



At Great Risk:

Holocaust Rescue and the Righteous Among the Nations

Student Reflection Journal



Student Name: _____
 Survivor Author's Name: _____
 Title of Memoir: _____

ABOUT THE STUDENT REFLECTION JOURNAL

Dear Student,

Welcome to your reflection journal. This journal will serve as your personal space to mindfully engage with the memoir you are about to read.

Learning about the Holocaust can be an emotionally and mentally difficult experience, and it is important to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings as you move through this Education Program on the theme of Holocaust rescue. Personal reactions to studying the Holocaust can vary from person to person, and there is no right way to feel while learning about it.

At various points throughout the program, you will be given an opportunity to reflect on the different themes and questions that arise. This journal offers suggested guiding questions or focal points for your reflection. You can respond to as many or as few of them as you choose. If you prefer to reflect on a different element that was not specifically mentioned, that is okay too.

You are welcome to write your response however you choose, whether that means a straightforward written response or a response with a personal touch or artistic element. The only requirement is that you give yourself the opportunity to engage mindfully with the topic, theme and text.

Please check in with your teacher at any time if you want to discuss how the content is affecting you. Some people or resources you can connect with to continue learning about and processing this information are:

LESSON 1

An Overview of the Holocaust



SUMMARY OF LESSON

In Lesson 1, you learned an overview of the Holocaust. The goal of the lesson was to provide you with a sense of the scope of the Holocaust as a historical event before you read an individual survivor's story.

Some of the information you learned today may have been overwhelming or difficult to take in, and perhaps it has left you with more questions than answers. It's important to be mindful of these feelings, thoughts and questions and to use them in order to motivate your study of the Holocaust.

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS FOR REFLECTION

These questions are here to guide your reflection, but you are not required to answer all of them or to answer them in any particular order. If there is an idea or topic you would like to reflect on that is not listed below, please feel free to include it in your reflection. Use the space on the next page to complete your reflection for Lesson 1.

**Questions marked with an asterisk are required.*

1. How has your understanding of the Holocaust changed after completing Lesson 1? *
2. Was there information that you thought you knew but while doing this lesson you realized you hadn't fully grasped?
3. Was there information that surprised you? Shocked you? Saddened you? Angered you? Offended you?
4. In Lesson 1, you learned a lot of new information. What did you notice about the learning materials and the way they were presented?
5. What types of sources were used to learn about the Holocaust? Did the sources leave any gaps in knowledge, perspective or information?
6. What aspect of the Holocaust are you most interested in learning about further?
7. What are your hopes and expectations for learning about the theme of rescue during the Holocaust? *
8. What questions were you left with after Lesson 1? *



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LESSON 2

An Introduction to the Topic of Rescue



SUMMARY OF LESSON

In Lesson 2, you explored the theme of rescue during the Holocaust. During the Holocaust, most people in Europe did not offer assistance to those who were being persecuted by the Nazis and their collaborators. Studying Holocaust rescue reveals the complex context in which people made decisions that went against the rules of the society they lived in and the significant outcomes of these difficult decisions.

During this lesson, you learned about the types of rescue, the high level of risk involved, and the motivations of rescuers during the Holocaust. You also learned about the designation of Righteous Among the Nations, an honour bestowed upon rescuers by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. This deeper understanding of the role of rescuers during the Holocaust will better support your reading of the survivor memoir.

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS FOR REFLECTION

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**Questions marked with an asterisk are required.*

1. What did you know about the theme of rescue during the Holocaust before beginning this unit of study? How has your understanding of rescue changed after completing Lesson 2?
2. Was there information that you thought you knew but while doing this lesson you realized you hadn't fully grasped?
3. Was there information that surprised you? Shocked you? Saddened you? Angered you? Offended you?
4. Are any of the three criteria for a Righteous Among the Nations nomination more important than the others? Which one and why?
5. Why was Holocaust rescue a rare occurrence in Nazi Europe? What insights about human behaviour in times of crisis can we draw from studying this particular case? *
6. What area of rescue are you most interested in learning about further?
7. What are your hopes and expectations for reading the survivor memoir? *
8. What questions were you left with after Lesson 2? *



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LESSON 3

Pause and Regroup



SUMMARY OF LESSON

In Lesson 3, you shared your knowledge of the survivor memoir you've been assigned with your peers. You had an opportunity to recall key biographical and geographical information, review the details of the author's life before the war and the changes that occurred in the early stages of the war. You also had the chance to hear from your peers about the other memoirs, and about the similarities and differences in those stories. People experienced the Holocaust in many ways and each story sheds light onto this complex history.

When learning about the Holocaust, it is common to hear about the statistics, the six million Jews who were murdered. Survivor testimony is important because it helps us learn how the Holocaust affected an individual. By learning about someone's life before, during and after the war, we gain a sense of the whole person, not just their victimization.

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS FOR REFLECTION

These questions are here to guide your reflection, but you are not required to answer them in any particular order. If there is an idea or topic you would like to reflect on that is not listed below, please feel free to include it in your reflection. Use the space on the next page to complete your reflection for Lesson 3.

**Questions marked with an asterisk are required.*

1. How did you feel about sharing your assigned memoir with your peers? *
2. What were your thoughts and feelings when listening to your peers share their assigned memoir? *
3. Are there any elements of the survivor author's life before the war that you connected with?
4. Was there information that surprised you? Shocked you? Saddened you? Angered you? Offended you?
5. What additional perspectives would you like to hear from?
6. What information about the survivor author are you hoping to learn as you continue reading their memoir?
7. What questions were you left with after Lesson 3? *
8. If you could ask the survivor author a question, what would you ask? *
9. Has reading this memoir shaped how you think about personal ethics (the values that govern an individual's choices and actions)? What happens when personal ethics conflict with the legal or social rules operating in a given society? *



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LESSON 4

Debrief and Discuss



SUMMARY OF LESSON

In Lesson 4, you used what you learned in the first two lessons and drew on the knowledge you gained from reading the memoir to engage with peers in a discussion about rescue during the Holocaust. In the last two lessons, you also may have been introduced to historical thinking concepts.

When you study something that happened in the past, historical thinking concepts, such as **historical perspectives** and **ethical dimensions**, can guide your thinking in helpful ways:

Taking **historical perspective** means that you try to understand the social, cultural and emotional context that shaped people's lives and actions in the past, instead of considering what you would have done or felt in those same circumstances.

Considering the **ethical dimensions** of history means that you carefully reflect on the ways that we should remember and respond to past events so that we can make informed judgments about contemporary issues, without drawing direct links between the past and present.

If you're interested, you can [learn more](#) about historical thinking concepts.

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS FOR REFLECTION

These questions are here to guide your reflection, but you are not required to answer all of them or to answer them in any particular order. If there is an idea or topic you would like to reflect on that is not listed below, please feel free to include it in your reflection. Use the space on the next page to complete your reflection for Lesson 4.

**Questions marked with an asterisk are required.*

1. In what way was reading a first-hand account different from reading a fictional novel? *
2. In your class/group discussion, what questions arose that stuck out to you? Were there any responses from your peers that resonated with you?
3. Was there a question that you wished was asked or discussed but wasn't? If so, ask and write about it here.
4. Was there information that surprised you? Shocked you? Saddened you? Angered you? Offended you?
5. You learned about the survivor author's life after the war. Were there any elements about this chapter of their lives that stood out to you?
6. What questions were you left with after finishing the memoir? *
7. If you could ask the survivor author another question now that you have finished the memoir, what would you ask? *
8. The rescuer(s) in the memoir was nominated and designated as Righteous Among the Nations. As we know, rescuing Jews and other persecuted people was very rare in Europe during the Holocaust. How does this make you feel?
9. Did your survivor author discuss their motivation for writing their memoir? Why do you think that most Holocaust survivors chose not to write down their experiences?



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FINAL REFLECTION



SUMMARY OF LESSON

We have reached the end of the Education Program on rescue during the Holocaust. To recap:

- We learned an overview of the Holocaust.
- We explored the theme of rescue and the designation of the Righteous Among the Nations.
- We studied the stories of three people who experienced the Holocaust and attribute their survival to the assistance of rescuers.
- We used survivor author memoirs to explore the risks taken to save the lives of Jews during the Holocaust and the motivations of those who helped, as well as the consequences of their actions.
- We engaged in meaningful discussion with peers about topics related to Holocaust rescue.
- We completed a final assignment demonstrating our understanding of the material.

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS FOR REFLECTION

These questions are here to guide your reflection, but you are not required to answer them in any particular order. If there is an idea or topic you would like to reflect on that is not listed below, please feel free to include it in your reflection. Use the space on the next page to complete your final reflection.

All questions are required.

1. Describe your experience choosing your final assignment. What factors did you consider to make your choice? Was it an easy or difficult decision? Was your assignment proposal approved or did it need adjustments?
2. Describe your experience working on your final assignment. Did things go as planned? Did you stray from your initial proposal as you got deeper into the assignment? What was easy or challenging about working on your assignment?
3. Describe how you feel about the outcome of your final assignment. Are you happy with how it turned out? What would you have done differently? What was your biggest challenge while working on this assignment? How closely does it resemble your final assignment proposal?
4. How has this Education Program influenced the way you view human behaviour in times of crisis?
5. How has the study of the Holocaust affected you? How will you remember and respond to what you have learned?



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