



What was the Holocaust?

During the Second World War, the Nazis aimed to wipe out all of Europe's Jews. Nearly six million people were murdered using industrial methods, including 1,500,000 children, during the Holocaust.

Below are three definitions of the Holocaust.

'Under the cover of the Second World War, for the sake of their 'new order,' the Nazis sought to destroy all the Jews of Europe. For the first time in history, industrial methods were used for the mass extermination of a whole people. Six million were murdered, including 1,500,000 children. This event is called the Holocaust.'

The Nazis enslaved and murdered millions of others as well. Gypsies, people with physical and mental disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, trade unionists, political opponents, prisoners of conscience, homosexuals, and others were killed in vast numbers.'

Imperial War Museum – <http://www.iwm.org.uk/>

'The Holocaust was the murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Between the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 and the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, Nazi Germany and its accomplices strove to murder every Jew under their domination. Because Nazi discrimination against the Jews began with Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, many historians consider this the start of the Holocaust era. The Jews were not the only victims of Hitler's regime, but they were the only group that the Nazis sought to destroy entirely.'

The term Holocaust is defined by the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1989) as a large-scale sacrifice or destruction, especially of life, especially by fire. As the research of Jon Petrie shows, Holocaust was already used by some writers during the war itself to describe what was happening to the Jews. Alongside it, various other terms such as destruction, disaster, and catastrophe have been and are still being used today to describe the fate of the Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe, although the dominant usage in American English since the middle of the 1960s is of the word Holocaust. In Hebrew, the word Shoah is used, and it appears more and more frequently in English-language texts. Genocide is a legal term for the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups. It may include, but does not necessarily include, the physical annihilation of the group. The Holocaust is an expression, and arguably the most extreme expression, of genocide.'

Yad Vashem, Jerusalem - <http://www1.yadvashem.org/>

The Holocaust is the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the

primary victims -- six million were murdered; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi Germany.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum - <http://www.ushmm.org/>

The Nazis take power and their persecution of Jews begins

In 1933 Hitler took control of Germany and the Nazi reign of terror began. Anti-Semitism - hatred of the Jews - was central to the world-view of Hitler and the Nazis. They believed that the world was locked in a great struggle between two races, the 'Aryans' and the 'Semites'.

The Nazis founded their state on the idea that there was a 'Master Race', superior to all others. The 'Master Race' was made up of the Germans and their neighbours in northern Europe, especially the blond and blue-eyed 'Nordics'. The dark-haired peoples of southern Europe were considered inferior, though still 'Aryans'. Below them were people regarded as 'sub-humans': the Slavs to the east, Gypsies, and non-whites. At the very bottom — inferior, yet powerful, the eternal enemies of the 'Aryan race' — were the Jews.

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany – head of government - in January 1933. In February, the first concentration camps were set up. Prisoners included trade unionists and political opponents of the régime, Jews, Gypsies, and homosexuals, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses, who refused to compromise their religious beliefs. Though conditions were still relatively mild, some prisoners did not survive the meagre rations, hard labour, beatings and torture. From summer 1934, the camps were run by the SS, which had grown from being Hitler's personal squad of bodyguards to Hitler's main instrument of terror. The SS was under the command of Heinrich Himmler.

LIFE IN NAZI GERMANY



IWM Negative Number: MH 11472

Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler inspect a guard of honour of the SS Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler'.

The first directly anti-Jewish measure took place on 1 April 1933 with a one-day boycott of Jewish-owned shops and businesses. In May books by authors whom the Nazis disliked were ceremonially burned. The Nazis censored and then seized control of all the media. Radio, films, rallies, exhibitions and posters spread Nazi doctrines, especially anti-Semitism and racism. Children's books and school lessons were designed to incite the young to hate Jews. Throughout Germany, signs were put up forbidding Jews to enter inns,

restaurants, parks and even entire villages. Jews, and 'Aryans' who associated with them, were often humiliated in public. In all, the Nazi regime imposed some 2,000 laws against Jews. Jews - and people of Jewish descent - were barred from public service and most professions. They were denied state social security and the needy had to rely on hard-pressed Jewish charities.

The concentration camp system: What is a concentration camp?

By the mid-1930s the German prisons were filling fast. Space to intern prisoners and enemies of the state was running out. The Nazis needed somewhere to hold the many political opponents they were arresting – mainly Communists, social democrats and those opposed to the establishment of Nazism. They began to house people in concentration camps – often consisting of numerous military-style barracks where people could be held in large numbers with a secure perimeter.

After *Kristallnacht* the number of Jews sent to concentration camps increased dramatically. By the start of the Second World War approximately 25,000 prisoners were being detained in camps across Germany. Prisoners detained in these camps were often exploited as a means of cheap labour. Some worked in quarries and industry; others were employed in the building of new camps.

The camp system soon spread to cover the expanding Reich. From four original camps in Germany (Dachau, Oranienburg, Esterwegen and Lichtenburg), the system expanded to include thousands of camps and sub-camps organized into 23 major complexes holding more than two million men, women and children throughout Europe. The Auschwitz complex was the largest. Amongst the most notorious were Dachau, Buchenwald and Mauthausen. The prisoners were of all nationalities, races, faiths and ideologies deemed enemies by the Nazis. German firms could buy the labour of these slaves from the SS. Some camps forced their prisoners to labour in factories. Some were 're-education camps', designed to alter the way the inmates viewed the Nazi regime, often with harsh brutality. Prisoners were subjected to hard labour, starvation, and harsh punishments. Nearly half were murdered, or died as a result of the appalling conditions.

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IWM Negative Number: GER 165

Concentration Camps - General: Prisoners at an unidentified concentration camp ploughing a field.

Life inside the camps

Life inside the concentration camps was extremely harsh. Prisoners were expected to live on starvation rations. Few had access to clean water for drinking or washing and disease spread very easily. Thousands died from the cold during the winter months.

The regime of concentration camp life wore people down. Early morning roll calls, hours spent standing in line and hard labour made living in camp both mentally and physically exhausting. Minor infringement of the camp laws and regulations often incurred severe punishments and frequently instant executions at the hands of the SS camp guards. Many chose to commit suicide by deliberately running against the electrified fences that surrounded the camps.

NAZI PERSECUTION



IWM Negative Number: B11677

Vught Concentration Camp: The electrically charged barbed wire fence around Vught concentration camp near Hertogenbosch in Holland.

Nuremberg Laws

When the Nuremberg Laws were introduced, in September 1935, the Jews became total outcasts. They lost their German citizenship, and were forbidden to marry non-Jews. Penalties for breaking the laws were severe. The laws defined Jews by ancestry instead of religion: anyone with at least three Jewish grandparents was considered a Jew; even one Jewish grandparent was sometimes enough.

From 1936 Hitler expanded German territories into the Rhineland, Austria, Czechoslovakia and thousands more Jews were subjected to Nazi persecution.

Emigration

As Nazi persecution intensified Jews became increasingly desperate to leave Germany. But emigrating was a major step, and very difficult.

Just recovering from the century's worst economic recession, countries in Europe and elsewhere were reluctant to take in refugees and placed strict limits on their numbers. To make things worse, the Nazis restricted the amount of money and possessions Jews could take with them. By 1939 about half of Germany's 500,000 Jews had left the country, along with 125,000 from Austria and 20,000 from the newly-acquired Czech lands.

'Kristallnacht'

On 9 November 1938 the Nazis staged 'spontaneous' violence against the Jews throughout Greater Germany. More than 7,500 Jewish shops were wrecked, leaving the streets littered with glass. This gave the pogrom its name, Kristallnacht - the Night of Broken Glass. Jewish-owned shops were looted and nearly half the synagogues in Germany were burned down. Countless religious objects were desecrated or destroyed. While police stood by, Stormtroopers broke into Jewish homes, terrorising men, women and children. Ninety-one Jews were murdered and over 20,000 men were arrested and taken to concentration camps. Afterwards the Jewish community was fined one billion Reichsmarks to pay for the damage.

The Invasion of Poland and Nazi Policy towards Polish Jews

On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

The Germans advanced rapidly across Poland. Then the Soviet Union attacked Poland from the east, under a secret agreement with Germany. Victory came within weeks, and Poland disappeared from the map of Europe. The Nazis now controlled much of the territory they had wanted as 'living space' (Lebensraum), as well as Europe's largest Jewish community.

The two million Polish Jews who had now come under Nazi control were stripped of their property, their freedom of movement was limited, and men had to register for forced labour. Jews were subject to random violence and many were forced to work in labour camps under appalling conditions. Some 100,000 died during this 'minor terror' (1939-1940). Much worse was to come.

Marked out

In most countries they controlled, the Nazis ordered Jews to sew a yellow star onto their clothing. Anyone caught without one could be imprisoned or shot. The yellow star was first introduced in the annexed areas of Poland in 1939, and in other countries from 1941. It harked back to the marking of Jews in the Middle Ages. The star was intended to humiliate the Jews and mark them out for segregation and discrimination. Later it made them easy to round up and deport to the camps.

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Anti-Semitism in Germany and the Occupied Territories: A column of Jews guarded by German soldiers, is marched through the streets of Warsaw during the winter of 1940.

The murder becomes systematic

On 22 June 1941, Germany suddenly broke its treaty with the Soviet Union and invaded with overwhelming force. With this escalation of war, Nazi fanaticism reached new levels and terror turned into systematic mass murder. The invasion was Hitler's crusade against 'Jewish Bolshevism'. Behind the front lines, SS murder squads, known as Einsatzgruppen ('Action Groups'), began rounding up and shooting Jews and Communists.

Ghettos

After the Nazis occupied Poland, Jews had been forced into ghettos. The Nazis wanted to keep the country's huge Jewish population under close control and exploit its labour. In larger cities and towns, ghettos were shut in by walls, fences or barbed wire. No one could leave or enter without a special pass. By mid-1941, nearly all the Jews of occupied Poland had been forced into these overcrowded slums. Ghettos were also set up in the newly conquered areas of the Soviet Union. The Nazis forced Jewish leaders to form councils to run the ghettos and to carry out their orders.

There was little food or money, and conditions became increasingly desperate. Some 500,000 Jews died in ghettos from starvation or disease. Jews received little food and many starved. Ghettos were overcrowded. The Warsaw ghetto held 30% of the city's population in just 2.4% of its space. This bred diseases such as typhus and tuberculosis. Conditions worsened when Jews from small towns and other countries were squeezed in.

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IWM Negative Number: IA 37590

Anti-Semitism in Germany and the Occupied Territories: A Jewish citizen of Warsaw, forced to wear the 'Star of David', is employed on turning a public park into a Jewish cemetery during the winter of 1940.

Deportation

The Nazis used the European railway system to transport people to their deaths. Right across Nazi-occupied Europe, Jews were rounded up and packed into ghettos or transit (holding) camps, usually near railway lines. Victims to be 'resettled' were then crammed into cattle wagons, up to one hundred people in each. The journeys lasted days, in freezing cold or stifling heat, often without food, water, or toilet facilities. Many of the deportees died before reaching their final destination.

The measures needed to prepare for the deportations varied from country to country. Some governments were friendly to the Nazis. They introduced anti-Jewish measures on their own initiative, or acted under varying degrees of pressure from the Nazis. In other areas, the Nazis were in direct control but usually relied on the help of local collaborators. In most occupied countries, Jews lost their jobs, their property, and their rights. They were then forced into ghettos or transit camps to await deportation. Only a few managed to escape or delay their fate by living under assumed names or going into hiding.

The 'Final Solution'

The Nazis mobilised the entire apparatus of a modern state to carry out what they called 'the Final Solution of the Jewish Question in Europe'.

The Nazi state was a maze of competing agencies, which were expected to show initiative. It is likely that the Final Solution was not the result of a single order, but unfolded with Hitler's approval as officials following his ideas to their logical conclusion out-did each other to impress their superiors.

It was at the January 1942 Wannsee Conference that the administrative details of the final solution were worked out. The Final Solution involved an enormous array of organisations,

not only the Nazi administration and police forces but also the army and private industry. Private companies supplied crematory ovens, gas vans and poison gas. The army lent the killing squads equipment and personnel, and carried out its own killings. Various branches of the state administration organised deportation trains, decided on timetables and priorities, processed the victims' possessions, and cajoled foreign governments into rounding up Jews to be killed.

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IWM Negative Number: RR 2206

Mass Extermination: Cans of 'Zyklon B' poison gas pellets found at Majdanek concentration camp in Poland.

'Resettlement'

In March 1942, the Nazis began to move people out of the ghettos for 'resettlement in the East' – supposedly to work. Few people believed this story, since the old, the poor, the sick and children were taken first.

Rumours soon spread that those taken for 'resettlement' were being killed. People tried to save themselves by hiding during round-ups, escaping, or getting work producing goods for the German war effort. Most people were too hungry, ill or demoralised to be able to resist.

New Ways of Killing

To improve on mass shooting as a killing method, the SS turned to the 'Euthanasia' programme, in place since the start of the war, which had by this stage killed some 70,000 - 80,000 mentally and physically disabled people using carbon monoxide gas. The latest technique, gradually adopted from November 1941, was the gas van. Victims were ordered into these vans, the doors were locked and the exhaust fumes pumped into the back and gassed. But it soon became clear that if millions were to be murdered, purpose-built installations would be needed.

Death factories

The death camp proved to be the Nazis' most sinister invention. The first of these opened in December 1941 at Chelmno. Three more death camps opened in the spring of 1942 near the villages of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka in occupied Poland. Their main purpose was to exterminate the Polish Jews. They drew men and equipment from the 'Euthanasia' programme, and were equipped with gas chambers capable of killing thousands of people at a time. This project, code-named 'Aktion Reinhardt', was stopped in the Autumn of 1943 and all traces of the camps were destroyed. 1,600,000 Jews and thousands of Gypsies had been murdered.

Auschwitz

Railway routes led from ghettos and transit camps all over Europe to the death camps. The death camps at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka had been set up to mainly to kill Polish Jews. But the largest death camp, and the last to go into full-scale operation, was Auschwitz-Birkenau. As the deportation trains arrived at Birkenau, Jewish victims were 'selected' by an SS doctor. About one in five was kept for slave labour; the rest were killed by gas immediately. More than a million Jews from all over Europe were killed in its gas chambers. It was where the Nazis perfected their killing technology.

Jewish resistance

It is often asked why Jews did not resist. The truth is that armed resistance was very difficult. Moreover, the Nazis cloaked their true intentions. People clung to the hope that they were indeed being resettled for labour, rather than being sent to their deaths. Few Jews had any military training and even those who did had little access to weapons.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Nevertheless, during the main deportations from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, Jewish youth groups organised a resistance movement. Shots were fired at police on 18 January 1943, during a second, three-day Aktion. Then when the Nazis resumed clearing the ghetto on 19 April they were met by organised groups of fighters from the Jewish Combat Organisation, led by 23-year-old Mordechai Anielewicz, and the Jewish Military Union. The rest of the ghetto's inhabitants disappeared into a maze of underground bunkers.

To force people out, the Nazis burned down the ghetto, building by building. But fighting groups held out in bunkers for a month, and sporadic resistance continued still longer. Jürgen Stroop, the German commander, reported that 7,000 Jews were killed in the fighting. The 50,000 Jews who survived the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were deported to labour camps. They were shot on 3 November 1943 in what the Nazis cynically called the 'Harvest Festival'.

Other armed resistance

Jewish armed revolts took place at Treblinka II, Sobibor, Auschwitz, and in more than 40 different ghettos, mostly in eastern Poland. Elsewhere, especially Belarus and Lithuania, particularly in forested or mountainous regions, Jews escaping from the ghettos took up arms as partisans, either independently or with Soviet or other partisan groups. They set up encampments in the forests, some of which sheltered Jewish fugitives in 'family camps'. Partisans lived in constant fear of attack, sometimes by anti-Semitic rivals. In winter, food

and weapons were hard to find, and many froze to death. If caught, partisans and those who helped them were tortured and killed. In all, 30,000 Jewish partisans fought the Nazis in Eastern Europe. Armed Jewish groups also resisted elsewhere. The main French group called itself *l'Organisation Juive de Combat*, in honour of the Warsaw fighters. Many Jews also fought with non-Jewish partisan groups or joined the Soviet Red Army.

The death marches and overrunning of the camps

Early in 1945, with Russian forces advancing westwards through Poland, the Nazis began to transport or force-march surviving prisoners of the camps deep into Germany. Most were force-marched hundreds of miles. Starving and weak, poorly clothed and with no proper shoes, they walked for weeks through snow and rain, sleeping in barns or in the open. Tens of thousands died from cold or hunger, or were shot for not keeping up. Survivors were moved on again as the Allied advance continued. Their final destinations were to be the concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Terezin and Ravensbrück, or one of their many sub-camps. The resulting overcrowding in these camps would cause many more deaths.

In the closing months of the war in Europe, forward units of the Allied armies advancing from both east and west came across the concentration camps. Horrified at what they saw, the liberators forced German soldiers and civilians to view the camps, and sometimes to help bury the dead. Newspapers, radio broadcasts and newsreels spread the news throughout Europe and America.

Relief efforts could not stop more victims from dying of malnutrition or in the epidemics that swept the camps. The rehabilitation and repatriation of survivors continued long after the war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945.

How much did the Allies know about the Holocaust and what did they do?

Since British Signals Intelligence could decode radio messages from some of the mobile killing units, the Government immediately knew about large-scale massacres in the East. But this information had to be kept secret, or the Germans would have known that their codes had been broken and the whole war effort might have been compromised.

Reports transmitted by the Polish Government-in-Exile and through neutral Switzerland gradually made the picture clear over the summer of 1942. On 17 December the Allies issued a declaration that condemned the Nazi extermination policy and threatened the perpetrators with punishment after the war, but no other action was taken. On 19 April 1943, the day that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising broke out, British and American officials met in Bermuda to discuss what should be done about refugees. Little was decided.

The news that reached the outside world led to protests and calls for action. Allied governments generally responded that the best way to save lives was to win the war as soon as possible. But for the Jews, who faced complete annihilation, the end of the war would come too late.

- § Some people were rescued while the war was still being fought.
- § As early as 1940, the Japanese government had let a few thousand Lithuanian Jews reach Shanghai. Legal emigration from Nazi-occupied territory was still possible until October 1941, and after that thousands crossed borders illegally. But neutral countries were reluctant to admit refugees, while immigration quotas to America and Palestine went unfilled. The difficulty of transporting civilians in wartime was offered as a reason, yet throughout the war Canadian and American troop-ships went home empty.

- § The Nazis also offered to exchange Jews for money or goods.
- § It is estimated that about 200,000 Jews survived in hiding, or by pretending to be 'Aryans' with the help of false identity documents.
- § Jews living 'on the surface' as 'Aryans' needed help to escape from ghettos or camps, find shelter, and obtain documents.
- § Jews hiding 'under the surface' needed helpers to provide shelter, food, and clothing, often at the risk of their lives. Such help usually had to be paid for, sometimes at exorbitant prices, but many thousands of people helped Jews without asking for any money in return.

Both the Jews and their protectors feared betrayal by ordinary people, and were hunted by blackmailers and the police. Penalties for helping Jews were severe: more than 1,000 people lost their lives, and many more were sent to concentration camps. One third of the Jews in hiding died.

The British experience of liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp

Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was liberated in April 1945 by units of the British Army. Newsreel coverage of the terrible sights at the camp were seen almost straight away in cinemas all over Britain, and the shock felt by those who saw them is remembered to this day. Although newspapers had carried stories about concentration camps and Nazi brutality throughout the war, it was only with the liberation of the camps and the widespread publicity given to the appalling living conditions inside them that the outside world could literally 'picture' the sadistic way in which so many had been treated.

The camp at Bergen-Belsen

Bergen-Belsen (hereafter referred to as Belsen) was a unique place in the concentration camp system. It was not an extermination centre such as Birkenau or Treblinka, nor was it a work camp like Mauthausen or Dachau. Belsen, near Hanover in north-west Germany, was established in 1943 as a special 'Exchange' camp for prominent Jews who were either citizens of neutral states or who were seen as 'useful hostages' for the German Reich. Foreign prisoners held at Belsen could be sent back to their own countries in exchange for German citizens interned abroad.

Living conditions deteriorate

Conditions in the camp were initially quite good, by concentration camp standards, but from 1944 they deteriorated rapidly. In March 1944 the camp was re-designated as a 'Recovery Camp' [*Ehrholungslager*] for prisoners from other camps who were considered too ill to work. Consequently, the population of Belsen began to rise, sharply.

Abel J. Herzberg describes life inside the camp in September 1944 in his diary:

'When we get up in the mornings it is still night; in the evenings it already starts to get dark while we are having our meal and once again the melancholy of winter threatens in the background. There is no light. A single bulb in the faltering shadow over the people crouching closely together.'

In November 1944 he wrote:

'It is snowing. I believe no place on earth has a worse climate than Belsen. There is no heating, the food is bad, our shoes are broken, our feet are swollen, and our hands and feet are sore from injuries.'

IWM Document reference: 95/35/1

By the end of 1944 the war was going badly for the Germans. The twin onslaughts of the British and American forces in the west and the Red Army in the east forced German forces back into the centre of their diminishing Reich. The Nazi concentration camps in the paths of these advancing Allied armies were cleared, and their exhausted, sick and dying inhabitants sent to Belsen. The prisoners were usually marched hundreds of miles with little sleep or food. Many died on these treacherous journeys in the winter and early spring of 1945. These excruciating journeys became known as the Death Marches.

The facilities at Belsen were unable to cope with this influx of sick and exhausted people. Basic services, such as food, water and sanitation, soon collapsed. In such poor conditions diseases such as typhus, dysentery and tuberculosis flourished and quickly reached epidemic proportions. By April 1945 there were over 60,000 prisoners living in Belsen in appalling conditions.

NAZI PERSECUTION



IWM Negative Number: BU 3805

The Liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp April 1945: Women and children herded together in one of the barrack blocks.

A brief history of the last months of the camp at Belsen

- § January 1945 Thousands of prisoners, evacuated from other concentration camps in Eastern Europe, are sent to Belsen. The camp is forced to expand to accommodate the swelling numbers, but it is still overcrowded.
- § February 1945 Camp population is around 22,000 (men and women). 7,000 of these die during the following month. Typhus, tuberculosis and dysentery are now widespread in the camp.
- § March 1945 Now surviving on starvation rations (one bowl of thin soup a day) the death toll at the camp rises sharply. From a population of 41,520, a further 18,168 people die during March. There is evidence of cannibalism in the camp.

- § 1 April 1945 More prisoners arrive. There are an estimated 44,000 people living in the camp. 9,000 people die over the next two weeks. With few facilities to dispose of the bodies, many are left lying all over the camp. The inadequate sanitary system breaks down, causing the further spread of disease.

- § 8 April 1945 The camp has reached saturation point, but still more prisoners continue to arrive from other camps. Total population is around 60,000. With no space left, some people are housed in nearby army barracks.

- § 11 April 1945 As British forces advance SS guards attempt to conceal the 10,000 unburied corpses.

The liberation of Belsen

After the Normandy landings on D-Day on 6 June 1944 and the Allied invasion of mainland Europe, British and American forces fought their way through Nazi-occupied France and the Low Countries. The Allies' aim was to force the Germans back into Germany, liberating the towns and cities as their forces advanced across the continent. The Soviet forces would do the same on the Eastern front until they Western and Eastern fronts met in the middle and secured victory over Nazi Germany.

The Allies forced the German front line back (eastwards) through France and parts of the Netherlands and, by February 1945, had begun marching over the border of Germany. By March, the British and American forces were moving eastwards into central Germany, southwards into Nazi-controlled Austria and northwards towards Germany's northern sea borders. British forces reached the area near Belsen, in northern Germany, in early April 1945.

On 12 April, the 11th Armoured Division made an agreement with the retreating German forces that they would be able to enter the concentration camp at Belsen peacefully. British forces now in the region created a 48 square kilometre area around the Camp, into which only medical units associated with relief work were permitted to go.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



Imperial War Museum BU 3624 IWM Negative Number: BU 3624

Two blindfolded German officers are led through British lines after the conclusions of negotiations for a truce, under which it was agreed that a 48 square kilometre area around the camp was to be evacuated and placed out of bounds to combatant units of both sides other than those engaged in relief work at the camp.

The horrifying scenes found by the British Army, when they liberated the camp on 15 April 1945, have gone down in history as some of the most shocking images of the Second World War. The Camp Commandant, Josef Kramer – nicknamed 'The Beast of Belsen' – and all remaining SS personnel were immediately put under arrest.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945: PORTRAITS OF BELSEN GUARDS AT CELLE AWAITING TRIAL, AUGUST 1945



IWM Negative Number BU 9711

Josef Kramer: known as the "Beast of Belsen", sentenced to death.

The cramped accommodation and evident inhuman treatment of the camp prisoners came as a major shock to the Allied soldiers. To this day, some of the British servicemen and relief workers present at the camp still have difficulty in describing their experiences of Belsen. The soldiers and medical staff present at Belsen did not know, initially, that the scenes they were witnessing were repeated elsewhere in Germany and Poland.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3745

The desolate scene in the camp as inmates scavenge among the rubbish for food.

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IWM Negative Number: BU 3764

The Liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp: A general view of part of Belsen concentration camp after its liberation by the British Army.

Over the next month over 10,000 former prisoners died at Belsen. After evacuating the camp of all remaining prisoners the British burned the camp buildings to prevent the spread of Typhus. Later a Displaced Persons camp was established at the site of a military school barracks near to the former camp site.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 6674

The ceremonial burning down of the last hut at Belsen.

What happened after liberation?

Many of the prisoners were gravely ill and continued to die, even after liberation. Preventing the spread of disease was an almost impossible task for the British forces. They began by moving the bodies that littered the grounds of the camp into mass graves.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3725

Women carry a corpse from one of the huts toward a pile of bodies lying in the open. As inmates died in the huts their bodies were simply thrown out and left in the open.

This created space for people to spread out and a cleaner atmosphere to combat the spread of infection. As the dead were buried, the living could begin to be rehabilitated. Basic food was introduced to the camp prisoners, but it was important not to over-feed the starving inmates. Some soldiers made the mistake of giving their chocolate rations to the former prisoners of the camp. Having survived for so long on meagre starvation rations, those who promptly ate normal meals could not digest their food and many more died.

Post-war Belsen

After the end of the Second World War and the rehabilitation of the former prisoners, Belsen continued to be in service as a camp, but now under the control of the Allies. Officially a Displaced Person's (DP) camp, it housed people who had lost their families, friends and homes until they were able to start rebuilding their lives.

By November 1945 the Jewish survivors of Belsen had formed their own barracks within the camp, making it home to the only exclusively Jewish Displaced Person's camp in the British zone of Germany. The inhabitants of the camp were politically active and created a camp committee soon after liberation. They elected Josef Rosensaft as camp leader, who went on to form the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bergen-Belsen.

The DP inhabitants formed an orphanage, kindergarten and primary and secondary schools, as well as a dedicated religious school. There was a lively and varied cultural and religious life in the camp and a resurgence of family life; there were, on average, twenty weddings a day in the months following liberation.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 7802

Miss Irene Mandel, a teacher and a former prisoner at Belsen, working at the school set up for children at the camp.

A number of memorials were built at the site of the former camp in the late 1940s and in 1966 a document centre was opened where the history of the camp is illustrated. A major new museum is planned to open at the site in 2006.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 12850

The unveiling of the Jewish memorial stone at Belsen. The inscription reads "Earth conceal not the blood shed on thee". The memorial was erected under the auspices of the Central Jewish Committee for the British Zone of Occupation.

Remembering the Holocaust

Many survivors of the Holocaust, including former prisoners of Bergen-Belsen, now live in the United Kingdom. On 27 January 2005 a group of 600 survivors met with HM The Queen at St James' Palace to mark national Holocaust Memorial Day. The Imperial War Museum held a day-long conference on the liberation of Belsen on the 60th anniversary of the arrival of British troops in the camp on Friday 15 April 2005.

Holocaust Memorial Day – held annually on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – aims to remember all the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution.

Text by James Taylor (Holocaust) and Steve Slack (Belsen)

Holocaust: Enquiry 1

Enquiry title	How can sources help us to form a better understanding of the Holocaust?
Rationale and learning intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § To test students' knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust by presenting evidence in the form of an investigation § To develop further students' historical skills by asking them to construct an objective and balanced narrative based around a selection of sources and other research § To use the experiences of one survivor (Anita Lasker-Wallfisch) as an illustration of the ways in which individual lives and whole cultures were shattered by the Holocaust and subsequently reconstructed § To encourage students to devise further lines of enquiry in order to flesh out their narrative § To get students working together and to present their narrative in ways that best suit their preferred learning styles
Resources required	Resource A: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch Resource B: Further material on Anita Lasker-Wallfisch Resource L: Teacher guidance
1 – Introduction	<p>When school groups visit the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition, they are encouraged to engage in a number of preparatory activities. There are reasons for this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § The pre-visit materials include a video programme 'The Way We Lived' and a resource called 'Torn Apart', devised by Paul Salmons. Both examine the need to understand the Holocaust, not only in terms of an individual story between, say, 1939 and 1945, but also to see it in terms of the wider communities, culture and ways of life that were destroyed and then needed to be rebuilt. In other words, to look at the experiences of those affected by the Holocaust across Europe and communities in the wider context of their lives <i>before, during and after</i> the Holocaust. § Another preparatory activity involves getting students to consider the nature of sources and artefacts and the ways they are used to construct a narrative for a museum or particular exhibition. On their return from the exhibition, students are then asked to devise an exhibition of their own and to justify their choices of particular exhibits or artefacts within it. This encourages them to consider the variety of decisions that are made when presenting information to an audience that may or may not be coming to a subject for the first time. <p>A visit to the Exhibition should not be seen as the quickest means by which the Holocaust can be 'done'. There is no substitute for considered and well-planned schemes of work that require time for detailed learning and reflection by both students and their teachers. A visit therefore should be one of a variety of ways in which such understanding can be developed.</p>
2 – Background	<p>This enquiry line aims to show the ways in which entire cultures were destroyed by the Holocaust, which then needed to be rebuilt after 1945. Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's experiences are just one way to illustrate this in microcosm. Hers was a happy, cultured life pre-war that was distorted beyond all recognition by Gestapo prison, Auschwitz and Belsen. After her liberation, this all needed to be pieced back together somehow, if this was even possible given her experiences. Her life story,</p>

	as depicted in <u>Inherit the Truth 1939-1945</u> and on her CD 'Testament', presents students with an opportunity to investigate these very things and then use their findings as a springboard into more detailed enquiries into other victims, perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers or simply events.
3 – Anita Lasker-Wallfisch	Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's place as a cellist in the camp orchestra at Auschwitz encourages consideration of the role of the individual as well as the concept of culture and the Holocaust, in this case music. Germany was, for centuries, considered to be one of the cultural centres of Europe and yet the same men who were requesting performances of Bach, Schubert and Brahms were also willing to carry out extreme torture and gas men, women and children in their hundreds of thousands. Some of the complexities and nuances of the Holocaust are demonstrated here. Even though people may think they know about the Holocaust, they can hardly fail to be moved by the idea that Anita survived because of her musical talent. She was helped by musical Germans and guards who appreciated music. As she herself notes: <i>'There were indeed some Germans – sadly not enough of them – whose behaviour was beyond reproach.'</i> ¹ Yet the questions remain: What was the place of an orchestra in a death camp? Are there any other accounts by other witnesses of the same things? After the war, how could she pick up a musical instrument when it must have carried the most appalling of connotations with it? What happened to her and her family after the war? What does she do today?
4 – The Purpose of the Resources	The extracts are all taken from <u>Inherit the Truth 1939-1945</u> Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, (London, DLM 1996) and have been deliberately chosen to accomplish two things: § Students should, by the vague nature and seeming randomness of the extracts, be forced into devising further questions about the individual as well as about the Holocaust. This should prompt further research, i.e. the search for pictures and other accounts to provide context to the narrative. § The fragmentary nature and subject-matter of the sources can inspire students to use their skills and their own creativity to present their findings in a variety of ways. In the same way that their subject survived by virtue of a special talent, students should be given the freedom to explore their own.
5 – Using the Resources	The sources vary in length and difficulty, enabling differentiation to take place. There should be enough sources, if deemed desirable, for a whole class to have one or more each. Teachers should deliberately present the sources as they are here, without footnote details or pictures. If, for example, Lasker-Wallfisch's CD is played, no clues should be given that the sources are about her. Students should use the clues to figure this out for themselves. Before looking at the sources, students can use the following exemplar questionnaire as a mechanism by which to reflect upon and plan their investigations: § What information can be gleaned from the sources? § What don't the extracts tell me? What questions will I need to ask to find out more? § What <i>specific</i> areas of the Holocaust do I need to investigate

¹ Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth 1939-1945* (London, DLM 1996) p.19
Holocaust: Enquiry 1

	<p>further?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § How will I present my findings? I.e. an analysis of the arguments for and against this approach. § What do I need to do to start with? § Where can I find the information I am looking for? § What is my action plan? § What do I need to do following my review of my draft? § What are the strengths and weaknesses of my completed presentation? <p>The extracts can be studied in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § They could all be given out and placed in chronological order. From this, comprehension questions or those about what more would need to be known before a narrative can be written could be devised. § Alternatively, individuals or pairs could take each source and draw up a list of questions about what more would be needed to make it informative/ useful/ reliable/ etc. § Another option might be to divide the class into four or more groups and give them a number of sources each. These can be chosen to illustrate the before, during and after, or the themes that emerge e.g. help from unexpected sources, etc. The idea is that they only see a part of the picture. <p>Once an initial feedback session has taken place and it is clear that each group might be dealing with the same person, more collaborative work can take place to develop the story. Students can visit other groups to find out more and feedback to their own.</p> <p>A final point: what do pupils make of the fact that the vast majority of these sources deal with the period prior to her time in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen? This is very much reflected in <u>Inherit the Truth</u>. Only three of its eleven chapters deal with the horrors of the camps, and these are amongst the shortest in the book. The rest deal in far greater detail with life before and after the Holocaust. Consequently, another question for students might be: 'Why is this the case?'</p>
6 – Accuracy and objectivity	<p>Two further points need to be made. Correctly cited sources, such as images, can enhance understanding of an event. Incorrect captions, such as identifying a location in an image wrongly for example, could completely change how the event is perceived. It is hoped that this activity will encourage a focus on accuracy and correct attribution. Furthermore, all the extracts come from the one source to reinforce that objective narrative can only be constructed from a variety of sources. A major pitfall of many students' coursework, for example, is an over-reliance on a single source, text or web-site. Hence, students should be forced to seek out <u>a number of sources</u> in the presentation of their narrative. Ultimately, it is important that students' understanding of an event is affected by their knowledge about the source of information. A range of sources and interpretations must be examined and evaluated before fuller understanding can be attained.</p>

Holocaust: Enquiry 2

Enquiry title	What was it like to experience the liberation of Bergen-Belsen?
Rationale and learning intentions	<p>This focus of this enquiry is on sources that describe the conditions at Bergen-Belsen at the time of liberation from the viewpoints of both victim and liberator.</p> <p>In reviewing these different perspectives, students should come to an understanding of why the camp's liberation was such a shock to the people of Britain when reports first reached home.</p> <p>In analysing these sources, students can be encouraged to raise appropriate questions and identify areas for further investigation.</p> <p>Not all sources need necessarily be read. Should the relevant facilities be available, differing pupil learning styles could be addressed by playing the Dimbleby BBC broadcast for auditory learners and showing the Gunner Illingworth film-clip to visual learners, to cite but two examples.</p>
Resources required	<p>Resource C: The British response to Belsen</p> <p>Resource D: Liberation</p> <p>Resource E: The challenges of liberation</p> <p>Resource L: Teacher guidance</p>
<u>1 Key questions</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the British respond to their discovery of Belsen? (Resource C) • How did Jewish inmates react to their liberation? (Resource D) • What were the main challenges facing the liberators of Belsen? (Resource E)
2 Using the resources	<p>Pupils should be divided into groups and allocated one of the key questions. Each group should use the relevant Resource to produce a presentation to the other groups on their allotted key question. The results could be presented in a variety of mediums e.g. read aloud or by means of a poster that draws on key sources that illustrate the answer to the given key question. Some Resource material will be relevant to more than one question.</p> <p>Alternatively, higher ability groups could tackle all three sections and examine the situation before, during and after liberation using all the Resources as well as devising further questions that they would like to have answered. For instance, <i>'why are there no sources that tell us what happened to the perpetrators?'</i></p>

Holocaust: Enquiry 3

Enquiry title	How has the Holocaust been remembered?
Rationale and learning intentions	<p>The focus of this enquiry is on the ways in which the Holocaust has been written about, portrayed and commemorated over the last 60 years. In reviewing different interpretations of the Holocaust using modern media and materials, pupils are more likely to engage with the subject and thus be able to identify and analyse different perspectives. To develop these further, pupils can be encouraged to raise appropriate questions and identify the reasons behind divergent interpretations.</p> <p>A range of different teaching strategies and media are recommended so that a variety of different learning styles and interests can be addressed.</p>
Resources required	<p>Resource F: Film and television Resource G: Websites Resource H: Commemorative events Resource I: Survivor testimony Resource J: Opinion formers Resource K: Art, music and literature Resource L: Teacher guidance</p>
1 – Introduction	<p>These activities are based upon a presumption that the Holocaust has been studied thoroughly. They could form the basis for a final, summative piece of work or assessment.</p> <p>By way of review work, pupils should be encouraged to demonstrate that they understand the context of the Holocaust and the fact that this is an event that contains complexities and nuances. Furthermore, it is important that they understand the subject from the perspectives of not only the victims, but also of perpetrators and bystanders.</p>
2 – Discussion	<p>A good starting point for discussion would be a quote by Professor Yehuda Bauer, eminent Holocaust historian at the International School of Holocaust Education at Yad Vashem. On 26 January 2000, he said:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I come from a people who gave Ten Commandments to the world. Time has come to strengthen them by three additional ones... Thou shalt not be a Perpetrator; Thou shalt not be a Victim; And Thou shalt never, but never, be a Bystander.”</i></p> <p>This illustrates the importance of Holocaust education, whilst also serving as a launching pad into a brainstorm about the different ways in which the Holocaust is taught and remembered.</p>

<p>3 – Sources of interpretation</p>	<p>One can test understanding of key concepts as well as highlighting some different sources of interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Fact-based, fictional and documentary filmic and televisual interpretations § Holocaust-related websites § Holocaust Museums § Commemorative events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, held every 27 January § Hearing or reading Survivor testimony § The views of opinion-formers § Artistic representations of the Holocaust, including art, music and literature <p>Resources F-K provide guidance to explore these sources of information.</p> <p>Teachers may choose to refine the task so that only one of these areas is addressed. However, depending on the time available, the age and ability of the group, it is recommended that at least three of the subject areas be explored.</p>
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The Holocaust Resource A: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

Up to [1933] I had had a sheltered and extremely happy life. I was my parents' third daughter much to the dismay of my father, who wanted three sons. My father was a lawyer of some repute, and my mother, apart from being very beautiful, had many accomplishments. She was exceptionally clever with her hands and made all our clothes herself. But most important, she was a fine violinist. I remember vividly the cosy feeling I had lying in bed listening to her practising... My father loved singing and we had a lot of chamber music in the house. All three of us learned instruments. My eldest sister Marianne played the piano and Renate the violin. I was the cellist...²

We were encouraged to speak French and had a French governess for a while. My father had a great love of languages. He maintained that people have as many souls as they have languages. He was very anxious that we should not forget the French we had learned while the governess was with us, and it was a rule in our house that on Sundays only French was spoken.³

Life was pretty good, and it seemed inconceivable that it should not go on forever. I suppose ours was a typical middle-class assimilated Jewish family. There was little emphasis on our Jewishness, but I remember that my parents went to synagogue on the high holidays and that we spent Pessach, the festival commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, at my maternal grandmother's home.⁴

A fellow pupil in the small private school I attended would snatch the sponge from me as I was about to wipe the blackboard and say: 'don't let the Jew have the sponge'; or children would spit at me and call me 'a dirty Jew'.⁵

I remember certain laws coming into force. All Jewish females had to add the name 'Sarah', and all the males 'Israel', to their signature. We were no longer allowed to employ household help under the age of 45 for fear of 'Rassenschande', racial pollution. Jews had to attend Jewish schools, and the infamous notice 'JUDEN UNERWÜNSCHT', 'Jews not welcome', appeared more and more frequently in public places like restaurants and cinemas.⁶

² Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Inherit the Truth, p.17

³ Ibid, p.17

⁴ Ibid, p.17

⁵ Ibid, p.18

⁶ Ibid, p.18

My father escaped arrest on that notorious 'Kristallnacht'... as it became known, on 9th November [1938] thanks to the courage of a great friend of ours, Walter Mathias Mehne, a violin-maker in Breslau. He was not a Jew, and he deliberately ignored the fact that the streets were crawling with members of the Gestapo looking for Jews. He climbed the stairs to our flat, took my father with him, and drove him around town in his car for the rest of the day...⁷

Breslau, 3rd June 1939

Dear Marianne,

... This morning at 7 o'clock I took Eva to the station. Our meetings [of the Jewish Youth Organisation] now consist of Steffi, Susi, Eva and myself... Konrad has written to you twice. He urgently needs a certificate to say he is a member of 'Werkleute' [the name of our group]. Why don't you answer? His case is getting more and more pressing. Things look blacker and blacker here. Please take this more seriously. So much can result from negligence. Maybe a letter got lost...

That's all for today... Write by return!

Yours, Anita⁸

Dr. Lasker, Breslau 13, Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse 69,

Breslau, 23rd July 1939

Dear Mrs. Wolf,

I beg to inform you that we got a refuse [sic] from the Aid Committee in London, owing to our high waiting number for America. The committee asks me to present alternative plans for re-emigration....

We are very discouraged by this answer and are now forced to get out our children as quick as possible.

Fortunately we have got a good chance to settle our youngest daughter Anita in France, where she would be able to continue her studies on the violoncello. We hope this chance will be realised, so that only Renate - 15½ years old - would have to be settled in England. Perhaps it would be easier to find hospitality for my daughter Renate, if I inform you that she would get a security of £50...

I am so sorry to trouble you with my great sorrows again; but the new turn of things made the situation for my children more urgent than ever. We are very thankful to you that you took matters in hand...

I am yours very sincerely,

Alfons Lasker⁹

One unassailable institution in our family was the Saturday afternoon 'Kaffe und Kuchen' [Coffee and Cake]. We would all gather without fail around the table, drink coffee and have a wonderful choice of 'Zehnpfenningstücke' [small individual pastries]; and my father would read to us or tell us stories about the war and the trenches. I am referring to the First World War of course.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid, p.19

⁸ Ibid, p.21

⁹ Ibid, p.24

¹⁰ Ibid, p.29

My mother [Edith] wrote to Marianne on 15th January 1941:
...The four of us are still together here. Tita [my nickname] has not run away any more [this relates to my abortive attempt to go back to Berlin to continue my studies]. The co-habitation with K and E and dog is not always pure joy. But it would be difficult for u to find a small flat and also we would have scarcely anything left to furnish it with. Alma [our maid] is no longer with us and we manage the household between us. Because of this I rarely get to my violin, but I do try to keep in practice somehow by playing chamber music. Fortunately I still have a sewing machine and I have even been making things for people outside the immediate family...¹¹

January 1941

Dearest M,

I am writing to you in bed because I have no time out of bed. You won't believe how much I have to do. Apart from school, where I have to go every afternoon and sometimes in the morning too, I have 'Auerbach' [Harmony lessons] twice a week and I am giving Latin coaching lessons to three people, which brings in quite a considerable sum of money.

To cap this all, there is a concert here on Thursday in the 'Kulturbund' where I will playing a sonata...

Yours, dead-tired,

Anita¹²

October 1941

My dearest M,

...As to my - or rather our - occupation, you already know what we are doing from Renate's letter... I am now in fact in a paper factory [at Sacrau] and serve the multitude by providing toilet-rolls with labels. I have attained a dexterity at doing this which I'll probably never reach on the cello! I'm sticking labels on about 5,000 rolls daily, work in two shifts, 6-2 and 2-10, and have a journey of approximately one hour. Renate is working in a different department: napkins. This is considerably better but the hours are longer and she has to get up every morning (most Sundays included) at 4a.m...

From yours,

Anita¹³

...by then we had done most of our 'dirty work', which consisted mainly of procuring civilian clothes and forging passes. Both Renate and I were able to write the German Gothic script, and we still had a typewriter, which was all that was left from my father's thriving practice. The papers we produced were 'leave passes' for French civilian workers, of whom there were many in Germany at that time (as well as POWs). The civilian workers were young men who had been rounded up by the Germans in France and sent to work in Germany. The 'official' stamp for these passes was furnished by other people, whose identity I did not know, but who were undoubtedly members of the French Resistance.... Our link with the French Resistance finally led to our own arrest in 1942.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid, p.33

¹² Ibid, p.36

¹³ Ibid, pp.41-42

¹⁴ Ibid, p.43

While we were doing our stint at the factory, the dreaded day came. My aunt and uncle had already been deported, and on the 9th April 1942 it was my parents' turn. They were not arrested in the street, but they were given 24 hours' notice to report at an assembly point.... Our parents were sent to place called Izbica, near Lublin... The last message we received from my father was on a postcard. G-d knows how he managed to smuggle it out. All it contained was the quotation from the psalm, and the PS that my mother was unable to add anything because she was not well.... That is all that I am left with as far as my parents are concerned. To think that 35 years later my sister should have been threatened with legal proceedings because she had had occasion to speak on German television about the fate of her parents, and had promptly been accused of 'defaming the reputation of the SS'...¹⁵

Next on the list for deportation was my [82 year old] grandmother [Flora]... She did not really understand what was happening to her – thank G-d – and she retained her pride and dignity until the end... A Gestapo man sat at a table reading out names... When he called 'Lasker', my grandmother walked past the table, but not without stopping in front of the Gestapo man. She looked him straight in the face, and said very loudly: 'Frau Lasker to you'. I thought he would hit her there and then, but not a bit of it. He just said simply: 'Frau Lasker'. I was extremely proud of her as she passed him unmolested. An object lesson in the treatment of bullies.¹⁶

...I carried with me a little glass bottle containing cyanide. It had been given to me by my good friend Konrad... For reasons best known to himself, he asked me one day to return the poison to him until I was ready to embark on my escape. This I did, and he duly gave it back to me as he had promised...
...There was a complete blackout at that point, and off we walked, Renate and I, and all the other people who had been arrested with us, encircled by the Gestapo and their dogs. As I said, neither of us was madly sold on the idea of taking the poison and we certainly did not want to die at different times. We decided to count up to three and... go... As my tongue touched the white powder, I imagined I was dying and I remember that I felt very faint. But, lo and behold, I was not dying but still marching along.¹⁷

For my friend Konrad, guided by great wisdom, had substituted icing-sugar for the cyanide during the brief period in which he had taken back the little bottle... I met my friend again after the war. He came to see me at the Lüneberg Trial, where I was a witness. I thanked him for the icing-sugar!¹⁸

The most striking features are the echoes and the never-ending sound of jangling keys. The cells were small and intended for one person, not four, the number of people in ours. Conditions were pretty rough. In those days, there were no outings to lavatories. There was simply a 'Kübel' [a bucket which rested on a wooden construction] in one corner of the cell. It did have a lid but that is the only thing one could say in its favour...¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid, compiled from p.45, p.46 and p.47

¹⁶ Ibid, p.49

¹⁷ Ibid, p.52

¹⁸ Ibid, p.52

¹⁹ Ibid, p.54

We decided to come clean about our real identity. We asked to see the prison Governor, who turned out to be a highly intelligent and civilised lady... We went to see her and admitted that we were not French but plain Jewish girls by the name of Renate and Anita Lasker, and not Demontaigne. She took it fairly well, as far as I can recollect.²⁰

A few days later I was called to the office of the Chief Warden, and as I was clattering down the iron stairs in my wooden clogs, I knew that my days in Jauer were numbered. Standing next to the Warden was a man in a leather coat who handed me a document and ordered me to sign it. It was the official order for my transfer to Auschwitz.
Renata Lasker²¹

Like Renata, I had become well informed about the goings on Auschwitz. Prisoners sent back to my prison from Auschwitz for further interrogation had also confirmed the rumours about the gas chambers. There was less and less doubt in my mind about what the future held for me...
The day came and my name was called. It was early December 1943. I had to go for a 'medical examination' – can you believe it? – and sign a piece of paper to say that I was going to Auschwitz 'voluntarily'.²²

When I try to recall my first impressions of Auschwitz, what comes to mind is figures in black capes, dogs barking and a great deal of shouting. We... waited in the barracks until daybreak. I was not aware at the time that I had already overcome the first hurdle. As a rule, when transports arrived at Birkenau, there was a reception committee of SS men who made a 'selection' there and then of who was to enter the camp and who was to go straight to the gas chambers... I had been sent with a prison transport of relatively few people, all of whom had been the subject of court cases and had been given prison sentences. That classified us as 'Karteihäftlinge', that is, prisoners with a file. This status meant that we could not be sent to the gas chamber, allegedly so that we could be available in case we received a summons to appear in court... Clearly, it was better then to arrive in Auschwitz as a convicted criminal than as an innocent citizen.²³

At the first light of day, we were taken to a different barracks or 'block'... There the 'welcoming ceremony' took place: I had to take my clothes off, my head was shaved and the number 69388 was tattooed onto my left forearm. It was done, as I only slowly realised, not by Germans but by prisoners whose job it was to work in that block... While this initiation was going on, the prisoners performing these tasks kept bombarding me with questions. Everybody was starved of news from the outside world. The girl who processed me asked me where I came from, what my name was, how long I thought the war would last, and what I was doing before I was arrested... I will never know what prompted me to tell her that I played the cello... 'This is fantastic,' she said, and grabbed me. 'Stand aside. You will be saved...'
...I did not remain in the Quarantine Block for long. One day an SS officer called for 'the cellist'. His name was Hoessler. He took me to the Music Block, and there I saw Alma Rosé again – a whole lot of other people with instruments..²⁴

²⁰ Ibid, p.54

²¹ Ibid, p.67

²² Ibid, p.70

²³ Ibid, p.71

²⁴ Ibid, compiled from pp.71 & 73

I was once asked on TV – and I was quite unprepared for the question: ‘Weren’t you scared out of your wits all the time you were at Auschwitz?’ Interestingly, my answer was ‘no’. I have often thought about it since, and the only explanation I have is that fear is like an ache. If you live with it long enough, you do get used to it.²⁵

Our main function was to go to the Main Gate every morning and every evening and play marches for the thousands of prisoners who worked outside the camp, at places like I G Farben, inter alia [amongst others]. It was imperative that these columns of prisoners should march neatly and in step, and we provided the music to achieve this. We sat out there in all weathers, sometimes in subzero temperatures, scantily dressed and we played. In this uniquely strategic position we witnessed all sorts of things. For instance, prisoners unlucky enough to be caught with ‘treasures’ which they had managed to ‘organise’, hoping they would not be frisked by the SS, would be made to kneel down and eat whatever they were caught with. I once saw a women being forced to eat a packet of cigarettes.²⁶

The more I think about it, the more I realise that, for me at least, it is not possible to describe life in Auschwitz-Birkenau adequately. Certain words and images do come to me, though, and will convey some of the ingredients of this hell on earth... the stench of burning corpses... smoke... hunger... despair... screaming... Müselmänner (emaciated people, in camp language)... And yet behind all the hopelessness a kind of life still went on.²⁷

The biggest problem at the beginning of our stay at Belsen was that there was no room for us. I believe our part of the camp held about 1,000 people, and we were 3,000 new arrivals. These figures may not be absolutely accurate, but the fact remained there were no quarters for us. It was winter. We stood in line, and we were issued with one blanket and eating utensils. Then the circus began.²⁸

One night a terrible storm broke out over Lüneburg Heath, the rain pelting down. It proved too much for the tents. They collapsed on top of us in the middle of the night, and that was that. It was pitch dark and there we were, with the tent flattened, and everybody struggling to get free. Somehow we managed to untangle ourselves... we just stood there in the open in the pouring rain, the wind howling, for the rest of the night. It is astonishing how much the human body can endure. We were all deeply undernourished and badly clothed – in short, not in the pink of condition. And although it was freezing and we were drenched through, I did not catch a cold.²⁹

Belsen was not equipped to cope with anything – least of all with the sick and the dead. It did not possess the ‘facilities’ available in Auschwitz, where bodies could be ‘processed’ with comparative ease. Auschwitz was a place where people were murdered. In Belsen they perished.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid, p.75

²⁶ Ibid, p.76

²⁷ Ibid, p.81

²⁸ Ibid, p.89

²⁹ Ibid, p.90

³⁰ Ibid, p.91

The days went by, and the weather improved. Although it was a relief not to be freezing all the time, conditions in the camp continued to deteriorate. Food became sparser every day, and then we began to have days without any food at all. People died like flies. Corpses began to pile up and decompose in the warmer weather. We moved about like zombies.³¹

The name Irma Grese may ring a bell. She had been a guard at Birkenau, and one day she appeared in Belsen. She was always accompanied by a dog. There was much publicity in the papers about her when she eventually sat in the dock at the trial in Lüneburg in 1945. She was good-looking, and therefore deserved more attention than the other ugly brutes. In reality, she was as mean and vicious as the rest of them. Anyway, Irma Grese came up to me one day in Belsen and started to make 'friendly' conversation. It was unheard of... It was obvious: the end must be near.³²

Many of the events of the day are rather hazy but I remember certain details... I left my sister in the care of a comrade and went in search of water... The soup that was occasionally distributed in minute quantities was mainly water and quite undrinkable. I had managed to 'organise' a rusty bucket and went to the camp entrance... The Germans had evaporated. No one at all stopped me. I filled my bucket and returned through the gate. There I was met by a horde of prisoners, half dead with thirst, trying to get hold of some of the water... I returned to the barracks empty-handed. I helped my sister off her bunk and led her into the open air. We sat on the ground, leaning against the hut. In front of us... next to us... corpses. R.L.³³

Belsen Camp, 2nd June 1945

Dear Marianne,

The bearer of this letter is going on leave tomorrow and I am taking advantage of it to send you a direct message... When we receive your first letter addressed direct to us I will be able to write very differently. And please, please send us some photographs... With the wonderful weather we are having at the moment, it is even more difficult to believe that we are alive...

All our love,

Yours A.³⁴

There was a great deal of looting in the early days after the liberation. I admit that I joined one of the looting parties myself one day, though I found the experience far from exhilarating. I remember finding myself in a house belonging to some Germans, the general idea being to help oneself to whatever took one's fancy. There was a child in the house who looked at me with total incomprehension. It made me realise that a thief is a thief whatever the circumstances. I left without touching a thing. There could never be adequate compensation for the losses we had sustained. Looting was not the answer.³⁵

³¹ Ibid, p.92

³² Ibid, p.93

³³ Ibid, p.95

³⁴ Ibid, pp.102-103 adapted

³⁵ Ibid, pp.108-109

Belsen Camp, 23rd September 1945

Dearest M,

...In the past few days the following things have happened: On Wednesday afternoon I went to Hamburg disguised as a Red Cross officer... At 1 a.m. I was back in Belsen, and at 7 a.m. I went to Lüneburg as a 'witness' in the Belsen Trial... In the evening, when the court had adjourned, I tore back to Belsen illegally because I had given a holy, holy promise not to let down the evening performance of the Jewish Theatre...

...More soon...

Yours Anita³⁶

At long last the day we dreamed of came!... 11 months after the liberation we had been allowed to go to England!... Now all we had to do was buy some tickets. Yet again UNRRA did their bit and gave us the money that was needed. I believe they were paid back later on. We travelled to Ostend accompanied by as many friends as could come, and boarded the boat. It was 18th March 1946.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid, pp.123-124

³⁷ Ibid, p.142

The Holocaust Resource B: Further material on Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

A recorded interview in English with Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, made in 1991, is available at the Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/sound.htm>)
Reference code(s): 11914

Title: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch Interview, Date(s): 1933-1945

Extent and medium of the unit of description (quantity, bulk, size): 4 tapes

Scope and content:

- Reel 1: Recollections of family and educational background. Recollections of life in Breslau and Berlin, Germany after Nazis came to power, 1933-1939: anti-Semitism; first restrictions against Jews; moving to Berlin to study cello; Kristallnacht, 1938 attempts of family to emigrate. Recollections of life in Germany after outbreak of war, 1939-1943: reaction to outbreak of war, impact of everyday life; working in toilet paper factory; living standards; deportation of parents 1942; forging papers for French workers.
- Reel 2: attempting to escape to France with forged papers. Recollections of arrest, imprisonment and trial, 1943: attitude towards helping French workers: suicide attempt; interrogation by Gestapo; transfer to Justice Department after 21 days trial; trial at Sondergericht May-June 1943; imprisonment return to Gestapo custody. Recollections of period of internment at Auschwitz-Birkenau: procedure on arrival; selection for women's camp orchestra.
- Reel 3: Role and organisation of orchestra. Recollections of internment at Bergen-Belsen: comparison between Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz; disorganisation of camp; remaining with women's orchestra friends in Bergen-Belsen; liberation of Bergen-Belsen; Hungarian guards; conditions. Further recollections of period at Auschwitz: privileges for women's orchestra.
- Reel 4: Conditions for women's orchestra at Auschwitz; description of 'Canada' warehouse where inmate's belongings kept.

Conditions governing access: Facilities for listening to tapes are available by appointment.

Conditions governing reproduction: Copyright held by the Imperial War Museum.

Reproductions can be ordered for a fee.

Contact details: Office Manager, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ
Telephone: 020 7416 5363, Fax: 020 7416 5379, Email address: sound@iwm.org.uk

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/4222695.stm> contains a BBC interview with Anita Lasker-Wallfisch.

The Sunday Times Review Online, dated January 16th 2005 has another interview at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2092-1441688_1,00.html

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch's CD "Testament", containing performances of music by Bloch, Bach, Popper, Ravel and others alongside readings from her memoirs, was released in 2002 and is available from Our World Records, catalogue number 4006.

The Holocaust Resource C: How did the British respond to their discovery of Belsen?

'I have just returned from the Belsen concentration camp where for two hours I drove slowly about the place in a jeep with the chief doctor of Second Army. I had waited a day before going to the camp so I could be absolutely sure of the facts available. I find it hard to describe adequately the horrible things I have seen and heard, but here, unadorned, are the facts.

There are forty thousand men, women and children in the camp. German and half a dozen other nationalities, thousands of them Jews. Of this total of 40 000, 4,250 are acutely ill or are dying of virulent disease. Typhus, typhoid, diphtheria, dysentery, pneumonia and childbirth fever are rife. 25 600, three quarters of them women, are either ill through lack of food or are actually dying of starvation. In the last few months alone, 30,000 prisoners have been killed off or allowed to die.

Those are the simple, horrible facts of Belsen. But horrible as they are, they can convey little or nothing in themselves. I wish with all my heart that everyone fighting in this war, and above all those whose duty it is to direct the war from Britain and America, could have come with me through the barbed-wire fence that leads to the inner compound of the camp. Outside, it had been the lucky prisoners, the men and women who had only just arrived at Belsen before we captured it. But beyond the barrier was a whirling colour of dust; the dust of thousands of slowly-moving people, laden in itself with the deadly typhus germ. And with the dust was the smell, sickly and thick, the smell of death and decay, of corruption and filth. I passed through the barrier and found myself in a nightmare. Dead bodies, some of them in decay, lay strewn about the road and along the rutted tracks. On each side of the road were brown wooden huts. There were faces at the windows, the bony, emaciated faces of starving women, too weak to come outside, propping themselves against the glass to see the daylight before they died. And they were dying, every hour and every minute. I saw a man, wandering dazedly along the road, stagger and fall. Someone else looked down at him, took him by the heels and dragged him to the side of the road to join the other bodies lying unburied there. No-one else took the slightest notice. They didn't even trouble to turn their heads. Behind the huts, two youths and two girls who had found a morsel of food were sitting together on the grass sharing it. They were not six feet from a pile of decomposing bodies.'

*BBC War Correspondent Richard Dimbleby, the first journalist to report from Belsen
IWM Sound Archive reference: 17714*

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number BU 4018

Three women lying closely packed together in one of the huts.

Today is 14th April 1945. My name is Gunner Illingworth and I live in Cheshire. I'm at present in Belsen camp doing guard duty on the SS men. The things I have seen in this camp are beyond describing. When you actually see them for yourselves, you know what you're fighting for here. Pictures in the paper can't describe it at all. The things they've committed, well, nobody would think they were human at all.

*Gunner Jim Illingworth, a British soldier present at Belsen's liberation, reporting to camera
IWM Film number: A70 514-97*

It became difficult to bury the dead, the thousands of dead. So a bulldozer was brought in, to bulldoze the dead into a huge pit and the blade sometimes didn't catch the bodies cleanly and they split open. And the smell was terrible. I soaked a handkerchief in petrol and put it over my mouth as I sat in front of the bulldozer and I couldn't stand the smell of petrol. I didn't know whether to try to bear the smell of petrol or take it off and stand the smell of death.

*Mike Lewis, Army Film & Photographic Unit cameraman during liberation of Bergen-Belsen
IWM Sound Archive reference: 4833*

This morning we buried over 5,000 bodies. Behind me is a pit, which will contain another 5,000. There are two other pits like it in preparation. All these deaths have been caused by systematic starvation and typhus and disease, which have been spread because of the treatment meted out to these poor people by their SS guards and their SS chief.

*Reverend T J Stretch, Army Chaplain present at Belsen soon after liberation
IWM Document reference: 01/30/1*

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number BU 4270

Two British Army chaplains - the Hebrew Padre Rev L H Hardman and the Roman Catholic Padre Father M C Morrison - conduct a service over one of the mass graves before it is filled in.

Conditions in the camp were becoming even more chaotic ... We took in over 2000 patients into a former 200 bedded Wehrmacht hospital. Attempts to bedpan were futile through lack of staff and pans... Our departure from Belsen was an emotional one, with patients in tears, for a strong bond of affection had developed. I shall never forget waving goodbye to men and women who in the intervening weeks looked less like walking skeletons.

Sgt P W Green, Royal Army Medical Corps, ordered to leave Belsen in July 1945 and move to Berlin

IWM Document reference: 92/28/1

The children's ward would break your heart. Tiny little scraps, two in a bed, with two big eyes staring out of a sunken face. I want to cry every time I go near the place, to think that innocent children should have suffered so much.

Miss J Rudman, a physiotherapist working at Belsen in May 1945

IWM Document reference: 94/51/1

THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE 1944-1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 6955

A sign erected by British Forces at the entrance to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Germany, 29 May 1945. The remains of the camp itself were about to be burnt to the ground by the British occupation forces. A similar sign in German was also erected.

The Holocaust Resource D: How did the Jewish inmates react to their liberation?

The barrack I was in was near the gate. One day I looked out and I could see the Lagerkommandant [Camp Commandant, Josef Kramer], with a white armband, and Irma Grese with their arms up in the air and there was a tank with soldiers, but there were no Germans. We gathered that something was happening. So I came back into the barrack and told my sister, "We are free." But she was so ill she couldn't understand what was going on. She passed away eight days after the liberation.

*Tauba Biber, liberated at Belsen
IWM Sound Archive: 17514 or 19792*

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945: PORTRAITS OF BELSEN GUARDS AT CELLE AWAITING TRIAL, AUGUST 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 9745

Irma Grese standing in the courtyard of the POW cage at Celle with Josef Kramer.

The amazing thing is that people weren't shouting, "Hooray! You're here! You've liberated us!" Everything was very quiet. We couldn't believe what we saw. And anyhow, hundreds and hundreds of people were dying and I don't know how many bodies were on the ground already decomposing. And you could see on the faces of the British troops how they could not understand what they were seeing.

*Freddie Knoller, liberated at Belsen, after spending time as a prisoner at Auschwitz,
Monowitz and Mittelbau-Dora
IWM Film Number: MGH 4509X*

You could see far away, the gate opened up and a jeep with four military police, the English dressed up in the white belts and the white gloves and the red hats. They sat in the front of the jeep, four of them with machine guns. And a truck with loudspeakers behind them, and a man said, "My dear friends..." in every language. In German, in Polish, in Yiddish, you name it. "From now on you are free. You are liberated by the Allied forces. And the Germans have nothing to do it to you anymore. You are free people." Everybody was crying. It was such an emotional experience. It's hard to describe it.

Alan Zimm, liberated at Belsen

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Personal Histories, Liberation

www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/phi_liberation_encounter_uu.htm

NAZI PERSECUTION



Imperial War Museum BU 3764

IWM Negative Number: BU 3764

The Liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp: A general view of part of Belsen concentration camp after its liberation by the British Army.

It is true that there is a difference between the funerals of today and those of yesterday. Now it is the Germans who are pushing the wagonloads of corpses. Formerly we did that. But how great is the difference, the dead are laid in mass graves whether they died as prisoners or as free men.

Bertha Ferderber-Salz, a former prisoner from And The Sun Kept Shining

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 4847

A sign over one of the mass graves reads 'Grave No 2 : 5000 lie buried here'.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3735

The crowded scene in a corridor separating two rooms in one of the huts.

It is interesting to note how the psychology acquired by the internees during their imprisonment persists with them even now – that is to say, it is still a question of every man for himself. One person will take as much food as he can, regardless of the more urgent needs of his sick neighbour. Dishonesty is prevalent and we have to keep a wary eye on our personal belonging lest any inquisitive internee should choose to 'liberate' them...

*Dr D H Forsdick, a London medical student posted to Belsen
Account of treatment of patients published in The Guy's Hospital Gazette 9th June 1945
IWM Document reference: 91/6/1*

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3745

The desolate scene in the camp as inmates scavenge among the rubbish for food.

The Holocaust Resource E: What were the main challenges facing the liberators of Belsen?

The problems were:

To stop the typhus spreading

To bury the dead before the hot summer started cholera

To feed the sick in the Horror Camp who were dying of starvation more rapidly than of their illness

To remove from the Horror Camp those who might live with some form of systematized feeding and nursing

To help those who lived regain their humanity

Lieutenant-Colonel M W Gonin recalls the main challenges at Belsen

IWM Document reference: 85/38/1

As you approach the camp for about three miles along the road you come upon notices 'DANGER - TYPHUS'. This may seem alarming and horrifying in itself, but the dreaded disease of the text books, like everything else in this nightmare world in which you find yourself, seems almost a commonplace when you are surrounded by it.

M C Carey visited Belsen on 29th April 1945. He later filed a report of what he saw in the Red Cross Society Quarterly Review

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 5467

After dressing in clean clothes a woman is dusted with DDT powder to kill the lice which spread typhus.

One day, after the camp had been liberated, a friend of mine received news of a camp in Italy for liberated boys and that her brother was dangerously ill there: and would she go there, immediately? And I said, "If you're going, I'll give you the name of my brother." So she went to this camp in Italy and she asked the first boy she met there, "Maybe you know somebody with this name. His sister is in Belsen and she's looking for him. It's her brother." And that boy was my brother.

Tauba Biber, liberated at Belsen, whose brother was later found in an Italian camp
IWM Sound Archive: 17514 or 19792

Judging from the condition of these poor people brought into the Human Laundry [support teams began to clean the internees in what became known as the 'Human Laundry'] it was painfully obvious, even to the most inexperienced, that most of them were desperately ill, and that practically all were suffering from starvation ... The atmosphere was thick with D.D.T. and everything in that building was covered with a film of white.

Miss J McFarlane, working at Belsen for the Red Cross
IWM Document reference: 99/86/1

Human Laundry, Belsen: April 1945 by Doris Clare Zinkeisen 1898 - 1991



IWM Art reference: LD 5468

A line of wooden tables the front three with an emaciated figure sitting or lying on top. Each of the figures is being washed by a man or woman dressed in a white uniform. A metal bucket stands at the foot of every table; a woman is seen walking out of the room carrying a bucket in either hand. One of a group of works produced by Zinkeisen during her time as a Red Cross artist. The 'human laundry' consisted of about twenty beds in a stable where German nurses and captured soldiers cut the hair of the inmates, bathed them and applied anti-lice powder before they were transferred to an improvised hospital run by the Red Cross. The tension in the composition lies in the enforced dealings between the emaciated and feeble former inmates and the healthy medical staff treating them.

It became difficult to bury the dead, the thousands of dead. So a bulldozer was brought in, to bulldoze the dead into a huge pit and the blade sometimes didn't catch the bodies cleanly and they split open. And the smell was terrible. I soaked a handkerchief in petrol and put it over my mouth as I sat in front of the bulldozer and I couldn't stand the smell of petrol. I didn't know whether to try to bear the smell of petrol or take it off and stand the smell of death.

Mike Lewis, Army Film & Photographic Unit cameraman during liberation of Bergen-Belsen
IWM Sound Archive reference: 4833

Conditions in the camp were becoming even more chaotic ... We took in over 2000 patients into a former 200 bedded Wehrmacht hospital. Attempts to bedpan were futile through lack of staff and pans... Our departure from Belsen was an emotional one, with patients in tears, for a strong bond of affection had developed. I shall never forget waving goodbye to men and women who in the intervening weeks looked less like walking skeletons.

Sgt P W Green, Royal Army Medical Corps, ordered to leave Belsen in July 1945 and move to Berlin

IWM Document reference: 92/28/1

It is interesting to note how the psychology acquired by the internees during their imprisonment persists with them even now – that is to say, it is still a question of every man for himself. One person will take as much food as he can, regardless of the more urgent needs of his sick neighbour. Dishonesty is prevalent and we have to keep a wary eye on our personal belonging lest any inquisitive internee should choose to 'liberate' them... It may be interesting to note that during the first ten days of our stay at Belsen, the standard of fitness which we were forced to adopt is as given below. This may give some impression of the general state of health of the internees:

A person is considered 'fit' if he can walk up three steps.

Dr D H Forsdick, a London medical student posted to Belsen
Account of treatment of patients published in *The Guy's Hospital Gazette* 9th June 1945

IWM Document reference: 91/6/1

When the war ended I weighed about 70 pounds. I was skin and bone. And I remember that a British soldier came to me one day and asked if he could do anything for me? And I said to him, "I'd like two things." I'd asked for him to bring me warm socks. It was already May and it was warm. But I was cold. I wanted warm knee-length socks and I wanted sugar. I was craving sugar, I suppose. So he brought me the socks and the sugar. And I remember two things from then. I remember when that when I put on the socks I started to cry because I didn't have any calf. I was all bones and the knee-length socks wouldn't stay on. And I also remember that when he gave me the sugar - and it may not have been more than maybe a quarter of a pound maybe, a little bag of sugar - I took the bag and I just poured it into my mouth. And I remember that he then got scared, and he ran out looking for the nurses because he didn't know what I might have done to myself by eating all this sugar. And I remember the nurse said to him in German that it's okay. I was probably just craving sugar.

Bella Jakubowicz Tovey, hospitalised in Bergen-Belsen, describing a British soldier's visit
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia, Articles, British 11th Armoured Division, Personal Stories

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3807

A starving woman near to death lies out in the open air.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3810

The Liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp April 1945: Former prisoners at Belsen with no accommodation in the barracks cook their food over open fires.

Hospital Diet Scales – Belsen Concentration Camp

Diet I. For Starvation and serious Febrile cases in 2 hourly feeds
Rations for one Day:-

Skimmed Milk Fresh – 2 litres
Sugar – 1 oz.
Salt - ½oz.
Compressed vitamin tablets - 3

Diet II Rations for one Day:-

Skimmed milk fresh, or Dried - 1½litres, or 2ozs.
Sugar – 1oz.
Bread – 5ozs.
Tinned Veg – 2ozs.
Tinned Meat – 1oz.
Potatoes – 2ozs.
Butter – 1oz.
Concentrated Soup - ½oz.
Salt - ¼oz.
Comp Vit Tabs - 3
Eggs – for special cases if available

Diet III For workers and those fully convalescent.
Rations for one Day:-

Skimmed milk fresh, or Dried - 1litres, or 2ozs.
Sugar – 2ozs.
Bread – 20ozs.
Tinned Veg – 4ozs.
Tinned Meat – 4½ozs.
Potatoes – 16ozs.
Butter – 2ozs.
Concentrated Soup - 1oz.
Salt - ½oz.
Pepper – 1/100 oz.
Dried Pulse – 2ozs.
Oatmeal – 1oz.
Flour – 2½ ozs.
Jam or Honey – 4/7 ozs. } if
Sausage – 5/7 ozs. } available

Instructions on the feeding of Belsen's recovering inmates

IWM Printed Books Classification: 78/5.4(=43).9[Belsen]-8 Accession Number: 82190

Two small babies were looking wonderfully well in the arms of their Hungarian nurses. They were orphans and no-one knew their names. The medical officer had sent to the nearest German town to requisition toys, and there were teddy bears, elaborate toys of all kinds there in plenty. But next door lay six or seven children in another room, who were very ill. They lay quiet and still, and in one bed were two little boys side by side, whimpering softly, their wizened faces a queer brownish colour.

M C Carey visited Belsen on 29th April 1945. He later filed a report of what he saw in the Red Cross Society Quarterly Review



IWM Negative Number: BU 4239

Soldiers from 1575 Artillery Platoon Royal Army Service Corps using pumping equipment requisitioned from the local fire service to establish a fresh water system in the camp.

NAZI PERSECUTION



IWM Negative Number: BU 4242

The Liberation of Belsen Concentration Camp April 1945: British soldiers supervise the distribution of food to inmates of the camp.

Captain W. R. Williams
S.T. Branch
HQ 8 Corps
B.L.A

Wednesday 18 Apr 1945

Dear Tom,

You've read in the papers all about the horror concentration camp we've captured. Well, that's where I'm writing from now. I came in with the first troops, and have been here ever since. So you know the reason for no letter lately.

Everything you've read and more are absolutely true. I've seen everything and can swear to it. Anyone you meet, pass it on. I never believed all the fantastic stories we've heard, read about, and the atrocities committed by the SS men & women. But after being here 4 days boy - some experience.

The conditions, the dead bodies rotting in piles 6-7 high, no food or water, the rags which they wear. It's a miracle how many are still alive. 500 died the first night I was here.

I could rattle off innumerable stories for you, but they must be seen to be really believed. You would never think human being, including Germans, could stoop so low, or have such low morals. Absolutely fantastic.

The first day I spent organising cookhouses and trying to cope with the hungry mobs. Now I have a complete platoon working for me doing the detailed splits to the cookhouses, which are inadequate, and cannot properly cope. There are no skilled cooks, and there was no lighting or water.

Now we have both, and food for all who can walk to get it. Some are so weak they try and get up and fall back dead. Nobody takes the slightest notice, and the bodies are everywhere.

We have captured SS men and women on the job now, shifting the masses of rotting discoloured bodies to a central burial trench. If they try and run away they are shot. Two did today. They are in the trench too.

Every British and co ally citizen & soldier should see this place, or on the screen. It would help solve the Jerry problem.

In one part of the camp I found some British lads, all P.O.W.s. I whisked them off back to B. lines. Since then I find more every day.

Not a very cheery letter son, but I feel it part of my duty to pass on this information.

I'm very tired, lousy, but happy to be doing my share of the final liberation of Poles, Greeks, Russians, French and all the rest. Women and men.

Am ever Chum.

Dick

IWM Document reference: 95/6/1

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 3752

An inmate too weak to stand is unable to drink a bowl of soup.

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP, GERMANY 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 4002

A British soldier talks to an emaciated prisoner. The prisoner, Louis Bonerguer, was also British and had been dropped by parachute to work in German occupied territory in 1941. After his capture, he was interned at Belsen.

GERMANY UNDER ALLIED OCCUPATION, 1945



IWM Negative Number: BU 7016

British occupying forces compel the population of the German village of Burgsteinfurt to watch a film showing scenes from the concentration camps at Belsen and Buchenwald. The inhabitants enter the cinema, watched by Military Policemen and German civilian police.

The Holocaust Resource F: Fact-based, fictional and documentary filmic and televisual interpretations

As the titles below illustrate, there has been no shortage of TV and cinematic interpretations of the Holocaust. Some will be well known, others less so. Nonetheless, visual images of the Holocaust cannot only be useful but also problematic. What follows is by no means an exhaustive review of the Holocaust as portrayed on the big and small screen. There is an extensive guide to Film and the Holocaust at these sites:

[http://english3.fsu.edu/~kpicart/humrights/holofilms.htm#Fictional Narrative Film](http://english3.fsu.edu/~kpicart/humrights/holofilms.htm#Fictional_Narrative_Film)

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/films.htm>

You could also refer to ed. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933, (London, Wallflower 2005) ISBN 1-904764-51-7

Documentaries

Documentaries strive for accuracy, most of the time. Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog [Nuit et Brouillard]* (1955), although short at 33 minutes long, adopts an avant-garde approach to the Holocaust which may be more suitable for an art or media studies lesson. Its 'voice of G-d' approach, very reminiscent of the intellectual climate of 1950s France, contrasts sharply with the more traditional 'talking heads' accounts one gets by watching the classic *The World At War: Genocide* (1973) episode, or Claude Lanzmann's monumental 9½ hour epic *Shoah* (1981). *Night and Fog's* director openly admitted that it was really about what was happening in Algiers; after all, the word *Jew* only appears once in the whole film. In the film, colour is used to symbolise emptiness whilst black and white footage supposedly generates excitement and action. This film amply illustrates the problems of remembrance through film. Not only was it toned down to appease German audiences, but also for French viewers still dealing with the uncomfortable realities of France's collaborationist past.

Lanzmann's *Shoah* was commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture and is a much more aggressive treatment of the Holocaust. In interviewing victims, perpetrators and bystanders, he presents us with a vivid and shocking account of the Holocaust as a whole. His use of Raul Hilberg to provide 'expert' opinion is dubious given that no other historians appear and some consider Hilberg the 'bête noir' of Holocaust research. Hilberg's classic work, The Destruction of European Jewry, has yet to be published in Israel, for instance. Modern documentary film-makers would try to call upon the services of more than one so-called expert. Lanzmann has also been accused of manipulating his subjects and the audience through the use of secret cameras and bullying interview techniques. The testimony he draws out, however, is incredible. There are too many essential and moving sections to cite here. Start with the Barber at the Treblinka death camp and Jan

Karski. Some of the perpetrator and bystander testimony beggars belief. One example is that of the reception the 'boy' who sang at Chelmno receives from local villagers on his return in the 1980s during a religious festival.

The World at War: Genocide stands out amongst documentaries; many regard it as the single, finest documentary ever made about the Holocaust. It is as moving in the 21st century as it was when first broadcast. Rudolf Vrba, one of a very few to escape Auschwitz-Birkenau, is an extraordinary highlight. *The Specialist* (1999), directed by Eyal Sivan, is about the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, condensed into a manageable size. It is a meditation on the phrase popularised by Hannah Arendt: "the banality of evil." In using actual footage, it is more immediate than the cinematic version of the same events, *The Man in the Glass Box*. Channel 4's *Auschwitz: the Forgotten Evidence* (2004) is another recent documentary that raises important questions about how much the Allies knew and why they didn't do more to stop the Holocaust. *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (2000) is another Oscar-winning documentary that covers a neglected area of the Holocaust. An essential documentary that is worth tracking down, despite its rarity, is Sidney Bernstein's *Memory of the Camps* (1945), which contains original footage of the liberation of Belsen and other camps.

Laurence Rees's two excellent BBC TV series, [Nazis: A Warning from History](#) (1997) and [Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution](#) (2005), are useful pieces of work, although the content can be less accessible for younger students. Teaching ideas to accompany each episode of the latter can be found on the extensive PBS website at: <http://www.pbs.org/auschwitz/learning/>. It is worth remembering that a good series nowadays will have a full website supporting it with lots of reliable links and teaching ideas.

Propaganda

Other questions to address include the degree to which films actually represent the industrialised nature of the Holocaust or, indeed, the experiences of its non-Jewish victims. Films like *Triumph of the Will* (1934) and *The Eternal Jew* (1940) were designed as propaganda and come with very definite health warnings. Any teacher showing films such as these should be very selective about the clips they use in order to avoid spreading the Nazis' obscene messages. Therefore, it is ill-advised to show the Rat Scenes. However, in showing the transmogrification of an assimilated western Jew into an eastern Jew from the shtetl or ghetto, this can illustrate the insidious nature of Nazi propaganda. *The Last Stage [Obstatni Etap]* directed by Wanda Jakubowska (1948), on the other hand, should also be handled with care given that it was produced by the newly-Communist regime to glorify Poland's patriotic war against the tyranny of Nazism.

Cinema

Even when Hollywood tries, it isn't always successful: how often have Hollywood producers allowed history to get in the way of a good story? In the furore that surrounded the release of TV mini-series *Holocaust* in 1978, Elie Wiesel wrote passionately that the programme was "Untrue. Offensive. Cheap... the Holocaust must be remembered but not as a show." Wiesel even went as far as to suggest that representations of the Holocaust should not even be attempted. None of this stopped 120 million people in America alone watching it. Audiences around Europe, especially in Germany, were just as huge.

Schindler's List (1993) – see <http://www.schindlerslist.com/> - became quite possibly the most well-known of all the cinematic representations of the Holocaust once it bagged numerous Oscars in that year's awards. Many Hollywood films fail to reproduce the cold,

hunger, smells and brutality of the Holocaust without seeming voyeuristic or gratuitous. In this, Spielberg succeeds where others fail. One need only think of the little boy hiding in the latrines to exemplify this. He also managed to avoid some of his trademark sentimentality. The problem with all stories like *Schindler's List* is simple, however. When a film-maker tries to make sense of history by imposing a narrative through a character, that film-maker creates a new truth. Kazimierz taking the place of Podgorze, the emotional ending, the fact that the list was neither written by Schindler nor Stern (his accountant), all of these run the risk of offering an opening to so-called revisionists or Holocaust deniers. The film remains banned in much of the Middle East. Hollywood plays with fire if it plays fast and loose with history in general, and Holocaust history in particular.

There is another interesting introductory article about *Schindler's List*, Hollywood and History at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/holocaust/schinlist.html>. Spielberg has also made some of his Jewish film collection available online at <http://MZNet.org> at which, provided your filtering system, broadband connection and computer speed can keep up, you can view films about the Holocaust and Jewish life at your leisure.

Along with Oskar Schindler, the 'secular saints of the Holocaust' include Anne Frank. There have been at least three major accounts of her life, to varying degrees of success. *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), starring Millie Perkins takes an uncritical and sanitised approach to the diary's story, to the extent of even ending on a romantic high note! *Anne Frank Remembered* (1995) is an Oscar-winning documentary that uses the 'talking heads' technique to interview her friends, rescuers and fellow camp inmates. *Anne Frank: the Whole Story* (TV Mini-series, 2001), starring Ben Kingsley, was, for copyright reasons, unable to use Anne Frank's own words and so is an imagining of her life, including scenes in Belsen. It is up to viewers to decide whether these are handled tastefully or, indeed, with dignity.

Judgement at Nuremberg (1961), starring Spencer Tracy and Maximilian Schell, and the slightly more entertaining *Nuremberg* (TV miniseries, 2000), with Alec Baldwin and Brian Cox, present two accounts of the War Crimes Trials. The latter is more "info-tainment" as it tells the story of the real individuals in the main trials and their fates while the former focuses on a lesser trial.

Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* (1965) explores the dignity and inherent goodness of the human spirit. Meryl Streep won a Best Actress Oscar for her portrayal of an Auschwitz survivor in *Sophie's Choice* (1982). It may serve well to illustrate the nature of "choiceless choices" that many faced during the Holocaust. Jack Gold's populist *Escape from Sobibor* (1987), starring Alan Arkin and Rutger Hauer, is based on Richard Raschke's account and details the famous break-out of Poland's easternmost death camp.

Two recent offerings - *Uprising* (NBC TV Miniseries, 2001) and Roman Polanski's Oscar-winning *The Pianist* (2002), starring Adrian Brody - attempted to do justice to the story of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. For the latter, the Art Director and Set Designer used the Stroop Report in order to recreate the destruction of the ghetto.

The Truce (1994) is an Italian attempt to tell Primo Levi's story of the same name, whilst *Life is Beautiful* (1998) by Roberto Benigni is about Italy's Risiera di San Sabba Concentration Camp in Fiume/Trieste. *The Great Dictator* (1940) and *The Producers* (1967) are both attempts to satirise the Nazi regime. The latter, incidentally, is enjoying a stage revival on Broadway and in the West End. A remake of this Mel Brooks classic is also scheduled for release soon. The degree to which 'Holocaust as fable' or humour can act as pathos successfully must be judged by the viewer. A similar accusation could be levelled at the

Robin Williams vehicle, *Jakob the Liar* (2000). Again, teachers and viewers must decide whether bounds of good taste make this suitable material for a school classroom.

Using film in the classroom therefore presents the teacher with a number of issues. Before showing clips, teachers should consider the agendas at work and the degree to which the clips they show are accurate and inform learning about the Holocaust.

Any gratuitous temptation to show gruesome scenes of death and torture should be resisted at all costs as this often provokes a lack of sympathy amongst classrooms full of teenagers weaned on a diet of violent films and peer pressure not to be shocked.

The Holocaust Resource G: Holocaust-related websites

Below is a list of 10 websites recommended by The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and Imperial War Museum (IWM):

www.ushmm.org
www.yadvashem.org.il
www.annefrank.nl
www.topographie.de
www.goethe.de/kug/ges/ztg/lks/enindex
www.auschwitz.org.pl/html/eng/start/index.html
www.vhf.org
www.bl.uk/education
www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm
www.calvin.edu./academic/cas/gpa

The slant of the majority of these is American because that's where most work has been done on the Holocaust. There is also useful material at the following sites:

- The Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library
<http://www.wienerlibrary.com>
- The Imperial War Museum
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/lambeth/educate.html>
- BBC online articles
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/genocide/>

Whichever sites teachers opt to use, there are certain key things to remember when using any site about the Holocaust specifically but History in general. Before downloading or cutting and pasting material, have the following been considered:

- Do pupils know what domain names mean (i.e. difference between .com, .org, .com, etc)?
- What's the site's purpose?
- Who is/are the author(s)?
- Is the information accurate? Have pupils cross-referenced with reliable sites to check?
- Is it up-to-date?
- Is it reliable?
- Are there Primary sources? If so, from where?
- Are any secondary references used reputable?
- Have sources been adequately captioned?
- Is the page display high quality or home-made?
- Is the spelling and grammar that of a reputable site?
- Are there Links to other reputable sites?

Teachers may wish to find some obviously poor examples of home-made Holocaust sites and explaining why before allowing pupils to go online in search of material. For example, www.fpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/Schindler looks harmless enough until you realise it is hosted by David Irving.

The Holocaust Resource H: Commemorative events

The introduction of Holocaust Memorial Day held every 27 January was brought about by a desire to promote greater awareness of the Holocaust and Genocide as well as improved citizenship and international understanding. Information about the annual Holocaust Memorial Day can be found at: <http://www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk> Included will be materials for use during Holocaust Memorial Day as well as educational resources written by the likes of David Cesarani at: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/resources

The Holocaust, and the way it is remembered, can also be explored at the Holocaust Educational Trust which offers its own resources: <http://www.het.org.uk/index.htm>

There is another Online Citizenship resource at: <http://www.thinkequal.com/> Another citizenship teaching activity can be found called Pyramid of Hate at: <http://www.vhf.org/pyramidofhate/vhfmain.htm>

The Anne Frank Educational Trust also offers materials at: <http://www.afet.org.uk>

Remember.org is dedicated to the furtherance of Holocaust Remembrance - visit http://remember.org/educate/#scholar_resources

The Holocaust Resource I: Hearing or reading Survivor testimony

Nothing quite has the same impact upon pupils as meeting or hearing Survivor testimony. Three very important things need to be considered before inviting a Survivor into school:

1. Why are you inviting them? A Survivor should not be used as a means of not teaching the Holocaust. A Survivor should enrich pupils' learning about the Holocaust and give a human face to victims of the Holocaust. Although about 500 Survivors remain alive today, only about 100 regularly visit schools. Survivors should have stories that are appropriate to the age group and ideally should be brought in to meet pupils between the middle and end of the course. This avoids a Survivor being asked such basic questions as "What was this Holocaust, then?" 12 year olds should not be hearing about extermination camps and death marches whilst 18 year olds may find identifying with the Kindertransport harder than primary school aged children. Pupils should also be able to have a period of reflection after the visit for follow-up questions. Some survivors even encourage pupils to email them with further comments and questions. As Paula Kitching of London's Jewish Cultural Centre once remarked: "Survivors should be the icing on the cake."
2. The practicalities prior to the visit should never be ignored either. Who will arrange the visit and when? Ideally, a Survivor should be given anywhere between 1-3 months' notice and Holocaust Memorial Day should be avoided given their likely participation elsewhere in National Events. What size of group will the survivor talk to and for how long? Many Survivors rarely talk for less than one hour. Often, they take longer. What collaborative preparation work can be done with the English, RE and Citizenship departments beforehand with regards to questions, for example?
3. On the day itself, how will your Guest get to the school and who will meet and greet them? Who will take them back and pay their expenses? Will they need a projector, OHP, photocopying, special seating arrangements, water, coffee/ tea, lunch and so on? All too often Survivors are not offered some or all of these things by schools. On the question of meals, given the potential pitfalls of the kosher diet, a sensible food option is vegetarian but double-check the restrictions regarding dairy products and so forth. Once your guest is happily settled amidst prepared pupils, it should all go very well and be extremely worthwhile. Don't be surprised if young people don't necessarily respond the way you would expect. If your aims are clearly thought out, they will find the experience invaluable and unforgettable.

Sadly, their number decreases as years go on. In another ten years or so, very few will be up to going into schools. So what can be done to ensure that pupils hear their stories first-hand rather than via a school textbook? Survivors of the Shoah Foundation – Spileberg's collection of oral testimony at <http://www.vhf.org/> is one way and the site

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/movies.htm> also contains film of survivors giving testimony.

For pupils who enjoy reading, 'Voices of the Holocaust' – a site by the Illinois Institute of Technology containing published transcripts of interviews conducted in 1946 in Displaced Persons camps – is useful: see <http://voices.iit.edu/>

Alternatively, just published by the IWM in October 2005 is Lyn Smith's, Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust (ISBN 0091898250). It is also available as an audio book, narrated by Andrew Sachs.

For other easily accessible and obtainable survivor testimony, try:

- § Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Inherit the Truth (London, DLM 1996) ISBN 1-900357-01-1
- § Paul Oppenheimer, From Belsen to Buckingham Palace (Newark, Quill Press 2001) ISBN 0-9536280-3-5
- § Kitty Hart, Return to Auschwitz (London, Grenada 1983) ISBN 0-583-13597-8
- § Dr Trude Levi, Did You Ever Meet Hitler Miss? (London, Vallentine Mitchell 2003) ISBN 0-853-03467-2
- § Filip Müller, Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers (Chicago, Ivan R Dee & USHMM, 1999) ISBN 1-56663-271-4
- § Samuel Willenberg, Revolt in Treblinka (Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute 1992) ISBN 83-85888-62-4 previously published in English as Surviving Treblinka (Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1989)

The British Library's 'Voices of the Holocaust' teaching resource pack is now available (appx. £20.00 +VAT) from: Turpin Distribution Services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts SG6 1HN Tel: 01462 672555 Fax: 01462 480947 Email: turpin@turpinltd.com

The Holocaust Resource J: Views of opinion formers

AUSCHWITZ REMEMBERED: An Activity for Reflection

This activity was devised by Paul Salmons, Co-ordinator of the Holocaust Fellowship Programme at the Imperial War Museum and could be best used at the end of a visit to sites of the Holocaust or a unit of work on the Holocaust. The 15 quotes have been adapted from ones used originally by The Independent, Thursday 27 January 2005, page 8.

What is the legacy of the Holocaust?

- a) Students could begin by considering their reactions to a visit to Auschwitz and/ or other Death Camps. How did the place(s) leave them feeling? How significant do they now consider the Holocaust to have been?
- b) A discussion of the meaning of words like "significance" and "legacy" could now take place in terms of the effects on people, the effects over a period of time, lessons learned, etc.
- c) Using the quotations below, students – individually, in pairs or in groups – should read some or all of them and decide which opinions or statements they do and don't agree with and why. They should also pay particular attention to the language each person uses. Students can then discuss why such a range of opinion has emerged. What agendas are at work and why? To what extent do events today shape our past and vice versa? Is this a good or bad thing, or doesn't it matter? Students should bear in mind that the question each contributor was expected to answer was the one above.
- d) It will be evident from the quotes that the Holocaust as an event has been hi-jacked by people wishing to use its so-called lessons to promote their own agendas. Is it right to do this – i.e. to use the Holocaust to teach about bullying or other genocides, for instance? Or do people who do this run the risk of trivialising the Holocaust by comparison? Do they do justice to the topics they wish to promote either?
- e) Students should now be better equipped to proffer a deeper insight to an analysis of the Holocaust's significance.
- f) Further questions that could arise from this discussion might include:
 - Shouldn't we consider the Holocaust as a European phenomenon? How do the reactions to it differ between those countries that were occupied compared with those that weren't?
 - What is the responsibility of people and institutions today for the Holocaust? Whose history is it?
 - Why didn't the Allies do more to stop the Holocaust? 'Why didn't the Allies bomb Auschwitz?' is a question oft asked. [See the Channel 4 documentary "Auschwitz – the Forgotten Evidence", for example.] There is an activity in the IWM *Reflections* pack that deals with this very issue which could be used as a follow-up activity.



'After 60 years of Holocaust education, inter-faith dialogue, human rights legislation, and anti-racist programmes, antisemitism is still alive and endangering lives. It is not what it was in Germany. The virus has mutated. But the old myths, from the "blood libel" to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, are still the same. There can be no doubt as to the most successful ideology of modern times. Fascism came and went. Antisemitism came and stayed.'

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sachs

Source: <http://www.onecountry.org>

'Auschwitz has been an integral part of my working life. I've made 25 to 30 films about the crimes of the Nazis and have had to go to Auschwitz several times to shoot a documentary. While my immediate family wasn't killed there, extended members died in other camps or were killed by the SS. I will never be able to get away from Auschwitz as the synonym for the horrible crimes of the Nazis.'

Lea Rosh, Berlin Holocaust Memorial Association President



Source: www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/



'Auschwitz was an enormous and very modern killing factory. The gas chambers were industrialised mass murder. Modern firms created the gas and built the ovens. Modern planning saw to it that maximum profit was made from the slaughter. Auschwitz shows us the extremities of the pathological side of modernity. And it warns us where the demonisation of minorities or those labelled 'undesirable' can lead in the hands of a ruthless, modern state.'

Professor Sir Ian Kershaw, historian

Source: www.shef.ac.uk/



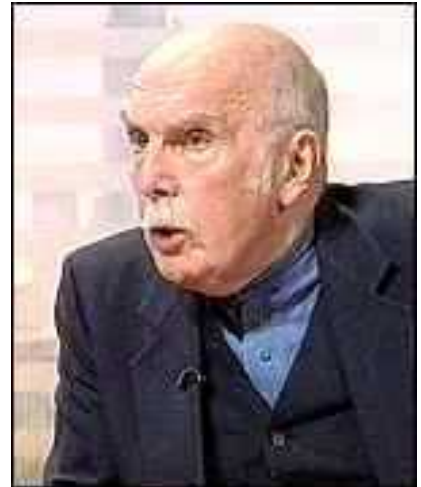
'...Rwanda and Darfur show that we forget so easily... People should know what is happening in their generation and we need to collectively share the guilt.'

Beryl Bainbridge, novelist

Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk/

'The lesson [of the Holocaust] is that outside powers have to move in time to prevent massacres and other genocidal events, using force if necessary. I am full of amoral horror that recent events, such as Cambodia and Rwanda, were not prevented, or, in the case of the Balkans, that intervention came so late.'

Professor Bernard Crick, political theorist



Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk/



'I don't like the word Holocaust because it signifies a natural or divine event. It was the largest organised crime in history – and the crime begins with words. A language of hatred is a danger, not necessarily for Jews, but for whoever is targeted. Each time language is used like an axe we should act because soon killing will follow. There is a rise in fanaticism: Islamic, Jewish, European. It's American fundamentalism.'

Amos Oz, writer and novelist

Source: www.ucm.es/

'...I reflect on the legacy paid for by the lives of the victims of Auschwitz and those who fought fascism. From this came the human rights framework enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration. It is our duty to remember Auschwitz and to cherish that legacy so that Auschwitz may never happen again.'

Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty



Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk/



'The Allies knew of the annihilation of the Jews and did nothing. Israel learned that we can trust noone but ourselves. This phenomenon – of Jews defending themselves and fighting back – is an anathema [to] the new anti-Semites. Legitimate steps of self-defence which Israel takes in its war against Palestinian terror – actions which any sovereign state is obliged to undertake – are presented by those who hate Israel as aggressive, Nazi-like steps.'

Ariel Sharon, former Israeli Prime Minister, in a speech to the Knesset

Source: www.archives.cnn.com/

'The most important lesson of the Holocaust is that fear provides a power structure for political leaders. Hitler portrayed the Jews as the enemy and used it to instil fear and gain power. George Bush evokes the fear of terrorism and becomes a more powerful leader. The important thing moving forward is to look at history and understand. Only by seeing how such things develop can we be sure such atrocities will not happen again.'

Tony Benn, former Labour MP and Cabinet Minister



Source: www.tonybenn.com/



'There are countless failures to learn from Auschwitz evident in the modern world. We have failed to build a community of shared security and vulnerability. America's war on terror has polarised groups across the Arab world. The atrocities in Sudan show that, in the face of mass crimes against humanity, the international community is unable to find a mechanism to protect people.'

Irene Khan, Secretary-General of Amnesty International

Source: www.amnistia.org.mx/

'First and foremost, Auschwitz is a graveyard and a horror. It stands for one of the worst excesses of human behaviour. The reason is because Auschwitz is a particular challenge for the West. We tend to think of genocide and massacres as savage acts where civilisation breaks down, but Auschwitz used state-of-the-art communications, technology, industrialisation, law and science to pervert morality.'

Clive Lawton, Jewish educator and writer



Source: www.shalom.edu.au/



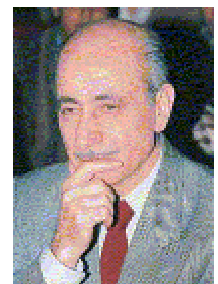
'...Every time the international community fails to prevent genocide and refuses to make the perpetrators accountable, they put at stake international order and our principles of civilisation.'

Bianca Jagger, ex-wife of Rolling Stone Mick and Human Rights activist

Source: www.schorn-hubert.at/

'The first thing is I think we should be talking about events in Iraq, the killing that is going on at the moment. For us as Arabs, the question is not the legacy of the Holocaust, so now our primary care is that Palestinians should have their own state. Arab writers usually avoid the Holocaust because we feel we will be resented in the West. This is a very sensitive issue for us to talk about.'

Fuad Al-Takarli, Iraqi author



Source: www.banipal.co.uk/



'The Holocaust overshadows everything the Israeli people think and do. Our attitude is conditioned by the Holocaust. It conditions Israel to justify any means because compared with the Holocaust any bad things we do are negligible by comparison. It is a standard of comparison which gives a kind of moral permit to do anything. In a way we are still victims of the Holocaust today but in a different way. It twists our outlook on things.'

Uri Avnery, Israeli peace campaigner

Source: www.uri-avnery.de/

'No crime in history has been so documented as Auschwitz. But we have to teach Auschwitz in the right way, that when we deal with antisemitism we are also fighting for the dignity of every human being... We should have peace with the Palestinians and they should have a state sooner rather than later. But to link the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict with the Holocaust, as is done by all sides in the debate, is also to trivialise the Holocaust.'

Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israeli Deputy Education Minister



Source: www.knesset.gov.il/

The Holocaust Resource K: Art, music and literature

What does the work of these artists, composers and writers tell us about the Holocaust and their interpretations of it?

Art

Using the following websites (and any other sources available to them), what can students discover about the following Holocaust artists:

David Olere

Felix Nussbaum

Art Spiegelman

Fernand van Horen

Joseph Nassy

Leo Haas

Moshe Rynecki?

A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust: Art <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/art.htm>

Holocaust Images at <http://www.holocaustimages.com/>

William Bernheim's site - A Holocaust survivor and artist:

<http://www.williambernheim.com/>.

<http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/bassr/218/projects/oliver/MausbyAO.htm> contains a review of Art Spiegelman's "Maus" and its place in literature.

Learning about the Holocaust through Art:

<http://art.holocaust-education.net/home.asp?langid=1>

A Holocaust Art Exhibit:

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/holocaust/art.htm>

The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz:

<http://lastexpression.northwestern.edu/>

Online exhibitions at the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies:

http://www.chgs.umn.edu/Visual_Artistic_Resources/visual_artistic_resources.html

Cybrary of the Holocaust at Remember.org:

<http://remember.org/>

Art Exhibitions at the Ghetto Fighters' House in Jerusalem:

http://english.gfh.org.il/holocaust_art.htm

Online exhibition about Arthur Szyk at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum:

<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/szyk/>

Music

More musically-minded students can explore the effects of the Holocaust using some of the sites below:

<http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/arts/music.htm> contains articles and examples of different pieces of music linked to the Holocaust

<http://remember.org/hist.root.music.html> is an article about different kinds of Holocaust music

<http://www.zamir.org/resources/holocaust.html> is an annotated bibliography

<http://www.rftf2000.org.uk/commemoration/music.html> is a 1998 article by Sarah Nathan-Davis about Jewish composers in places like Theresienstadt, Warsaw, Buchenwald and Dachau

<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/music/> is the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of Holocaust music available to be listened to online

<http://motlc.learningcenter.wiesenthal.org/pages/t052/t05283.html> is the encyclopaedic entry from the Simon Wiesenthal Online Learning Center

Music information about songs used during *Aktion Reinhardt* can be found at:

<http://www.deathcamps.org/reinhard/arsongs.html>

On the 60th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, a concert was broadcast from Auschwitz by the BBC. The soundtrack and DVD will soon be available for purchase online or at Auschwitz-Birkenau itself.

Literature

For many pupils, the classic introduction to the Holocaust is through *The Diary of Anne Frank*. There are, of course, vast numbers of books not only published by Survivors and also as works of fiction. For a review of some important works, an extremely useful start point is the following text:

[Inga Clendinnen](#), *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press 1999)

ISBN: 0521645972 238 pages – a review of which can be found at

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/REVIEWS/Clendinn.HTM>

Alternatively, another useful source is <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/litSurvi.htm> which is about survivor testimony and literature at the Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust.

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/arts/lit.htm> is a more extensive part of the same site.

http://cghs.dade.k12.fl.us/ib_holocaust2001/Ghettos/education_culture/poetry_of_the_holocaust.htm is an essay about Holocaust Poetry by Coral Gables High School, Florida. It also has links to other aspects of the Holocaust and the Arts.

http://www-english.tamu.edu/pers/fac/myers/holocaust_pages.html is a links page at Texas A & M University.

<http://classiclit.about.com/od/holocaustlit/> has links to other sites about this topic

<http://www.remember.org/educate/anbib2.html> is an annotated bibliography about Holocaust related reading

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/berga/teach/resources2.html> is a page for teachers courtesy of PBS TV in America

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/holhome.html> is Al Filreis' overview of links about Literature and the Holocaust at the University of Pennsylvania, USA.

The Schindler story can be found detailed at innumerable sites including www.oskarschindler.com and www.oskarschindler.net (both by Louis Bülow) or in the books, *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Kenneally or *Oskar Schindler: The Untold Account of his Life...* by David M Crowe, for example. The Schindler story was originally unearthed by Herbert Steinhouse in 1949 but lay unpublished for many years. This can be accessed at: <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/steinhouse.html> .

Teachers could supply pupils with a range of extracts from some of the following, all of which are easily available:

Primo Levi, *If This Is A Man/ The Truce* (London, Abacus 1987) ISBN 0-349-10013-6

Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way For The Gas, Ladies And Gentlemen* (London, Penguin 1976) ISBN 0-14-018624-7

Elie Wiesel, *Night* (London, Penguin 1981) ISBN 0-14-006028-6

Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist: The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-45* (London, Phoenix 2000) ISBN 0-75380-860-9

Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust – with original voices and narration by Andrew Sachs – by Lyn Smith in association with the Imperial War Museum. Random House Audio, catalogue number RC918

Pupils can then compare and contrast a range of different experiences of the Holocaust at different times and places. What are the similarities and differences, and possible reasons for them?

Resource L: Guidance and resources for teaching about the Holocaust

Why shall I teach about the Holocaust?

It is essential that teachers consider their rationale for their lessons on the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only for the 20th century but also in the entire history of humanity. It was an unprecedented attempt to murder a whole people and to extinguish its culture. The Holocaust should be studied because it fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization.

A thorough study helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with human rights violations. It can heighten awareness of the potential for genocide in the contemporary world.

Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of diversity in a pluralistic society and encourages sensitivity to the positions of minorities.

The Holocaust demonstrated how a modern nation could utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.

The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent and indifferent in the face of the oppression of others.

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

The Holocaust has become a central theme in the culture of many countries. This is reflected in media representation and popular culture. Holocaust education can offer students historical knowledge and skills needed to understand and evaluate these cultural manifestations.

What shall I teach about the Holocaust?

The study of the Holocaust must be examined within the context of European history as a whole. We encourage educators to also examine the local context for this history.

Educators should provide context for the events of the Holocaust by including information about:

- § Anti-Semitism
- § Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust
- § The aftermath of World War I
- § The Nazi rise to power

As for the historical themes or topics connected with teaching about the Holocaust, educators might examine the following, among others, when constructing lessons on the Holocaust. As they do so, they may consider this history from the perspectives of the:

- § Victims
- § Perpetrators
- § Collaborators
- § Bystanders
- § Rescuers

1933–1939

- § Dictatorship in National Socialist Germany
- § Jewry in the Third Reich
- § Early stages of persecution
- § The first concentration camps
- § World response

1939–1945

- § World War II in Europe
- § Nazi racist ideologies and policies
- § “Euthanasia” program
- § Persecution and murder of Jews
- § Persecution and murder of non-Jewish victims
- § Jewish reactions to Nazi policies
- § Ghettos
- § Mobile killing squads
- § Expansion of the camp system
- § Killing centres
- § Collaboration
- § Resistance
- § Rescue
- § World response
- § Death marches
- § Liberation

Aftermath

- § Post-war trials
- § Displaced persons camps and emigration

How shall I teach about the Holocaust?

There can be no single ‘correct’ way of teaching any subject, no ideal methodology that is appropriate for all teachers and students. What is offered here are guidelines and advice that might prove useful to schoolteachers in constructing their own schemes of work, taking into account the learning needs of individual students. These guidelines draw on current best practice from a number of institutions with expertise in teaching the Holocaust to address some of the concerns teachers have about how to approach this

very difficult subject and to present possible ways forward...

Summary

- § The Holocaust can be successfully taught to students; do not be afraid to approach this subject
- § Define the term 'Holocaust'
- § Create a positive learning environment, with an active pedagogy and a student-centred approach
- § Individualise the history by translating statistics into personal stories
- § Use witness testimony to make this history more 'real' to your students
- § A cross-curricular approach will enrich your students' understanding of the Holocaust
- § Contextualise the history
- § Give broad and balanced coverage to this subject
- § Be precise in your use of language and urge your students to do the same
- § Distinguish between the history of the Holocaust and the lessons that might be learned from that history
- § Avoid simple answers to a complex history
- § Provide your students with access to primary sources
- § Students should be alerted to the fact that the perpetrators produced much of the evidence of the Holocaust
- § Encourage your students to critically analyse different interpretations of the Holocaust
- § Be responsive to the appropriateness of written and visual content and do not use horrific imagery to engage your students in a study of the Holocaust
- § Avoid comparing the pain of any one group with that of another
- § Allow your students to explore a variety of responses of the victims, including the many forms of resistance to the Nazis
- § Take care not to define the Jewish people solely in terms of the Holocaust
- § Indicate that the Holocaust was not inevitable
- § Do not attempt to explain away the perpetrators as 'inhuman monsters'
- § Be careful to distinguish between the perpetrators of the past and present-day societies in Europe and elsewhere
- § Encourage your students to study local, regional, national and global history and memory
- § Ask your students to participate in and reflect upon national and local traditions of commemoration and remembrance
- § Select appropriate learning activities and avoid using simulations that encourage students to identify with perpetrators or victims
- § Avoid legitimising the denial of the past
- § Be aware of the potential and also the limitations of all instructional materials, including the Internet
- § Distinguish between historical and contemporary events and avoid historical comparisons
- § Be responsive to the concerns of your students

These guidelines were abridged from materials produced by the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Significantly more detail is available from <http://taskforce.ushmm.org/working-groups/>. Search under the Education Working Group.

Links and Resources

Below are listed materials and reference works that have been of invaluable use to this author over the years.

Useful general reference works, background reading and links about the Holocaust:

- § Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Glasgow, Fontana 1987) ISBN 0-00-637194-9
- § Guido Knopp, *Hitler's Holocaust* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing 2001) ISBN 0-7509-2700-3
- § Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution* (London, BBC Books 2005) ISBN 0-563-52117-1 accompanied the six-part BBC TV series of the same name that was broadcast to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation in 2005. Teaching ideas to accompany each episode can be found on the extensive PBS website at: <http://www.pbs.org/auschwitz/learning/>
- § Ed. Francuszek Piper & Teresa Swiebocka, *Auschwitz: Nazi Death Camp* (Oswiecim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum 2002) ISBN 83-88526-27-8
- § Kazimierz Smolen, *State Museum in Oswiecim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Guide Book* (Oswiecim 2002) ISBN 83-88526-08-1
- § Walter Laqueur, *The Holocaust Encyclopaedia* (London, Yale University Press 2001) ISBN 0-300-08432-3
- § Ed. David Cesarani, *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* (London, Routledge 1996) ISBN 0-415-15232-1
- § Robert S Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2001) ISBN 0-297-64373-8
- § Deborah Dwork & Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: a History* (John Murray, 2003) ISBN 0-7195-5486-1
- § Philippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews: the Genesis of the Holocaust* (London, Edward Arnold, English edition 1994) ISBN 0-340-59362-8
- § Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London, Penguin 2002) ISBN 0-14-100395-2
<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/wansee-transcript.html> is an online transcript of the Wannsee Protocol.
- § Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* (London, Penguin 1979) ISBN 0-14-005116-3
This is also available online at www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/festjc/index.htm
- § Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (London, Bodley Head 1991) ISBN 0-370-31352-6
- § Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London, Abacus 1997) ISBN 0-349-10786-6
- § Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society 1939-1944* (London, Arnold 2003) ISBN 0-340-76246-2
- § <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/index.html>
- § <http://www.nizkor.org/fast-track.shtml>
- § <http://www.mazal.org/Default.htm>
- § <http://history1900s.about.com/library/holocaust/blcampsausch.htm>
- § http://www.cbcl.com/holocaust_history/
- § <http://www.mtsu.edu/~baustin/holo.html>
- § <http://www.einsatzgruppenarchives.com/documents/introduction.html> for an essay on role of Einsatzgruppen in the Holocaust by Yale F Edeiken
- § <http://history1900s.about.com/od/holocaust/> for all manner of links on lots of aspects of the Holocaust e.g. Kurt Gerstein

- § Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York, Henry Holt 2003) ISBN 0-8050-6260-2
- § Eric Silver, *The Book of the Just* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1992) ISBN 0-297-81245-9
- § Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Scourge of the Swastika: a short history of Nazi War Crimes* (London, Greenhill 2005 edition of 1954 classic) ISBN 1-85367-650-0
- § Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (Allen Lane, Penguin 1999) ISBN 0-713-99292-1
- § Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* (London, PaperMac 1984) ISBN 0-333-37914-4
- § Stephan Lebert, *My Father's Keeper: the Children of Nazi Leaders – an Intimate History of Damage and Denial* (London, Abacus 2002) ISBN 0-349-11457-9

Site-specific reference works (primary & secondary)

- § Primo Levi, *If This Is A Man/ The Truce* (London, Abacus 1987) ISBN 0-349-10013-6
- § Kitty Hart, *Return to Auschwitz* (London, Grenada 1983) ISBN 0-583-13597-8
- § Rudolf Reder, *Belzec* (Krakow, Judaica Foundation 1999) ISBN 83-907715-3-5
- § Samuel Willenberg, *Revolt in Treblinka* (Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute 1992) ISBN 83-85888-62-4 previously published in English as *Surviving Treblinka* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1989)
- § Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way For The Gas, Ladies And Gentlemen* (London, Penguin 1976) ISBN 0-14-018624-7
- § Dr Trude Levi, *Did You Ever Meet Hitler Miss?* (London, Vallentine Mitchell 2003) ISBN 0-853-03467-2
- § Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth* (London, DLM 1996) ISBN 1-900357-01-1
- § Filip Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers* (Chicago, Ivan R Dee & USHMM, 1999) ISBN 1-56663-271-4
- § David Olere, *The Eyes of a Witness: A Painter in the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz* (New York, Beate Klarsfeld Foundation 2nd Edition 1997)
- § www.sobibor.info/index.html is Thomas Toivi Blatt's online extract version of his book *The Forgotten Revolt*.
- § Rudolf Hoess, Pery Broad, Johann Paul Kremer, *KL Auschwitz Seen By The SS* (Oswiecim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum 2003) ISBN 83-88526-29-4
- § Elie Wiesel, *Night* (London, Penguin 1981) ISBN 0-14-006028-6
- § Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist: The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-45* (London, Phoenix 2000) ISBN 0-75380-860-9
- § Hugo Gryn (with Naomi Gryn), *Chasing Shadows: Memories of a Vanished World* (London, Viking 2000) ISBN 0-670-88793-5
- § Ernest Levy, *Just One More Dance* (Edinburgh, Mainstream 1998) ISBN 1-84018-134-6
- § Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder* (London, Pimlico 1995) ISBN 0-7126-7447-0
- § Witold Chrostowski, *Extermination Camp Treblinka* (London, Vallentine Mitchell 2004) ISBN 0-85303-456-7.
- § Colin Rushton, *Spectator In Hell: A British soldier's story of imprisonment in Auschwitz*, (Chichester, Summersdale, 2001 Edition) ISBN 1-84024-143-8
- § Ed. Steve Hochstadt, *Sources of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004) ISBN 0-333-96345-8
- § Ed. J Noakes and G Pridham, *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 3: Foreign Policy, War and Extermination* (University of Exeter Press, 1995) ISBN 0-85989-474-6
- § Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London, Penguin 2001) ISBN 0-141-00042-2. See also an article by Christopher Browning explaining the sources of information for the Holocaust at www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/browning1.htm

- § Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The history of a Small Town and an Enlightened World* (Secker & Warburg, 1998) ISBN 0-436-20482-7
- § <http://www.deathcamps.org/contents/>
- § <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/index.html>
- § www.polandsholocaust.org/intro.html is one family's website about their experiences under both the Nazi and Soviet regimes.
- § <http://www.bl.uk/services/learning/curriculum/voices/audiomenu.html#title>
- § <http://korczak.com/Biography/kap-0.htm> - site with Janusz Korczak's life story
- § <http://www.einsatzgruppenarchives.com/ghetto/krakow/krakow.html>
- § <http://www.einsatzgruppenarchives.com/ghetto/lublin/lublin.html>
- § <http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Poland.html>
- § <http://www.ibiblio.org/yiddish/>
- § <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/>

Learning more about Belsen

- § The collections of the Imperial War Museum hold a wealth of information relating to the liberation of Belsen. The Army Film and Photographic Unit had been covering the push through North West Europe, and a unit stayed behind at Belsen to record not only the burials of the bodies but also the efforts to save those who were still just alive. The Museum's collections of books, personal documents and sound archive material document many of the personal stories of the liberation of Belsen and other concentration camps. Parts of the Museum's catalogue have been digitised and are available to search at www.iwmcollections.org.uk
- § The site of the former concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen can be visited. A new museum will open there in 2006: www.bergenbelsen.de
- § For details of Holocaust Memorial Day, held annually in the UK, and local activities happening in your area, go to: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk
- § An excellent resource on all Holocaust-related history is the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: www.ushmm.org
- § For details of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, visit the museum's website. The Exhibition is permanent and entrance is free. Note: the Holocaust Exhibition is not recommended for 14s.

Bibliography

- § Abel J Herzberg, *Between Two Streams: a diary from Bergen Belsen* (London, I B Tauris, 1997)
- § Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth* (London, DLM 1996)
- § Paul Oppenheimer, *From Belsen to Buckingham Palace* (Newark, Quill 2001)
- § Jo Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London, Routledge, 1998)
- § Jo Reilly (et al), *Belsen in History and Memory* (London, Frank Cass, 1997)
- § Martin Gilbert, *The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity* (London Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1996)
- § Ed. Ben Flanagan and Donald Bloxham, *Remembering Belsen: Eyewitnesses Record the Liberation* (London, Vallentine Mitchell, 2005)

For general reading on the Holocaust, although not an exhaustive list, we recommend the following:

- § David Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (Heinemann, London, 2004)
- § Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, the Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (Perennial, 1998)

- § Peter Longerich, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* (Tempus, London, 2003)
- § Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (Penguin, 2003)
- § Mark Roseman, *The Past in Hiding* (Penguin, 2001)
- § Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (Fontana, 1986)
- § Kitty Hart, *Return to Auschwitz* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981)
- § Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (Bloomsbury, 1999)
- § Michael R Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Penguin, 1987)
- § Richard Overy, *Interrogations Inside the Minds of the Nazi Elite* (Penguin, 2001)

Other sites of interest include:

- § <http://auschwitz.dk/Bergenbelsen.htm> is a website about Belsen
- § <http://www.scrapbookpages.com/BergenBelsen/> is about a visit to Belsen
- § <http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/snapshots/snapshot26/snapshot26.htm> is a quick learning activity based around documentary evidence from the National Archive
- § <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005258> is the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's article about Belsen.
- § <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4445529.stm> reports on the 60th anniversary commemorations

General books, links and guides to sites

- § Martin Gilbert, *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past* (London, Phoenix 1998) ISBN 0-75380-477-8
- § Jeremy Leigh, *Holocaust Sites in Germany, Poland and Austria* (London, Holocaust Educational Trust, 2001) ISBN 1-903705-01-6
- § Andrzej Trzcinski, *The Traces of Monuments of Jewish Culture in the Lublin Region* (Lublin Tourist Information, 1991) guide booklet.
- § Eugeniusz Duda, *Jewish Cracow* (Krakow, Vis-à-vis 2003) ISBN 83-918255-5-8
- § Jan Jagielski, *Jewish Sites in Warsaw* (Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute 2002), ISBN 83911138-5-X. <http://polish-jewish-heritage.org/Eng/links.htm> also has links to Warsaw Jewish sites
- § Marc Terrance, *Concentration Camps: A Traveler's Guide to World War II Sites* (Universal Publishers/ upublish.com 2003) ISBN 1-58112-839-8
- § Krzysztof Dydyński, *Lonely Planet Poland* 4th Edition, published May 2002, ISBN: 1-74059-082-1 (5th Edition Available May 2005)
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/poland/>
- § Krzysztof Dydyński, *Lonely Planet Polish Phrasebook*, 1st Ed, published April 2001 ISBN: 0-86442-588-0
- § M. Salter & J. Bousfield, *The Rough Guide to Poland* (Rough Guides 5th Edition 2002) ISBN 1-85828-849-5
- § Adam Dylewski, *Where the Tailor was a Poet: Polish Jews and their Culture* (Krakow, Pascal 2003 edition) ISBN 83-7304-113-3. An online version of this can be found at http://www.diapozytyw.pl/en/site/slady_i_judaica, the Traces of the Past website.
- § <http://www.scrapbookpages.com/sitemap03.html> is a guide to a number of Holocaust sites round Europe. Not comprehensive but a useful starting point
- § http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/index_education.html is some guidance from Yad Vashem for people preparing for a journey to Poland.

Teaching guides to the Holocaust

- § Paul Salmons, *Reflections: an inter-disciplinary scheme of work for teaching the Holocaust* (London, Imperial War Museum, 2000) ISBN
- § *Lessons of the Holocaust: the complete teaching and resource pack* video, resources and scheme of work (London, Holocaust Educational Trust & Spiro Institute, 2000)
- § The Historical Association, "Teaching the Holocaust", *Teaching History* September 2001 Issue 104
- § J Clements, J Gorsky, R Boston, *The Holocaust: Faith, Morality and Ethics* secondary RE and PSE resource pack (London, Holocaust Educational Trust, 2000) ISBN 0-951-6166-9-2
- § Jehovah's Witnesses, *Stand Firm* documentary video and study guide (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1997) ISBN 1-892208-03-2
- § <http://www.proteacher.com/090173.shtml>
- § <http://www.holocaust-history.org/>
- § <http://teachers.teach-nology.com/themes/social/holocaust/>
- § <http://www.het.org.uk/index.htm>
- § http://remember.org/educate/#scholar_resources
- § <http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/sitemap/sitemap.htm>
- § <http://www.teacheroz.com/holocaust.htm>
- § <http://www.pbs.org/auschwitz/learning/guides/>
- § <http://holocaust-education.de/holocaust/e/projects/> - examples of other education projects
- § <http://www.holocausthistory.net/> is Beth Shalom's interactive Learning about the Holocaust for School Pupils presentation/ site
- § <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/lesson.htm> contains samples of teaching ideas and materials that can be purchased. A source of ideas.
- § http://www.kdhs.org.uk/history/v2/a/as_unit6/ is gidz.co.uk's scheme of work on Nazi Germany for AS Level students

Other useful, interesting or related works of interest

- § Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Canto 2002) ISBN 0-521-01269-4
- § Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London, I B Taurus 2004) ISBN 1-86064-546-1
- § Michael Smith, *Foley: the Spy who saved 10,000 Jews* (London, Hodder & Stoughton 1999) ISBN 0-340-71850-1
- § Solomon Perel, *Europa, Europa* (Chichester, John Wiley & Sons 1997)
- § BBC articles on Genocide & the Holocaust at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/genocide/>
- § www.chgs.umn.edu/Visual_Artistic_Resources/visual_artistic_resources.html Center for Holocaust and Genocide studies
- § www.jewish.co.uk/content/jewishfilm.htm - site on loads of Jewish related films
- § www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/Film/Film_TO/HolocaustFilm.htm - similar to above
- § <http://course1.winona.msus.edu/pjohnson/h140/schindler/schindler1.html> - essay on the film *Schindler's List*

Where to obtain Holocaust resources and further guidance

- § Holocaust Education department at the Imperial War Museum, London at <http://www.iwm.org.uk/>. Contact Paul Salmons on 0207 416 5269.
- § <http://www.holocaust-history.org/> contains essays and documents about a number of different aspects of the Holocaust as does <http://www.nizkor.org/fast-track.shtml>

- § www.holocaustbookstore.net/ at Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, Newark.
- § <http://www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/>
- § Holocaust Educational Trust in London at <http://www.het.org.uk/>

Below is a list of 10 USHMM & IWM linked websites

- § www.ushmm.org
- § www.yadvashem.org.il
- § www.annefrank.nl
- § www.topographie.de
- § www.goethe.de/kug/ges/ztg/lks/enindex
- § www.auschwitz.org.pl/html/eng/start/index.html
- § www.vhf.org
- § www.bl.uk/education
- § www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm
- § www.calvin.edu./academic/cas/gpa

The slant of the majority of these is American because that is where most work has been undertaken on the Holocaust.

Key things to remember when evaluating any website:

- § Know what domain names mean (i.e. difference between .com, .org, .co.uk, etc)
- § What is the site's purpose?
- § Who is the author?
- § Is the information accurate? Cross-reference to check
- § Is it up-to-date?
- § Is it reliable?
- § Primary sources?
- § Reputable secondary references?
- § Captioned sources?
- § High quality page display?
- § Check spelling, punctuation and grammar?
- § Links to other reputable sites?

For further references, see the Links and Resources page of the school website
<http://www.ousdale.staffs.sch.uk/auschwitz/>

The Holocaust Resource M: Visiting Belsen today

Below is a selection of photographs taken during recent visits to Bergen-Belsen.



There is a documentation centre – currently being redesigned for 2006 – in which you can find a scale model of the camp, a documentary film, an exhibition, artefacts and book shop.



Once through the gate, you encounter this sign, carved in stone



This path is actually the route down to the original camp entrance. Note the barrack foundation outlines in the foreground.



What initially appears to be a quiet park is actually the site of a series of giant graves. None of the original buildings survive. These were all destroyed to prevent the spread of disease.



Some evidence remains. Here the foundations of one of the Barrack blocks. The power of imagination, relevant accounts and readings are essential to evoke a picture of life here.



Dotted around the camp are information boards that point out your location with what was the camp's confines. There is an online map of the camp at <http://www.bergen-belsen.de/en/karte/1944/>



Today, Belsen is visited by a lot of schools, especially German ones. This particular group is actually British: students from Ounsdale High School in 2003.



Students are encouraged to explore the site and create works of art to illustrate their findings.



Much of the camp is overgrown and wooded.



Another mass grave, one of several scattered around the camp. In this case, the number of victims within it remains unknown.



Three mass graves. Beyond the trees lies the camp for Soviet Prisoners of War.



One of Belsen's main monuments, an Obelisk with a wall of inscriptions. Here the diverse nationalities that died at Belsen are commemorated in many different languages.



The field in front of the Obelisk contains stones of remembrance erected by family members and survivors to honour lost loved ones.



A commemorative headstone, dedicated to Margot and Anne Frank.



This headstone is dedicated to members of the Oppenheimer family killed during the Holocaust and was erected by their children who survived the camp. For details, see Paul Oppenheimer's account in *From Belsen to Buckingham Palace*.



Belsen survivor, Rudi Oppenheimer, reciting the *Kaddish* at the Jewish Memorial.

All photographs © Phil Ginnings

The website for the Bergen-Belsen Memorial is at www.bergenbelsen.de/en/index.php. The memorial is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. (Except for 24-26, 31 December and 1 January).

A map of the camp today and other photographs of its monuments and sites of interest are available online at: <http://www.bergen-belsen.de/en/karte/heute/>