

Lesson 8: *The Camera of My Family*
Optional Lesson

1 Class Period

Reading Skill: Making Text-to-Text Connections
Building Schema

Purpose:

The Camera of My Family is a short film (19 minutes) that tells the story of a photographer who discovers that many of the members of her family died in the Holocaust. The film is useful to show the lifestyle of an assimilated German Jewish family and allows many comparisons with the Blumenthal family in *Pebbles*. Some of these connections points are:

- Patriotic Germans – Jews by religion only
- Successful family business
- Served German army in WWI
- Political and economic turbulence in Germany after WWI
- Nazi attempt to overthrow the government/ Hitler jailed
- Economic depression increased overt antisemitism & helped Nazis gain power
- Personal experiences with antisemitism
- Hitler becomes Chancellor/ Democracy destroyed
- Effects of the Nuremberg Laws (although that term is not used in the film)
- Kristallnacht
- Fleeing to Holland to await emigration
- Aryanizing Jewish property

Materials Needed:

A VHS or DVD of *Camera of My Family*

One copy for each student of “Connections Chart for *Four Perfect Pebbles* and *The Camera of My Family*”

Process:

Give each student a copy of the note-taking chart. Ask them to look at the comparison points in column one and the information that has already been completed in column two. Tell the students that they are going to watch a video about a German Jewish family that can be compared in many ways to the Blumenthal family. As they watch, they are to take brief notes in the third column. Their task is to make text-to-text connections; in this case, they will find many similarities between the two families.

The Camera of My Family is only 19 minutes long and it is densely packed with information. You may wish to pause the tape periodically to let students catch-up on their notes. Or you may wish to rewind the film and show it again to help students catch details the second time that they missed on the first viewing. It would also be well worth the time to have a bit of question-and-answer and discussion time following the film.

The main concept I wanted my students to understand after watching this film is that life for Jews in Germany before Hitler was generally good. German Jews were often well assimilated into German society. They were patriotic and served in WWI in greater proportion than their actual percentage of the overall population. There were poor Jews, and middle-class Jews, and wealthy Jews. Like many Germans, the Blumenthals and the Wallachs developed their own successful family businesses. They took vacations, celebrated holidays, and went to school. All in all, they weren't really much different from us!

Name: _____ Hour: _____ Date: _____

**Connections Chart for *Four Perfect Pebbles* and *The Camera of My Family*
Key**

Points to Compare	<u>Four Perfect Pebbles</u>	<u>The Camera of My Family</u>
Family Roots in Germany	Hoya – small town. Business started 1894 by Walter’s parents.	
German Assimilation/ Patriotism	Assimilated – 44 Jews of 3,000 people in Hoya.	
Service in WWI	Walter served 4 years. Awarded the Iron Cross.	
Occupation	Family business – shoes & clothing.	
Lifestyle	Financially comfortable. Lived in 2 floors above store with grandparents.	

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Experiences of Antisemitism	1933 Boycott hurt family business. Rocks thrown at Albert's baby carriage.	
Experiences of Nazi Persecution	Boycott started loss of business. Nuremberg Laws: lost citizenship	
Kristallnacht 9 November 1938	Walter arrested. Car confiscated.	
Escape from Germany	Started emigration process 1938. To Holland in 1/1939 to wait for US visa.	
Financial Circumstances	Sold business for only a small portion of its worth. Many possession taken during departure inspection.	
Outcome	Trapped in Holland.	

Name: _____ Hour: _____ Date: _____

**Connections Chart for *Four Perfect Pebbles* and *The Camera of My Family*
Key**

Points to Compare	<u>Four Perfect Pebbles</u>	<u>The Camera of My Family</u>
Family Roots in Germany	Hoya – small town. Business started 1894 by Walter’s parents.	Catherine Hanf Noren – narrator. Mother was a Wallach. Born near Munich, Germany in 1938. Family had lived in Germany for many generations: Great x3 Grandfather Abraham lived in German Jewish ghetto.
German Assimilation/ Patriotism	Assimilated – 44 Jews of 3,000 people in Hoya.	Thought of themselves as Germans; Jews in religion only. Loved Bavarian folk art and culture – basis of family business.
Service in WWI	Walter served 4 years. Awarded the Iron Cross.	All of men in Wallach family served in WWI.
Occupation	Family business – shoes & clothing.	Wallach House of Folk Art started in 1929 by Grandfather Moritz in Munich. Owned textile mill in Dachau.
Lifestyle	Financially comfortable. Lived in 2 floors above store with grandparents.	Prosperous. Comfortable lifestyle. Large family; large home; large garden. Vacations with family.

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Experiences of Antisemitism	1933 Boycott hurt family business. Rocks thrown at Albert's baby carriage.	Grandfather Moritz taken hostage during Nazi attempt to overthrow the government in 1923. Called "Jew" even by gardener employed by family. Prejudiced gym teacher.
Experiences of Nazi Persecution	Boycott started loss of business. Nuremberg Laws: lost citizenship	Felt many effects of Nuremberg Laws. Nazis confiscated grandparents' furniture and folk art.
Kristallnacht 9 November 1938	Walter arrested. Car confiscated.	Wallach store windows sprayed with acid. Grandfather hid in mountains. Cousin sent to Dachau. Father arrested.
Escape from Germany	Started emigration process 1938. To Holland in 1/1939 to wait for US visa.	Many of Wallach family were able to go to U.S. Catherine's family went to Holland; then Australia in 1938; then U.S. approx 1947.
Financial Circumstances	Sold business for only a small portion of its worth. Many possession taken during departure inspection.	Grandfather was cheated out of his prosperous business when it was "Aryanized." Grandparents arrived in U.S. with only \$10 of German money.
Outcome	Trapped in Holland.	Some of family escaped. Many members of extended family perished in Holocaust.

