

TEACHING HOLOCAUST HISTORY USING SURVIVOR TESTIMONY

One of the most powerful ways of remembering the Holocaust and honoring its victims is to bring the voices of survivors to your students. As our [Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust](#) state, “Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics.”

As you teach about [key historical topics](#), incorporate survivor testimony to personalize the history, to emphasize its impact on individuals, and to highlight the diversity of experiences individuals had during this event. When including survivor testimony, providing context is essential. Our [Teaching Guideline](#) suggests placing events described in survivor testimony into historical context so students can understand the circumstances that led to particular actions or events.

Materials for this Lesson

SURVIVOR TESTIMONY ILLUSTRATING KEY TOPICS (PDF)

Below are additional resources to assist you in identifying survivor testimonies to enhance your teaching of Holocaust history.

- [Survivor Testimony Videos](#) – collection of interviews with survivors of the Holocaust and persecution by the Nazis and their collaborators
- [Personal Histories](#) – personal accounts of what occurred during specific moments in the Holocaust, such as deportations and liberation
- [ID cards](#) – Museum-created ID cards from the Permanent Exhibition, chronicling the experiences of individuals during the Holocaust
- [Behind Every Name a Story](#) – essays describing survivors’ experiences during the Holocaust
- [The Memory Project](#) – writings by survivors who volunteer at the Museum
- [First Person podcasts](#) – audio excerpts from interviews with Holocaust survivors conducted at the Museum
- [First Person YouTube channel](#) – videos of Holocaust survivors as they share their remarkable personal stories of hope, tragedy, and survival with visitors at the Museum
- [Life After the Holocaust](#) – documents the experiences of Holocaust survivors whose journeys brought them to the United States, and reveals the complexity of starting over
- [Curators Corner](#) – describes the significance of collections donated by Holocaust survivors

SURVIVOR TESTIMONY ILLUSTRATING KEY TOPICS

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has identified [topic areas](#) for you to consider while planning a course of study on the Holocaust. Below are survivor testimonies that help illustrate and personalize each of the topic areas.

1933-1939

Dictatorship under the Third Reich

- [Frank Liebermann](#) describes changes in Germany after Nazi rise to power (07:49)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (58:59)

Early Stages of Persecution

- [Hanne Hirsch Liebmann](#) describes effects of Kristallnacht (the “Night of Broken Glass”) (01:30)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Gerald Liebenau](#) memories of Kristallnacht (06:26)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Rabbi Jacob G. Wiener](#) “A Student in a Nazi School” (written reflection)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Benjamin \(Ben\) Meed](#) describes Warsaw shortly after the German occupation in 1939, and his first experience of antisemitism (02:14)

The First Concentration camps

- [Hanne Hirsch Liebmann](#) describes harassment and anti-Jewish sentiment in Germany (00:56)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Johanna Gerechter Neumann](#) describes anti-Jewish measures in Hamburg, Germany (01:56)
 - [Biography](#)

1939-1945

World War II in Europe

- [Charlene Schiff](#) describes the Soviet occupation of Horochow after the outbreak of World War II (02:30)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Tania Marcus](#) ID card describes German troops invading Poland and later invading the Soviet Union

Murder of People with Disabilities (Euthanasia program)

- [Leo Schneiderman](#) describes arrival at Auschwitz, selection, and separation from his family (describes treatment of the sick and disabled) (02:51)
- [Helene Melanie Lebel](#) ID card describes a woman killed in the Brandenburg “Euthanasia” center due to mental illness
- [Robert Wagemann](#) describes fleeing from a clinic where, his mother feared, he was to be put to death by euthanasia (01:09)
- [Benno Müller-Hill, Antje Kosemund, Paul Eggert, and Elvira Manthey](#) describe the Euthanasia Program (07:55)

Persecution and Murder of Jews

- [Emanuel \(Manny\) Mandel](#) describes wearing the yellow star as a child in Hungary (06:39)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 program YouTube video](#) (01:05:40)
- [David Bayer](#) describes life after the German Invasion of Poland (07:12)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (01:08:05)
- [Jakob Blankitny](#) Behind Every Name – “Jakob’s Story” (written reflection)
- [David J. Selznik](#) ID card describes the murder of Jews in the Kovno ghetto escalating in 1944

Ghettos

- [Judith Meisel](#) describes smuggling food as a child into the Kovno ghetto (01:26)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Emanuel Tanay](#) describes the establishment of the Miechow ghetto (01:53)
- [Benno Helmer](#) describes conditions in the Lodz ghetto (01:46)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Erika Eckstut](#) describes a young girl’s experience in the Czernowitz ghetto (07:09)
 - [“In the Ghetto with My Mother”](#) by Erika Eckstut (written reflection)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Nesse Godin](#) describes a day in the Siauliai ghetto (06:42)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (58:33)

Mobile Killing Squads (Einsatzgruppen)

- [Frima L.](#) describes roundup of Jews for mobile killing unit (Einsatzgruppen) massacre (02:49)

Expansion of the Concentration Camp System

- [Siegfried Halbreich](#) describes conditions and forced labor in the Gross-Rosen camp (01:58)
- [Saul Ingber](#) describes forced labor and brutality in the Gusen subcamp of the Mauthausen concentration camp (02:59)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Sandor \(Shony\) Alex Braun](#) describes the death of his father in Kochendorf, a subcamp of Natzweiler (01:37)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Abraham Lewent](#) describes deportation to and conditions in Majdanek (01:32)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Judith Meisel](#) describes arrival at the Stutthof camp (02:20)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Steven Springfield](#) describes conditions in the Stutthof concentration camp (02:48)
- [Fritzie Weiss Fritzshall](#) describes deportation in cattle car to Auschwitz (01:13)
- [Miso \(Michael\) Vogel](#) describes the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau (00:50)
 - [ID Card](#)

Killing Centers

- [Abraham Bomba](#) describes gassing operations at Treblinka (02:03)
- [Martin Weiss](#) describes selection at Auschwitz (09:46)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)

Additional Victims of Nazi Persecution

- [Joseph Muscha Mueller](#) ID card describes the discrimination of a young boy born to Roma (Gypsy) parents

- [Harry Pauly](#) ID card describes the treatment of homosexuals in Germany
- [Robert Oelbermann](#) ID card describes paragraph 175 and the requirement of homosexuals wearing pink triangles
- [Robert Wagemann](#) describes surreptitious Jehovah's Witness prayer meetings in Nazi Germany (01:04)

Jewish Resistance and Non-Jewish Resistance

- [Estelle Laughlin](#) describes the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (09:30)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2015 interview with transcript](#) (01:02:59)
- [Tomasz \(Toivi\) Blatt](#) describes Sobibor uprising (00:56)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Nesse Godin](#) "Spiritual Resistance - The Hanging" (written reflection)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (58:33)
- [Samuel Zoltan](#) joined the armed resistance group, Franc-Tireurs et Partisans
 - [ID Card](#)

Rescue

- [Agnes Mandl Adachi](#) describes rescue activity on the banks of the Danube River and the role of Raoul Wallenberg (01:42)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Murray Pantirer](#) describes one of Oskar Schindler's rescue efforts (01:58)
- [Alisa \(Lisa\) Nussbaum Derman](#) describes her escape from Slonim during a roundup in 1941 (02:51)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Tom Veres](#) describes Wallenberg's rescue of members of the Swedish legation (03:15)

United States

- [Andrew Glass](#) "Illegal Immigration: A Personal Story" (essay)
- [Thomas Buergenthal](#) describes the difficulties involved in postwar migrations (00:51)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Hessy Levinsons Taft](#) describes his father's attempts to obtain visas for the family to emigrate from Nice, in the south of France (01:49)
- [Kalman Kernweiss](#) ID card describes writing a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt and her replying with an encouraging response

Death Marches

- [Rochelle Blackman Slivka](#) describes a death march from Stutthof (02:03)
- [Lilly Appelbaum Malnik](#) describes death march from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen (01:45)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Sam Itzkowitz](#) describes a death march from Landsberg, a subcamp of Dachau, to the Bavarian Alps (01:32)
- [Lily Mazur Margules](#) describes death march from a labor camp near Stutthof (01:09)
- [Manya Friedman](#) describes death march to Ravensbrück (06:31)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)

Liberation

- [Nesse Galperin Godin](#) describes seeing her reflection in a mirror upon liberation (01:17)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (58:33)
- [Norbert Wollheim](#) describes liberation at Schwerin, in northeast German, in May 1945 (02:13)

- [Martin Weiss](#) reflections on liberation (07:40)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Louise Lawrence-Israëls](#) describes first days of freedom (05:54)
 - [Biography](#)
 - [First Person 2016 YouTube video](#) (57:37)
- [Bart Stern](#) describes how he survived to be liberated in the Auschwitz camp (01:52)
- [Edwarda Kleinfeld Rorat](#) describes emotions upon liberation (01:10)
- [George Salton](#) describes liberation by American forces (01:48)

Post-1945

Postwar Trials (includes testimony from lawyers and eyewitnesses)

- [Thomas Buergenthal](#) describes the significance of Nuremberg both personally and as a lawyer and judge (01:23)
 - [Thomas Buergenthal](#) describes the charges brought at Nuremberg (01:42)
 - [Thomas Buergenthal](#) describes the impact of Nuremberg on the development of international law (00:32)
 - [ID Card](#)
- [Benjamin \(Beryl\) Ferencz](#) describes taking testimony from witnesses while collecting evidence of war crimes (00:54)
 - [Benjamin \(Beryl\) Ferencz](#) describes collecting evidence of death marches (01:30)
 - [Benjamin \(Beryl\) Ferencz](#) describes early war crimes investigations in which he participated (03:04)
- [Henry Kellermann](#) describes reactions of defendants during proceedings of the Nuremberg Trial (02:15)
- [Joseph Maier](#) describes Hermann Goering at Nuremberg (01:55)
 - [Joseph Maier](#) describes former Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoess at Nuremberg (01:01)
 - [Joseph Maier](#) describes Hjalmar Schacht at Nuremberg (01:46)
- [William \(Bill\) Zeck](#) describes the role of Nuremberg in establishing a historical record (00:56)
 - [William \(Bill\) Zeck](#) describes translation and witnesses during the trials (01:09)
- [William Denson](#) describes the nature of the evidence uncovered (02:49)
 - [William Denson](#) describes the trial process (01:31)
 - [William Denson](#) describes emotional difficulties for witnesses in recalling their experiences (03:05)
 - [William Denson](#) describes finding witnesses for the trials (00:32)
- [Belle Mayer Zeck](#) describes the emotional toll of the Nuremberg trials (01:04)
 - [Belle Mayer Zeck](#) describes the personal impact of the Nuremberg trials (01:55)
- [John Dolibois](#) describes attitude of captured Nazi leaders (00:33)
 - [John Dolibois](#) describes interrogation practice (01:13)
- [Robert Mills Donihi](#) describes defendants at the postwar US trials in Germany (01:10)
 - [Robert Mills Donihi](#) describes a Buchenwald survivor who became a witness at a postwar US trial in Germany (02:31)
- [Drexel Sprecher](#) describes a witness at the Nuremberg trials (01:28)
 - [Drexel Sprecher](#) describes German documentation that could be used as evidence (00:34)

Displaced Persons Camps and Emigration

- [Sam Spiegel](#) describes life in displaced persons camp (00:59)
 - [ID Card](#)
 - [Biography](#)
- [Fela Warschau](#) describes the Feldafing displaced persons camp (01:10)
- [Colonel Richard R. Seibel](#) describes aid given to survivors after liberation in Mauthausen and their plans for emigration (01:36)