

## The Horrors of the Holocaust

Goal: Students will learn about the persecution of European Jews prior to and during World War II. They will learn about Hitler's policy of genocide against Jewish people.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will analyze two primary source documents related to the Holocaust.
- 2) Students will make observations about a written document and a visual document.
- 3) Students will synthesize their observations to make inferences about the documents.
- 4) Students will make extrapolations based upon the information gained in their observations.

Read the children's book *Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust* by David A. Adler, Illus. by Karen Ritz. This picture book tells the story of two children of the Holocaust and is intended for an elementary school audience.

After reading the book, hold a Think-Aloud discussion with your students. Create a word web mapping their associations with the word "Holocaust." Talk about the Jewish religion (attached) and help the students to understand the origins of the Holocaust by explaining that Hitler blamed European Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I and its financial problems throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. There was a long tradition of *anti-Semitism* in Europe even before Hitler. *Anti-Semitism* means prejudice against and persecution of Jews. However, Hitler had as his goal *genocide*, meaning the murder of an entire ethnic, religious, or cultural group – in this case the Jewish people.

The Nazis killed 6 million Jews as a part of the Holocaust. Hitler also ordered the deaths of 5 million gypsies, homosexuals, people with handicaps, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Catholics. Many of these deaths occurred in concentration camps: death camps or work camps run by the Nazis. At work camps, the Nazis used inmates as slave labor, working them to death in an average of six weeks. The only function of the death camps was to kill Jews in what Hitler termed "The Final Solution to the Jewish Problem."

The following document is an identification/data card for Symcho Dymant, who was a prisoner at Buchenwald work camp. Have students study the document and answer the following questions together as a class. A translation of the document follows.

Translation of Prisoner ID card for Symcho Dymant

Family Name: Dymant

First Name: Symcho

Birth Date: Feb. 18, 1914 in Warsaw

Marital Status: Married      Children: none

Address: Techenstochau, Hadom District

Street: Alter Ring # 9

Religion: cos. (?)      Country: Poland

Address of Family Members: Friends Frank and Felix live in Techenstochau, Warsaw Street # 21

Admitted on: December 24, 1944

Through: Rüll (?)

Class: Buchenwald

Reason: Political (Polish-Jew)

Description:

Height: 170 cm

Build: Slim

Face: Oval

Eyes: Dark brown

Nose: Germanic [describes the shape of the nose]

Ears: Protruding [stick out]

Teeth: Several missing

Hair color: Blond

KL: Weimar - Buchenwald Jud  
Hollerith erfasst

Häftlings-Personal-Karte

Häftl.-Nr. 15.349.2

Fam.-Name: Dymant  
Vorname: Symcho  
Geb. am: 18.2.14 in: Warschau  
Stand: verhe. Kinder: -  
Wohnort: Techenstochau, Distr. Radom  
Strasse: Alter Ring 9  
Religion: Mos. Staatsang.: Pole  
Wohnort d. Angehörigen: Freunde: Frank Felix, Techenstochau, Warschauerstr. 21  
Eingewiesen am: 24.12.1944  
durch: RSH  
in KL: Buchenwald  
Grund: Polit. Pole-Jude  
Verstrafen: -  
mit Verfügung v.: -

Überstellt an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.  
an KL.

Personen-Beschreibung:  
Größe: 170 cm  
Gestalt: schl.  
Gesicht: oval  
Augen: d. braun  
Nase: ger.  
Mund: gew.  
Ohren: 2 fehlen  
Zähne: -  
Haare: blond  
Sprache: -

Bes. Kennzeichen:  
Charakt.-Eigenschaften:  
Sicherheit b. Einsatz:  
Körperliche Verfassung:

Strafen im Lager:  
Grund: Art: Bemerkung:

23.8.44 500.000

Hollerith data card for Buchenwald prisoner Symcho Dymant. [Photograph #95314]

US Holocaust Memorial Museum

1) List three physical characteristics of Mr. Dymant. (Physical characteristics include weight, height, eye color, hair color, etc.)

2) Where did Mr. Dymant live before he was deported to Buchenwald?

- 3) What was Mr. Dymant's nationality?
- 4) How old was Mr. Dymant when he was taken into custody?
- 5) What information on the card indicates that Mr. Dymant was a prisoner?
- 6) Based upon the descriptions of Hilde and Eli's experiences in the book *Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust*, what kind of experiences do you think led up to Mr. Dymant's deportation to Buchenwald? In other words, in what other ways do you think the Nazis persecuted Mr. Dymant?

Look carefully at the photo below.



**Child survivors of Auschwitz, wearing adult-size prisoner jackets, stand behind a barbed wire fence. [Photograph #66935A]**  
US Holocaust Memorial Museum

- 1) Name three important things about the photo.
- 2) Who are the subjects of this photo?
- 3) This picture was taken at the Auschwitz death camp by Soviet Soldiers who liberated

the camps in January, 1945. What evidence in the photo tells you about the conditions at the camp?

4) How could you know more about conditions at Auschwitz and at other camps? What kinds of materials might give you more information?

## **The Religion of Judaism**

Judaism is a religion based upon the relationship of the Hebrews to their God. The Hebrews were a people descended from a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah and believed themselves to be God's "chosen people." The Jewish Holy Book is called the Torah and is made up of the first five books of the Bible. These books tell Abraham and Sarah's story and describe how they led their "nation" through many difficulties and trials while remaining true to their God. It is very important to Jewish people to study, question, discuss, ponder, explain, and re-explain the meanings of this body of writings.

Jewish people believe that in exchange for their agreement to serve and accept One God, they can achieve holiness. Part of being holy means observing Shabbat, or a day of rest dedicated to serving and getting to know God better. On Shabbat – from sun up to sun down on Saturday – faithful Jews nurture their personal relationships with God.

Another important part of Judaism is doing "deeds of lovingkindness." These are good deeds done to make another person's life better without the expectation of payment or reward. Jewish people try to live the concept of "mitzvah," the joy of doing something for the sake of others and for God.