Holocaust Museum LA Teacher Guide

Teaching the Holocaust with *The Story of Three Rings: A Memoir of Dana Schwartz*

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Holocaust Museum LA
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To reserve a tour for your students, contact reception@hmla.org

Museum Hours

Mon-Thu	10am-5pm
Fri	10am-2pm
Sat-Sun	10am-5pm

Students are always free

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The Story of Three Rings: A Memoir of Dana Schwartz short film was created by Felix Audelo-Ruiz, Juli Freedman, Elly Hong, Carolina Martinez, and Dora Schoenberg and produced by Holocaust Museum LA and Harvard-Westlake School

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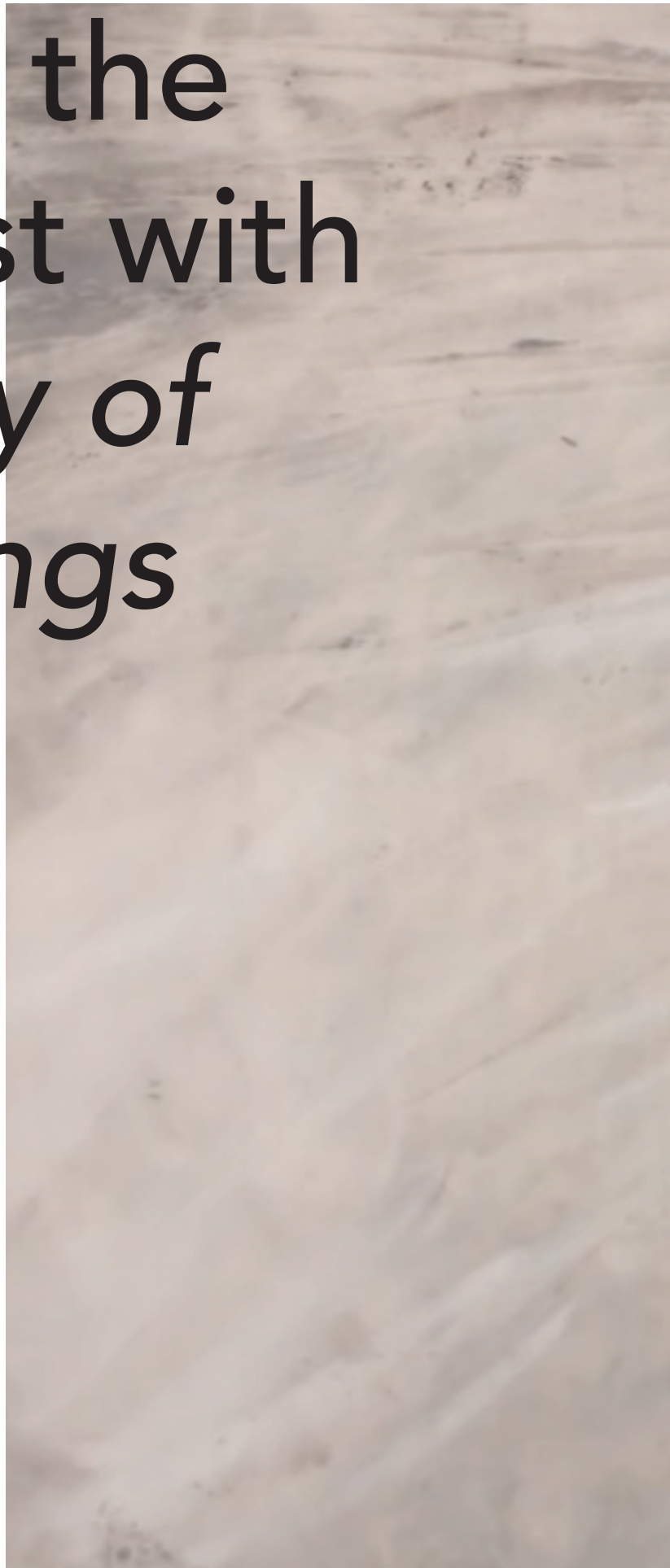


The educational philosophy of Holocaust Museum LA is to teach about the Holocaust through oral history and primary sources. This guide is intended to engage your students in this important history through Holocaust Survivor testimony and historical context to understand the past and build a more dignified future.

History of Holocaust Museum LA

Holocaust Museum LA was founded in 1961 by Holocaust Survivors who met in Los Angeles, each with their own personal experiences and precious documents, photographs, and objects that connected them with their family, friends, and history.

The Holocaust Survivors who founded this museum believed in the importance of creating a space to commemorate their loved ones, house precious artifacts, and educate future generations. The founding Survivors mandated that the Museum always be free to students, so no one would ever be turned away from learning about the Holocaust. Holocaust Museum LA opened its permanent award-winning facility in Pan Pacific Park in October 2010, where it is open seven days a week with free admission for all students, particularly meeting the needs of underfunded schools in under resourced communities. Holocaust Museum LA dedicates itself as a primary source institution, one that commemorates those who perished, honors those who survived, and houses the precious artifacts that miraculously weathered the Holocaust. The Museum provides free Holocaust education to students from across Los Angeles, the United States, and the world, fulfilling the mission of the founding Holocaust Survivors to commemorate, educate, and inspire. Through engagements and educational programs that value dialogue, learning, and reflection, the Museum believes that we can build a more respectful, dignified, and humane world.

The Holocaust: An Overview

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic mass murder of European Jewry perpetrated by Nazi Germany, its allies, and collaborators. From their initial rise to power, the Nazis worked to marginalize and dehumanize the Jewish population, as well as other minority groups, which later manifested in *genocide*.

A genocide is the deliberate and systematic attempted annihilation of a national, racial, ethnic or religious group of people

While the term "**Holocaust**" has come to denote the destruction of European Jews by Nazi Germany, the word *holocaust* stems from the Greek word for "burnt offering." The term *holocaust* can also be found in the Biblical text Samuel 1: 7-9 and refers to the consumption of a sacrifice by fire. The Hebrew word for the state-sponsored murder of European Jewry is *Shoah*, which connotes a calamity, disaster, or destruction that cannot be fully described by human language.

Life Before the Holocaust

For over 2,000 years, Jews lived as a minority throughout Europe. In most cases, they maintained their religious practices and traditions, forming a rich culture in various empires, nations, and states. In 1933, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, comprising 1.7% of the total European population. This number represented more than 60% of the world's Jewish population at that time, estimated at 15.3 million. The majority of Jews in prewar Europe resided in Eastern Europe, with the largest community in Poland, where Jewish communities settled in the 12th century. By 1933, the Jewish population in Poland numbered over three million and comprised roughly 10% of the total Polish population.

The Polish Jewish community, as well as many other Eastern European Jewish communities, was diverse in its traditions and practices. Some families lived secular, urban lives in the largest cities of Eastern Europe, such as Lodz, Warsaw, Kiev, and Vilna, while others lived in smaller towns (communities known as **shtetls**). In shtetls, members of the community often spoke **Yiddish**, a language that combines elements of German, Slavic languages, and Hebrew, in addition to Polish and other local languages.

Emancipation is the freeing of a group of people who have been restricted socially and legally by the ruling class

Jews in Central and Western Europe faced persecution, discrimination, and limited rights for over 1,000 years. The majority of Jews living in these regions were ***emancipated*** and subsequently granted equal rights by the end of the 19th century. Some Jews continued to live in traditional religious communities, while others **assimilated** into the urban landscape. Jews had a variety of professions ranging from farmers to doctors, tailors to teachers, and other jobs common at the time. Like their fellow citizens, wealth varied a great deal between Jewish families.

The German Jewish community had been emancipated in 1812 under Prussian rule, thus when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, German Jews had experienced over a century of equal rights and subsequent assimilation. Many German Jews proudly served in the German Army in World War I. In 1933, the German-Jewish population was about 524,000, which was 0.8% of the total German population; roughly two-thirds of the German Jewish population lived in Berlin.

Also know as the "Great War," World War I occurred from 1914 to 1918 and was lost by Germany and Austria-Hungary

The Rise of Nazism

From the end of ***World War I*** in 1919 to the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933, the German government was a democracy

called the **Weimar Republic**. In the Republic, democracy, arts, music, and social acceptance flourished, and rights such as the freedom of speech and human rights were protected.

However, when World War I ended, the Germans were required to pay a large reparation sum to the victorious countries for the war's cost. This, and chronic political instability that arose during the Weimar Republic, plagued Germany in the 1920s and led to economic and social strife throughout the country, further exacerbated by the Great Depression. In 1921, the National Socialist German Workers Party, or Nazi Party, was founded. The party was explicitly anti-communist and anti-Marxist. It condemned the liberalism of the Weimar Republic and sought for a return to the "authenticity" of Germany. The party valued nationalism, "**Aryanism**," and a revival of **nativism**. The Nazi Party's popularity within German society varied through the 1920s, but they secured their position in government through a coalition in 1933.

On January 30th, 1933, Germany's President, Paul von Hindenburg, appointed Adolf Hitler to be the Chancellor of Germany, the second most powerful position in the country. Those who opposed Hitler believed that von Hindenberg's position and power would control and balance the government. Adolf Hitler's **antisemitic** ideology was apparent in his writing and speeches before his entrance into the German political sphere. In his 1924 infamous memoir, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes, "...no one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the devil, as the symbol of all evil, assumes the living shape of the Jew." In his public speeches, Adolf Hitler capitalized on Germany's unstable environment in the 1920s and 30s, blaming Germany's defeat and failing economy on Liberals,

Marxists, and Jews. Hitler asserted his hatred of Jews, whom he considered a "foreign race," and assured the supremacy of the "Aryan race" and need for racial purity. Hitler and the Nazis found it imperative to reverse the decades of emancipation and assimilation by ostracizing Jews and other minority groups in order to fulfill their objective of creating a commanding, powerful, and "racially pure" German Empire.

Nazi Antisemitism: Its History and Conceptualization

Nazi racism was comprised of several elements, producing the specific form of Nazi antisemitism. The theoretical practicalities of modern antisemitism, which translated into racism in Nazi Germany, had its foundations at the end of the 18th century in reaction to the emancipation and subsequent assimilation of German Jews, both of which were products of ***Enlightenment*** thinking: the awakening of ideas regarding fraternity, equality, and liberty characterized the Enlightenment period, resulting in the emancipation of Jews across Western Europe. However, this time period also witnessed the discussion and development of nationalistic debates that were later used as a foundation for racism.

The Enlightenment Era was the development of intellectual and philosophical ideas in Europe throughout the 18th century, creating spaces of dialogue that eventually led to changes in government, religion, and ideals

Scholars and philosophers, such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Friedrich Schlegel, wrangled with practical questions such as how to strengthen the national community and concepts such as "organic" theory, which argued that a natural, racial gap existed between groups of people. These scholars did not argue for the superiority of one group of people over the other, but their ideas later lent themselves to the nationalistic theory of racial superiority of Nazi antisemitism. Arthur de Gobineau expanded and altered the early notions of differentiating humans into distinct groups, arguing that there was a distinctive cultural and political element

to each race. In his 1885 work, *Essai sur l'inegalité des races humanies* ("Essay on the Inequality of Human Races"), he sought to explain history through a racial lens: racial purity and racial pollution were the primary forces behind historical events. Gobineau divided the races into "yellow," "black," and "white," arguing that the strong "white" race was steadily losing its superiority due to blood contamination, and mixing between the races resulted in the superior race deteriorating to the inferior level of lesser ones. According to Gobineau, the great empires of world history degenerated because they allowed their blood to be contaminated. Racist notions in Europe flourished in the 19th century; Charles Darwin's book "On the Origin of Species" provided fuel and a scientific source frequently cited by those in Europe who believed inferior races had to be eliminated through a race war. Nazi ideology borrowed many pre-existing concepts involving race, mankind, blood purity, power, and natural order; often these concepts were unrelated, illogically connected, or even conflicting.

In 1879, German journalist Wilhelm Marr coined the term "antisemitism," denoting a general hatred of Jews. When the term was first used, it was understood as prejudice against or hatred of Jews. However, Nazi ideology transformed the notion of antisemitism and propagated hatred of a people based on a racial framework, as Hitler and the Nazis held racial principles as one of the most important components of their ideology and beliefs. While the first use of the term "antisemitism" dates to the 19th century, antisemitic ideas and violence occurred for thousands of years, and Jews were often blamed for many social and political problems throughout history, time and again serving as the **scapegoat** for countless issues. Perhaps most infamously, the Jewish people collectively received the blame for Jesus's crucifixion — a misconception still held by some today. During the Crusades, between 1095 and 1291 CE, thousands of Jews were massacred or lost their homes and property. Spanish monarchs

King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella expelled Jews who refused to convert during the 15th century Spanish Inquisition, in which a tribunal of the Roman Catholic Church tortured, imprisoned, and burned tens of thousands of Jews at the stake — all in the name of investigating "heresy" against the Church. Jews were considered to be part of the fringes of society until the Enlightenment brought waves of reform and emancipation across Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Jews in Eastern Europe continued to face antisemitic persecution that resulted in waves of *pogroms*.

A pogrom is the organized destruction of a certain group of people; a term often used to describe acts of violence and persecution of Jews throughout history

Nazi Propaganda and Discrimination of German Jews

On February 27, 1933, a large fire at the Reichstag (German Parliament building) broke out, giving the government an opportunity to falsely depict the arson as an attempted communist coup. Marinus van der Lubbe, a young Dutch council communist, was caught at the scene of the fire and arrested for the crime. Hitler pressed President von Hindenburg to declare a State of Emergency, suspending civil liberties and freedom of the press, and arresting communists around the country, including 100 communist members of parliament. The suspension of civil rights remained in place until the end of the war. The Nazis utilized vigorous **propaganda** to exploit the public fear of a communist take-over and portray Hitler as a protector and savior of Germany. This chain of events allowed Hitler to consolidate his power of his fascist state, moving the Nazi Party to the majority. To this day, historians suspect that the Nazis orchestrated the arson to seize power.

Hitler's Nazi party offered ideals such as national pride, **nativism**, and **xenophobia** to go with its virulent anti-communist and antisemitic

beliefs, all of which were portrayed as essential elements for the restoration of power to the superior Aryan race. To spread these beliefs and ensure public approval, Hitler utilized propaganda through mass media to convince the German people of Nazi ideology. Hitler established a Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which was led by Joseph Goebbels. Its purpose was to disseminate information through various forms of mass media to influence the general public. Racial superiority was central to these messages, which was supported by the demonization of those that were not descendants of the pure Aryan race. A special focus of attack was the Jewish population, which was made to appear both inferior and dangerous, leading to the population's gradual acceptance of increasingly antisemitic laws, and to use the Jews as a scapegoat for society's issues.

Joseph Goebbels addressing a crowd c. 1930s

(courtesy of Holocaust Museum LA Archival Collection)

The Nazis successfully communicated their ideology through art, music, rallies, theater, films, books, radio, educational materials, and the press. The Nazis censored anything considered "un-German," and attempted to purge everything that went against Nazi ideology from society. Nazi propaganda targeted all age ranges, backgrounds, and demographics. Propaganda and Nazi ideology permeated throughout German society, and the Nazis ensured that their messages and thoughts reached everyone. For example, the Nazis utilized radio broadcasts as part of their propaganda machine. They created an inexpensive radio called the *Volksempfänger* ("people's radio") to allow the entire community an opportunity to own a new radio. The Nazis additionally controlled the broadcasting so they could create a direct connection into every home. During the war, it was illegal to listen to foreign news at home, and the **Gestapo**, the

German secret police, would arrest those listening to BBC or radio broadcasting produced by Allied countries (enemies of the German state).

The Nazi Government employed a host of different methods to regulate every aspect of the nation, including individual's private lives. Furthermore, they captured society's fear to better control the population, and the Gestapo began to heavily rely on informants and denunciations. In his essay, "The Gestapo and German Society," Robert Gellately explored the role German citizens played in informing the Gestapo on their fellow citizens' criminal activity by analyzing 19,000 surviving Gestapo files. The Gestapo were infamous for their brutality and secrecy, which perpetuated a climate of fear, but lacked sufficient manpower to meticulously police the entire nation. Gellately found that German citizens took it upon themselves to police their neighbors and turn in those they suspected of engaging in anti-Nazi activity, which could be as simple as listening to foreign radio broadcasts.[1] This is one of the many ways in which the Nazi government worked to control the information that people accessed and control the allegiance of the population.

Stereotypes are simplistic, firmly held beliefs about individual characteristics generalized to all people within that group

Propaganda used negative ***stereotypes*** to propagate the Jews as a detested "other." Jews and other "non-Aryans" were depicted as dangerous enemies of Germany and were made to feel alienated and less than human. The Nazis, notably Heinrich Himmler, one of the leading members of the Nazi Party, often employed rhetoric that compared the Jews to vile vermin such as parasites, roaches, fleas, and rats. These connections instinctively conjured the association

[1] Robert Gellately, "The Gestapo and German Society: Political Denunciation in the Gestapo Case Files." *The Journal of Modern History* 60, no. 4 (1988): 654-694.

between Jews and parasites that society subsequently needed to exterminate.

Shortly after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the Nazis gradually enacted antisemitic legislation to diminish the lives, humanity, and dignity of Jews and further their exclusion from society. The first law of this nature was the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which was enacted on April 7th, 1933. This law barred Jews from employed positions as civil servants. The subsequent laws in following months removed German Jews from practicing law and medicine, and limited the number of Jewish students allowed in schools. These laws created a hostile environment and made dehumanization and brutality acceptable in the public eye; even if Jews were not forbidden from attending school or university, they were still targeted for discrimination and subjected to humiliation. For example, by 1934, "Jewish students at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin had to come to terms with a wide yellow stripe stamped on their matriculation books."[2] This blatant identification facilitated antisemitism, and coupled with rules that required Jewish students to sit on separate benches or in the back of classrooms, resulted in a drop in matriculated Jewish students attending German universities from 3,950 in 1932 to 656 in 1934.

A boycott is a social protest against a group of people or organization, many times aligning with certain ideals.

In April of 1933, the Nazis planned a nationwide ***boycott*** of Jewish businesses, which ultimately failed to engage the public on a wide scale, signaling to the Nazi government that the larger population did not share in their same deep-seated antisemitism and hate. The

[2] Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 21.

Nazis quickly focused on intense propaganda and did not stage another national boycott until 1938; by then, their ideology had permeated German society and this boycott did not fail.

In May of 1933, a nationwide "action against the Un-German spirit" was declared. This resulted in the destruction of all books, artwork, and media that was not in line with the ideologies of the Nazi Party, including all literature and mediums about Judaism, communism, liberal ideas, or any material that contested Nazi ideological beliefs. For example, the books of Sigmund Freud, Erich Maria Remarque, and Helen Keller were included during the massive Nazi book burnings of all literature considered "un-German." The Nazis believed that those who had any disability were considered "subhuman" and did not fit in with the ideal Aryan members of society.

Life for German Jews became increasingly oppressive in Nazi Germany. Through violent acts and anti-Jewish laws, the Nazis created an environment of segregation and dehumanization. In reversing the previous decades of emancipation and assimilation, the Nazis worked to ostracize the Jewish population, and "ordinary Germans were invited to participate in and profit from the exclusion, expropriation, and expulsion of the unwanted Jews."[3] In 1935, the **Nuremberg Laws** were passed, which stripped Jews of their German citizenship, forbade them from flying the national flag, and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of "German or German-related blood." Additional laws took away political rights, including the right to vote and hold public office. The Nuremberg Laws became the ideological cornerstone for the National Socialists, and they were intended to protect the nation

[3] Nicosia and Scrase, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, 117.

and individual Germans from perceived degeneration.

Though specific violent acts and laws against Jews had began in 1933 and continued through the 1930s, the horrifying and unprecedented violence of **Kristallnacht**, "the Night of Broken Glass," was a turning point in Nazi Germany's persecution of their Jewish population. On November 9th and 10th, 1938, anti-Jewish pogroms took place throughout Germany and Austria. During this state-sponsored, violent event, rioters destroyed 267 ***synagogues***, looted over 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses, and murdered 91 Jews. As synagogues and Jewish property burned, fire departments were instructed not to assist unless the fires endangered any Aryan buildings. Approximately 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and **deported** to Dachau, the first **concentration camp** created in 1933 to detain political prisoners, and other camps including Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. Their release was contingent on money and papers produced by their families indicating they would leave Germany or Austria. Kristallnacht marked the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale. This unprecedented and wide-scale violence signified the danger for Jews remaining in Germany. Many of the Jewish men who were able to return from the concentration camps were despondent and desperate to get their families out of the country.

A synagogue is a Jewish religious house of worship

The Boerneplatz synagogue in flames during Kristallnacht, Frankfurt, Germany, November 10th, 1938

(courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

In response to the brutality of Kristallnacht, several organizations worked together to bring Jewish children under Nazi occupation to safety in England. Roughly 10,000 Jewish children from Germany,

Austria, parts of Czechoslovakia, and parts of modern-day Poland were sent to England on **Kindertransports** ("children's transports"). The vast majority of the rescued children never saw their families again. The Kindertransports operated until the outbreak of war on September 1st, 1939.

The Outbreak of War and Genocide

On August 23rd, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a **Nonaggression Pact** (the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) that guaranteed neither country would attack the other and laid out the division of an occupied Poland. On September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and two days later, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, beginning World War II. The Polish army, made largely of cavalry units, was defeated in less than a month, and Poland was partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union, as agreed upon in the Nonagression Pact.

At the time of the invasion, there were roughly 3 million Polish Jews living in Poland. In response to the large number of Jews under their authority, the Nazis began the process of ghettoization, establishing the first **ghetto** in Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland in October 1939. Jews from smaller towns and villages were brought to more populated areas where ghettos had been established, allowing the Nazis more control and authority over the Jewish populations. Daily life in the ghettos was horrid, as families were crowded together in unsanitary apartments, food was limited, and diseases ran rampant. Starvation, inadequate health care, extreme overcrowding, deadly diseases such as dysentery and typhus, and severe weather caused hundreds of thousands of deaths.

In the spring of 1940, Germany began its assault on Western Europe and invaded Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. In June 1940, France signed an armistice with Germany, allowing the German occupation of the northern half of the country, while the southern half of France remained under control of the collaborating Vichy government. The armistice remained until November 1942, when German troops invaded and occupied the area.

Germany broke the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact on June 22nd, 1941 and invaded the Soviet Union during **Operation Barbarossa**. Hitler and the Nazi elite viewed this war not only as a territorial battle between countries, but as a racial war between the Aryans and those regarded as "subhuman." Thus, under the cover of war, the Nazis began the systematic mass murder of European Jews throughout Eastern Europe. Beginning in the summer of 1941, *Einsatzgruppen* (Mobile Killing Units) murdered those perceived to be racial or political enemies of Nazi Germany, including Jewish women and children. In the largest single action of these mobile killing squads, *Einsatzgruppe C* massacred 33,771 Jews in less than three days at Babi Yar, Ukraine, a ravine outside of Kiev, on September 29th and 30th, 1941. As the ***Wehrmacht*** moved through eastern Europe, *Einsatzgruppen* units followed them, murdering over one million Jews. Although some *Einsatzgruppen* units used gas vans, the primary method of murder was through widespread shootings of victims into shallow mass graves. Several reports demonstrated the psychological impact of the shootings on the soldiers themselves, which, in addition to the desire for a more streamlined and efficient method of murder, led the Germans to establish permanent death

The Wehrmacht was Nazi Germany's unified armed forces

camp facilities — the first of which opened in December of 1941 in the town of Chelmno.

On January 20th, 1942, the chief of the Reich Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, lead the **Wannsee Conference** to direct and coordinate the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." The fifteen mid-level officials in attendance represented the relevant government industries needed to smoothly organize this plan to systematically muder the European Jewish population. The **Final Solution** was the term the Nazis used to speak of the systematic, deliberate, physical annihilation of the Jewish population. To implement the Final Solution, six **death camps** were expanded and built in different locations in Poland: Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek. Chelmo, as the first permanent death camp, utilized gas vans to asphyxiate victims while gas chambers were built in the other five death camps to speed up the killing process.

Jews were deported from the ghettos to transit camps, and from there sent to various concentration camps. Upon arrival to death camps, prisoners were ordered to leave their belongings and strip off their clothes in preparation for showers. They were then assembled in large numbers in the gas chambers, where they were killed within minutes. It is estimated that at the height of the deportations, up to 6,000 Jews were gassed each day at Auschwitz-Birkenau alone. Carbon Monoxide and Zyklon B were used as poisonous gas in these facilities. While Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, and Majdanek kept some prisoners alive for slave labor in addition to executing large groups of people by gas, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka had no purpose other than mass murder.

The death camp of Sobibor was one of the three *Operation Reinhard* camps designed to implement the Final Solution. The camp was located in eastern Poland in the small village of Sobibor, a wooded and sparsely populated area. The camp was surrounded by trees and a minefield spreading 50 feet in all directions. Jews were deported to Sobibor between 1942 and 1943 from ghettos in Poland, German-occupied Soviet territory, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Bohemia and Moravia, the Netherlands, and France. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 people were killed at Sobibor.

Operation Reinhard was the code name for the plan to murder two million Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland

As the systematic mass murder continued, the Allied governments learned of the murderous intentions of Nazi Germany and issued public condemnations in 1942. However, 1942 was the deadliest of the Holocaust, as approximately 2.7 million Jews were murdered that year, and deportations and gassings continued.

On October 14th, 1943, the prisoners at Sobibor participated in an uprising and escape at the death camp. Of the prisoners who were able to escape, it is estimated that less than 50 survived. The uprising at Sobibor led the Germans to raze the entire camp to hide evidence of its existence. They tore down the buildings, burned bodies, and ensured that trees were planted to disguise the location as a farm.

Additional examples of uprisings and revolts occurred in other killing centers, including Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau. These and the **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** led Nazi officials to accelerate the killing process, shooting approximately 42,000 Jews on November 3rd, 1943 in the Lublin District in Poland.

Germany's invasion of its ally, Hungary, on March 19th, 1944 drastically changed the situation for Hungarian Jews. With the advancing Soviet

Army on the Eastern Front and the military decline of the Third Reich, the Nazi Government focused on quickly deporting and gassing over 400,000 Hungarian Jews in the time between Hungary's invasion in 1944 and the end of World War II in 1945.

The Conclusion of the War

As the **Red Army** rapidly advanced on the Eastern Front, the Germans quickly attempted to destroy evidence of mass murder. The Soviets liberated Auschwitz on January 27th, 1945. However, the Nazis had bombed the gas chambers and forced the majority of Auschwitz prisoners out of the camp on a westward **death march**. Thus, Soviet soldiers found only several thousand prisoners when they entered the camp.

U.S. forces liberated Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany on April 11th, 1945; however, the Nazis had evacuated the camp a few days prior and only 20,000 remaining prisoners were liberated. U.S. forces also liberated Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbürg, Dachau, and Mauthausen. British forces liberated concentration camps in northern Germany, including Bergen-Belsen in mid-April 1945. The camp contained over 60,000 prisoners and most were in critical condition due to starvation, torture, and a rampant typhus epidemic. More than 10,000 of them died from malnutrition or disease within a few weeks of liberation.

Liberators confronted unspeakable conditions in the Nazi camps, such as emaciated prisoners and piles of corpses that lay unburied. Although rumors and information about the brutal mass murder were known as early as 1942, the full scope of horrors were exposed to the world only after liberation. Disease was rampant in the camps

and many camp structures were burned to prevent the spread of epidemics. Survivors of the camps faced a long and difficult road to recovery. Many Survivors ended up in **Displaced Persons (DP) Camps** following liberation.

Following Germany's surrender in 1945, the Allied forces held a series of military tribunals, the **Nuremberg trials**, to prosecute individuals involved in the political, military, judicial, and economic apparatus of Nazi Germany. Beginning on October 18th, 1945 with the indictment of 24 individuals and several organizations, the Nuremberg trials were the first act of legal justice for victims of the Nazi regime. A milestone of contemporary international law, the Nuremberg trials were instrumental in establishing a legal precedent and a historic legacy of holding individual war criminals responsible for their crimes against humanity and creating standards of human rights. The first Nuremberg trial indicted war criminals on four charges: participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace; planning, initiating, and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace; war crimes; and crimes against humanity. Twelve of the defendants were sentenced to death, seven more to imprisonment, and three were found innocent and acquitted. Serving as a model, the Nuremberg trials helped establish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Geneva Convention (1949), and the International Criminal Court (1998).

Life After the Holocaust and Modern Antisemitism

Antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiment existed before the Holocaust and continued to exist even after the end of World War II and the Nuremberg trials that made the world aware of the dangers of

inhumanity and hatred. After the war, many Survivors, unsure of what to do after liberation, returned home to find people living in their homes and using their possessions, forcing Survivors to buy back their own family photographs of loved ones who had perished in the Holocaust. Much of this was due to the tremendous antisemitism throughout Eastern Europe that continued following the war. In an extreme case, Polish people murdered 42 returning Holocaust Survivors in the town of Kielce in 1946, and 75,000 of the Jews who had returned to their hometowns in Poland fled to Displaced Persons camps in Western Europe.[4] Many Survivors joined the Brihah movement, which arranged illegal immigration to the British Mandate of Palestine, because they felt that a Jewish homeland would be the only place where they could be safe and live without antisemitism.[5] Thousands of Survivors immigrated to Israel when it received its independence in 1948.

In modern times, antisemitism endures and recently, antisemitism has been on the rise in America, Europe, and the Middle East. In some countries, antisemitism is spread by the government. For example, former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad publicly denied the Holocaust. In Europe, there has also been a rise of far right-wing extremist political parties who view Jews as "others." There have been several attacks on Jews in Europe recently, such as the 2014 attack on a Jewish supermarket in Paris that killed four and the shooting of a security guard at a Danish synagogue in 2015. America has also seen a rise of anti-Jewish sentiment, including vandalism of Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, and on college campuses, a rise in

[4] "The Kielce Pogrom: A Blood Libel Massacre of Holocaust Survivors." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007941.

[5] "Brihah." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005417.

anti-Jewish tweets, and even a shooting at the Kansas City JCC.

Now is a critical time to remember and learn about the Holocaust and to engage students in discussions on the dangers of hate and prejudice, Holocaust history, today's worldwide humanitarian crises, and the importance of social justice. Importantly, hate crimes against Muslim Americans, Jewish communities, African Americans, and LGBTQ individuals are on the rise in the United States. In 2015, FBI statistics showed hate crimes had spiked 6%. The Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, released in April 2017, reported a 34% increase in antisemitic incidents in 2016, with an additional 86% increase in the first three months of 2017. In California, the ADL audit noted 211 incidents of antisemitism in 2016, up 21% from 2015.[6] A major component of hatred is fear and ignorance. By teaching students history and about other communities, their understanding of those who seem different will grow, diminishing fear and hatred. Holocaust education can be utilized to inspire the next generation to change the present and shape the future.

Discussion Questions for Students

1. What is a stereotype?

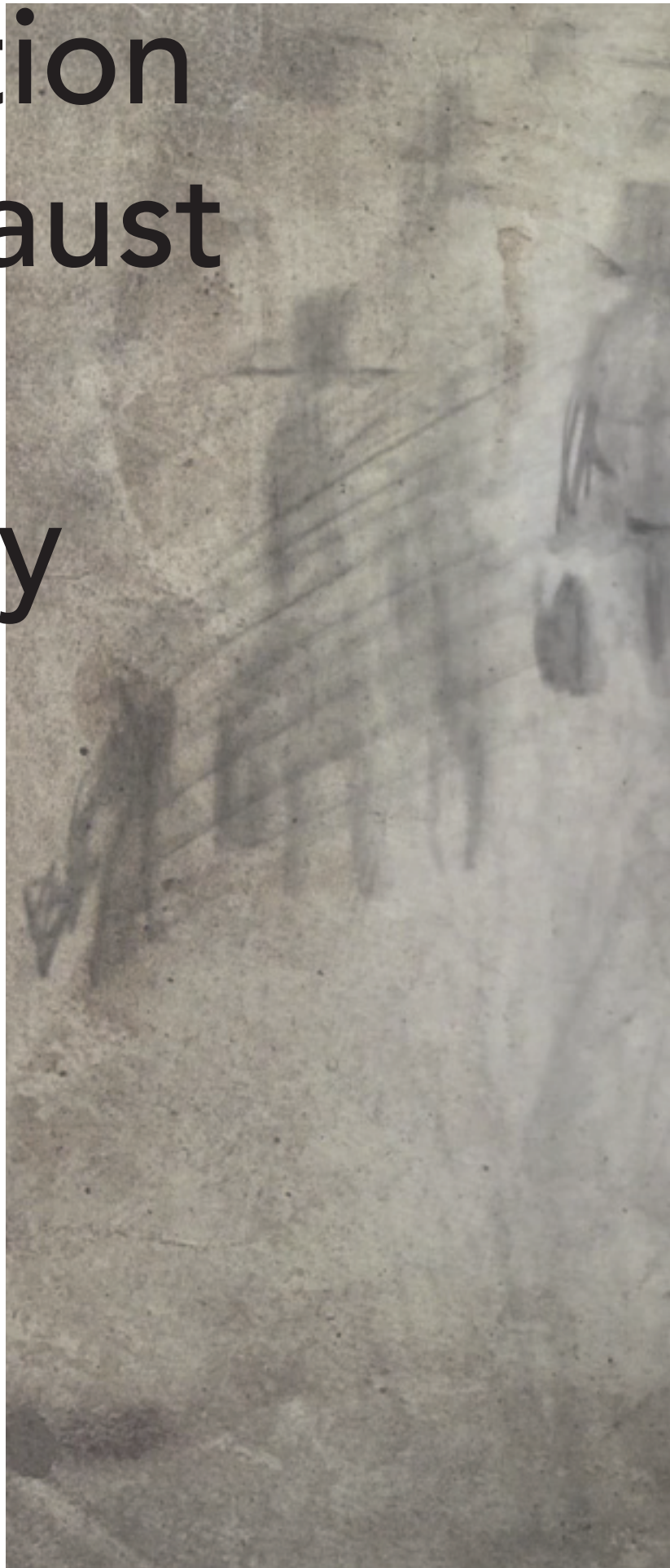
2. "All girls like pink. All boys like sports." What is the operative word of these statements? Are these statements true?

3. How could stereotyping and racism lead to antisemitism and other forms of hate rhetoric? Have you seen examples of antisemitism, racism, or negative stereotyping in your own life?

4. What can you do to prevent antisemitism or hatred of others? How can we combat hate and intolerance?

[6] "Antisemitism Today." United State Holocaust Memorial Museum. www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-the-longest-hatred/film/antisemitism-today.

Introduction to Holocaust Survivor Testimony



A Holocaust Survivor is a person who lived in Nazi Europe during the Holocaust and managed to survive. Survivors were displaced, persecuted, discriminated against, tortured, and dehumanized by the Nazis and their collaborated between 1933 and 1945. They coped and lived through extreme difficulties during this time.

The Importance of Testimony in Holocaust Education

Holocaust Survivor testimony and oral history are important components of Holocaust education and remembrance. It allows listeners and students to personalize the history and form personal connections and relationships to Survivors, each with their own unique experiences. Experiences of Holocaust Survivors included living in hiding, having a false identity, surviving ghettos and/or concentration camps, or hiding outdoors in forests or mountainous regions. It is quite remarkable that not only did people survive horrific ordeals, but were also able to adjust to normal society after the war.

An oral history is stories or histories told by a person who experienced an event or time period first-hand

Oral history of Holocaust Survivors consists of recounting traumatic memories, thus it does not always follow a chronological path or have a logical continuum. There is an importance in understanding that specific facts recounted in Survivor testimony may not be the exact same as those historians have documented. When including Survivor testimony as part of a larger context of Holocaust education, it is important to research and learn from additional sources to create a full understanding and accurate historical narrative. Survivors' experiences are an imperative component to learning about the Holocaust; it is important to remember the extremes they faced during this time and maintain sensitivity to how these memories are shaped.

Psychological Impacts

The Nazis' systematic, mass murder of the European Jews, known as the Holocaust, left an immeasurable impact on the minds and hearts of those who suffered from the horrid atrocities that took

place. Victims of the Holocaust experienced dehumanization, violence, loss, and torture both on physical and psychological levels. The traumatic impact on Holocaust Survivors varied based on their personal survival experiences (camps, hiding, false identities, ghettos), as well as their age and developmental stage of life. The psychological effects of the war on differed from those of adults, subsequently affecting Child Survivors' postwar lives. Only 6-7% of Jewish children living in Nazi-occupied territories survived the Holocaust.[7] Additionally, most children who survived the Holocaust were not imprisoned in concentration camps, as children in camps were almost always immediately murdered. Their psychological dispositions, situations, and coping mechanisms contributed to their resilience and survival. While researching Child Survivors, Cohen, Brom and Dasberg found that "members of the [Child Survivor] group...tend to believe that there is justice in the world...that luck exists, and that the world is a good place."[8]

Child Survivors

Child Survivors are individuals who were under the age of 18 at the start or end of the Holocaust and survived under extraordinary circumstances

There were additional psychological effects for those Jews who lived by posing as non-Jews. They lived in a constant and unrelenting fear of exposure and had to learn different patterns of behavior and adopt unfamiliar ways of living, such as crossing themselves in church, eating non-**Kosher** food such as pork, and removing Jewish customs from their behavior. Jews posing as non-Jews had to be ready to lie and convince local police officers, suspecting neighbors, and Nazis that they were not Jewish. They lived for weeks, months, and years with new names and completely false identities, which

[7] Deborah Dwork, *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[8] Cohen, Brom & Dasberg. "Child Survivors of the Holocaust: Symptoms and coping after fifty years." *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* (2001): 10.

often changed, forcing them to constantly remember their new name and forget the old one. As examined by the psychologist Sarah Moskovitz, "Young school age children [in the Holocaust], in addition to losses, separations, turmoil, and loss of security, keenly felt the emotional disruptions with their own parents. They lost basic skills of schooling, the give and take of playful peer relationships, the feeling of being accepted in school and community and the freedom to play outside and explore the near environment."[9]

Discussion Questions for Students

In the Jewish tradition, there is a command to learn about the past, called* Zachor *("remember"). Zachor *is not just about memory, it is also about positive action to make the world a better place.

1. What does it mean to learn about the past?
2. What is a story in your own life that you would want to pass on to future generations?
3. What is an "identity"? What is your identity and how do you determine your identity?
4. What does it mean to have to pretend to be someone you are not? How would this impact an individual living under a false identity?

[9] *How We Survived: 52 Personal Stories by Child Survivors of the Holocaust* (Santa Monica, CA: Child Survivors of the Holocaust, 2016).

Historical Context of The Story of Three Rings

The Polish Jewish community, as well as many other Eastern European Jewish communities, was diverse in its traditions and practices. Some families lived secular, urban lives in the largest cities of Eastern Europe, such as Lodz, Warsaw, Kiev, and Vilna, while others lived in small communities known as shtetls, where they often spoke Yiddish, in addition to Polish and other local languages, and followed a more traditional lifestyle.

Lvov was a city located in the southeastern part of Poland (now Lviv, located in modern-day Ukraine). Before the Nazi invasion, Lvov was home to a large, diverse Jewish population who lived and flourished in the city for centuries. Jewish communities played an integral and formative role in the early settlement of the city in the mid-13th century. Polish Jews had enjoyed civil freedoms and liberties not available to them in other European countries at the time; in 1264, Boleslaw the Pious of Kalisz, Prince of Poland, issued the General Charter of Jewish Liberties (the Kaliszc Statute), which gave Jews equal rights and permitted them the freedom of worship, trade, and travel within Poland under the protection of the nobility.

Uniquely tolerant for its time, this statute attracted Jews to Poland from territories far beyond Eastern Europe, including Spain and the Ottoman Empire, and thus created a vast and rooted Jewish community in Poland. In 1332, King Casimir III the Great expanded and amplified the Charter. He set the precedent for continued acceptance of Jewish immigration to Poland.

Although motivated by economic concerns, this benevolent attitude of Polish monarchs allowed Jewish communities in Poland to grow

and flourish and "by the sixteenth century, Poland was no mere refuge for bedraggled and broken exiles; it had become the new center of a vigorous Jewish life."[10] The Jewish community in Lvov flourished and grew trade in the city until 1772, when the area was conquered by the Habsburgs and their rights were curtailed.

Prior to World War II, Lvov was home to the third largest Jewish community in Poland, numbering close to 100,000. An additional 100,000 Jews resettled there as they fled from the Nazis following the outbreak of war in 1939. By the end of the war in 1945, only a few thousand Jews remained.

In June and July of 1941, violent and deadly pogroms broke out in Lvov; the local population, encouraged by the Germans, murdered thousands of Jews. In the fall of 1941, the Nazis established a ghetto in the city of Lvov, forcing the local Jewish population to move into the specific area of the northern part of the city. Living conditions were abhorrent; diseases like typhus and dysentery were rampant and people starved to death. In 1943, the ghetto was completely **liquidated** when the Nazis, with the assistance of the local population, searched for, located, and deported or murdered the Jewish population of the ghetto. Jews were deported either to the Janowska Concentration Camp for forced labor or the Belzec Death Camp, where the Nazis murdered approximately 600,000 Jews.

For Jews who managed to avoid deportation to concentration camps, they faced the challenge of hiding either in the open with false identity cards or hidden indoors, often in the care of others who

[10] Abram Leon Sachar, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Random House Inc., 1967), 223-225.

were risking their own lives taking in Jews. Living in hiding or under a false identity was traumatic and difficult in its own way. Survivors in hiding almost always had to conceal their Jewish identity whilst pretending to be someone of a different (most oftentimes Christian) faith. Many Child Survivors possessed little knowledge or experience with their Judaism or Jewish faith before they went into hiding, mostly because of the simple fact that they were young before the war.

While in hiding, Polish Jews not only lived under constant threat of being turned in by suspicious Poles, but needed to obtain food in an already difficult and strained atmosphere in which ration cards were required by all citizens to procur daily sustenance and food was scarce. For those living in hiding, many had to receive food from other individuals. Those caught hiding or aiding Jews during the Holocaust in any way risked severe punishment, including death, if discovered.

The Red Army liberated the city of Lvov in July of 1944. Poland's Jewish community had been decimated by the end of the war; only 10% of Poland's Jews survived the genocide. Though many attemped to return home following liberation, roads were destroyed. transportation was limited, sickness and disease were still rampant, and ultimately many Survivors did not feel welcome. Throughout Poland, neighbors had moved into Polish Jews' unoccupied homes and taken Jewish property left behind after deportations, and some Holocaust Survivors were even killed attempting to reclaim property after the war ended. Some Survivors chose not to identify themselves as Jewish following the war and others decided to leave Poland entirely.

History of the Yiddish Language

Yiddish as a spoken language came into being around 900-1100 CE. Yiddishism as a cultural and linguistic movement, however, began among the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe during the late 19th century.

In 1861, Yehoshua Mordechai Lifshitz circulated "The Four Classes," an essay in which he designated Yiddish as a separate language from both German and Hebrew, claiming it as the "mother tongue" of the Jewish people. By 1908, the Conference on the Yiddish Language declared Yiddish "a modern language with a developing high culture," which was evidenced by the proliferation of Yiddish literature, theater, and films that were available at that time. By the early 1900s, there was an increase in formal Yiddish-language education, more uniform orthography, and the founding of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in Poland in 1925. Yiddish became so prevalent that Yiddish speakers in Poland spoke Polish with a Yiddish accent. Prior to 1939, there were over 10 million Yiddish speakers, 85% of whom died in the Holocaust.[11]

Yiddish is still spoken and praised, as evidenced by Isaac Bashevis Singer's Nobel Prize in Literature for his Yiddish works in 1978, the continued publication of several Yiddish newspapers, the existence of Yiddish theaters, and the YIVO Institute, which is now in New York City. For hundreds of years, Yiddish was the cohesive force binding Jews together in a secular culture, and that bond, while damaged, was not destroyed by the Holocaust.

[11] Solomo Birnbaum, "Grammatik der jiddischen Sprache" (4., erg. Aufl., Hamburg: Buske, 1984), 3.

Biography of Dana Schwartz

Dana Schwartz (born Danusia Szapira) was born in 1935 in Lvov, Poland, which initially fell under Soviet occupation and received an influx of Jewish refugees fleeing from the Nazis. During this time, Dana's father considered relocating the family to Romania, but her parents ultimately decided that it was too difficult to leave their home and their life in Lvov. Dana was four years old at the outbreak of World War II in 1939, when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divided and occupied her native Poland. In July 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and occupied Lvov, and by November, the Nazi authorities established a ghetto in the former Jewish district of the city. The entire Jewish population, including Dana, her parents, and her grandmother, were forced into the Lvov Ghetto. The first deportations of Jews from the Lvov Ghetto to concentration camps began in April 1942, and Dana's parents decided to go into hiding in the ghetto, hoping to avoid deportation.

Understanding the peril and danger, Dana's father was able to organize **false papers** identifying Dana and her mother as Polish non-Jews. The two were able to escape from the ghetto with their new false identities and survived the remainder of the Holocaust in various hiding places outside of Lvov. Often, Dana's mother was put in dangerous situations where she had to act swiftly and smartly to protect herself and her young daughter. After Dana and her mother were liberated by the Red Army, they returned to Lvov but were unable

to locate Dana's father, later learning that he had been murdered during the Holocaust in the Janowska Concentration Camp. Determined to leave Poland, Dana's mother arranged for her and her daughter to relocate to Sweden in 1946. For five years, she tried to obtain visas for her and Dana to emigrate to the United States and, eventually, a former colleague of Dana's parents was able to provide an *affidavit* for them to come to Los Angeles. Dana's mother passed away soon after their arrival. Dana studied to become a teacher and therapist, and became active in documenting and interviewing Holocaust Survivors, conducting some of the first testimony interviews for the Shoah Foundation.

An affidavit is a document signed by an individual that outlines their financial support for another person who is immigrating to the United States

Connecting to Dana's Testimony

Unlike many children in hiding, Dana was able to stay with her biological mother for most of the Holocaust. This allowed Dana to employ several coping mechanisms, specifically close familial bonds, that allowed her to navigate the horrifically brutal atrocities of the Holocaust. As highlighted at both the beginning and the end of *The Story of Three Rings*, Dana's mother imparted important lessons of forgiveness, care, and compassion. These lessons impacted Dana's resilience, as well as her understanding of empathy

Dana's oral history as presented in *The Story of Three Rings* is beneficial for analyzing emotional responses and story narration. She cultivated positive psychological functions and maintained a positive disposition both throughout and following the war. Dana

avoided impairment of emotional relationships due to the way in which she survived: in the care of her mother. It is important to understand the way in which Dana's mother not only protected her daughter's physical safety, but additionally, her emotional safety. Her mother's lessons are directly linked to Dana's resilience and character.

When analyzing testimony, it is imperative to observe the participant's overall emotional state and reaction to specific questions and to "not to overlook expressed emotions and feelings, because they are part of context and often follow and/or are associated with action or inaction."[12] Most psychological studies that focus on the trauma of Holocaust survivors specifically analyze those who went through the concentration camp system. This is a product of a combination of a few factors. Firstly, there was a trend in the years after the war to focus on the camp survivors as the only "real" Holocaust Survivors. Many Survivors who survived through hiding felt pressure from society to silence their stories, because their experiences were not as "bad" or as "traumatic" as what Survivors of concentration camps had witnessed. Additionally, there was an immense interest in how the psyche of camp prisoners survived the horrific dehumanization process that was intentionally created within the Nazi camp structure.

Throughout the war, Dana consistently maintained a relationship with her mother, giving her life meaning and providing a form of resilience during the horrific experience. Dana experienced a strong social support system, directly affecting her resilient personality; her primary coping mechanism was her capability to maintain emotional support from someone whom she loved.

[12] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, eds. Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (Sage, 2008), 83.

Timeline of Key Dates

1933

January 30th:
Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor

March:
The first concentration camp, Dachau, is established

1934

January 26th:
Germany and Poland sign a ten-year nonagression pact

August 2nd:
Hitler declares himself Führer of Germany and commander-in-chief of Germany's armed forces

1935

January 30th:
Dana Schwartz is born

September 15th:
Nazi Germany enacts the Nurenberg Laws, stripping German Jews of their citizenship

1936

March:
Anti-Jewish pogroms take place across Poland

August 1st-16th:
The Berlin Olympics

1937

September 7th:
Hitler ends the Treaty of Versailles

November 25th:
Germany signs an agreement with Japan

1938

March:
The *Anschluss*
Nazi Germany annexes Austria directly into the Third Reich

November 9th & 10th:
Kristallnacht, or "Night of Broken Glass"

1939

August 23rd:
The Molotov-Ribbentrop (Nonaggression Pact) is signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union

September 1st:
Germany invasion of Poland and outbreak of World War II

September 22nd:
Soviet invasion of the city of Lvov; as part of the Nonaggression Pact, the Soviet Union occupied eastern Poland while Germany occupied the western portion of Poland

1940

April - May:
Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France

1941

June 22nd:
"Operation Barbarossa" Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union

July 5th:
Jews in Lvov, Ukraine are murdered in the streets by antisemitic locals

July 6th:
Jews in Lvov, Ukraine are ordered to wear the Star of David identifying them as Jews

September - October:
Janowska Factory and Concentration Camp is established

1942

March:
Belzec Extermination Camp is established

December:
Liquidation of Lvov Ghetto

1943

June:
Lvov Ghetto is destroyed; the Nazis did not need the ghetto anymore, as they had murdered most of the Jewish population in the area

November 19th:
Prisoners of Janowska Concentration Camp stage an uprising and estape attempt; 6,000 surviving inmates in surrounding camps are executed by the Nazis and Janowska is liquidated

1944

June 6th:
The Allied Forces land on the beaches of Normandy as US forces begin their attack on the Western Front

July 23rd:
The Red Army liberates Lvov

1945

January - March:
The SS evacuate some of the concentration camps and send prisoners on death marches

April 30th:
Hitler commits suicide in Berlin

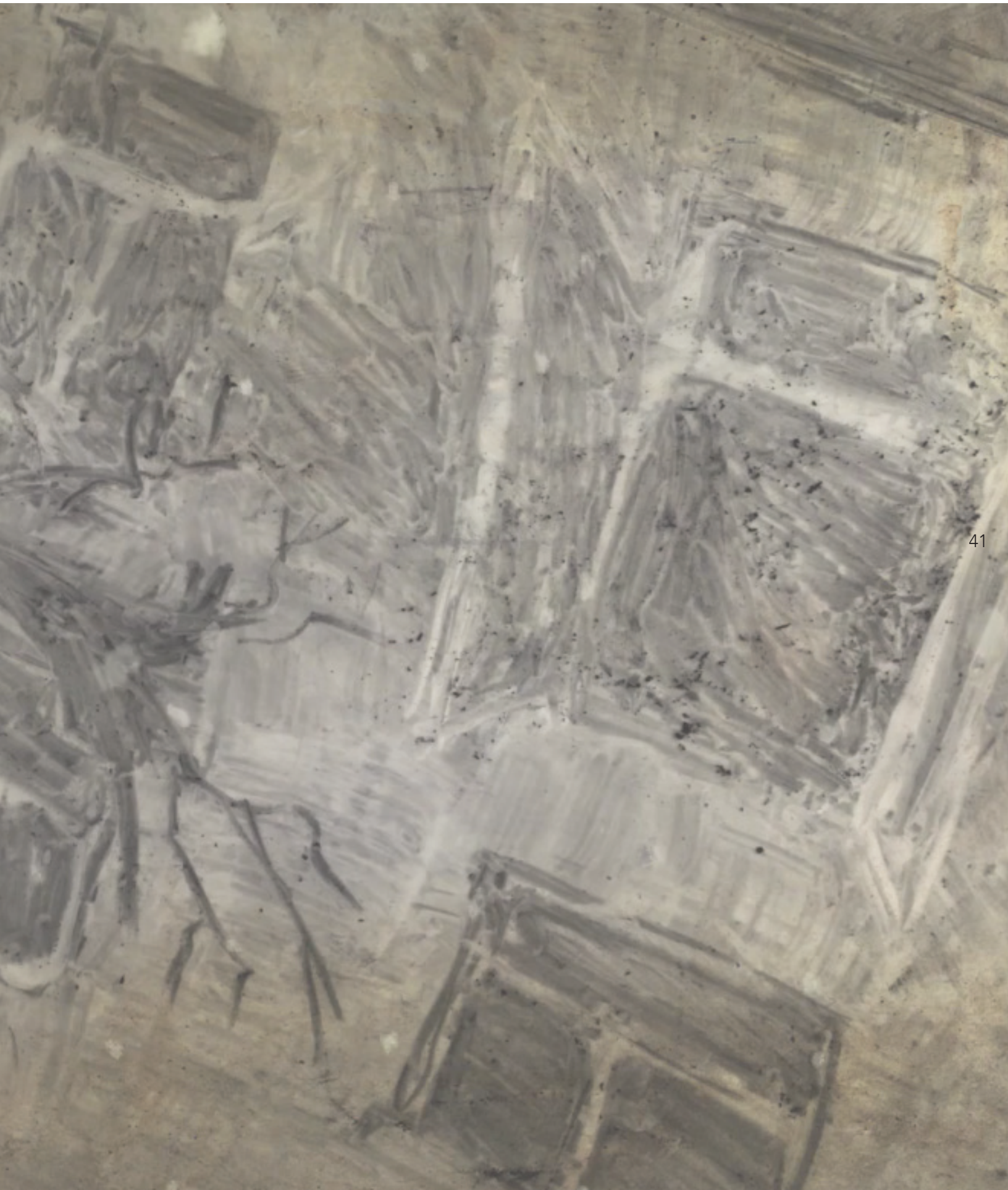
May 2nd:
Soviet troops occupy Berlin and German troops surrender

September 2nd:
The Japanese surrender, officially ending World War II

November 20th:
The Nuremberg Trials begin

Viewing *The Story of Three Rings* with Your Students

The Story of Three Rings: A Memoir of Dana Schwartz was created by middle and high school students and produced by Holocaust Museum LA and Harvard-Westlake School. Using stop motion animation and documentary-style interviews, this film chronicles Dana and her mother's experiences during the Holocaust.



Introducing *The Story of the Three Rings* to Your Students

We suggest you inform students they will be watching a student-made, animated film that includes testimony by Dana Schwartz, a Child Survivor from eastern Poland during the time of the Holocaust. Have students reflect before listening to Survivor testimony to help them process emotionally powerful material. The subject of the Holocaust is difficult beyond words, and Survivors volunteered their time to share and record their traumatic memories because they understood the value of their personal testimony. These deeply personal and emotional events can help foster empathy in students. We recommend that you create a space for students to have a large range of reactions and emotions.

Have students write what they think they will think, learn, feel, and remember:

Think	*Learn*
Feel	*Remember*

Use components of this guide to provide context prior to viewing. It is important to understand the historical implications of the Holocaust, specifically on Dana's experience:

- What background do your students have on the history of the Holocaust?
- What do your students know about Holocaust Survivor testimony?
- How may watching the film differ from reading a transcript of the testimony?
- How can watching a Survivor share his or her experience change your students' perspective?

The Story of Three Rings: A Memoir of Dana Schwartz can be found at **www.vimeo.com/hmla/danaschwartz**

Holocaust Museum LA films are available to view at

www.vimeo.com/hmla

Transcription of *The Story of Three Rings*

Why do you think the film begins with this? Why do you think it is important for Dana to tell us her mother's lessons? How did this impact Dana?

My mother was very idealistic even through the whole war. She taught me to be kind and to forgive, although that's really hard to do.

Here is my ring, which has given me more than joy; it gave me a feeling of belonging.

What is belonging? What does it mean to belong?

My name is Dana Schwartz. This is a story of three rings.

One day, in Poland, in Lvov, I watched the nanny when she was busy talking - I crept up and walked over the wire and I picked the daisy. And as I picked the daisy, I heard a tremendous boom and I thought, "Oh, God is angry with me. I've done something very wrong." A man with a big white dog ran past us and said, "Go home. The war has started." I knew I had started the war.

Based on what you know about the historical context, what year would this have taken place? How do you know this?

One day there was a knock on the door. I was about six. There stood this gorgeous, tall, handsome German soldier of high rank. He wanted to see our house. And he walked and he walked and looked around and said, "Uh-huh, very nice." "Mommy, mommy, they like our house." "Shh, shh," my mother said. They looked at mother and said, "Yes,

What do you know about the acquisition of Jewish property during this time period? Use this time to explore the term "aryanization."

be out in a half hour. You can each take a small bag."

What are adjectives do you think of when you hear the word 'ghetto'?

The ghetto had three hundred thousand people in it. They were killing people, people were starving to death. One day, my dad came home. He said, "It's very bad news. There is an ***aktion*** coming." ***Aktion*** is exactly like cowboys herding the cattle onto the train. They were going to concentration camps, right to death camps. It was the last I saw of my grandmother. I remember looking up high into the sky and saying, "God will never find us here."

What image of the ghetto do you come up with after hearing Dana's description? How does this add to your understanding of life in the ghettos for Jews?

My dad wanted us to hide. My father found that this courtyard of the building had some steps and he realized that if you crawl behind the three steps, there was a hole. We lived in that hole. It was like a sardine can. There were several people lined up in two layers. My father had a box of sugar cubes. He would put a sugar cube in my mouth and that's how I got the calories to keep living.

What would Dana's mother gain by not having to watch over Dana for a week? Why do you think her mother did this?

One day, my mother was so shaken, she took me and she went to the neighbor upstairs. She said, "I'll give you this ring if you take my daughter for one week and just hide her in your new place." It was a one-bedroom apartment. They put me in the bedroom.

There was no furniture there, there was just a heap of newspapers. I would sleep there and cover myself with the newspapers. My mother had a week without having to worry about me. She knocked on the door of a guy who was an **aryan** and she said to him, "Will you hide me for a week? I have this ring I'll give to you." He let her in and he said, "I'll bring you some food and water." He locked her from the outside and he didn't come back. She was thirsty and she was hungry and she was terrified.

Why do you think the man locked Dana's mother in? How did the student artists portray her escape?

A week went by and my mother was in the hole when I walked down. And I was so happy to see her again. My mother and I were going to go on aryan papers as non-Jews. We met my father at the gate and we no longer had the Star of David on us and he had the Star of David. My mother said, "You are not to show that you know him. You keep your hands at the sides at all times." There I was seeing my daddy, whom I loved above everything else, and I wanted to hug him, but I was not allowed. I had to turn around and walk away from my father...forever.

Why did Dana and her mother no longer have the Star of David on their clothes? Why did her father still have it on?

We got to the village and my mother went to the baker and said, "Look, I have a ring. It's my engagement ring. And I'll give you

What is the value of the engagement ring to Dana? To her nother? To the baker?

everything as long as you promise to give me a piece of bread every day." We survived.

There were three hundred thousand Jews forced into the ghetto. A week and a half after we left, they opened the gates because there was no one left.

My mother knocked on the door of the next-door neighbor of our first apartment, the one we had before the war. It was very dangerous because people would kill you if you wanted to get back your stuff or take back your apartment or house. This was now after the war. She said, "Do you have any little thing that you could give me that might have landed in your apartment?" And she gave her back our ladle.

What is the value of the ladle to Dana? To her mother? To the neighbor? What sort of challenges would Survivors have rebuilding their lives after the war?

One day, we got some money. My mother said, "Honey, what do you think we should do with that money?" And I said, "Mommy, I would like one of those dinners that we used to have long ago." She took me next to the window and she said, "Look, there are German kids and they're hungry because the Germans lost the war. You want such a fancy dinner, it's not fair." I said, "Mommy, their daddy killed my daddy. I don't want to share." The next day, she made a huge

Why do you think Dana wanted her mom to spend the money on a fancy dinner?

soup. She walked down the stairs and she said to all the German children, "Is anybody here hungry?" And by golly, they all came.

I wonder if my dad would have taught me the same thing. But I learned it from my mother. My mother taught me to do what I can to make the world a better place. And boy have I tried.

What did Dana's mother do instead? What did this teach Dana? What does it teach you?

Film Questions for Discussion

1. What have you learned from Dana's testimony?
2. What are some of the symbols or imagery utilized by the student filmmakers to visualize Dana's narrative?
3. What themes stood out to you throughout Dana's retelling? Does Dana's story raise any lessons or moral questions for modern day issues?
4. "*There was a trend in the years after the war to focus on camp survivors as the only "real" Holocaust Survivors. Many of those who survived through hiding felt pressure from society to silence their stories, because their experiences were not as "bad" or as "traumatic" as what camp survivors had witnessed.*" How does this and hearing Dana's testimony change or impact your perception of Holocaust Survivors and their testimonies?
5. Although Jews were already being deported and killed prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland, the systematic mass murder of the Jews began after this act of war in 1941. What do we mean by "systematic" murder? Discuss how circumstances for Polish Jews changed between the outbreak of war in 1939 and the Nazi invasion of Lvov in 1941.
6. What age was the narrator during her experiences? What do we know about her family life before the war? How would the experiences of a child differ or compare to the experiences of adults?
7. What stage of life is the narrator in now? How may this affect the retelling?

Object Share Activity for Your Students

At Holocaust Museum LA, we understand the power that primary sources and personal narratives offer students in their quest to better understand history. With this in mind, we invite you to ask your students to bring an object to share with the class that illuminates something meaningful about their identity, family history, or cultural heritage. Students may choose to bring an artifact that connects them to their individual identity, their hobbies or passions, or their family's narrative. In the past, participants have brought everything from a baseball bat that a grandparent used in his professional baseball career, a final piece of art painted by a loved one, and a map of a grandparent's journey to America.

Object Shares demonstrate how we use inquiry-based, student-centered techniques when teaching about Holocaust history at the Museum. The activity also establishes the idea that each member of the community has an important story to tell, similar to the mission of the founding Survivors of Holocaust Museum LA when they established the Museum in 1961. The belief in the sharing of personal narratives within a broader historical context is the foundation for our educational programming and serves as a basis to begin teaching about the Holocaust and relaying the universal and valuable lessons learned.

Object: A material thing that can be seen and touched

Artifact: An item of cultural or historical interest

Creating Historical Narratives: Artifact-Based Inquiry Worksheets

The following pages contain activities and discussion questions for your students based in primary sources and artifacts from the Holocaust Museum LA Archival Collection.

Creating Historical Narratives: Artifact-Based Inquiry Worksheets

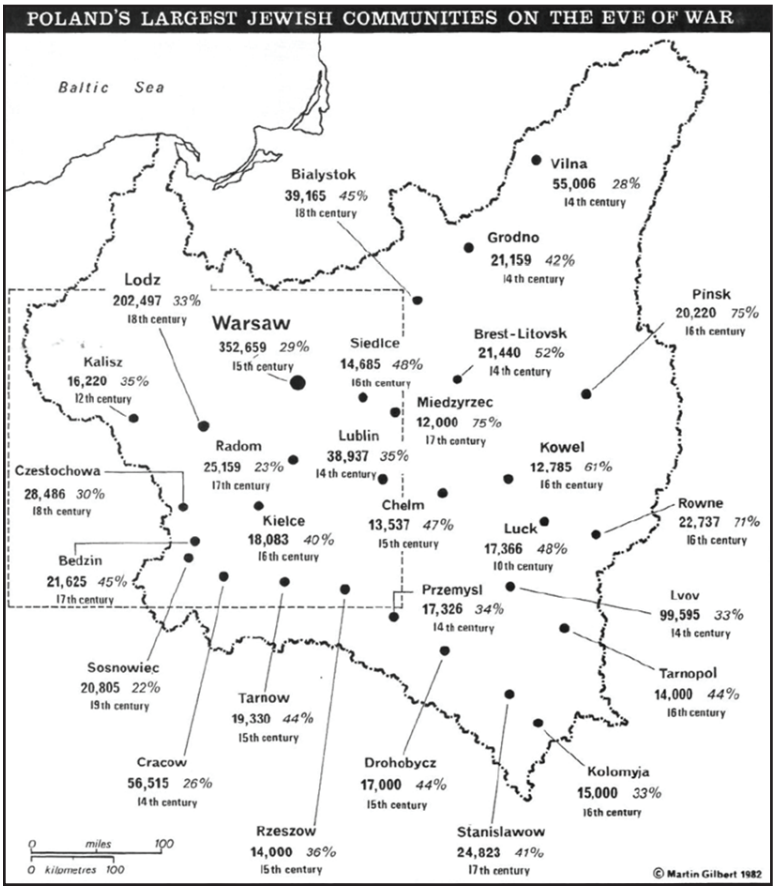
These worksheets contains images of artifacts, primary sources, and documents from the Holocaust Museum LA Archival Collection, Dana Schwartz's personal collection, and maps from the *Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust*. Each primary source directly relates to and creates historical context for the student-made film *The Story of Three Rings: A Memoir of Dana Schwartz*, produced by Holocaust Museum LA and Harvard-Westlake School. By utilizing different sources, historians, educators, and students can create historical narratives, providing a fuller understanding of this complex history. Holocaust history is multi-layered and intricate; therefore, this case-study exercise will allow your students a better understanding of the larger history through creating a micro-history, focusing on a specific narrative and experience.

We recommend that you use these primary sources and suggested artifact-based inquiry questions in the following pages with your students in the classroom, encouraging them to think analytically about the sources presented and how they directly and indirectly relate to Dana's personal narrative as presented in the film and to the larger context of the Holocaust.

Map Exercise #1

Interwar Map

Poland's Largest Jewish Communities on the Eve of War



This map depicts those cities in interwar Poland with a Jewish population of over 12,000. It also includes the Jewish percentage of the total population of the city.[13]

Identify the city in which Dana lived. What do you learn about this city from the map?

What does the term "interwar" mean? Why is it important to identify this map of Poland as an interwar map and why is it important to include this information in learning about the Holocaust?

[13] Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2009), 32.

Map Exercise #2

The Nonaggression Pact

The German-Soviet Partition of Poland, 28 September 1939

This map identifies the new border as agreed upon between the Soviet Union and Germany per the Nonaggression Pact.[14]

Which country annexed the part of Poland in which Dana lived? What were the implications for Dana and her family at this time?

Note the mass movement of people from the Nazi occupiedregion of Poland across the "Eastern Frontier." What could explain this mass migration? How does the movement of people impact the transmision of knowledge and news?

[14] Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust*, 36.

Map Exercise #3

Operation Barbarossa

Jews Massacred Between 22 June and 16 July 1941

Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, breaking the Nonaggression Pact; under the cover of war, the Nazis began the mass murder of European Jews. This map depicts communities of Jews murdered within the first weeks of the invasion.[15]

Identify the city in which Dana lived. What are the implications for Dana and her family at this time?

Why do you think the Nazis began the systematic mass murder during the invasion of the Soviet Union?

[15] Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust*, 67.

Jewish Life in Eastern Europe

Lusia and Ignacy Szapira (Dana's parents) outside of John Casimir University where they both attended as students (1930)

Wedding photo of Lusia and Ignacy Szapira (1932)

Describe the photographs of Dana's parents: Where are they and how do they appear?

What do these photographs tell you about Dana's parents' lives? What does their experience tell you about pre-Holocaust Jewish life in Poland?

Nazi Propaganda

A Nazi propaganda postcard with a grotesquely stereotypical image of an eastern European Jewish man. The words in red read: "The Eternal Jew" (1938)

Describe the image of the depiction of the Jewish man on the postcard: What stereotypes does this picture represent? What is the man holding? What is the intention of this image? What feelings or thoughts are the Nazis attempting to evoke in the population?

Dana's father was a Jewish man in Eastern Europe. How do the photographs of him compare to the stereotypes depicted on the postcard? What does this tell you about stereotypes and propaganda?

Jewish Culture in Lvov

Tabl. 10–17. LUDNOŚĆ — POPULATION

MIASTO LWÓW — *VILLE DE LWÓW*

Podział administracyjny według stanu w dn. 1.VIII 1934 r. — *Division administrative d'après l'état au 1 août 1934*

Tabl. 10. Ludność według wyznania i płci oraz języka ojczystego

Population d'après la confession et le sexe, ainsi que d'après la langue maternelle

Wyznanie — *Confession* r — razem—*ensemble* m — mężczyźni—*hommes* k — kobiety—*femmes*		Ludność ogółem *Population totale*	Język ojczysty — *Langue maternelle*											
			polski *le polonais*	ukraiński *l'ukrainien*	ruski *le ruthène*	białoruski *le biélorusse*	rosyjski *le russe*	czeski *le tchèque*	litewski *le lithuanien*	niemiecki *l'allemand*	żydowski *le yiddish*	hebrajski *l'hébreu*	inny *autre*	nie podany *non déclarée*
Ogółem — *Total* . .	r	312 231	198 212	24 245	10 892	24	462	221	6	2 448	67 520	7 796	296	109
	m	142 263	88 851	11 211	4 145	14	220	106	4	1 031	32 532	3 980	115	48
	k	169 968	109 361	13 034	6 747	10	242	115	2	1 411	34 988	3 816	181	61
Rzymskokatolickie i ormiańskokatolickie *Cath.-romaine et cath.-arménienne*	r	157 490	155 986	423	123	12	14	174	6	593	—	—	139	20
	m	70 340	69 846	112	37	6	4	75	4	208	—	—	41	7
	k	87 150	86 140	311	86	6	10	99	2	385	—	—	98	13
Greckokatolickie i obrządek wschodni kościoła katolickiego *Cath.-grecque et rite oriental de l'Eglise catholique*	r	49 747	15 592	23 473	10 604	2	40	6	—	9	—	—	15	6
	m	21 364	6 394	10 916	4 018	1	20	5	—	1	—	—	7	2
	k	28 383	9 198	12 557	6 586	1	20	1	—	8	—	—	8	4

Census of languages spoken in Lvov, Poland with Yiddish speakers circled (1934)

What do you know about the history of Poland that would indicate the diversity of languages commonly spoken in this region?

For many Polish Jews who spoke Yiddish as their first language, their chances of pretending to be a non-Jew were more difficult and nearly impossible. Why would that be?

"I knew that my parents could never become fully assimilated. They were too 'Jewish,' not so much because of their physical appearance as because if an array of other identifying traits. Yiddish was the language they have been born to, and their knowledge of Polish was limited. Yiddish brought in its wake special inflections, expressions, and sentence structures. And these, in turn, were accompanied by certain facial expressions, gestures, and movements that Christian Poles considered 'typically Jewish.'"[16]
- Nechama Tec, Dry Tears

How does this quote from Nechama Tec's memoir, ***Dry Tears***, relate to Dana's experiences?

Is there a gesture or expresion you use? Do you think it would be easy to change these habits?

How did speaking Yiddish impact the chance of survival for Jews?

What was the danger of being in hiding and appearing "typically Jewish?"

How does Nechama's passage impact or work with what you have learned about stereotypes?

How does this add to what you've learned about Yiddish and Jews in hiding?

[16] Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears* (Westport, Connecticut: Wildcat Publishing Company, 1982), 47.

German Occupation of Poland

Photograph of locals greeting German soldier walking down Zamartynow Street in Lvov, Poland (1941)

Dana lived in the section of Poland under Soviet occupation from 1939 to 1941. After Nazi occupation of the city started in 1941, the Lvov Ghetto was established. Dana and her family were taken from their home and forced into the ghetto.

Her father succeeded in obtaining false papers for his wife and daughter that identified them as not Jewish. Thus, the two of them were able to escape from the ghetto. In 1943, the Nazis liquidated the Lvov Ghetto, and Dana's father was deported to the Janowska concentration camp. Dana and her mother were unable to learn additional information on where he perished.

Who is in this photograph, and what are the reactions of people in it?

Think of this photograph within the context of Map #2: Does this add a new understanding? How does this photography work with the maps to create a larger context?

What was the sociopolitical climate in Lvov, Poland in 1941?

Why may some of the residents of the city (or those under Soviet control) welcome the German Soldiers?

Describe Dana's details of the outbreak of war in Lvov and her interactions with German soldiers. How does this photograph enhance our understanding of German occupation of Lvov?

Identity During the Holocaust

Wanted ad from Lvov, Poland (March 1943)

This document was published by the German Security Police and Ukrainian Auxiliary Security Police and was posted in public places throughout the city of Lvov. The title reads, “Search advertisement for a Jewish female under a false identity.” The document is written in two languages, Ukrainian and Polish.

The wanted ad includes a photograph of a Jewish woman, Lina Hans, who was known to be living under false papers that identified her as a non-Jew. The intention of the fliers was to alert the local population and ultimately encourage them to turn her in if spotted.

What did it mean to take a false identity?

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Why was this document not written in the languages of previous and current occupying powers (German or Russian)?

To whom was the document directed towards? What does the language used tell us about the intended audience?

Why would the government place wanted ads for Jews living with false identities? What is significant about the advertisement being from the same period as the liquidation of the ghetto? What does this tell you?

Knowing what you know about the search for Jews in Lvov and the danger of possessing false identity papers, what does this teach you about Dana's experience?

What conclusion can you draw from this source?

German Occupation of Poland

Jewish boy selling Star of David armbands in the Radom Ghetto, Poland (1942)

The Nazis utilized different patches (Jewish stars, triangles, and arm bands) to identify Jews in public, in ghettos, and in concentration camps. Jews were required to wear badges on their outer clothing when in public. The badges varied based on different counties; in France, Jews were required to wear a yellow star with the word ***Juif*** printed on it (the French word for Jew), whereas in Poland, Jews often were forced to wear plain yellow stars or a blue star on a white armband on their arm.

This photograph from 1942 depicts a boy in the Radom Ghetto in Poland (approximately a four hour drive from Lvov) selling white armbands printed with the Jewish star.

What is a "Badge of Shame"? How were symbols used to identify and segregate?

In what ways did the obligation to wear a Jewish star encourage and perpetuate antisemitism or discrimination?

What would the implications of wearing this badge be for Polish Jews? What would the implications be for Polish Catholics to see their neighbors, friends, or strangers wear these badges?

Could being openly identified as a Jew have any positive impacts? If so, what are some examples?

After the War

Photograph of Dana Schwartz after liberation (1946)

Dana and her mother survived the remainder of the Holocaust living in the village of Zakopane under false identities. For food, Dana's mother organized an exchange with the village baker; for the last of their valuables, including Dana's mother's engagement ring, the baker provided the two with enough bread to sustain them. Following the liberation of Poland by the Red Army, Dana's mother aimed to take her daughter to Sweden. With no legal documents, such as a passport, proof of citizenship, or birth certificate, Dana and her mother went to a photo studio in 1946 to prepare the proper documentation to leave the country.

When sharing this photo, Dana explained, "The photographer asked me to smile. And I knew it had something to do with the corners of my lips, but I had no understanding of what to do. This photograph was the result – a young girl who cannot smile after the Holocaust."

Why would Dana and her mother want to leave Poland after the Holocaust ended?

What documents does one need to emigrate? How would it impact a young child to not have a birth certificate?

Reflect on rebuilding life after the conclusion of the war: What does "liberation" mean to Dana and her mother? What challenges might they face in attempting to recreate normal family life? What are some examples Dana shares in her testimony that highlight some of the complications of post-war life?

The Larger Historical Narrative

Using the primary sources in the Artifact-Based Inquiry Worksheets in addition to Dana's testimony, we suggest you utilize the questions below to create a larger historical narrative:

What experiences are covered in learning through this individual's narrative? Name concrete examples.

What do these archival sources teach about the Holocaust?

What does each source tell us? What do these sources add to your understanding of the past? What new questions do they raise?

What does this microhistory study teach us about the larger context of Holocaust history? How can it be applied on a macrohistory level?

What narratives do these primary sources tell when compiled together?

Glossary

Affidavit: A document signed by an individual that outlines their financial responsibility for another person, usually a relative, who is immigrating to the United States.

***Aktion* (Action)**: German word meaning "campaign" or "mission." Used by Nazi officials for the purposes of deportation or execution of Jews.

Assimilation: The process of which a person or group of people adapt to another culture's way of living and are absorbed into the dominant culture of society. Subsequent to Emancipation, Jews, particularly in cities, often culturally assimilated into the way life and traditions of the dominate groups around them.

Antisemitic/Antisemitism: Hostility toward or hatred of Jews as a religious or ethnic group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination.

Aryan: The term the Nazis developed to identify the "pure, German race." The term was used to describe non-Jewish objects and belongings such as "aryan homes" and "aryan papers." Identification papers at that time were required to state a person's identity as a Jew or non-Jew. For Jewish people to have "aryan papers" meant that they were in possession of false identity papers that did not label them as Jewish. People were required to always carry identification papers and often had to present them to Nazi officials, Gestapo, and police. If identification papers appeared to be questionable, the person could be arrested, interrogated, beaten, or sent to a concentration camp.

Aryanization: The expropriation and plundering of Jewish property by German authorities and their transfer to "aryan" ownership.

Boycott: Social protest against a group of people or organization, many times aligning with certain ideals.

Child Survivor: A Child Survivors is an individual who was under the age of 18 either at the start or end of the Holocaust and survived under extraordinary circumstances.

Concentration Camp: Concentration camps served many different functions, but they were all part of the overarching objective to murder the European Jewish community. Concentration camps included transit camps, forced labor camps, and death camps. These were places of intense dehumanization, mistreatment, and death. Historians estimate that there were over 40,000 Ghettos and Camps across Europe.

Death Camp: The Nazis established 6 death camps, all of which were in Poland (Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau). People were murdered at all camps, but at death camps, people were taken en masse straight from arrival to be murdered.

Deportation: Forced transfer of Jews to ghettos, concentration camps, or killing centers. When being deported long distances, Jews were generally forced in cattle cars without food, water, proper ventilation, or toilets.

Displaced Persons (DP) Camps: A temporary facility for Survivors after the war, mainly established in Germany, Italy, and Austria. These camps were intended to help former prisoners of concentration camps by providing aid, food, medicine, or a place to live. DP camps are where Survivors began to rebuild their lives.

Einsatzgruppen: Mobile killing units. These SS units (divided into four groups: A, B, C, and D) followed the advancing German Army during Operation Barbarossa. With the assistance of auxiliary units and the ***Wehrmacht*** (Nazi Germany's army), these killing squads systematically murdered Jewish populations across Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Emancipation: Freeing a group of people that have been restricted socially and legally by the ruling class. Early European countries to grant emancipations were France (1791), Greece (1830), and Great Britain (1858). Despite Jews receiving civil equality in these countries, antisemitism and discrimination remained rampant in many parts of Europe.

The Enlightenment Era: Throughout the 18th century, a development of intellectual and philosophical ideas swept through Europe, creating spaces of dialogue that eventually led to changes in government, religion, and ideals.

False Papers: In the context of the Holocaust, false papers were forged identity documents used for the sake of posing as a non-Jew. Creating false papers was illegal and very risky.

The "Final Solution" (*Endlösung*): A euphemism for the extermination of the Jewish people.

Genocide: Coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, the term describes the deliberate and systematic attempted to destroy the existence of a group of people, often a national, racial, ethnic or religious group.

Gestapo: The Nazi Secret State Police. Established in Prussia in 1933, its power spread throughout Germany after 1936, when it was incorporated into the SS. In German-occupied territories they held the role of "political police," arresting actual and perceived enemies of the Nazis without judicial review.

Ghetto: The term "ghetto" has roots in 16th Century Venice, Italy when the closed Jewish Quarter of the city, called the ***Geto Nuovo*** (New Foundry) was established in 1516. "***Geto***" became the foundation for the term "ghetto." When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, approximately 3 million Jews lived in Poland. The Nazis began plans for the ghettoization of Polish Jews shortly after.

Interwar Period: The period of general peace between the conclusion of the First World War (1918) and the beginning of the Second World War (1939).

Kindertransport: After Kristallnacht in November of 1938, 10,000 Jewish hildren from the ages of 2 to 17 were allowed into the United Kingdom to escape the increasing violence. Children had to say goodbye to their parents, were sent alone to Great Britain, and placed in family homes or orphanages. Most never saw their parents again.

Kosher: Jewish dietary laws according to the Kashrut detailing the types of foods allowed, forbidden, and how they should be prepared.

Kristallnacht: Usually referred to as the "Night of Broken Glass." It is the name given to the violent anti-Jewish pogrom of November 9th and 10th, 1938. Instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and the SA (Nazi Storm Troopers), the pogrom occurred throughout Germany,

annexed Austria, and the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia.

Liquidated: Clearing of the ghettos. Anyone left alive was rounded up and deported to concentration camps.

Nativism: Policies that prioritize the interests of native-born citizens as opposed to immigrants.

Nazi Party: Byname of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP). The Nazi Party was founded in 1919 and was taken over by Adolf Hitler in 1920-1921. The party was focused around strong nationalistic ideology with antisemitic rhetoric. Following the failed Nazi coup in 1923, the party had about 55,000 members, however with growing unemployment and poverty, Hitler manipulated people's plight for his own political gain, becoming Chancellor ten years later and governing by totalitarian methods until the end of World War II in 1945.

The Nonaggression Pact/Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also known as the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact), passed on August 23rd, 1939 and stipulated neutrality between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, secretly dividing territories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. In September of 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia began occupation of their decided-upon territories (see Map #2 in the Artifact-Based Inquiry Worksheets). On June 22nd, 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, breaking the Nonaggression Pact and invading the Soviet Union and land previously under Soviet occupation.

Nuremberg Trials: The first International War Crimes Tribunal. Judges from the Allied powers (United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) presided over the Nuremberg Trials in 1945 and 1946, where 22 top officials from the Nazi party were tried for crimes against humanity. Twelve of them were sentenced to death for playing a direct role in the mass murder.

Operation Barbarossa: German code name for the attack and invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. This operation created a two-front war for the Germans to fight and increased the number of Jews under German control. With the launch of Operation Barbarossa and under the cover of war, the Nazi's systematic mass murder of European Jews began.

Operation Reinhard: Code name for the plan to murder 2,000,000 Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland. Named for top SS officer Reinhard Heydrich, who was one of the architects of the Final Solution and assassinated in Prague in 1942 by Czech Partisans. Operation Reinhard included the death camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, and ended with the murder of 1.7 million Jews.

Oral History: Stories or histories told by a person who experienced an event or time period first-hand.

Pogrom: The organized destruction of a certain group of people. Used to describe acts of violence and persecution against Jews throughout history. The word is derived from Russian, implying "havoc" and "to harm." Pogroms were carried out throughout the late 19th and early 20th century in Eastern Europe, inciting an influx of Jewish immigrants to Western European countries and America at the time.

Propaganda: The deliberate spreading of ideas, ideology, or information with the purpose of manipulating public opinion to gain support for one's cause or to discourage support for another.

Red Army: The military army of the Soviet Union.

Scapegoat: An individual or group unfairly blamed for problems not of their making.

Shtetls: Small Jewish villages or towns, commonly found throughout Eastern Europe. Most, if not all, shtetls were destroyed during the Holocaust.

Star of David (*Magen David* or Jewish Star): A symbol often used by Zionists before World War II, the Nazis utilized it to identity Jews, often requiring Jews in different countries under their occupation to wear a yellow or blue Jewish star on their clothes when in public. The implication of this was to identify, humiliate, and shame Jewish communities and individuals.

Stereotype: A simplistic, firmly held belief about individual characteristics generalized to all people within that group.

Synagogue: Jewish religious house of worship.

Wannsee Conference: On January 20th, 1942, fifteen bureaucratic Nazi Party and German officials met to discuss the logistics of what they called "the Final Solution to the Jewish Question," the code name for the plan to murder 11 million European Jews. SS Officer Reinhard Heydrich lead the meeting.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: During Passover in 1943, the remaining Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto learned that they were all to be deported to death camps. For almost a year, underground organizations made up of about 800 ghetto inhabitants had been preparing for the final deportations by stockpiling weapons and explosives. From April 19th to May 16th of 1943, Nazi soldiers and policemen fought with the ghetto's resistance fighters, ultimately burning the ghetto to the ground. This was the largest and most successful uprising in any ghetto during the Holocaust and demonstrated the continued will and fight to live.

Wehrmarcht: Nazi Germany's unified armed forces. Soldiers invaded countries and coordinated with the SS in regards to the implementation of the Final Solution.

The Weimar Republic: Parlimentary democracy established in Germany from 1919 to 1933, following the collapse of Imperial Germany and preceding Nazi rule.

World War I: Also known as The Great War for its extreme destruction and introduction of modern weapons, such as the machine gun and gas. Occurred from 1914 to 1918 and was won by the Allies – Russia, France and Great Britain (later joined by the US and Japan) – and lost by Germany and Austria-Hungary. Per the Treaty of Versailles, Germany paid reparations to the victorious Allies, lost territory and colonies, and was forced to accept complete blame for the war. This, coupled with the Great Depression, led to economic devastation as well as humiliation throughout Germany.

Xenophobia: The irrational and intense fear or dislike of foreign people.

Yiddish: Language spoken by much of the Ashkenazi European Jewish population. A mixture of Hebrew and German with Slavic influence. Primary language in shtetls and sometimes spoken at home by Jews that lived in cities. The majority of Yiddish speakers perished in the Holocaust.