

Holocaust Resource Center Classroom Book Sets

Elly Berkovits Gross, *Elly: My True Story of the Holocaust*

Told in short, gripping chapters, this is an unforgettable true story of survival. At just 15, Elly, her mother, and brother were taken from their Romanian town to the Auschwitz-II/Birkenau concentration camp. When they arrived at Auschwitz, a soldier waved Elly to the right; her mother and brother to the left. She never saw her family alive again.

Thanks to a series of miracles, Elly survived the Holocaust. Today she is dedicated to keeping alive the stories of those who did not. Elly appeared on CBS's *60 Minutes* for her involvement in bringing an important lawsuit against Volkswagen, whose German factory used her and other Jews as slave laborers.

Recommended for Grades 3+.

Note: **25 copies available**

Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, *The Children of Willesden Lane. Beyond the Kindertransport: A Memoir of Music, Love, and Survival*

Jewish musical prodigy Lisa Jura has a wonderful life in Vienna. But when the Nazis start closing in on the city, life changes irreversibly. Although he has three daughters, Lisa's father is able to secure only one berth on the Kindertransport. The family decides to send Lisa to London so that she may pursue her dreams of a career as a concert pianist. Separated from her beloved family, Lisa bravely endures the trip and a disastrous posting outside London before finding her way to the Willesden Lane Orphanage.

Her music inspires the other orphanage children, and they, in turn, cheer her on in her efforts to make good on her promise to her family to realize her musical potential. Through hard work and sheer pluck, Lisa wins a scholarship to study piano at the Royal Academy. As she supports herself and studies, she makes a new life for herself and dreams of reconnecting with the family she was forced to leave behind. The resulting tale delivers a message of the power of music to uplift the human spirit and to grant the individual soul endurance, patience, and peace.

Recommended for Grades 4+.

Note: **60 copies available (Two classroom sets)**

Michael Bornstein and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat, *Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz*

Survivors Club tells the unforgettable story of how a father's courageous wit, a mother's fierce love, and one perfectly timed illness saved his life, and how others in his family from Zarki, Poland, dodged death at the hands of the Nazis time and again with incredible deftness. Working from his own recollections as well as extensive interviews with relatives and survivors who knew the family, Michael relates his inspirational Holocaust survival story with the help of his daughter, Debbie Bornstein Holinstat. Shocking, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting, this narrative nonfiction offers an indelible depiction of what happened to one Polish village in the wake of the German invasion in 1939.

Recommended for Grades 4+.

Marguerite Quddus, *In Hiding*

"I'm ready, but I'm overcome with sadness. Mama hugs us and kisses us: 'Goodbye, children! Go, and don't look back . . .'" With these last words from their mother, two little girls, Marguerite and her older sister, Henriette, start on a long and wandering journey that will last three years. Given new identities, they must forget everything about their former, familiar lives. Taken from farms to convents, they learn how to remain silent, to pretend, to lie in order to survive, to adapt repeatedly to new environments. Through it all, they manage to keep their hopes alive. This story, beautifully illustrated by Marguerite Élias Quddus, tugs at our hearts and allows us a remarkable insight into history through the eyes of a very young child.

Recommended for Grades 6+.

Gerta Solan, *My Heart is at Ease*

What keeps 15-year-old Gerta Solan going in the Auschwitz children's barracks is dreaming of the normal life that had been torn from her. Deported with her parents from Prague to the Theresienstadt "model camp" in June 1942, Gerta describes the lengths to which the Nazis went to mislead the International Red Cross about their treatment of Jewish prisoners. Then comes Auschwitz, where she has to learn to cope on her own with the corruption, brutality and desperation around her.

Recommended for Grades 8+.

Elie Wiesel, *Night*

Despite warnings about German intentions towards Jews, Eliezer's family and the other Jews in the small Transylvanian town of Sighet (now in modern-day Romania) fail to flee the country when they have a chance. As a result, the entire Jewish population is sent to concentration camps. There, in a camp called Auschwitz, Eliezer is separated from his mother and younger sister, but remains with his father. Over the course of the book, Eliezer and his father are sent from Auschwitz to a new concentration camp called Buna and then, as the Allies (the British and American troops) approach, deeper into Germany, to Buchenwald. A few months before the concentration camps are liberated by Allied soldiers, Eliezer's father dies. Though Eliezer survives the concentration camps, he leaves behind his own innocence and is haunted by the death and violence he has witnessed.

Recommended for Grades 9+.

David Newman, *Hope's Reprise*

David Newman's gifts as a musician and a teacher carry him through years of brutality during the war. Torn from his family in Poland and deported for forced labour at Skarzysko-Kamienna, David battles desperation and the mounting death toll by writing songs, poems and satires about life in the camp. Later, in the infamous Buchenwald camp, the resistance recruits him for a clandestine initiative to protect the Jewish children there. With his soulful songs and his lessons for the children, David is able to rouse a chorus of hope, both in himself and those around him.

Recommended for Grades 9+.

Arthur Ney, *W Hour*

Arthur Ney, a 12-year-old smuggler outside the Warsaw ghetto walls when the ghetto uprising began in the spring of 1943, fled to the countryside with false papers to work on a farm. Almost a year later he returned to Warsaw and faced the realization that his family was gone. Under the protection of the Salesian Fathers as a "Christian" boy, he struggled with loneliness, guilt, fear and indecision regarding his "dual identity." When the Warsaw Uprising—codenamed W Hour—began on August 1, 1944, then-14-year-old Arthur joined the barricades and fought the Nazis.

Recommended for Grades 9+.

Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*

While imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, Simon Wiesenthal was taken one day from his work detail to the bedside of a dying member of the SS. Haunted by the crimes in which he had participated, the soldier wanted to confess to—and obtain absolution from—a Jew. Faced with the choice between compassion and justice, silence and truth, Wiesenthal said nothing. But even years after the way had ended, he wondered: Had he done the right thing? What would you have done in his place?

In this important book, fifty-three distinguished men and women respond to Wiesenthal's questions. They are theologians, political leaders, writers, jurists, psychiatrists, human rights activists, Holocaust survivors, and victims of attempted genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, China and Tibet. Their responses, as varied as their experiences of the world, remind us that Wiesenthal's questions are not limited to events of the past.

Recommended for Grades 9+.

Rachel Shtibel, *The Violin*/ Adam Shtibel, *A Child's Testimony*

Rachel Milbauer, a vivacious and outgoing music lover, lay hidden and silent with her family and a family friend in an underground bunker in Nazi-occupied Poland for nearly two years. Adam Shtibel, only eight years old when the war broke out, survived in the forest with other Jewish children until he was taken in by a gentile couple and "passed" as a non-Jew. After the war, the recovered violin, case and photos hidden away by her beloved Uncle Velvel became cherished symbols of survival and continuity. Saved by inner fortitude, luck, and the courage and caring of friends and strangers, Rachel and Adam met and fell in love, and set about building a new life together. Half a century later, a chance remark inspired Rachel to explore her memories. Always at her side, Adam found himself compelled to break his long self-imposed silence in the only way he could.

Recommended for Grades 10+.

Molly Applebaum, *Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum*

A unique and poignant document, Molly's diary is a stark confession of her fears and anxieties, her despair and her secrets and, above all, her fervent wish to stay alive. *Buried Words*

presents Molly's extraordinary diary, never before published in English, and also the memoir she wrote in the 1990s. Molly Applebaum's courageous words, written fifty years apart, offer a fascinating reflection on both her wartime experiences and her post-war life.

Recommended for Grades 11+. Memoir contain sexual content.

Anna Hegedus, *As the Lilacs Bloomed*

It is June 1, 1945, as Anna Hegedüs writes her memoir from her hometown of Szatmár, Hungary. She has survived the ghetto—the prologue to her Greek tragedy; survived Auschwitz—the first act; the horrific Schlesiersee camp—the second act; and a death march—the brutal third and final act. It is there, however, that Anna was separated from her daughter, Agnes, and now, as she writes with her memories so raw, she waits desperately for Agnes's return.

Recommended for Grades 11+.

Nate Leipziger, *The Weight of Freedom*

Nate Leipziger, a thoughtful, shy eleven-year-old boy, is plunged into an incomprehensible web of ghettos, concentration and death camps during the German occupation of Poland. As he struggles to survive, he forges a new, unbreakable bond with his father and yearns for a free future. But when he is finally liberated, the weight of his pain will not ease, and his memories remain etched in tragedy. Introspective, complicated and raw, *The Weight of Freedom* is Nate's journey through a past that he can never leave behind.

Recommended for Grades 11+. Memoir contains sexual content.

Joseph J. Preil, *Holocaust Testimonies : European Survivors and American Liberators in New Jersey*

A project of the Holocaust Resource Center of Kean University, New Jersey, this book is a reference tool for teaching the Holocaust, for Holocaust survivors and their families, and for the general reader. Drawing on the center's central missions is to produce and preserve a series of oral-history videotapes based on the personal experiences of Holocaust survivors who reside in New Jersey. Joseph J. Preil brings together the most compelling testimonies of 153 Holocaust survivors as well as twenty concentration-camp liberators. Through these riveting accounts, the book traces the mass murder of the Jews across Europe in a geographical as well as chronological order. The testimonies in each chapter are grouped by the witnesses' country or region of origin, preceded by a brief introduction of the history of events in a particular area. In the last part of the book, American soldiers recount their impressions of being present at the liberation of the camps.

Recommended for Grades 11+.

Brad Hirschfield, editor, *Remember For Life*

Memory is about choice. We can choose to remember the past in ways that provoke pain and stir our anger, or we can remember in ways that help us create the kind of world in which we

most want to live. Nowhere is this choice more important than in connection to the Holocaust. And never has it been more important than now, because we are the first generation that will live without the presence of those who can tell us in their own words what they saw with their own eyes. These seventy-one firsthand stories from survivors of the Holocaust teach us to choose to remember for life, for their words are not about hatred and death but about ethics, decency, and love. Although the stories are arranged to accompany the weekly Torah readings and many of the Jewish holidays, they are just as meaningful when read on their own, in any sequence. The themes—journey, identity, resistance, community, refuge, and righteousness, to name but a few—are universal. And the lessons—about how to live more fully the life we are given—shine through.

Recommended for Grades 9+

Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*

This stirring collection of diaries written by young people during the Holocaust reflects a vast and diverse range of experiences—some of the writers were refugees, others were hiding or passing as non-Jews, some were imprisoned in ghettos. This seminal National Jewish Book Award winner was the first comprehensive collection of such writings, with extensive excerpts from fifteen diaries, ten of which had never before been translated and published in English. The diarists ranged in age from twelve to twenty-two; some survived the Holocaust, but most perished. Taken together, their accounts of daily events and their often unexpected thoughts, ideas, and feelings serve to deepen and complicate our understanding of life during the Holocaust.

Recommended for Grades 9+

Susan Garfield, *Too Many Goodbyes: The Diaries of Susan Garfield*

In 1944, as Budapest's Jews begin to suffer under German occupation, eleven-year-old Susie takes to her diary. Precocious and charming, Susie records the mundane along with the poignant, describing her family, friends and her daily life against a backdrop of war and persecution. Soon, Susie's young life is marred by farewells — to her father, forced into labour service, and then to her mother when collaborators take her away. After the war, Susie makes a fateful decision to embark on a journey to a new country. Lonely and struggling to adapt in Canada, Susie's diary is now filled with angst. In *Too Many Goodbyes*, Susan's memoir picks up the story where her younger self left it — close to finding a place where she truly belongs.

Recommended for Grades 9+

Anita Ekstein, *Always Remember Who You Are*

When the Nazis invade eastern Poland in 1941, young Anita Ekstein, a cherished only child in a large, close-knit family, is suddenly living in the shadow of fear and violence. At seven years old, she and her parents are forced from their home into a ghetto, and one day, her mother is gone.

As Anita's father desperately tries to save his beloved daughter, he befriends a Catholic man who smuggles Anita out of the ghetto, risking his own life to save hers. Frightened, living among strangers and missing the warmth her parents provided, Anita learns how to be Catholic and spends most of her days inside and in silence. Always at risk of being discovered, Anita has only her newfound faith to accompany her on the lonely path of survival. After the war, orphaned and struggling with her identity, Anita finds her way through her grief and confusion to fulfill her father's last request to *Always Remember Who You Are*.

Recommended for Grades 9+

Carl Wilkens, *I'm Not Leaving*

Why did Carl Wilkens decide to remain in Rwanda in 1994, with a genocide swirling around him? How did he and his wife Teresa maintain communication during the one-hundred days of terror when Tutsis were being hounded to death by Hutu militia extremists? How does the only American who chose to stay—in order to protect two Tutsi household workers—look back on that fearful time? Working from tapes made for his family, which chronicle daily events from the sublime to the horrific, Carl reconstructs in fascinating detail both personal and political events triggered by the April 6 plane crash assassination of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. He takes us through the poignant good-bye to his family, as they join the mass exodus of expatriates leaving this dangerous situation. He affirms his presence in the neighborhood he has known for four years, by standing barefoot in the middle of the dusty road, waving farewell. — Helen Kweskin, teacher

Recommended for Grades 9+