



SHOES OF MEMORY

Holocaust Ceramic Work by Jenny Stolzenberg

WORKSHOP FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES

VICTIMIZATION, CONFISCATION AND DEHUMANIZATION

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn more about how the processes of victimization, confiscation and dehumanization operated in the death camps.
- Students will gain an insight into what the process was like for the victims.
- Students will view survivor testimony and Holocaust photographs—primary evidence.
- Students will consider how the Holocaust is represented.

MATERIALS/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- VCR in cabinet and large screen TV
- VHS tape
- Several pencils
- Lined paper
- Sheet with questions
- Photocopied images on regular paper

Words in bold and italics represent what docents will communicate in their own words.

OPENING TO THE WORKSHOP

Most groups will be going through the workshop after having completed the tour of the exhibit. Explain to the class that they will be learning about the process of victimization and destruction in the death camps. However, if there is an exception to the rule, and this group is beginning their visit to *Shoes of Memory* with the workshop, please gauge the level of Holocaust knowledge and bring them up to date. This can be done with basic questions and discussion, and should not last more than five minutes.

Seat the students at the eight tables.



OVERVIEW OF THE HOLOCAUST

ACTIVITY ONE –

RELATING WORKSHOP TO EXHIBIT & BRIEF DISCUSSION OF TERMS

Explain to the students that the workshop will be dealing with the issues of dehumanization, victimization, and destruction.

- *Ask for volunteers to briefly explain what each word means, and to give an example of the word.*
- *Also, explore how the three words relate to each other: e.g. how dehumanizing someone makes it easier to victimize them.*
- *For groups that have gone through the first part of the tour, ask if there were any examples of dehumanization, victimization and destruction in the Shoes exhibit. Have the students share their examples.*

ACTIVITY TWO – VIDEO

Students are going to be watching a short video (VHS) on the large screen. The video will be set up for docents. All they will have to do is push a button or two.

Let them know that they will be watching an 8-minute video clip of a local Holocaust survivor, David Ehrlich, speaking about his memories of the death camp Auschwitz. He will tell us about:

- *His deportation to and arrival in Auschwitz*
- *His memories of selection*
- *What happened to those condemned to death*
- *What he saw in warehouses*
- *Being forced on a death march.*

Let them know that you will ask them questions based on David's testimony and that they should look and listen for examples of victimization, confiscation, and dehumanization.

Start the video. If you have any problems working the video, let a staff member know. Once the video is over, turn off the machine and please rewind the machine. Now you can ask the following questions. Feel free to add questions that you think are relevant.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- (a) According to David, what were the conditions like on the train to Auschwitz?
(b) Does David's answer relate to any or all of the three concepts—victimization, confiscation, and dehumanization? Explain.
- (a) What happens when David first arrives in Auschwitz?
(b) Who would likely be selected for immediate death? Why?
(c) Again, are any or all of the concepts of victimization, confiscation, and dehumanization in play during the selection stage?
- (a) How does David finally come to the conclusion that Auschwitz is a place where people are being systematically murdered?
(b) How were the Nazis able to justify and carry out their program of mass murder?
- (a) Why do we hear the word "Kanada" in the clip?
(b) Does "Kanada" relate to any or all of the concepts of victimization, confiscation, and dehumanization? Explain.
- (a) What were the death marches?
(b) Why were shoes so important on a death march?
(c) Why would the Nazis have forced Jews on death marches?

Once Done...

COMMUNICATE: *David, who lost many family members in the Holocaust, was eventually liberated by American forces in a sub-camp of Mauthausen, called Ebensee.*

SUGGEST: *To find out more about David's story, students can access our website, www.vhec.org and open Open Hearts-Closed Doors online resource. David's story is laid out with accompanying photos, quotes and maps. This would make for a good post-visit activity. Another option is to watch the full video, which includes his pre-war life and post-war life, and is available to teachers for use in the classroom.*

ACTIVITY THREE –EXAMINING IMAGES OF THE PROCESS OF VICTIMIZATION

In this activity, students will examine images of the steps of victimization experienced by prisoners (images are on the wall.). Students will be divided into eight groups of approximately four people—you can use the tables at which the students are already seated as the eight groups. Hand out to each table/group an envelope containing a laminated sheet with questions, photocopies of the images, and paper and pencils. Each sheet is the same. Each group will have 10 - 15 minutes to work through these questions, after which you will go around and ask for answers to the questions. Please relate the instructions to the room. They are also written on the sheet itself.



QUESTIONS OF IMAGES OF VICTIMIZATION

Work through the following questions, based on the images on the wall, as a group.

You may write down your thoughts and answers on the provided paper, although your answers will be shared orally and the paper will not be handed in. You have ten to fifteen minutes to work on the questions, after which your docent will ask various groups for their thoughts and answers to the questions. Each group has in its possession copies of the images, although the copies are not of the same quality as those on the wall.

1. Examine all the images. Share with your group any initial thoughts, observations or comments that you have based on what you see.
2. What did the word deportation mean during the Holocaust? Is the word used today? In what situations?
3. What do the three images from the deportation stage suggest to you about what the Jews knew about what awaited them at the end of their journey? How does this idea link to the process of destruction set up by the Nazis? Explain your answers.
4. Which images on the wall convey, in your opinion, the idea of dehumanization and loss of identity? Explain your choices.
5. Examine the images from the selection, mass murder, and slave labour stages. Explain the relationship among these three stages of the process of victimization and destruction.
6. Two images are used to depict the mass murder stage: people walking toward the gas chambers and a can of Zyklon-B gas. In your opinion, are these effective in terms of communicating the idea of mass murder? Explain the advantages and drawbacks that you see.
7. Besides confiscation, what other terms would you use to describe the images of shoes and suitcases on the wall? Explain your choices.
8. Using the image showing a diagram of Auschwitz-Birkenau, try to find where the following steps would have taken place:
 - Arrival and Selection
 - Mass Murder
 - Disinfection of prisoners selected for Slave Labour
 - Storing of Confiscated/stolen Goods
9. Looking at all of the images together, why do you think people often call the death camps “factories of death”? What phrase might you use? Why?
10. Of all the images, which is the most moving to you? Which is the least moving image? Explain your choices.



CLOSURE

Once the questions have been answered, please offer a chance for students to reflect on their visit to the exhibit. (For those classes just beginning the workshop, you will bring them to the main gallery.)

Some strategies for closure include asking the following:

- *What will you take away with you—be it something you saw, heard or thought about—once you leave the exhibit today?*
- *Do you feel that the ceramic shoes in this exhibit return a sense of identity to the millions of victims of the Holocaust? Why or why not? What are some other ways that the identity of the victims could be restored?*
- *What are the ways in which shoes can be associated with the Holocaust? If you could tell something or ask a question to Jenny Stolzenberg, what would you say?*

After finishing your discussion, thank them for coming...

As always, feel free to make this workshop your own. All I ask is that you share with me and other docents your ideas, so that the rest of us can think about incorporating your changes.

DEPORTATION



ARRIVAL



SELECTION



MASS MURDER



SLAVE LABOUR



CONFISCATION

