SELECTIONS FROM

THE HOLOCAUST
A NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER’S RESOURCE

Featuring the experiences of Holocaust survivors who settled in North Carolina

View and download the complete teacher’s resource guide at the Council website.

NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL ON THE HOLOCAUST
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/
The North Carolina Council on the Holocaust is pleased to offer these selections from its publication, *The Holocaust: A North Carolina Teacher’s Resource*, which is available in its entirety on the Council website (www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/).

The North Carolina Council on the Holocaust was established in 1981 by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., and authorized in 1985 by the General Assembly. It is composed of twenty-four members, of whom six are Holocaust survivors or first-generation lineal descendants of survivors. All members are volunteers appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the House, or the President Pro Tempore of the Senate; six are appointed at large. Through its education and commemoration programs, the Council strives to help prevent atrocities similar to the systematic program of mass murder by the Nazis of six million Jews and other targeted groups, including Roma (gypsies), homosexuals, handicapped persons, and religious and political dissidents, from 1933 to 1945.

The Council gratefully acknowledges the dedication and contributions of its members and supporters over the years, as well as the longstanding support of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

The Council gratefully acknowledges the past chairmen of the Council: Dr. and Rev. B. Elmo Scoggin, William Shrago, Dr. Bramy Resnik, and Dr. David Crowe. The Council also wishes to acknowledge the past chairmen of the North Carolina Holocaust Foundation: William Shrago, Jack Woodland, Steven Ellsweig, and Alan Novak.

Funding for the Council projects and the continued success of the Council would not have been possible without the expert management and guidance of Richard Schwartz, Vice Chairman of the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust since September 1999, and Mitch Rifkin, Vice Chairman of the North Carolina Holocaust Foundation, 2007-2012, and Chairman of the Foundation since 2012.

The Council remembers Holocaust survivor Gizella Abramson for her endless dedication to educate others about the Holocaust. For almost thirty-eight years, from autumn 1973 to spring 2011, Mrs. Abramson’s testimony served as an inspiration to thousands of North Carolina teachers, students, and other audiences.

The Council also thanks Holocaust survivors Irving Bienstock, Julius Blum, Hank Brodt, Susan Cernyak-Spatz, Suly Chenkin, Rena Kornreich Gelissen, Morris Glass, Zev Harel, Rebecca Hauser, Henry Hirschmann, Manfred Katz, Henry Landsberger, Simone Weil Lipman, Elias Mordechai, Esther Mordechai, Abe Piasek, Bramy Resnik, Shelly Weiner, and Walter Ziffer for their countless speaking engagements on behalf of the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust to teachers, students, civic groups, and the military about their Holocaust experiences and lessons learned from the Holocaust.

The Council gratefully acknowledges Henry and Runia Vogelhut for the creation of the State Holocaust Commemoration in 1982 and for their annual management of the
Commemoration through 1998. The Council thanks the current and former members of the Commemoration Committee for continuing to plan the Commemoration since 1998.

The Council on the Holocaust gratefully acknowledges Linda Scher for her tireless commitment to Holocaust education since the first years of the Council’s educational outreach across the state. Ms. Scher initiated the Council’s teacher workshops with Gizella Abramson in 1991, and since then the Council has educated an estimated 10,000 teachers about teaching the Holocaust to their students. The workshops have had a direct impact upon millions of North Carolina public school students through the past twenty-five years.

The Council sincerely thanks Linda Scher for her very capable direction and development of the teacher workshops, and also thanks Gizella Abramson for her twenty years of dedicated speaking about her first-hand experience of the Holocaust to teachers at the workshops. Over the years, Dr. David Crowe, Dr. Joseph Hoffman, Dr. Karl Schleunes, and Dr. Peter Stein have given generously of their time and talents at the teacher workshops as distinguished Holocaust scholars.

The Council gratefully acknowledges and thanks Linda Scher for writing the original Council teacher’s guide, *The Holocaust: A North Carolina Teacher’s Resource*, published in 1989. The Council also gratefully acknowledges and thanks Marianne Wason for preparing the guide for digital upload by WUNC-TV (2005), preparing the guide selections distributed to workshop participants (2015), and expanding the guide with the experiences of additional Holocaust survivors who settled in North Carolina (2017). Since its first publication in 1989, over 22,000 copies of *The Holocaust: A North Carolina Teacher’s Resource* have been published and distributed to North Carolina teachers attending Council workshops. Since the guide is online, the Council now distributes this publication of guide selections and Holocaust teaching materials to workshop participants.

The Council also wishes to thank Marianne Wason for contributing her editing and publishing expertise to the Council’s printed and digital resources. Since 1997, Ms. Wason has created flyers, handouts, programs, and PowerPoint presentations for the teacher workshops, teacher conferences, specific Council programs, and the annual Holocaust commemoration. Ms. Wason created the Council’s original website and serves as the Council’s website liaison with the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

Sincerely,

Michael Abramson
Chair, North Carolina Council on the Holocaust, 1999-present
Chair, North Carolina Holocaust Foundation, 2004-2012
January 2017
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See complete guide at www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/guide/.

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The first-person accounts in this guide are those of Holocaust survivors who became North Carolina residents. An asterisk indicates those whose narratives are included in these selections.

*Gizella Abramson  *Rena Kornreich Gelissen  *Elias Mordechai
*Julius Blum  *Morris Glass  *Esther Mordechai
*Susan Cernyak-Spatz  *Zev Harel  *Abe Piasek
Suly Chenkin  *Anatoly Kizhnerman  Barbara Ledermann Rodbell
Walter Falk  Henry Landsberger  *Edith Neuberger Ross
Renée Fink  *Simone Weil Lipman  Shelly Weiner
In the century and a half before 1933, the people of Germany created more enduring literature and music, more profound theology and philosophy, and more advanced science and scholarship than did the people of any other country in the world. Germans were highly cultured and literate. Their universities were the most respected in Europe. And yet it was in this country that Nazism developed.

Many factors played a part in Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Hitler's arresting personality and his skills as a public speaker and propagandist contributed to his political success. His ability to attract followers can also be attributed to the bitterness many Germans felt following their country's defeat in World War I, resentment of the Versailles Treaty, weaknesses of the Weimar Republic, the Depression, and the growth of extreme nationalism in Germany.

**WEIMAR REPUBLIC BLAMED FOR GERMANY'S DEFEAT**  In 1919 after defeat in World War I, Germany set up a republic. The Weimar Republic was created during the period of general exhaustion and shock that followed the war. The Kaiser, Germany's ruler, fled to Holland and although the military had lost the war, the new government was blamed for the defeat.

Germans were not prepared for a democratic government. The country had always known authoritarian leaders and had been ruled by an emperor since 1871. Many Germans saw the Weimar Republic as an interim government. When Germany held elections, it became a “Republic without Republicans.” It did not have an elected majority and was disliked by many sides.

**RESENTMENT OF VERSAILLES TREATY**  At the end of World War I, the Weimar government signed the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty fostered feelings of injustice and made many Germans want revenge. Article 231, known to many Germans as the “war guilt” clause, declared that the Central Powers had begun the war and were, therefore, responsible for the destruction it caused in the Allied nations. Germany was forced to give up land and pay reparations which Germans considered excessive and unfair.

**HIGH INFLATION IN GERMANY**  Following Germany's defeat, the German mark became almost worthless. In 1914 $1 was equal to 4 marks; in 1921 $1 was equal to 191 marks; by 1923, 17,792 marks; and by 1923, 4,200,000,000 marks. Hitler benefited from the country's economic problems. Economic uncertainty and the fear of communism after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia offered a rich soil for the seeds of fascism.

**HITLER'S EARLY YEARS**  Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889, in Austria. He was the fourth of six children. Hitler's stepfather, a customs official, died when Adolf was 14. Hitler's first years at school were successful until he entered a technical school at age 11. There his grades became so poor that he left school at 16.
In 1907 Hitler’s mother died. He moved to Vienna, where he lived for seven years. While there he applied for admission to the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, but was rejected for lack of talent. In 1913 Hitler moved to Munich, Germany. In 1914, he joined the Bavarian army as a dispatch runner. In World War I, he took part in heavy fighting. He was wounded in 1916 and gassed in 1918. He was recovering in a hospital when the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Hitler’s wartime experiences reinforced central ideas he pursued later: his belief in the heroic virtues of war, his insistence that the German army had never been defeated, and his belief in the inequality of races and individuals.

**NAZI PARTY FORMED** In 1919, at age 30, Hitler returned to Munich, where former soldiers, embittered by their experiences, had formed associations. Many groups blamed Germany’s defeat on Jews who, they said, had “stabbed the army in the back.” Hitler joined the German Socialist Workers’ Party and within a year, had transformed it into the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, or Nazi Party. By 1922, he was well known in Munich. He rented beer halls for meetings and gave speeches repeating his basic themes: hatred of communists and Jews, the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, the betrayal of the German army by Jews and pacifists, and the need to acquire enormous amounts of land for German settlement.

**HITLER WRITES MEIN KAMPF** On November 8, 1923, Hitler and his followers attempted a takeover of the government in Munich. The failure of this coup attempt resulted in a five-year jail sentence for Hitler. He served only nine months due to a sympathetic judge. During this time he wrote the first of the two volumes of *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*). This book became the bible of the Nazi movement. It clearly spelled out Hitler’s program. In it, Hitler announces his intention to manipulate the masses by means of propaganda, forecasts a worldwide battle for racial superiority, and promises to free Germany from the limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

Released from prison in 1924, Hitler realized the Nazis must come to power legally. “Democracy must be defeated with the weapons of democracy,” he said. His task was to reorganize his outlawed party and work toward his goals. The popularity of Hitler’s racist ideas coupled with his remarkable gift of oratory united the disillusioned of every class: the bankrupt businessman, the army officer who couldn’t adjust to civilian life, the unemployed worker or clerk, and the university student who had failed his exams.

**PROFESSIONALS AND WORKERS ATTRACTED TO NAZI PARTY** Hitler’s ideas found support among all classes from lawyers, doctors, and scientists to factory workers. Among his earliest supporters were members of the lower middle class—small shopkeepers, farmers, clerks, and tradesmen. Generally, young Protestant men favored the party, while women, Catholics, and older
socialists and democrats opposed it. Hitler offered something for everyone: the return of the glories of Germany, racial war as a normal state of life, the Jew as the common enemy of the German people, the German race as the saviors of the world. Hitler's racist appeals attracted anti-Semites, but most Germans were more attracted by other aspects of his program.

**DEPRESSION BRINGS NEW SUPPORTERS**  
Hitler's chance came during the Depression years. After 1929, many people blamed the Weimar government for the country's economic problems. By the early 1930s, Germany was in a desperate state. Six million people—one third of the workforce—was out of work. Hitler's program appealed to a cross-section of the German public who perceived the Depression as a unique German phenomenon rather than as a worldwide disaster.

**HITLER APPOINTED CHANCELLOR**  
The Nazi party surprised observers with its success in the parliamentary elections of 1930, winning 107 seats in the Reichstag, or parliament. By July 1932 the Nazis had gained control of 230 seats to become the strongest single party. In January 1933, an aging President Paul von Hindenburg was persuaded to appoint Hitler Chancellor of the Reich. Hindenburg believed Hitler could lead Germany out of its political and economic crisis. Hindenburg also believed Hitler could be controlled. Once in power, Hitler immediately took steps to end democracy and turn the nation into a dictatorship. He began by calling a new election for March 1933. The Nazi-controlled Reichstag then passed the Emergency Decree. All civil rights—free speech, freedom of the press, the right to assemble, the privacy of the mails—were suspended.

Until the election, Hitler used the power of emergency decrees to rule. All open opposition came to an end. Newspaper offices and radio stations were wrecked. He created special security forces that murdered or arrested leaders of the communist, socialist, and other opposition political parties.

**CIVIL RIGHTS SUSPENDED BY ENABLING ACT**  
On the first day the new Reichstag met, the Nazis helped push through the Enabling Act. This act provided legal backing for the Nazi dictatorship. No charges had to be filed to lock people up. Warrants did not have to be issued for arrests. "Enemies of the people and the state" were sent to concentration camps. The first camps opened soon after Hitler took power. The Reichstag adjourned, never again to have an effective voice in the affairs of Germany during Hitler's rule.

**THIRD REICH COMES TO POWER**  
When Hindenburg died in August 1934, Hitler saw his chance to consolidate his power. He united the offices of President and Chancellor to become the Supreme Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The democratic state was dead. Hitler's Third Reich had come to power.
Lesson: Dissent in Hitler’s Germany

Handout: The News from Germany  
Vocabulary: pacifist, totalitarian

Lead students in reading and discussing the chapter overview. Then write the following quotation on the board (often incorrectly attributed to the British statesman Edmund Burke):

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Ask students what they think this quote means. (Bad things happen because good people do nothing to stop them.) Ask students to suggest reasons why otherwise “good people” might not act when confronted with behavior they know to be wrong. (fear of physical harm, fear of losing status in the community or of public disapproval, apathy, indifference, ignorance of how the problem can be solved)

Middle schoolers might be introduced to this lesson through the poem “The Hangman,” written in 1951 by Maurice Ogden (available online and printed in the back of the full guide).

In this lesson students read about some German men and women who did try to protest against Nazi policy. This handout can be used to help students contrast the way dissent or opposition to government policy is treated in a democratic society like the United States with the way dissenters are treated in a totalitarian state.

Distribute the handout, The News from Germany (p. 6). Make sure students realize that each of these newspaper reports comes from newspaper articles of the 1930s. As students read each article, have them note the date and the place where each occurred. Explain that Martin Niemöller was a German Protestant minister who served with distinction in the German navy as a submarine commander in World War I. In the years after World War I, he was at first a supporter of the Nazi party. However, after Hitler came to power in 1933, he preached against the Nazis and became the leader of the Confessing Church. The purpose of this group was to systematically oppose the Nazi-sponsored German Christian Church. He was imprisoned by the Nazis for nearly eight years from 1938 to 1945, when the Allies liberated the camps.

When students have completed the reading, make a chart like the one below on the board. Have students complete the chart and use it to compare the articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Persons Accused</th>
<th>Punishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed to give Nazi salute</td>
<td>German citizen</td>
<td>Two weeks in prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marched in a protest against a ban on public prayer meetings for imprisoned ministers; opposed restrictions on churches</td>
<td>Several hundred Protestant church leaders</td>
<td>Demonstrators jailed but later released; Rev. Niemöller imprisoned for eight years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposed Nazi ideas, told children not to give Nazi salute, were pacifists</td>
<td>German citizens</td>
<td>Children taken away from their parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask students what effect they think the punishments for these acts had on German citizens who did not agree with Nazi policies. (The increasing severity of punishments in the decade before the war had a chilling effect on dissent.) Point out that without the cooperation and support of
major institutions of German society such as the church or the universities, individual resistance, even if it had existed on a larger scale, would not have been very effective.

Next ask students whether any of the actions described in these newspaper articles would be considered a crime in the United States. (No) What rights do Americans have that protect them from arrest for such activities? *(constitutional rights of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly)*

Have students think of periods in American history when opposition to government policies has been strong. A good example is the Vietnam era. Some of the ways opponents of the Vietnam War expressed their views were through marches, protests, refusing to salute the flag, and refusing to sing the national anthem. None of these actions were illegal. What would have been the response to such actions in Nazi Germany? *(Clearly, such actions would have been considered criminal acts in Nazi Germany. Point out that in the United States opposition to the war expressed through such activities as refusing to register for the draft and takeovers of buildings were illegal, and students might consider reasons for this.)*

As a follow-up activity, groups of students can write the memo suggested at the end of the handout. *(Groups can consider such responses as diplomatic protests, secret negotiations, the League of Nations, economic sanctions and boycotts, breaking off relations with Germany.)* Students can also write short newspaper articles indicating how the same information might appear in a German newspaper of the period. Students should be made aware that these newspapers were used as propaganda tools of the Nazi government.

**CONNECT TO CIVICS** Examine with the class the difficult choices a democracy faces in determining the limits of dissent. Should a civil rights group be allowed to hold a protest march or a rally? Should the same rights be given to the Ku Klux Klan or to neo-Nazis and skinheads? Should members of an American Nazi party be given a parade permit? Students can research an actual incident that took place in Skokie, Illinois, in 1977. Skokie is a suburb of Chicago. At the time, many of its residents were Jewish and some were concentration camp survivors. The incident which occurred there began when Nazi party members requested a permit to hold a rally. Many members of the community objected strongly to the request. Skokie town leaders responded by obtaining a court order banning the rally and passing local laws that prohibited the rally. The Nazi party appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to defend its right to hold the rally. The lawyer for the Nazi party argued that to deny the Nazis the right to march violated their First Amendment rights. In a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment protected the Nazis’ right to assemble. However, the Skokie rally was not held; the Nazis decided to rally in Chicago instead. *(National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie, 1977)*

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

- The Third Reich: An Overview (Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM)  
- The Holocaust: A Learning Site for Students (USHMM)  
  www.ushmm.org/learn/students/the-holocaust-a-learning-site-for-students
Imagine you are a policy analyst for the U.S. State Department. Based upon these newspaper articles, write a memo to the president describing the situation, what might happen, and the courses of action the president might take.

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IV ■ THE HOLOCAUST ■

OVERVIEW

“How did I survive such hell? I learned to accept the nightmarish camp as the real world and coped from one minute to the next. Blind luck also played a part.”

Susan Cernyak-Spatz

The term Holocaust comes from a Greek word meaning “burnt whole” or “consumed by fire.” Between 1939 and 1945, nearly six million Jews died in the Holocaust along with five million non-Jews. Among the non-Jewish groups the Nazis singled out for murder and persecution were the Roma (Gypsies), Polish intellectuals, Serbs, resistance fighters of all nations, German opponents of Nazism, and eventually all people of Slavic ethnicity. These were not accidental deaths or casualties of war, but planned mass executions. Along with these 11 million human beings, a way of life, an entire European Jewish culture rich in traditions, vanished as well.

POLICY OF EMIGRATION ABANDONED

In the prewar years, Hitler tried to rid Germany of its Jewish population by a series of harsh discriminatory laws intended to make Jews want to leave Germany. If this failed, he planned forced expulsion. Many historians contend that at the time World War II began, the Nazis had not yet devised a plan for the murder of the Jews. Although Hitler began setting up concentration camps in 1933 for the persecution of political and religious dissidents, the Final Solution may not have been decided upon until after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. The war enabled the Nazis to apply their racial theories particularly against the “subhuman” Poles, Slavs, Roma, and Jews. Starting in October 1939, following the invasion of Poland, Heinrich Himmler created a new department of the SS whose purpose was to deal with deportations, emigration, or mass shootings by mobile killing units. Once groups were categorized as “subhuman,” they no longer had to be treated by the normal rules of civilized behavior. Nazi leaders felt justified in making them victims of mass brutalization.

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR KILLING

At the beginning of the war, the SS, directed by Heinrich Himmler, had organized mobile killing squads—the Einsatzgruppen—that followed the German armies into Poland and, later, into the Baltic countries. Jews were rounded up in towns and villages and driven to the forest or into the countryside. As soon as they were stripped of their clothes and any possessions, victims were executed by gunfire and buried in huge pits. Fearing this method of execution would be discovered, the Germans abandoned mass shootings, relying instead upon specially equipped vans that were used to gas the passengers within.

WANNSEE CONFERENCE

During 1941 Hitler decided to move from a policy of forced emigration to one of annihilation. The Einsatzgruppen were already murdering Jews in Poland.
and parts of the Soviet Union. At the Wannsee Conference, in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, on January 20, 1942, SS General Reinhard Heydrich explained to SS and other top Nazi leaders and heads of German government bureaucracies that Hitler had “given sanction for the evacuation of Jews to the East.” This statement announced a policy that had as its aim the destruction of European Jewry. Instead of forcing Jews to emigrate, Nazi officials would deport them to death camps. A death camp would have facilities designed specifically for mass murder. The Nazis' euphemism for this policy was “resettlement to the East.” At the conference, Nazi leaders as well as non-Nazi bureaucrats, who would arrange for the transport of Jews to the death camps in Poland, received instructions for the implementation of this policy of genocide and the deportation of Jews from all Nazi-occupied countries. No dissent was heard from those attending the conference. In fact, some participants offered suggestions for making the process of carrying out the Final Solution more efficient. Nazi leaders had a two-step plan. Jews were to be gathered at “concentration points” in cities on or near railroad lines and then taken by train to mass killing centers.

JEWS FORCED INTO GhettoS  Following the invasion of Poland, the Germans began to round up Polish Jews and put them into ghettos. There they were segregated from the rest of the population and told that, when labor camps were built, they would be resettled in special work areas. Jews from cities in Germany and from other countries were also sent to these staging areas in Poland and in other parts of Nazi-occupied eastern Europe. In total, the Nazis created some 400 ghettos. They used starvation and deprivation to weaken the captives. Then, whenever the Nazi officials in charge decided, a certain number of residents was ordered to report to rail stations for “resettlement to the East.”

DEATH CAMPS IN POLAND  By the fall of 1941, mass murder became official state policy. Orders were given to build death camps in Poland, accessible by direct rail lines from any point in occupied Europe. Nazi leaders chose Poland for the killing centers for several reasons. First, the largest number of Jews lived in eastern Europe. Second, non-Jews in these areas had age-old traditions of anti-Semitism and were unlikely to oppose the activities of the Nazis. In fact, many offered assistance. The Holocaust would not have been possible without the aid of these local populations. Finally, all sites were located in semirural areas. Starting in 1941, death camps were built at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Chelmno, Belzec, and Majdanek.

Between 1941 and 1945, the Germans built and operated 20 major concentration camps in
Germany and eastern Europe. The concentration camps, including Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Ravensbruck, were set up as work camps. Prisoners were worked to death as slave laborers or used in medical experiments conducted by German physicians and university scientists. Scores of other smaller concentration camps were built in other areas. These camps tied up men and materiel in their operation and were a drain on German manpower. This policy did not advance the war effort, but it showed the strong commitment of the Nazis to the Final Solution. At first, thinking that life could only be better away from the disease-ridden ghettos, the victims willingly accepted resettlement. In order to avoid panic in the ghettos, the Germans allowed families to travel together to the death camps. Crowded into railroad cattle cars with little water and no food, frightened and confused families made the slow train trip into Poland.

DEPORTATION “TO THE EAST” The victims seldom knew what was about to happen to them. Although the rumors from the killing centers, or death camps, began to filter back into the ghettos after 1942, few Jews could believe that mass extermination was the final aim of the Germans—a nation many had considered to be the most cultured and advanced in Europe. Even when a number of death camp escapees managed to return to the ghettos and report what they had seen, their accounts were dismissed as wild stories.

Under the “resettlement plan,” the Nazis first emptied out the major areas of Jewish settlement in eastern Europe. Poland was first, followed by Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. Nazi victories in western Europe in 1940 had brought even more Jews under Nazi control. Victims were transported from France, Holland, Belgium, and Germany itself. The policy of genocide was in full force in Europe by mid-1942. Almost all the victims at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka death camps were Jews. A few were Roma. Few survived these camps.

AUSCHWITZ IS LARGEST CAMP Auschwitz, also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau, was the largest death camp. It was built west of Krakow, Poland, in Auschwitz. Beginning in late 1941, Russian prisoners of war and several thousand Jewish prisoners worked nonstop to build the gas chambers and crematoria, as well as hundreds of barracks to house slave laborers. Thus, Auschwitz served first as a concentration camp and slave labor camp and then became the death camp where most of the European Jews and Roma were killed. German engineers and architects supervised the construction. Scores of German doctors and medical researchers carried out cruel medical experiments on human beings in specially equipped laboratories built on the grounds of the camp. The camp began accepting large numbers of prisoners in 1942 and was soon operating at full capacity. While the Germans used some prisoners as slave laborers, killing was the major goal of the camp. By mid-1944, when vast numbers of Hungarian Jews were arriving at Auschwitz, 10,000 people or more were murdered daily. Even as the war brought the Soviet armies deep into eastern Europe after 1944, trains filled with victims continued to arrive in Auschwitz.

Railroad freight cars and passenger trains, packed with terrified prisoners, arrived in the death camps several times each day. Prisoners were unloaded from the trains by waiting guards. Once they were separated by gender, victims waited in long lines to
be checked by an SS doctor who decided who would go to the gas chambers. The young, the healthy, and those with skills needed by camp officials were sent into the camp itself. In the camp, guards made the prisoners undress and hand over rings, watches, and all other valuables. Prisoners’ heads were shaved and they were herded into overcrowded barracks. Most of these people eventually died of malnutrition, brutality, and disease. Old people, the sick, women with children under 14, and pregnant women were almost always sent directly to the gas chambers. Victims were driven naked into the gas chambers which were disguised as shower rooms. Either carbon monoxide or Zyklon B, a deadly gas, was used to asphyxiate them.

**NAZIS TRY TO DESTROY EVIDENCE OF CAMPS** As the Allies closed in on Germany from the west (American and British armies) and the east (Soviet army), the Nazis attempted to evacuate and destroy the camps. Treblinka had already been plowed under after a Jewish revolt in August, 1943, and Auschwitz was partially taken apart in early 1945.

**FORCED MARCHES BEGIN** As the Allies approached several of the remaining camps, the killing continued, with nearly a half-million victims murdered in 1945 alone. The SS forcibly marched the surviving prisoners from the Polish death camps to camps inside Germany, where they hoped to prevent their liberation and hide evidence of the massive genocide which had occurred. These final death marches killed thousands, and tens of thousands of starving victims were eventually left to die in abandoned German trains. Those who survived remained in concentration camps until they were freed by the Allies.

On April 30, 1945, shortly before he took his own life, Hitler wrote his last political testament. He blamed the war on the Jews. They were, he said, solely responsible for causing the war and their own eventual destruction, and he urged the continuation of their extermination.
In this lesson students will read about the experiences of five North Carolinians who survived the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Encourage students to think about the ways in which the Nazis attempted to dehumanize their prisoners. They can also consider what motivated these people to survive, what strategies they developed to help them survive, and what part luck played in their survival. Have students discuss why these people wanted to tell others about their experiences even although it is extremely painful for them to do so.

Divide the class into groups of four students. Give a member of each group one of the four narratives. Within groups, have each student read and summarize the narrative for the other group members. When all students have shared their findings, have each group use these questions to compare and contrast the experiences they have read about. Ask each group to select a spokesperson to report the group’s answers to the class.

1. In what ways were the experiences of these people alike? (All of them lost their freedom and all control over their time. They all lived in fear and uncertainty, but tried, in accordance with their abilities, to react in ways that would help them survive.)

2. What kept most people from trying to escape from the trains going to the camps? From the camps? How successful do you think the escape attempts were? (Students should be aware that deportees and camp inmates were unarmed, malnourished, and shell-shocked from their treatment in the ghettos or from incarceration in the cattle cars. They had no money or food, no weapons or ways to get weapons, no ration cards or identification papers, were surrounded by largely hostile local populations who were very unlikely to help them, and risked endangering those around them by trying to escape or fight back. For these reasons, escape attempts rarely succeeded.)

3. In her selection, Rena talks about learning to be “camp smart.” In what ways were these survivors camp smart? What do you think helped them survive their experiences? (Students might mention personal courage, resourcefulness, the help of others, religious faith, intelligence or cleverness, determination to survive, luck, the ending of the war. In the case of Rena, having her sister to look after her might also have helped her survive. Point out that although the resourcefulness of these survivors under pressure was an important factor in their survival, they were also just plain lucky. Emphasize that for every person who survived because of bravery, resourcefulness, and chance good fortune, many hundreds of thousands more who were equally brave and resourceful died in labor camps or gas chambers.)

4. Why do you think the people you have read about wanted to tell others about their experiences? (When one of the survivors was asked why she was willing to visit schools and talk to students about her experiences, she replied, “When you read about something in a book, it’s entirely different from when you meet a person face to face and you realize that they’ve got two hands, two arms, and two eyes, and they’re very much like you. It helps you realize that they have the same right to exist as anybody in this world.”)

5. In her testimony, Susan states that making people eat and drink from the same bowl and use that bowl for urination and defecation was one of the ways prisoners were dehumanized. This
enabled the guards to justify treating them like animals or, as Susan says, “like vermin.” In what other ways were people dehumanized at Auschwitz? What do you think the purpose of this treatment was?

For a concluding activity, have each group prepare a group statement expressing the members’ feelings about what they have read. The reaction statement might take the form of a poem, picture, or Power Point presentation using passages from the readings. Encourage students to be creative in their responses.

CONNECT TO LANGUAGE ARTS Students can compare and contrast the wartime experiences of the people they have read about with the experiences of Anne Frank or of Annie and Sini in the book The Upstairs Room by Johanna Reiss (1972). High school students might read Primo Levi’s Survival at Auschwitz (1947) or Elie Wiesel’s Night (1960). Students can note the dates of the experiences described in these narratives and interview adults who lived during this period, asking them to describe what their lives were like and what they knew or did not know about what was going on in eastern Europe at this time.

For recommended lists of Holocaust-related books for students, see the Bibliographies section of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website at www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography. See the categories Children’s Books, Holocaust Fiction, Holocaust Poetry, and Primary Sources.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- The Holocaust: An Introduction (Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM)
- Holocaust Encyclopedia (USHMM: links on main page to most visited entries)
  www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust-encyclopedia
  * All entries in alphabetical order: www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/a2z.php?type=article&cat=0
- Auschwitz (Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM)
- Auschwitz through the Lens of the SS (USHMM)
  www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/collections-highlights/auschwitz-ssalbum
- The Liberation of Auschwitz (USHMM)
  www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/liberation-of-auschwitz

Access the valuable teaching resources of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust. The museum’s offerings include lesson plans, teaching guidelines, online activities, interactive maps, audio and video collections, the Holocaust Encyclopedia, and other exemplary classroom resources.
Surviving Auschwitz ■ Esther and Elias

Esther Politis and Elias Mordechai were born in Ioannina, Greece. Esther, age 22, had been married less than a year to her first husband. Elias was in his early thirties, married, and had a four-year-old daughter.

ESTHER: On a Saturday morning, 1944, early in the morning around seven o’clock, somebody knocked on the door very hard. We didn’t know what was happening. The Germans were outside. They gave us exactly two hours to get ready. Two of my brothers were begging my mother for permission to let them go up into the attic and hide. My mother was screaming like anything. She said she was not going to leave anybody behind. Everybody—the whole family was going. We were very close. The whole family was going to go together. So my two brothers didn’t have any choice. We all got ready. We took a couple of loaves of bread and a quilt or blanket. They took us to a big place and gathered everybody together. The Germans were organized. They had a schedule. Everybody’s name was written down. They knew how many people were there. And that afternoon they sent trucks like they carry horses in. Everybody got in the trucks. It was March 25 and it was snowing. They called our names out and checked a list before they put us in the truck. I was completely lost. I was 22 years old. I said, “What are they going to do to us? Where are they going to take us?”

ELIAS: They put us in a big truck without food or anything and we went to a little town. There we were put in one big building that used to be a warehouse. Over 2000 people in one building without food, not a thing. After eight days, a train came. Seventy-five people—children, old people, families—were put in each car of the train. The train traveled through Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, through Czechoslovakia, and stopped at Auschwitz, Poland. Eight days and nights. A lot of people died in the train cars by the time the train reached Auschwitz.

ESTHER: When we arrived at Auschwitz, everybody was asking, “What are they going to do?” Two German men came and took us out of the train. You know if you sit eight days in a train and you don’t stretch your feet, it’s very hard to walk. They separated us when we came out of the train. They put the young people on the right, the old people on the left. Of all my family, only one of my brothers and I came out of Auschwitz. Everybody else went that same night to the gas chambers. I told the German officer, “I want to go with my mother,” and he said, “You cannot go with your mother because she cannot walk. You’re going to walk. And you’re going to meet them tonight.” And we walked. And we never saw them again.

After the war Esther and Elias returned to their town hoping to find their families again, but most of their relatives had died in Auschwitz. They became friends and married in 1946. In 1951 they emigrated to the United States with their two daughters and settled in Greensboro, North Carolina, where other Jews from their village had emigrated before the war.

Susan Eckstein was born in 1922 in Vienna, Austria, and moved to Berlin, Germany, with her family in 1929. They witnessed Hitler’s rise to power and fled first to Austria and then, after the Nazis occupied Austria in 1938, to Prague, Czechoslovakia. Hoping to smuggle his family out of Nazi-occupied Europe, her father was able to enter Poland—on August 31, 1939, one day before the Nazis invaded Poland and World War II began. He eventually arrived in Belgium, but Susan and her mother were unable to follow him. They were arrested in 1942.

We were deported to Theresienstadt from Prague. My mother, due to some personal decisions, chose to go on a further transport. So mother chose at that time to be deported east from Theresienstadt, and nobody knew where to. Well, we found out later—I saw her name on the transport list when I worked in the political department in Auschwitz—that she arrived on the transport but never came into the camp. So probably, I would say, that at that age—mother was 45—she was one of the fortunate ones. Because, at her age, she would have come into the camp and she would have suffered terribly and then gone into the gas. This way, she went into the gas, not knowing what was happening, not knowing what was going on.

I came into the Auschwitz death factory from one of the many collection camps for Jews in German-occupied countries. My transport consisted of 500 men and 500 women. Sixty women between the ages of 14 and 34, myself included, were selected for labor in the women’s camp; the same number of men went into the men’s camp. The rest were gassed at once. Men and women, separated in camps enclosed with electrified barbed wire, were guarded day and night by soldiers with machine guns.

I was “processed” into the camp on January 28, 1943. According to Hitler’s master plan I was to live for two and a half months doing hard labor before being murdered. I was shaved all over, given the summer uniform of a dead Russian prisoner, a kerchief to cover my bald head, and a tin bowl for food, drink, and other purposes. I had no spoon, coat, handkerchief or rag, nothing for care and maintenance of my appearance. This was a means to dehumanize prisoners so that guards would feel no pity when they treated us like vermin.

People ask how I survived such hell. I have only one explanation that makes sense to me. I learned to accept the nightmarish camp as the real world and coped from one minute to the next. Blind luck also played a part. Twice a day the SS guards made random selections from the prisoners’ ranks. Those chosen went to the gas chambers. I have no explanation for why some lived and others died. Survival depended on getting through selection alive or finding a kommando that worked inside the camp and was not subject to selections. Kommandos were work units that performed tasks inside and outside the camp. An inside unit might have five prisoners while an outside unit contained 200 to 300 laborers. Outside jobs included road building, demolishing bombed houses, digging stumps, cultivating fields, carrying ties and rails for railroad construction, all...
without the help of machinery. For eight months in 1943, between bouts of typhoid fever, jaundice, scabies, and other diseases, I served on an outside kommando and lived in a barracks built to house 200 people, but actually crammed with 400 to 500 women. There was one toilet and one water faucet for 25 overcrowded barracks.

One of the things that probably started me out on a career intermittently in Auschwitz was that on the first day of walking out on the outside of the kommando, not knowing the rules and regulations of the camp, I just acted on instinct. We were standing in line by the gate waiting to march out, and there was the work commander leader, an SS man, and I just blithely stepped up and said to him, “Reporting name so-and-so, number so-and-so, and I’m a secretary.” And that man’s mouth fell open because nobody had dared to do that, and somehow I suppose I must have made an impression. He wrote my number down, and everybody in line said, “My God, he wrote your number down, you’re going to go to the gas.” But three days later, I and some other people [who] had given their profession as secretary were called to work in the political department to serve as temporaries. I guess they had a lot of investigations down there and they needed people to take transcripts of the investigations. And through that, after about two or three weeks, I got a job in the political department, which was the elite department, clean and relatively well fed. But after about a month or so, somebody in the secretarial kommando was caught smuggling information out of a file, probably out of a personal file. Like in all jobs, last hired, first fired. The example was made with me and two others that were on the bottom rung. And we were kicked out of Auschwitz and back to Birkenau to the extermination camp. And then I made my way through typhoid fever, scurvy, hepatitis, and the whole bit. Well, I survived.

A lot of people, when they came into Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was a surrealist nightmare situation, couldn’t accept the fact that they were there. Why were they there? They couldn’t live like that. No normal being could live like that. They totally refused to adapt or even attempt to cope within the frame of that nightmare. And I think, if I remember, from the first day on, whether it was walking around in Russian prisoners’ uniforms and with a shaved head, and with one bowl for eating and elimination and everything, I accepted it. I accepted it and I manipulated to cope with anything, and I think that that was one of the most important things, that you accepted the frame of the situation and lived from one minute to the next, or from one day to the next, with no other aim but survival.

Because I have seen people who simply would lie down and die because life like that’s not worth living. And, just like today where the physician will tell you your own mental condition was part of your cure, it was the same thing there. Your mental condition was part of your survival. Survival was the utmost thing and survival needed to be within the frame of that given world. That was the world I lived in.

You always had to have a support group. The support group might change because any time you changed kommandos, or changed jobs, or changed blocks, you
had to have a new support group. Anybody who tells you that he existed by himself, especially in the lower kommandos, is lying. You had to have a support group.

In January 1945, the Germans evacuated the camp because the Russians were too close. They did not release us. Instead we endured an infamous death march in the subfreezing Polish winter. Women who had survived for two or three years in Birkenau died on that march. Those who could not walk anymore got a bullet in the head. Survivors were stuffed into the overcrowded concentration camps in Germany proper. I spent three months after that death march in the Ravensbruck women’s camp near Berlin.

When the Russians entered Berlin, the Germans marched us deeper into Germany. They hoped to exchange their prisoners for German prisoners held by the Allies. But when we arrived at the first American checkpoint near a small German village, German hopes were dashed. The SS guards went straight into prisoner-of-war camps. The Americans put me in a displaced persons camp.

It felt strange to walk down streets without guards or barbed wire. It took a long while to get used to freedom. I was alive but 5.5 million Jews had died as a result of governmental hatred and prejudice. These deaths, called the Holocaust, must be remembered to prevent mankind from being diminished again. The Holocaust must never be repeated.

Susan was reunited with her father in Belgium soon after the war. She married Hardy Spatz, an American GI, and they came to the United States on July 4, 1946. After earning a Ph.D. in Germanic Literature and Language at the University of Kansas in 1972, she moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where she taught German and French at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte for 33 years. She has three children and two grandchildren. In 2013 she published her Holocaust narrative, Protective Custody: Prisoner 34042. She continues to speak to students and other groups across the state.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Susan Cernyak-Spatz, video introducing audiobook of Protective Custody: Prisoner 34042 (2013) www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLS0y2Bh68Mvideo

Adapted from:

Photos of Dr. Cernyak-Spatz courtesy of Dr. Cernyak-Spatz.
Surviving Auschwitz: Rena

Rena Kornreich was born in 1920 in Tylicz, Poland. Her older sister, Gertrude, was 16 years older than Rena. Her younger sister, Danka, was born when Rena was two years old. The two sisters were extremely close, with Rena looking after her younger sister throughout their childhood. Their mutual caring and sharing continued throughout their nightmare years in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

We have a calendar in Birkenau. It is hunger. The emptiness in our stomachs never ceases. It is our only clock, our only way to discern what time of day it is. Morning is hunger. Afternoon is hunger. Evening is hunger. Slowly we starve until we cannot make out anything beyond the gnawing of our intestines grinding against each other.

There is only one thing that exists beyond the gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It lies in wait for me like a beacon of light shining through the fog. I hold it before me constantly, every second of every day. It is the only thing that keeps me going—Mama and Papa. They beckon to Danka and me from the fringes of my mind. . . . We’re here! they cry. We’re waiting for you to come home. I hear Mama’s voice comforting my troubled mind, soothing the worries of our existence. The only thing she cannot help is the hunger, but even that dulls in comparison to the knowledge that Mama and Papa are waiting for Danka and me to return to Tylicz. I frame this picture in my mind and hang it on a mental wall where I can gaze at it constantly. I know they are there. I work because they need me. I live because they are alive. . . . I wonder if I will ever wake up to turn over in a real bed again. Will I ever open my eyes without German commands and decide to sleep in because it is raining out and I don’t have to get up yet? The days are long and hard. . . . Falling into unconsciousness, I am woken by barking, by gunshots . . . by four a.m.

“Raus! Raus!” [“Out, Out”]

The room elders hit the girls who are still sleeping and those who aren’t quick enough to scramble off the shelves we lie on. . . . “Come on, Danka.” I shake [my sister] gently. “We have to get up and find the bathroom.” There is no toilet in the block, as we had in Auschwitz: there is a bucket. “Where’s the toilet?” I ask, ducking as the stick strikes my head. This is not a place for questions. We run outside. The kettle of tea is sitting by the door. We hold out our bowls; the ladle splashes lukewarm tea across our hands.

Standing in neat rows of five in the dark, we eat our remaining piece of bread and wait for the SS to arrive. We have noticed that the day goes better if we can eat something before we work, so Danka and I always eat only half our portion [of bread] at night, saving the rest until morning.

SS men march up and down the rows counting our heads. . . . Roll call takes at least two hours this first day at Birkenau. We are not used to standing for so long at attention; fighting the urge to shift our feet, we must not even yawn. Every few minutes [the SS man] hits someone for not looking attentive enough, for moving her feet, for no reason at all.
“Dismissed!” The orders crackle through the dawn light. We work all day and march back to the stables. . . . We should try to sleep in here.” I point to an area far enough away from the block elder’s room to give us time to get up in the morning without getting struck by her stick. We crawl onto the shelving cradling our bread and clutching our blanket between us. Silently we chew our bread, hiding the remainder in our pockets.

These first few weeks we are barely surviving. The food is less than it was which means it has gone from a crust to half a crust. The soup is so thin there is no use to wait at the end of the line for a piece of turnip or meat, and the tea is practically clear. Every morning that we wake up at least one of the girls has died on our block. There are no exceptions. We are dropping like flies.

You have to have a brain to figure out all that is going on, the tricks to being camp smart: where it’s the warmest, who’s the most dangerous, who doles out a bit more soup. The new arrivals barely have time to figure out how to survive before they die.

After roll call you don’t know anything else that’s happening. You can’t keep brooding about what is befalling you . . . because then you won’t have the energy to go on, and you have to keep going. The work you do may kill you, but if you don’t do it you will be killed.

As bad as Auschwitz was I miss it. I miss being able to wash my face. I miss the little blanket Danka and I both had. Now we must fight for just one blanket that barely covers us. In Auschwitz, the bunk beds we slept on were spacious in comparison. Now there are six women per shelf. We are crowded so close that we almost have to touch.

You have to have a brain to figure out all that is going on, the tricks to being camp smart . . . . The new arrivals barely have time to figure out how to survive before they die.

It is Sunday. . . . We get off our shelves. Get our tea. Eat our half piece of bread. There is a rumor that there is going to be a selection.

“What’s a selection?” we ask among ourselves. We groom all day, pulling lice from our armpits and clothes. There is no frightening these creatures; they are everywhere. I spit on my shoes and wet the crease on my pants. It is important to look good if there is going to be a selection—whatever that means. I want to look right.

Four A.M. “Raus! Raus!”

We grab our tea as we step outside. The guards do not count us at once. Instead they stand at one end of the camp, ignoring our neat lines and perfect rows. We wait and wait. The row at one end begins to move slightly forward slowly. We strain our eyes to see what is happening. “They are selecting us.” The whisper scurries down the rows, informing those of us who are not yet moving toward the SS. “They’re deciding who will live and who will die,” the whispers confirm. Our ranks grow silent. How can they do that? We move forward. I take Danka’s hand, squeezing it reassuringly. “I will go in front of you,” I whisper.
An SS points for one to go left and the other right. . . . I squeeze Danka's hand one last time before stepping in front of those who will judge me fit or unfit. Tomorrow may have no meaning for us if we do not pass this selection—and if we do pass? Tomorrow may have no meaning for us.

I hold my breath. The thumb points for me to live. Stepping forward cautiously, I wait for my sister. The thumb points for Danka to follow me. I breathe.

Four A.M. “Raus! Raus!”

There is another selection.

As the Soviet army approached Auschwitz in early 1945, most prisoners were forced on a death march west into Germany. Rena and Danka survived the march to arrive at the Ravensbruck concentration camp, where they were liberated on May 2, 1945. Their sister Gertrude also survived the war, but the fate of their sister Zosia is unknown. Rena never saw her parents again and believes they perished in Auschwitz. After the war, Rena and Danka worked for the Red Cross in Holland. Rena married a Red Cross commander and in 1952 they emigrated to the United States. In 1988 they retired to Hendersonville, NC. The couple have four children and three grandchildren. In 1995 Rena published her Holocaust memoir, Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Video: Presentation by Rena Kornreich Gelissen on her Holocaust experience, Salem College, Winston-Salem, NC, 1994 (YouTube)
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGx3i_GiT6w (first of several parts on YouTube)

  news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150415-ngbooktalk-nazis-auschwitz-holocaust-survivors/

Julius Blum was born in 1925 in Munkacs, Czechoslovakia, a mountain town with a strong Jewish community. In 1938 the area was annexed by Hungary as part of the Munich agreement that gave most of Czechoslovakia to Hitler. The Jews of Hungary were relatively safe until Nazi Germany invaded the country in March 1944. By late May, all the Jews of Munkacs had been forced into a ghetto and sent to Auschwitz to be killed, but Julius, with other young men, was able to escape into the woods.

Instead of moving into the ghetto, we twenty fellows decided to go into the woods where we hoped to survive until the war was over. We pretended to be migrant workers accepting odd jobs from the farmers. We worked on one farm taking care of pigs and carting wheat to the flour mill. Close to the end of April, the farmer we worked for informed on us to the Germans. We were captured by German soldiers and taken to the brick factory, which was the transport area for Jews being deported to Auschwitz. At the brick factory, we were severely beaten and then interrogated to find out if we knew anyone else hiding in the woods. Unfortunately, I had a note written in Hebrew in my pocket which a German officer found. Thinking it was a secret code, he took me to the group leader. I was questioned and beaten until I passed out. Luckily, I was taken to a first-aid station and the doctor looking after me happened to be a close family friend. He made sure I was put in a cattle car with the rest of my friends.

No one in the train knew where we were heading. A day later the train stopped. The Germans opened the cattle car doors and allowed Hungarian Jews from the nearby labor camp to bring water into our car. The big bucket that served as a bathroom for the whole train car was emptied. Immediately they locked the doors again and the train headed east.

About three or four days later, the train stopped, and the doors opened to a bedlam of noise. Voices in German, Yiddish, French, and Polish shouted for us to get out of the car, leave everything behind. Men and women were told to line up separately. Immediately they marched us forward and we passed the first selection in front of [Dr. Josef] Mengele. I shall never forget Mengele. He was dressed immaculately from his uniform to his very highly polished boots. I could see my reflection in them. He looked at me. I was still showing bruises on my face, and despite the fact that I was young and otherwise in excellent condition, he wasn’t sure if I should go right or left. Finally he asked me, “Can you run?” I loudly answered “Yes.” Then he pointed to his left and I started running. This was the difference between life and death.

We were taken to an empty barrack where we sat wondering where we
were and what was going to happen to us. Late that evening a fellow in a prison uniform came
to our barrack, hoping to find somebody he knew. He had heard that a transport from Hungary
had arrived. He told us that we were in a camp called Birkenau, an adjoining camp to
Auschwitz, and that we had been selected to work, but he doubted that many of us would
survive the harsh conditions and the lack of food. We asked him about the others who were
directed to Mengele’s right, mostly the elderly, frail, or women with children. He told us we would
never see them again. He pointed to the chimneys spewing smoke and sparks, letting us know
that was where they were. We realized the odor we were smelling was burning flesh. The rest of
the night not one of us slept a wink. We just stood by the windows and looked at the chimneys.

Early in the morning several prisoners took us to the showers, ordering us to strip naked and
leave everything behind except for our shoes. First the barber shaved our bodies. After the
shower, we were disinfected and given a towel, a piece of soap, and a bowl with a rusty spoon.
They also gave us a uniform of lightweight striped fabric and marched us to Auschwitz, about a
mile and a half away. There we were assigned to a place in a barrack and a number was
tattooed on our left arm. Then the guards asked everybody about their profession. Other
prisoners had advised me to claim a profession; I told them I was a plumber.

One day they came and called out certain numbers. The men with these numbers were assigned
to be taken to a labor camp. I was one of the 200 men taken in a transport to a new camp built to
house workers for a nearby factory. I was assigned to a drill machine used in producing cannons
for the German army. We worked seven days a week, 12 hours a day, on the day shift and
another group worked 12 hours on the night shift. We were considered luckier than most other
people who worked outdoors and in the mines which was much more difficult.

Our life followed a certain routine. We got up at six o’clock in the morning and lined up for appel,
which was the roll call or counting. We got a dark hot liquid that they called coffee and marched
to work. Seven o’clock at night the night shift arrived, and the day shift marched back to camp.
We were given a soup which sometimes contained one or two pieces of potatoes or turnips. It
was a daily struggle figuring out where to stand in line to reach the kettle just before it was
empty. People at that point in the line were the lucky ones. They were in the right place to
receive the piece of potato and turnip in the bottom of the soup kettle. We were also given a
slice of bread, one sixth of a loaf. Little communication took place among prisoners. We were
not allowed to talk while working or marching, or during roll call. The only time we talked to each
other was during mealtime when the subject was invariably food—what our mothers used to
cook and our favorite dishes, and what we were going to do when we were liberated. I was
going to spend all my money eating in a pastry shop until I was sick to my stomach. My dream
was to have enough bread to satisfy my hunger along with one slice of bread for tomorrow.

In December, just before Christmas, we heard heavy machine gun fire and knew Russian sol-
diers were coming closer. The Nazis gathered us together, gave each of us half a loaf of bread,
and marched us to the railway station. The factory where we worked produced one gun a day,
the best gun of World War II, but for the previous few weeks not a single gun was taken to the
battlefield because the Germans lacked the fuel or trains to carry them. Yet they had no pro-
blem getting a train to take us to Austria. We ate the bread on the first day of the trip. For the
rest of the trip, we had no bread or water. We picked up some snow from the top of the car
through a small window. In Munich, Germany, the train was taken away from us and we waited
for a day outdoors for another. We were gathered in a corner in the railroad station, watching
the people walking by with Christmas packages. We stood there starved and looking miserable,
but not one person out of the hundreds passing by took notice of us or gave us so much as a
morsel of bread. A day later we arrived at Mauthausen, a concentration camp in Austria. We
had to get off the train and walk about a mile to the station in knee-deep snow. Weakened by
starvation and brutal treatment, many could not make it. Those who fell in the snow were killed. At least one third of the group died.

Mauthausen was at the foot of the Alps. It was mid-January and extremely cold. We kept ourselves from freezing by huddling together to get the warmth of our body temperatures. After three weeks, we were taken to Gusen, a labor camp working for the military. I was assigned to assemble machine guns. The camp was in a valley, and the factory was on top of a hill. From the camp to the factory we had to climb 21 rough uneven steps, and these steps became the test to determine if we were still fit to work. If anyone fell while walking those steps, his number was reported and the next day he was told to stay in his barracks. Staying in the barracks usually meant you would be taken to the crematorium to die.

On the second day of May, at five o’clock, we again lined up for an appel [roll call]. Always exactly at five o’clock the gates opened and the German soldiers appeared. But on this day it was five minutes after five and the gates were closed. Suddenly I saw two soldiers in green uniforms peeking through the gates. Then the gates opened and suddenly some prisoners shouted: “We are free.” The German soldiers had fled as American GIs approached the camp. We started singing our national anthems. Every European country was represented. Then everyone ran towards the gates to surround the soldiers. They looked at us as if we were creatures from outer space, while we looked at them as if they were angels from heaven. We stared at each other without saying a word. Then I remembered my English lesson from school and I shouted “God Save the King.” A soldier looked at me and said, “We are Americans, not British.” The silence was broken and we started communicating. Thus my captivity ended and my second life began.

Julius was reunited with his mother and father in the United States. His brother and the rest of his family died in the Holocaust. Julius came to the United States in 1947 on a scholarship to study in Georgia; he earned his degree in textile engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. After working in textile mills in South Carolina, he opened his own textile plant, Blue Jay Knitting, in 1966 in Asheville, NC. Julius retired in 1988 after establishing several other textile plants in the region. He and his wife Phyllis have three sons and five grandchildren.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Video: interview with Julius Blum, no date (USHMM, 1:49:26) collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn520398
- Brief biography of Julius Blum, in SHOAH: Survivors and Witnesses in Western North Carolina (Center for Diversity Education, UNC-Asheville) toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/SHOAH/blum.htm
When the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed, many people wondered how it was possible for the Nazis to kill so many people without meeting overwhelming resistance.

POLICY OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY  Jewish resistance to Nazi persecution was limited by circumstances in occupied Europe. With the carefully worked out plans for the Final Solution, Jews had few chances for massive resistance. Under the Nazi policy of collective responsibility, anyone working against the Germans faced brutal punishment. Entire communities and families were held responsible for individual acts of resistance or sabotage. Poland, for example, lived under a virtual state of terror throughout the occupation. Any contact between Poles and Jews was punishable by death. Despite this, resistance to Nazi persecution took several forms—armed resistance outside the ghettos and camps, resistance within the ghettos that led to uprisings, and the spiritual resistance of individuals who showed their opposition by continuing to practice their religion.

ARMED RESISTANCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE  Armed resistance came from those who managed to escape capture. Organizing themselves into small resistance groups in the eastern European countryside, these people—with few weapons, inadequate food, and little help from native citizens—fought against the Nazis on several fronts. Known as partisans, such groups attacked German supply depots, captured weapons, and served as links between the ghettos and the outside world. In both eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Jewish partisans fought against the Nazis in the forests and countryside. On April 19, 1943, members of the National Committee for the Defense of Jews, in cooperation with Christian railroad workers and members of the Belgium underground, attacked a train going to Auschwitz from the Belgian transit camp of Malines. Working together, Jewish and Christian partisans helped several hundred Jewish deportees escape.

JEWISH ARMED RESISTANCE  When the ghettos were being evacuated and destroyed, Jewish resisters led a number of uprisings. There were few weapons available to Jews or to civilians in general. Despite this, armed resistance took place in many ghettos. One of the most famous uprisings occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto in April-May, 1943. With few weapons and almost no outside help, a group of young ghetto residents held out for several weeks against overwhelming German superiority. The Warsaw Ghetto was destroyed soon after the uprising. Only a handful of the ghetto fighters survived. Yet, this uprising was not unique. In September 1942, in the Tuchin ghetto in the Ukraine, 700 Jewish families escaped. Almost all the Jews were caught; few survived the war. Similar uprisings took place at the Bialystok and Vilna
ghettos in Poland. In both cases most participants were killed.

The strongest armed resistance took place in the ghettos, but almost every concentration camp also had a resistance movement. In Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Sobibor, Jews formed active resistance groups that helped prisoners get food from the outside, bribed camp guards, sabotaged installations, and even led armed uprisings. Jewish workers in the Auschwitz crematoriums revolted in 1943, destroying one of the crematory facilities and killing a number of SS soldiers. In Treblinka, prisoners spent a year organizing a full-scale revolt that took place in the summer of 1943. A number of prisoners escaped. In Sobibor, nearly 700 Jews rebelled and, although most were caught and killed, some 300 got away. These uprisings so enraged Hitler that both camps were destroyed.

OTHER FORMS OF RESISTANCE

In the ghettos, slave labor camps, concentration camps, and death camps, Jews rebelled through daily acts of spiritual resistance. They participated in worship services at great risk to themselves and their families, and in the ghettos secretly continued the education of their children by organizing schools and holding classes. Strictly observant Jews also defied the Nazis by continuing to practice Jewish dietary laws. Others resisted by creating art or music, keeping diaries, or by stealing out of the ghetto to obtain food. Many continued to practice their religion, praying silently or aloud in camp barracks so that others could be comforted. They shared food, helped the weak stand through roll call, or intentionally produced defective war materials in slave labor factories. All were extraordinary acts of courage and resistance.
LESSON ■ RESISTANCE

Narrative: Gizella Joins the Resistance  Narrative: Simone Helps Refugee Children

Vocabulary: Resistance, spiritual resistance, Gestapo, Vichy government, Occupied France

[Also see the Lesson on Resistance in Supplemental Materials, p. 75.]

Lead students in reading and discussing the overview. One question teachers and students ask frequently about the Holocaust is “Why didn’t the Jews fight back?” You may point out that the question to some extent blames the victims of the Holocaust for the tragedy that befell them. It implies that the Jews could have stopped the Nazi genocide if only they had acted differently. As the overview indicates, both physical and spiritual resistance did take place. It is important to present an accurate picture of the daily acts of resistance by Jews in ghettos and concentration camps as well as to describe Jewish participation in resistance groups. Jews resisted by building hiding places in the ghettos and by jumping from the trains taking them to the death camps. For many Jews, the ultimate act of resistance was struggling to survive in a death camp or ghetto at a time when it would have been easier to die than to live under such horrifying conditions.

Because teenagers, in particular, often argue that they would have acted quite differently in this situation, you can use these questions to clarify their understanding of the obstacles which Jews faced in resisting.

1. If you fled to escape capture, where would you go? Who would give you food and shelter? How would you pay for these necessities? What would be the penalties be for Christians who helped you? (Remind students that violence against Jews was state-supported. Thus victims could not turn to the police or other law enforcement officials for protection. To the contrary, police and military soldiers were perpetrators of state-sanctioned violence. Also, in almost all occupied countries, local populations collaborated with the Nazis. Resisters could not assume that their Christian neighbors or friends would hide them. Many people informed on their neighbors for personal gain, out of fear of reprisals if they did not do so, or out of personal anti-Semitism.)

2. Assuming you could get out of your house, how could you escape from the town or city where you lived? (Point out that in Nazi-occupied countries, everyone was required to carry identification papers. It was not possible to travel by train from one place to another without such papers. People caught without their papers were immediately under suspicion.)

3. How would you defend yourself? (Students often say they would get a gun, but where would they get one? Few farmers owned guns. Only police, foresters, and soldiers had them. There were no gun stores and obtaining guns or ammunition was a life-threatening act. Even Christian resistance groups were very reluctant to give guns or ammunition to Jewish partisans.)

4. Would you be willing to risk the lives of your family, your friends, and possibly your entire community by an act of resistance? (The Nazis practiced a policy of collective responsibility. If one member of a family resisted, other family members were killed. Resistance put every-one in a family and sometimes in a village in extreme danger. Sometimes a resister was forced to watch as his or her family was tortured and killed before the resister himself was put to death.)

5. Once trapped in a ghetto, malnourished and demoralized, would you be thinking about resistance or survival? What resources would you have to organize resistance?

6. In a concentration camp—closely watched by guards with guns and vicious dogs, surrounded by electrified fences, skeleton-like in appearance and dressed in thin, clearly-marked clothing often in subzero temperatures—how would you fight back?
Tell students they will read the experiences of two Jewish women who participated actively in resistance movements. Write “resistance” and “member of the underground” on the board. Ask students what associations these phrases bring to mind. Where do students’ ideas about the work and life of such people come from? (war movies, television dramas, suspense novels) From the media and spy novels, students often think of such work as exciting, even glamorous.

Divide students into pairs and give each pair the two narratives of women—one in Poland and one in France—who eventually settled in North Carolina after the war. Direct them to compare and contrast their resistance activity.

To introduce Gizella’s narrative, explain that the Nazis exerted strong direct control over Poland. Many Poles actively collaborated with the Nazis. Although Gizella was forced to live in the ghetto, her uncle, a doctor, had more freedom of movement, since he was allowed to leave the ghetto to treat his Christian patients. Gizella was sometimes permitted to go with him to carry his medical bag or supplies. Outside the ghetto, her blonde hair and gray-green eyes meant she was often mistaken for a German or a Pole. Her physical resemblance to the Polish Christians around her helped save her life.

To introduce Simone’s narrative, explain that after France surrendered to Germany in 1940, the country was divided into two parts. The northern part, Occupied France, was ruled directly by the Germans, while in southern France the Vichy Government, composed of pro-Nazi French politicians, governed unoccupied France, the Free Zone. Initially in the Free Zone, French Jews felt safe, although Jews living in either part of France who did not have French citizenship, and Jewish refugees from eastern Europe, were soon targeted for deportation by the Nazis. However, as the war progressed, the Nazis exerted greater control over all of France and all Jews risked deportation and death.

Have students use the following questions to help them analyze and compare and contrast the experiences of Gizella and Simone:

1. How did each of these young women become a resister?
2. What were the goals for each young woman’s resistance work? Whom did their work help the most? What risks did each take? What obstacles did each face? Which resister had more help from the local population?
3. What was each resister’s “cover”? Why were identity papers important to each of them? How were these papers obtained? How were they used?
4. What skills and personality traits do you think helped make these young women effective resisters?
5. Simone expresses the opinion that she and her friends in the resistance did nothing out of the ordinary? Do you agree?

After the students read the two resistance narratives, ask them if they would describe resistance work as “exciting” or “glamorous.” What words best describe it?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Jewish Resistance (Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM)  
- Resistance during the Holocaust (USHMM, pdf: 56 pages)  
  www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20000831-resistance-bklt.pdf

Access the valuable teaching resources of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust. The museum’s offerings include lesson plans, teaching guidelines, online activities, interactive maps, audio and video collections, the Holocaust Encyclopedia, and other exemplary classroom resources.
Gizella Gross was born in Tarnopol, Poland in 1928. She was eleven when the Nazis invaded her country. With her blond hair, she was able to escape from the Lutsk ghetto by using false ID papers. She joined the partisans fighting the Nazis.

One day my uncle [a doctor] sent for me, asking me to bring a special instrument to the home of a Czech farmer he was treating. I walked out with my yellow star patches. Suddenly I heard someone say, “Where are you going, little one?” I was walking with my head bowed. They were German soldiers calling me. “Now look at her,” they said, “how pretty. She looks like my —— look at the blonde hair. Look at those eyes. Do you want a piece of chocolate?”

I remember walking on. I didn’t turn around then. I came to the farm and I must have looked a bit strange. Uncle said to me, “What’s the matter with you? You look positively yellow. And where are your patches?” He turned to the wife of the farmer he was treating and said, “Do me a favor, put the patches on her.” But the farmer’s wife shook her head. She looked at me and said, “No, I won’t. She doesn’t need any patches.”

Gizella’s appearance eventually helped her escape from the ghetto. Her uncle arranged for her to hide in the home of one of his patients. She slipped out of the ghetto and went to meet people who would take her to her new hiding place.

The meeting was a meadow on the edge of town. I went there. I heard trucks coming and hid. When they arrived, they were full of people. The Germans yelled at them to get down and I saw a shower of yellow stars as they got off. I heard shooting and then screaming. Then it got quiet. Those voices have haunted me every day of my life.

The Germans left and I crept out of my hiding place. Two men came up behind me. “What do you want?” I said. Then somebody grabbed me and I was placed under straw in a wagon. They seemed to know quite a lot about me. They said they knew where my Aunt Lucy and my two cousins were hiding. If this remark was meant to scare me, I don’t know. But after they said that, I never said another word. I was afraid, and I had a feeling that I had no choice but to obey their orders. And anyway, where else was I to go? My life in the Resistance had begun.

I was taken to a hut in the forest. They listened to me speak German, Russian, and Polish. I spoke these languages without any difficulties. I was given the birth certificate of a young woman named Veronika. The birth certificate was authentic, but the only problem was Veronika was much older than I. At that time I was twelve years old. So in the next picture that was taken of me I had to put my hair up so that I looked a little bit older.

To make sure I learned my new identity, a member of the Resistance would coach me. In the middle of the night he would shine a light on my face to wake me up. He would say,

“What’s your name?”
“Gizella.”
“What’s your name?” Slap.
“Veronika?”
“What’s YOUR NAME?”
“Veronika!” That was how I learned my new name.
After getting her identification papers, she began her work with the Resistance.

At my first job I was told I would know only one person among the people working for the Resistance. The person that I knew was called Makar. I doubt that was his real name. Throughout my stay my only contact was this one man. He was my "chain man." He was my only link in this human chain of underground Nazi fighters.

I was supposed to be the granddaughter of a couple living in a house where the German commander of that city lived. My job was to polish his boots, bring his meals, and empty the wastebasket. Anything I found in the wastepaper basket, I was told to bring to Makar. My job was to live in this house. Never ask any questions. And tell Makar about the comings and goings of the German officers and the types of insignias they were wearing. Makar told me to pretend I could not understand German so that I could listen to their conversations.

My next job was my most important one. I had a completely different identity. I was the cleaning person in the German commandant’s headquarters in a large city in Poland. My job was to get as many copies of the identification forms issued at this headquarters as I could. People could survive with those papers. People who had identification papers could get work papers. They could prove that they were legal residents of the city and they could obtain ration cards for food. Even non-Jews without such papers might be sent to forced labor camps. I took the papers, but I never knew whom they gave them to. That’s what I wonder about today. I would like to know that I saved someone’s life.

Early in 1944, I was captured. I think somebody denounced me. I don’t know for sure. At that time, I was working with a German supply unit, doing kitchen work. A Gestapo officer came. He asked many questions. Even though the Germans could not prove my identity was false, I was arrested and taken to a concentration camp.

Gizella was forced on a death march from the Majdanek concentration camp when the Russian army approached. She was liberated in May 1945, but her parents and brother did not survive the war. In 1946 she came to the U.S. to live with an aunt in Brooklyn, New York, and graduated from college in 1951. She married Paul Abramson in 1952 and in 1970 they relocated with IBM to Raleigh, North Carolina. They have two children and three grandchildren. For over twenty years Gizella was dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust and tolerance across the state.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- "Holocaust survivor says ‘learn to love,’” Carteret County News-Times (NC), May 18, 2008
  www.carolinacoastonline.com/news_times/news/article_8f7a692c-b1c3-55a0-b4d6-95d18b2623d5.html

RESISTANCE • SIMONE HELPS REFUGEE CHILDREN

Simone Weil [not the French activist and philosopher of the time] was born in 1920 in Ringendorf, a village in northeast France. At age three, she and her family moved to the larger nearby city of Strasbourg. After graduating from high school in 1938, Simone studied early childhood education at a school of social work. Her education ended after the Germans invaded France in May 1940. One month later France surrendered, and the country was divided into two parts. Simone’s family was expelled by the Germans from Strasbourg along with all other Jews. Eventually they found a farmhouse in the southwest of France in the Free Zone, where her parents and brother, along with several other relatives, lived until late in the war.

A Request for Help

One day late in 1941, I got a letter from someone I had known in Strasbourg. She was a member of OSE (O-Zay),* a French Jewish child-care organization. OSE had set up children’s homes around Paris in the late 1930s to care for Jewish children from Germany and Austria whose parents had sent them to safety in France. After the German invasion of France in 1940, the homes were moved to the south of France. By 1941 OSE was taking care of several hundred Jewish children in sixteen homes. OSE workers were trying to help families detained in French internment camps get their children out of these camps and into the children’s homes. The letter asked me to come at once to an internment camp called Rivesaltes where many foreign-born Jewish families deported from the Rhineland or from Belgium and Holland were being held.

So I packed my bags and came. I was 21 years old. I had no idea what to expect at Rivesaltes. I hadn’t even known these camps existed. I was shocked at conditions there. People were malnourished, inadequately clothed, and living in filthy rat-infested quarters. We set up infirmaries, clinics, and nurseries, and created programs for children and teenagers.

At this time OSE workers could take children under the age fifteen out of the camps and place them in children’s homes. To be released from an internment camp, a child had to have a residence permit authorized by a local government official. Some local officials found ways to help us, despite the orders of the Vichy Government. First, however, we had to persuade the parents in the Rivesaltes camp to let their children go. The deportations had not yet started. Understandably, the parents, not realizing the grave dangers they faced, were reluctant to be separated from their children.

Massive Deportations Begin

By August 1942, buses and trucks unloaded their human cargo daily at the internment camps. Rivesaltes became a central collection point for deportations. People were told they would be sent to work camps, but that wasn’t true. The trains went to the death camps in Poland. At this time, some Jews could still escape deportation, depending on their nationality, date of arrival in

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*OSE: Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Organization to Save the Children).
France, service in the French army, and a few other such factors. For example, Jews with one non-Jewish parent might be allowed to remain. We scrambled to provide people in the camps with documents that would help them.

In our work at Rivesaltes we were aided by other relief agencies, the French Resistance, and the Jewish scouting movement. The Jewish scouting movement became a laboratory for falsifying documents and escorting people to safe places and across borders. Taking children out of the camps was now strictly forbidden. The Nazis and their French collaborators had ordered that Jewish families be kept together for their “resettlement to the East.” The French police even took children from the children’s homes after the parents had been tricked by the police into giving them their children’s addresses.

**Conditions Worsen and Danger Increases**

By November 1942, all of France was occupied by the Germans. Rivesaltes was emptied out and I took a job in one of the children’s homes taking care of the children whom we had gotten out of the camp. We cared for around fifty children. In spite of the risks, the police alerts, the lack of food, we tried to make life in the home as normal as possible.

**Children’s Homes Closed**

By early 1943, the French police were taking children over age 16 from the children’s homes. The homes were easy targets for police roundups, because they were known to house Jewish children. The Germans conducted house searches and made mass arrests. OSE offices were raided and had to be moved many times. Now French Jews like myself were as much at risk as foreign-born Jews. How foolish we had been to think we would escape persecution.

In the summer of 1943 we learned that the children’s homes would soon be closed. We had to act quickly. OSE formed a secret network to place the Jewish children under assumed names in non-Jewish surroundings. The homes began to forge false identity papers and organize secret border crossings into Switzerland and Spain for the older teenagers. Everywhere frightened Jewish parents clamored for false papers and entrusted their children to OSE.

**Going Underground**

The new OSE operation needed workers, and I was eager to join. What were the qualifications? None, really. You had to do it and be able to blend in physically with the non-Jews around you. I began by changing my identity. I took a different name and obtained a false birth certificate, an identification card, and most importantly, ration cards for food and clothing. By then a network of people forging false papers existed, so we had access to blank identification cards. I made my place of birth the town of Toul because I knew that Toul’s city hall had been bombed and all the documents had disappeared.

Changing my prewar student card and library cards was easy, but to make my new identity more believable, I needed the help of my former professors at the school of social work in Strasbourg. I went to see them. Without asking me any questions, they agreed at once to help me.
They got me a diploma under my false name and a certificate stating that I was their student in 1938. These documents later helped to save my life when I got into a tight spot. I also needed a cover. The local Department of Public Health listed me as a member of its staff and gave me the documents to prove it. I went there only once to see what the place looked like in case I needed to describe it.

**Finding New Hiding Places**

With my new identity established, I moved to Châteauroux, a safe city some 75 miles north of Limoges and began my real job, helping to find safe places and new identities for children escaping from the Nazis. One of the first people to assist us was the Archbishop of Toulouse. The archbishop had already spoken out from the pulpit against the discriminatory measures against Jews. He immediately gave his support to our project, helping to find homes for 24 children in Catholic convents, orphanages, and private schools. Soon we were combing the entire southern zone for Christian children’s homes and even summer overnight camps willing to take Jewish children under false names.

The bewildered children came day and night, carrying whatever possessions they had. They traveled in small groups supervised by a social worker. We found temporary shelter for them until permanent housing could be arranged, and coached them in their new identities before taking them to new families. When, as sometimes happened, a false identity broke down, the children had to be moved at once and placed elsewhere for everyone’s safety.

Sometimes children came to us who were being smuggled into neutral countries, particularly Switzerland. We got them false papers, took the labels out of their clothes and went through their luggage removing any traces of their true identities. I took them from Châteauroux to Lyons. Then someone else helped them cross into Switzerland. More than a thousand children were smuggled from France to Switzerland this way. Coded lists of the children’s real and false names compiled by OSE workers were kept in Geneva, ensuring that the children could be traced even if all the OSE workers were killed.

**Nothing Out of the Ordinary**

In February 1944, the Gestapo raided OSE headquarters. All the OSE offices and medical centers were closed. Workers were captured and shot as hostages or died in battles between the French Resistance and the Gestapo. Despite this, OSE’s work continued.

During those years, I was rarely frightened. I was young and felt sort of invulnerable, not thinking beyond what I had to do. There was a job to be done and I did it. None of us felt we were doing anything extraordinary or particularly brave. So many of my peers were doing the same kind of work. We did it because it was the thing to do.

Around this time I was arrested in Limoges by the French militia, a special police unit dedicated to finding Jews and members of the French Resistance. Limoges was the headquarters for OSE
work in my area and I had to go there from time to time. I was walking down the street with a co-worker when a young Frenchman came up to us and said, “Follow me.” Under his arm, he carried a gun. He belonged to the French militia which suspected my friend of being in the resistance. He marched us to my friend’s apartment and began ransacking her rooms. Neither of us knew exactly what he was looking for, but sewn into the lining of my suit pocket were the seals of town halls used in making false papers. I also had a coded list of my hidden children.

**Fast Thinking in a Dangerous Situation**

As I watched the French militia man tear apart my friend’s apartment, I thought about how to get rid of the incriminating documents. I asked permission to go to the bathroom and they let me go. That simple little slip on their part saved me. In the bathroom, I removed everything from the lining of my pocket, and flushed most of it down the toilet. The rest I threw out the window. When I came back into the room, they went through my papers but I was okay. I had my diplomas, my university student card, and my library card with the false names. Luckily no one asked me about the address in Limoges on my identification card. I didn’t even know where the street was. If they had asked me to take them there, I couldn’t have done it, but they didn’t and I was saved. The militia let me go, but not my friend.

In September 1944, the war was over for us in southern France. OSE reopened its doors and we took the children out of the convents and homes that had hidden them and brought them to a large chateau in central France. We celebrated as the search for the children’s surviving relatives began. Months passed before the Allies reached the death camps in Poland. Only then did we learn that many of the children we had sheltered were now orphans.

*Simone helped to rescue 350 children during the war. When France was liberated in 1944, Simone reopened an OSE home for Jewish children who had been in hiding during the war. She came to the United States in 1946, earned a master’s degree in social work, and pursued her career as a social worker in Syracuse, New York. She married Martin Lipman; they have two children and five grandchildren. In 1986 they retired to Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

- Video: Oral testimony of Simone Weil Lipman, 2006 (USHMM, four parts)  
  collections.ushmm.org/search.catalog/collection/collectionId=607951
- Videos: Short selections from Ms. Lipman’s 1990 oral testimony (USHMM)  
  - Conditions in the OSE facility (2:11)  
    www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?ModuleId=0&MedialId=4450
  - Moving children to safety in southern France (1:44)  
    www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?ModuleId=0&MedialId=4449
LIBERATION

____OVERVIEW____

- “One of the [prisoners] comes back and says ‘I can’t believe it, the gate is open, and there isn’t anyone around.’”
- “I didn’t realize I was going to be liberated. I was liberated instantly. We had no idea.”
- “How can I describe the jubilation I felt when I first glimpsed the tank flying an American flag?”

Young Allied soldiers entering Nazi-occupied territory as the war neared its end had no idea what horrors awaited them. Although Allied leaders knew about the Nazi concentration camps, there was little awareness or acknowledgment that they represented a brutal highly organized policy of mass murder. As the young soldiers reached these camps—often abandoned by the Germans—they found thousands of skeletal victims and thousands of piled corpses. “We went inside and saw all the bodies,” recalls George Rose, a liberator of Dachau who now lives in Wilmington, NC. “We went through the main gate, and there was a wall all around it with bodies like rag dolls, like little dolls thrown on top of one another. Then [survivors] started screaming ‘Amerikaner, Amerikaner.’ They came out and they were hugging us and kissing us. I didn’t realize I’d done something so important.”

LIBERATION OF THE CAMPS
AND GERMANY’S SURRENDER

As Allied forces marched through Europe from the east (Soviet army) and from the west (American, British, Canadian, French, and other forces), they liberated hundreds of Nazi concentration camps. They gave food and medical care to the survivors and they buried the dead by the thousands. They compelled local residents to view the horrific camps and help transport bodies to burial. They photographed and filmed the horrors to document the genocide they saw firsthand.

As spring arrived, the defeat of Nazi Germany became complete. On April 25, 1945, the Soviet and American armies met at the Elbe River in central Germany. On April 30, Hitler committed suicide in his underground bunker in Berlin. On May 2, Berlin surrendered to the Soviet army. The German forces surrendered unconditionally on May 7 in the west and May 9 in the east.

DISPLACED PERSONS

The Allied forces faced the daunting challenge of providing relief for war refugees labelled “displaced persons”—the millions of liberated slave laborers and concentration camp survivors. Much of this work was accomplished through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which set up hundreds of displaced persons camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. They set up housing in former army barracks, schools, buildings, and even concentration camps; provided medical care, schools and training centers, and cultural programs; helped DPs find surviving relatives; and helped them get home—or

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<th>LIBERATION OF MAJOR CAMPS</th>
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<td>Majdanek       Poland</td>
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<td>Ohrdruf        Germany</td>
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<td>Buchenwald     Germany</td>
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<td>Westerbork     Holland</td>
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<td>Dachau         Germany</td>
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<td>Theresienstadt Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>Surrender of Germany (V-E Day)</td>
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Liberated by

Soviet Army
Soviet Army
U.S. Army
Soviet Army
Soviet Army
British Army
U.S. Army
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U.S. Army
U.S. Army
Soviet Army
wherever they felt would provide security and a future. Most Jewish DPs went to Palestine on the eastern Mediterranean coast, where the state of Israel was created in May 1948. About 80,000 emigrated to the United States. The experiences of Holocaust survivors who came to the U.S. and eventually settled in North Carolina are featured in this guide

SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES  Many survivors did not talk about their experiences for many years, even to their children and other relatives. With time, and the growth of Holocaust commemorations, museums, memoirs, and programs like Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation to record survivor interviews, we have a permanent record of individuals’ experiences. Many survivors continue to speak to students, the military, and other public groups.
LESSON ■ LIBERATION

Narrative: Morris Sees an American Tank
Narrative: Abe Survives a Death Train
Narrative: Edith Is Freed from Auschwitz
Narrative: Zev Meets His Liberators

Vocabulary: appel, dysentery, kapos, kilometer, partisan, selection, tuberculosis, typhoid fever

“Translate statistics into people.” In its guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust (see Supplemental Materials), the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum recommends using first-person accounts of survivors “precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims; [they] add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics.” Ask students to offer examples from their own reading that reflect the value of first-person accounts in understanding history.

To lead students into the liberation narratives, ask them these questions: (1) How might it have influenced the survivors’ experiences that they were teenagers during the war? (2) How would it feel to realize you might never see your family again? (3) Why is it difficult for most of us to imagine being freed after years of brutal treatment and imprisonment, especially not knowing if or when your suffering would ever end?

Have students read the four survivor narratives in this chapter. As they read, they can complete a chart (see question #11) to organize and consider the survivors’ experiences of liberation. Then have the students share and discuss their charts to lead into a deeper discussion of the narratives.

1. How did Morris, Edith, Abe, and Zev sustain their will to survive?
2. What does Zev mean by “the finish line”? How did the other survivors express this idea?
3. In what ways did they feel that luck helped them survive? How did their own quick thinking and personality help them survive? (Remember that many victims died regardless of their strengths and character.)
4. How did Morris, Abe, and Zev respond to seeing African American soldiers?
5. How have the survivors expressed gratitude to each other, to those who helped them during the war, and to their liberators?
6. What aspects of the liberation experience do you find in all the narratives? What unique aspects do you find?
7. All four survivors were teenagers during their imprisonment in the camps. How does that awareness affect your understanding of their experiences, and of the narratives they created many years later?
8. What questions would you want to ask Morris, Edith, Abe, and Zev if you met them?
9. Let’s say these four narratives are to be published in a small book and you are asked to write the introduction for students. Write an introduction of three to five paragraphs that includes (a) an overview of the liberation experience, (b) guidance on reading the narratives as a careful and compassionate observer, and (c) a statement of your personal response to the narratives.
10. Write a dialogue of 50-100 lines between two of these survivors. In your introduction, explain why you chose the two people and what characteristics of their experience you would emphasize to the reader. In the final lines of the dialogue, have them pose a question to the reader, share a wish for the future, offer a lesson from their experiences—or you can create a similar concluding element.
11. Create a chart with five columns. Title the four right columns with the names of the four survivors. Title the first column with these entries, and, if you wish, add two to three entries of your own. What patterns do you find upon completing the chart? What questions do you have?

- Age when liberated
- Last camp before liberation
- Location (country) of camp
- Liberated how? by what army?
- When did the person realize he/she was free?
- What did the person do immediately, and shortly after, being liberated?
- To what factors does the person attribute his/her survival?
- What was his/her physical condition on liberation?
- Did the person return to his/her home country?
- Was each able to find surviving members of his/her family?
- Did the survivor go to Palestine or, later, Israel?
- When did the survivor come to the U.S.? How?
- Where in North Carolina did the person settle?
- Write one statement in the narrative that most affected you.
- Why did this affect you?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Media coverage of the 2015 North Carolina General Assembly remembrance honoring survivors and liberators on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Dachau concentration camp
  - WWAY-TV, Wilmington, NC, April 29, 2015  www.wwaytv3.com/2015/04/29/veteran-concentration-camp-survivor-reunite-70-years-later/
  - "Holocaust survivors emotionally reunite with soldier who helped free them," People, April 30, 2015  people.com/human-interest/holocaust-survivors-meet-george-rose-soldier-who-freed-them-from-dachau/
LIBERATION • MORRIS SEES AN AMERICAN TANK

Morris Glass was born in 1928 in Pabianice, Poland. He was 11 years old when Germany invaded his country in 1939. He and his family suffered through four and a half years in the ghettos of Pabianice and Lodz. In August 1944 the Lodz ghetto was liquidated and its residents sent to Auschwitz, where Morris, his father, and his brother were separated from his mother and two sisters, whom he never saw again. Soon after Morris’s brother was sent to a work camp in Germany, Morris and his father volunteered to work in Germany in order to leave Auschwitz. They arrived in the Dachau concentration camp in October 1944, where his father died from the hard labor and brutal treatment. In April 1945, as U.S. troops approached Dachau, most of the prisoners were marched to a train as the Germans evacuated the camp.

Walking the half kilometer from Kaufering IV [Dachau subcamp] to the railroad tracks was no easy task for most of us. We walked as slowly as possible and as close to each other as possible in order to help those who were struggling—otherwise, they would have been shot. After we had waited several hours, a huge train appeared. It stretched as far as the eye could see and held thousands of people. Because the cattle cars were full, my group was put in a coal car where we were stacked like sardines, one on top of the other. Most were sick and burning with fever. People were dying all around me. Once again I thought, “This is the end.” But now more than ever, I desperately wanted to live. I was certain that the war would end soon. Liberation seemed very near.

There were a number of signs that indicated that the days of the mighty Third Reich were numbered. The Allied guns sounded very close. I saw very young boys, maybe 14, 15, or 16 years old, manning huge anti-aircraft guns—a sure sign that the Germans were on their last leg. Furthermore, it was whispered that some of the SS guards had been heard to say that the surrender would be soon. I had listened to rumors for years, but I knew this one must be true. Unfortunately, we also heard troubling reports that we were being sent to the Tyrol Forest on the border between Germany and Austria to be fed poisoned soup. This was a rumor that I hoped was not true, but knowing the Nazis, I feared the worst. Thank God for Generals Patton, Eisenhower, and Taylor, and all the others! It was because of their rapid advance that I never found out if there was truth to the poisoning rumor.

I’m not sure how many days I was on the train. At some point, we came under fire from American and British planes that were attacking German anti-aircraft guns. In order to discourage the attack, the Germans deliberately parked our train next to the guns. The Allied planes were flying very low—so low the pilots could see us. I know that they tried not to hit us, but sometimes they did. Those of us in open cars lay there totally helpless, like dead ducks. There were a lot of casualties. I saw people

Once again I thought, “This is the end.” But now more than ever, I desperately wanted to live.
with missing arms and legs and other terrible wounds. There was no one to care for them. All of a sudden, I felt wet and warm. I thought, “Oh, no, after all these years, I’m to be killed by my friends.” When I recovered from my fright and I checked myself, I was okay. What I had felt was hot water gushing from a locomotive that had been punctured.

As a result of the Allied attack, our train was damaged and stalled, and there were piles of dying people in my car and along the tracks. There was confusion and panic everywhere. When I saw some SS fleeing into the woods, I thought that I must be hallucinating, but then I realized that the war just might be over. I decided that if the SS were leaving, then I too would leave, and so I and four others rolled off the train. I said to them, "It’s a matter of hours. Our liberators must be very close. Let’s walk toward the village," and off we went. One of my friends, Libel, had pneumonia and was burning with fever. He was very sick, so we walked slowly.

We walked to a farm, where the family gave us food. Thinking that the war must be over and that we were safe, we rested for several hours. But our dream of freedom was soon ended when some German militia arrested us. First, we were taken to a Wehrmacht [German army] officer who spoke kindly to us and assured us that the war would be over shortly. We begged him to let us go, but he said that he was under orders to detain all prisoners. Then the SS came and accused us of being spies who were running toward the Americans. They wrote down our numbers and told us that we would be executed in the morning. I don’t know why they did not shoot us then, but luckily for us they didn’t. The SS took us to a wooded area where there were hundreds of wounded and dying prisoners. We could hear them crying “Hear O Israel” and pleading for help. Amidst all the suffering, it was hard to think about myself.

Nevertheless, knowing that the war was almost over, my friends and I were determined to escape execution. Since the SS knew us only by the numbers on our jackets, we exchanged our jackets for the jackets of dead prisoners. Feeling protected by our new numbers, we slept through the night. In the morning, after some SS gave us permission to get water for the sick and dying, the five of us started to walk away from the camp. Just as we started walking, the sky became very dark and rain started to come down in sheets. With our movements shielded by the dark and the rain, we walked away from the SS as fast as we could. Finally, we met a farmer who took us in, gave us food, and hid us in his hayloft. While we were lying in the hay, we heard the SS come. They searched and searched, but they did not find us. When we went to sleep that night, we were aware that we had much to be grateful for.

When we awoke in the morning, we were greeted by the great news that there had been a radio announcement (which it turned out was incorrect) that Germany had surrendered. Our joy at this news was tempered by the worsening condition of Libel. We knew something had to be done immediately or he would die. Seeing how sick Libel was, the farmer told us that there was a hospital only a kilometer away. It seemed once again that luck was with us.

Jauntily, we set out for the hospital. Believing that the war was over, that we were out of danger, and that there was a place nearby where Libel would be cared for, we were a happy group. Unfortunately, we had not walked far when we learned that all was not well. The messenger of
bad news was a hulking SS officer who was sitting on a motorcycle in the middle of the road, holding a machine gun. As we rounded the curve and saw him, I thought, “Oh, my God, what will we do.” Somehow, I quickly came to my senses, calmly walked up to him, and told him that we were lost and wanted to go back to the train. He must have believed me because he gave us directions and let us go. We started walking as instructed, but as soon as the road curved, we raced into the forest.

We would have been happy to have stayed in the forest until we knew for certain that the SS had departed and that the war was really over, but Libel was very very sick and we had to get him to the hospital. We waited until dark and then set out once again. Covering the short distance to the hospital took a long time because every time we heard a car or any strange noise, we would jump back into the woods. Finally, we saw the lights of a large building. We went around the back, and I knocked on the door. It was opened by a nun. I didn’t have to say anything; she just motioned us to come in. We had arrived at St. Ottilien, a Benedictine monastery that had been converted into an SS hospital. We were now under the care of kindly nuns and monks, but we were not yet out of danger.

The nuns were so good to us. They gave us food and took our filthy prison clothes, which they burned. When I said, “I have one wish. I would like to take a bath,” they took all of us to be bathed. And wonder of wonders, there I was, I who had not had a real bath in years, in a bathtub with soap, hot water, and a nun who came and scrubbed me. This was heaven!!! I must have been in that tub for hours. After the bath, the monks gave us new clothes, and then they whisked us away and hid us in a hayloft—it was still an SS hospital. The monks told us that it was a matter of days until the war would be over and we would be free. In the meantime, we could stay where we were and they would bring us food.

A day or two later, the monks told us that the Americans were very near, and since there might be some shooting, we should move to the basement where it would be safer. We went to the basement. I found a box to stand on so that I could see out of the window—I was not going to miss a thing. Before long, I was rewarded with a view of an American tank coming up the hill.

How can I describe the jubilation I felt when I first glimpsed that tank flying an American flag? There is no way to describe the joy in my heart—the joy of being free! I ran outside and embraced the first soldier I saw and then another and another and another. I was happy beyond my ability to describe it. I was free! I was free! I was free! A

* A Roman Catholic monastic order.
minute ago, I had been a prisoner and hiding, and now I was free and hugging every American soldier I could find. I just could not believe it.

I was then and I remain now very grateful to the American army for giving me back my life and my freedom. My gratitude has no bounds. Every time I see the Stars and Stripes, I am reminded of my debt to those soldiers and to the American army.

On spotting us, one of the soldiers yelled out, “We need five beds immediately.” On his orders, we were taken into the hospital and everything possible was done to help us. The Americans put us on a strict diet and checked us every few hours. Because so many survivors had died from overeating, they carefully supervised what and how much we ate. The German SS doctors treated us politely and tried to help us—they said they wanted to redeem themselves. Of course, the nuns and the monks were wonderful. Much care was devoted to Libel. The Americans and the Germans tried to save him, but he died shortly after we were liberated. To lose him, especially after we were free, put a damper on our spirits, but even his death could not destroy our joy.

Shortly after I was put in the hospital, the soldier who had ordered the beds came to check on us. When he was giving the order, I thought that I heard him using some Jewish words, but I said, “No, no, Morris, you are fantasizing.” Well, I wasn’t. It turned out that he was a Jewish guy from Brooklyn. That made me so proud—one of my saviors was an American Jew! Also among the American liberators was a black man; this was the first time that I had ever seen a black person except in the circus. My life was indeed full of new and wondrous things.

St. Ottilien was a perfect place for me to be. In addition to the hospital, it included a farm with cows and other animals, and wheat and potato fields. The bounty of nature and the serenity of the countryside buoyed my spirits, and with the good care that I was receiving, I improved rapidly.

Recognizing that this was an ideal place to recover, General Eisenhower decreed that St. Ottilien was to be a hospital for Jewish survivors. Within two or three weeks, there must have been a thousand of us there, all needing medical attention. The SS doctors were removed from the hospital and replaced by American doctors and by Jewish doctors who were themselves survivors. The Jews there, like survivors everywhere, were desperately

* Most major European circuses featured black African performers.
seeking their loved ones. As soon as I met another survivor, I would immediately ask if they knew my family and they would ask me the same question. It was a search that was to go on all over Europe and the world for a very long time.

Of 42 members of his family, only Morris, his brother, and a cousin survived. While in In a DP camp in Italy, Morris learned that his brother had survived and was in a DP camp in Germany. Sponsored by an uncle (the brother of their father), they came to the U.S., arriving in New York City on June 2, 1949. Morris settled in New Jersey where he bought and expanded a coat manufacturing company. There he met his wife Carol; they have seven children, 18 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. In 2000 they moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where three sons live. Morris speaks to school, military, and public groups across the state about his Holocaust experience. In 2011 he published his Holocaust memoir, Chosen for Destruction: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor, co-written with historian Dr. Carolyn Murray Happer.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Video: Morris Glass’s presentation to the Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, April 2013, Jacksonville Daily News, NC
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSkq-kYI__o

- Video: Morris Glass reviews the experiences in his memoir, Chosen for Destruction, 2013 (C-Span/YouTube, 28:32)
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=e__-1sYifN5U

- Video: St. Ottilien Hospital for Jewish Former Political Prisoners, 1945 or 1946 (USHMM, 6:23)
  collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/fv1260
Edith Neuberger was born in 1925 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. After the Nazis invaded her country in 1940, her parents sent her and her older sister Bobbie into hiding with a family near the Hague. Her parents and little brother were arrested, and soon after, in December 1942 when Edith was 17, she and her sister were discovered and arrested. They were sent to the Westerbork camp in Holland, from which Jews were sent to death camps in Poland. Separated from her family, Edith was sent to Auschwitz alone and endured brutal treatment. In January 1945 as the Soviet army approached Auschwitz, she was sent to the camp hospital with suspected tuberculosis. The Germans abandoned the camp, leaving Edith and thousands of other survivors on their own.

I had such tremendous fever that I was petrified to fall asleep in case I wouldn’t wake up in the morning. It was really very, very bad. Finally they decided to examine me, and they decided that I had TB. How they decided it, I don’t know, but it was highly likely, and it turned out they were correct. So they put me to the TB block, and the TB block was well known that when it comes to selection, the whole TB block goes. I and another girl that happened to be—I remember her name, it was Enid—she was a German Jewish girl, and we were both so-called diagnosed having TB and had to get out of there and go to the TB block. So we go through the doors and I remember saying to Enid, “We’ll never get out of here. This is really it. This is it.” And it was it for her: she never made it.

I stayed in there till about a week or ten days later, when an announcement came through from Berlin, an order that all the crematoria had to be broken down because they wouldn’t want to leave any evidence for the Russians behind, which was my luck. So I remember a German SS man walking through the barrack and talking about this in a loud voice and saying in German he had never seen those Jews work so hard, trying to break down the crematoria.

We knew the Russian front was coming near. During all this time that I was there, whenever a transport [train] came into the camp, I tried to find after appel [roll call] to find some Dutch people and see where the transport had come from. And I came across one day a transport that had come from Grenoble, France, and one of the people told me that landings had begun in June [D-Day
invasion], so we were aware of that. I also found out while I was there through the grapevine that Bobbie was in Auschwitz—I—Birkenau was called Auschwitz II—and that Bobbie was used as a guinea pig in experiments. She survived it all; she lives in Holland. So I knew Bobbie was alive, and that gave me some hope. I thought, if she’s alive, then I’m going to make sure that I stay alive.

The Russians were coming near. By now it was near the end. It was December ’44 and we could hear shooting or whatever. We heard something. The day came that the Germans decided they were going to leave the camp, so they went into every barrack and gave the order to the kapos [inmates assigned to be guards] “alle Juden raus!”—all the Jews out. The others could stay. So I made myself as flat as possible and tried to hide. But I had no such luck. The Ukrainians were only too glad to get rid of the Jews. They hated us. They found me and they dragged me down, and they told me I had to get out. They gave me a thin blanket, a safety pin to get the blanket around my body, and a pair of shoes.

And I went out in the cold, and December in Poland is very cold. I went out and we were supposed to line up five abreast. I was number two in one of the five somewhere. And I was standing there, and the SS man in charge of this particular group somehow caught my eye and told me to come to him. And I was scared stiff, of course, and I came to him, and then he pulled his pistol and put it on my ear, and he said, in German, of course, “You can’t even walk half a mile. What do you think you can walk, five miles?” Well it wasn’t any five miles; it was hundreds of miles, or hundreds of kilometers, that these people walked. “You can’t even walk half a kilometer.” And he was right. I couldn’t. I was really in sad shape. So after he cocked his pistol, he told me I wasn’t worth his bullet. “So go back into the block, and eventually we’ll shoot all you Jews in the block that can’t walk.”

So I walked back to the block, and I was petrified that he was going to shoot me in the back anyway. But he didn’t. I got into the block, and the Ukrainians that had thrown me out wanted to throw me out again. And so I told them in German, hoping that they at least would understand some German, because I don’t speak Ukrainian or Russian, that the SS man had told me to go back. It wasn’t me. He was going to shoot me here; he wanted to shoot me here, I said. So they said, “All right, go!” So I was allowed in, and I stayed. I went back to my bed—of three, up high—and I stayed there.

Eventually I learned that they had gone away, the Germans, with all these people that were supposed to walk. And what happened, I heard later, that as soon as you sat down on this walk, they shot you in the neck. They didn’t leave you sitting—they shot you. They killed each and every one that couldn’t walk anymore. So I almost certainly would not have made it. I wouldn’t have made it even one mile.

So now the Germans had gone, and there was no food at all. There wasn’t even this turnip soup. I just lived on snow. I went outside and tried to find some snow that was clean, because the so-called potties were overflowing, so everybody went out in the snow and do whatever they had to do. So I tried to find some snow that was clean. And I lived on that for about five days, I think.

Then the Russians came, and there was a Yugoslav partisan girl that had a bed close to me. But the only way I could talk to her—she didn’t speak any German—she could speak a little bit of school French, and I could speak school French, so we made do with that, and the rest

I thought, if she’s alive, then I’m going to make sure that I stay alive.
talking with our hands. So one day she handed me a pocket knife, and I didn't know what was going on. I thought she'd gone mad and was going to attack me. But she put it in my hand and she pointed it at the door of the barracks. So I just did what she pointed. And I went there and I saw a whole group of women hovering over a dead horse. And they were all cutting a piece of horse to eat. So I worked my way through them and I cut myself a piece of horse and just ate it. It just about killed me because my dysentery was worse than ever. I couldn't digest anything anymore. So I made my way back to my bed and I passed out. Then when I came to, I just lived there. I just went out of there. I was having dysentery all the time. It was just terrible. There was blood all over the place.

The Russians began transporting the survivors to their home countries. Because the German railroads were destroyed, the Dutch survivors were to go by train to the Black Sea and then by ship through the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to Holland. While still in poor health, Edith began the journey, which stopped for a time in Chernivtsi, Romania, on the way to the Black Sea.

I had with me about seven or eight dresses which I had received from the same Yugoslav girl—partisan—who was in much better shape than I, because after all she wasn’t Jewish so she wasn’t beaten, she wasn’t treated as badly, and I don’t know when she got to Auschwitz. And she had gone after the Germans left and raided the barracks where they kept all the clothes that they took away from the Jews when they arrived. Everybody that could, did, but I couldn’t. And she had grabbed armsful of clothes. Now when she got back to her bed, seeing that it was January and it was cold, she kept all the winter clothes, and the summer clothes that she had grabbed were no good to her, so she gave them to me. So I was thrilled with it. Although they were cotton dresses, I put one over the other. I was nothing but a skeleton, anyway. I weighed in at 59 pounds after liberation. So I put just one over the other, and I thought, well, six summer dresses will keep me just as warm as one winter dress. So I put all these dresses one on top of the other. And when we got to Romania and it got warmer, I didn’t need them all, and so I sold them on the marketplace. People came up to me and didn’t speak my language and I didn’t speak their language, so they came and they touched my clothes, and you talk with your hands, and I stripped off the dress—I had plenty underneath. And I got money for it, for which I bought—they sold a lot of yogurt and blueberries there. And I ate yogurt and blueberries, which I’m sure was very good for me. By that time I could digest it again. So this is how I got some money, by selling my clothes off my body.

One day we went to the marketplace in order to sell a dress of mine again so we could have some food. And I passed out. I completely collapsed and I was out. I was totally out. When I
came to, I was covered with paper money. All the farmers in the market knew where we came from, because we had no hair, you know, we were shaven. And your hair doesn’t grow back if you don’t get anything to eat. Your hair just doesn’t grow. So they knew where we came from, and I was covered with all this money. And my friend and another Dutch girl—there were three of us together—thought this was fantastic, and right away told me “We’re going back tomorrow and you’re going to faint again!”

But it didn’t work out that way, because a woman came up to me, very well dressed, and spoke to me in German, and she said, “Do you understand German?” And I said, “Yes, I do.” She said, “I am Jewish and I am Austrian, and I’m married to a Russian Jewish doctor here. And I think it would be better for you if you would be in a hospital bed.” Everybody knew in Chernivtsi where we were and who we were. She said, “Why don’t you come tonight for dinner?” And I couldn’t believe my ears. So the three of us went there, and I hadn’t sat at a table with a tablecloth and with a knife and a fork and regular food—I just couldn’t believe it. So they treated us very well, and it turned out that the Russian Jewish doctor was the head of the TB hospital there.

The doctor confirmed the diagnosis of TB and Edith was treated in the hospital and regained strength. She left Romania on a train bound for Holland, this time traveling through Poland and Germany. In Berlin, Edith and her traveling companions were able to get from the Russian occupation zone to the American zone, and from there Edith finally arrived at the Dutch border.

When I got into Holland, they gave me a hard time at the border, because this stupid man said to me, “Where are your papers showing that you are Dutch?” And I said, “Well, what do you expect? I don’t have any papers.” And so he started with “Well, then we can’t let you in.” I got so mad that I started swearing in Dutch till there was no end to it. And he said, “If you can swear in Dutch like that, you’ve gotta be Dutch.” And so that’s how I got back into Holland.

Edith was reunited with her sister and successfully treated for TB. She learned that she could not emigrate to the U.S. until she had been free of TB for five years, so she decided to go to Israel. On the way, she met David Ross, who as a child had been sent from Germany to England through the Kindertransport program. They were married in 1949 in Israel and, after living in London for several years, they moved to the U.S. in 1953, settling in Delaware. They moved to North Carolina in 1988. They have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Excerpted from the Shoah Foundation interview of Edith Ross, online at youtu.be/dXfQ6bQ-ZA, by permission of Edith Ross. Photographs of Edith and David Ross courtesy of Edith and David Ross.
Abram Piasek was 12 years old in 1940 when the SS entered his town of Bialobrzegi in Poland and killed or deported most Jewish residents. He was separated from his parents and sister, whom he never saw again. For two years he endured forced labor in a weapons factory in the Radom camp in Poland and then was sent via Auschwitz to the Vaihingen camp in Germany, where he repaired craters from Allied bombing raids. After several months he was transferred to the nearby Hessental camp to work on railroad maintenance. In spring 1945 as Allied troops approached, the prisoners who could walk were put on trains to be transported deeper into Germany.

Before the liberation, we were put on cattle cars. This has to be about two weeks before the liberation. And we had no idea where we were going. They put us on a train from the Hessental camp—a working camp, which was about a few miles [from Vaihingen]—that was a real slaughterhouse. And they took us away. They load up the cattle cars, and we were going back and forth for a couple days, and we had no idea why we were going back and forth.

All of a sudden the train stopped. The train stopped because the American Air Force bombarded the locomotive. And we stopped, and we couldn’t get out from the cattle car because our cattle car was locked from the outside. But some people ran out because some of the locks in the cattle cars were locked inside. So one guy was yelling “what’s going on?” and he opened the cattle car, and as we opened up we saw the SS running away. They dropped their weapons, they were running away. And the people [camp inmates] from the Polish army, they picked up the weapons and started shooting the guards. I didn’t see it, but I heard the shots. They were killing them.

I didn’t realize I was going to be liberated. I was liberated instantly: we had no idea. Actually, we were supposed to end up in Dachau. That was the train to Dachau—that was the last stop. We stopped a few miles from Dachau. And at that time, we were liberated. They bombed the locomotive, and the army was coming fast.

We had no idea what we’re going to do, so we sat on the crater where they had been bombing. And then I saw a guy coming out from a jeep, or a tank or a big truck, who was black. That’s the first time I saw a black person, and I had no idea who they were. And of course at that time they were segregated, and so that’s the first thing I saw.

Then we were running around wild, me and my friends. And we were actually starting to rob places in the town. We went into banks, into jewelry stores. And I was looking for bread, but my friends were looking for
jewelry. They sure enough got the jewelry, but I was not interested in the jewelry; I was interested in bread.

I was 17. When they took me away, I was 12. So when I was liberated, I was 17. And they stopped us—the MP [U.S. military police]—and they brought us to a camp, Feldafing, near Munich. It was run by UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Admin.]. And we went over and we threw away our [prisoner] uniforms and we got regular clothes. After that we were robbing the trains, really robbing the trains, because we were wild. And we robbed the trains; we throw out the suitcases. Maybe about 10, 15 of us. You know, it was everything you can think of in the suitcases, but I was still wasn’t interested. I was interested in eating food.

Then Patton and Eisenhower stopped us. Patton said to the people from camp, if you don’t stop robbing the train, he was going to put barbed wire around the camp. So the people didn’t like that. So then Eisenhower came, and they promised him that nobody is going to rob the train again. And he told Patton not to put wire around it.

In a couple weeks, when we got used to the camp, they said all the teenagers to be lined up outside the barracks. And they told us we were going to go to another camp, Foehrenwald. All the young people, I would say from 15 to 25, we were put in that camp.

I was there from 1945 till 1947. And meanwhile we were learning a trade. We were learning how to dance. And they brought in all the girls, young girls, you know, and romance was going on.

I was learning to be a carpenter. But I really wasn’t—I didn’t care for it. But anyway, we went to school. We were learning Hebrew. The teachers were Israelis, the Israeli soldiers, from the Palmach. And we were learning, and the food was good, and we were gaining weight, and a lot of the people, the elderly people, got married. And two years, from 1945 to 1947, the camp almost doubled in population, with babies being born.

We forgot that we had been in a [concentration] camp because they didn’t let us remember, and I think that was good. Because they were really trying to get the kids away from what they went through. We were busy constantly, from morning till night, till we went to sleep. So we couldn’t even think [about] what actually happened to us. Our minds were in left field, because nobody talked about it. Nobody. For so many years to be locked up—didn’t think about it.

And they asked us who wants to go to Israel. That was in ’46. A lot of people went to Israel. And I decided, well, I wanted to come to the United States. I remember as a kid, my grandmother received packages from New York, in the thirties when I must have been five, six, seven years old. And I remember her name. So I went to the consulate and I told him that I have some

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1 The Palmach was the elite brigade of Jewish soldiers fighting for the establishment of the state of Israel, which was created in May 1948.
relative, but the relative I picked—must have been about a thousand of them in the book—so I have no idea who they were. So I closed my eyes. I said this is the one, I just put my finger on it. And two months later it came back. And he said, “Mr. Piasek, you picked the wrong people.” And I said, “Why?” “They’re not even Jewish!” So they decided I wasn’t going. And, well, I didn’t give up. And a few months later they decided—the Americans probably decided, I assume so—that the teenagers who wanted to go to the United States should register, and I was picked to register to come to the United States.

With about 50 other survivors from Foehrenwald, Abe boarded a ship in Bremerhaven, Germany, and on August 3, 1947, arrived in New York City.

They put me in a hotel with all the people who came with me, the young kids. And we were there for about two weeks—must have been about 300 or 400 of us from all the camps around the Munich district, from Bavaria. They gave us five dollars. At that time five dollars was a lot of money.

Then after a few weeks some other kids were coming, so they told us we had to decide where we want to go. And we knew very little. They asked me, “Where do you want to go? You have two choices, Connecticut or California.” I said, “How far is California?” They said, “2000 miles.” “How far is Connecticut?” “100 miles.” So I said Connecticut.

But I had nobody there. When I came there, they put me into a lady’s [home] who was taking in the displaced persons. She was Jewish, and she got paid for it. So five of us were staying in her home. So we stayed over there for, I would say, for about a year. And it was nice. I learned a trade, I went to school. And over here, I have to find a job. So I found a job, and I was working in a coat factory, in Manchester, Connecticut.

I was a presser. I was making, I think, 20 cents or 30 cents a coat. And then they put me to another home. Their name was Waxman, in Hartford, Connecticut. And they had two boys my age. And I was there for about eight, nine, months, and I worked here at the laundry. And I still went to school, night school, and daytime I was working, so I saved up a few dollars.

And then I met Shirley through a friend of mine. He went out with another girl, and she went along with them. So he was talking to her, and I said, “Whom are you talking to?” He said, “Her name is Shirley.” I said, “Can I talk to her?” And he said, “Sure.” So I talked to her and made a date. And we went out to a hamburger place—I didn’t have any money, very little. And I didn’t like her at the beginning. When I came home, another guy said, “How is she?” I said, “She’s ok.” “Do you like her?” I said, “No.” “Can I have the telephone number from her?” I said, “No, I’m
going to take her out once more.” So I did, and from then on, it’s history. I came in ’47 and in ’49 I was married.

When I got married, I worked in a few jobs. Shirley’s father was a carpenter, so I helped put in the carpets, put in linoleum. Then I joined the National Guard, and then I joined the army. In ’49 there was a depression here—very hard to find a job, so I joined the army. Then Shirley got pregnant and we had a baby, and that’s how I get out from the army. From 1950 to 1955 I was in the reserve.

After that, I went to get a bakery job, because my wife’s sister’s friend’s friend knew the owner from the bakery. So I got a job right away. And since then, I’m still baking.

I never talked about it until, I would say—of course, my wife knew, a lot of people knew that I was a displaced person. But we never got in a discussion about what happened until the ’80s. That’s the first time I opened up. I was interviewed by Spielberg. * And then they said, you have to speak in schools, to tell your story. So I did. So I started to talk about it. Very difficult.

Abe and Shirley moved to California in 1975 and later to Florida, as Abe continued his profession as a baker. In 2009 they moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, to be near a daughter. They have two children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandson. Abe continues to speak to students and other groups about his Holocaust experience.

ONLINE RESOURCES


- Displaced Persons camps (Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM)


Adapted from the interview of Abe Piasek by Linda Scher and Larry Katzin, Raleigh, NC, 20 July 2015; reprinted with permission of Mr. Piasek. Photographs of Mr. Piasek courtesy of Mr. Piasek. 2015 photograph of Mr. Piasek courtesy of Marianne Wason. Source of Hessental photograph unknown.

* Steven Spielberg, the Hollywood film producer, founded the Shoah Foundation in 1994 (now at the University of Southern California) after working with Holocaust survivors while filming Schindler’s List. The Foundation has recorded interviews with thousands of Holocaust survivors, including Abe Piasek, who was interviewed in 1995.
Zev Harel was born in Kis-Sikarlo, Hungary (now Borgou, Romania). In March 1944, when he was 14, he and his family were sent to Auschwitz, where he avoided death in the gas chamber by lying that he was older. Soon he was sent with his older brother to the Ebensee slave labor camp in Austria. Separated from his brother, Zev endured hard labor until liberation on May 6, 1945, by the U.S. Third Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, whose reunions Zev has attended.

Trying to think back on those days and recalling the thoughts and feelings of then, two memories that I have—the finish line, the expectation that I'll get there, and not so much the reasons why. Other than the sense of “keep on going” because the finish line is there and you'll get there, you'll get through, and what it is that will be there. And wanting to get back and to see what happened to my father and mother and to see them again.

On his last weeks before liberation. Our work detail [in a quarry near Ebensee] was across the street from a place called the Marian Guest House. It was a guest house, and as we were working there—when the SS guards were not nearby—we had all kinds of ways of supporting one another. And we had what I call rescue fantasies: “When this is over, I'll do this and this.” Some of the other people would say “the first meal that I will have my wife cook for me will be this and this.” Or “the first food that I eat will be this and this.” And my fantasy was “when I’m done with this, I will go into that restaurant and order a meal, and not only eat it, but I’ll pay for it.” And so that was one of my rescue fantasies.

The person that owned the quarry that I worked at, he had also horses and cows and the like. And so once every week one of the SS guards would take me in order to do work that needed to be done in the barn. And the owner had a daughter who was older than me—she was probably about 17 or 18 years old—and she would bring a nice plate and give to the SS officer so that he could have his meal. But, bless her heart, she would sneak whatever she could, a piece of bread or something that she could bring in and just set there in the barn for me to have to eat. So I appreciated to this day, and then when I had a chance to go back, I personally thanked her for that. [See p. 55.]

In the last days before liberation, Zev was assigned to the crematorium detail. On May 5, 1945, as the U.S. Army approached, the SS guards fled and the Americans entered the camp the next day.

Already there are the beginning rumors that the American soldiers are not far away, that the Russians are closing in, that the finish line is getting closer and closer. But what we feared is
that the Germans will not want anyone who has been part of knowing how they were burning the bodies to be around to tell about it. So I remember the last day in camp that a Russian guy and I who were on the same work detail, that we decided that we’ll just hide, and so we hid under an old barrack. We were expecting the Germans to come—it was a dumb thing to do, in retrospect—we were expecting the Germans to come with the dogs to sniff us out—but it was too late already. We had done this dumb thing, just on the spur of the moment.

And then we hear noise and this guy, who was one of the [imprisoned] Russian soldiers, crawls out and looks in and comes back and says, “I can’t believe it, the gate is open, and there isn’t anyone around.” So I came out, and we are going toward the gate, and the gate is open, and so with the flow of people out of the gate—and that’s my liberation.

The American soldiers arrived and liberated us. I learned in retrospect that that morning, when the German soldiers were aware that the Americans are nearby, they handed over the guarding to some civil militia. A minute or two after the Germans departed, they just left their posts, and so people just started streaming out of camp. What I recall of that day is just a mass of people walking out and being part of the people that walked. I wanted to get away from Ebensee as far as I could. That’s the sensation that I remember carrying with me. I can’t really recall any triumphant joy, expressions of joy or any of that thing. It took about two or three days to sink in that we are liberated, for me.

As we were walking out of the camp, the last thing that I remember is that I fell into a roadside ditch. I had typhoid. So I was in the ditch—not knowing much about what was happening—and there are two or three African American young men in this group. And African American soldiers were not allowed to fight because they were discriminated against. They were in the support units. So a young African American member of that support unit picked me up from the ditch—now try to imagine that—something in the roadside ditch, [he] picked me up, drove me to the nearby town where he knew that there was a hospital—Linz—which was about ten miles from our camp—took me to the hospital and asked the nurses to
nurse me back to life. So you can have a sense that I am very proud to be an American. I owe my life to the brave American soldiers. And had it not been for those that fought against the Nazis and brought about the defeat of the Nazis—had it not been for that concerned discriminated-against young African American man that took me from the roadside ditch and took me to the hospital for me to be brought back to life, I would not be standing here and sharing with you.

I tried to find that [young man] because I wanted personally to have an opportunity to thank that person. And over the years I got to know Senator John Glenn who chaired the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and he’s also a retired colonel. So I asked him to help me to find that young man that I owe my life to. But I have not been successful.

After the liberation, my brother, then 19, went to a youth village that had been set up for young survivors. When I recovered and left the hospital, I spent a short time—about three weeks—working with the Russian military in Austria. I was comfortable using Russian and all the Slavic languages, but I wanted to go “home,” so I walked away and went back to the village where I'd grown up. I got home [in January 1946] and fortunately my brother also survived, and the two of us figured out that we don’t want to stay in the place where we grew up, so we left everything and went back to Germany and I spent time in what’s called a displaced persons camp [Bergen-Belsen]—in other words, persons that were liberated could stay in the camps. And there I applied for coming to the United States, and in order to come to the United States, someone who wanted to come from another country had to get permission. I had an uncle who agreed to sponsor me and send me papers, but I was waiting and waiting there for the State Dept. to agree and process the papers. Since I picked up languages very easily, so during the year I was in camp I learned to speak Russian, to speak Polish, to speak the various languages. And so after spending time and helping the members of the Palestine Jewish Brigade smuggle illegally persons that wanted to go to Palestine, they rewarded me that I replaced one of the Brigade soldiers, and I got to then-Palestine in that way. When I got to then-Palestine [July 1946], I was 16 years old. Again I decided to pretend that I was older. I pretended to be 18 years old. I volunteered to serve in the then-Israeli military and I take pride in the fact that I succeeded in contributing to the establishment of the state of Israel.

Zev completed high school and college in Israel and came to the U.S. in 1965 for graduate studies at the University of Michigan, where he met his wife Bernice. After competing his Ph.D. in social work at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, he began a long career as a professor of social work at Cleveland State University.

In May 1995, at the 50th anniversary of liberation, World War II veterans were invited to attend the annual Holocaust commemoration in Cleveland, Ohio, sponsored by the Kol Israel Foundation. Among the
attendees was Captain Carl Delau. He was the commanding officer of the 3rd Cavalry squadron that liberated Ebensee camp. We enjoyed meeting each other after the commemoration.

Following the event, we were invited to attend the 3rd Cavalry reunions and did so for several years. They were held in Detroit, Michigan, or Chicago, Illinois. These reunions provided opportunities for the World War II veterans to recall and share their experiences and observations about the war years. It was very special for me to be able to thank in person the veterans who saved my life. In addition, I could highlight the historical significance of their service and the defeat of Nazi Germany. It was also heartwarming to see that it meant something to them to meet the people they had saved and to see that they had a good life. I continued to meet in person with Capt. Carl Delau, who resided in Amherst, Ohio, until he passed away in 2005.

Zev retired in 2009, and in 2013 he and Bernice moved to Greensboro, North Carolina. Dr. Harel makes presentations on his Holocaust experience to schools and public groups across the state.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Oral testimony of Zev Harel, 1984 (USHMM) collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn505019
- Oral testimony of Zev Harel, 2005 (USHMM) collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn78755
- The Liberation of the Ebensee Concentration Camp, U.S. Army Center of Military History history.army.mil/news/2015/150500a_ebensee.html

Narrative adapted from: (1) Zev Harel, interview by the Natl. Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, 23 July 1984; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section; permission pending; (2) Zev Harel, presentation at Congregation Shaarey Tikvah, Beachwood, Ohio, 12 April 2005; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of Congregation Shaarey Tikvah; acquired from Louise K. Freilich on behalf of Congregation Shaarey Tikvah; reprinted with permission of CST Face to Face; (3) “Mythbuster: Zev Harel, Educator and Gerontologist,” Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging, Cleveland, Ohio, 13 July 2010, www.benrose.org/mythbusters/MB_Harel.cfm; (4) Email communication with Dr. Harel, 18 Sept. 2016. Reprinted by permission of Dr. Harel. Photographs of Dr. Harel courtesy of Dr. Harel. Photograph of Dr. and Mrs. Harel courtesy of Marianne Wason.

Bernice and Zev Harel, 2016. Dr. Harel wears the cap of the 3rd Cavalry squadron that liberated Ebensee, and he holds a plaque displaying an article on his reunion in 1981 with the woman who slipped him food while he was in Ebensee. In the plaque photo is Carl Delau of Cleveland who helped feed liberated prisoners in the camp.

Diane Suchetka, “Forty years later, a reunion,” The Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, 4 May 2005, excerpts.

[Dr. Harel] drove to Ebensee to see the memorial there. But first, he walked to the guest house across the street. “Table for one,” Zev told the hostess, his concentration camp fantasy finally coming true.

He sat down and read the menu, decided on the wiener schnitzel, looked up to find the waitress. Instead his eyes met a familiar face. “Will you join me?” Zev asked. The woman sat down in the chair across from Zev.

“Do you remember me?” She looked more closely. “I was the boy who cleaned the stalls during the war.”

The dark-haired girl who smuggled food to him, who helped keep him alive, was grown now and running her father’s guesthouse. She insisted on treating Zev to dinner, but he refused.

When the check came, he paid, just the way he’d dreamed as a prisoner 40 years before. . . .

Zev won’t stop looking, though, for the man who saved him—a pile of skin and bones in a dirty cloth sack—from that ditch at Ebensee. He wants to thank him before it’s too late. He wants to thank him, too.
HOLOCAUST FACT AND FICTION

Mark each statement true or false.

1. Approximately six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.
2. Other victims of Nazi persecution included Roma (Gypsies), many Slavic nationalities, the disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and political opponents such as Communists and socialists.
3. Jews made up 25 percent of the population in pre-World War II Germany.
4. Jews are a race as well as a religious group.
5. Most of the concentration camps were located in Germany.
6. If Jews converted to Christianity, they were not sent to ghettos or concentration camps.
7. The Nazis established ghettos as havens against the anti-Semitism of local people in Poland and other Eastern European countries.
8. Before 1939, the U.S., Canada, and western European countries had an open-door policy for all German-Jewish refugees, but Hitler refused them permission to emigrate.
9. The government of the United States was aware of the mass executions of Jews during the war.
10. The Holocaust would not have been possible without the support of local people in countries occupied by the Nazis.
11. Genocide as practiced by the Nazis was similar to such anti-Semitic outbreaks as the Russian pogroms (organized violent, often murderous assaults on local Jewish communities) or the attacks on Jews in medieval Europe.
12. Students study the Holocaust solely to learn about the persecution of Jews.
13. Hitler was partly Jewish.
15. There was no Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

16. The Final Solution was ordered by the United States to end the war against the Nazi regime.

17. Before World War II, most Jews lived and worked on farms and few lived in urban areas (towns and cities).

18. Many Jewish men and women who survived the Holocaust say they did so because of luck.

19. There were few Christian bystanders during the Holocaust.

20. The word bystander also refers to businesses and countries.

21. The only way any people can resist is by having guns and other weapons.

22. The “Righteous among the Nations” refers to countries that fought alongside the U.S., France, and Britain against the Nazis and their collaborators.

23. Kristallnacht—meaning “night of broken glass” in German—was the beginning of the end of Jewish life in Germany.

24. Most of the people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust were other Jews.

25. The Nazis believed that racial purity was required to build the new German empire.

26. The latest research indicates that the Nazis and their allies operated over 42,000 camps, ghettos, and other sites of detention, persecution, forced labor, and murder during the Holocaust.

Survivors speak to an American liberator (perhaps from North Carolina), Mauthausen concentration camp, Austria, May 1945.
**North Carolina Council on the Holocaust**

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction**

www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/

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**Holocaust Fact and Fiction**

**with answers and explanations**

**True** 1. Approximately six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

**True** 2. Other victims of Nazi persecution included Roma (Gypsies), many Slavic nationalities, the disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and political opponents such as Communists and socialists.

**False** 3. Jews made up 25 percent of the population in pre-World War II Germany.

   *In 1933, Germany had a population of 70 million people, about 550,000 of whom were Jewish. Thus, Jews made up less than 1% of the total German population.*

**False** 4. Jews are a race as well as a religious group.

   *Jews are not a race. Jews are a religious group as are Christians and Muslims.*

**False** 5. Most of the concentration camps were located in Germany.

   *Most of the camps were located in Poland; only about 20% were located in Germany.*

**False** 6. If Jews converted to Christianity, they were not sent to ghettos or concentration camps.

   *Jews were not permitted by the Nazis to convert to Christianity. Children born to a Jewish mother or father were considered “racially Jewish” by the Nazis.*

**False** 7. The Nazis established ghettos as havens against the anti-Semitism of local people in Poland and other Eastern European countries.

   *Jews were herded into ghettos with very limited food, housing, and medical supplies. Almost all were eventually sent to their deaths in concentration camps.*

**False** 8. Before 1939, the U.S., Canada, and western European countries had an open-door policy for all German-Jewish refugees, but Hitler refused them permission to emigrate.

   *Before World War II, Jews were allowed to leave Germany, but most European countries limited or forbade their entrance. The U.S. government refused to change the small American quota to admit Jewish refugees from Europe.*

**True** 9. The government of the United States was aware of the mass executions of Jews during the war.

**True** 10. The Holocaust would not have been possible without the support of local people in countries occupied by the Nazis.

**False** 11. Genocide as practiced by the Nazis was similar to such anti-Semitic outbreaks as the Russian pogroms (organized violent, often murderous assaults on local Jewish communities) or the attacks on Jews in medieval Europe.

   *Medieval pogroms were organized locally, sometimes with police or government encouragement, targeting Jewish communities in cities and towns, but these were not attempts to murder all the Jews of Europe. In contrast, the Nazi genocide was a state-sponsored, systematic, and bureaucratic attempt to annihilate all European Jews.*

**False** 12. Students study the Holocaust solely to learn about the persecution of Jews.

   *Studying genocide and the Holocaust helps students understand the persecution of different nationalities and ethnic groups historically and today. It teaches them what happens to a society when it is taught to hate and to systematically persecute other people.*

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False 13. Hitler was partly Jewish.

*There is no credible evidence to support the idea that Hitler was partly Jewish.*


*The Nuremberg Laws were racial laws—the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. These laws institutionalized Nazi racial ideology and provided the legal framework for the systematic persecution of Jews.*

False 15. There was no Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

Jews carried out acts of resistance in many ways against impossible odds — in ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers. Organized armed resistance was the most forceful form of Jewish opposition to Nazi policies. Jews used armed resistance in over 100 ghettos in occupied Poland and the Soviet Union. Jews also sabotaged equipment and spied on German activities.

False 16. The Final Solution was ordered by the U.S. to end the war against the Nazi regime.

*The term “Final Solution” refers to the Nazi plan to annihilate European Jewry.*

False 17. Before World War II, most Jews lived and worked on farms and few lived in urban areas.

*Most Jews of western Europe lived in cities. In eastern Europe, Jews also lived in urban areas, but others lived in small cities or marketing villages known as “shtetls.”*

True 18. Many Jewish men and women who survived the Holocaust say they did so because of luck.

False 19. There were few Christian bystanders during the Holocaust.

*Bystanders were those individuals, groups, and nations who knew about the persecution of Jews and others, but decided to remain silent. As the majority of the population of Europe was Christian, many Christians were bystanders.*

True 20. The word bystander also refers to businesses and countries.

False 21. The only way any people can resist is by having guns and other weapons.

*Resistance can take many forms besides armed resistance, including escaping, hiding, assisting and rescuing others, sabotage, spiritual resistance, and creating written records or art that live on beyond the death of the creators.*

False 22. The “Righteous Among the Nations” refers to countries that fought alongside the United States, France, and Britain against the Nazis and their collaborators.

*Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial, grants the title of Righteous Among the Nations to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.*

True 23. Kristallnacht — meaning “night of broken glass” in German—was the beginning of the end of Jewish life in Germany.

False 24. Most of the people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust were other Jews.

*People in every European country and from all religious backgrounds risked their lives to help Jews. Efforts ranged from isolated acts of individuals to small or large organized networks.*

True 25. The Nazis believed that racial purity was required to build the new German empire.

True 26. The latest research indicates that the Nazis and their allies operated over 42,000 camps, ghettos, and other sites of detention, persecution, forced labor, and murder during the Holocaust.
Because the objective of teaching any subject is to engage the intellectual curiosity of students in order to inspire critical thought and personal growth, it is helpful to structure your lesson plan on the Holocaust by keeping questions of rationale, or purpose, in mind. Teachers rarely have enough time to teach these complicated topics, though they may be required to do so by state standards. Lessons must be developed and difficult content choices must be made.

A well-thought-out rationale helps with these difficult curricular decisions. In addition, people within and outside the school community may question the use of valuable classroom time to study the Holocaust. Again, a well-formed rationale will help address these questions and concerns. Before deciding what and how to teach, we recommend that you think about why you are teaching this history.

HERE ARE THREE KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

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

The Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects for examining basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into this history yields critical lessons for an investigation into human behavior. It also addresses one of the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen.

BY STUDYING THESE TOPICS, STUDENTS COME TO REALIZE THAT:

- Democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected.
- Silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, can—however unintentionally—perpetuate these problems.
- The Holocaust was not an accident in history; it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.
- The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century but also in the entire course of human history.

STUDYING THE HOLOCAUST ALSO HELPS STUDENTS TO:

- Understand the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society.
- Develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and an acceptance of diversity.
• Explore the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent to the oppression of others.

• Think about the use and abuse of power as well as the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.

• Understand how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.

As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain awareness of the complexity of the subject and a perspective on how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values. Students come to understand that it is the responsibility of citizens in any society to learn to identify danger signals and to know when to react.

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

Educators should avoid tailoring their Holocaust course or lesson in any way to the particular makeup of their student population. Failing to contextualize the groups targeted by the Nazis as well as the actions of those who resisted can result in the misunderstanding or trivializing of this history. Relevant connections for all learners often surface as the history is analyzed.
Teaching Holocaust history demands a high level of sensitivity and keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. The following guidelines, while reflecting approaches appropriate for effective teaching in general, are particularly relevant to Holocaust education.

- **Define the term “holocaust.”**
  The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

- **Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable.**
  Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. Focusing on those decisions leads to insights into history and human nature and can help your students to become better critical thinkers.

- **Avoid simple answers to complex questions.**
  The history of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior and the context within which individual decisions are made. Be wary of simplification. Seek instead to convey the nuances of this history. Allow students to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust and that often made decision making difficult and uncertain.

- **Strive for precision of language.**
  Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to generalize and, thus, to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Avoid this by helping your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish, for example, the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

  Words that describe human behavior often have multiple meanings. Resistance, for example, usually refers to a physical act of armed revolt. During the Holocaust, it also encompassed partisan activity: the smuggling of messages, food, and weapons; sabotage; and actual military engagement. Resistance may also be thought of as willful disobedience, such as continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules or creating fine art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to live in the face of abject brutality was an act of spiritual resistance.

  Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions. Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases but not all”) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis, nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.

- **Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust.**
  Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. However, it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them and for students to thus place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves. One helpful technique for engaging students in a discussion of the Holocaust is to think of the participants as belonging to one of four categories: victims, perpetrators, rescuers, or bystanders. Examine the actions, motives, and decisions of each group. Portray all individuals, including victims and perpetrators, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making.

  As with any topic, students should make careful distinctions about sources of information. Students should
be encouraged to consider why a particular text was written, who wrote it, who the intended audience was, whether any biases were inherent in the information, whether any gaps occurred in discussion, whether omissions in certain passages were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events. Because scholars often base their research on different bodies of information, varying interpretations of history can emerge. Consequently, all interpretations are subject to analytical evaluation. Strongly encourage your students to investigate carefully the origin and authorship of all material, particularly anything found on the Internet.

- **Avoid comparisons of pain.**
  One cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as “The victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity.”

- **Do not romanticize history.**
  People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful, important, and compelling role models for students. But given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic actions in a unit on the Holocaust can result in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. Similarly, in exposing students to the worst aspects of human nature as revealed in the history of the Holocaust, you run the risk of fostering cynicism in your students. Accuracy of fact, together with a balanced perspective on the history, must be a priority.

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

  Similarly, the Holocaust should be studied within its contemporaneous context so students can begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged particular actions or events. For example, when thinking about resistance, consider when and where an act took place; the immediate consequences of one’s actions to self and family; the degree of control the Nazis had on a country or local population; the cultural attitudes of particular native populations toward different victim groups historically; and the availability and risk of potential hiding places.

  Encourage your students not to categorize groups of people only on the basis of their experiences during the Holocaust; contextualization is critical so that victims are not perceived only as victims. By exposing students to some of the cultural contributions and achievements of 2,000 years of European Jewish life, for example, you help them to balance their perception of Jews as victims and to appreciate more fully the traumatic disruption in Jewish history caused by the Holocaust.

- **Translate statistics into people.**
  In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. Show that individual people—grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics.

- **Make responsible methodological choices.**
  One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific historical images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the lesson objective. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students’ emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful to the victims themselves. Do not skip any of the suggested topics because the visual images are too graphic; instead, use other approaches to address the material.

  In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students “experience” unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression that they now know what it was like to suffer or even to participate during the Holocaust. It is best to draw upon numerous primary sources, provide survivor testimony, and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

  Furthermore, word scrambles, crossword puzzles, counting objects, model building, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialization of the history. If the effects of a particular activity, even when popular with you and your students, run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.
THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. “Holocaust” is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire.” The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were “racially superior” and that the Jews, deemed “inferior,” were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community. The Nazis’ proclaimed goal was the eradication of European Jewry.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic nationalities (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

*Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC
www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust-encyclopedia

GENOCIDE means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as such:

- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

*Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Photos courtesy of USHMM, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, J. Nachtway/Phaidon Press.
Adapted from Pyramid of Hate, ADL (Anti-Defamation League).
GUIDELINES for Teaching about Genocide
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/teaching-about-genocide

The term “genocide” did not exist before 1944. It is a very specific term, referring to violent crimes committed against a group with the intent to destroy the existence of the group. The Museum strongly encourages teachers to discuss with their students the concept of genocide and its development since World War II to provide background and a foundation for their investigation of individual or multiple genocidal events. For more information, visit the section Confront Genocide on the website of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide.

■ Define the term “genocide.”
The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

1. Killing members of the group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

■ Investigate the context and dynamics that have led to genocide.
A study of genocide should consider what the steps toward genocide in a society have been or could be. Analyze the factors and patterns that may play a role in the early stages: political considerations, economic difficulties, local history and context, etc. How are targeted groups defined, dehumanized, marginalized, and/or segregated before mass killing begins? As students learn of the early phases of a genocide, ask them to consider how steps and causal conditions may have been deflected or minimized. Ask them to think about scope, intent, and tactics. Be mindful that there is no one set pattern or list of preliminary steps that always lead to mass murder.

■ Be wary of simplistic parallels to other genocides.
Each genocide has its own unique characteristics of time, place, people, and methods. Students are likely to try to make facile comparisons to other genocides, particularly the Holocaust; however, it is up to the teacher to redirect students to the specifics of a particular community at a particular time and place. Some parallels do indeed exist between the Holocaust and other genocides: the use of trains to transport victims, camps for detention and killing, etc. However, genocide has also occurred without these two tactics. Thus, you could make careful comparisons between the tactics or procedures used by oppressors to destroy communities, but you should avoid comparing the pain and suffering of individuals.

■ Analyze American and world response.
The world community is very different and far more complicated in the aftermath of the Holocaust. An important goal in studying all aspects of genocide is to learn from mistakes and apply these lessons to the future. To do this, students must strive to understand not only what was done, or not done, in the past but also why action was or was not taken. As with any historical event, it is important to present the facts. Students need to be aware of the various choices that the global community had available before, during, and after the mass killing. It is important to begin at home, with the choices available to the United States. It is also important to discuss all of the stakeholders involved—political leaders, religious leaders, and private citizens. Next, it is critical to discuss the range of choices seemingly available to the rest of the global community. How did international and regional authorities respond? What is the role of nongovernmental organizations? When is diplomacy, negotiation, isolation, or military involvement appropriate or effective?

Students may become frustrated when they learn of governmental inaction in the face of
genocide. While there are certainly cynical reasons for not intervening, teachers can lead students to understand the complexity of responding to genocide—that it is usually not a simple matter to step into another country and tell one group to stop killing another group. In addressing what might cause genocide and how to prevent it, consider these questions:

- When does a nation (the United States, for example) have the political will to take all necessary steps to stop genocide?
- How much international cooperation can be mustered? How much is needed?
- What are the possible ramifications of intervention?
- Is a nation willing to absorb casualties and death to stop a genocide?

**Illustrate positive actions taken by individuals and nations in the face of genocide.**

One reason that genocide occurs is the complicity of bystanders within the nation and around the world. However, in each genocide, there have been individuals—both persons at risk inside the country as well as external observers or stakeholders—who have spoken out against the oppressive regime and/or rescued threatened people. There are always a few who stand up to face evil with tremendous acts of courage—and sometimes very small acts of courage, of no less importance. Teachers should discuss these responses without exaggerating their numbers or their frequency.

When teaching and learning about genocide, individuals may fall prey to helplessness or acceptance of inevitability because the event is imminent or in progress. The magnitude of the event and seeming inertia in the world community and its policymakers can be daunting, but actions of any size have potential impact. Numerous episodes from the Holocaust and other genocides illustrate this point.

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**CASES OF GENOCIDE**

www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases

- **Bosnia-Herzegovina.** During the conflict in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, an estimated 100,000 people were killed, 80 percent of whom were Bosnian Muslims—known as Bosniaks. In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces killed as many as 8,000 Bosniaks from Srebrenica. It was the largest massacre in Europe since the Holocaust.

- **Burma.** Long considered one of the world’s most persecuted peoples, the Muslim Rohingya have no legal status in Burma and face severe discrimination, abuse, and escalating violence.

- **Cambodia.** Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge subjected the country’s citizens to forced labor, persecution, and execution in the name of the regime’s ruthless agrarian ideology. Almost two million Cambodians—approximately one third of the population—died in the “Killing Fields.”

- **Central African Republic.** What began in 2013 as political violence initiated by rebel groups opposing the government of the Central African Republic has taken on a religious dimension, and groups and individuals are now being targeted because of their Christian or Muslim identity.

- **Democratic Republic of the Congo.** Over the last two decades, more than five million civilians have died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a succession of complex wars and conflicts. Most have died from preventable diseases as a result of the collapse of infrastructure, lack of food and health care, and displacement.

- **Iraq.** In the summer of 2014, the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) conducted a violent campaign against civilians in northern Iraq, targeting in particular ethnic and religious minorities. The violence forcibly displaced more than 800,000 people and resulted in the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians. The Museum’s findings also indicate IS has been and is perpetrating genocide against the Yazidi people.

- **Rwanda.** In just 100 days, from April to July 1994, between 500,000 and one million Rwandans, predominantly Tutsis, were massacred when a Hutu extremist-led government launched a plan to wipe out the country’s entire Tutsi minority and any others who opposed their policies.

- **South Sudan.** In July 2011, South Sudan became the world’s newest country after its citizens voted for independence from Sudan. The country faces great challenges as it seeks to build its democratic institutions, overcome a history of internal conflict based on ethnicity, and resolve ongoing tensions with Sudan over the region’s oil resources.

- **Sudan.** Since the 1950s, the Arab-dominated government of Sudan has tried to impose its control on African minorities on the country’s periphery. More than 2.5 million civilians have been killed in a succession of brutal conflicts—between north and south, in Darfur in the west, and in other regions.

- **Syria.** Since its outbreak in March 2011, the conflict in Syria has cost the lives of more than 400,000 people, displaced millions more, and involved numerous atrocities and crimes against humanity.
Frequently, a news story will reach the press about a classroom lesson that set out to try to help build empathy for the victims of the Holocaust by having students role play situations of either being “persecuted” or “privileged.” Some of these simulations have gone so far as to have selected students wear a yellow star for a day and be subjected to enforced rules ranging from forcing them to stand at the back of the class or the end of long lunch lines, to barring them from using some bathrooms and preventing them from using school drinking fountains. In many cases, these well-intentioned efforts go awry, leading to upset, complaint, and distress for students, families, and the school community.

While simulation-type activities may appear on the surface to be a compelling way to engage students in the history of the Holocaust, the Anti-Defamation League and other institutions with expertise in teaching about the Holocaust strongly caution against using such activities for the following reasons:

- They are pedagogically unsound because they trivialize the experience of the victims and can leave students with the impression at the conclusion of the activity that they actually know what it was like during the Holocaust.
- They stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality by reducing groups of people and their experiences and actions to one-dimensional representations.
- They can reinforce negative views of the victims.
- They impede critical analysis by oversimplifying complex historical events and human behavior, leaving students with a skewed view of history.
- They disconnect the Holocaust from the context of European and global history.

While we want students to think about their own choices and decisions, especially under difficult circumstances, we should also remember that we teach and learn about the Holocaust knowing “the end of the story,” while those who lived during this event did not have the benefit of such information. Asking students to consider what they would have done under the same circumstances is an artificial question as there is no way of knowing what decisions we will make until we are actually faced with them. Such an exercise also inherently judges the decisions that were made by individuals, decisions that were often “choiceless choices” where no decision was necessarily a good decision but a choice had to be made. Often such decisions—which had to be made very quickly—could mean the difference between life and death. There is no way to adequately or authentically replicate such situations, nor should we try.
Below are examples of effective and pedagogically sound methods that can be used to help foster a sense of empathy and help students begin to understand the motivations, thoughts, feelings, and actions of those who lived through the Holocaust.

- Provide ample opportunities for students to examine primary source materials, including photographs, artwork, diary entries, letters, government documents, and visual history testimony. Such an exploration allows for a deeper level of interest and inquiry on a range of topics from many perspectives and in proper historical context.

- Assign reflective writing exercises or lead class discussions that explore various aspects of human behavior such as scapegoating or making difficult moral choices. These types of activities allow students to share how they feel about what they are learning and also consider how it has meaning in their own lives.

- Invite survivors and other eyewitnesses to share their stories with students.

One of the goals for teaching about the Holocaust should be for students to determine their own roles and responsibilities in the world around them. To advance this thinking and learning, we encourage teachers to provide students with opportunities to think about meaningful actions they can take in their schools and communities today when they see injustice or are faced with difficult moral and ethical decisions, not imagine what they might have done in the past.
ROLES PEOPLE PLAY

PERPETRATORS — people who plan and carry out acts of violence along with an inner circle of forces they control, such as the military, police, and militias.

ENABLERS — arms dealers, mafias, or other criminals who look to profit from mass killings.

UPSTANDERS — people who help those targeted for violence or death, often at great peril and personal risk; they speak out, offer assistance, and intervene to prevent abuse.

Bystanders — people who stand by and do nothing; by looking away, they can even appear to support the perpetrators.

VICTIMS — people targeted for violence.

WHY PEOPLE STAND BY

FEAR — Some people feel they have to go along with the perpetrators or they will suffer abuse themselves.

PERSONAL GAIN — Some people see personal or economic gain in allowing others to be victimized.

BLIND OBEDIENCE — Some individuals just do what they are told by authority figures.

PREJUDICE — All too often, people are ready to believe propaganda because it reaffirms their own prejudices.

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO — Some people do nothing because they do not believe they can make a difference.

NO ONE ELSE IS HELPING — If no one stands up, it's easier for others to justify doing nothing.

Adapted from a display at the National Center for Civil & Human Rights, Atlanta, Georgia. Photos courtesy U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: (1) Massacre of Jews by an Einsatzgruppe unit, Ukraine, 1941-1943; (2) Bystanders watch as Jews are rounded up and marched through the streets of Lvov, Poland, 1941; (3) Jewish and non-Jewish children sheltered in Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, with their protectors, 1943; (4) Polish rescuer holds Jewish child she protected during the war, 1943.
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.

Attributed to Rev. Martin Niemöller (1892-1984), a Protestant minister imprisoned from 1938 to 1945 for his ardent opposition to the Nazis. In April 1945 as Allied troops approached Dachau concentration camp, he was transported with other political prisoners to Austria. They were soon liberated by the U.S. Army.

North Carolina Council on the Holocaust  ■  N.C. Department of Public Instruction
www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/
A LESSON ON RESISTANCE

1. Ask your students: *You have decided to actively resist and fight back — what do you need?*

2. Ask students to develop a list of what would be needed to resist an oppressive regime, such as the Nazi occupation of their country. Though incomplete, the following list includes many factors that often come up in similar discussions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Followers (committed, loyal, healthy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>Leadership and Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Hideout, Safe House, and Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan A</td>
<td>Goal (with consensus among fighters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan B</td>
<td>Communication Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Supplies</td>
<td>Command and Control Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower/Committed Fighters</td>
<td>Knowledge of Enemy’s Resources &amp; Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Training</td>
<td>(weapons use; military strategy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Ask students to consider this question: *What are some conditions, beliefs, and realities that would keep people from fighting back?*

Factors that would deter active resistance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Information</td>
<td>German Policy of Collective Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capture and Torture</td>
<td>Collaborators/Spies Working with Enemy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Ask students to discuss/comment on this revelation: *The question is not “why wasn’t there more resistance?” The question is “how could there have been so much?”*

5. Ask students to discuss/comment on this statement by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.: *“To accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system; therefore the oppressed became as evil as the oppressor. Noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.”* Do you agree? (Stride Toward Freedom, 1958)
6. Imagine you live in a country where your ethnic or religious group persecutes another group. You know that you could be arrested, threatened, or harmed—perhaps killed—for helping someone from that persecuted group. One day you see a child from the persecuted group hiding in the woods. The child is bleeding and unable to walk. What would you do?

A. Inform authorities about the child.
B. Bring water, food, and bandages to the child once it gets dark.
C. Take the child to your house for bandages and food, but then make the child leave.
D. Hide the child in your home, risking jail or even death for you and your family.
E. Do nothing and try to forget what you saw.

7. Discuss the significance of:
   - the importance of the individual and how an individual can make a difference
   - the different forms of resistance
   - the importance of standing up for what is right, even if you know your chances of winning are slight

8. Discuss this question: Is it worth dying for something?

Online Resources on Resistance during the Holocaust

  www.ncpublicschools.org/holocaust-council/guide/
- Resources from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org
  — Lesson Plan: Individual Responsibility and Resistance during the Holocaust
    www.ushmm.org/educators/lesson-plans/individual
  — Jewish Resistance, with animated map and links to related articles
- Resources from Yad Vashem, Memorial to the Holocaust, Israel www.yadvashem.org/
- Lesson Plans from A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust (Florida Center for Instructional Technology, University of South Florida) fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/
  — Resistance during the Holocaust fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/activity/912plan/resistan.htm
  — Inside the Warsaw Ghetto fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/activity/68plan/Warsaw.htm
  — The White Rose fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/activity/912plan/whiteros.htm
- Lesson Plan: Holocaust and Resistance (EDSITEment, NEH) edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/holocaust-and-resistance
- Daring to Resist: Three Women during the Holocaust (PBS), with teacher’s guide www.pbs.org/daringtoresist
## HOLOCAUST TIME LINE

### 1933

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 30</td>
<td>Hitler, leader of the National Socialist Party, is appointed chancellor of Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 27</td>
<td>The Nazis use the arson-burning of the Reichstag building in Berlin as an excuse to suspend civil rights in the name of national security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 5</td>
<td>The Nazis receive 44% of the popular vote in parliamentary elections, the last democratic elections in Germany until Hitler's death. Hitler arrests the Communist parliamentary leaders in order to achieve a majority in the Reichstag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 22</td>
<td><strong>FIRST CONCENTRATION CAMP</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;, Dachau, is opened in Nazi Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 24</td>
<td>German parliament (Reichstag) gives Hitler power to enact laws on its behalf, in effect creating a dictatorship (Enabling Act).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Nazi boycott of all Jewish businesses begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Jews are barred from German civil service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>The Gestapo (secret police) is established, taking over all local police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>The Nazis ban German trade unions and arrest their leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Thousands of books by Jews and political dissidents are burned publicly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>Nazis declare the Nazi Party the only legal political party in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 20</td>
<td>American Jewish Congress calls for a boycott of German products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Jews are barred from owning land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1934

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>Jews are banned from receiving national health insurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2</td>
<td><strong>HITLER DECLARES HIMSELF FUEHRER</strong> (leader) after von Hindenburg dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 19</td>
<td>By a 90% approval, the German people vote to support Hitler's dictatorial powers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 16</td>
<td>Hitler renews the draft in violation of the Versailles Treaty that ended World War I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 18</td>
<td>Jews are banned from marrying non-Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td><strong>NUREMBERG RACE LAWS</strong> deprive Jews of the rights of citizenship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 7</td>
<td><strong>NAZI INVASION OF THE RHINELAND</strong> between Germany and France. Nazi military aggression for territory begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Sachsenhausen concentration camp is opened in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 1</td>
<td>Olympic Games open in Berlin. Signs reading &quot;Jews Not Welcome&quot; are temporarily removed from most public places by Hitler's orders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>Jews are banned from certain jobs and professions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Buchenwald concentration camp is opened in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Jews’ right to obtain passports for travel outside of Germany is restricted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 13</td>
<td><strong>NAZI OCCUPATION OF AUSTRIA</strong>, which is annexed to Germany (the Anschluss).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Nazis order Jews to provide full information about their businesses, personal property, and financial assets to the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June/Sept.</td>
<td>Jewish doctors and lawyers are forbidden to practice their professions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>All Jews over age 15 are ordered to get identity cards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evian Conference. Delegates from 32 countries meet in France to consider ways to help European Jews, but no nation agrees to accept any refugees.

### Sept. 29.
**NAZIS ACQUIRE SUDETENLAND** (western Czechoslovakia). In the Munich Agreement, Great Britain and France agree to the German takeover of the Sudetenland in return for Hitler’s promise to demand no more territory.

**Oct. 5**
Nazis require Jewish passports to be stamped with a large red “J.”

**Nov. 9-10**
**KRISTALLNACHT**: The Night of Broken Glass. Nazi-initiated anti-Jewish riots take place in Germany and Austria. 267 synagogues are destroyed, 7,500 Jewish shops are looted, 91 Jews are killed, and 30,000 Jewish men are sent to concentration camps.

**Nov. 12**
German Jews are ordered to pay 1,000,000,000 (one billion) Reichsmarks in reparations for the damages of Kristallnacht.

**Nov. 15**
All Jewish children are expelled from German schools.

**Dec. 3**
Nazis issue the Decree on Eliminating the Jews from German Economic Life.

### 1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 30</td>
<td>In a speech, Hitler threatens to exterminate the Jews if a world war breaks out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 21</td>
<td>Nazis order Jews to turn over all of their silver and gold items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 4</td>
<td>Nazis begin using German Jews for forced labor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 15</td>
<td><strong>NAZIS OCCUPY CZECHOSLOVAKIA</strong> in violation of the Munich Agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>German landlords are given the right to evict Jewish tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-June</td>
<td>The ship <em>St. Louis</em>, carrying almost 1,000 Jewish refugees, is turned away from Cuba, the U.S., and other countries before returning to Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>Germany and the Soviet Union sign a nonaggression pact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1</td>
<td><strong>NAZIS INVADE POLAND.  WORLD WAR II BEGINS.</strong> Britain and France soon declare war on Germany. The U.S. declares its neutrality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>Nazis begin forced euthanasia of the handicapped in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Dec.</td>
<td><strong>GHETTOS ARE CREATED IN POLAND</strong> to isolate the Jewish populations into small enclosed sections of the cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 18</td>
<td>Nazis restrict food rations for Jews in Germany.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April-May</td>
<td><strong>NAZIS INVADE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.</strong> Denmark, Norway. Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France are defeated and occupied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27</td>
<td><strong>AUSCHWITZ</strong> concentration camp is established in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td><strong>THE AXIS IS FORMED</strong> as Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 8</td>
<td><strong>NAZIS BEGIN AIR ATTACKS ON BRITAIN.</strong> The Battle of Britain begins. The Nazis never invade the island of Great Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
<td>Nazis announce plan to deport all European Jews to the island of Madagascar off southeastern Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>Anti-Jewish laws are passed by the Vichy government in France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>The Jewish ghetto in Warsaw is sealed, enclosing 450,000 Jews inside its walls. Other ghettos in Poland are sealed by the Nazis in the following months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Killing of Jews by gas begins at Sobibor death camp in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td><strong>GERMANY INVADES THE SOVIET UNION</strong> in violation of the nonaggression pact. <strong>EINSATZGRUPPEN</strong> (killing squads) begin murdering hundreds of Jews in the western Soviet Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Majdanek (My-DON-ek) concentration camp is opened in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td>German and Austrian Jews are ordered to wear armbands with the Star of David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Nazis begin mass deportations of German Jews to ghettos in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td><strong>THE U.S. ENTERS WWII.</strong> The U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, is bombed by the Japanese. The U.S. declares war on Japan the next day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>Nazis begin using mobile gas vans to kill Jews at the Chelmno death camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>Germany declares war on the U.S. The U.S. declares war on Germany.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1942**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 5</td>
<td>German Jews are ordered to turn in their winter clothing to be sent to Nazi troops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 20</td>
<td><strong>“THE FINAL SOLUTION”</strong> to exterminate European Jews is planned at the Wannsee Conference. More death camps are opened in the following months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>First Jews from France and Slovakia arrive at Auschwitz death camp in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Jews in Germany are banned from using public transportation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>The <em>New York Times</em> reports mass killings of Jews by the Nazis in eastern Europe — Poland, Russia, and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>First Jews from Holland are sent to Auschwitz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>American Jews hold a rally in New York City to pressure the U.S. and the United Nations to rescue the Jews of Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>All Jews in German camps are sent to the death camp at Auschwitz in Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>First Jews from Norway are sent to Auschwitz.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1943**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2</td>
<td><strong>NAZI RETREAT BEGINS.</strong> German army surrenders at Stalingrad, Soviet Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>First Gypsies (Roma) arrive at Auschwitz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>U.S. and British officials meeting in Bermuda fail to devise an effective plan for rescuing the victims of the Nazis in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-May</td>
<td><strong>WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING.</strong> Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto resist for 28 days the Nazi attack to liquidate the ghetto. 50,000 Jews are killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Allies are victorious in north Africa with the surrender of Axis troops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28</td>
<td>Five new crematoria are completed at Auschwitz. Almost 5,000 corpses can be burned in one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July</td>
<td>Nazis order all ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union to be liquidated. Armed resistance by Jewish fighters occurs in five ghettos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9</td>
<td>Allies invade Sicily, beginning the military campaign in southern Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 25</td>
<td>As Allies invade Italy from the south, Italians revolt and depose Mussolini. German army soon occupies Italy from the north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2</td>
<td>Inmates of the Treblinka death camp in Poland revolt. Only 70 survive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.-Sept.</td>
<td>The Jewish ghettos in Vilna, Minsk, and Bialystock, Poland, are liquidated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Danish underground evacuates over 7,000 Jews by sea to Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>U.S. Congress holds hearings on the State Dept.’s inaction in response to the mounting evidence of the Nazi extermination of the Jews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1944**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 19</td>
<td>German army invades Hungary. The deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz soon begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Two Jews escape from Auschwitz and present a report of the Nazi atrocities in the camp to representatives of the Pope in Slovakia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6</td>
<td><strong>D-DAY. THE ALLIES INVADE CONTINENTAL EUROPE</strong> at Normandy, France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-Jan.</td>
<td>Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg saves nearly 33,000 Jews in Hungary by giving them visas and setting up “safe houses.” In early 1945 he is arrested by the Soviets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and imprisoned in Moscow. He may have lived in Soviet prisons until the late 1980s.

July 20
Attempted assassination of Hitler by a group of German officers fails.

July 24
Majdanek death camp in Poland is liberated by the Soviet army.

Aug. 4
Anne Frank and her family are arrested in their hiding place in Amsterdam, Holland, and are sent to Auschwitz. Anne and her sister Margot are later sent to Bergen-Belsen in Germany where Anne dies of typhus on March 15, 1945.

Aug. 6
Last ghetto in Poland is liquidated (Lodz). 60,000 Jews are sent to Auschwitz.

Oct. 7
Inmates revolt at Auschwitz and destroy Crematorium IV.

EUROPEAN CITIES ARE LIBERATED FROM NAZI CONTROL as the U.S. and British armies progress from the west and the Soviet army from the east.

1945

Jan. 17
Nazis evacuate Auschwitz as the Soviet army approaches from the east.

Feb.-April
DEATH MARCHES. Prisoners are forced to march to camps in central Germany as the Nazis retreat from advancing Allied armies. Thousands die on the marches.

Jan.-May
CONCENTRATION CAMPS ARE LIBERATED across Europe by Allied troops.

April 12
U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt dies. Vice President Harry Truman becomes president.

April 15
Bergen-Belsen, where Anne Frank had died a month earlier, is liberated. Of the 58,000 survivors, nearly 30,000 die in the following weeks from disease and the effects of chronic malnutrition.

April 25
American and Soviet troops meet on the Elbe River in Germany.

April 30
HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE as Allied armies approach Berlin from east and west. Other top Nazi officials commit suicide in the following months.

May 8
WAR IN EUROPE ENDS. Germany surrenders: V-E Day (Victory in Europe)

Aug. 15
WORLD WAR II IS OVER. Japan surrenders. V-J Day (Victory in Japan).

Oct.
NUREMBERG WAR CRIMES TRIALS BEGIN (Nuremberg, Germany). Of the 22 major Nazi officials who are tried, twelve are sentenced to death by hanging, seven are given prison sentences from ten years to life, and three are acquitted. Many other Nazi war criminals are tried in later months.

See the Timeline of Holocaust Events on the website of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/.