue curtains. In the park in front of the Infants' Home they put up a luxury pavilion with cribs and light blue, quilted covers. In one room there are toys, a carved rocking horse, and so on. None of us can explain why they are doing all this. Are they so concerned about that commission? Perhaps we don't even know how good the situation is.

From the diary of Helga Weissová

The Germans permitted representatives from the Danish Red Cross and the International Red Cross to visit in June 1944.

It was all an elaborate hoax.

The Germans intensified deportations from the ghetto shortly before the visit, and the ghetto itself was "beautified." Gardens were planted, houses painted, and barracks renovated. The Nazis staged social and cultural events for the visiting dignitaries.

Once the visit was over, the Germans resumed deportations from Theresienstadt, which did not end until October 1944.

The ghetto didn't reflect the view that the Nazi regime portrayed, as buildings received names such as school and coffeehouse compared to the letters previously used. There were gardens and arrow signs added - this would make the ghetto look more like a town. All of the changes were made to deceive the Red Cross into thinking the ghetto was a safe place for the Jewish people to live. The Nazi regime were hiding the conditions inside the camp. This was achieved by deportations. The Red Cross visit, referred

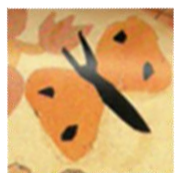
The SS authorities intensified deportations of Jews from the ghetto to alleviate overcrowding, and as part of the preparations in the camp-ghetto, 7,503 people were deported to Auschwitz

Eric Vogel, a Jewish jazz musician that was once in Theresienstadt, said:

"We musicians did not think that our oppressors saw us only as tools in their hands. We were obsessed with music and were happy that we could play our beloved jazz. We contented ourselves with this dream world that the Germans were producing for their propaganda".

"A large proportion of Jewish artists and intellectuals were amongst those imprisoned there due to the camp's function as an 'old age ghetto' and 'show camp'. In addition, the camp leadership, after a short initial prohibition, officially allowed prisoners to possess musical instruments, thereby enabling a broad spectrum of musical as well as other cultural and artistic activities."

~ Music and the Holocaust (2020, online)



The SS guards instructed Kurt Geron, a Jewish man, to direct a propaganda film in Theresienstadt, so the Nazi regime could deceive the world to think the ghettos were a happy, safe and good place to live.



Theresienstadt also served as a collection point at which approximately 33,500 humans died of hunger, disease, and physical, as well as psychological, exhaustion.

At the beginning of learning about the Holocaust, I was curious about how the German people could let this happen in their country. However, as I began to learn it became evident that there was deception employed towards the entire population. The Jewish people however faced this deception with resistance. The Nazi regime needed a cultural life in the Terezin camp for propaganda. This need was exploited by the Jewish people who used music as a form of escape and **spiritual resistance** through camp life. **Music gave people happiness and humanity, "retaining the identities of both musician and listener"**.

Moments of culture – such as embracing music and art – "stood in sharp contrast to the daily attempt and struggle to survive".

However, because it was useful for propaganda purposes, the SS camp leadership not only tolerated, but welcomed the cultural life of the prisoners, such as that in the Theresienstadt ghetto.

In December 1943 the so-called "beautification of the city" (*Stadtverschönerung*) was ordered. Its goal was supposed to be the presentation of Theresienstadt to the world as a model example of a Jewish settlement.

The conditions were harsh, starvation and disease were common causes of death, yet through this spiritual resistance culture remained and was

"More than 155,000 Jews passed through Theresienstadt until it was liberated on May 8, 1945. 35,440 perished in the ghetto and 88,000 were deported to be murdered."
~ Yad Vashem (online)

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THE BUTTERFLY



I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–1944 is a collection of works of art and poetry by Jewish children who lived in the concentration camp Theresienstadt.

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 good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Pinned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches 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



Silent Resistance: The German Righteous and Jewish Spirituality During the Holocaust

To what extent was Jewish spiritual resistance against Nazi terror during the years of 1933-1945 an effective method of resistance, and is Jewish resistance without the aid of the 'righteous of the nations' contested by contemporary academics as a valid method of resistance?

By Student 16

"One cannot really resist passively. When one refuses to budge in the face of brutal force, one does not resist passively: one resists without using force, and that is not the same thing."

~ Yehuda Bauer

Renowned academic authority on the holocaust, Bauer highlights the validity of non-violent resistance in this quote and supports the argument of the preservation of life and the upholding of human moral principles that can indeed be considered valid resistance.

"No more than 5-10 per cent of those Jews who survived the Holocaust did so by virtue of another's heroism."

~ Peter Hayes

Within this quote, Peter Hayes contests the validity of the efforts of the righteous being considered at the forefront of resistance against Nazi Germany.

"We had the moral right; we had a duty towards our people... We have carried out this most difficult of tasks in a spirit of love for our people."

~ Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews

The Nazi perpetrators were so thoroughly indoctrinated with their racist ideologies that they believed themselves to be under a moral obligation towards the Human race to exterminate the Jewish population.

"Whereas bystanders refrained from any action ... there was a small minority who managed to muster extraordinary courage and to uphold human values in an attempt to save human lives..."

The Germans executed not only the people who sheltered the Jews, but their entire family as well... It is clear that those who decided to shelter a Jew had to give up their normal lives and embark upon a clandestine existence."

~ Steinfeldt (2002)

"They [the German police] found the Jews on the Ulma farm and shot them to death. Afterwards they murdered the entire Ulma family - Józef, Wiktoria, who was nine months pregnant, and their six small children."

~ A primary account of the deaths of the German Righteous Ulma Family

The Ulma family took in a group of Jews during the height of the Final Solution. Their decision was discovered by Nazi forces and resulted in their execution. They are one of many families to be destroyed by Nazi Terror.

Their willingness to help others when their lives were at risk for doing so was an exemplar of the human capacity for perseverance and empathy.

They were posthumously recognised by *Yad Vashem* and awarded as ***The Righteous Among the Nations***.



A group of Jewish people gathered in prayer during 1941 within the Warsaw ghetto. This image shows the exemplary willingness of the Jewish people to remain steadfast in their traditions and maintain their will to preserve life during those trying times and preserve their faith in the face of adversity.

The topic of the righteous prompted me to explore further into the topic of resistance during this period in effort to gain a more complete understanding as to the various aspects of resistance from both the German and Jewish perspectives.

What stood out to me was the concept of Jewish Spiritual resistance, and how even an approach which was passive in its application was also said to be a valid method through which to resist the tyranny of the Nazis. It is my belief that non-violent resistance against the Nazi Regime was indicative of paragons amongst the terror and death of the time, and that there is a lesson to be learned in the integrity and willingness to preserve life these people held even when their lives were in danger.

"The sanctification of life [promotes]... meaningful Jewish resistance... but not armed force."

~ Yehuda Bauer

Non-violent resistance is built into the backbone of Jewish faith. For instance, Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenboim coined the term "*Sanctification of life*" in order to provide a principle to adhere to in times where the Jewish people were desperate and afraid.

This beacon of hope and integral concept related to Jewish faith and beliefs allowed for Jewish people to maintain the integrity of their faith and remain steadfast in their passive resistance, greatly, discouraging theft and violence in favour of morally strong survival.

"In most cases, they never planned to become rescuers... They were human beings, not saints."

~ Steinfeldt (2002)

“Whereas bystanders refrained from any action ... there was a small minority who managed to muster extraordinary courage and to uphold human values in an attempt to save human lives.” ~ Steinfeldt (2002)

During our studies of Life, Terror and Resistance in Nazi Germany during the years of 1933-1945, the topic of the ‘**Righteous of the Nations**’ interested me greatly.

Righteous of the Nations is a term used to define the people who placed their lives at risk in order to uphold their morals and humanity in an effort to preserve human life. Their methods varied from leaving food drops at points in the area for Jews to pick up, all the way to harbouring Jews within their own homes. As they did this, the risk that they were going to lose their own lives in this effort would increase. Despite this however, they would persevere and be responsible for the survival of many Jews during this dark period in history.

The topic of the righteous prompted me to explore further what forms resistance took during this period, in my effort to gain a more complete understanding as to the various aspects of resistance from both the German and Jewish perspectives. What stood out to me was the concept of Jewish Spiritual resistance, and how even an approach (which was not armed but more passive in its application) can also be seen as an extremely valid method through which to resist the tyranny of the Nazis.

Both the Righteous and the Jewish methods of resistance have one commonality – in as much as that they are both seen as being non-violent methods through which to resist Nazi terror.

From this unit I will take away a much greater understanding of the Holocaust and the suffering it caused. But I also came away from this with a greater understanding of human morality and compassion in the face of adversity. I am glad that I was able to deepen my understanding of both our world’s history, and my understanding of the human species and our capabilities to demonstrate beautiful feats of passion and morality for the sake of others, and I hope you too listen to and remember these courageous and righteous voces.

For my multimodal response I wanted to capture what I had learnt about resistance, spirituality and the righteous.

I crafted a blank verse poem which would serve to convey the emotion behind the idea of Jewish Spiritual resistance during the Holocaust.

In the poem, I sought to include an allusion or reference to multiple major religions and faiths in the world in order to bring across the idea of spirituality, and shift perspective towards the resistance of the Jewish faith during those dark times.

The shift in verb tense at the end is to promote their enduring legacy of righteousness and resistance that will live on, never forgotten by past, present and future generations.

They Stood Tall By Student 16 (2020)

They stood tall in the face of pure terror
In their fear they stood with resolve and held their faith in
hand
A death grip, cold fingers wrap around hope and faith even
in the end

They stood tall, and did not fall to their level
They kept their dignity, refusing to become the monsters
they feared
The sanctity of life, the love for others, kept them fighting
They were Muhamad, bearing their oppression whilst
never replying in kind

They stood tall when death loomed in the air
Beneath a crown of thorns, they stood upon patched dirt
and ash of their fellows
The lines of workers stood in quiet dignity, finding peace
in their morality

They stood tall, and spread their message to others
The classrooms in basements, teaching resilience and the
fight for peace
The elders gathered as well, with dusted manuscripts,
holding to their faith, always

They stood tall, despite the consequence

They stood tall in the many days of famine, and cold
They were Buddha, starving themselves in the name of
peace and faith

They stood tall, thrown into the streets by their neighbours
out of fear
They were Christ, betrayed and murdered for their beliefs

They stood tall, never fell
Even in death, even in exhaustion in the camps

They stood tall,
for they were better than the monsters

They *stand* tall today,
never forgotten
by past, present and future generations.

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We Are the Messengers: Collecting and Sharing Holocaust Voices and Messages for All of Humanity

The Holocaust or Shoah is an event in history that stands out in its brutality and its ability to question faith in humanity. As the event ages further into the past, we as a society must never forget the lives, memories, and dreams of the Jewish people lost in this event.

By Student 17

"For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time."

~Holocaust Survivor Elie Wiesel in 'Night,' his memoir.

"We must be listened to: above and beyond our personal experience, we have collectively witnessed a fundamental unexpected event, fundamental precisely because unexpected, not foreseen by anyone. It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say. It can happen, and it can happen everywhere."

~ Primo Levi in his book 'Survival in Auschwitz' published in 1947. Primo Levi was an Italian-Jewish writer and chemist who spent 11 months at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

REMEMBER

"This is why I now wish – and this is my sole desire:

If I cannot mourn my loved ones, then may at least a stranger's eye shed a tear for them.

My family, burned here at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, December 8, 1942."

~ Zalman Gradowski

A Polish Jewish prisoner of the Auschwitz-Birkenau, and member of the *Sonderkommando*.

The above extract was written by Zalman Gradowski, a Polish-Jewish man who was an inmate in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in his secret diary later published as "*From the Heart of Hell: Manuscripts of a Sonderkommando Prisoner*", found in Auschwitz. Gradowski was taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau in November of 1942. When he was at Auschwitz-Birkenau he was in the Sonderkommando unit, a Jewish-comprised unit that worked the process of the crematoria. The voice of Gradowski is one that is undefinably significant and highlights the courage of the Jewish people in the Holocaust, for their struggle to never be erased, and in turn for those who remain, we will *NEVER* forget.

The Holocaust is an event that has happened within the last 80 years, a range that comprises people currently living. It is important to categorise this event not as a distant memory or event in world history, but as a recent scar of which the atrocities should never be forgotten or diminished. Victims of the Holocaust could without the event be the person living next door, but were stripped of their humanity and their lives.

We must remember and commemorate the millions of lives that were lost.

"First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me."

~ Martin Niemöller's confession of living life as a bystander in the Nazi sphere of influence in Germany during WWII and the Holocaust.

"This April marks a scary time for our country in many ways. The coronavirus has many suffering physically, emotionally and financially.

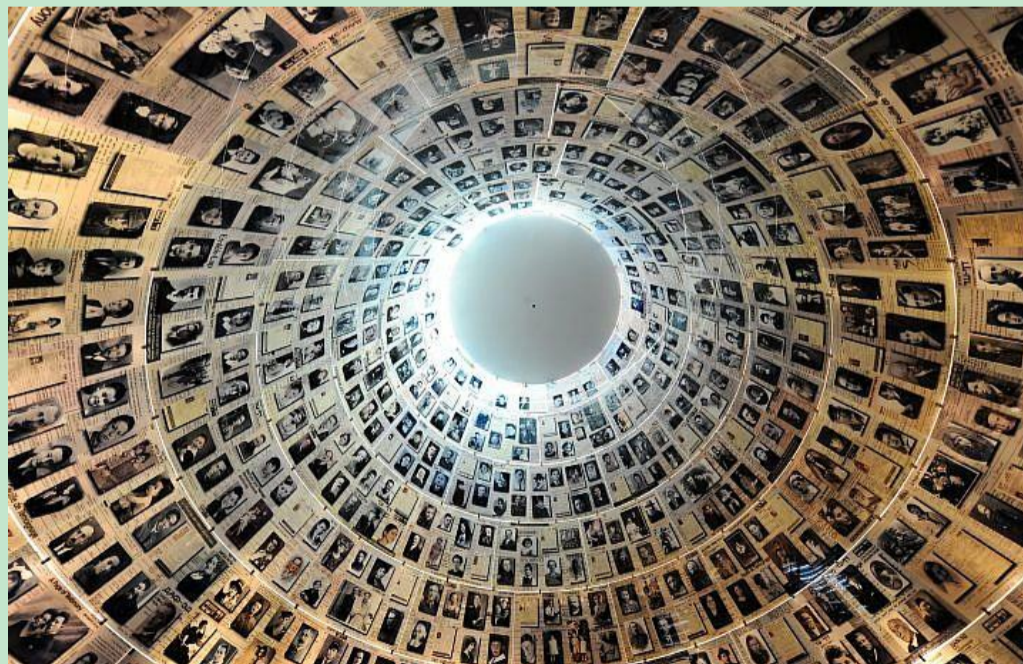
But it also reminds of us of a past only 75 years ago this month that we should never forget.

Today, we pause to commemorate the Holocaust and remember the victims, survivors and rescuers. We remember their lives, some which ended much too soon, and are determined that an event of this magnitude will never again happen. It has been seventy-five years since the liberation of the concentration camps."

~Mario A. Guerra for the Downey Patriot publication on remembering the Holocaust in 2020, 75 years later.

"The Hall of Names at Yad Vashem is the Jewish People's memorial to each and every Jew who perished in the Holocaust – a place where they may be commemorated for generations to come.

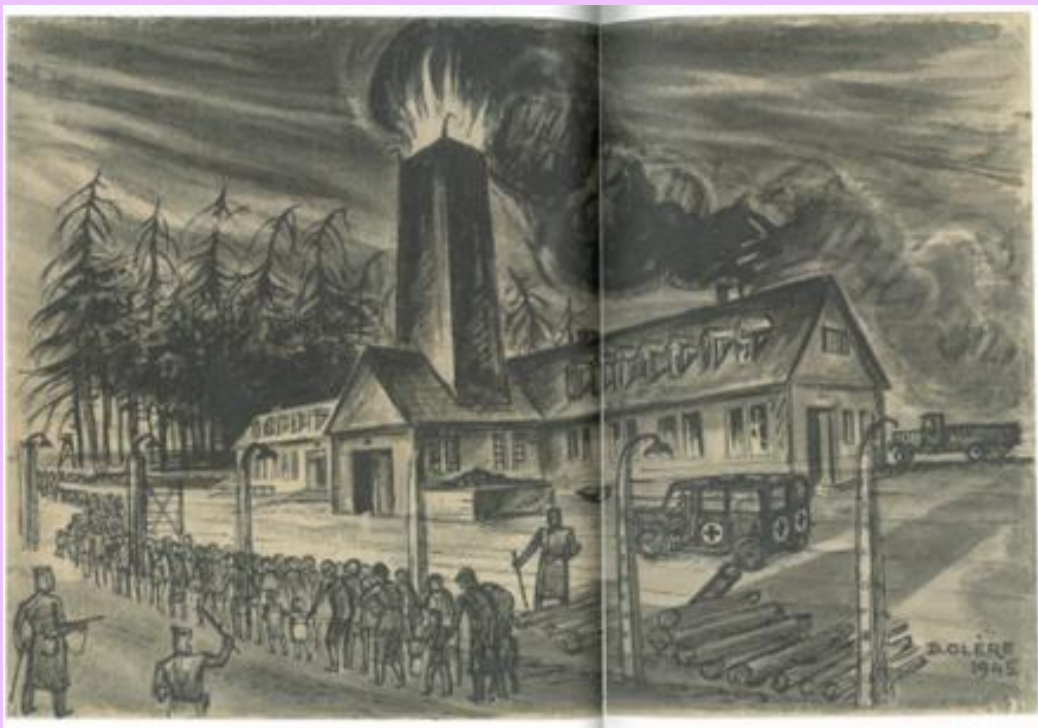
The main circular hall houses the extensive collection of "Pages of Testimony" – short biographies of each Holocaust victim. Over two million Pages are stored in the circular repository around the outer edge of the Hall, with room for six million in all."



~ The Hall of Names at the Yad Vashem Museum, featuring a collection of photos and testimonies of Jewish victims of the Holocaust in the Yad Vashem Museum in Israel, Jerusalem.

"Jews survived all the defeats, expulsions, persecutions and pogroms, the centuries in which they were regarded as a pariah people, even the Holocaust itself, because they never gave up the faith that one day they would be free to live as Jews without fear."

~ Jonathan Sacks a British Orthodox Rabbi, philosopher, theologian and author.



This source is a collection of artworks created by David Olère, which depict his experiences during the Holocaust in Auschwitz and more specifically his time in forced labour as a *Sonderkommando*.

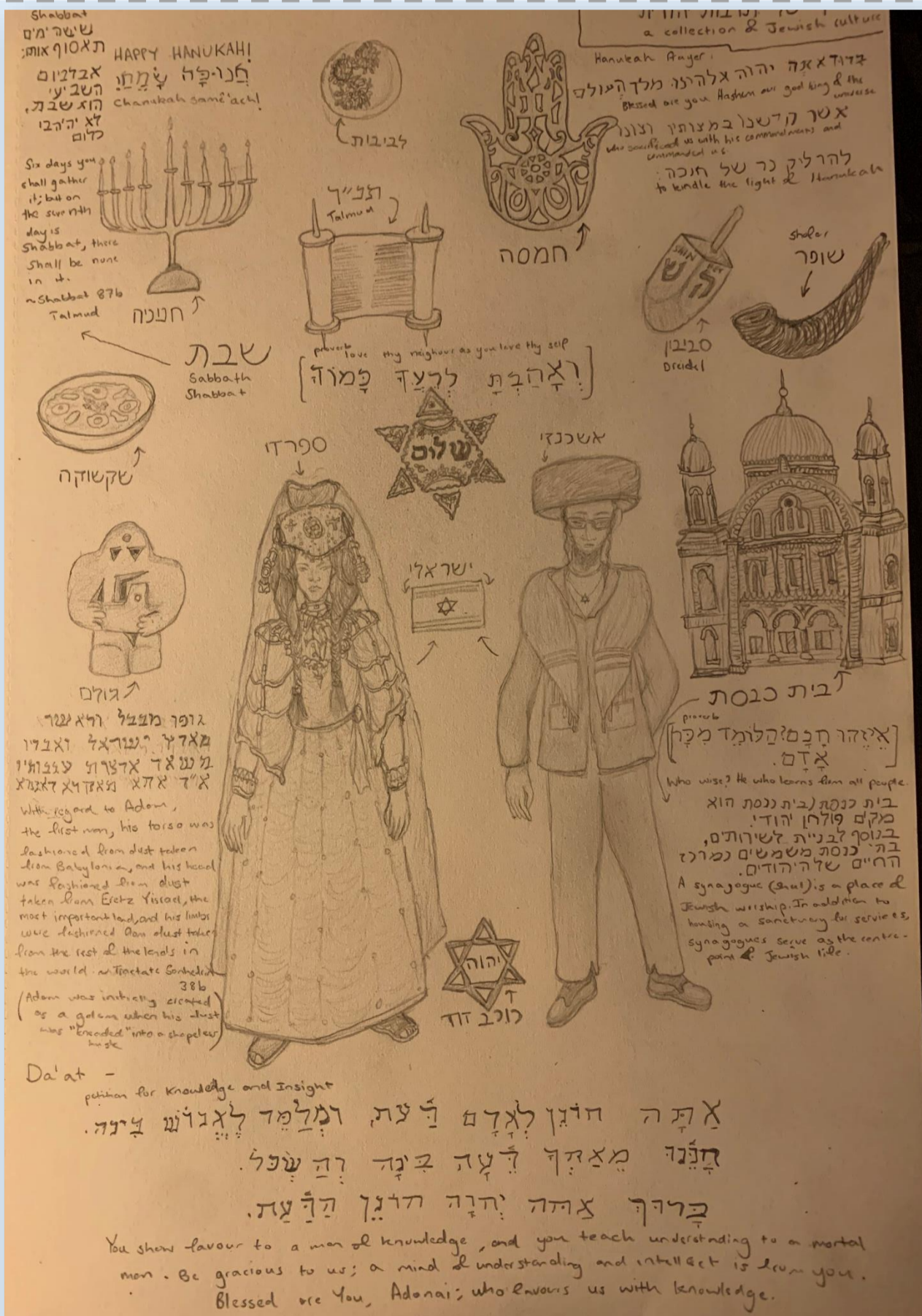
This collection is called “*Witness – Images of Auschwitz*” and was assembled by Olère’s son Alexander Olère in 1998. It can be inferred that the motive in this work by David Olère is to contextualise the stories of many Holocaust victims who survived after the war, including Olère. This work serves to represent the horrors of the death camps and very explicitly serves to remind readers of the grim reality that was the Holocaust and the work forced upon the *Sonderkommando*. Implicitly the source was also intended to illustrate the fates of the Jewish people who did not survive the Holocaust.

In many of the artworks that Olère painted, he depicts himself as a figure in the background, only witnessing the fate that befell the other victims of the Holocaust.

“Olère’s works show every stage of the horror disembarking on the ramp, selection, death in the gas chambers and the cremation of the corpses – secrets no one could have photographed or filmed. His determination to reveal every detail is today appreciated by historians, who use his sketches to help find answers to various questions concerning that particular process of mass extermination.”

~ Alexander Olère, son of David Olère (1998)

The experiences of the *Sonderkommando*, to a significant extent, represent struggle and resistance to Nazi oppression and to the atrocities of the Holocaust, and demonstrates the *Sonderkommando* perspective as victims, not as perpetrators. These perspectives, including that of Zalman Gradowski and David Olère, are just some of the **voices of the Shoah that must always be REMEMBERED.**



Sketches

By Student 17 (2020)

I have presented here a collection of sketches, inspired by the same medium as Olère.

My sketch includes various prayers and proverbs in Hebrew (as I was able to pursue my own love and interest in language here), and significant Jewish cultural pieces with the intent to highlight the Jewish people and their in-depth links to such an amazing and unique culture, language and religious faith in Judaism, as well as their related traditions and practices (many of which were sources of pride, courage and resistance that endured throughout the Holocaust).

Student 17 Reference List:

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To what extent do the experiences of the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz-Birkenau (1940-1945) represent struggle and resistance to Nazi terror and the atrocities of the Holocaust, while also demonstrating contestation over viewing them as victims or perpetrators?

REMEMBER

“It may be that this, these very lines I am writing, will be the only witnesses to what was my life. But I will be happy if my writings reach you, free citizen of the world. Perhaps a spark of my inner fire will ignite in you, and you will fulfil at least a part of our life’s desire: you shall avenge, avenge our deaths!”



~ Zalman Gradowski
A Polish Jewish prisoner of the Auschwitz-Birkenau, and member of the Sonderkommando.

Reflections

Reflections

As part of the Yad Vashem pedagogical philosophy of coming 'safely in and safely out' of our unit, and in conjunction with the importance of reflection as a critical element of project based learning (PBL), students were invited to take the time for reflection. This occurred weekly throughout the unit, especially during the more challenging, confronting and very emotive experience of our history unit on the Holocaust and Nazi Germany. The students were asked to share their reflections on the unit as a whole and their learning experiences, including what they will take away with them.

The main challenge of studying and remembering the Holocaust is that ideologies and events surrounding it can be very confronting and upsetting, even now. It's important that we remember what happened, however, to pay tribute to the lives lost, and so that history can't repeat itself. As I move out of this unit I can remember the Holocaust/Shoah by continuing to seek knowledge about it outside of school. We should all make sure to preserve the memory of this time by observing National Holocaust Remembrance Day each year, and making sure to take a stand against inequality, antisemitism, and other xenophobic ideologies, whenever we can.

It was also important throughout this unit to share the names and faces of the people who experienced the Holocaust. This helps us to honour those people, and to empathise with their experiences. It would be hard to understand just how upsetting the lives and experiences of the people of this time were if we only looked at the data.

The things we have learnt from this unit about antisemitism and hatred show us that the Holocaust has never been more relevant than it is today. To avoid history repeating itself we must all continue to learn from the past.

During this unit, the thing that surprised me the most to learn was just how quickly Adolf Hitler managed to push his agenda and change Germany. This information made me question my prior understanding of the history of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, as I hadn't understood before how many people actually supported Adolf Hitler and his ideologies.

The thing I learnt that saddened me the most was just how horrible conditions were in concentration camps, and the horrors people in these camps were subjected to. It was a topic that I previously only knew about vaguely.

While researching for the assignment, some perpetrator perspectives were hard for me to look at, as it is difficult for me to understand the mindset of these people. It forced me to accept the cruel brutality that people are capable of committing. It was also difficult to look at primary Jewish perspectives, as the things these people were subjected to, and their experiences with life and terror in Nazi Germany were very confronting and upsetting.

Learning about these confronting experiences, however, taught me just how important the resilience of the human spirit is. Although such terrible things happened during the Holocaust, people still managed to resist and survive by not losing hope. This understanding of hope and the human spirit is something that I hope I can take away from this unit with me.

By Student 11

I think that some of the challenges of studying and remembering the Holocaust are that it is such an emotionally devastating topic. Often in history we talk about the loss of many lives, but not too often have those events been so close to the present. It reminds us that not too long ago there was one group of people who felt so strongly against another group of people, that they felt the need to wipe them out. It reminds us that things like antisemitism, racism and sexism used to be so much more prevalent in society and that that kind of outlook can lead to devastating outcomes, such as the Holocaust. It's important to remember that, and to keep talking about historic events so that we can move towards an even less discriminative future.

Society has come a long way since World War II and the Holocaust, and it's important to remember why changes to prevent discrimination against individuals and groups of people were necessary. It's important to remember that change occurred because people lost their lives, and their sacrifices should be honoured. When remembering those who were lost to the Holocaust, it is vital to remember who they were, not just that they existed. Remembering a mass of numbers only proves that people existed, and then suddenly they didn't, honouring those people by knowing their names and the lives they cherished, promotes understanding, as well as sympathy and empathy.

One of the things that surprised me when I researched in depth into the treatment of women in concentration camps was the sheer lack of humanity in the way they were treated. I read stories and letters, communications between scientists and leaders on some of the most disgusting and dehumanising experimentation performed on people. Treating humans like animals, or in some case worse than them. Some people think that getting household animals such as cats and dogs de-sexed is inhumane, now imagine doing it to people. It saddens me to think that the kind of people willing to do stuff like that existed, and similar people may exist today.

It's hard to imagine a discriminatory act being taken this far, growing up in today's society I haven't had too many bad experiences with discriminatory acts. You get the occasional racist or homophobic comment, but never anything taken to this extreme. Even now those little things sadden me, even in a world that has moved so far away from anything like that being acceptable, some people just can't get past people being different to them. As confronting as this topic is, I'm glad we were given the opportunity to learn more about it. It has provided insight into today's world.

By Student 13

It's hard to read all the stories about how Jewish people suffered at the time. Watching videos, movies and researching all that pain makes you wonder how could people allow that to happen. It's important for society to know everything that happened because those who have died in this tragic time need to be remembered. It is also important to know about how many people suffered due to prejudice, so that something like this will never happen again.

I can remember the Holocaust by reading books and watching movies that were inspired by that time. With that I can remember their suffering. I can also have discussions with friends and family about the war and their experiences of this terrible time.

In order to preserve and cherish the memory of the Holocaust so it would not be forgotten, is that we need to continue to tell their stories. Many museums and memorials were made so that people could always visit and remember their stories.

Sharing the specific individual names and faces of individuals who experienced the Holocaust means that you are giving them an identity and if you just number them it's like taking their humanity away and they just become a number on a list.

During this unit, I was surprised by the Nazi propaganda and how many people actually believed that what they were doing was for the greater good in their ideologies. Learning about people's personal experiences and how much they suffered at the time was the thing that saddened me the most.

I've always been interested in the Holocaust and always searched a lot about it, so I didn't really learn anything new, but it was interesting researching more into detail about how the children felt during the time and that even though there was so much pain, they still had hope for a better future.

This unit was expected to be hard, since we have to learn a lot about suffering. But however, it is good so that we learn that the world isn't perfect and to know that we can't always expect the best from people. Sometimes humans can be cruel. However, I've also learned that even in the worst situations, people still have hope and they are willing to fight for what they believe in.

By Student 3

The challenge of studying and remembering the Holocaust is the confronting and graphic imagery and this level of confronting material related to a very real, and very impactful event in our history can be extremely disconcerting and even difficult to continue studying in some of the more challenging aspects often associated with the topic. However, studying and remembering the Holocaust is a necessity and is integral to never allowing the memory of the deaths of over 6 million human souls fade into obscurity.

I believe that I can remember the Holocaust through reflecting on this unit, and the content I learned within it. Through encouraging institutions such as Yad Vashem to continue growing so that they might ensure the preservation of the memory of these tragic events would also help to preserve and cherish these memories and histories so as not be forgotten.

It is important to share the specific individual names and faces of individuals who experienced the Holocaust, rather than just to stick with the data and numbers. Because when we fall to only using statistics to refer to these people, it is easy to forget that every single one of those numbers was once a living, breathing human with a name, a face, and a family that they so wrongly lost. Thus, it is important, if painful, to not fall into the trap of using numbers and refer to these victims by their names and faces whenever it is possible.

The lessons that we can continue to learn today from the events of the Holocaust are numerous, however, one is particularly relevant within the context of today's society in recent years. Recently, with the prevalence of gay marriage and an increasingly accepting and political aware culture, the lesson of tolerance and diversity is one which can be taken from the horrific events of the Holocaust. Tolerance and diversity were things that were abandoned during the Third Reich, and as a result of rampant intolerance and racial purity, over six million people were killed in a horrific fashion. Thus, with this rapidly evolving, modern culture, we must keep in mind past events, and ensure that hatred and bigotry is kept to the sidelines and eventually eliminated, else we risk repeating the past.

In particular, a source which I analysed for my assignment induced a strong feeling of grief within me. The story of the Ulma family is a story which culminates in the execution of a family of children, a father, and a pregnant mother. This exposure to the raw, powerful pain of the Holocaust prompted me to reflect upon and become saddened by our world's history. Furthermore, I found the sheer mechanical process of these murders to be extremely confronting. The fact that humanity is able to turn against itself and introduce such templated and standardised murder is unthinkable. Some of the painfully grim and confronting perspectives of life in the camps were difficult to research for my assignment. Being born in a time of relative peace and luxury is often taken for granted, but when I reflect upon the cruelty that these six million were subjected to in these camps, with these people living as less than animals, was extremely confronting. Often, the easy life is taken for granted, but we often forget the pain that has been felt by others before we came to this point.

Learning about how it was not only the Jews who were killed, but also countless other bystanders and other persecuted races changed my fundamental understanding of the Holocaust. Previously, I believed that only the Jews were prosecuted by Nazi Germany, but I know now that their reign of terror ruined the lives of countless others.

Moreover, I learned that although the time of the Holocaust was one predominantly characterised through the pain and suffering caused by Nazi terror, there was also much hope and beautiful human kindness to be found in those troubling times. Although there was much suffering, life was able to continue on through the resistance provided through hope and human kindness.

What I learned about the meaning of humanity from this study, is that although we are capable of immense harm and vindictive, bigoted rage, we are also capable of great feats of love and compassion. I learned that human morals are always present no matter the situation, as seen in the Righteous Among the Nations and their sacrifice for others and for the sake of compassion and human morality.

From this unit I will take away a much greater understanding of the Holocaust and the suffering it caused. But I also come away from this with a greater understanding of human morality and compassion in the face of adversity. And I am glad that I was able to deepen my understanding of both our world's history, and my understanding of the human species and our capabilities to demonstrate beautiful feats of passion and morality for the sake of others.

By Student 16

The Holocaust is an important part of history to be remembered, especially the survivors and people who were brutally murdered because of their religion or how they were born, all due to antisemitic ideologies. Through many historical artefacts from the time and contemporary literature and historical essays, the stories from the time of Nazi reign will never be forgotten. By creating contemporary perspectives and secondary sources that corroborate with the information from the past (for example our project) we are able to cherish all of these innocent people that were lost, and their memory will never be forgotten.

I think that it is important to share the specific names and faces of the individuals who were involved and experienced the Holocaust to show the personal perspectives in order for contemporary society to try and fathom the extent of this inhumane part of our history. While sticking to the data and numbers of those who died and those who were sent to camps and gassed, putting faces and names to these numbers is very emotive for the audience and makes them deeply think about the Holocaust and its impact on many families, communities and lives.

From the Holocaust and the spread of antisemitic views, we can continue to learn that the past actions that pointed the finger to a group of people out of hatred is still despicable, and the events of the Holocaust are inhumane and problematic, and shows the power that political ideology can have over people. We can gain a better understanding of our world and it is clear to see the positive changes that have happened since these indescribable times.

I learnt a lot that surprised me in this unit of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. I think what surprised me the most was how in the dark I was about this topic and how uninformed many other people were about this silenced event in history. This unit was very saddening, to learn the amounts of death and destruction of the Jewish people and the fact that someone could kill someone out of vain and political ideology made me sick to my stomach. I had a vague amount of knowledge about concentration camps, but I did not know, until studying this unit the amount of people that were gassed and piled up for all of these innocent people to see every day. I found the primary images from these camps of these people very confronting.

It was difficult to examine the Nazi point of view in this unit, whereas the Jewish perspective, there are a lot of testimonies from the few survivors of the camps. I was not knowledgeable on this subject at all, I think that the messages that have been learnt from this unit should be shared to those, who are like me, before we learnt about the Holocaust. In Nazi Germany, I learnt that Jewish life was a struggle every day, they were belittled, dehumanised, deceived and terrorised by SS Soldiers, their community, and their society, thrown in crowded carts and sent to camps to die, if they tried to resist against the forces they would be shot on the spot.

The Jewish perspective allowed me to understand what it means to be human and the cruel brutality humanity is capable of, as well as the beauty of hope and resilience. It is important to acknowledge and recognise the bravery and resilience of these people who were, and still are, the same as you and me.

By Student 2

The challenge of remembering the Holocaust is ensuring all perspectives are considered, such as the privileged perspectives, but also privileging previously silenced and marginalised perspectives – that is critical, as many people's voices were not heard. I think that it is really important to remember the Holocaust for many reasons so history will never be repeated – we need to remember the horror faced by innocent victims and the experiences they faced, the fact that it is never okay to punish people because of their race or religion, and how antisemitic attitudes are still evident today. By listening to victims, testimonies, and stories passed down from generation to generation, it allows us as society to remember those whose lives were lost too soon, and those who experienced what no one should have to. By keeping their stories alive at all times, we can learn from them, as they have taught us so much, such as the resilience of them and their culture.

When you only look at numbers, it is often hard to comprehend the fatalities and the sheer number of people. By sharing the individual names and faces, it puts everything into perspective on a more personal level and is very emotional. It often makes me think if I were in their shoes, or if I was all alone with none of my friends or family facing an unknown future of whether I will survive another day - this had a significant impact on me. I'm not sure if I would be able to live on like they did. Their courage and resilience really inspires me to make sure that I keep their story alive, and not take my life for granted.

I think it is really important to learn from the Holocaust that antisemitism and hatred should not exist, but as not everyone will ever agree, no person should ever be endangered, killed, hurt (physically or psychologically) for simply being who they are. The Holocaust has never been more relevant, because there is often hatred towards certain races or religions, and certain communities which is unjust and no reason for, and with the media, it has spread even more. We must make sure that the hatred does not turn into physical violence that could damage innocent people. Also, as many people are required to self-distance and quarantine themselves at home during COVID times, we may feel as if we are trapped or isolated, but it is incomparable to what victims of the Holocaust faced.

Before the unit, I had a brief understanding of the Holocaust. I have read *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* and *Cilka's Journey*, which provided me with a little bit more of an understanding before the unit. I was surprised to learn that antisemitism can be traced back into ancient times and many centuries ago. I found it saddening the number of people's whose lives were lost through the ghettos and concentration camps, and the number of those camps that existed. I found it confronting the types of violence the Nazis used in the concentration camps, such as the 'medical check-ups', but also confronting to see the images and the actual conditions that existed. It was quite difficult to analyse the *Auschwitz Album*. Whilst it was interesting and important to analyse visual sources of photographic evidence from the time, it is confronting how victims were treated and the conditions they lived in. It was kind of hard to comprehend that Nazi Germany were that cruel and could do what they did to other human beings. It was a bit difficult to examine some of the women perpetrator sources, because you often hear of how violent the males were, but not really women, who were actually just as violent, if not more. This is why it's important to analyse all perspectives such as those who were silenced, as often women perpetrators were marginalised and silenced as much as victims were.

I wonder how many SS officers didn't agree with the actions of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust? In psychology class we were learning about obedience to authority and conformity, and how both situational and dispositional attributes influence human behaviour. This would be a hard question to answer because many Nazi people's attitudes might have changed after the war, but it has entered my mind. I didn't realise there were so many perspectives to consider, and how perpetrator perspectives differed from person to person, which questioned my previous knowledge about the Holocaust because originally I had thought that most German people were somehow involved in the Holocaust and agreed with Nazi Germany, but after I realised this wasn't the case, and there were Germans who risked their lives to help hide Jews.

I also learnt that the terror continues to remain for many Jewish people throughout their lives and is carried through intergenerational trauma. I also learnt how there is survivors' guilt, which is quite saddening to hear, but important to acknowledge to assist the surviving victims. I learnt that there were many acts of resistance which I previously did not know about – including painting artwork and writing poetry, and how some victims found ways to hide them, such as under floorboards and other places to ensure they survived. I also learnt through one of my sources that even though the horror and dehumanisation faced by victims was extremely difficult, they still found ways to maintain their humanity – such as by reaching out to each other. Today, we may not realise that something as simple as holding out your hand, or waving, or a small gesture like that, could mean the world to somebody else, which is something we need to learn more of.

I learnt that to be human, you need to try and fight for what you believe in – for example, some German people resisted Nazi Germany and helped some Jewish people survive even though the majority of their country were against them and it was very risky to do so. Even in the camps, Jewish people continued to resist to help each other out by creating artwork, poetry and continuing education, sneaking food to survive, but also staying alive as a form of resistance. They didn't give up and assisted each other when the times were extremely tough – this shows the beauty of resilience and hope of individuals and strangers in helping each other at the times when humanity was so brutal. Whilst not every resistance was successful, every single victim of the Holocaust must be remembered, those who were murdered and passed away, and those that survive – they are the people that have shown us what it means to be human – it's the small things that matter, which we can learn from keeping their memory alive through privileging their testimonies and stories. From this unit, I will take away an increased appreciation for the victims of the Holocaust – like I mentioned earlier, they have shown us what no one else can – the fighting spirit, the hope of never giving up and the resilience of their culture and population.

Thank you Miss Hovelroud very very much for putting together an interesting, powerful and inspiring unit that has taught me so much about the Holocaust, and the importance of keeping the human spirit and the story of victims to live on. I really enjoyed the activities and content we did, and the wide range of perspectives we looked at. I also liked looking at the testimonies and videos. Also thank you for sharing your stories from your trip to Yad Vashem in Israel, because I found them to be emotional and powerful in sharing the story of the Holocaust. Also, thank you for your ongoing support in helping me do my best in history and this unit, as well as our project. 😊

By Student 7

The challenge of studying and remembering the Holocaust is ensuring that you look at all aspects, as it is such a complex topic with so many different parts. For example, there were all the events that occurred even before the beginning of the Holocaust which were also significant. I think that we can remember the Holocaust or Shoah by just keeping it in the back of our minds and not forgetting about the previously silenced and marginalised perspectives that are emerging today. To preserve and cherish the memory of this period so it won't be forgotten - I think we should just continue learning about it and investing time into looking at the stories of those who were impacted.

I feel it is important to share the specific individual names and faces of individuals who experienced the Holocaust, then to just stick with the data and numbers as each person has a unique story. Not one person had the exact same experience which is why it is important not just to look at the statistics or numbers. It kind of relates back to our idea of the tree (of our

collaborative project), not one leaf is the same but they all are part of the same tree! When you analyse something, even outside of history, the numbers don't make up everything and often they just give a brief overview of something. The personal stories are the real human experience which is what we can look for connections to most. Lessons we can learn from history today is that we should value each person's difference as it does not really get anyone anywhere!

Another thing that I found quite interesting (a little bit irrelevant to the questions for the reflection but I thought I'd include it anyway) about the relevance of this topic was that in psychology we were learning about the experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram in 1963 which were about obedience. And he actually was investigating into whether there was a special characteristic that made Germans more obedient to authority than other races which was a popular theory in the US and Europe during that time (whether they were just following the orders of authority). So I just thought that was interesting (also given my love for psychology) that the Holocaust is still relevant even outside of the direct analysis of history!

A lot of what we learnt surprised me, as my knowledge of the topic before was mostly just based on movies or from watching documentaries. I guess what surprised me most was just the scale of it and how many people were affected. This links into what saddened me, was that children were taken away from their families and that it didn't matter to them whether they were men, women or children that they all were considered the same. What I didn't know before was actually a lot about the ghettos and the systems before. A lot of the movies about the Holocaust that I had seen mainly focused on the concentration camps so it was interesting to look at that.

It was a bit difficult to examine some of the perspectives and experiences as some of it just seemed heartless. It also prompted me to do some more research outside of the topics, and I actually found a true story about how a couple from Poland who lived in Warsaw (Jan and Antonia Zabinski) and owned the Warsaw Zoo. They actually hid over 300 Jews inside the zoo for three years. Jan also was secretly part of the Polish resistance and smuggled food and Jews into and out of the ghetto and a lot of other things. They even made a movie out of their story called the *Zookeepers Wife* which I never knew the story behind.

It was quite sad to examine the *The Stroop Report* as they just took the images and put it in to show what was happening and they didn't seem to care much about the Jewish people themselves based on the actual origin and purpose of the report. And it was the same with a number of the perpetrator sources we looked at in class, like the images they took at the end of the camera film just to use it up. What I learnt didn't really make me question my prior knowledge, it more built onto it and really gave me a deeper understanding of the life and terror experienced. But it did make me question why I never had really heard about the acts of resistance, which was probably due to the perspectives of it had been marginalised and silenced.

I did learn a lot about life, terror and resistance in Nazi Germany this unit. What I probably took away the most was the resilience and fighting spirit that the Jewish community had, despite the terror they faced. What I will take away from this unit is that something like the Holocaust should never happen again as it is a lesson to be learnt. It is important to not only look at the perspectives that have been traditionally privileged, but to look at those who were likely impacted most – the victims. Their stories are just as important in properly understanding this period and the individual experiences which differed so much.

I would like to thank you Miss Hovelroud for putting together a wonderful unit that I have enjoyed learning about so much! And for all your help and support for our project too!

By Student 8

From the start of the unit, I understood why we needed to understand victims through their names, faces, lives before the Holocaust, families and personal experiences of life under a Nazi Regime, and also the importance of not focusing solely on numbers and data. By showing human stories of the impacts of the Holocaust, we are able to fully understand not just the numbers who were murdered, but the individual experiences filled with daily terror and trauma. Studying the Holocaust can feel overwhelming and the sheer extent it impacted countless people's lives is quite difficult to grasp, however, it is extremely important in understanding what happened and why it must never happen again. By preserving the memory of the Holocaust through exhibitions, commemorative spaces, and memorials, this significant event in history can be remembered throughout history and can be sustained to future generations. The Holocaust is a representation of what should never happen again, and we can learn from its impacts the full cost of the antisemitism that was pursued by the Nazi Party.

I studied this topic once and I remember that at that time, because I was younger and had a less shaped view of the world, I had just seen it as just another history topic, just another history assignment. I had no understanding or appreciation for the experiences of terror and fear so many people had experienced during these times, and although I do remember some lessons being confronting, I never thought further about it after class was over. Throughout this topic, I found a new understanding of the Holocaust and the individual experiences of Jewish people, as well as people from many other backgrounds, races and religions who also were victims of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.

In this unit we focused a lot on the personal experiences, though looking at personal recounts, artworks and testimonies. I found myself a few times this term feeling quite sad and upset after particularly hard and overwhelming lessons, because I really felt awful about what so many people had to go through. I wished that there was a way for me to remember and commemorate every victim: I wanted to learn more about those who hadn't survived, to hear stories that weren't well known within historical research and to listen to victims voices from a time where they had no voice. A few days after I had begun my individual research for the source investigation, I came across an article written about the process of victims rebuilding their lives after the Holocaust, and how their experiences had shaped their understanding and perception of the new world around them. It isn't humanly possible for me to read and commemorate every single victim, there are so many people who died as a number, not a person with a name, and no record remains of them. I am one person, and although I cannot commemorate every story, I can continue to live my life with a new perspective of their suffering and my own privilege of never having to experience what they did.

During the whole assessment period, I never saw my source investigation as an assignment. Sometimes, I did get frustrated with my work, but for me, my source investigation and project I worked on with my closest friends in the class was a form of me giving victims voices and allowing their stories to stay alive and be heard. Even if these stories were only shared with my classmates through our collaborative project, and the viewers of this project, I think that this has assisted me in feeling somewhat satisfied that I have understood and listened to experiences. There are countless who I didn't research, however, as one person, I believe I have done my best. When I worked on it the assignment, and even when I found research I didn't include, I tried my best to understand the life experiences of these people. As a form of respect and commemoration to the people who suffered, I made sure not to put off my assignment, and I tried my best to put as much effort as I possibly could to create a sort of memorial through my assignment and collaborative project.

So, in the end, although this is a grade 12 unit and a grade 12 assessment piece that counts towards my ATAR mark, for me, it is so much more. I feel that through this unit, my mindset and perspective has matured greatly, and I feel like I am able to understand people and what they have gone through as individuals significantly more. Although I may not be able to relate to those who experienced the Holocaust, I understand now that I do not need to relate to someone to provide support and consolation, whether they are the individuals and groups I study through history, or my friends and family.

I will truly take this away from this unit, and I am also truly grateful to Miss Hovelroud who has allowed me to open my eyes to these events through her passion and has assisted me in truly understanding and appreciating these people and their stories. Although our time studying the Holocaust has come to an end, I hope that I can continue to live my life with newfound knowledge and respect for the all the people who were affected greatly by the Holocaust and those who continue to be.

By Student 9

By sharing names and faces we are giving back the Jewish people's humanity and remembering them for what they are: humans. Not one number in millions of Jews. Their experiences were all unique. Many Jewish people experienced things that no person should have to. As respect for them we should remember their names, faces and their stories. We also need to remember that hatred and discrimination of a whole group of people based on race, religion, nationality, sex and more can be very dangerous. A person shouldn't be judged based on things they can't control, but who they are as an individual.

I was surprised how a country can have so much control over a group of people doing terrible things for so long and there was no one doing anything big to change it. It was hard for me to comprehend or begin to understand how someone can have so much hate and violence towards a stranger because of their religious beliefs. The Holocaust really shows how we as humans can be so brave, strong and kind but also brutal, ugly and horrible. It was difficult to learn about the things that happen to the Jewish people as they were often so cruel and violent. It was also difficult for me to release that those things happen to people my age and younger. I couldn't image the strength it would take to be forced away from the rest of my family, alone in a place where I don't know. It amazed me that people put in a hopeless situation forced to make "choiceless choices" where still about to not only live, but also resist to the mistreatment against them.

To ensure the stories of Jewish people is never lost places like Yad Vashem and its website are very important. We must ensure that resources are available to everyone.

Also, the poems and art piece from the children in Theresienstadt had a big impact on me and my understanding of life in ghettos. I think it was a brilliant and moving way to get people to remember and understand life for Jewish people in the Holocaust. It is so important for us to remember events the happened in the Holocaust through sharing stories, art and writings of the time to all people

By Student 15

The challenge of studying and remembering the Holocaust, is to learn of all the experiences Jewish people had as all survivors have their own significant story of the Holocaust. It is obligatory to remember this event in history, as it can present a point of view of what can happen if people are left to such terror and horrors.

I will be able to remember the holocaust through the Holocaust Remembrance Day held on the 27th of January and the work of our unit. To be able to cherish the memory of the Holocaust in order for it not to be forgotten, Memorials can be set up throughout different areas of the world so people can visit and learn about what happened.

It is important to share the specific individual names and faces of individuals who experienced the Holocaust as it shows the individual as an equal person who has their own significant story as no different to others, whereas if it was just data and numbers, it can marginalise them against the rest of the world.

Some lessons we can continue to learn is that everyone is equal, despite their religion, culture, and skin colour, and that no-one deserves what the Jewish people have experienced during the genocide.

What surprised me about this unit was where the Jewish people were located and how they were treated. What I learnt that had saddened me was how the Jews were treated throughout the Holocaust and the 'Final Solution.'. Some new knowledge I didn't know before was the Ghetto areas and life in the ghettos, and how many camps there actually were.

It was difficult to examine some of the perspectives because of how confronting most of the evidence that were provided was. What made me question my prior knowledge was how Jews were really treated in the Ghetto areas and concentration camps and the environment that had to live in.

Life in Nazi Germany was hard, cruel and painful for many. Jews would live in fear of Nazi Perpetrators who roam the streets with guns in hand, killing anybody on sight if something wasn't done right. However, resistance was also seen within ghetto areas, uprisings were held in certain places and many Nazi and Jewish people would have been killed.

If put into the position, humans can be ruthless, brutal, resilient, and hopeful within the current situation that is held against them.

I will you take away from this unit that everybody is equal, despite their culture or religion, and no person deserves to be treated how the Jews were treated again.

By Student 4

The challenge of studying the Holocaust lies in the horrific nature of this event, both in light of the suffering endured by its victims and the fact that it was humans who were able to inflict such cruelty. It is vital to remember this great crime of humanity, both to pay respect and acknowledgement to the victims and their descendants, and further, to ensure that nothing like this should again become possible.

I can remember the Holocaust by taking the time to visit places of commemoration – e.g. monuments, or a museum – and continuing to learn about this time through reading testimonials and research on the topic. Furthermore, what we can ensure that the dark legacy of the Holocaust is of importance to future generations by continuing to acknowledge and explore it, both in the public and private spheres.

By revealing an individual's story, we are able to humanise and better comprehend the enormity of the otherwise inconceivable figures that represent them. As antisemitism and other prejudices are seen to gain alarming momentum in contemporary society, the issue of the Holocaust has never been more relevant. It serves as a warning for what is indeed possible if hatred spirals out of control.

I found it interesting learning about the significant resistance of the Sonderkommando in the camps; it would have taken an enormous amount of resourcefulness and courage to achieve what they did in capturing evidence of the crimes they witnessed.

I found the topic overall very saddening, however perhaps what I found most tragic was the sources gathered by passive observers, and perpetrators, who, though fully aware of the injustice before their eyes, were able to distance themselves from morality.

Also, I found the extensive visual documentation of scenes from liberation quite confronting. Looking through David Olère's testimony on the tasks of the Sonderkommando was also very taxing, and something I had not looked into in such detail before. As mentioned above, Olère's testimony in particular was very graphic, and connecting such terrible images to the knowledge that they are an eyewitness account of true events leads to revelations regarding the human capacity for evil, which can be difficult to accept and stomach.

I thought this topic was covered really well; I especially liked the revisionist focus on resistance during this time.

The long history of antisemitism was something I did not know so much about, with this background, Hitler's popularity and public tolerance of prejudice made more sense. Additionally, I learnt a lot about the significance of not just physical survival, but spiritual resistance of victims of the Holocaust.

I learnt that people are able to justify almost any measure of cruelty that they take upon themselves. However, it was also heartening to hear of the incredible strength of humans faced with such adversity, and the number of stories of people helping each other than have endured as strongly as the horrors of the Holocaust in living memory.

Finally, I have learnt the breadth of the human spectrum: from impossible cruelty to self-sacrificing kindness and strength.

By Student 10



**Artwork by
Student 13
(2020)**