

What Makes a Good Book Good?

Guidelines for Choosing Holocaust Books for Classroom Use

1. Good literature is developmentally appropriate.
2. Illustrations, art and photographs in good children's books are appropriate in content, tone, and relation to text. They accurately reflect the time, mood, and place and are respectful of the people whom they portray.
3. A good book is rooted in historical context and reflects historical reality.
4. Good books present limited, recognizable human experiences. They foster empathy, compassion, involvement, and identification with the victims and survivors of the Holocaust; they personalize statistics.
5. Good literature highlights, rather than marginalizes, the Jewish experience and particular Jewish responses during the Shoah; it features Jewish life in all its diversity, including specifics of ordinary, daily pre-war life.
6. Good books bring students back from the Holocaust era into the reassuring present. They are hopeful and life-affirming, and may include acts of religious, spiritual, and armed resistance, illustrating the indomitable will to survive and the strength of the human spirit.
7. Good books have the potential to motivate students to examine their own lives and behaviors, providing a bridge from the world of the Holocaust to the present, and promoting opportunities to explore universal issues and themes evoked by the unique stories of the Holocaust.
8. Good literature offers flexibility in the classroom.

These Guidelines were developed by the Consortium of Holocaust Educators (with acknowledgements to Dr. Karen Shawn). Updated by Beryl Bresgi – August 2003

I. International Book Sharing Project teachers suggested films and books (not to be considered exhaustive listing):

- *One Survivor Remembers* (1995). 36 minutes. A perfect companion for *All But My Life*. In this Academy Award-winning HBO movie, Gerda Weissmann Klein tells her story. The footage includes photographs of where she lived and her incredible story of rescue by her future husband, Kurt Klein.
- *The Camera of My Family: Four Generations in Germany, 1845–1945* (1991). 20 minutes. In this moving short film, Catherine Hanf Noren uses her own family photographs to personalize the history of the Holocaust.
- *The Last Days* (1998). 87 minutes. This Academy-Award winning documentary by Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation is a perfect companion for *Night*. It chronicles the lives of five survivors from Hungary. My students are fascinated by every detail of this film.
- *America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference* (1994). 100 minutes. A must-see for American students, this film shows the role of the United States in the Holocaust. It is narrated by Kurt Klein, who reads the letters of his parents to tell their story of the problems posed for them by U.S. immigration policies. This documentary uses actual footage to tell the history of the Holocaust.
- *The Courage to Care* (1986). 28 minutes. This compelling film shows how ordinary people chose not to be passive bystanders during the Holocaust. Each rescuer tells his or her story of how personal actions made a difference.

Literature:

Night (Elie Wiesel)

All But My Life (Gerda Weissmann Klein)

Salvaged Pages (Alexandra Zapruder)

Sunflower (Simon Wiesenthal)

Suggestions by the workshop presenters:

On the Holocaust itself,

“The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions—The Story of the Holocaust.” Hosted by Walter Cronkite at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. A major highlight of this DVD is the interview by Walter Cronkite of Elie Wiesel. Artisan Productions, available through the Discovery Channel. 1994 (60 minutes)

On the St. Louis voyage of 1939,

“Sea Tales: The Doomed Voyage of the St. Louis,” A&E, 1997 (50 minutes)

“The Double Crossing,” Ergo, 1992 (29 minutes).

Movies about the Holocaust,

“Gentleman’s Agreement,” 20th Century Fox, 1947 movie starring Gregory Peck and Dorothy McGuire. Won 3 Academy Awards.

“The Seventh Cross,” MGM movie starring Spencer Tracy. A powerful film that deals with anti-Semitism in the United States.

On the Holocaust and on genocide,

“Defying Genocide: Choices that Saved Lives,” USHMM, Committee on Conscience, (n.d.).

“A Good Man in Hell,” USHMM, Committee on Conscience (n.d.), Ch. 1: A Good Man in Hell, 13 minutes; Ch 2: Archive Version of Full Interview, 88 minutes.