

PRIMER ON TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY AS AN HISTORICAL SOURCE

Testimony means *something that serves as evidence or proof in support of a fact or assertion*. Often, testimony is a first-hand personal account of an event. A Holocaust survivor's testimony is micro-history, one person's story told from a specific and subjective perspective. Since most survivors are not historians, they will tell personal stories that will connect with the historical details that students acquire from other sources.

Historians listen to testimony in order to understand the personal experiences of people who were involved in an historical event. When historians examine testimony as an historical source, they must carefully consider the challenges and the benefits that accompany the use of such testimonies.

It is important to consider why survivors testify and under what circumstances. Some survivors of the Holocaust gave testimony in court, thereby providing eyewitness evidence in the process of building cases against war criminals. More recently, survivors have offered testimony to confront the phenomenon of Holocaust denial or to leave a legacy for future generations.