

# Understanding the Holocaust through Art and Artifacts

CURRICULUM GUIDE

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This publication is made possible by a generous grant from the Kekst Family.



Dear Educator:

The Jewish Museum's Education Department is delighted to introduce *Understanding the Holocaust Through Art and Artifacts*, a curriculum guide for sixth through twelfth grade educators.

We believe that this guide will enhance classroom study of the Holocaust, and the issue of tolerance, by fostering a more thorough understanding of relevant issues. What were people in Nazi Germany thinking? What about European Jews as they dealt with a relentless enemy? How sympathetic were American legislators to Holocaust events? In considering pertinent art, writing, and artifacts, and by engaging in thought-provoking activities, students will gain new perspectives. A visit to The Jewish Museum, where many of the artworks included can be closely observed, or to the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, will only augment the value of this guide, encouraging comprehension in even greater depth.

Greer Kudon  
Manager of School Programs and Outreach

COVER

Albert Bloch, *March of the Clowns*, 1941, oil on canvas mounted on Masonite, The Jewish Museum: Purchased with funds given by the Oscar and Regina Gruss Memorial Fund

## I. About This Guide

*Understanding the Holocaust through Art and Artifacts* is a supplementary resource for teachers examining the Holocaust with their middle and high school students. It can help prepare classes for a museum visit or be used on its own as a complement to other classroom materials.

Images of works from The Jewish Museum's collection, along with discussion questions and suggested activities, are included to help students connect with how ordinary people, and artists responded to catastrophe. This guide also examines the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, a passionate artist, designer, and teacher who gave hope to many young people in the Terezin (or Theresienstadt) concentration camp. Her life and work offer a unique perspective on the horrors of the Holocaust and the power of art to challenge fear and oppression.

By participating in the discussions and activities outlined in this guide, students will:

- develop skills in visual literacy—reading and interpreting art and artifacts;
- explore artistic responses to the Holocaust (created both during the period and afterward);
- investigate the impact of the Holocaust on individuals and communities;
- consider the various roles art can play in the life of a person or group;
- understand the power of art as a form of spiritual resistance;
- and engage in personal expression through a variety of media.

## II. Historical Background: The Holocaust

The Holocaust (1933-1945) was a time of fear, brutality, and tremendous bloodshed. Once the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, their ideology of racial superiority targeted the Jews of Europe not only as inferior, but also as “the enemy.” By the end of the war in 1945, approximately six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, along with millions of others, including Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), the disabled, political prisoners, homosexuals, and Slavs.

The systematic, government-sponsored persecution of European Jews was a process that the Nazis built up gradually over the years. Shortly after coming into power in 1933, Adolf Hitler began a book burning campaign. With the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the Nazi regime excluded German Jewish citizens from certain jobs and public venues, as well as from marriage with non-Jews or “Aryans.” The Jews had their citizenship and rights taken away. On November 9, 1938, Nazi mobs attacked and burned Jewish homes, shops and synagogues, a night that has come to be known as *Kristlnacht*, or “the night of broken glass.” There was very little public outcry against this violence. With the invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II in September 1939, the Nazis imposed their racial laws on Jews in all the countries they occupied.

The Nazis seized Jewish businesses and property, started rounding up Jews or sending them “to the East.” Most Jews had little access to the news: when they were rounded up they did not know that they were being sent to ghettos, concentration camps, or even death camps.

The Nazis developed ways to intimidate and isolate the Jews, so that they could then do what they wished with them. In early 1942, at the Wannsee Conference near Berlin, Nazi officials discussed details of the “Final Solution,” a plan to methodically kill an estimated 11,000,000 Jews in Europe. By February 1942, the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland began mass murdering Jews in gas chambers, designed to kill the maximum numbers of inmates in the most efficient manner. The peoples and governments of the world barely responded as word leaked out that civilian Jews and others were being systematically put to death.

Despite the violence that dominated this era, some individuals and groups, both Jews and non-Jews, demonstrated considerable resourcefulness and compassion. Some Jews were able to stay alive through a combination of luck, inventiveness, the help of friends, and sometimes, the assistance of strangers who were willing to lend a hand, despite the considerable danger.

### Discussion Questions

- Why did most Jews not leave Germany, and other countries occupied by the Nazis, in the face of such extreme discrimination during the 1930s?
- Why do you think the Nazis targeted Jews?

### Suggested Activities

#### CREATIVE ARTS

- The one and the many: It is very hard to imagine the magnitude of the number six million, the number of Jews killed by the Nazis. It is important to consider that each one of those murdered was a human being, an individual. Have the students create an artwork that includes a vast number of units that seem the same (i.e. paper clips, popsicle sticks), while contrasting with the uniqueness of a few particular items.

#### SOCIAL STUDIES / HISTORY

- Have students research the history of anti-Semitism. Create a timeline leading up to the beginning of the Holocaust.

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Have students read the following poem by Elie Wiesel. A Holocaust survivor, Wiesel is an author, educator, and winner of the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize.

### *The Silence of the Bystander*

*Silence.*

*Where in this holocaust is the word of God?...*

*The world was silent; the world was still.*

*And now, survivors stammer; their words are haunted.*

*Behind their words: silence.*

*Behind the silence,*

*a witness to the sin of silence...*

*And in the camps and streets of Europe*

*mother and father and child lay dying,*

*and many looked away.*

*To look away from evil:*

*Is this not the sin of all “good” people?*

*Perhaps some of the blame falls on me,*

*Because I kept silent, uttered no cry.*

*Fear froze my heart and confused my mind.*

*And I did not resist the lie...*

*Cowardice came down and walked the earth.*

*We hid our true feelings from one another.*

*We did not hear the cry of a friend.*

*And our own cry we often had to smother...*

*Courage was branded treason,*

*Betrayal was called heroic, bold.*

*Light hung its head in shame,*

*Waiting that at least one man should cry out:*

*“No!” but no one cried.*

*Only one thing was left—the patience to wait,*

*To wait that justice might prevail one day.*

*Perhaps that was part of my blame,*

*That I kept silent, did not speak,*

*As though I had nothing to say.*

- Who is the speaker in this poem? How do we know?

- The word “silence” is repeated many times in this poem. Why?

- What does the poet mean by the “sin of silence”?

- What does the poem tell the reader about the importance of individual responsibility?

- What do you think Wiesel meant by his statement, made after he wrote the poem: “What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander”?



# III. Selected Works from The Jewish Museum Collection

Artifacts and artworks—those from the period of the Holocaust and those created afterward in response—can be important tools for learning about and reflecting on the events of that time. This section offers ideas for exploring the Holocaust through art and artifacts by highlighting six unique objects from The Jewish Museum’s extensive collection. Each object is accompanied by discussion questions and suggested activities.

## 1. Art and Artifacts from the Holocaust

Elaborately decorated and graced with a gilded Hebrew donor inscription, this sofa was probably commissioned for the Mattenbuden Synagogue in the city of Danzig. (Danzig was once a free city on the German border; it’s now Gdansk, Poland.) The clasped hands depicted on the top portion of the sofa back suggest the object’s role in the traditional Jewish wedding. It was probably used for a preparatory ceremony—known in Yiddish as *Bedekin*—in which the groom veils the bride. This custom is associated with the biblical matriarch Rebecca, who showed her modesty by veiling herself in the presence of her future husband Isaac.

But this object’s presence in The Jewish Museum’s collection tells another powerful story. In 1939, the Danzig Jewish community felt the impending Nazi threat. In a prescient attempt

to preserve the community in the face of potential destruction, they gathered their most prized objects of Judaica and shipped them to New York for safekeeping at The Jewish Museum. The attached note requested the objects be returned if the Danzig community still existed fifteen years hence. If not, however, the collection was to remain in New York “for the education and inspiration of the rest of the world.”

The Danzig collection remains an important part of The Jewish Museum’s collection, and serves as a living memorial to an extinguished Jewish community—one of the many that was lost to Nazi barbarism.

### Discussion Questions

- What do you notice about this object? What clues are there about its use?
- *Share the story of this sofa with your students. Why do you think it was so important for the members of the Danzig Jewish community to save their objects?*
- What objects would you want to be preserved when you are no longer around? Why? What do these objects say about you, your family, or your community?



Wedding Sofa, 1838,  
Jewish Museum: Gift of the Danzig  
Jewish Community



Felix Nussbaum, *Skeleton Playing a Horn*, study for the painting, *Death Triumphant*, c. 1944, pencil, gouache, and chalk on paper, The Jewish Museum: Purchased with funds given by Mildred and George Weissman

Felix Nussbaum was born to a Jewish family in Osnabruck, Germany, in 1904. He studied art in Hamburg, Berlin, and Rome before fleeing to Belgium in 1935. Nussbaum lived as a refugee in Brussels until 1940, when he was arrested and sent to St. Cyprien, an internment camp in southern France. He later escaped and returned to Brussels, living in hiding until captured by the Nazis in 1944. Felix Nussbaum was murdered in Auschwitz in August 1944.

Amazingly, Felix Nussbaum continued to paint and draw throughout his plight. His art served as a personal refuge—a means by which he could hold on to his spirit and sanity in the face of overwhelming fear and uncertainty. In 1942, Nussbaum brought some of his paintings to a friend in Brussels, along with a request: “If I perish, do not let my pictures die; show them to the public.” Nussbaum’s surviving works provide a unique insight into his life in exile, in the camps, and in hiding.

This drawing, executed while in hiding, was a study for Nussbaum’s last extant work, titled *Death Triumphant* or *The Skeletons Play for a Dance*. In the completed painting, a group of skeletons dance and play music in a landscape strewn with the ruins of Western Civilization, as Allied bombers streak across the sky.

## Discussion Questions

- Tell students about the artist and the circumstances in which the drawing was made. How does your understanding of the artist’s story affect the way you understand this artwork?
- Felix Nussbaum worked hard to get art supplies and continue to make art even when he was in hiding from the Nazis. Why do you think he did that? How can art be a form of resistance? What other purposes can art serve?
- Nussbaum’s artwork is a kind of document, giving us insight into the period in which it was made. How is this different from other types of historical documents?

## Suggested Activities

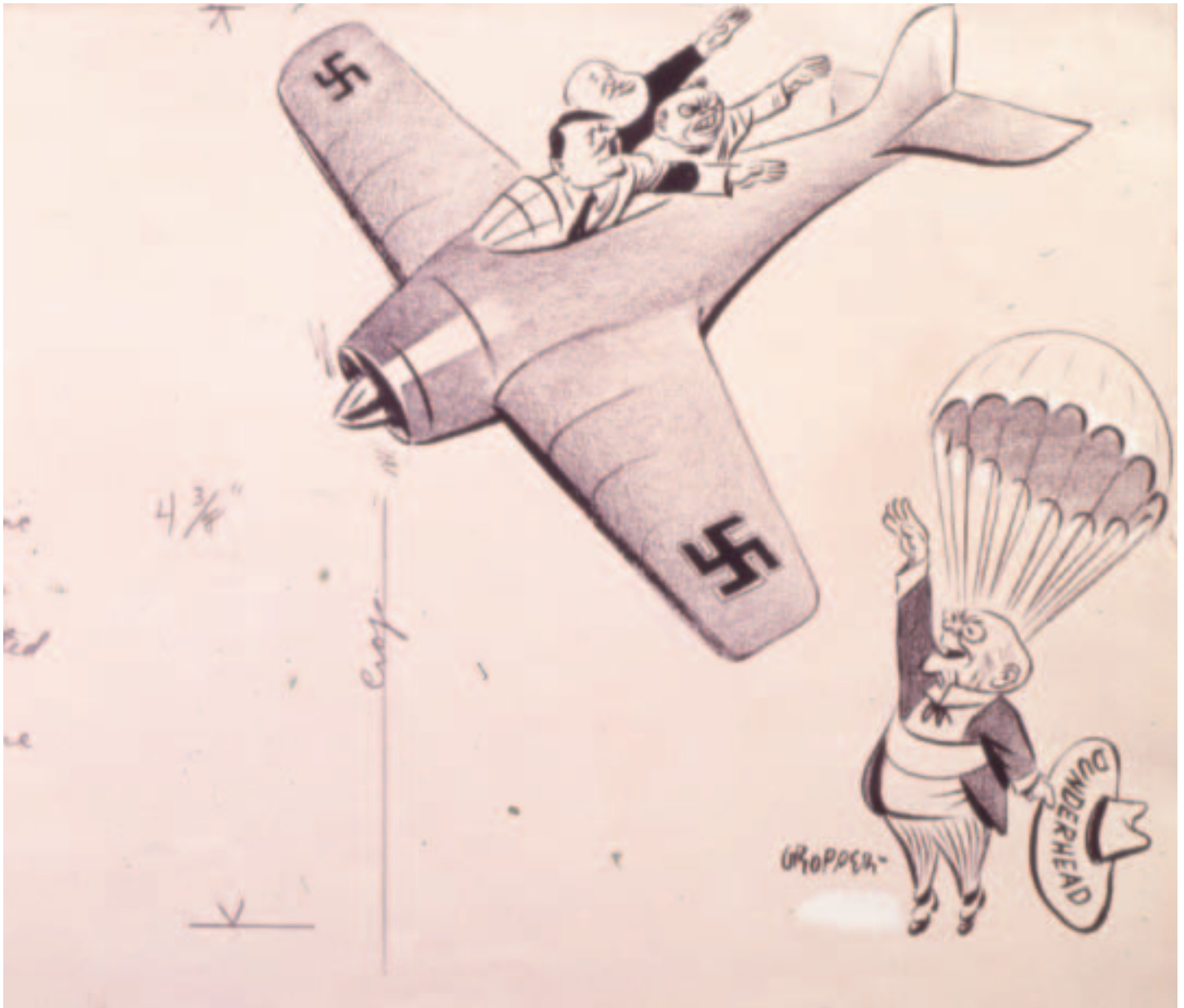
### S O C I A L   S T U D I E S / H I S T O R Y

- Contrary to some popular views of the Holocaust, those persecuted by the Nazis often did not go quietly to their graves. For some (like Felix Nussbaum), art was a form of resistance. By drawing, painting, putting on plays, or making music, they resisted the Nazis’ attempts to take away their humanity and dignity. Other people practiced prayer and religious observance as a form of spiritual resistance. And many also took part in armed resistance. Ask students to conduct further research into the various resistance movements in order to gain a greater understanding of the different ways in which Jews and others challenged Nazi oppression.

### L A N G U A G E   A R T S

- Personal and cultural items often have great significance beyond their monetary or functional value. They may reflect important aspects of an individual’s personal identity, family history, or cultural/religious background. The Jews of Danzig felt so strongly about their possessions—menorahs, Torah crowns, and other objects of Judaica—that they went to the trouble of preserving them even while their own fate was uncertain. Ask each student to choose an object that has significance to him or her and write about it. Students should take a creative approach to the assignment, for example, writing from the point of view of the object itself or imagining the future or past life of the object.

## 2. American Perspectives



William Gropper was a painter, muralist, and cartoonist who expressed his deep commitment to social justice and economic equality through his art. Born in 1897 to a poor Jewish family on New York's Lower East Side, Gropper eventually went on to study at the New School of Fine and Applied Art. Although he was inspired and influenced by the Old Masters, the subject matter of his work reflected the American reality of the 20th century. His cartoons—which appeared in the *New York Tribune*, the *New Republic*, and many other popular publications—often satirized the rich and powerful.

This cartoon was one of many studies Gropper did for the 1942 book *The Illustrious Dunderheads*. Illustrated by Gropper and edited by Rex Stout, the book aimed to show how members of Congress had been influenced by Nazi propaganda in the period leading up to Pearl Harbor. The “Dunderheads” were those American politicians whom the book accused of kowtowing to Hitler and his allies.

William Gropper, *Untitled*, 1942, from *The Illustrious Dunderheads* series, Ink, crayon, and gouache on paper, The Jewish Museum: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William S. Konecky, Photograph © 2004 The Jewish Museum; photograph by Richard Goodbody, Courtesy of ACA Galleries

### Discussion Questions

- Can you identify the different characters in this cartoon? How can you tell who is who? Does the way Gropper has drawn each of these characters tell you anything about what he thinks of them?
- What is Gropper saying about the relationship that existed between certain American politicians (the “Dunderheads”) and the Axis powers early in World War II?
- How else (other than political cartoons) could Gropper have made these comments about the U.S. government? Do you think cartoons are an effective way to make political statements? Why or why not?



In *March of the Clowns*, American artist Albert Bloch creates a parade of uncanny clowns—at once comical and sinister—led by an effigy of Adolf Hitler hanging from a swastika. In this prophetic vision of the war's end, painted in 1941, Hitler is reduced to a tiny and ridiculous doll. A variety of cultural symbols appear in the background, and cartoon characters from the 1920s and 30s look on from the left-hand side. Bloch probably painted this before the United States entered the war, and the cartoon characters may represent America looking on helplessly from the periphery.

## Discussion Questions

- What do you see in this scene? How does the line, color, and composition affect the mood in the painting?
- What religious or cultural symbols do you see in the painting? Why do you think the artist included these?
- How does the painting portray Hitler? What does this suggest to you? What other figures do you recognize? Why might Bloch have included them?

## Suggested Activities

### C R E A T I V E   A R T S

- William Gropper used his art to comment on social and political issues of his day. Have your students consider issues that are important to them, and create a political cartoon based on these issues.

- In their work, William Gropper and Albert Bloch suggest that the United States had a moral responsibility to enter World War II. Even after America entered the war, many believed that the United States should have done more to help the victims of the Nazis. Have your students research the American response to the Holocaust. Students should consider:

- What did the United States do to help those suffering at the hands of the Nazis?
- What did they not do that they could have or should have done?
- What do you think the responsibility of the United States was?

### L A N G U A G E   A R T S

- Political cartoons have long served as a popular means for expressing political views. Have students find and bring in political cartoons that they find particularly effective. Each student can write a short essay explaining the issue, the position of the cartoon, and his or her response to it. These cartoons can then serve as the basis for class debates on the issues.

Albert Bloch, *March of the Clowns*, 1941, oil on canvas mounted on Masonite, The Jewish Museum: Purchased with funds given by the Oscar and Regina Gruss Memorial Fund



### 3. Remembering the Holocaust

Michael David's piece, *Warsaw*, a simple yellow star is reminiscent of such abstract, minimalist works as the color-field paintings of Ellsworth Kelly and Barnett Newman. But the title makes it clear that David is interested in more than abstraction. His work calls to mind the yellow badges that Jews were forced to wear throughout Nazi Europe, and therefore it carries powerful emotional baggage. It also challenges viewers to consider the various meanings of the star symbol. A six-pointed star can be a symbol of Nazi oppression or a symbol of Jewish pride. Is David's large, thickly textured, wax-and-paint star a memorial to those who suffered in the Warsaw Ghetto? Is it an attempt to reclaim a cultural symbol? Is it both?



Michael David, *Warsaw*, 1981, pigment and wax on Masonite, The Jewish Museum: Gift of Lenore B. Lippert and Barbara E. Lippert in Memory of Michael Myron Lippert

#### Discussion Questions

- What associations does Michael David's painting bring up for you? What feelings does it evoke? What does the title suggest to you?
- The Nazis forced Jews to wear yellow stars. Discuss the significance of that practice and of Michael David's choice to use the yellow star in his painting.

In 1981, the city of San Francisco organized a competition to create a memorial to the Holocaust. George Segal's submission, *The Holocaust*, pictured on page 9, was chosen. For this work, Segal used his trademark technique of posing live models and casting them in plaster. The tableau he created is based on photographs of the concentration camps taken immediately after the Liberation. But Segal intentionally added order and organization to the piles of corpses seen in those photos, because he found the Nazi disregard for the dead so disgraceful. He also incorporated a variety of literary and personal symbols into the scene. For example: one of the figures (representing Eve) holds a half-eaten apple in her hand; a man cradles the head of a young boy in a representation of Abraham and Isaac; and another lies with outstretched arms like Jesus, a universal symbol of suffering. Segal also included a standing figure in the foreground of the scene, perhaps to suggest hope and offer some emotional distance for viewers.

#### Discussion Questions

- What do you notice about this scene? What kind of feeling does the sculpture give you?
- Why do you think the artist chose to include a living figure in the foreground? What do you think this figure would say if he could talk?
- How are artworks created after the Holocaust (like Segal's *Holocaust* or David's *Warsaw*) different from those created during the Holocaust (like the works of Felix Nussbaum)? Is one more important than the other?

#### Suggested Activities

##### CREATIVE ARTS

- In his piece *Warsaw*, Michael David explores the evocative power of a cultural symbol and raises questions about its meaning. Ask students to think about symbols that are powerful for them. Then, have each student create an artwork based on a symbol. They can work in a range of media—painting, drawing, sculpture, etc. Through their creations, students might choose to express their cultural identities, respond to the uses of the symbol in popular culture, or challenge its accepted meanings.

##### SOCIAL STUDIES / HISTORY

- Why do people feel the need to create Holocaust memorials? What purpose do they serve? Should they be designed primarily to educate? To remind people of what happened? To evoke a particular emotional response? What kinds of memorials do you think are most effective?
- Broaden the conversation to discuss memorials in general. Have students look online at the various ideas submitted for a 9/11 memorial at the World Trade Center site. Which one would they choose? Why? How is such a memorial similar to or different from a Holocaust memorial? What about war memorials, presidential memorials, or historic sites? How are they similar or different?



- Ask students to read the order below requiring the Jews of Salonika, Greece, to wear the Jewish star. After reading, students should write their responses.

**Salonika, February 12, 1943**  
**Security Police and Security Service (S.D.)**  
**Branch in Salonika**

**To: The Jewish Community in Salonika**  
**Attn: The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Koretz**

**Re: Implementation order of the military commander of Salonika-Aegean, February 6, 1943**

On the basis of the order given on February 6, 1943, MV 1237 Dr. Me., the Jewish community of Salonika is informed hereby that it is to comply with the following instructions:

**1. The Jewish identifying mark consists of a six-point star, ten centimeters in diameter, made of yellow cloth. The sign shall be worn on the left-hand side of the chest, next to the heart, on the upper lapel. The sign shall be visible at all times. The sign shall be worn by every Jew aged five years and over. Along with the sign, each individual shall be given a personal document. The documents shall be numbered consecutively. Upon handing over the sign, the document number shall be clearly printed on the**

**star. A list with consecutive numbers, names, and dates of birth shall be prepared.**

- 2. The following persons shall be considered Jews for the requirements of the aforementioned order of the military commander of Salonika-Aegean:**
- Offspring of at least three grandparents of the Jewish race;**
  - Offspring of mixed marriages, offspring of two grandparents of the Jewish race who belonged to the Mosaic faith on April 1, 1941, or offspring born after that time, out of wedlock, to a Jew.**
  - Having left the Jewish faith, irrespective of when this occurred, does not exempt one from wearing the sign.**
  - In cases of miscegenation, the Jewish spouse must wear the sign.**

**Requests for exemption from the sign shall not be heeded.**

**Signed:**  
**[Dieter] Wislecey**  
**Hauptsturmfuehrer-SS**

*(From the "Jewish Virtual Library"*  
*[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/salonika.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/salonika.html))*

George Segal, *The Holocaust*, 1982. Plaster, wood, and wire. The Jewish Museum: Purchased: Dorot Foundation gift  
 Art © The George and Helen Segal Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY, Photo by John Parnell



## IV. Theresienstadt

As soon as they occupied Poland in 1939, the Nazis began creating thousands of ghettos in small towns and large cities. They forced Jews, under threat of death, to leave their homes in a hurry, ordering them into miserably cramped and unsanitary ghettos. The extreme deprivation led to illness and death for many, while regular “shipments” of Jews to death camps decimated the population.

In November 1941, the Nazis created a Jewish ghetto out of an isolated 18th century fortress town near Prague. Terezin (also known by its German name, Theresienstadt) was different from the other ghettos. Along with less harsh living conditions, there was also a degree of self-government for prisoners, though they were still absolutely dependent on the Nazis’ arbitrary decisions. At Terezin, the Nazis tolerated a cultural life for Jews. There were orchestras, concerts, theater, lectures, a library; even religious life was not officially banned. Many well-known people were sent to Terezin, people whose fates might be followed by the outside world. The Nazis created a smoke screen of deception, making it look like Terezin was a “model Jewish settlement.”



Cloth star. Given to Peretz Milbauer by a survivor, Waldenburg, Germany, 1945. Gift of Peretz and Blanche Milbauer to the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

In 1943, the Nazis made Terezin into a showplace for their propaganda. The Nazis were aware that news of the extermination and labor camps was beginning to leak to the outside world. They set up art studios and had prisoners design posters that showed images of the ghetto as a productive Jewish community. The Nazis carefully prepared a great staging for the arrival of the International Red Cross investigation committee on July 23, 1944. Dummy stores were constructed, as well as gardens, a school and a café, while a large quota of prisoners were deported to their deaths at Auschwitz-Birkenau, so the ghetto would look less congested. The Nazis even created a propaganda film showing Jews benevolently protected by the Third Reich. After the film’s production was complete, most of the cast was deported to the gas chambers. Of the approximately 140,000 Jews interred in Terezin, the Nazis’ “model Jewish settlement,” over 33,000 died.



Birthday gift. Heart-shaped clover given as a gift to Elizabeth Kroo, Lippstadt, Germany, March 16, 1945. Gift of Elizabeth Kroo Teitelbaum to the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

### Discussion Questions

- Why were the Nazis so interested in producing a particular image of Terezin for the world?
- Why was propaganda so important to the Nazis?

### Suggested Activities

#### C R E A T I V E   A R T S

- Artists in Terezin were forced by the Nazis to produce propaganda posters to deceive the world about the conditions for Jews. They were required to show that the situation was benign, whereas it was very harsh and dangerous. However, privately, for themselves, they produced drawings that more accurately represented the situation as they saw it. Have students create a set of drawings about a contested issue today. One drawing shows an official scene, as authorities might want it to be seen; the other shows the same scene from an insider’s perspective.

#### L A N G U A G E   A R T S

- The children of Terezin put on an opera called *Brundibar*. Have students read the libretto and discuss the meaning of this opera and its production in the Terezin ghetto.



# V. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis



Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, *Lady in a Car*, 1940, pastel on paper, Jewish Museum, Prague

**F**riedl Dicker was born to a Jewish family in Vienna, Austria, in 1898. After completing her art studies at the Bauhaus school in Weimar, Germany in 1923, she spent a year in Berlin and then returned to her hometown of Vienna. Friedl spent 10 years in Vienna working as an artist, designer, and art teacher. In her teaching, Friedl combined her boundless artistic creativity with the lessons about making art that she had learned from her own teachers.

In Vienna, Friedl became active in the anti-fascist movement. She was arrested in 1934 and spent time in prison. After her release, she fled to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where she worked with the children of political refugees. Her lessons not only taught the students how to make art; they also served as a form of art therapy. Friedl also made contact with relatives in Prague, including her cousin Pavel Brandeis, whom she married in 1936.



Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, *Interrogation I*, 1934-38, oil on canvas, Jewish Museum, Prague

Friedl and Pavel moved to the Czech town of Hronov in 1938. The political situation worsened. In 1939, they lost their jobs at the local textile factory. They were forced to move into smaller and smaller apartments. But Friedl managed to find refuge in her art. On December 17, 1942, Friedl and Pavel were deported to Terezin. Friedl packed paper, pencils, and other art supplies for the children she knew she would meet there.

At Terezin, Friedl gave art lessons for children in the crowded barracks, using whatever supplies she could find or get sent to her. Friedl did not set out to make artists out of all her students. She merely wanted to help them develop independence, imagination, self-esteem, and an appreciation for beauty. She provided an important emotional and creative outlet for them; they, in return, were her source of strength.



- A million and a half children were killed in the Holocaust. Many more suffered horribly in the ghettos, in the concentration camps, and in hiding. Students can research the experiences of some of these children by reading diaries and memoirs. They can explore how these children responded to their unique situations, what kinds of responsibilities they took on, and how they managed to keep their hope and sanity. Students can create written or oral presentations based on their research, or write their own memoirs.

## L A N G U A G E   A R T S

- In addition to art, many of the children at Terezin studied poetry. They expressed their hopes, fears, and experiences eloquently through that medium, and some of their works have been published in the book *...I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944* by Hana Volavkova. This compilation also includes artwork by the children, many of whom were Friedl's students. Ask your students to read and respond to some of the poetry in the book. Have students also consider the relationship between the poetry and artwork: Do the two different modes of expression provide different kinds of insights? Do they complement each other in any way? Students can also create their own poetry as a response to their study of the Holocaust.

Eva Schurova, *Untitled*, pastel on paper, Jewish Museum, PragueHana Mirjam Kohn, *Untitled*, watercolor on paper, Jewish Museum, Prague

Pavel Brandeis was deported to Auschwitz on September 28, 1944. He survived the war. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis was taken to Auschwitz on October 6, 1944, and died three days later. But she left two suitcases behind at Terezin, filled with more than 4,000 artworks by the children of the ghetto.

### Discussion Questions

- While in Terezin, Friedl painted landscapes, still-lives, portraits, and abstract compositions, but she chose not to depict the horrors going on around her. Why do you think that might be?
- The children Friedl taught were often hungry, cold, and scared. How could art help them in this situation?
- What details do you notice in the children's drawings? What do they tell you about life in Terezin? What don't they tell you? What questions do they raise for you?
- Dicker-Brandeis was a mentor (a teacher or guide) for many children. Have you ever had a mentor or a role model? How did this person help you?

### Suggested Activities

#### C R E A T I V E   A R T S

- Friedl led her students in exercises to help them release their inner creativity, reconnect with the world outside, and express their individual identities.
  - ▶ Friedl showed her students copies of artwork by the world's great masters. She then encouraged students to use different media to create their own works based on these examples. The goal was not simply for the students to copy great art, but to explore the artist's inner world and begin to see reality through new eyes.
  - ▶ Find an image of a well-known artwork and have students create their own works "after" it using collage, pastels, watercolors, or another medium. Encourage students not just to recreate the lines and colors of the original, but to try to capture the vision of the original artist.

# VI. Glossary

**Allies** – The twenty-six nations, led by England, the United States, and the Soviet Union, that fought in World War II against Germany, Italy, Japan, and their allies (known as the Axis powers).

**Anti-Semitism** – Hatred, hostility, or discrimination directed at people because they are Jewish.

**Aryan** – The term “Aryan” originally referred to people who spoke any ancient Indo-European language. But the Nazis used it to describe someone who was of Germanic or Northern European descent and therefore, according to Nazi belief, racially superior.

**Auschwitz-Birkenau** – Located in Poland, this complex of concentration and extermination camps was the largest in the Nazi system. Auschwitz was established in 1940 as a concentration camp, and the killing center at Birkenau was added in 1942. By the end of the war, one million Jews had been killed in its gas chambers or as a result of the horrifying living conditions in the camp.

**Bauhaus** – A design school founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, by Walter Gropius. It moved to Dessau, Germany, in 1925, and was closed down by the Nazis in 1933. Many world-famous artists, designers, and craftspeople taught and studied at the Bauhaus.

**Concentration Camp** – A prison camp established by the Nazis where the inmates were used as slave labor. Because of the inhumane living conditions there, millions of people suffered and died in the camps.

**Death Camp** – A Nazi camp to which Jews and other prisoners were brought specifically to be killed, often by gassing. The Nazis set up six death camps (all in Poland), at which over three million people were killed. They included Chelmno, Auschwitz, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Maidanek.

**Discrimination** – Setting a group of people apart and treating them differently.

**Fascism** – Founded in Italy in 1919 by the dictator Benito Mussolini, and later adopted by the Nazis, fascism is a system of government that combines strident nationalism, strong socioeconomic control, centralized authority under a dictator, and suppression of opposition through terror and censorship. A person who advocates or practices fascism is a “fascist.”

**Gestapo** – The Nazi State Secret Police. Established in 1933 to suppress anti-Nazi dissent and resistance, the Gestapo eventually became a primary force in the murder of Jews throughout occupied Europe during the war.

**Ghetto** – A section of a city or town into which the Nazis forced Jews to live. They were usually enclosed in walls or barbed wire and the residents were not free to enter and leave as they wished. Starvation, disease, and overcrowding were common.

**Hitler** – Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was the Nazi dictator of Germany from 1933 to 1945.

**Holocaust** – The systematic mass slaughter of European Jews in Nazi ghettos, concentration camps, and death camps just before and during World War II. Also known by the Hebrew term “Shoah.”

**Nazi** – A member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, which took control of Germany in 1933 under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. The Nazi regime was a fascist dictatorship based on military force, the suppression of dissenting opinions, and a belief in the racial supremacy of the German people.

**Pogrom** – An organized attack by a mob of people in which Jewish men, women, and children were brutalized and killed and their homes sacked and looted.

## This is a publication of The Jewish Museum’s Education Department

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# VII. Bibliography

## Books for Students

Bachrach, Susan D. (1994). *Tell Them We Remember*. Boston: Little Brown.

*Focusing on young people and their experiences, this short book offers concise information about anti-Semitism, propaganda, rescue, resistance, and everyday life during the Holocaust.*

Berenbaum, Michael (1993). *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: Little Brown.

*This broad historical overview uses the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to provide powerful insights into the story of the Holocaust.*

Boas, Jacob (1995). *We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust*. New York: Henry Holt.

*Boas combines poignant selections from five Jewish teenagers' wartime diaries with his own insightful commentary.*

Botwinick, Rita Steinhardt (1996, 2001). *A History of the Holocaust (2nd Edition): From Ideology to Annihilation*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

*This detailed overview of the Holocaust for high school students takes readers clearly through the history, from prewar Jewish life and anti-Semitism to the Nuremberg trials. An accompanying Holocaust reader has been published as well.*

Heller, Fanya Gottesfeld (1993). *Strange and Unexpected Love: A Teenage Girl's Holocaust Memoirs*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV.

*A gripping first-person account of the dangers and dilemmas the author faced while coming of age under Nazi oppression.*

Landau, Elaine (1991). *We Survived the Holocaust*. New York: Franklin Watts.

*Sixteen survivors from across Europe describe their lives under Hitler as children and teenagers.*

Rogarsky, Barbara (1988, 2002). *Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust (Revised and Expanded Edition)*. New York: Holiday House.

*This comprehensive, well-organized history of the Holocaust is written in a clear, student-friendly style. It includes a short glossary, a selected time-line, and black-and-white photos.*

Rosenberg, Maxine B. (1994). *Hiding to Survive: Stories of Jewish Children Rescued from the Holocaust*. New York: Clarion Books.

*Written specifically for student readers, this short book includes the stories of fourteen Holocaust survivors in their own words, along with photos of the children then and now.*

Rubin, Susan Goldman (2000). *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin*. New York: Holiday House.

*Rubin retells Friedl Dicker-Brandeis's powerful story for a middle-school audience, accompanied by numerous color images.*

Sender, Ruth Minsky (1986). *The Cage*. New York: Macmillan.

*In this evocative memoir, Minsky describes her own experiences as an adolescent in Poland during the Holocaust.*

Speigelman, Art (1986, 1991). *Maus I & II*. New York: Pantheon Books.

*Artist Art Speigelman retells his father's Holocaust experiences in a thoughtful and accessible way using a graphic novel format.*

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Resistance During the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

*This informative pamphlet uses maps, photographs, and concise text to explain the different kinds of resistance that existed during the Holocaust. It is available at:*  
[www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/resistance.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/resistance.pdf).

Volavkova, Hana, ed. (1993). *...I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. New York: Schocken Books.

*A touching compilation of artwork and poetry created by children of Terezin, many of whom were students of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis.*

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Bilski, Emily D. (1985). *Art and Exile: Felix Nussbaum, 1904-1944*. New York: The Jewish Museum.

*An exhibition catalogue exploring the life and work of Felix Nussbaum, a Jewish artist who documented his experiences up until his death in Auschwitz.*

Dawidowicz, Lucy S. (1975). *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

*Dawidowicz lays out the development and progression of the Holocaust in this straightforward, meticulous, and well-researched volume.*

Dwork, Deborah (1991). *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

*Dwork offers personal glimpses into the lives of over 100 children who survived the Holocaust.*



Flaim, Richard F., and Edwin W. Reynolds, eds. (1983). *The Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience—A Curriculum Guide*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

*This detailed curriculum guide was created and piloted by high school educators for the New Jersey State Education Department. There is also an "Anthology for Students," edited by Harry Furman.*

Gilbert, Martin (1982). *The Macmillan Atlas of the Holocaust*. New York: Macmillan.

*Gilbert's maps provide a visual overview for teachers and students of the progression of events in Europe before, during, and after the Holocaust.*

Gutman, Israel, ed. (1990). *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. New York: Macmillan.

*An extensive background resource on many aspects of Holocaust history.*

Makarova, Elena (2001). *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Vienna 1898 – Auschwitz 1944: The Artist Who Inspired the Children's Drawings of Terezin*. Los Angeles: Tallfellow / Every Picture Press.

*A catalogue for the exhibition of the same name, featuring color images and background information on Friedl and her work.*

Parsons, William S., and Samuel Totten (1993). *Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

*This useful resource includes a full chronology, a brief narrative overview of Holocaust history, guidelines for teaching, an annotated bibliography, and a videography of Holocaust films.*

Strom, Margot Stern, and William S. Parsons (1982). *Facing History and Ourselves: The Holocaust and Human Behavior*. Watertown, MA: Intentional Educations, Inc.

*Through this book's readings and activities, teachers can help students examine the Holocaust and better understand the moral choices they make in their own lives.*

*Teaching about the Holocaust and Genocide (The Human Rights Series, Vol. I & II)*. (1985). Albany, NY: University of the State of New York.

*Includes student readings, suggested activities, photographs, artwork, and charts and graphs that explore the Holocaust and its implications for our present and future.*

Totten, Samuel, and Stephen Feinberg, eds. (2001). *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

*Guidelines, resources, and activity ideas help teachers incorporate literature, the arts, first-person accounts, and primary documents into Holocaust study.*

Totten, Samuel (2002). *Holocaust Education: Issues and Approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

*This collection of essays addresses key pedagogical issues faced by educators teaching about the Holocaust.*

Young, James E., ed. (1994). *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*. New York: The Jewish Museum/Prestel.

*This catalogue from a 1994 Jewish Museum exhibition features several short essays by artists and scholars and includes many images of Holocaust memorials from around the world.*

Young, James E. (1993). *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

*Young explores the concept of the Holocaust memorial and its role in contemporary society.*

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[www.facing.org](http://www.facing.org)

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[www.holocaust-trc.org](http://www.holocaust-trc.org)

The Jewish Museum  
[www.thejewishmuseum.org](http://www.thejewishmuseum.org)

Learning about the Holocaust through art  
<http://art.holocaust-education.net/>

Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust  
[www.museumofjewishheritage.org](http://www.museumofjewishheritage.org)

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<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/>

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



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