

TORONTO HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

A MUSEUM BY UJA

Auschwitz

Not long ago. Not far away.



Elementary Educator Guide

Developed by the Toronto Holocaust Museum

Adapted by the Royal Ontario Museum

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Auschwitz Educator Guide - Elementary

Introduction

This teacher guide was created to support learning about the Holocaust for high school students (grades 9 – 12) in connection with visiting the historically comprehensive and dynamic exhibition, *Auschwitz: Not long ago. Not far away.*, hosted by the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). It has been adapted to support elementary learning (Grade 6-8) by the ROM School Programs team.

For classes visiting ROM, students will attend a presentation led by ROM educators about Jewish Communities and daily life before, during, and after the Holocaust, followed by an opportunity to explore hands-on objects that reflect different aspects of Jewish culture and community. This onsite experience covers most of the activities outlined in this educator guide, though you may wish to follow up with the activity worksheets later to reinforce and document student learning.

Guided virtual webinars, led by a ROM educator, and an independently-paced self-guided Virtual Exhibition Experience are also available if you wish to conduct this learning in the familiar environment of the classroom. These experiences parallel the onsite experience.

Onsite lessons, virtual guided lessons, and the self-guided virtual visit can also be combined if you wish to reinforce or supplement learning.

Visit ROM's [Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away. school programs page](#) for details.

Overall Learning Objectives

- Students will increase their knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust by a deep study of the effects of persecution during the Holocaust framed through the experiences of Auschwitz survivors and victims.
- Students will reflect and think critically about the importance of Auschwitz and the Holocaust in today's world.
- Students will develop an appreciation for museum learning, including museum etiquette, and hands-on engagement with primary source documents, objects, and personal and cultural belongings.
- Students will make connections with key topics in the Ontario elementary curriculum, practice historical thinking and the inquiry process, as well as work with concepts of disciplinary thinking.

Why Teach About the Holocaust?

When studying the Holocaust, learners are engaging with complicated moral questions, many of which do not come with simple answers. The complexity that accompanies the study of the Holocaust encourages people to think critically about important issues and values not only within the historical context of the Holocaust, but also in contemporary society. The Holocaust demonstrates the fragile nature of democratic institutions, inclusion and even citizenship. It challenges individuals to develop their participation in their own civil society. Understanding the range of human behavior represented during the Holocaust and the choices, responses and

actions of individuals and communities, makes the Holocaust a story for all of humanity. By fostering critical thinking, the legacy of the Holocaust is a call to action for individuals to care, protect and take responsibility for their civil society, social justice, and human rights around the globe.

While every Holocaust story of survival and death is unique, Auschwitz to many represents the centre of Holocaust education and experience. The camp was where one sixth of all Holocaust victims were murdered and it was the largest death and concentration camp throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Auschwitz stands at the centre of our consciousness of Holocaust memory. Many survivors of the camp became some of the most central figures in Holocaust education and storytelling, such as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. Auschwitz was where Hana Brady, from *Hana's Suitcase*, was murdered, and where Anne Frank and her family were deported after their discovery in the secret annex. The camp's murder operations are perhaps the greatest embodiment of Nazi dehumanization, where countless people lost their identities.

Curriculum Expectations

Grade 6

Social Studies

A3.7 describe significant events or developments in the history of Jewish communities in Canada, including some of the ways they have contributed to Canada (e.g., events and developments: official recording of the first Jewish settler in New France [1759]; establishment of Canada's first synagogue, Shearith Israel, in Montreal [1768]; equal rights being given to Jewish people in Lower Canada [Quebec], including being able to hold public office [1832]; founding of Canada's first national Jewish organization, the Federation of Zionist Societies in Canada [1899]; establishment of Montreal's Young Men's Hebrew Association and Young Women's Hebrew Association [1910]; founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress [1919]; waves of Jewish immigration during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries from Europe, Asia, South America, and North and South Africa, increasing the diversity of Canada's Jewish community; dedication of the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa [2017]; Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism role created [2020]; contributions: leaders in human rights laws since the 1940s; entrepreneurs in industry and manufacturing), and identify some of the impacts of antisemitism on these communities' development and/or identities (e.g., restrictions: pre-World War II restrictions on participation in medicine and law; severe restrictions on Jewish immigration during World War II and up to 1947; prohibition of Jewish residences or property purchases in some Canadian neighbourhoods; reactions: building of Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital [1923] to serve the Jewish immigrant community and provide space for Jewish doctors who faced discrimination at other hospitals; resistance to antisemitism during the Christie Pits Riot in Toronto [1933]; building of the Jewish Community Centre in Toronto [1953] in response to not being allowed to join many of the existing clubs in the city; security at synagogues and cemeteries)

Guidelines for Teachers

Whether you are an experienced teacher looking for a refresher or a teacher new to this subject, there is so much advice out there on how to teach about the Holocaust that it can seem overwhelming. This section presents a synthesis of the most important points and helps you consider what is unique about teaching this topic in Canada. In the first part of this section, you will consider nine well-established principles for all educators to follow, which are known as the “Best Practices” of Holocaust education. In the second part of this section, “Tips for Teaching in Canada,” you will learn five practical ways that you can ground your teaching in our national context.

Best Practices in Holocaust Education

These guidelines are based on internationally recognized approaches to Holocaust education. The content is adapted from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s [guidelines](#).

Guideline 1

Explain what the Holocaust was using a definition from a credible source. Make sure to include who was involved, where it took place, and the timing.

Rationale: Students will have a solid foundation from which to further explore the history and its lasting influence, and they will be positioned to combat ignorance and misinformation.

Guideline 2

Acknowledge the complexity of human behaviour and emphasize the context in which decisions were made. For example, try not to oversimplify the choices made by perpetrators, rescuers, and bystanders, and make sure to include victim responses.

Rationale: Students will recognize that many factors and events contributed to the Holocaust and often made decision-making difficult and uncertain.

Guideline 3

Model precise language that respects the complexity of this history and the sensitivity required to discuss this topic. For example, the term “killing centre” is preferable to “extermination camp,” which conveys the idea that prisoners were like vermin that needed to be eradicated.

Rationale: Students will learn to identify stereotypes, recognize perpetrator vocabulary, and avoid generalizations.

Guideline 4

Balance the perspectives and types of sources that you include in your lessons. For example, include primary sources and help students to analyze who created them and why.

Rationale: Students will consider evidence created by different people implicated in the Holocaust and learn to identify gaps, biases, and interpretations.

Guideline 5

Make connections rather than comparisons when examining the varying experiences of target groups in the Holocaust and across different genocides.

Rationale: Students will be positioned to understand the particularities of each genocide rather than ranking the suffering of different groups.

Guideline 6

Aim to teach an accurate understanding of this history appropriate to the age of your students rather than using the Holocaust to instill moral lessons.

Rationale: Students will be sensitive to the complex situations of the past in which people had to make choices and decisions, learning to see patterns, recognize consequences, and identify the processes that can lead to genocide.

Guideline 7

Contextualize the Holocaust broadly in European, global, and Jewish history, and show how the Holocaust was carried out differently in each country.

Rationale: Students will gain a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that contributed to the Holocaust and shaped how people responded.

Guideline 8

Integrate survivor testimony and other sources showing the victim perspective, highlighting individual voices from a collective experience.

Rationale: Students will understand that each statistic was a real person with a life before the Holocaust who is deserving of remembrance.

Guideline 9

Ensure safe and appropriate classroom activities. For example, don't assign games or simulations, and only use graphic photos when pedagogically necessary.

Rationale: Students will participate in learning opportunities that respect the dignity of the victims and the gravity of the topic.

Tips for Teaching in Canada

The general guidelines presented above are designed for all educators. What is unique about teaching this topic in Canada? These five suggestions point you to the particular opportunities available for Canadian teachers and students.

Tip 1: Include Canadian Survivor Voices

You may be surprised to learn that Canada became home to 40,000 Holocaust survivors – one of the largest communities of survivors in the world. Canadian survivors have been involved in sharing their stories and shaping educational efforts in this country. These efforts include participating in projects to collect oral history. To date, more than 1,200 oral histories have been

recorded. When including survivor voices in your lesson plans, choose voices from Canada. Students are more connected to what they are learning when they hear it from people who are fellow Canadians, perhaps even their neighbours. Furthermore, when Canadian survivors share their life stories with us they teach us about how they experienced the Holocaust *and* what it was like to immigrate to Canada and build new lives here. Their experiences as immigrants were not easy: they faced difficult periods of adjustment and often discrimination, while also dealing with the trauma of their wartime persecution and loss.

Tip 2: Think Local

Across Canada, education centres and museums provide local Holocaust education opportunities. These experiences cater to your students by following provincial curriculum guidelines, engaging with local survivors, and rooting the educational experiences in the particular place. Often these centres are at the forefront of experimenting with new forms of media and cutting-edge pedagogical experiences for students. The Toronto Holocaust Museum is a state-of-the-art facility where your students can access ground-breaking technology and innovative approaches to Holocaust education. Whenever possible, include trips to your local Holocaust centre to ground your teaching in a site and benefit from the expertise and innovation taking place around the country.

- [Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre](#) in Vancouver
- [Montreal Holocaust Museum](#) in Montreal
- [Canadian Museum for Human Rights](#) in Winnipeg
- [Canadian War Museum](#) in Ottawa
- [Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre](#) in Winnipeg
- [Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship](#) in Ottawa
- [Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre](#) in Toronto
- [National Holocaust Monument](#) in Ottawa
- [Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21](#) in Halifax

Tip 3: Consider the Curriculum

Unlike countries with a national curriculum, in Canada curricular requirements vary between provinces. It may surprise you to learn just how much it varies in terms of which grades mandate Holocaust education and what content about the Holocaust is required to be taught. Considering the direct references to Holocaust learning objectives in your provincial curriculum is an important element of your preparation for teaching, so you know what, if anything, your students have already learned in an educational setting, or so you can prepare them for what they will encounter later. Often, references to the Holocaust that appear in curriculum documents frame the content in a way that directly links it to Canada's history.

Tip 4: Connect to Canada's History

Students may think the fact that the Holocaust happened a long time ago on a different continent means that it's not relevant to them. One way that you can help students see the relevance is to integrate into your teaching key moments from Canada's history that demonstrate the Canadian connection to the Holocaust. Some examples are the [MS St Louis](#) refugee ship that was refused

entry in 1939; the internment of German-Jewish "[enemy aliens](#)" on Canadian soil; and the role of the Canadian army in [liberating parts of Europe](#), including some of the Nazi concentration camps.

Tip 5: Acknowledge Canada's Genocidal Legacy

When teaching about the Holocaust in Canada, it is important to be aware of *where* you are teaching and *who* you are teaching. The Holocaust did not happen in Canada, but genocide has happened here, and conversations about Residential Schools are becoming commonplace in many classrooms. This reality makes studying the Holocaust gain new significance as it develops students' awareness of genocide as a feature of modern life that has happened many times and continues to occur. And as you get to know your students each year, awareness of their backgrounds also informs your teaching. Indigenous and Jewish students bring their family legacies with them to the classroom, and newcomers to Canada may bring firsthand experience of war and persecution. When choosing which cases of genocide to discuss in your classroom, make sure to give enough time to each case so that student discussions are well-grounded and respectful of the particularities of each situation.

Defining Antisemitism

Prior to beginning learning about the Holocaust, it is important to define antisemitism with students. The Ontario curriculum defines antisemitism in its glossary, and the *Unlearn It Antisemitism* resource also has a useful definition for parents and teachers. You can access the resource from this [link](#).

Conclusion

In this section you learned best practices and tips to guide you as you bring Holocaust education into your classroom. Some of the principles are designed for all educators taking on this important work, and others are specific to our national context. Visit the Toronto Holocaust Museum and our [website](#) for more educational opportunities and education modules grounded in best practices and the Canadian context.

Historical Overview of Auschwitz – Teacher Resource Only

Auschwitz stands at the very center of Holocaust memory. In just five years, Nazi Germany murdered approximately 1.1 million people at the camp: about 1 million Jews, 70 thousand Poles, 21 thousand Roma and Sinti, 15 thousand Soviet prisoners of war, and 12 thousand additional prisoners from German-occupied Europe. For context, this means that **one out of every six Jews murdered in the Holocaust was at Auschwitz**; this was also **the most Jews murdered at one location throughout the Holocaust**. Most of the killing was done in specially designed gas chambers created for mass murder. The other victims died from hunger, disease, slave labour, extreme cold, executions, physical abuse, and medical experimentation.

Visitors to the Royal Ontario Museum’s exhibit *Auschwitz: Not long ago. Not far away*, will come face to face with a detailed record of Auschwitz history, context, and killing operations. Visitors hear first-hand testimony from camp survivors and learn about the lives of those who were murdered. On the advice of the Ontario Elementary Curriculum Leads, it is recommended that the exhibition itself is not included as part of the elementary learning experience. However, if any teachers have reviewed the exhibition and still wish to guide their classes through, it is available as an option for onsite visitors, and in the Virtual Exhibition with the password **ROMschools2025**.

Auschwitz is located in what is now Poland, near the small town of Oświęcim, about 40 kilometers from Krakow. The Austrian military originally constructed barracks at the site in the 19th century, which were later used by the Polish Army prior to the German invasion on September 1, 1939. Germany occupied the area following its victory over Poland and unleashed a brutal wave of repression against the Poles (including Polish Jews).

By April 1940, German mass arrests of Poles had grown beyond the capacity of prisons in occupied-Poland. In response, SS chief Heinrich Himmler ordered to establish the Auschwitz I camp at the site of the former army barracks. About 11,000 mostly Polish prisoners were incarcerated at Auschwitz I between 1940 and 1941. It is important to note that during this period, Auschwitz I was a concentration camp, not a killing centre.

This would change following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, which would change Nazi policy towards Jews. Hitler and the Nazis saw the war in the East as a “war of annihilation” against the inferior Slavic race and the ultimate evil of Jewish communism. Nazi-created *Einsatzgruppen* death squads followed the army’s advance into the USSR and murdered 1.5 to 2 million Jews in towns and villages.

The most frequent method used was mass shooting. But, for the Germans, shooting operations required significant amounts of ammunition, as well as military personnel to transport Jews to the killing sites and for security. Furthermore, shooting women and children (even those deemed racial enemies) had a negative psychological impact on German shooters. Over time, the Germans began to develop more “efficient” methods of killing, culminating in using gas in sealed

vans and trucks. Eventually, the Germans began to develop more permanent, significantly larger gas chambers to increase the capacity of their murder operations.

Over the course of late 1941, Hitler and various senior Nazis began to arrive to what would be referred to as the “Final Solution”: the complete annihilation and murder of all European Jewry. Six camps built with gassing facilities in German-occupied Poland would serve this purpose: Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz. Auschwitz was already undergoing expansion when in September the SS tested Zyklon B gas in a makeshift gas chamber, primarily on Soviet Prisoners of War. The construction of larger gas chambers at the camp began in October and this new larger camp, was known as Auschwitz II, or Birkenau.

The first transport of Jews arrived at Auschwitz in March 1942. From then until November 1944, transports of Jews arrived daily at the camp from across occupied Europe for murder. While the first gassings of Jews were at Auschwitz I, operations would be moved to the much larger facilities at Birkenau.

Deportees arrived at Birkenau often in closed and overcrowded cattle cars, having endured long journeys without food and water. After disembarking at the train platform, the SS guards would separate men from women, as well as those fit for work from those unable to work. In an instant, families would be torn apart. Women along with small children, the old, pregnant women, and people with physical or psychological disabilities were separated and taken away for murder in the gas chambers. At its peak, 6,000 people could be killed in the gas chambers every day. In 1943, four large crematoria were built to dispose of bodies more efficiently. The SS guards forcibly selected prisoners from the camp to act as *Sonderkommando*, forced to assist new arrivals undress, and transport and burn thousands of corpses each day.

Unlike other killing centres, the guards at Auschwitz selected prisoners for forced labour. Those selected upon their arrival were stripped of their clothing and belongings, had their hair shaved off, and showered. Their prisoner number was tattooed on their forearm, and they were provided with ill-fitting striped uniforms. Barracks were makeshift and lacked any washroom facilities. Prisoners slept on thin straw mattresses on top of wooden bed frames, with multiple prisoners forced to share a single space. The allotted food for prisoners was scarce, usually a small portion of watery soup and stale moldy bread.

Prisoners constructed facilities for the expanding camp or worked at one of many nearby labour subcamps. Most notable was the labour subcamp Auschwitz III, or Monowitz. Conditions in forced labour were horrific and resulted in the prisoners dying from exhaustion. The SS regularly conducted selections of the prisoners, sending those too weak and unable to work to the gas chambers.

Additionally, SS Dr. Josef Mengele frequently selected new arrivals (especially twin children) and other prisoners to undergo medical experiments at the camp’s “medical” facility. Mengele murdered countless prisoners in these horrific and brutal experiments.

As the Soviet Red Army began approaching Auschwitz, the SS evacuated close to 60,000 remaining prisoners on brutal death marches westward away from the approaching Red Army.

Thousands of prisoners died from the exhaustion, starvation, and bitter cold they were forced to endure. Anyone unable to keep up or who fell behind was shot by the SS. The Red Army liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945. Only around 7,000 prisoners remained in the camp. Those who survived the death marches did not see liberation until the spring. The Soviets were shocked by what they found at Auschwitz. They attempted to help the starving and ill prisoners which remained. Some were too far gone and died even after liberation. Many survivors did not have homes or family to return to. The trauma remained with them their entire lives.

Only a small minority of the camp's staff ever stood trial for war crimes. Most notably, the British Army were able to capture longtime camp commandant Rudolf Höss shortly after the war. They eventually handed Höss to the Polish government to stand in trial in May 1946. Höss was sentenced to death by hanging in April 1947. But most who served at Auschwitz escaped justice.

Today, Auschwitz stands almost in its entirety as a museum. Its liberation date of January 27 is observed as International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD). A number of the camp's survivors became educators, sharing their stories with others.

Activity Checklist

If Visiting Onsite:

- Review Educator Guide
- Complete Lesson Introduction: Knowledge Review (See page 16)
- Attend the ROM presentation and object exploration.
- Optional: Follow up and review with the Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away. Virtual Exhibition and related activities:
 - Learning from objects and photos
 - Lab Exploration
 - Reflection and resistance
- Optional: Complete any of the Post-Visit Activities coming to the ROM Learning Portal in March:
 - Memory Quilt
 - Memorial Build
 - Reflection Journal

If taking a Guided Virtual Lesson:

- Review Educator Guide
- Complete Lesson Introduction: Knowledge Review (See page 16)
- View the ROM presentation and object exploration in your classroom.
- Optional: Follow up and review with the Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away. Virtual Exhibition and related activities:
 - Learning from objects and photos
 - Lab Exploration
 - Reflection and resistance
- Optional: Complete any of the Post-Visit Activities coming to the ROM Learning Portal in March:
 - Memory Quilt
 - Memorial Build
 - Reflection Journal

If using the Virtual Exhibition Independently:

- Review Educator Guide
- Complete Lesson Introduction: Knowledge Review
- Complete Activity 1: Learning from Objects
- Complete Activity 2: Learning from Photos: Pre-war Jewish Communities
- Complete Activity 3: Learning from Photos: Government Laws and Policies
- Complete Activity 4: Learning Lab: Object Exploration
- Optional:** Review the Virtual Exhibition yourself using the password **ROMschools2025**. If you wish to guide your students through the exhibition after reviewing it, provide them with the password. Otherwise, skip to Activity 5.
- Activity 5: Resistance & Reflection
- Optional: Complete any of the Post-Visit Activities coming to the ROM Learning Portal in March:
 - Memory Quilt
 - Memorial Build

- Reflection Journal

Activities/Lessons

Overview

In these lessons, created to parallel the onsite and guided virtual elementary lessons, students will build knowledge about daily life in Jewish communities before, during, and after World War II. They explore how the Holocaust, Auschwitz, and antisemitism have affected communities and identities in Canada. Students will build knowledge about the diverse and well-established Jewish communities in Europe and learn about Jews not just as victims, but as individuals who were leading multifaceted lives as part of families and communities. These lessons can also be done by classes who have done the onsite or guided virtual lessons, but wish to reinforce and document the learning.

Recommended Grade Range

Grades 6-8

Estimated Time

Each lesson will take one class period.

Teaching Outcomes

- Assess students' existing knowledge, preconceptions, and misconceptions about the Holocaust and Auschwitz.
- Ensure that students have a sufficient understanding of the topic before moving into deeper study.
- Reinforce key terms that the students will encounter later in the learning experience.
- Humanize the experience of Holocaust survivors by introducing Canadian survivors of Auschwitz, their experiences and life after the Second World War.

Lesson Introduction and Reflection Exercise:

In this lesson, students will engage in a knowledge check to establish class knowledge and questions about Jewish communities and life before, during, and after World War II, as well as the Holocaust and camps like Auschwitz. **Participants in the onsite or virtual lessons may wish to complete this activity as well.**

Materials

Onsite & Guided virtual: Worksheet Page 1 [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Online version: [Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet Page 1 [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Begin by sharing with the class you will be learning about Jewish communities, the Holocaust, and a concentration camp called Auschwitz, with the guidance of the exhibition *Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away*. Introduce students to the [Virtual Exhibition Experience](#). Show them how to navigate to the Elementary branch and then to the Lesson Introduction and Reflection exercise.

Students will learn a breathing exercise in the Reflection Space, a forest filled with nature sounds. Make sure they know that if they ever need time to process what they're learning, they can return to the Reflection space.

Navigate through the ROM Land Acknowledgement and the statement by ROM Educators about why we learn this history, even though it can be difficult to learn.

Knowledge Review

Decide if you will have students complete this exercise on their own, in small groups (recommended), or as a full class. Using the **first two columns** of the KWL chart on page 1 of the Learning From Objects and Photos worksheet, have students figure out:

1. What do they know about Jewish communities and life before, during, and after World War II?
2. What do they know about the Holocaust and camps like Auschwitz?
3. What do they want to know about Jewish communities and life before, during, and after World War II?
4. What do they want to know about the Holocaust and camps like Auschwitz?

After 5-10 minutes, re-gather the class if you have been working in small groups or independently and ask for each group to briefly share their answers.

Inform students that they will have the opportunity to re-visit this chart and complete the third column after your visit is complete. This applies to classes doing the onsite, guided virtual, and self-guided virtual exhibition experiences.

Activity 1: Learning from Objects

In this lesson, students will be introduced to how museums observe objects and interpret details on them that tell stories about people and events in the time and place the object is from. They will make detailed observations of a kiddush cup, and begin to learn about making **inferences** about their **observations**. These observe/infer skills will continue throughout the activities.

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet Page 2 [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Begin by guiding students to Activity 1 in the Virtual Exhibition. Explain that you're going to be learning some important skills that museum curators and educators use to learn how objects can tell stories. Introduce the worksheet, and how students will be using it to collect their observations.

Cup Observation

Navigate to the first scene of the cup. Show students how they can click on the magnifying glass and 3D model icons to look closer at features of the objects we'll be studying. Encourage students to write down their observations – ONLY what they can see. Think about shape, colour, details.

Observation discussion with ROM Educator

Navigate to the video discussion (choose EN or FR, depending on the main language your class is using for the experience) and learn from the ROM educator about some observations they hope students noticed about the cup.

Making Inferences Based on Observations

Navigate to the next section and discuss with students the differences between observations and inferences. An inference is an educated guess you make from clues you observe. Students will then navigate to the same cup again, but this time use their sheet to make educated guesses, or inferences, based on the cup. Some question prompts listed in the activity and on the sheet are:

- How might the item have been used?
- Do you think this is new, or did this person have it a long time? What clues tell you that?
- Based on what it is made of, do you think it is affordable or expensive? What clues tell you that?
- When might the cup have been used? Are there specific scenarios it would have been used in?
- Does it remind you of an object you have seen before?

Inferences Review with ROM Educator

Once the class has made their inferences, navigate to the next scene and watch the video of the ROM educator discussing what inferences students might have made of the cup, and what the cup actually is.

The following section will summarize the information we know about the cup.

Big Questions

The final section of this activity, and final question on the worksheet, introduces students to the idea that they may still have questions that aren't answered right away in the lessons, and encourages them to keep track of any questions they still have.

Activity 2: Learning from Photos: Pre-war Jewish Communities

In this lesson, students will continue to build their observation and inference skills based on photos related to daily life in Jewish communities throughout Europe before World War II.

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet Page 3 [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Ensure that students have found their way to Activity 2 in the Virtual lesson. Explain that you're going to be continuing to work on their observation and inference skills using photos of real people who lived in Jewish communities in Europe before or around the time of World War II.

Photo Observation

Navigate to the scene of the four photos labelled "Pre-war Jewish Life." Students can use the magnifying glass to look more closely at each photo. Have students fill their **observations** in the first column on page 3 of the worksheet, and their **inferences** in the second column. You may need to review the difference between observing the facts and deducing what those facts tell you. You might want to practice on the first photo together, and then let students work independently or in small groups on the rest.

Discussion with ROM Educator & Photo Review

Navigate to the video discussion (choose EN or FR, depending on the main language your class is using for the experience) and learn from the ROM educator about each of the photos. In the following section, they can view the photos again with completed interactive labels about each photo. Students can self-assess how close their inferences are, and add more to their table if they wish.

Concluding Thoughts

After finishing with their table, students can navigate to the final section of this activity, and watch the video in which the ROM educator makes connections between historic photos and life today, and emphasizes the diversity of Jewish communities in Europe leading up to World War II.

Activity 3: Learning from Photos: Government Laws and Policies

In this lesson, students use their observation and inference skills to build an understanding of conditions in and around Germany in the interval leading up to World War II. They will also begin to understand how Governments, and their laws and policies, affect the daily lives of the people they govern.

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet Page 4 [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Navigate with students to the start of activity three, and have students brainstorm ideas about how the government affects daily lives, and how it affects peoples' experiences. This can be done individually, as a group, or as a class discussion. Have students spend 5-10 minutes on this brainstorm, and use the first question on page 4 of the worksheet to collect their ideas, or key ideas from a class discussion.

Historical Context in Germany

Navigate to the scene of the three photos labelled "Laws and Policies." For the first part of this activity, students will use the table on page 4 to record their observations and make inferences. Remind students they can use the magnifying glass to look closer at each image.

Historical Photos Explained

Navigate to the video discussion (choose EN or FR, depending on the main language your class is using for the experience) and learn from the ROM educator about each of the photos. In the following section, they can view the photos again with completed interactive labels about each photo. Students can self-assess how close their inferences are, and add more to their table if they wish.

Historical Context: Hitler and the Nazis

In the next scenes of the activity, students will have the opportunity to learn from video and guided Thinglink scenes about the Nazis' rise to power. Please note that the Kristallnacht scene is a **guided scene** – students will need to read each point on the scene to unlock the next one and progress through the lesson.

Unrest Grows

In this section of the activity, students will make observations of some photos from Kristallnacht. They will use the table on page 5 of the activity to record their observations, and make inferences about how the events shown in the photos would affect Jewish people and/or communities. You can decide if you wish students to do this activity individually, in small groups, or as a class.

Historical Photos Explained

Navigate to the video discussion (choose EN or FR, depending on the main language your class is using for the experience) and learn from the ROM educator about each of the photos. In the following section, students can view the photos again with completed interactive labels about each photo. Students can self-assess how close their inferences are, and add more to their table if they wish.

Effects on communities

This section is similar to the others in that it prompts students to make observation of historical photos, and make inferences about how the events in the photos would affect the people in the photos. However, the table on page 6 of the worksheet now has an additional column, to allow students to make more formal notes on what they learn from the educators and slides outside of their observations and inferences. After working through the observation and knowledge review sections, encourage students to reflect on what they learned, how it aligned or differed from their inferences, and what surprised them in the final question on page 6.

Historical Context: War Begins

This video with the ROM Educator leads students into the fourth activity by discussing how World War II began, and providing an overview of the massive scale of loss during the war due to battle, concentration camps, and the Holocaust.

Activity 4: Object Exploration Lab: Jewish Communities in Canada

In this lesson, students travel to one of the learning labs at ROM to get up close with objects in the museum's teaching collections, putting their observation and inference skills to the test, and learning more about the diversity of Jewish lives, cultures, and practices throughout history and into the modern day.

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Navigate with students to the start of activity four, and inform them that they're going to be using the observation and inference skills to investigate real objects that belonged to Jewish people and communities. There will be several objects to choose from; they will choose a total of three that they are most curious about, and use the Object Exploration Lab worksheet to organize their learning.

Object Exploration

As before, students will use the magnifying glass and 3D model icons to look closely at three of the objects in the lab. Students should choose objects that interest them. They will use the table on page 1 of the worksheet to record the facts they can see (observations) and what they think the object tells them about life for Jewish communities in Canada.

Objects Explained

In the following section, students can return to the lab to investigate their three objects of choice. This time, the magnifying glass will have a complete label, including the name of the object, and videos in English and French telling them more about the object. On page 2 of their worksheets, students will record what they learned, and compare that to their inferences. Be sure that students record the actual name of the object in the first column of page 2.

Optional Activity: *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.* Virtual Exhibition

At this juncture, students can continue on to Activity 5, or spend time in the virtual re-creation of the *Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not far away.* exhibition.

The Ontario Elementary Curriculum Leads recommended that this virtual exhibition not be part of the default elementary experience due to the weight of the content and the uncensored imagery within. However, it is also acknowledged that some teachers may still wish to explore the exhibition with your class.

To that end, we have included the optional branch of the Virtual Exhibition that can be accessed with the password **ROMschools2025**. We highly recommend that you view the exhibition first to decide whether or not you are ready to guide your class through it.

Alternatively, **if you feel the exhibition is not suitable for your students, you can progress directly to Activity 5.**

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Navigate with students to the start of the virtual exhibition with your students and provide them with the password **ROMschools2025**. Inform them that between each scene, they will have a chance to decide if they wish to progress to the next scene, skip over it, or spend some time in the Reflection Space.

No worksheet exists for this section of the Virtual Exhibition Experience, but you may wish to have students make some notes in the “what did you learn about...?” column of the chart on Page 1 of the Learning from Objects of Photos worksheet.

Activity 5: Resistance & Reflection

In this lesson, students have a chance to focus in on reasons for hope, learning more about acts of resistance on large and small scales that allowed people to fight back against tyranny and oppression.

Materials

[Virtual Exhibition](#) (or standalone lesson), Worksheet [[Google](#)] [PDF]

Lesson Introduction

Navigate with students to the beginning of Activity 5 and explain that in this last lesson in our learning exploration based on *Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away.*, we will be exploring stories of humanity and hope.

What does resistance look like?

Individually, in small groups, or as a whole class, have students brainstorm examples in response to the question, “What do you think acts of resistance could look like?” Have them record their ideas in the first section of the first page of the Resistance and Reflection worksheet.

Resistance could also look like...

Navigate to the next page to examine three photos showing real examples of resistance during the Holocaust. Then, navigate to the next video page, Acts of Resistance, to learn even more about them. Once you have reviewed the photos and the video, have students continue their brainstorm in the section titled “Resistance could also look like” on their worksheet.

Returning to Objects

In the next section, students will do one final object observation that mirrors their first activity they did with the kiddush cup. In this section, students will first examine two rings that appear in the exhibition, and fill in the **first two** columns on page 2 of the worksheet. Once their observations and inferences are done, they can proceed to learn more about the story of these rings, and fill in the **third** column of the worksheet. Finally, they can fill in the question at the bottom of the chart, What is the story these objects tell, and how is it a story of resistance?

Survivor stories

For the final part of this activity, students will listen to stories from survivors, and then answer the final question on their worksheet, **Why is it important to learn about Auschwitz and the Holocaust.** You may wish to facilitate a class discussion around this question. Once you are done, students can progress to hear one final story about the importance of empathy and solidarity.

Additional Resources

This section provides information on some of the additional education resources for teaching about the Holocaust. These resources have been developed by Holocaust educators and engage different strategies for teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Some of the resources listed here use historical primary sources as part of their education programming for students, while others use personal narratives.

Toronto Holocaust Museum

Learning Platform

Designed to support educators learning and teaching about the Holocaust, deepen your knowledge about essential topics and access classroom-ready materials and sample lesson plans on The Learning Platform for Holocaust Education and Antisemitism. Learn about teaching approaches and explore new Canadian resources through modules exploring a key topic, teaching approach, or new resource. Whether you are an experienced Holocaust educator looking for new lesson ideas or a teacher new to Holocaust education, we have resources to support you.

To access the Learning Platform, please visit this [link](#).

Brady Resource Kit

The Brady Resource Kit is an innovative interactive learning tool that incorporates Holocaust survivor George Brady's narrative with artefact exploration from his family's remarkable collection. This Heritage Toronto Award-nominated experience was initially developed as a physical in-classroom experience and is now available through an online platform. The Brady Resource Kit encourages dialogue about and exploration of the Holocaust and its relevance to contemporary issues.

To access the site, including education resources and teachers' guide, please visit this [link](#).

In Their Own Words

In Their Own Words is a collection of oral history excerpts collected from Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Canada after the Second World War. These recordings are often referred to as "testimonies" because they focus on the experiences of the person during the Holocaust.

The excerpts featured in this online collection have been curated from over 1,200 testimonies in the Canadian Collection which can be accessed at the Toronto Holocaust Museum. On average complete recordings may range from 90-120 minutes in length. The excerpts shown here average less than 10 minutes in length. Some of these testimonies were recorded in the mid-1980s while others are more recent additions. They provide us with important personal accounts of what it was like to live through the Holocaust.

To access the site, including education resources and teachers' guide, please visit this [link](#).

Portraits in Courage

The *Portraits in Courage* microsite uses primary source documents, archival images, and oral testimony excerpts to explore the experiences and fates of four individuals during the Holocaust. You'll discover their unique stories and the connections between each of these four individuals.

To access the site, including education resources and teachers' guide, please visit this [link](#).

In Search of Better Days–Holocaust Survivors and Canada

The *In Search of Better Days* microsite educational kit includes tools and resources for both teachers and students. The website and accompanying activities have been designed to encourage students to analyze different types of primary sources, allowing them to develop and improve their analytical, interpretive, and critical thinking skills.

To access the site, including education resources and teachers' guide, please visit this [link](#).

Hatepedia

Hatepedia is an online database and resource centre developed by the Toronto Holocaust Museum's Online Hate Research and Education Project, built with original research to provide educators, parents, lawmakers, and researchers with tools to identify and counter the proliferation of online hate.

To access Hatepedia, please visit this [link](#).

Virtual Museum Experience for Middle School Students

Through the Toronto Holocaust Museum's Virtual Museum, we can bring the experience of learning in the Museum directly to your classroom.

Our Virtual Museum experiences explore the Holocaust through the lens of Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Canada after the Second World War and through Canadian history, connecting directly to the learning strands in the Grade 6 social studies curriculum. A teacher resource accompanies the virtual museum experiences.

While this resource is designed for grade 6, it is entirely age appropriate for high school students.

To access the experience, please visit this [link](#).

Childhood Interrupted

Students engage through multimedia immersion in the story of a young German Jewish girl, Yael Spier Cohen, who experienced the Holocaust and later shared her story as a Holocaust survivor in Canada. Hear rich testimony from Yael and view primary source documents that inspire critical thinking.

While this resource is designed for grade 6, it is entirely age appropriate for high school students.

To access the experience, please visit this [link](#).

Azrieli Foundation

The Human Experience of Auschwitz

The Human Experience of Auschwitz is an inquiry-based activity that uses survivor testimony to encourage students to gather knowledge. Students answer guided research questions that span the range of shared experiences at the Auschwitz concentration camp complex: deportation, arrival and selection, daily life, resistance, and death marches.

During this activity, students will:

- Read USHMM's Auschwitz article on their online Holocaust Encyclopedia.
- Complete a collaborative research task.
- Explore the Auschwitz special collection on Re:Collection.
- Learn from a variety of first-hand accounts.

Learning objectives include:

- Gain knowledge of and reflect on the experiences of prisoners at Auschwitz.
- Build historical empathy skills by engaging with multiple survivor testimonies.
- Develop media literacy skills by researching a survivor's story on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Please consult the Auschwitz Activity Instructions to see more (link at the bottom of this page):

<https://memoirs.azrielifoundation.org/education/programs/the-human-experience-of-auschwitz/>.

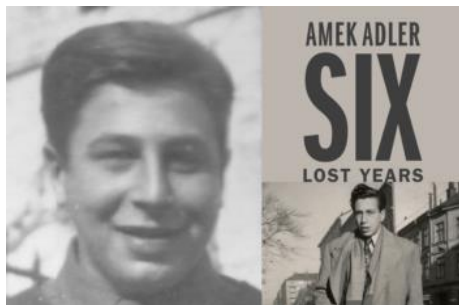
Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program

The Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program was established by the Azrieli Foundation in 2005 to collect, preserve and share the memoirs and diaries written by survivors of the Holocaust who came to Canada.

Please consult the Educators' Catalogue to read more about survivor memoirs and for other education resources from the Azrieli Foundation:

<https://memoirs.azrielifoundation.org/uploads/education/AZRIELI-Educators'-Catalogue-2025-Eng-WEB-26082024.pdf>

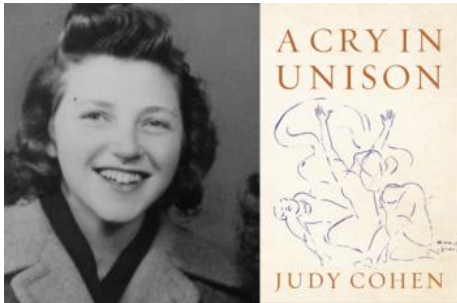
Listed below are a variety of suggested memoirs written by Auschwitz survivors.



Six Lost Years | Amek Adler

- Deported from Radom to Auschwitz in July 1944

- Not registered into Auschwitz; sent on to Vaihingen, a subcamp of Natzweiler
- Discusses return to Auschwitz with Jewish students on March of the Living programs
- [Read more](#)



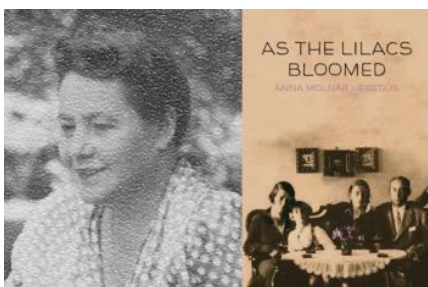
A Cry in Unison | Judy Cohen

- Deported from Debrecen ghetto to Auschwitz in June 1944
- Describes life in women’s barracks BIII (“Mexico”)
- Initially with her three sisters, then, alone, joins two sisters to survive: “sistering”
- Deportation to Bergen-Belsen and Aschersleben forced labour camp
- Focus on gendered experiences and spiritual resistance
- [Read more](#)



Spring’s End | John Freund

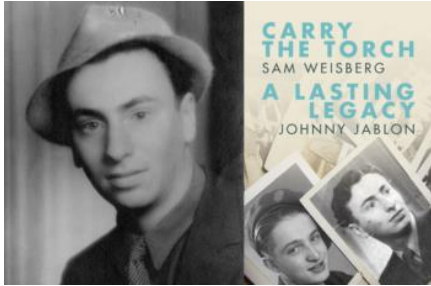
- Deported from Terezín/ Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in November 1943
- Describes the brutality of the arrival and selection process
- Details conditions in Czech Family Camp at Auschwitz for six months, then Men’s Camp until evacuation
- [Read more](#)



As the Lilacs Bloomed | Anna Molnár Hegedűs

- Deported from Szatmár to Auschwitz in May 1944

- Written in 1945, first published in 1946 in Hungarian
- Detailed and nuanced literary style written from the perspective of a wife and mother
- Focus on gender, camp hierarchy and mother-daughter relationships
- [Read more](#)



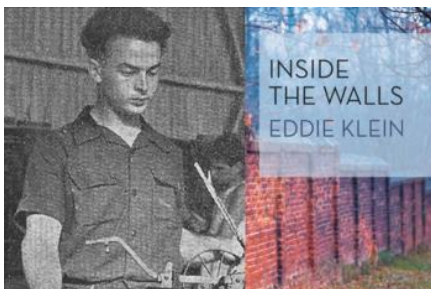
A Lasting Legacy | Johnny Jablon

- Deported from Plaszow to Auschwitz in February 1944
- Death march from Auschwitz to Nazi camps in Austria
- Survival attributed to Polish linguistic ability, luck, and friendship
- [Read more](#)



We Sang in Hushed Voices | Helena Jockel

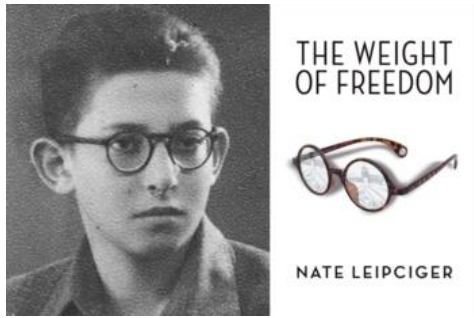
- Deported from Użhorod (Ungvár) ghetto to Auschwitz in spring 1944
- Death march from Auschwitz to Leipzig and Dresden, Germany
- Focus on women supporting one another and spiritual resilience
- [Read more](#)



Inside the Walls | Eddie Klein

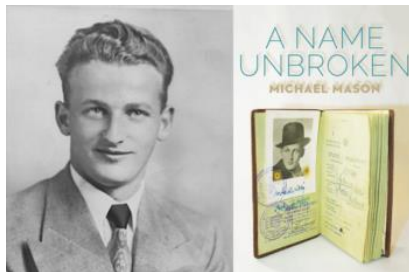
- Deported from Lodz ghetto to Auschwitz in August 1944
- Kitchen worker and messenger for SS
- Sent to Sosnowitz subcamp at end of 1944; rapport with German functionaries
- Unique perspective from a place of relative protection

- [Read more](#)



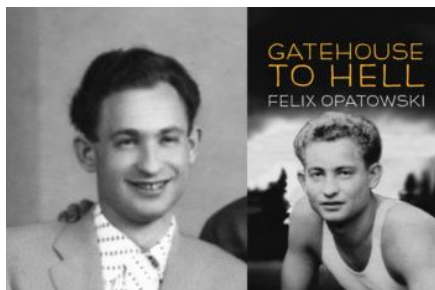
The Weight of Freedom | Nate Leipziger

- Deported from Sosnowiec ghetto to Auschwitz in August 1943
- Describes brutality and constant, ever-present threat of death
- Survives with his father and expresses their changing relationship
- Deported to various concentration camps; writes of his vulnerability as a *pipel*
- [Read more](#)



A Name Unbroken | Michael Mason

- Deported from Monor to Auschwitz in July 1944
- Poignantly details the shock of the arrival and selection process
- Recalls liquidation of the “Gypsy Camp”
- Discusses learning about gas chambers and crematoria and witnessing suicides
- [Read more](#)



Gatehouse to Hell | Felix Opatowski

- Deported from a labour camp near Lodz to Auschwitz in August 1943
- Detailed stories of fellow prisoners, kapos and commandants
- Messenger role from Buna to Auschwitz; implicated in Sonderkommando uprising
- Friendship, trading, smuggling, connections with Polish underground

- [Read more](#)



Bits and Pieces | Henia Reinhartz

- Deported from Lodz ghetto to Auschwitz in August 1944
- Unique literary style of describing experiences in short vignettes, as if glimpses of fuller memories
- Deported from Auschwitz to Sasel, Germany, in October 1944
- Focus on the importance of being with her mother and sister
- [Read more](#)



Dignity Endures | Judith Rubinstein

- Deported from Miskolc ghetto to Auschwitz in June 1944
- Attributes survival to her mother's sacrifice
- Observes the *Sonderkommando* rising from the unique perspective of a kommando who cleaned the watchtowers
- [Read more](#)



The Last Time | Eva Shainblum

- Deported from Nagyvárád ghetto to Auschwitz in late May 1944
- Reliance on older sister for support
- Succinct account; deported to forced labour camp in October 1944
- [Read more](#)



My Heart Is at Ease | Gerta Solan

- Deported from Terezín/ Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in October 1944
- Survival with no family, in children's block
- Snapshots of memories
- [Read more](#)



In Fragile Moments | Zsuzsanna Fischer Spiro

- Deported from Kisvárdá ghetto to Auschwitz in late May 1944
- Reliance on older sister for support
- Includes postwar diary entries describing a death march, written in Leipzig, Germany, in 1945
- [Read more](#)