

Holocaust Essay Contest Winner – Middle School

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Hatred and prejudice still play a very large role in the world today, but when most people hear those words they think of one major, devastating event: The Holocaust. The Holocaust was the most terrifying expression of hatred the world has ever seen. A total of approximately 11,000,000 people were brutally murdered because of things they could not control. Among these 11,000,000 people, 6,000,000 of them were Jewish. These victims were put to their deaths by people they didn't know for things like religion, ethnicity, beliefs, and handicaps, things that these victims would not have changed even if they wanted to. The Holocaust was a horrendous event that we can prevent from happening again by just accepting each other for who we are and respecting everyone. If you don't know someone, do not just assume they are unpleasant, or mean, or worth killing, because I am 100% certain that is what led Hitler to think of the "Final Solution". The "Final Solution" was an idea based solely on Hitler judging people he did not even know. Hatred and prejudice can destroy lives, homes, countries, and even the world if taken far enough. So, if we respect and tolerate each other we can stop it from ever happening again.

The first thing everyone needs to comprehend is exactly how many and why people were put to death in the Holocaust. People were killed for a number of reasons. If you were handicapped, a gypsy, a homosexual, a Jehovah's Witness, a Catholic, a Pole, a Soviet Prisoner of War, politically opposed to Hitler, or many other things, you were sent to die. At first the Holocaust was only in Germany and the goal was not to kill anyone. In the beginning the

general idea was to make all of the Jews evacuate Germany. Soon after, the plan changed and Hitler decided to put them to work. After starting the work camps Hitler came up with the death camps where he could just kill a mass of Jews in a short amount of time and then have the remaining prisoners clean up the mess. In a death camp you would arrive on the train and then stand in a line. If you worked at a certain expertise that the Nazis needed, like seamstresses or shoemakers, you were saved. A majority of the time people would live in these camps for weeks without realizing what was going on around them. Imagine being trapped somewhere without any option of escape. Now imagine losing all of your loved ones and then being treated like an animal or a slave by your family's killers. The victims of the Holocaust went through torture, loss, death, starvation, disease, and many other hardships with no chance of escaping. Millions of people went through all of that just because one man hated them and spread his ideas through a nation. Hatred and prejudice led to all of this death and hardship therefore, in my opinion, hatred and prejudice are two of the human race's biggest flaws.

A lot of people don't know what the word "hate" means. When you say you hate someone, do you really know exactly what you are saying? According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, hate is "a strong dislike or ill will toward something". In my opinion, that is not what hatred is at all; if someone simply disliked something they would say it in that form. To hate something or someone is much stronger than to dislike it or them. To hate someone, in my mind, is to dislike them strongly enough that you wouldn't even care if they were to die right in front of you. I cannot speak for every single person in the entire world, but I am pretty sure that most of my acquaintances and friends are not even capable of hatred. Unfortunately, Adolph Hitler was able to hate not only someone, but millions upon millions of people for all sorts of reasons. If a person has even one speck of goodness or caring in their soul,

I don't think they could ever live with themselves after doing what Hitler has done. Prejudice, also according to Webster, means, "a preconceived, usually unfavorable, idea." Consistent with that definition you could say Hitler's plan was prejudice, his views were prejudice, and his whole thinking process was prejudice. Obviously Hitler was a hateful and prejudiced man. I hope everyone can learn to be the exact opposite of what he was. If we can, I'm sure this could never happen again.

After learning about the Holocaust at school, I feel I have an understanding of when it happened, what happened, who did it, and who suffered from it. The only thing I still cannot grasp is why. I know the definition of hatred and prejudice, but I just don't see how someone could actually feel those feelings toward anyone, let alone almost everyone. By learning about the hatred and prejudice Hitler had towards so many people, I can see how this happened; Hitler believed so strongly that all these people were evil that he convinced hundreds of other people to believe it as well. After all of these people were convinced, it was easy to make some propaganda posters and deceive almost everyone. But what about the people who weren't tricked? People like Miep Gies. Ms. Gies was a woman who worked for Otto Frank and ended up hiding all the Franks, plus four other people for two years. If there had been more people like Miep Gies, who weren't prejudice about someone's image, religion, or beliefs, there might have been a chance of stopping the Holocaust before it got completely out of hand. Miep Gies was someone who knew the Franks before the Holocaust began and didn't change her opinion of them just because someone told her to. If everyone in the world would follow Ms. Gies' inspiring example, I am certain that nothing even remotely similar to the Holocaust could ever happen again. If everyone could learn to tolerate and respect each other, our world would become a much better place.

Tolerance and respect play a huge role in life today. Hopefully, they play a dramatically bigger role than hatred and prejudice, because if tolerance ruled over hatred, life WOULD be better. Hatred and prejudice killed 11,000,000 people in the late 1930's and early 1940's. Since then, the human race has hopefully learned and grown from the devastating event that was the Holocaust. Hitler was an evil man with awful prejudices and judgments costing innocent people their lives. In my mind, it is definitely possible for humanity to reach this goal of respect and tolerance for one another. The Holocaust was an awful way to learn an important lesson: hatred and prejudice should not run a country or a life. Maybe in the future everyone will have learned this lesson but if not, perhaps we have learned enough to make a difference.