Social Studies Teacher Resource Package

Dear Social Studies Educator,

Pictures of the thousands of shoes found in the death camps at the end of the war are a chilling indication of the enormity and scale of the Holocaust. These shoes provide tangible reminders of the six million lives lost. In addition to serving as a reminder of loss, the images of shoes also reveal that mass-murder was not the only component of the Nazi Final Solution. Complementing the industrial means of mass-murder was an equally thorough and organized system of theft, which confiscated the possessions of the victims and eventually distributed them among the population and agencies of Nazi Germany.

The exhibit Shoes of Memory: Holocaust Ceramics of Jenny Stolzenberg examines these issues of loss and confiscation. On display will be the artwork of Jenny Stolzenberg, featuring 70 pairs of hand-sculpted ceramic shoes; an actual child’s shoe from Auschwitz; and images of the thousands of valuables seized from prisoners in the camps. Classes that visit the exhibit will take part in a 45-minute tour and then participate in a 45-minute hands-on workshop.

This resource package can be used as a tool to prepare your students for their visit to this exhibit. The package is divided into three sections:

I. Pre-Visit Information and Activities
II. Post-Visit Activities
III. Additional Teaching Resources
The Holocaust is the term now given to the Nazi-led genocide of European Jewry. Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi anti-Jewish policy escalated from the removal of legal rights and confiscation of property to physical isolation and, ultimately, mass murder. Other groups were also victimized by the Nazis—including Gypsies (Roma and Sinti), the handicapped and homosexuals—but only the Jews were to be completely annihilated. By the end of World War II, nearly six million Jews had perished in the Holocaust, many in extermination camps, centres designed for the singular purpose of murder.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in January 1933. It did not take long for them to begin their assault on the Jews of Germany. The persecution began with antisemitic legislation, which included the expulsion of Jews from professions, the elimination of citizenship for Jews under the notorious Nuremberg Laws, and the forbiddance of Jews entering public spaces. Jews’ property and wealth were confiscated—a process known as Aryanization—while the Nazis pursued a policy of making their land “Judenfrei”—free of Jews. Sadly, the doors to escape were not open to Jews as countries around the world, including Canada and the United States, denied entry to people considered “ethnically undesirable”.

The policy of making its land “Judenfrei” conflicted with Nazi Germany’s expansionist war aims. More territory gained meant millions of more Jews under Nazi control. While the Nazis decided how to solve their “Jewish Question”, they established ghettos in which to hold millions of Jews. The majority of the 400 ghettos were in Eastern Europe and were characterized by disease, overcrowding and starvation. The ghettos became deportation centres for Jews to concentration camps and extermination camps.

The first Nazi concentration camps had opened in the 1930s as prisons for political opponents of the regime. Eventually the system grew to encompass over 1800 camps, most classified as forced labour camps or transit camps. By late 1941, a new type of camp had emerged: an extermination camp. The extermination camp offered the Nazis a more efficient method of murdering Jews than the previous policy of using mobile shooting squads. It was at this point during the Holocaust that the Final Solution came into effect: the plan to kill all the Jews of Europe.

In total, six extermination camps were built for the task of annihilating the Jews. The extermination camps relied on a very orderly system in which Jews would arrive at the camps and be herded into gas chambers designed to look like showers. Jews not immediately selected for death would be forced to work in the camp, labouring in horrid conditions until they died or were murdered.

Of the nearly six million Jews murdered by the Nazis, over one million were children. To this day, the Holocaust remains a testament to the dangers of bigotry and racism and raises troubling questions about civilization and human nature.
Timeline of the Holocaust, 1933–1945

1933

January 30
Adolf Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany.

March 20
Dachau concentration camp opens.

April 1
Boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.

April 7
Laws for re-establishment of the Civil Service bar Jews from holding civil service, university and state positions.

April 26
Gestapo established.

May 10
Public burning of books written by Jews, political opponents of the Nazis, and others.

July 14
Law passes permitting the forced sterilization of Gypsies, the mentally and physically disabled, African-Germans and others considered "unfit." East European Jewish immigrants stripped of German citizenship.

1934

August 2
Hitler proclaims himself Führer und Reichskanzler (Leader and Reich Chancellor). Armed Forces must now swear allegiance to him.

October – November
First major wave of arrests of homosexuals.

1935

March 17
Hitler’s army invades the Rhineland.

April
Jehovah’s Witnesses banned from all civil service jobs and are arrested.

September 15
"Nuremberg Laws," anti-Jewish racial laws enacted; Jews lose the right to German citizenship and to marry Aryans.
1936

Summer
Olympic Games take place in Berlin. Anti-Jewish signs temporarily removed.

July 12
First German Gypsies arrested and deported to Dachau concentration camp.

October 25
Mussolini and Hitler form Rome-Berlin Axis.

1937

July 15
Buchenwald concentration camp opens near Weimar.

1938

March 13
Austria is peacefully annexed (Anschluss) by Germany. All anti-Semitic decrees immediately apply in Austria.

July 6 – 15
Representatives from thirty-two countries meet at the Evian Conference in France. Most countries refuse to let in more Jewish refugees.

November 9 – 10
Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass): anti-Jewish pogrom in Germany and Austria; synagogues destroyed; Jewish homes and shops looted; nearly 30,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps.

November 12
Decree forces all Jews to transfer retail businesses into Aryan hands.

November 15
All Jewish pupils expelled from German schools.

December 2 – 3
All Gypsies required to register with the police.

1939

March 15
Germans invade Czechoslovakia.

August 23
Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed: non-aggression pact between Soviet Union and Germany.
June 1939
Cuba, the United States and Canada refuse to admit Jewish refugees aboard the S.S. St. Louis, which is forced to return to Europe.

September 1
Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.

September 10
Canada declares war on Germany.

October
Hitler extends power of doctors to kill institutionalized mentally and physically disabled people in the "euthanasia" program.

October 12
Germany begins deportation of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland.

October 28
First Polish ghetto established in Piotrków.

November 23
Jews in German-occupied Poland forced to wear an arm band or yellow star.

1940
Spring
Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France.

May 7
Lodz Ghetto sealed. No movement allowed in or out of the ghetto.

May 20
Auschwitz concentration camp established at Oswiecim, Poland.

August 8
Battle of Britain begins.

September 27
Italy, Germany and Japan form an alliance called the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis.

October
Warsaw Ghetto established: ultimately contained 500,000 people.

1941
March 22
Gypsy and African-German children are expelled from schools in the Reich.

March 24
Germany invades North Africa.
April 6
Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.

June 22
Germany invades the Soviet Union. The Einsatzgruppen, mobile killing squads, begin mass murders of Jews, Gypsies and Communist leaders.

July 31
Heydrich is charged with organizing the "Final Solution."

September 23
Soviet prisoners of war and Polish prisoners killed in Nazi test of gas chambers in Auschwitz.

September 28 – 29
Approximately 34,000 Jews murdered by mobile killing squads, at Babi Yar near Kiev, Ukraine.

October
Establishment of Auschwitz II (Birkenau) for the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Russians and others. In related measure, Germany bans all Jewish emigration.

December 7
Japan attacks Pearl Harbour.

December 8
Gassing begins at Chelmno extermination camp in Poland.

December 11
United States declares war on Japan and Germany.

1942
Nazi extermination camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Majdanek-Lublin begin the mass murder of Jews in gas chambers.

January 20
Wannsee Conference in Berlin; fifteen Nazi leaders met to discuss "the Final Solution," the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe.

June
Jewish partisan units established in the forests of Belorussia and the Baltic States.

June 1
Jews in France and Holland required to wear identifying stars.
1943

**January**
German 6th Army surrenders at Stalingrad.

**April 19 – May 16**
Warsaw Ghetto uprising; Jewish armed resistance to being deported to extermination camps.

**June**
Himmler orders the liquidation of all ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union.

**Summer**
Armed resistance by Jews in Treblinka concentration camp, Bedzin, Bialystok, Czestochowa, Lvov and Tarnów ghettos.

**October 14**
Armed revolt in Sobibor extermination camp.

**October – November**
Rescue of Danish Jewry to Sweden.

1944

**March 19**
Germany occupies Hungary: Eichmann put in charge of plan to eliminate Hungarian Jewry.

**May 15 – July 9**
Over 430,000 Hungarian Jews are deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where most of them are gassed.

**June 6**
D-Day: Allied invasion at Normandy, France.

**July 20**
Group of German officers fail in their attempt to assassinate Hitler.

**July 24**
Russians liberate Majdanek concentration camp.

**August 2**
Nazis destroy the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau; approximately 3,000 Gypsies gassed.

**October 7**
Prisoners revolt at Auschwitz-Birkenau and blow up one crematorium.
1945

January 17
Nazis evacuate Auschwitz and forced prisoners on "death marches" toward Germany.

January 27
Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz-Birkenau.

April
U.S. troops liberate Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps.
Canadian and British troops liberate Bergen-Belsen.

April 30
Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

May 5
U.S. troops liberate Mauthausen concentration camp.

May 8
V-E Day: Germany surrenders; the war ends in Europe.

August 6
The U.S. bombs Hiroshima, Japan.

August 9
The U.S. bombs Nagasaki, Japan.

September 2
V-J Day: Japan surrenders; end of World War II.

November 1945 – October 1946
International Military War Crimes Tribunal held at Nuremberg, Germany.
**Terms Relevant to the Holocaust**

**Adolf Hitler**
Born in 1889, became leader of the Nazi Party in 1921 and later ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Led Germany into a world war and was the prime initiator of the Holocaust. Killed himself in a Berlin bunker at the end of the war. Contrary to myth, Hitler did not have any Jewish ancestry.

**Antisemitism**
Opposition to or hatred of Jews. Wilhelm Marr coined the term in the late 1870s but the word has come to denote hatred of Jews, in all of its forms, throughout history.

**Aryan**
Originally a linguistic term referring to the Indo-European group of languages. Before the end of the 19th Century, the term had taken on racial definitions, often referring to people whose ancestors were Northern European and thus “purer” than “lesser races”. The Nazis viewed Jews and other non-Aryan people such as Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) and Poles as either inferior or subhuman.

**Auschwitz-Birkenau**
Established in 1940 as a concentration camp in Poland, it became a killing centre in 1942. Auschwitz I was the central camp; Auschwitz II, known as Birkenau, was the killing centre; and Auschwitz III, known as Monowitz or Buna, was the slave-labour camp. In addition, there were numerous subsidiary camps. Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army on January 27, 1945. The number of people who died in Auschwitz is estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.5 million.

**Concentration Camps**
The Nazis established prison camps shortly after assuming power in 1933 to hold and isolate political opponents and those considered to be “racially” undesirable such as Jews and Gypsies. Most of the approximately 1800 camps were transit or labour camps. The first were Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. After the occupation of Poland, extermination camps were established for mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno and Majdanek.

**Confiscation System**
The Nazis put into place an organized and efficient system to seize the property and last belongings of victims in the concentration camps. All stolen property was sorted, inventoried and then sent to Nazi agencies and organizations. It is estimated by the United States Holocaust Museum that the confiscation process produced over 2,000 freight carloads of stolen goods.

**Death Marches**
Near the end of the war and with the Soviet Army advancing from the East, the Nazis forced many of the already weak prisoners inside the death camps on long, hard forced marches. Approximately 250,000 prisoners died on these marches, either from the harsh conditions or from murder.
Deportation
Initially an effort to rid German-held land of Jews, deportation eventually became a means to deliver Jews to concentration camps and to implement the Final Solution.

Extermination Camp (Death Camp)
A camp in the concentration camp system designed for the singular purpose of murdering Jews and other victims. Sometimes referred to as a Death Camp. Some extermination camps were connected to concentration, labour and transit camps.

Final Solution
The Nazi code name for the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe. Intended as a resolution to what the Nazis called the 'Jewish Question'.

Genocide
Systematic killing, in part or in whole, of a group of people or nation. Term was first coined in 1943 by the Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. “Genos” in Greek means tribe or race, and “cide” is from Latin, meaning to kill.

Holocaust
The mass murder of nearly 6 million European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. Many individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered at the hands of the Nazis, but only the Jews were targeted for total ‘extermination’.

Kanada
Term used by prisoner work units to denote the warehouses in Auschwitz that contained the stolen possessions of prisoners. The nickname was given since the warehouses contained an abundance of goods, and Canada, in the minds of many, was a “land of plenty”.

Kommando
Term used for prisoner work units in the concentration camps. There were many types of Kommando units, including those assigned to work the stolen goods warehouses, and the gas chambers and crematoria. Kommando units were regularly gassed or killed and replaced with other prisoners.

Liquidation
Term used by the Nazis for clearing Jews and other victims out of a ghetto, town or camp. Liquidation could also mean murder.

Majdanek (Maidanek)
Extermination camp located outside of Lublin in eastern Poland. It also contained a slave-labour camp. Between 79,000 and 235,000 persons died or were killed at Majdanek. Most succumbed to starvation, disease, exposure, and the effects of physical torture or back-breaking labour performed under threat of violence. The number of victims of Majdanek's gas chambers is unknown.
**Nazis**
Name for the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, which was formed in 1919. Adolf Hitler joined the Party in September 1919, when it was called the German Workers’ Party. The following year the Party added “National Socialist” to its name.

**Ravensbrück**
The only Nazi concentration camp built specifically for women, it first opened in May 1939 just north of Berlin. Established for the dual purposes of “re-education” and slave labour, by 1942 camp doctors began performing terrible medical experiments on prisoners. In six years of operation, Ravensbrück had the highest mortality rate of any camp located in Germany.

**Second Generation**
Term used to describe the children of Holocaust survivors. The Second Generation has responded to the presence of the Holocaust in their families’ lives in a myriad of ways, including through art.

**Slav**
A member of one of the Slavic-speaking peoples of eastern Europe. Group includes Poles, Russians, and Serbs. The Nazis viewed Slavs as inferior and targeted members—like Poles—for enslavement.

**SS**
Abbreviation for Schutzstaffel (Defense Protective Units), usually written with two lightning symbols. Initially established as Hitler’s personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a larger organization by Heinrich Himmler. Although some SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for its role in the destruction of European Jewry.

**Art Terms Relevant to Shoes of Memory Exhibit**

**Abstract Representations**
Objects, representations and artworks that do not resemble figurative or real objects from everyday life. These works usually use forms, shapes and colours that do not look like everyday objects to represent themes or emotions. For example, Jackson Pollock’s paintings are abstract swirls and drips of paint.

**Artist Statement**
A personal reflection that is written by an artist on his or her work. The statement focuses on the most important aspects of the art and the techniques used to make it, and can serve as a bridge of communication and understanding between artist and audience.

**Ceramics**
Used to describe the shaping, finishing and firing of clay. The word “ceramics” comes from the Greek word “Keramos” meaning “Pottery,” “Potter’s Clay,” or “a Potter.” This Greek word is related to an old Sanskrit root meaning “to burn” but was primarily used to mean “burnt stuff.”
**Figurative Objects**

Objects that look like and are supposed to represent something in real life. For example, the ceramic shoes created by Jenny Stolzenberg are figurative objects.

**Firing**

To harden clay, you have to heat it at high temperatures (1280°C), which fuse the clay particles. This is usually done in a kiln (a small oven made for firing ceramics and clay).

**Glaze**

Colour that is thinned to a transparent state and applied over previously painted areas to modify the original colour. One glaze must be completely dry before another colour or layer is applied on top.

**Interpretation**

An artist’s explanation of or personal view about a topic or event. When artists choose to represent an idea through art, they must also explain or examine how they feel about that idea or why they think it is important to represent it in art.

Audience members are sometimes said to interpret the work of an artist, but generally this term refers to the artist’s task. Audiences are said to “read” the work of an artist.

**Medium**

The material or means of expression with which the artist works. Within art, this refers to the method of representation used by the artist (e.g. photography, clay, paint, drawing, collage).

**Representation**

A creation that is a visual or tangible rendering of someone or something. Also, the manner in which something is depicted, exhibited or presented. Representation can affect the way people think about a subject or an event.

**Sculpture**

The action or art of processing (as by carving, modeling, or welding) clay, plastic or hard materials into a three-dimensional work of art.

**Style**

The distinctive or characteristic qualities of an artwork which tell us something about the artist, their background, their training or the time in which they lived.
The Nazis’ Attitudes & Beliefs About Jews & the Consequences

To understand why the Nazis sent Jews and other so-called “undesirables” to death camps, it is important to understand their racist worldview. The Nazis ranked people along pseudo-scientific racial lines, placing themselves at the top as “Aryans”. Gypsies (Roma and Sinti), Slavs, the physically and mentally handicapped, and homosexuals were all groups that did not fit into the Nazi worldview and thus classified as inferior. At the very bottom of the ladder were the Jews, who were considered subhuman.

Read the quote below taken from a piece of Nazi antisemitic propaganda from material distributed at Nazi Public Meetings in September and October 1944 and then answer the following questions:

*The Jew wants to force us back to a life of slavery so that he can live off us as a parasite and suck us dry. The healthy life of our people stands against the parasitic life of the Jew.*

*Who in this struggle can still speak of pity, brotherly love, etc.? Who believes that a parasite (e.g., a louse) can be improved or changed? Who believes that one can come to an agreement with a parasite? We can only choose between being devoured by the parasite or destroying it.*

- What were Jews likened to and called by the Nazis in this excerpt?
- Why do you think the Nazis used this word so often when attacking Jews in speeches or writings?
- According to this excerpt, what were the characteristics and habits of Jews? How did the Nazis portray themselves?
- According to this material, how did the Nazis want to deal with the Jews? Why was this so?
- How did the Nazis attempt to accomplish this goal and what name did they give to it? You may need to consult the glossary or one-page handout on the Holocaust to answer this question.
CONFISCATION SYSTEM AT WORK IN THE CAMPS

The chart below reveals the system in the death camps by which prisoners and their possessions were sorted upon arrival. The Nazis relied on a tightly-run and organized system to separate the sexes; to select those who would be killed immediately (often the old, the young and the sick) and those who would be worked to death as slave labourers; and to confiscate everything of value that belonged to the prisoners. While many people are aware of the killing and working components of the death camps, less familiar is the system of theft. Yet the plan to rob the Jews of all their valuables was an important part of the Final Solution, the plan to kill all the Jews of Europe.

Once all possessions—including glasses, hair and shoes—had been taken from prisoners, the material was sorted in large warehouses and eventually distributed to help the German economy, military and population. It is estimated by the United States Holocaust Museum that the confiscation process produced over 2,000 freight carloads of stolen goods.

For Class Discussion:
Looking at the chart, discuss as a class why you think the death camps are sometimes referred to as “death factories” or examples of “bureaucratic control”.

Usual Workings of the Confiscation System in the Death Camps

1. Arrival of New Prisoners by Train

2A. Removal of Luggage and Large Bags by Special Prisoner Work Units

2B. Luggage and Bags Brought to Warehouses. Warehouses are full of items, which are stored, inventoried and packed for shipment.

2C. Items are delivered to Nazi agencies and then either put in the bank or sold or freely distributed. German economy, military and population benefits.

3A. Newly Arrived Prisoners are segregated by sex and then selected for immediate death or slave labour. The very young, old and weak are selected for immediate death.

3B. Those selected for work give up the remainder of their possessions and clothes. Most will be given a delousing shower and have their heads shaved. Everything is sent to the warehouses, and steps 2B and 2C are followed.

3C. Prisoners are given shoes, striped uniforms and a bowl or cup. They are assigned a work detail. Most will eventually be killed.

4A. Those selected for immediate death are sent to gas chambers designed to look like showers.

4B. All possessions are taken from the dead and sent to warehouses, including hair and gold from teeth. Steps 2B and 2C are followed.

4C. Bodies of dead are cremated or buried. Work is performed by prisoner work units.
**Why Did the Nazis Steal from their Victims?**

There are two main reasons why the Nazis put into place a confiscation system in the death camps.

*Reason One*

One clue is provided by the chart below, which lists just a small sampling of the materials taken from prisoners and where the materials were ultimately sent and used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials Taken</th>
<th>Who Received the Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glasses without frames</td>
<td>Government Medical Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches, clocks, and pens</td>
<td>German Army Soldiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery, money, gold, and pearls</td>
<td>German National Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets, clothing, shoes, suitcases</td>
<td>German Welfare Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur Coats</td>
<td>SS Army Officers (Waffen SS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions**

- If you had to use one word to describe what was taken from prisoners, what word would you use, and why?
- If you had to use one word to describe who benefited from the stolen items, what word would you use, and why?
- Looking at this chart, what was one major reason why the Nazis stole from the prisoners in death camps? Explain your answer.

*Reason Two*

There was also a second reason behind the existence of the confiscation system in the death camps. To figure out what this second reason was, read the list of possessions below, and then discuss how each item represents a form of identity:

- Fancy Dress
- Watch
- Reading Glasses
- Pair of Walking Shoes
- Hat
- Long Hair
- Necklace that has been in the family for generations

**Questions**

Without all of these possessions, how would prisoners feel?

Based on your conversation, what would you say was the major second reason why the Nazis put the confiscation system into use?
“Kanada” Warehouses in Auschwitz – Follow the Clues

The Nazis used large warehouses to store the possessions they had stolen from prisoners in the death camps. In the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp the warehouses were nicknamed “Kanada” by the prisoners. Why had the prisoners given the warehouses the name of this country?

Follow the Clues

Read the following clues and then write up a reason why you think the warehouses in Auschwitz-Birkenau were nicknamed “Kanada” by the prisoners.

- All prisoners who arrived in Auschwitz had all their personal possessions taken from them.
- Prisoners selected for work and not immediate death were issued a pair of shoes, a striped uniform, a cap, perhaps a spoon and either a cup or bowl.
- Prisoners selected for work were given very little to eat, and ran the risk of suffering from disease and starvation.
- The warehouses had everything imaginable piled up inside of them, from jewels to pens to coats. Occasionally food would be found among the stolen possessions.
- Many people in Europe at the time had a certain view of the countries Canada and the United States. Robbie W., a local Holocaust survivor who spent time in Buchenwald concentration camp, remembers how he imagined Canada before he ever arrived here: “I thought of Canada as a young country full of wheat fields. It seemed to be a place where I would never run out of bread.”

Question

Why do you think the warehouses in Auschwitz were nicknamed “Kanada” by the prisoners?
Importance of Shoes for Prisoners in the Camps

Prisoners who write or talk about their experiences in the Nazi concentration camps often mention the importance of shoes. Why?

Have students, either alone or working in groups, read the following Survivor accounts. Once the students are finished, give them ample time to formulate an answer to the question: Why were shoes so important to prisoners in concentration camps?

Answers can be written, presented orally, or used as a basis for discussion.

Good footwear was essential to survival, especially working in that half-frozen mud in the rainy winter season. And people were prepared to risk their lives for a decent pair of boots, something I learned that first night we arrived. Auschwitz survivor Michel Mielnicki

We didn’t have adequate footwear because it suited the Nazis to have us stealing from each other... You knew that if your feet froze or blistered, which they were certain to do in clogs or rotten leather (socks were not part of our clothing allotment), you would have difficulty walking. The “Kapo” [prisoner assigned by Nazis to be in charge of other prisoners] would beat you. If they became infected or froze severely, gangrene would set in. Then someone would “select” you. Auschwitz survivor Michel Mielnicki

[At night in the barracks]...and if you took off your shoes, you had to make sure you put it under your head, because otherwise they [other prisoners] would steal. Ravensbrück survivor Judith Rosner Gertler

As the Germans did not have sufficient shoes for all, most of the prisoners received wooden clogs, which made walking difficult... Fortunately for my brother and myself, the camp clothing store had run out of shoes [clogs] by the time our turn came, and we were accordingly permitted to wear our own—where Mother had concealed a hoard of dollars before our departure from the ghetto. Auschwitz survivor Avraham Harshalom

[On a death march from Raisko Labour Camp, near Birkenau] They walked and walked, throwing away everything in order to walk without any extra weight. She saw many women who had been shot because they were unable to walk and were lying dead on the road... She believed that her good boots saved her life. Based on the testimony of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück survivor Rachel Rozenbaum Hocherman
What A Shoe Represents; What Shoes Represent

Read the following information, look at the images, and then fill out the chart and share the opinions expressed.

One of the objects in the exhibit Shoes of Memory is a single shoe from a child who was deported to Auschwitz. It is almost certain that this child was immediately selected for death upon arrival at the death camp, since the Nazis only chose strong and healthy adults for slave labour in Auschwitz and condemned the old, very young and weak to the gas chambers.

Another image found in Shoes of Memory is a picture of thousands of shoes stored in a warehouse in a death camp.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to using either the single child’s shoe from Auschwitz or the image of thousands of shoes from a warehouse in an exhibit on the Holocaust. Fill out the chart below, expressing your opinion of what each object/image does effectively and what it does not do effectively.

Shoe or Shoes as Representation: Pros and Cons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Single Child’s Shoe</th>
<th>Picture of Thousands of Shoes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would this image or object do effectively in terms of representing the history of the Holocaust in an exhibit?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would this image or object not do effectively in terms of representing the history of the Holocaust in an exhibit?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonus Question:

What does this chart suggest in general about choosing an image or an object to represent the history of an event?
**Shorter Assignments**

- As noted earlier in the packet, the Nazis used the confiscation system to dehumanise victims by stripping them of all outward signs of identity. Create a comprehensive chart that lists and briefly explains the number of ways that Nazis dehumanised Jews and other victims during the Holocaust.

- In addition to shoes, many other Holocaust related objects are used by museums to tell the story of the Holocaust. Pick one of the following objects, research its use during the Holocaust, and present your findings to class.

  Railway Boxcar
  Zyklon-B Canister
  Jewish Badge/ Star of David Badge
  The sign “Arbeit Macht Frei”

- The stealing and distribution of prisoners’ possessions was not the only way the Nazi-German economy and businesses benefited from the Holocaust. Several companies used slave labour and prisoners for experiments, while others provided essential services to the Nazis. Research the history of one of these companies and present the findings of your investigation to class. Possible companies include:

  Hugo Boss
  BMW
  Daimler-Benz (Mercedes)
  Bayer (IG Farben)
  Krupp
  Porsche
  IBM

**Longer Assignments**

- Although the Nazis stole millions of dollars worth of goods and valuables from Jews during the Holocaust, the costs of undertaking the Final Solution were also quite high. Research the economics of the Holocaust and determine in an essay if the Final Solution, in the end, actually cost the Nazis money.

- Read a memoir of a concentration camp survivor. Write a paper on what was considered essential for survival for this particular person. Focus on material possessions (spoon, clothes, shoes etc.) as well as psychological tools (positive attitude, belief in seeing family again, ability to convince others etc.) used by the survivor, and if possible, write about how the material side affected the psychological side, and vice-versa.
The following resources will provide additional background information on the Holocaust and issues and themes related to the exhibit *Shoes of Memory*.

**Useful Websites**

**www.ushmm.org**
Website for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A good site for teachers and educators.

**www.yadvashem.org**
Yad Vashem is the Israeli organization dedicated to Holocaust research, education and memory.

**www.holocaust-trc.org**
The Holocaust Teacher Resource Centre, presented by the Holocaust Education Foundation, is an indispensable site for teachers.

**http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/**
The Florida Centre for Instructional Teaching has produced an excellent online teacher’s guide.

**Useful Books and Videos**
(All items are in the VHEC library and available to teachers)

**Memoirs from Survivors**
Isabella Leitner *Fragments of Isabella* Dell, 1978
Recounts the true story of a young Hungarian Jew and her sisters interned in Auschwitz, their struggle to survive, and their daring escape from a death march to Bergen Belsen.

Primo Levi *Survival in Auschwitz (If This is a Man)* Touchstone, 1996 (org. 1958).
The machinations of the prisoners and guards in a Nazi death camp, as seen through the eyes of an Italian Jew. Levi’s account is regarded by many as the most intellectual of all survivor memoirs.

Carol Matas *Daniel’s Story* Scholastic, 1993.
Daniel, whose family suffers as the Nazis rise to power in Germany, describes his imprisonment in a concentration camp and his eventual liberation. A fictional account based on the actual experiences of child survivors.

Elie Wiesel *Night* Avon Books, 1960
Perhaps the most well-known memoir of the Holocaust. If Levi’s account is from the intellectual’s perspective, then Wiesel represents the spiritual perspective.
Historical Works
Informative look at the operations of three Nazi death camps, all of which are often over-looked by students and teachers. Arad is a Holocaust survivor who has become a historian.

From the archives of the Auschwitz Memorial and the German Federal Archives, this is a complete record of the events in Auschwitz. Extremely valuable reference book.

Book reveals how an unremarkable Polish village was transformed into a killing field. Using architectural designs and planning documents recently discovered, this work traces the successive stages of how Auschwitz became the focus of a Germanized Poland and the epicentre of the Final Solution.

Videos
Daniel’s Story
Video that complements the novel of the same title. This 14-minute video documents the events of the Holocaust from the perspective of a Jewish child growing up in Nazi Germany. Suitable for younger audiences.

David E. VHEC Testimony Project
This tape follows the experiences of a teenage Holocaust survivor from Hungary. David describes the ghettoization of his community, Auschwitz, a death march, forced labour and his liberation. 23 minutes. Includes teaching guide.

Klara F. VHEC Testimony Project
The first part of the tape documents Klara's life in Hungary, her life before deportation, her experiences in Auschwitz-Birkenau, labour camps and Bergen-Belsen. The second part is her answers to students’ questions. 34 minutes. Includes teaching guide.