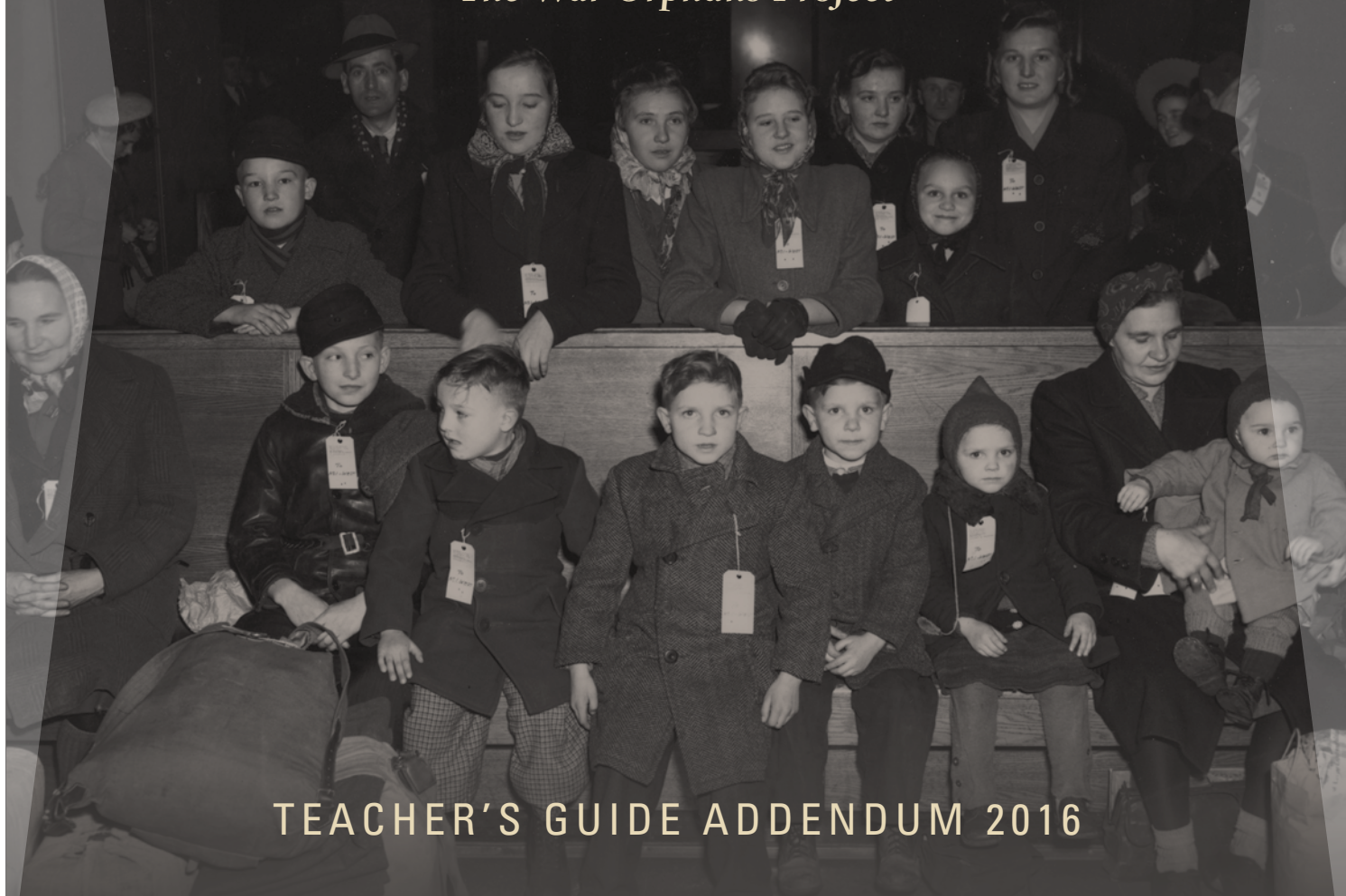


VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

# OPEN HEARTS --- CLOSED DOORS

*The War Orphans Project*



TEACHER'S GUIDE ADDENDUM 2016

## INTRODUCTION

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is proud to present the *Open Hearts – Closed Doors: The War Orphans Project* Exhibit. It tells the story of the arrival in Canada of 1,123 Jewish children orphaned by the Holocaust. It chronicles the lives of these children as they emerged from the Holocaust into Displaced Persons (DP) camps and orphanages, and eventually to the ships that would lead them to new lives in Canada. It also tells the story of the efforts of Jewish organizations and international agencies that helped identify these children and bring them to Canada. The exhibit speaks to the efforts of Jewish social workers, members of the

Jewish community and Jewish foster families who cared for them after their arrival. The project presents the documents, photographs and individual stories of the war orphans, and attests to the power of communities to act and make a difference.

Originally developed by and presented at the VHEC in 1997, the *Open Hearts – Closed Doors* teaching exhibit is being re-presented to provide opportunities for visitors to engage with Canadian refugee policies from a historical perspective, using case studies of Holocaust survivors from the local community.

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

The VHEC produced a teaching resource to support classroom visits to the *Open Hearts – Closed Doors: The War Orphans Project* school program in 1997. The guide contains pre- and post-visit activities that facilitate student engagement with the historical context and personal testimonies in the exhibit, and provides an opportunity for further reflection on thematic issues raised during the school program. The guide is available for download on the VHEC website: [www.vhec.org/teachersguides.html](http://www.vhec.org/teachersguides.html)

This addendum to the guide introduces students to Jewish- life in pre-war Europe through engagement in the **Pre-Visit Photo-Narrative Activity**, complementing class participation in the 75-minute interactive exhibit tour.

A suggested post-visit exercise on p. 34 of the original study guide address themes addressed in the school program, and offers students the opportunity for further reflection on Canada's immigration system and the current refugee situation.

Additional Holocaust education resources can be found on the VHEC's website: <http://www.vhec.org>

# PRE-VISIT PHOTO NARRATIVE ACTIVITY

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**GRADE LEVELS:** 6–12 • **SUBJECTS:** Social Studies, World History, English and Language Arts

**TIME REQUIRED:** One class period. This activity is adaptable to various grade levels and can be completed in a single class period. It can be used to initiate discussion at the beginning of a unit of study on the Holocaust. Paired with written reflections, it may be seen as a pre- and post-assessment of a unit.

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## OBJECTIVES

Students gain a critical understanding of Jewish life in pre-war Europe.

The focus of this project is to engage students in understanding both the individuality of Jewish lives affected by or lost in the Holocaust and the cumulative effects of the Holocaust on their communities. It explores the normalcy (religious, cultural, and communal) of Jewish life by finding and analyzing family photographs of an affected community from before the Nazi occupation or invasion and then researching the drastic changes in that community following Nazi rule.

The project seeks to provide entry-points into the individual lives behind the statistics of the Holocaust and the misconception that students may have that the Jews were not people like themselves, but somehow different. Thus, the project aims to illustrate parallels between students' lives and Jewish lives through photographs taken before the German occupation affected daily life, as well as to explore how life in those communities changed under German occupation

It is important that students do this project before looking at life under German rule: the Nazi rise to power, restrictions against Jews, ghettoization, and the "Final Solution." The goal is to cultivate understanding what it is that will be lost, rather than focus on the results of that loss. Students should ideally be familiar with a very basic timeline of the Holocaust (specifically, when different countries came under Nazi control), as well as European geography.

Through the analysis of visual images, students will develop awareness of historical context; develop critical thinking skills, particularly in regards to visual images; enhance their observation and interpretive skills; and develop conceptual learning techniques

## INSTRUCTIONS

### FOR TEACHERS:

Provide access to the online *Open Hearts – Closed Doors* online exhibit: <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/orphelins-orphans/english/>

Students will select photos from the “Before the War” section.

### FOR STUDENTS:

- In order to better understand what Jewish cultural and communal life was like in Europe before the Second World War, you will look at the various photos from that time period and analyze them, as well as research the towns where the photos were taken.
- Complete the *Photo Analysis Worksheet* and write captions for the photos.

## PHOTO RESEARCH

Research the town/city that is the setting of your photo and determine the following:

- How large was the town/city that is the setting of your photo and determine the following:
- What was Jewish life/culture like prior to the Nazi invasion?
- Where is or was that city located?
- What was the fate of this particular town’s/city’s Jews during the Holocaust?

## PHOTO PARALLEL

For homework, students are to look through their own family photos to find at least one to bring in and share with the class that relates in some way to one of the photos they have researched. It is preferable not tell them that they will be bringing in their own photo when they begin searching for photos, so they choose photos that strike them in some way, rather than ones for which they know they may find a match at home. Additionally students can write an organized response to the following questions concerning their photos:

- In examining your researched photos, what evidence suggests that life was “normal” or “ordinary” for the Jews prior to the German occupation?
- What did you discover as you looked through your own family’s photos in relation to those that you had researched? Which one did you choose to share? How does it relate and why?
- What do these photos, both yours and the researched ones, tell you about Jewish life in Europe before the Second World War?

## CLASS DISCUSSION

Students attach their own family photo to the pre-war one it relates to, so that both can be seen. Students hang the collected photos (including their own) on a chalkboard or bulletin board so that it will be one large visual collection. Students then mark with a pushpin on the posted classroom map the location researched during this project.

After those tasks are completed, a final synthesis of the project takes place. Students gather around the boards, and look at the class photographs together and discuss the similarities and differences they notice. The focus of the discussion should be on how the students and people pictured are similar to each other, and how the community of the students and those pictured are similar, as well.

Discussion questions include but are not limited to the following:

- What did you find out?
- What were you surprised by?
- What was Jewish life like before the German occupation?
- What are the similarities and differences of life in both sets of photos?
- Which European Jewish communities were affected?
- How were European Jewish communities affected?
- How did the Germans gain control?
- The patchwork of identity is unique to each individual. Brainstorm the various ways people self-identify, including religion, race, gender, political values, or abilities.

## ACTIVITY DEBRIEF

After assessing students' understanding of the project through the previous questions, discussion should then focus on the magnitude of six million lives lost through the visual on the wall of the people in the photos. Students have already counted them for their analysis sheets, so involving the entire class by adding up the numbers then dividing into six million can be powerful; however, it can also be confusing.

Try to make a connection between the individual lives lost and the statistic of six million by gauging the space filled by the photos and number of people there, and then approximate how many walls that would be, and then rooms, floors, and so on.

Finally, emphasis in the discussion should move toward the respect for individual lives lost in the Holocaust as a way of renewing those lives, recognizing them. Focus should also be placed on the recognition of Jewish cultural and communal life in Europe, pre-occupation, how diverse it was, and what was ultimately lost.

## EXTENSION

Students write a letter from the perspective of one eyewitness to a pen pal, sharing something about your life. Alternately, write a letter to the eyewitness, posing two or three questions about their pre-war life.

## FOLLOW-UP LESSON

Students watch the Home Vision Select video “There Once Was a Town,” which references life in the small shtetl of Eishyshok before German occupation. The documentary follows a group of people who return to their childhood shtetl in Poland to share memories of their culture and lives before the Second World War, their escape from the massacre that destroyed the Jewish presence in the town, and their years of fighting for survival during the Holocaust

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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

***There Once Was a Town (2000)***, a film chronicling the town of Eishyshok, a small Polish town where 3,500 Jews were brutally murdered in 1941. Duration: 90 minutes.

***“Survivors of the Holocaust,”*** a video by Steven Spielberg and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (1996). A historical documentary chronicled in timeline form through survivors’ own testimonies, this video is useful in giving students an eyewitness account of Jewish life before the Nazis and how drastically it changed. Duration: 60 minutes.

***There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok by Yaffa Eliach.*** Eliach (1999), one of the only 29 survivors of Eishyshok. This book documents life in a shtetl before the Nazis invaded. Because it is rich in photographs of and information on one Jewish community’s history, as well as its bitter end, it’s a valuable reference to guide students’ understanding of the parallels of Jewish communal life then to their own lives now.

***Historical Atlas of the Holocaust***, produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (1995). This geographical atlas and historical text covers all aspects of the Holocaust, including what happened in different areas of Europe, the Nazi killing centers, Jewish resistance, and postwar Europe. For this particular lesson, the first section on Europe before the war is important, as well as other more specific maps that students may use to locate Jewish communities in Europe for research.

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# PHOTO ANALYSIS WORKSHEET 1 OF 2

Subject of the photograph:

Number of people:

Estimated ages:

Number of men or boys:

Number of women or girls:

Describe clothing:

Describe facial expressions:

Describe what people are doing:

Are there objects in the photograph? Please list them.

# PHOTO ANALYSIS WORKSHEET 2 OF 2

Describe the objects in detail:

Can you tell when or where the photograph was taken?

Describe in as many details as possible, what you can identify about the place where the picture was taken (example: on a street, etc):

## WRITING A CAPTION

A caption is a short description of a photograph or picture. It often includes information about what is happening in the picture, where and when the picture was taken, and who is in the picture. Using the information you have gathered above, write a caption for your photo.