

**Personal Text Set for Study of the Holocaust**

**Theme:** The Holocaust

**Rationale:** This unit of study is to be used with grades 8-12. This unit of study was chosen since even today many countries are experiencing political and economic problems which occurred in Germany during this time period. Totalitarianism or total control of the government and citizens by one party or a dictator also exists in many countries today and even threatens to take over other countries in our world. Many people today continue to harbor hostile feelings toward Jews and other minority groups. Something like this could happen again.

**The Essential Question:**

**Why should we study the Holocaust?**

## **Why should we study the Holocaust?**

[www.jewishhistory.huji.ac.id/Internetresources/holocauststudies.htm](http://www.jewishhistory.huji.ac.id/Internetresources/holocauststudies.htm)

<http://earthrenewal.org/Holocasut.htm>

Title Author Publication Info	Genre	Cultural Diversity	Relevant Content Area	Sign Systems (language, art, music, movement, etc.)	Other?	Contribution to Essential Question Inquiry
Anne Franks Talks From the Secret Annex Anne Frank Doubleday, 1944	YAN	Y	LA Reading / SS / Psychology	Language, Art Music		How does Anne Frank feel towards Nazi-Jews? what is quality of her writing?
Joos Jacob We Are Witnesses The Dunes	YAN	Y	LA Reading / SS / Science / Math / Psychology	Lang Music, Art		What did I think it feel while being held as prisoner?
Tennessee Williams The Glass Menagerie	CB	Y	LA Reading / SS / Math / Psychology	Lang Art, Movement		
Allen, David Hiding From the Nazis	YAN	Y	LA Reading / SS / Math / Psychology	Lang Art, Music		
Rosa Johnson Upstairs Downstairs						
Short Geoffrey "Learning to Walk with Literature: Hospitalized Children" Anthropology Journal of the Biological Education (Dec 1997): P. 179-190	Article	Y	All Subject Other	Lang Art, Music Dance		
Romoli, Alexander And The Violins Staged Plays, 1986	YAD	Y	LA Reading / SS / Science / Math Art / Music / Psychology	Lang Art Music Dance		Can this happen again?

## **Five Young Adult Novels**

Orlev, Uri, (1984). *The Island on Bird Street*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

### Summary

This fictional book is based on the author's experience during World War II in Poland. Alex, the main character, a young Jewish boy, and his father are separated by the German soldiers. Alex's mother has already been lost to the Holocaust. Alex promises his father he will wait and hide for him at 78 Bird Street. Days go by and his father never returns. Alex never gives up on his father. He then understands and realizes he *has to make him a safe home. Alex realizes his home is like an island. His only close friend is his white mouse named Snow. Even though danger lurks constantly, Alex is able to slip out, realizing many more people are hiding in this supposedly empty Polish Ghetto. Alex becomes smart at handling both the danger and the people. Fortunately, Alex's father returns only to think his son has been murdered, but is happily surprised at finding him alive.*

### Commentary

Another useful tool to introduce the concept of the term "Ghetto" during this *time period. Students could pretend they are Alex and describe what their typical days would be. Students could have discussions about the importance of trust and bravery during times like this. Students could even write about such themes as trust and bravery. Students could write descriptions of this Polish Ghetto and even compare other Ghettos from other text readings.*

Yolen, Jane, (1988). *The Devil's Arithmetic*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin, Inc.

### Summary

Hannah Stern is transported back to World War II unexpectedly after constantly Complaining about her family's remembrance of the Holocaust during Passover. After being transported back to World War II, her new name is now Chaya. She Is going to the wedding of her Uncle Shmuel and Fayge, the rabbi's daughter. As they Reach the shul for the wedding, they see trucks. Chaya realizes now what is in store for Her and her family. They are taken to concentration camps. Since Chaya's name means "life", her name helps her survive the camps.

### Commentary

This book is an excellent tool in introducing the Jewish Passover Seder holiday And other Jewish holidays and celebrations. The students will be introduced To the living in the ghettos during World War II. Many students today believe The word "ghetto" is a fairly new word and relates to certain populations Living in the projects. Students could write descriptions of the living conditions of the ghettos during World War II. Students could also write descriptions of the Concentration Camps. Students could use maps and timelines to show the countries invaded by Germany. Students will identify the causes and global consequences of WWII and compare and contrast to the war in Iraq. Students can analyze the phenomenon of genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nazi holocaust.

Wiesel, Elie, (1960). *Night*. New York, NY: Hill & Wang.

### Summary

This is a true story of Elie Wiesel who survived the Holocaust while being imprisoned in Birkenau, Auschwitz, and Buna. He kept his silence for ten years before writing about his true experiences of what happened to him and the other six million Jews. This book deals with extremely depressing events and unbelievable horror Elie Wiesel witnessed and lived through to write. His family was murdered but he kept his strength and religion to help him survive.

### Commentary

This book is an excellent tool to introduce the concepts of genocide and Anti-Semitism. Students can even see this today of what is going on in Iraq and other non-Democratic countries through text to world connections. Students can also learn more about the different prison camps used for the Jewish peoples and the indignities these people experienced. Students can compare and contrast WWII to the Vietnam War, Gulf War, or the present war in Iraq. This book also is an excellent tool to introduce the reign of Hitler and World War II. Students can write to reflect their feelings received from reading this book. They could make predictions for each chapter. They could make timelines from the story. Students could write their own stories stating how they would survive such terror and horror.

Lowry, Lois, ((1989). *Number the Stars*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

### Summary

Annemarie, a ten year old has thought about the war often. She lives in Copenhagen in 1943 and the Germans have invaded Copenhagen. Her best friend Ellen Rosen moves in with her family and pretends to be part of her family. Annemarie is asked to participate in a dangerous mission. She agrees and finds the strength and courage to save her best friend's life. In this book, the readers see the Danish Resistance in smuggling almost 7000 Jews across the sea to Sweden.

### Commentary

Students witness many themes within this story such as friendship, bravery, inhumanity, and freedom. Teachers can use this book in numerous ways. Writing activities such as comparing Little Red Riding Hood tale and how it unfolds into Annemarie's reality. Students can retell several events from specific character's point of view. Students can write a summary of how the Danish Resistance smuggled the Jews from Denmark to Sweden as stated in this novel. Students can use maps of Europe and trace the Nazi invasions to Denmark and other countries also using timelines.

Matas, Carol, (1996). *After the War*. New York, NY: Simon & Simon.

### Summary

This story is a fictional account of a fifteen year old Holocaust survivor. It is also a fact based account of the great post-World War II Jewish migration to Eretz Israel. After Ruth Mendenberg is released from the death camp of Auschwitz, she returns home to Kielce, her home town in Poland. She finds no other surviving relatives. Ruth agrees to join an illegal organization and to locate a group of young children to Palestine even though she has no conviction to this cause. Through this experience, readers see Ruth begin to come to terms with her sadness, faces life, and even find love while risking her life for these children.

### Commentary

This book is another excellent tool for use in numerous writing activities. Students could write about choices they have had to make in their lives and why they made those choices. They could even decide if they would be willing to do something similar to Ruth's decision. Students would learn about the building of this new Jewish state in 1945 and discuss what has happened since that date. Students could use maps and timelines to draw and describe the routes Ruth and the children took during this migration. Students could compare and contrast her horrors from Auschwitz to the horrors she faced during the journey of the children.

**Five Children's Picture Books**

Innocenti, Roberto, (1985). *Rose Blanche*. Mankato, MN: Creative Education, Inc.

### Summary

Rose Blanche is a heartwarming and sad story taking place during the German occupation of a town in Germany. Rose Blanche is the narrator of this story. The author wrote this children's book to show how a child experiences war without truly understanding it. Rose witnesses German soldiers occupying her small town. She also sees trucks loaded with children. One day after seeing a small boy trying to escape but being caught and returned to the truck, she decides to follow the German military trucks. Upon finding a clearing within the forest, she is stopped by electric barbed wire. There she witnesses many children in striped uniforms telling her they were hungry. She gives them a piece of bread. For the next several weeks, Rose secretly visits the camp and gives food to these hungry children prisoners. When the snow has melted, Rose notices the soldiers are moving in the opposite direction. She decides to go into the forest that day. Upon arriving to the clearing, Rose notices it was empty. Suddenly in the fog, a shot is fired. Rose never returns home.

### Commentary

The illustrations are beautiful and the story is easy to read aloud to the students. When reading this story, the teacher and students can sense danger and sadness. This book can be read to audiences from grades 4-12. This book can be used for predictions, summary writings, feelings received from the reading, or even changing the ending of it. It is an excellent book to introduce the effects of the war on children who were or were not prisoners. I feel students will make connections to what is going on in Iraq and other parts of the world and connections from other texts.

Krinitz, Esther N. & Steinhardt, Bernice, (2005). *Memories of Survival*. New York, NY: Hyperion

### Summary

This book is full of beautiful illustrations of fabric collages, embroidery collages, and variety of needlework done by the author. Most of the stitching was done by hand by the author. Most of the pictures contain a hand-stitched narrative caption and commentary. This book contains thirty-six pictures and the stories of her mother Esther's life as a young Jewish girl and during the Nazi occupation of Poland. Her mother found work outside her home town at a farm and later discovered her cousin and cousin's father were imprisoned in a labor camp near this farm. She even witnesses a prisoner being executed near the farm. We see her father and brother hiding out in the forest for a period of time. Finally the family is forced to move and Esther takes up residence with a non-Jewish family in order to survive. Unfortunately, the family abandons Esther and she is faced to try to find others to help her. Finally, she realized she must make up a name for herself and claim she is Polish Catholic. She and her cousin Mania finally was helped by two different families. After the Russians liberated Maidanek, Esther goes there looking for her family but not finding anyone. After the war, she later becomes married and emigrates to the United States. Her cousin Mania goes to Israel.

### Commentary

Students could use math skills and art skills to design their own quilts or hangings representing this story or other stories from the Holocaust. Students could write about Jews in today's world compared to earlier years. Students could write post war responses to the Holocaust, such as the founding of the Jewish state of Israel. Students could

Present scenes from the plays, *The Deputy* or *Doctor Korczak and the Children*.

Mochizuki, Ken (1997). *Passage to Freedom*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books, Inc.

### Summary

In 1940 a young Japanese child witnesses his father issue numerous visas to Jewish Refugees from Poland in the country of Lithuania. Seeing these families every day and night for numerous months and not fully understanding what his father is doing is very confusing to young Hiroki Sugihara. The readers see that his family feels this is the right thing to do in order to save these people even though the Japanese government did not agree to his decision. Finally this Japanese family is shipped to Berlin. While boarding the train, his father throws out papers with his signature to more Jewish Polish refugees in order to save their lives. Students see child's view of these refugees and his trying to understand what is going on.

### Commentary

What a great book to introduce how others viewed the Jewish refugees and what they may have done to help them. Students could write about standing up for something they believe in very strongly. Students could research, report, and discuss comparing the persecution of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust to the persecution of minority groups in America such as blacks, women American Indians, or Orientals. Students could write and discuss the roles of Japanese during World War II and compare and contrast the Japanese prison camps in the United States.

Adler, David (1994) *A Picture of Anne Frank*. New York, NY: Holiday House.

### Summary

David Adler traces the brief life of Anne Frank in Germany and in the attic until her arrest and deportation. The drawings are in black and white set into watercolors closely resembling the true photographs of Anne, her family, and friends. Students read her diaries and become to know one of the victims. Students will realize the Holocaust was real and nothing was made up about it.

### Commentary

Pretending they are in hiding and fearing for their lives, students could write a daily journal similar to the diary of Anne Frank. Students could research and discuss Anne Frank through writing or power-point presentations. Students could graph the statistics of the surviving children of the Holocaust. Students could research, write, or discuss the experiences of the children of the Holocaust. Art, Social Studies, and Science lessons could be incorporated, such as the scientific experiments done on twins during the Holocaust.

Bunting, Eve (1993). *Terrible Things*. New York, NY: The Jewish Publication Society.

### Summary

This is a wonderful children's book which explains how important it is to stand up for what one believes. It also teaches children not to be prejudiced towards other people due to their skin color, religion, or etc. The book also tells children to stick together and fight for what is right regardless how horrifying the situation may seem. Bunting uses an allegory of the Holocaust, where she uses animals to represent the Jews and others who suffered throughout the Holocaust. The pictures are wonderful and a book adults will also enjoy.

### Commentary

Another great children's book to use in book talks, literacy circles, or writer's workshop. Students could compare and contrast picture books to novels or non-fiction books. They could compare and contrast the different authors of these picture books. Students would learn the concept of using allegory in story-telling. They could even make up their own stories using allegory.

## **Five Non-Fiction Books**

American War Library (2000). *Weapons of World War II*. San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, Inc.

### Summary

This book is full of vital information and original black and white photographs of the different types of weapons for warfare used during World War II. There is even a map of the invasion of Normandy. There is also a chronology of important events and detailed indexes. This book is one of a series which offers readers the insight into the triumphs and tragedies of war. Readers also examine the causes of the war and crucial battles. They read about the key personalities of the war, weaponry, and the daily life on the battlefields. Students become familiar with the inventions of the tank, u-boats, flattops, fighter planes, and the bomber planes. Even they experience D-Day. It is a great historical tool for students to learn more about the weapons and battles of World War II.

### Commentary

What a great book to be incorporated with the history of weaponry within history classes in middle and high school. Students could compare and contrast weaponry then and now and discuss or present through power-point or posters. Students could compare and contrast the costs and research which goes into these designs of weaponry. Students could even interview former and present pilots or engineers who design weaponry. Of course, Physics could be incorporated into these lessons regarding the planes then and today.

Shuter, Jane (2000). *Visiting the Past*. Chicago, IL: Heinemann.

### Summary

This is an excellent book to familiarize students with the Nazi period and the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. There are beautiful present-day color and original black and white photographs. Even bold-faced words for students to remember are part of this book. The book provides a brief history of the Nazi period. Then it details the experiences of the prisoners in Auschwitz. There is even a timeline and an architectural drawing of the prison showing the different areas where the prisoners were held. There is also another detailed drawing of the brick huts where the prisoners were kept. These pictures will take your breath away for a second. They truly make you think about the horrifying conditions the prisoners experienced and make you appreciate your life today.

### Commentary

Students could research why this camp remained open the longest compared to the other Jewish camps. Students could research Jewish life and the Jewish community in the Axis countries today. They could make a collage of their impressions of the Final Solution. They could make posters of the inside of the cattle cars, showing people of all ages within. They could list all the camps and the number of victims who died in each.

Pettit, Jane (1993). *A Place to Hide*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

### Summary

This book contains true stories of Holocaust rescues. The author did extensive research uncovering hundreds of stories about rescuers, and verified information about these experiences she chose to tell in this book. The book states two million children survived the Holocaust thanks to rescuers. The book even contains some original photographs taken during this time period. The book is made up of only six chapters of rescues. The author believes the people who rescued Jews did this out of a deep moral conviction to respond to the suffering of another human being. After the war, many of the rescuers did not want their names known. Many were even thrown into prison, shot, or just disappeared. Some had to testify and eventually forced to leave the country.

### Commentary

Students could research why more countries would not accept Jews who were trying to flee the Nazis. Students could analyze the history and character of the countries that tried to protect their Jews in spite of Hitler's orders. They could also analyze the characters listed in this book. Students could research, discuss, or present a lesson about human behavior in the past, present, and future.

Bachrach, Susan D. (1994). *Tell Them We Remember*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

### Summary

This book is another one with explicit original photographs and information regarding the invasion of the Nazi German Army and the persecution of Jews. The author has used many resources developed and maintained by the staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The book is divided into three parts with an I. D. photo guide. The reader follows each individual story as it unfolds at different points in time from 1933 to 1945. There are several maps listed in this book also. Pages 88-92 list a chronology of events. There are also three pages of suggested future readings. The book also contains some beautiful photographs and a glossary of terms.

### Commentary

Students could draw pictures of Holocaust survivors. Students could research the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, including the architecture and meaning. Students could choose the Holocaust passports, read about their prisoner, and discover if he or she survived. Students could list the twenty-two Nazi war criminals tried at Nuremberg and their sentences. They could illustrate Adolf Eichmann in a bulletproof booth at his trial. They could have a debate regarding sentences given to these war criminals.

Ambrose, Stephen E. (2001). *The Good Fight*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

### Summary

Along with covering the World War II battles of Europe, this author also covers the battles of the Pacific. The introduction is full of information for students in a more shortened version. There are many beautiful colored photographs along with black and white ones. There are also important colored maps for information. Students will also see moving photographs of happy times and breath-taking photographs of people being rescued. This book also contains a glossary of important terms. The atomic bomb picture will take your breath away along with the photograph of a discovered watch showing the time when the atomic bomb blast. There is also a timeline in the front of the book.

### Commentary

What another excellent resource to incorporate into a history, science, math, or LA/Reading class for students. Students receive a broader picture of World War II. Students can research the lives of Americans during this time period; especially of the women joining the workforce. Students could design posters for or against the war. Students could research, discuss, compare or contrast some of the great military leaders of World War II to today's military leaders.

## **Five Websites**

Assigned groups of students will take a virtual visit to Germany, 1943. They will visit the following web sites to see some faces of the people and scenes related to the Holocaust. After viewing these web sites, the groups are to respond in presentations to the photographs and information given. They are to describe their thoughts and feelings. They can also present their own illustrations. They are to decide which photographs they will use for their documentary and why they chose those.

*Picture Tour*

<http://remember.org/jacobs/index.html>

*French Children of the Holocaust*

<http://www.dialnsa.edu/Klarsfeld/children.html>

Assigned groups of students are to work on a documentary about the Holocaust. They are to choose some musical selections for this documentary. They are to explore the following sites to find musical pieces they may want to use. They are to choose a musical piece they think could be a theme song or an instrumental for the documentary. They are then to give their reasons for choosing this work.

<http://www.zamir.org/resources/holocaust.html> This site contains listings of books, articles, annotated musical selections, selected recordings and musical compositions.

<http://ww.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/phila-orchestra.html> This site contains details of Terezin, a Nazi concentration camp. The prisoners were allowed to compose and perform music.

<http://www.gateway-va.com/pages/cols/Clarke/1109clar.htm> This site contains poems from the Holocaust. Even a musical "lullaby" is written by the son of a Holocaust survivor.

## **Suggested Audiovisuals**

## **Audiovisual Aids for the study of the Holocaust**

*Act of Faith* is a 28-minute black and white film of how the Danes rescued their Jewish citizens from deportation to the gas chambers.

*Kitty: A Return to Auschwitz*, a 90-minute videotape about Kitty Felix Hart. As a teenager imprisoned in Auschwitz, she returns to visit Auschwitz more than thirty years after her release. Her son accompanies her in this visit and video. She discusses many details about her life there.

*Warsaw Ghetto* is a 51-minute black and white on the spot motion picture of ghetto life taken from the SS files.

*Image Before My Eyes* is a 90-minute documentary in color and black and white dealing with Jewish life in Poland from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the time it was destroyed during the Holocaust.

## **Suggested Plays**

## **Plays from the Holocaust**

Students could present one or several scenes of one of the following plays:

*Wonders of Heaven* (or *Cat in the Ghetto*), by Simon Wincelberg. This play reveals the life in a Nazi ghetto through the experiences of a Jewish boy.

*I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, by Celeste Respanti. This play centers on the lives of Jewish children in the prison camp of Terezin.

## **My Personal Text Set**

Since my text would be used for students with learning disabilities, I had to look at numerous texts in order to determine which ones I felt were appropriate and fairly easy reading material. The majority of the students I serve with learning disabilities also have significant reading difficulties. Most of my choices also included children as the main characters and the horrific experiences they encountered during the Holocaust. I felt that my students would be able to make some kind of connections with these main characters.

Sadly, many times learning disabled students have long and short-term memory difficulties. They are unable to recall much material they have learned in many of their core courses except many hands-on experiences. I knew all of them would be familiar with Adolph Hitler and how he tried to rule the world. But I knew they would not be as knowledgeable about the Holocaust and the terms used during this time, such as ghetto. The students constantly use this word, but have never realized that the Nazis gave it to the housing sections for the Jews. It is important for them to have a deeper understanding of genocide and Anti-Semitism, along with prejudice. Many believe they have been the target of prejudice all of their lives and do not understand the freedom they have living here in the United States.

The books describing the battles and the weaponry will be particularly interesting to my male students. All of them will enjoy the picture books since I read those to them on a daily basis. Picture books are excellent tools for introducing a theme or concept.

My students will also enjoy presenting artwork, posters, and power-point presentations. Since they rarely obtain computer skills in their other classes, I will schedule periods for them to complete their projects in the school's computer lab. These computer lab periods will also help them with their typing and other basic computer skills.

When assigned the documentary projects, I will have students work in groups of threes. We will have book chats, author chats, comparisons of the books and authors. Students will respond daily in their writing journals. The students and I will do guided reading and shared reading in the class.

Before assigning this Holocaust theme unit to my students, I would speak to their English, History, Science, Math, and Art teachers to see if they would be interested in collaborating with me. If they agreed, I would also go into their classrooms and assist in presenting this unit. For the culminating activities, each student will be given the passports of former true victims of the Holocaust. Each will read about the victim and then discover if the victim survived or not. The students would then write in their journals their feelings of emotions upon receiving this information. The next activity focuses on the students writing an editorial on why the Holocaust should be a part of everyone's education.

