

# Teachers's

## *Music in the Holocaust*

# Guide



GRADE  
**5-12**

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Museum of History and  
Holocaust Education



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## *About this Teacher's Guide*

This curriculum guide for fifth through twelfth grade teachers and their students will explore the different roles music played during the Holocaust. From the rise of Nazism in Germany to the end of World War II, governments and individuals used music for a variety of reasons. While the Nazi regime incorporated music into films and mass rallies as a propaganda tool, Jews living in segregated communities, ghettos, and even camps, maintained a sense of community and tradition through music. The power of music to corrupt, exclude, provoke, encourage, and save is evident in the history of this dark period.

This teacher's guide explores music in the Holocaust through individual stories, musical selections, and classroom activities. The activities in this guide are effective in Social Studies and English, Language Arts, and Reading lessons.

We recognize that many educators will be unable to dedicate significant time to the topic of music in the Holocaust, therefore the lessons and classroom activities included in this teacher's guide are effective as part of the whole guide and as individual parts.

In designing this guide, we emphasized primary sources such as musical compositions, oral histories, images, and recordings. All primary sources and web links are available at the end of the guide in the form of "Source Sheets."

This teacher's guide was created, written, and designed by the Museum of History and Holocaust Education's James Newberry, Richard Harker, Dr. Catherine Lewis, Dr. Julia Brock, and Zoila Torres.

Additional content and advice were provided by Kennesaw State University Composer-in-Residence Dr. Laurence Sherr. Dr. Sherr's website features additional historical and musical content: <http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~lsherr/cellosonata>.

Special thanks to Museum of History and Holocaust Education's intern Maura Finlay who conducted research and developed classroom activities for this guide.

## Music in the Holocaust – An Introduction

Music has been essential to German culture and national identity for centuries. For the Nazis, music was seen not only as a source of national pride but also as a tool that could be used to reshape German society to reflect the racial and cultural ideology of the Third Reich. Shortly after taking power in 1933, Nazi officials sought to “coordinate” German music by establishing the Reich Chamber of Music to supervise all musical activities in Germany and encourage music that upheld “Aryan” values. Orchestras and conservatories were nationalized and subsidized by the state, while popular performers were recruited to serve as propaganda outlets for the Reich. Jewish musicians were stripped of their positions, and those who chose or were forced to remain in Germany formed the Jewish Culture Association (“Jüdischer Kulturbund”) to operate an orchestra, theater, and opera company composed of Jewish performers. The Nazis also ascribed a racial element to music, denouncing popular music like jazz and modern, avant-garde orchestral compositions as corrupting influences on traditional German values. A 1938 exhibition in Düsseldorf entitled “Entartete Musik” condemned this so-called “degenerate” music and the artists who performed it.

In the ghettos and concentration camps, music was used as a form of spiritual and cultural resistance against the Nazis. Orchestras, choirs, and other musical groups were formed in many ghettos to give clandestine performances for residents. The ghetto at Terezín (Theresienstadt in German), which the Nazis used for propaganda purposes as a “model ghetto,” held many of the most prominent Jewish musicians and composers from across Europe, including Gideon Klein, Hans Krása, Pavel Haas, and Viktor Ullmann. Music composed and performed in Theresienstadt and other ghettos reflects the dire living conditions under the Nazis and longing for what was being destroyed. Several concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald, had prisoner orchestras that were forced to give performances for SS officers and visiting dignitaries. For these performers, music became a form of “useful work” that could help guarantee survival.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/music>, accessed 1/14/2015.



# Lesson 1

## Music of the Nazi Regime

After the Nazis came to power in 1933, they passed laws restricting the rights of Jews and anyone who challenged their ideology. A network of concentration camps housed political prisoners and religious dissidents. The Nazi propaganda machine produced posters, films, and cartoons aimed directly at daily life in Germany. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Nazi Party “wanted to change the cultural landscape: to return the country to traditional ‘German’ and ‘Nordic’ values, to excise or circumscribe Jewish, ‘foreign,’ and ‘degenerate’ influences, and to shape a racial community which aligned with Nazi ideals.”<sup>1</sup>

The Nazis’ Reich Chamber of Culture enforced rules pertaining to all aspects of German culture including music. Historian James A. Grymes writes, “To assist with the restoration of Germany’s musical supremacy, the Chamber of Music made sure that only ‘good German music’ such as the compositions of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Mozart, and Wagner were performed.” The Nazis banned many modern musical genres, including jazz because of its African American origins. The works of Jewish-German composers such as Felix Mendelssohn and Gustav Mahler were also strictly forbidden.<sup>2</sup>

With the establishment of concentration camps, Nazi officials used music to dehumanize prisoners. They ordered concentration camp inmates to sing during roll call or while working. Historian Guido Fackler writes, “The guards used singing on command to intimidate insecure prisoners: it frightened, humiliated, and degraded them.” A favorite song choice among guards was the “Horst-Wessel-Lied,” the Nazi party anthem.

### Learning Objectives:

- Explore the role of music under the Nazi regime.
- Understand how the Nazis used music to change German culture.

### Materials needed:

Pen/pencil, paper, projector, white board

<sup>1</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Culture in the Third Reich: Disseminating the Nazi Worldview*, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007519> (January 2015).

<sup>2</sup> James A. Grymes, *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust – Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind’s Darkest Hour* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014): 19-20.

**Introduction:**

1. Describe the rise of the Nazi party from the end of World War I to the election of Adolf Hitler in 1933. Explain how mass rallies and propaganda films used music to gather support for the Nazi party.
2. Explain how the Nazis promoted classical German music (unless the composers were Jewish) and tried to eliminate modern music, especially if it was composed by Jewish musicians.

*One source of background materials for teachers regarding the rise of the Nazi Party is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s film: *The Path to Nazi Genocide*. This film can be accessed at: <http://www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide>. This film can be watched in sections, and may be suitable for older high school students; however, we recommend that you view this to judge the suitability of images and content for your students.*

**Part 1: Primary Source Analysis**

3. Project the lyrics of the “The Horst Wessel Song” onto the board (Source Sheet A).  
*“The Horst Wessel Song”: SA (Stormabteilung – the original paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party) officer Horst Wessel wrote the lyrics before he was killed by enemies of the Nazi party in 1929. After his death, the Nazi party made the Horst-Wessel-Lied or “The Horst Wessel Song” its official anthem and sang it at mass rallies and gatherings.*

4. Instruct the students to read the lyrics and identify unfamiliar words such as:  
**S.A.** – Nazi paramilitary organization that used intimidation and violence to gain power  
**Red front** – Members of the Communist party in Germany  
**Brown battalions** – Members of the S.A. wore brown uniforms  
**Storm troopers** – Nickname for members of the S.A.  
**Swastika** – Symbol of the Nazi party; used primarily on the flag
5. Write the following words on the board: **spirit**, **hope**, **freedom**, and **slavery**. Instruct the students to consider the meaning of these words and answer the following questions about them on a separate sheet of paper.

What do these words mean to you?

Do you think these words had the same meaning to the Nazis?

Why do you think the Nazi party made this song its anthem?

How do these words conflict with the actions of the Nazi party?

**Part 2: Group Discussion**

6. Instruct the students to form groups of three or four and compare their answers.
7. Lead the class in a discussion of “The Horst Wessel Song.” Compare and contrast each group’s answers.



# Lesson 2

## Music and Jewish Identity

Living in Germany for generations, most Jews were integrated into mainstream life before the Holocaust. They served as doctors, lawyers, business people, and public servants. Hundreds of Jewish musicians played in professional orchestras across Germany. When the Nazis came to power, however, many Jewish musicians sought positions in other European orchestras or in America. For those who stayed behind, making a career in music became increasingly difficult.

In the spring of 1933, the Nazis passed the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, expelling Jews from public sector jobs. As James A. Grymes writes, “Jewish musicians who worked for music conservatories, orchestras, and opera companies quickly found themselves out of work.” The musicians responded by founding the Culture League of German Jews, a group dedicated to supplying incomes for Jewish musicians, providing entertainment for Jewish audiences, and preserving Jewish culture.<sup>3</sup>

During the Second World War, the culture of music remained strong in ghettos established throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. An 80-member orchestra performed concerts in the Warsaw Ghetto, where “there were also chamber music evenings, entertainment and variety shows, choir performances...and religious concerts in synagogues.” Poet and resistance fighter Shmerke Kacerginski was imprisoned in the Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania. He arranged musical productions and wrote numerous songs that became popular in the ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

After mass deportations began, Jewish musicians formed orchestras in concentration camps. When Nazi officials forced prisoners to hold concerts, performing music became “a form of ‘useful work’ that could help guarantee survival.”<sup>5</sup> Many Jewish musicians were deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, commonly referred to as Terezín. They held concerts, composed sonatas and operas, and wrote new arrangements of beloved Jewish songs.<sup>6</sup> Smaller groups performed in secret, offering a temporary distraction for other prisoners.

<sup>3</sup> Grymes, 19.

<sup>4</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Music in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/music-in-ghettos-and-camps/> (January 2015).

<sup>5</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Music: Introduction, <http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/music> (January 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Yad Vashem, Heartstrings Music of the Holocaust: Music in the Holocaust, [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music\\_and\\_holocaust.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music_and_holocaust.asp) (January 2015).

**Learning Objectives:**

- Explore Jewish identity through music in the Holocaust.
- Understand how music builds community.

**Materials needed:**

Pen/pencil, computer with Internet access

**Introduction:**

1. Describe the rich culture of music that existed in Jewish communities before World War II. Explain how Jewish poets and songwriters used music to instill hope in the face of Nazism.
2. Describe musical performances in ghettos and camps. Explain the dual role of music as a symbol of humanity and exploitation.

*The following resources can be consulted for additional information about the role of music in the Holocaust:*

<http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~lsherr/cellosonata>

[http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Holocaust/Music\\_and\\_the\\_Holocaust](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Holocaust/Music_and_the_Holocaust)

[http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music\\_and\\_holocaust.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music_and_holocaust.asp)

<http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/music>

<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/music-in-ghettos-and-camps/>

<http://isurvived.org/2Postings/HolocaustMusic-Jacobson.html>

**Part 1: Musician Biographies**

3. Distribute copies of the musicians' biographies to the students (Source Sheets B-D). Each student should receive one biography. Instruct the students to read the biography and answer the following questions.

Where was he/she born?

Where was he/she imprisoned?

What sort of music did he/she create?

How was his/her music preserved after the Holocaust?

4. After the students answer the questions, choose volunteers to introduce the musicians.
5. Extension Activity: Ask the students to research these individuals using the Internet. If time allows, students can also conduct research about additional Jewish musicians such as Pavel Haas and Karel Berman.

**Part 2: Listening and Analyzing**

3. Play recordings from the websites below. Instruct the students to listen to the music while reading the lyrics (in English) on the attached source sheets.

Shmerke Kaczerginski's recording available online:

<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/friling/>

Lyrics on Source Sheet E

Frieda Bursztyn Radasky's recording available online:

<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=treblinka>

Lyrics Source Sheet F

Mordecai Gebirtig's recording available online:

<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=burning>

Lyrics on Source Sheet G

7. Discuss class reactions to the recordings. To facilitate and inspire your discussion you may project or distribute the Library of Congress' Analyzing Sound Recordings Worksheet. It asks analytical questions to be considered when listening and analyzing music. The worksheet can be accessed at:

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing\\_Sound\\_Recordings.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Sound_Recordings.pdf)



# Lesson 3

## Music of Resistance

Resistance or fighting back took many forms during the Holocaust. Individuals, partisan groups, and governments participated in efforts to save victims of the Nazi regime and combat the German military. Active or armed resistance included strategic bombings and assassinations, but as Holocaust survivor Roman Kent said, “Resistance does not have to be with a gun and a bullet.” Acts of cultural and spiritual resistance were equally important because they gave people hope for the future.<sup>7</sup>

Creating music was an act of cultural and spiritual resistance. According to Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial to the Holocaust, “the freedom to sing and compose music could not be totally censored or controlled. Thus, music became a symbol of freedom.”<sup>8</sup> Traditional songs provided entertainment and a sense of community for partisan fighters gathered around camp fires. New songs offered a means of communication between ghettos and camps. Prisoners in the Warsaw Ghetto learned “There Lies Treblinka” and warned friends and relatives of the dangers waiting at the extermination camp in eastern Poland. Singing was an act of solidarity that boosted the spirits of people who lost loved ones, saw their communities destroyed, or toiled in work camps.<sup>9</sup>

### Learning Objectives:

- Explore the role of music in the resistance.
- Understand a broad definition of resistance.

### Materials needed:

Pen/pencil, paper, projector, white board

### Introduction:

1. Describe resistance efforts during the Holocaust. Explain the difference between active and passive resistance.
2. Describe the role of music in resistance. Explain how music could challenge the status quo, outsmart the enemy, and boost morale, while also serving purposes such as

<sup>7</sup> Echoes and Reflections: *A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust* (Anti-Defamation League, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Yad Vashem, 2005), 203-207.

<sup>8</sup> Yad Vashem, *Heartstrings Music of the Holocaust: Music in the Holocaust*, [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music\\_and\\_holocaust.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music_and_holocaust.asp) (January 2015).

<sup>9</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *There Lies Treblinka (Treblinka Dort)*, <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=treblinka> (January 2015).

“expressing inner feelings, encouraging resilience and resistance, establishing identity, strengthening faith and courage, lamenting loss and current circumstances, and longing for earlier and better times.”<sup>10</sup>

*Information can be found about Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005213> and about the role of music in resistance at [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music\\_and\\_holocaust.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music_and_holocaust.asp)*

### **Part 1: Songs of Resistance**

3. Distribute copies of both resistance songs “The Soldiers of the Moors” and “Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Road” (Source Sheet H and I) to each student. Play recordings of these songs from the websites below. Instruct the students to listen to the music while reading the lyrics (in English) on their worksheet.

#### **“The Soldiers of the Moors”**

*In 1933, Prisoners of the Börgermoor concentration camp in the wetlands of northwest Germany composed one of the first camp songs, Die Moorsoldaten or “The Soldiers of the Moor.” Ordered to sing by their Nazi captors, the prisoners composed the song as a reflection on the camp’s awful conditions and as a subtle challenge to their confinement. The song circulated widely during the Holocaust after inmates wrote the lyrics on paper. Die Moorsoldaten became an anthem of anti-Nazi fervor around the world.*

*Recording available online: <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=moor>*

#### **“Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Road”**

*Inspired by the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Hirsh Glik wrote the lyrics for Zog Nit Keynmol Az Du Geyst Dem Letstn Veg or “Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Road” while he was imprisoned in the Vilna Ghetto in 1943. Resistance fighters adopted the song as an anthem after it spread beyond the ghetto’s walls. Today, it is a popular choice at Holocaust remembrance ceremonies.*

*Recording available online: <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/zog-nit-keynmol/>*

4. Draw two columns on the board, one for each song. Instruct the students to consider adjectives that describe each song. Choose volunteers to write adjectives in each column.
5. Lead the class in a discussion about each song and whether it is an example of active or passive resistance, what emotions they hear in the music or see in the lyrics, and why they think the songs had wide appeal.
6. Direct the students to the website <http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~lsherr/cellosonata> that features resistance songs from the Holocaust, and ask each student to select one of the resistance songs featured in the sources section. Ask them to consider how the lyrics, language, themes, and emotions of these compare and contrast with the lyrics of “The Soldiers of the Moors” and “Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Round.” Discuss as a class each of these songs and their similarities and differences building upon the previous discussions.

<sup>10</sup>Laurence Sherr, Sonata for Cello and Piano – Mir zaynen do! Program Notes, <http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~lsherr/cellosonata> (January 2015)

# Lesson 4

## Music of Resistance

After the Allied forces defeated Germany in 1945, the full magnitude of Nazi atrocities began to emerge. British and American military photographers captured footage of concentration camps and killing centers. The evidence was used against Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg trials.

Music left behind by victims of the Holocaust casts a long shadow both as a primary source and as a connection to individuals, families, and communities. In the ghetto at Vilna, tens of thousands of Lithuanian Jews endured illness and starvation. Many perished, leaving few records and personal items. Today, they are remembered through their music at concerts and remembrance ceremonies. According to Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the Holocaust, "The songs from the Vilna ghetto describe life and events within its walls... the songs bear witness to the tragedy and devastation in the ghetto, while connecting these events to the history of the Jewish people."<sup>11</sup>

Many Jewish musicians who fled Europe during the Holocaust joined orchestras around the world or composed music for the stage and screen. Polish violinist Bronislaw Huberman became an outspoken opponent of the Nazis. In the early 1930s, he invited Jewish musicians to Palestine where he established an "Orchestra of Exiles." Today, his Israel Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the most renowned institutions in the world and plays a variety of works by Jewish and non-Jewish composers.<sup>12</sup>

### Learning Objectives:

- Explore the legacy of music in the Holocaust.
- Understand the importance of Holocaust memory.

### Materials needed:

Pen/pencil, multi-color markers, construction paper, computers with internet access

<sup>11</sup>Yad Vashem, *Heartstrings: Music of the Holocaust: Vilna Ghetto*, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/vilna.asp> (January 2015).

<sup>12</sup>Grymes, 30-34.

**Introduction:**

1. Describe the role of music in Holocaust remembrance ceremonies around the world. Explain how music is sometimes the only connection to those who perished in the Holocaust.
2. Describe the rich music generated by a specific ghetto or camp such as the Vilna Ghetto (see Lesson 2 and 4) or Theresienstadt concentration camp (see Lesson 2).

**Part 1: Music and Art**

3. Assign one of the following songs to each student.

Shmerke Kaczerginski's "Spring" recording available online:  
<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/friling/>  
Lyrics available on Source Sheet E

Frieda Bursztyl Radasky's "There Lies Treblinka" recording available online:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=treblinka>  
Lyrics available on Source Sheet F

Mordecai Gebirtig's "Our Town is Burning" recording available online:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=burning>  
Source Sheet G

"The Soldiers of the Moor" recording available online: <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=moor>  
Lyrics available on Source Sheet H

"Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Road" recording available online:  
<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/zog-nit-keynmol/>  
Lyrics available on Source Sheet I

4. Instruct the students to listen to the online recordings and read the lyrics (lyrics available on Source Sheet E-I).
5. Instruct the students to write one stanza or four lines inspired by the song on construction paper and decorate it appropriately. Encourage the students to be thoughtful and creative. Questions they might consider while writing these stanzas are:
  - What emotions does this music provoke?
  - What adjectives describe the music that you heard?
  - What was the composer trying to communicate?
  - What does the music tell us about the composer and his culture?

**Part 2: Discussion**

6. Each student should share their stanza and artistic design with the class. Display the students' creations on the wall, and the stanzas will form an entire song.



## Source Sheet A

“HORST-WESSEL-LIED” (THE HORST WESSEL SONG)

### *Short history:*

**SA** officer Horst Wessel wrote the following lyrics before he was killed by enemies of the Nazi party in 1929. After his death, the Nazi party made the Horst-Wessel-Lied or “The Horst Wessel Song” its official anthem and sang it at mass rallies and gatherings.

Recording available online: <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/horstwessel.asp>

### Lyrics

Flag high, ranks closed,  
The S.A. marches with silent solid steps.  
Comrades shot by the red front and reaction  
march in spirit with us in our ranks.

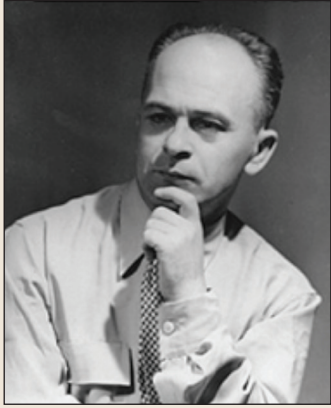
The street free for the brown battalions,  
The street free for the Storm Troopers.  
Millions, full of hope, look up at the swastika;  
The day breaks for freedom and for bread.

For the last time the call will now be blown;  
For the struggle now we all stand ready.  
Soon will fly Hitler-flags over every street;  
Slavery will last only a short time longer.

Flag high, ranks closed,  
The S.A. marches with silent solid steps.  
Comrades shot by the red front and reaction  
march in spirit with us in our ranks.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Fordham University, *Modern History Sourcebook: The Horst Wessel Song*, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/horstwessel.asp> (January 2015).

### Source B- Biography of Shmerke Kacerginski



**B**orn in Lithuania, Shmerke Kacerginski was a Jewish poet and resistance fighter. During the Holocaust, he was imprisoned in the Vilna Ghetto where he organized musical performances and cultural events. He wrote lyrics for several songs that became hugely popular in the ghetto. “In ordinary times each song would probably have travelled a long road to popularity,” Kacerginski later wrote, “But in the ghetto

we observed a marvelous phenomenon: individual works transformed into folklore before our eyes.” Kacerginski eventually escaped the ghetto and joined resistance fighters in the forest. After the war, he recorded music of the ghettos and of the resistance movement.

Source: <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/kacerginskishmerke/>

**Source Sheet C – Biography of Frieda Bursztyn Radasky**

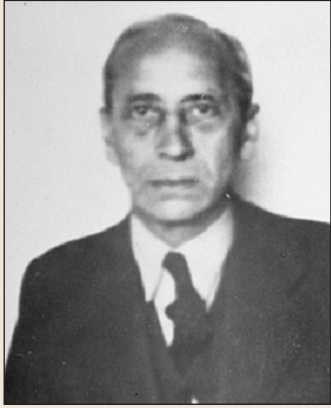


**F**rieda Bursztyn Radasky was born into a Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Radasky was imprisoned near the Warsaw Ghetto as a kitchen worker. She and other young women composed the lyrics to “There Lies Treblinka” as a warning, because the Nazis were deporting prisoners of the ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp. Radasky survived the

Holocaust and recorded the song in 1990.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=treblinka>

**Source D - Biography of Mordecai Gebirtig**



**B**orn into a Jewish family in Kraków, Poland, Mordecai Gebirtig worked as a carpenter and songwriter. He wrote numerous songs that chronicled Jewish life before and during the Second World War. Gebirtig gained popularity around the world and earned the honorary title, “troubadour of the Jewish people.” His most famous song, “Our Town is Burning,” became an anthem of resistance in Kraków. Gebirtig

was murdered by the Nazis in 1942.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=burning>

## Source Sheet E - “Friling” (Spring) Lyrics by Shmerke Kaczerginski

Poet and resistance fighter Shmerke Kaczerginski wrote the lyrics of *Friling* or “Spring” as a tribute to his wife who died in the Vilna Ghetto.

### Lyrics

I roam through the ghetto from alley to alley,  
And I cannot find any haven;  
My beloved is not here, how can I bear it?  
Oh, people, at least say something.  
The blue sky illuminates my home  
But what benefit do I have from it now?  
I stand like a beggar at each gate,  
And beg for a little bit of sunshine.

Springtime, dispel my sorrow,  
And bring back my beloved, my adored one to me.  
Springtime, on your blue wings,  
Oh, take my heart with you and return joy to it.

This year springtime came very early,  
And my longing blossomed for you once again,  
I see you before me all laden with flowers,  
Happily you come to me.  
The sun showered the garden with its rays,  
The earth has sprouted its green.  
My adored one, my darling, where have you gone?  
You are never out of my mind.

Springtime, dispel my sorrow...<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Music and the Holocaust, *Friling*, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/friling/> (January 2015).

**Source Sheet F - “Treblinka Dort” (There Lies Treblinka)  
Lyrics By Frieda Bursztyn Radasky’s**

A storm raged through the world,  
Leaving people uprooted and homeless.  
Without pity or sorrow, their world was destroyed.  
The sun was torn from the heavens, and day turned into night.  
There, not far, the Unschlagplatz lies waiting.  
There, people push and shove for space in the railcars.  
There, you hear the sound of a child crying to its mother,  
“Why are you leaving? You will never come back to me!”  
The police roughly shout the order: “Go!”  
“You won’t feel a bit hungry. You’ll get three loaves of bread!”  
But with those three kilos of bread, they did not know  
That they were being driven to their deaths.  
There lies Treblinka;  
For everyone a final resting place.  
Whoever goes there  
Never comes back again.  
The heart weeps when one recalls a sister or a brother  
Who were murdered there.  
The train is here waiting!  
And there’s only one thing left to say,  
“That I am for Treblinka!”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *There Lies Treblinka*, <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=treblinka> (January 2015).

**Source Sheet G - "Undzer shtetl brent!" (Our Town is Burning)  
Lyrics by Mordecai Gebirtig**

It's burning, brothers! It's burning!  
Oh, our poor village, brothers, burns!  
Evil winds, full of anger,  
Rage and ravage, smash and shatter;  
Stronger now that wild flames grow --  
All around now burns!  
And you stand there looking on  
With futile, folded arms  
And you stand there looking on --  
While our village burns!

It's burning, brothers! It's burning!  
Oh, our poor village, brothers, burns!  
Soon the rabid tongues of fire  
Will consume each house entire,  
As the wild wind blows and howls --  
The whole town's up in flames!  
And you stand there looking on  
With futile, folded arms,  
And you stand there looking on --  
While our village burns!

It's burning, brothers! Our town is burning!  
Oh, God forbid the moment should arrive,  
That our town, with us, together,  
Should go up in ash and fire,  
Leaving when the slaughter's ended  
Charred and empty walls!  
And you stand there looking on  
With futile, folded arms,  
And you stand there looking on --  
While our village burns!

It's burning, brothers! Our town is burning!  
And our salvation hands on you alone.  
If our town is dear to you,  
Grab the buckets, douse the fire!  
Show that you know how!  
Don't stand there, brothers, looking on  
With futile, folded arms,  
Don't stand there, brothers, douse the fire! --  
Our poor village burns!<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jewish Resistance – Music, [http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media\\_so.php?ModuleId=10005213&MediaId=2621](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_so.php?ModuleId=10005213&MediaId=2621) (January 2015).

**Source Sheet H - “Die Moorsoldaten” (The Soldiers of the Moor)  
Lyrics by Johann Esser and Wolfgang Langhoff**

Wherever we may cast our eye,  
Moor and heath are all we find,  
No bird sings to raise our spirits,  
Here, the oaks are bent and bare.

We are the soldiers of the moor,  
With spades in hand, we’re marching  
To the moor.

Back and forth the sentry passes,  
No one, no one, can escape;  
To try to flee means certain death-  
So tightly is the camp secure.

We are the soldiers of the moor,  
With spades in hand, we’re marching  
To the moor.

For us there’s surely no complaining-  
Even winter has to pass;  
One day with great joy we’ll cry out:  
Homeland, you are mine again!

And then the soldiers of the moor,  
Spades in hand, will march no more  
To the moor.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *The Soldiers of the Moor (Die Moorsoldaten)*, <http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/detail.php?content=moor> (January 2015).



**Source Sheet I - “Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg”  
(Never Say That You Are Walking the Final Road)  
Lyrics by Hirsh Glik**

Never say that you are walking the final road,  
Though leaden skies obscure blue days;  
The hour we have been longing for will still come,  
Our steps will drum – we are here!

From green palm-land to distant land of snow,  
We arrive with our pain, with our sorrow,  
And where a spurt of our blood has fallen,  
There will sprout our strength, our courage.

The morning sun will tinge our today with gold,  
And yesterday will vanish with the enemy,  
But if the sun and the dawn are delayed –  
Like a watchword this song will go from generation to generation.

This song is written with blood and not with lead,  
It's not a song about a bird that is free,  
A people, between falling walls,  
Sang this song with pistols in their hands.

So never say that you are walking the final road  
Though leaden skies obscure blue days.  
The hour we have been longing for will still come –  
Our steps will drum – we are here!<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Music and the Holocaust, *Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg*, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/zog-nit-keynmol/> (January 2015).

## Additional Resources

*We recommend that you consult these websites before using them with your students.*

Music and the Holocaust: [www.holocaustmusic.ort.org](http://www.holocaustmusic.ort.org)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

Special online exhibit: *Music of the Holocaust: Highlights from the Collection*  
<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/>

Yad Vashem World Center for Holocaust Research: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Special online exhibit *Heartstrings: Music of the Holocaust*  
<http://www.yadvashem.org/YV/en/exhibitions/music/intro.asp>

### **Additional Web Resources regarding Music and the Holocaust**

<http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~lsherr/cellosonata>

[http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Holocaust/Music\\_and\\_the\\_Holocaust](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Holocaust/Music_and_the_Holocaust)

<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/music-in-ghettos-and-camps/>

<http://isurvived.org/2Postings/HolocaustMusic-Jacobson.html>

[http://www.thesongstheysang.com/images/TSTS\\_Education\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.thesongstheysang.com/images/TSTS_Education_Brochure.pdf)

## Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/general-teaching-guidelines>

### **Define the term “Holocaust”**

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

### **Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable**

Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. Focusing on those decisions provides insight into history and human nature and can help your students to become better critical thinkers.

### **Avoid simple answers to complex questions**

The history of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior and the context within which individual decisions are made. Be wary of simplification. Seek instead to convey the nuances of this history. Allow students to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust and that often made decision making difficult and uncertain.

### **Make responsible methodological choices**

One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific, historical images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the lesson objective. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students’ emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful to the victims themselves. Do not skip any of the suggested topics because the visual images are too graphic; instead, use other approaches to address the material.

In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students “experience” unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust is pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose

of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression that they now know what it was like to suffer or even to participate during the Holocaust. It is best to draw upon numerous primary sources, provide survivor testimony, and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

Furthermore, word scrambles, crossword puzzles, counting objects, model building, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialization of the history. If the effects of a particular activity, even when popular with you and your students, run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.

### **Strive for Precision of Language**

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to generalize and, thus, to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Avoid this by helping your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish, for example, the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions. Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases but not all”) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality.

### **Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust**

Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. However, it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them and for students to thus place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves. One helpful technique for engaging students in a discussion of the Holocaust is to think of the participants as belonging to one of four categories: victims, perpetrators, rescuers, or bystanders. Examine the actions, motives, and decisions of each group. Portray all individuals, including victims and perpetrators, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making.

### **Avoid Comparisons of Pain**

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of the level of suffering between those groups during the Holocaust. One cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as “The victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity.”

**Do not romanticize history**

People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful, important, and compelling role models for students. But given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic actions in a unit on the Holocaust can result in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. Similarly, in exposing students to the worst aspects of human nature as revealed in the history of the Holocaust, you run the risk of fostering cynicism in your students. Accuracy of fact, together with a balanced perspective on the history, must be a priority.

**Contextualize the history**

Events of the Holocaust, and particularly how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The Holocaust must be studied in the context of European history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that may have contributed to it.

**Translate statistics into people**

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. Show that individual people—grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative. 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.

## Common Core Standards Correlated with these lessons

ELACC5RI5: Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

ELACC5RI6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

ELACC5RF4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
- b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

ELACC5W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELACC5SL1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expression their own clearly.

ELACC5SL2: Summarize a written text read aloud or in formation presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

ELACC5L1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

ELACC5L2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

ELACC5L3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

ELACC5L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.





Museum of History and  
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