

Lesson 18: Building Schema for the Holocaust

2 Class Periods

Reading Skills: **Determining Main Ideas**
 Note-taking
 Making Connections
 Building Schema

Purpose:

Obviously a memoir is focused on the experiences of one person or one family. A reader cannot expect to get a comprehensive understanding of a historical event from a memoir. It's hard to get a comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust from one Holocaust history book! Because the Holocaust happened over so many years and in so many places, it is very complicated history. Chapters 4 and 5 of *Four Perfect Pebbles* mention the transports to "the East," and Auschwitz, and the gas chambers that looked like showers. I think the authors do an admirable job of providing some historical context within the confines of a memoir. However, I want my students to know more about what happened to the people who did not survive the Holocaust to write a memoir.

Materials:

Each student will need a copy of *Tell Them We Remember*.

Each student will also need a note-taking sheet for *Tell them We Remember*.

Process:

Give each student a copy of *Tell Them we Remember* and a note-taking sheet. Tell them that their task for the next two class periods is to learn what happened to most of the people whom the Blumenthals watched board the transport trains from Westerbork. They will need to decide which ideas in each chapter are the most important and, therefore, ought to be written on the note-sheet. The note-sheet gives them prompts to make this process easier. For the most part, the prompts are listed in the same order the information is given in the text.

It took my students two class periods to complete this assignment. Because we had been working on identifying main ideas, I did not let my students work with a partner on this task. I wanted to see what they could do on their own. I checked the notes myself before we went over the answers in class. Of course, it would be an option to allow students to work together in small groups to do the work or to check their work after they finished independently.

I took some time on an additional day to discuss the main ideas from *TTWR* with the students and help them connect the ideas to what they had already read in *Pebbles*. My students also had a lot of questions that we took class time to discuss.

Background Reading:

I would recommend that you read the following pages of *The World Must Know* for your own information. I think it will help you answer your students' questions. It also is an excellent source of photos to show the students.

Deportations	pages 112-117
Resettlement in the East	pages 119-122
Implementing the Final Solution	pages 122-123
Killing Centers	pages 123-124
Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die	pages 124-127
Prisoners of the Camps	pages 127-130
Slave Labor	pages 130-133
Auschwitz	pages 133-137
Murder by Gas	pages 137-143
Why Wasn't Auschwitz Bombed?	pages 144-145
Face-to-Face with Death: Shoes	pages 145-147
Tattooing and Shearing	pages 147-149
Body Disposal	pages 149-150

- Work

- Escape:

- “Medical” Experiments:

- Death – “_____ through work”:

5. Describe the Nazi’s “Other Victims” – people who were not Jewish:

Notes for Tell Them We Remember

“On the Train” pp.50-51

“At the Killing Centers” pp.52-53

“Auschwitz-Birkenau” p.54-57

“Prisoners of the Camps” pp.58-59

Name _____

Hour _____ Date _____

1. Describe the conditions on the trains.

- Crammed into boxcars
- No Bathroom facilities
- No ventilation or light
- Unbearably hot in summer and freezing cold in winter
- No food or water except what people brought with them.

2. Describe the selection process that happened as soon as the trains arrived at the camps.

- Immediately after unloading, deportees were ordered to form a line
- Men separated from women and children
- SS officer made a quick visual judgment of whether a person was strong enough to work
- Victims ordered to the left or right; they had no idea what that meant

3. Describe what happened to those who were selected to die.

- Babies and children, pregnant women, the elderly, the handicapped, and the sick were selected to die
- Told that they would be taken to showers to get rid of lice before they entered the camp
- Told to remove clothes, shoes, valuables
- When all were inside the “shower” room, the door was locked
- Zyklon B gas, an insecticide, was piped into the gas chamber
- When all the victims were dead, prisoners selected for work removed the corpses, shaved hair, removed gold tooth fillings, loaded bodies into crematoria for burning

4. Describe what happened to those who were selected for work at Auschwitz.

- Entrance Sign:
“*Arbeit Macht Frei*” = “Work makes one free”
- Induction into the Camp:
Hair shaved
Tattooed prisoner registration number on left forearm
Striped uniform - pants and jacket or dress
- Housing:
Crowded barracks that had no windows, insulation, or heat
No bathroom – only a bucket
Wooden bunkbeds – 5 or 6 people in a single bunk

- Food:
Watery soup made with rotten vegetables and (sometimes) meat
A few ounces of bread and a bit of margarine
Tea or a bitter drink resembling coffee
- Work
Inside the camp – kitchen workers, barbers, sorting clothing/ shoes/ personal belongings
Outside the camp – coal mines, rock quarries, construction projects, digging tunnels and canals, shoveling snow off roads, clearing rubble from air raids
Factories – private companies “hired” slave laborers from the Germans to build things such as automobile and aircraft engines
- Escape: almost impossible
Electric barbed-wire fences surrounded the camps and killing centers
Guards with machine guns & automatic rifles stood in watch towers
- “Medical” Experiments:
Cruel “medical” experiments
Josef Mengele experimented on twins and dwarfs – including children
One goal was to find better treatment for German soldiers and airmen
Also wanted to find better ways to sterilize people the Nazis considered “inferior”
- Death – “extermination through work”:
Most prisoners survived only a few weeks or months
When they were too ill or weak to work they were killed in gas chambers

5. Describe the Nazi’s “Other Victims” – people who were not Jewish:

- Political prisoners – Communists, Socialists, trade unionists
- Common criminals
- Gypsies – like Jews, targeted for systematic murder because they were considered an inferior race
- Jehovah’s Witnesses
- Homosexuals
- Captured Soviet soldiers