

Heart to Heart: Adolescents Connect to Holocaust Survivors

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Overview

In this unit, students will analyze video testimony of three Holocaust survivors, all of whom recount their experiences as children during this period. The focus on children is intended to help my students make connections to survivors who experienced trauma and catastrophic loss during their youths. Students will watch video testimonies and then work from transcripts designed to guide them through a close reading of the survivor testimonies. Using the video transcripts as their source materials, students will create poems and write letters. Discussions will focus on making personal connections to the experiences of the survivors and to an understanding of the mechanics of genocide.

This unit was designed for students in Grade 8. It could be used with older students. This material may be too disturbing for use with younger children.

This unit is suitable for language arts and social studies curricula.

Rationale

In the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), the drama *The Diary of Anne Frank* is included in the curriculum. This dramatic version of Anne Frank's story appeals to my eighth grade students. Each September, my students ask when we will get to Anne's story, having heard good word of mouth commentary from the previous year's class. My inner-city eighth graders identify with Anne's impatience with the adults in her life and with the conflicts that are exacerbated by the historical situation of the family. My students struggle with their own issues of power and basic human dignity on a variety of levels, and Anne Frank's story helps them place their own lives and family histories into a larger context.

The activities that are included in this unit extend the SDP mandated unit. (There is a plethora of fine curriculum resources available for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, among which is the material available in the Holt *Elements of Literature* workbook. Holt's format guided me in the development of the transcripts of the video testimonies in this unit.)

With the adoption of the Core Curriculum has come a new emphasis on broadening the concept of literacy reflect the changes in how information is communicated in our increasingly digital world. The video testimonies and transcripts in this unit enhance traditional, written literacy as well as visual literacy.

I was introduced to the materials in this unit through the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia seminar, *Teaching the Holocaust: Bearing Witness*. As part of this seminar, I was introduced to two invaluable resources for teaching the Holocaust and other genocides: *Facing History* and *Echoes and Reflections*. Both of these programs are available online and provide a range of materials and topics that are thoughtfully designed and easily accessed.

I chose to extend the curriculum I use in teaching *The Diary of Anne Frank* because, while meeting traditional academic requirements, the topic is engaging to my students on a personal level. Teaching in an urban school district, I find that my students are likely to bring up slavery in America. They frequently argue that they themselves would never have tolerated the treatment meted out to their African-American forbears. I have found that examining issues of disenfranchisement and genocide through the lens of the Holocaust can help some of my students switch from exasperation with what they see as their own ancestors' acquiescence to the system of slavery to a more nuanced understanding of how political power and denial of human rights create a no-win situation for those who are trapped in these systems.

In the seminar, *Teaching the Holocaust: Bearing Witness*, I was introduced to video testimonies of Holocaust survivors. I was overwhelmed and riveted by these testimonies and recognized that my students would make strong emotional connections to this material. As we discussed pedagogical issues relating to the presentation of this material, I became more selective about the images I presented to my students, shying away from the fairly graphic photographs of starving inmates and piles of dead bodies that I used to show, largely in an attempt to preempt questions about the reality of the Holocaust as a historical fact. In one of our seminar discussions, our seminar leader, Al Filreis, commented in passing that he found a particular depiction of the Holocaust "pornographic," and this idea struck an uncomfortable chord in me. Selecting material for its appropriateness is a judgment call, and in earlier instruction of this topic, I now find myself wishing I had been more judicious and less shocking in some of the images I used.

With these considerations in mind, I chose to use excerpts of video testimony in which some of the more unsavory instances of inhumanity are not present (violent treatment of infants, for example.) The video testimonies in this unit tell the stories of children who were caught up in a system in which they had no power and little support, but who managed to survive and to live meaningful lives in spite of their horror of their experiences during the Holocaust. Their stories point to a way that we can all honor the traumas of our pasts by placing them in a context that honors our very human struggle to overcome whatever shame or degradation has affected us.

Objectives

This unit will incorporate standards for reading, viewing, writing, discussing, and listening. Students will be able to produce a body of written work that reflects both a historical understanding and creative response to the materials in the unit. Students will be expected to listen actively, to read and think critically, to discuss their interpretations of events with their peers, and to create their own literature which reflects the themes in this use with which they have made the most significant personal connections.

Standards

PENNSYLVANIA COMMON CORE STANDARDS

English Language Arts Grade 6 - 12

1.2 Reading Informational Text

Students read, understand, and respond to informational text – with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

1.2.8.B

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

1.2.8.C

Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events.

1.2.8.F

Analyze the influence of the words and phrases in a text including figurative and connotative, and technical meanings; and how they shape meaning and tone.

1.2.8.F

Analyze the influence of the words and phrases in a text including figurative and connotative, and technical meanings; and how they shape meaning and tone.
Evaluate authors' arguments, reasoning, and specific claims for the soundness of the

arguments and the relevance of the evidence.

1.2.8.L

Read and comprehend literary non-fiction and informational text on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

1.4 Writing

Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content. 1.4.8.F

1.4.8.M

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

1.4.8.N

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters.

1.4.8.O

Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection, and pacing, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

1.4.8.S

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade level reading standards for literature and literary non-fiction.

1.4.8.T

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Strategies

Students will begin by writing a Bio Poem about themselves. They will return to this Bio Poem towards the end of this unit. My hope is that their work will prompt them to revise their original Bio Poems to show a deeper level of self-reflection after they have grappled with the issues raised in the video testimonies.

Following this, students will watch a series of three short video testimonies. The first of these is the testimony of Menachem S (HVT-8063), who describes his escape from a concentration camp at the age of 5 and his ultimate (and traumatizing) reunion with his parents after the war. The second video testimony is that of Aniko Friedberg. The portion of this testimony that students will watch is about her experience as a teenager at

Auschwitz, which she survived with the support of her friends at the camp. The third video is that of Nechama Shneerson, who survived a labor camp and death march as a young teenager.

After students watch each of the video segments, they will work with a partner or small group, re-watching the videos and completing a transcript which has been annotated with a series of questions to guide a close reading of the text.

After the students have completed all three video testimonies and their accompanying transcripts, they will choose one survivor to focus on. For this survivor, the students will use the transcript to create a found poem. (An explanation of *found poem* and a sample has been attached.) They will share these with their partners/small groups.

After students have finished their found poems, they will write a parallel poem about themselves. (An explanation of *parallel poem* and a sample has been attached.)

As the final activity, students will return to the Bio Poems they wrote about themselves at the start of the unit. They will revise these poems with the goal of revealing some connections with the video testimony of their chosen survivor.

Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Bio Poem

Students will write a Bio Poem about themselves. There are many Bio Poem formats available online. I made up the following Bio Poem, choosing sentence starters that would encourage my students to think about themselves as deeply as they dared. (See appendix for sample.)

Activity 2: Video Testimony of Menachem S.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdBqOibdIfU

Students will watch this short video testimonies, following which they will engage in a re-examination of this material, using a transcription of the video and responding to a series of questions that will encourage a deeper engagement with the spoken and written versions of the testimony. (Transcribed testimony follows the list of classroom activities in the appendix.)

Activity 3: Video Testimony of Aniko Friedberg

www.youtube.com/watch?v=95lxT90PsKI

Students will watch this short video testimonies, following which they will engage in a re-examination of this material, using a transcription of the video and responding to a series of questions that will encourage a deeper engagement with the spoken and written

versions of the testimony. (Transcribed testimony follows the list of classroom activities in the appendix.)

Activity 4: Video Testimony of Nechama Shneerson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV-HZE28BHs>

Students will watch this short video testimonies, following which they will engage in a re-examination of this material, using a transcription of the video and responding to a series of questions that will encourage a deeper engagement with the spoken and written versions of the testimony. (Transcribed testimony follows the list of classroom activities in the appendix.)

Activity 5: Found Poetry

Students are to take a transcribed section of a survivor's Video Testimony and use the survivor's words to create a poem of their own.

They will manipulate the text to create a poem that expresses a theme consonant with the video testimony. Students may cut out or keyboard appropriate words, phrases, and sentences. They may space their printed material in any way that represents the experience of the survivor's testimony for themselves.

There should be a thematic unity of some kind in their finished pieces, and students should be expected to share and to be able to discuss some of the decisions that they consciously made as they chose and rejected particular lines.

(See appendix for sample.)

Activity 6: Parallel Poems

Students can follow up on their found poems by creating Parallel Poems (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/found-poems-parallel-poems>). For these poems, students use their found poem as a template for a parallel poem that reflects an experience of their own. Students' parallel poems will use the same basic structure line by line, but with a change of topic and a resultant readjustment of the vocabulary of the found poem. Again, there should be a thematic unity of some kind in their finished parallel pieces. (See appendix for sample.)

Activity 7: Survivor Bio Poem

Students will write a Bio Poem about one of the survivors portrayed in the video testimonies.

Activity 8: Revised Student Bio Poem

Students will return to their original Bio Poems after working on the survivor testimonies and edit these Bio Poems to include themes they have seen reflected in the survivor testimonies. Students will be able to discuss how their Bio Poems have changed after they wrote Bio Poems of their chosen survivor. Students will present their Bio Poems and will create a display of their work.

Bibliography

Friedberg, Aniko. [videorecording.] Interview by Tino Tito. "Survivors of the Shoah." YouTube. USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 1995. Web. www.youtube.com/watch?v=95lxT9OPsKI. May 1, 2014.

Aniko Friedberg survived labor camp and a forced march as a teenager. She relied heavily on friends within the labor camp, to whom she attributes her survival. Friedberg went on to pursue an international postwar reputation as a sculptor.

Menachem S (HVT-8063). [videorecording.] "Menachem S. Edited Testimony (HVT-8063)." YouTube. *Fortunoff Video Archive for Video Testimony, Yale University*, 1988. Web. May 1, 2014. www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbBqOibdIfU

Menachem S, through the contrivance of his parents, escaped the Plaszow concentration camp at age 5 and spent the war years hiding from the Nazis. He carried his mother's high school ID card with him through these years. Reunion with his parents after the war was traumatic. Neither of the shrunken figures in their striped prison clothing was recognizable to Menachem. He repressed his memories for decades until he began an examination of how his experiences as a victim of Nazism might affect his children, and through them, future generations.

Nechama Shneerson. [videorecording.] Interview by Charlotte Redinger. "Holocaust Survivor Nechama Shneerson Testimony Segment." YouTube. USC Shoah Foundation Institute, University of Southern California 1995. Web. May 1, 2014. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV-HZE28BHs>

Nechama Shneerson was the 12-year-old daughter of a Lithuanian butcher. Her family was rounded up by the invading Germans in 1941. After nearly three years in a ghetto, the family was sent to Auschwitz, where most were immediately murdered. Shneerson was sent to the Stutthof concentration camp, survived the war, and was ultimately reunited with a sister.

Nechama Shneerson: Shneerson Biography pdf @<https://sfi.usc.edu>.
©2009 USC Shoah Foundation Institute, University of Southern California

This is a one-page biographical summary of Nechama Shneerson's survival of a labor camp and forced march during her young teenaged years.

Wartime Witness: Aniko Friedberg. Facebook. 2011. Web.

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/Permalink.php?story_fbid=10151007948635245&id=209453710244)

Permalink.php?story_fbid=10151007948635245&id=209453710244.

May 1, 2014.

Obituary of Aniko Friedberg.

Teacher Resources

Echoes and Reflection: A Multimedia Curriculum On The Holocaust

www.echoesandreflections.org

@2005 Anti-Defamation League, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Yad Vashem

Reprinted in the United States of America 2012

Echoes and Reflection is an invaluable resource for teachers. Its historical presentation of the Holocaust used to promote an understanding the how desperate is the need to protect civil and human rights for all people and to see how these rights are denied through bigotry and false blame. Lessons include Jewish resistance, rescuers, liberators, survivors, Non-Jewish resisters, perpetrators, bystanders, and children. Excellent video testimony accompanies the text, and lessons are appropriate for advanced middle schoolers and high school students. NB: The presenter of this material wisely warned us to focus on making connections between genocides, as opposed to comparisons. It is not helpful to have students sidetracked by a discussion of whether the Final Solution was better or worse than, for example, American slavery.

Facing History and Ourselves. <https://www.facinghistory.org/> This is a website designed to support educate students (and teachers) about the Holocaust and other genocides, such as Rwanda. Materials include text, video, and audio. Support for teachers includes the descriptions of numerous activities whose purpose is to engage students in critical thought, discussion, and action.

Appendix

Bio Poem Rough Draft

Name _____

Choose at least 15 sentence starters and think about how they apply to you. When you have thoughtfully completed your rough draft, make a good copy. Decorate your copy to reflect the spirit of this poem about yourself.

I am _____ (your name)

1. _____ (3 descriptive words that express your inner self)
2. I enjoy _____
3. I hope _____
4. I worry about _____
5. I dream about _____
6. I wonder if _____
7. I believe _____
8. I respect _____
9. I support _____
10. I defend _____
11. I daydream about _____
12. I argue _____
13. I trust _____
14. I love _____
15. I plan _____
16. I fear _____
17. I face _____
18. I always _____
19. I understand _____
20. I pray _____
21. I say _____
22. I choose _____
23. I am confused by _____

Found Poem: *Walking in the Rain without Getting Wet*
(Based on the Holocaust Survivor Testimony of Menachem S.)

You shouldn't be talking about it.
Father
upset.
Mother
cry.
I'll get my nightmares.
So let's
pretend
it's never been.
It never happened to me.
Calm.
Very, very calm.
I walked in the rain without getting wet.
Matter of fact,
When I was safe again...
I
dis
in
te
g-r-a-t-e-d
Trying to
convince
myself
It never happened.

Parallel Poem: *Walking in the Rain without Getting Wet*

I shouldn't be thinking about it.
Father will get...
angry.
Mother will...
Scold.
I'll get my comeuppance.
So let's
agree
it's wrong for me.
It should never be considered.
Blank.
Completely unaware.
I choose to be accepted without giving thought.
Matter of fact,
When I was older though...
I
dis
in
te
g-r-a-t-e-d
Trying to
convince
myself
I was someone else.

Bio Poem Rough Draft

Name _____

Choose at least 15 sentence starters and think about how they apply to your survivor.
When you have thoughtfully completed your rough draft, make a good copy. Decorate
your copy to reflect the spirit of this poem about your survivor.

_____ (Survivor's name)

1. _____ (3 descriptive words that express your inner self)
2. S/he enjoys _____
3. S/he hopes _____
4. S/he worries about _____
5. S/he dreams about _____
6. S/he wonders if _____
7. S/he believes _____
8. S/he respects _____
9. S/he supports _____
10. S/he defends _____
11. S/he daydreams about _____
12. S/he argues _____
13. S/he trusts _____
14. S/he loves _____
15. S/he plans _____
16. S/he fears _____
17. S/he faces _____
18. S/he always _____
19. S/he understands _____
20. S/he prays _____
21. S/he says _____
22. S/he chooses _____
23. S/he is confused by _____
24. S/he remembers _____

Transcript 2

Video transcript of Menachem S. Edited Testimony HVT-8063)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbBqOibdIfU

(0:00 to 1:38

There is a whole process of denial and repression.

And I think that what's really significant is that for many years now, people were trying to deny that it ever happened.

That it ever happened to them.

Or if it did happen, that it affected them in any particular way.

So that it's better forget about about it.

You shouldn't be talking about it because Father will get upset. I'll get my nightmares. Mother will cry.

So let's pretend it's never been. It's never happened.

Personally speaking, I was unable to read any books, for instance, about the Holocaust until very recently...didn't read one word about the Holocaust. I was never able to watch any movies about the Holocaust, okay. I was pretending very hard that it never happened to me.

(Stop at 1:38 and move to 9:54)

Think of a topic you or your friends might avoid talking about because of the feelings that topic arouses.

Are there types of movies or tv shows you don't watch because they make you feel uncomfortable? How does this connect to Menachem's experience with avoiding the Holocaust as a topic?

(9:54 to 18:27)

Beginning of 1943 the ghetto was closed down and we were moved to concentration camp in Plaszow, which is nearby Krakow, a suburb of Krakow

This was a labor camp

You could take with yourself only what you could carry, so you didn't carry bed spreads or pillows or things like that

So my...once again this very vivid recollection is of my uncle negotiating ...talking to people ...Maybe someone has a pillow for the child and eventually he got hold of a pillow which was partially torn...I can see the down kind of breaking away, flying all around us. Was a pillow, was a luxury; was a great thing, so I had this pillow for...to put myself on. It was a great thing.

But I do have a very vivid memory of arriving there; okay, this once again is like looking at a picture and once again because this was in a total contrast It was not moving from a 6 bedroom apartment to a 2 bedroom or 1 bedroom apartment. It was like walking from two different planets

We were living...

You must have seen in various photograph is those ...

How you call them ?

Huts... what you call them?

Barracks ...platforms....maybe 20, 25 inches of head space, I should say body space...so you really had to crawl in...

They held a kind of family discussion of what to do and they decide I stand better chances in getting out and trying to be on my own.

What would you carry with you if you were in Menachem's position?

What do you think the pillow represented for the five-year-old Menachem?

How would you describe Menachem's uncle?

What concerns do you think the family discussed before coming to the decision that he would stand a better chance on his own (at age five).

There was a practical problem of how they were going to break the news to me. I overheard this whole discussion. It was going for a couple of nights, so I knew what's coming. So my reaction was very, very calm as a matter of fact.

This guy was supposed to start a diversion at the gate Pull the guard's attention away with a bottle of vodka, which he somehow got. And at that time they gave me the address and they decided... It was a pretty straight walk. So I was supposed to walk out. Once again we had this parting talk. They tied a scarf on me.

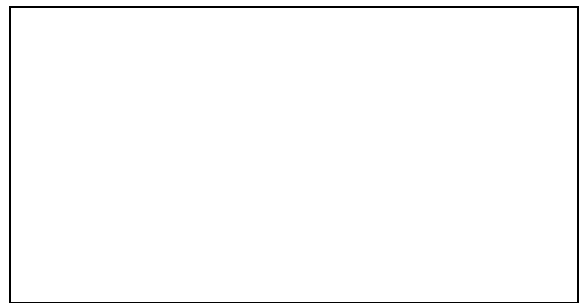
And my mother gave me... which, you know, speaking logically, it was a stupid thing to do...but to me it meant really everything... My mother gave me her student ID, high school ID with her picture in it. "You keep my picture so when we meet again..."

Well...They said to me that when the war was going to end...they made a promise the war is going to end. They were going to come for me...

And I realize now after many, many years...how much...what does it mean for me to promise something? When you promise something, no matter what happens, what catastrophes, what hardships you have to overcome...what does it mean to you? If you give your word, if you promise something, you have to do it...there is no way out.

Have you ever overheard a serious discussion about yourself? How did it make you feel? Did it affect you?

Draw a picture of the scene with the guard and the bottle of vodka.



What does the detail, "They tied a scarf on me" suggest? How does it connect to his mother's giving him her ID card?

Have you—or would you—ever make a promise in the way that Menachem defines the word? What might be some aspects of there being "no way out" of a promise? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

This is what I believed and this... it's fact...if they say they will come for me...they will...

This is something that kept me going.

I don't remember the war particularly. I remember the place that I got to, I didn't know at that point that it was a whorehouse...People who were living on the verge of society, who were kind of helpful to one another. And being Jewish meant automatically being included on the marginal side of society. I met some people around it, showing this address, and they told me this house on the left.

But I remember someone, a women...opening the door...only women. To me there were all dressed in white...everything in this house was white and only later I realized why? Because when I got in they gave me a glass of milk...and this milk kind of colored everything white.

I stayed there for about 3 months, and after three months it was folded down by the Germans who took the women to work for them in their army installations like they used to...and at that point I was ...I was left alone...to say left alone... it was not exactly true...because I wasn't alone...there were other children... orphans, displaced, roaming the streets, you ganged up with other kids, and you lived according to the laws of nature... no one was there to tell us it was improper to steal, that it was not becoming to beg...I was really lucky because I was blond, I was straw blond and so I didn't really resemble a Jew...

What words from a parent or loved one might keep you going in a challenging situation?

What does Menachem have in common with the women at the whorehouse?

Why do you think the glass of milk colored everything about the whorehouse white?

Describe what you think 24 hours in Menachem's life would have included.

(27:09)

Anyway I met with my parents in the summer of 1945.

It was a very traumatic meeting.

I had the picture of my mother, but of course, she did not resemble my mother at all.

They were still dressed in their prison camp clothes with those wide stripes... They were really emaciated and my father looked terrible. He was tortured... and he had all of his teeth hanging out, you know... It was, it was nothing that I had, I just couldn't believe that they were my parents, as a matter of fact.

I think that this was the hardest part of it all, to accept them again.

And this was something that on one hand, I wanted it so badly to happen, and then when I was confronted with those disfigured people... I just couldn't force myself to go and to make any contact with them.

I knew they were my parents, logically, but emotionally I didn't feel anything towards them and I used, for some period, to address them by calling them as mister and missus. I just couldn't bring myself to accept them.

And it took a while until I was able to accept them.

Something that kind of haunted me for many, many years.

And once I was safe again, I suppose, this is where I disintegrated. I developed fears. I couldn't sleep. I started having nightmares that were totally abstract but

What do you think Menachem was expecting the reunion with his parents to be like? Why do you think it was "traumatic"?

Can you think of ways that a long separation might affect the parent/child relationship?

How do you think Menachem's parents reacted to having their beloved son address them as Mister and Missus?

Did the reunion of the family solve Menachem's worries?

they were always repeating themselves with a kind of a three themes that always boiled down to a kind of a surrealistic, abstract representation of a feeling of helplessness...a conveyor belt on which I was moving towards a press that was rolling, roll press, and there was no power whatsoever to stop it; I couldn't move I was just rolling closer and closer.

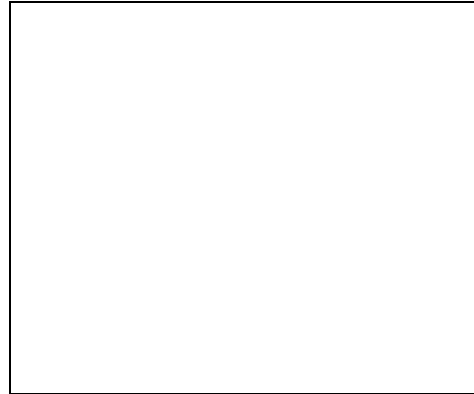
I would wake up totally disoriented, crying my head off, terrible screaming, all sweat and shaking. I couldn't...I could never go back to sleep. This went on for many years until at one time I stopped dreaming...I know that sounds weird because you never stop dreaming...but I somehow managed totally to repress all dreams...and I felt then free from dreaming...

When I was asked to participate in the program [Holocaust Video Testimony]my initial reaction was no, I was resolved I would not do it, from the fear of reviving the sense I was trying to repress.

I am scared everything will come back. Wife said, "34, 35 years after the war you're still anxious, and you never talked about it, it hasn't worked, maybe you should try talking about it." I started to see the logic... went to bed very early in the morning after talking...

Next night I had my nightmares again. Different. Again the conveyor belt, rolling presses. Helplessness. Terrible anxiety. And for the first time I have stopped the conveyor belt.

Draw a picture representing Menachem's dream.



What was Menachem's first solution to the problem of dreaming?

What did his refusal to dream represent?

What brings back Menachem's nightmare?

I woke up, I felt very anxious, turned into a wonderful sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, wasn't disoriented.

Somehow I was able to do it...had to do with the fact that I had opened up. It's been so long repressed. We have to come up and we have to talk about it. And therefore in this room...

Is it only for the sake of the other people?

I think that for me it served another purpose, a very personal one, trying to deal with my feelings.

As I said in the beginning, for the past 35 years, I've been trying to convince myself that it never happened. Maybe it happened, but I wasn't affected.

I walked in the rain without getting wet.

If we don't deal with our feelings, if we don't understand our experience, what are we doing to our children

How did the experience of telling his story affect Menachem?

What does it mean to "walk in the rain without getting wet"?

Can you think of a time when you have thought you were "walking in the rain without getting wet"?

**Transcript 2: 54:55 Aniko Friedberg
Video Testimony
www.youtube.com/watch?v=95lxT9OPsKI**

One day they put us in the cattle cars. Maybe this was logistics of this being in this brick factory that was next to the tracks, some kind of railroad tracks for shipping.

And I've heard, I've talked to other survivors and how similar our stories are, and how different our stories are, even the cattle cars. Cattle cars are not for human transportation as is, but is big difference if you are 40 or 80 or 120. We were 120 in the cattle car. Maybe because it was a last minute thing.

Like actually, I have to retrack, but I have to tell you. By New Years Eve of 1943-1944, my father was home, and my parents had a small New Years party, you know, nothing raucous, just a few friends together, and it was a warmish Christmas—New Year's night and they opened the window at midnight and they sang the Marseillaise, and they said it was just as a symbol of feeling that victory is at hand... We won the war.

This was after the Stalingrad battle, and everyday my father heard on the radio that the Americans are planning the landing. And "They'll be here any minute. They'll be here any minute." So we figured there was no question about the Germans having lost the war already, but still they can't stop, so that was the background.

What is the reason Aniko Friedberg thinks she was transported by cattle car?

Highlight the words that tell you survivors do not have identical stories to tell of their imprisonment.

Do you think Aniko travelled as she did because it "was a last minute thing"? Why or why not?

Highlight the events that led Aniko's family to feel confident they would be safe from the Nazis.

56:45

So everything happened so fast that the Hungarian Jews had to be liquidated at the speediest way. So we went into the cattle cars, and we got a little lucky because my mother had the baby. The cattle car has just one little opening on one side and they let us sit under that opening.

It turned out that this nice present from this German who threw this condensed food did the baby more harm than good because that was the only food we had somehow with us and we kept giving it to him and he had this terrible diahrea, dysentery in the cattle car and my mother at one point hung his little clothes on that window to dry and somebody pulled it down from outside so he didn't even have that, so that I remember was a terrible thing.

And we were in the cattle car extremely long. I just cannot tell you how long, like two weeks? And we didn't know where we were going and it was dark and of course there is no water and no hygiene, no nothing and actually that's when I learned that my young and beautiful little mother is what a strong person she is cause she really kept my spirits up.

She never complained, and said, "Don't worry. The war's almost over and these people, these are just not good people and they are ignorant people but whatever we'll go Germans are still civilized people. They are in a war. They are doing what they have to. You'll see. When we get there we'll probably have to work but we're strong and young and soon enough it will be over and

daddy will be at the gates waiting for us."

What makes you pick a particular place to sit on a bus or train.

Highlight the words that tell you how Aniko's family got "lucky" as they journeyed in the cattle cars.

Does the "luck" of the family change? How?

Why do you think Aniko can't say how long the trip was?

Highlight the words that tell you Aniko admired her mother.

How does Aniko's mother compared the soldiers on the train to the soldiers she expects to meet at their destination.

So you know, that's how it was.
And the reason we took such a long time to go...to go...we didn't know our destination...Through Czechoslovakia to go to Auschwitz, Poland, shouldn't have taken that long time... was that very many times, they just pushed us off onto another track, and the cars just sat there on the tracks overnight or a day or two, and we had no idea what's going on.

1:00:43 (Interview resumes.)

[Interviewer: We're going on the tracks. You're headed for a destination. Continue please.]

So finally we arrive.

[Interviewer: Day or night?]

Day, day, daytime.

I have no idea what time of the day, what day, or even what month at this point.

And they opened the doors, and by then there were a couple, many older people, sickly people who were by the door. I remember them falling out. Some didn't survive the trip.

And we are getting off and I am holding the baby. Usually I wanted to hold the baby. And there is this...we are still standing in the doorway and there is this handsome, tall German officer standing there and my mother says to me, "You see, what a nice man." Very polite expression or something that she immediately thought, "See, what a nice man." And I'm holding the baby and I get off, and he was by then saying to some people, "You go this way and you go that way," and it's my turn, and he says, "Give the baby to an older person." And I didn't want to first. But my mother said, "Well, that's my baby."

And he said, "Good. Then give it to her."

Infer. What might account for the cattle cars being pushed off the tracks?

Infer. Why can't Aniko state the time she arrived at the camp?

Infer. Why do you think Aniko wanted to be the one holding the baby? Does her wish to do so remind you of anything about yourself?

Highlight the words that tell you that the mother was reassured by the manner of the German officer who gave them directions.

What do you suspect upon hearing that Aniko should give an older person the baby?

So my mother took the baby and he says, “Well, you go that way, and you go that way.” [gesturing in different directions] I remember they went right, and I went left. And my mother said, “But she’s also my baby. Please let her come with me also.” And the man, who turned out to be Mengele, said, “But she’s young, and she can walk, and you’re going to go by bus.” And then my mother smiled, and she looked at me like, “You see, I told you so” kind of a smile, everything would be fine, so, and she left with the baby and my grandmother and my aunt and my little six year old cousin (my aunt had a six-year-old child) and I’ve never seen them again.

Then we went, we marched quite a while, I remember going through this gate which says *Arbeit Mach Frei*. Well, I still thought we were going to a labor camp, and then we were going to go through a long line, where they shaved us. First we went into a large hall where we were waiting.

And then they said, “Take off everything.” And I had a coat on that was a brand new coat. I got that coat a couple of months prior to that. My mother had it made for me because that was supposed to be more like a big girl-ish coat. And so we were supposed to not wear it until the fall. And when we left, my mother said, “Put that on and your best shoe and everything.” And I said, “How come?” when we left our apartment. I’m going back then a little bit. She said, “Well, you never know what you’ll have left. I want the best. You’ll wear the best.”

What did you think as you heard Aniko say that she was to hand the baby to an older person?

Highlight the words that tell you how Aniko’s mother feels as she takes the baby.

Infer. What happened to Aniko’s relatives?

Arbeit Mach Frei means *work makes you free*. How might this slogan have affected Aniko’s expectations of the camp?

Have you ever owned an something that represented growing up, an item you had to reach a certain age to get? What was it?

Highlight the words that tell you the mother’s motivation for having Aniko wear her best clothes.

So I had this coat that I was so proud of because it had a line that little girls didn't wear.

1:04:33

So they said put everything on the floor, so I took off this coat, and I was looking where I can hang it and I saw some kind of a knob kind of thing on the wall and I was going there to hang my coat and the next thing I know that this big woman--I don't know if she was German. I don't think she was German. She spoke German, but I think she had some kind of an accent. She came over and she said, "What do you think? You arrived to a vacation?" and she gave me a tremendous, tremendous blow to my head. And then I blanked out for a minute, and so then I had to take everything off, and I didn't understand what everything means until I understood what everything means. They were lined up where they were shaving our heads, completely, and when we coming out through the other door, we were still young girls, you know, and we looked at each other.

1:05:45

There were a few girls with me who I knew from Debrecen who went to the same school or even the same class, and we looked at each other and we started to giggle kind of, because we didn't recognize each other. We did not recognize each other. We just standing there completely naked with bald heads. It just changed your whole face. I remember that. But what I was always thinking of that I'm glad my mother and the others went to a better place, that they went by bus, and they don't know this,

Highlight the words that tell you Aniko was confused by her situation.

What might have been the German woman's motivation in treating Aniko as she did when Aniko tried to hang up her new coat?

What can you infer from Aniko's experience about how she would learn to go on in the camp?

Highlight the reaction Aniko's friends have to one another.

Would you and your friends respond as Aniko's friends did? Why or why not?

what will they think when they'll see us again, but I'm glad that they are not here.

And then came a couple of terrible months in Auschwitz.

1:06:26

Again I was at the worst place at Auschwitz.

Now you think Auschwitz was Auschwitz, and I used to think so too, until I started to talk to several other Auschwitz survivors about this, which really didn't happen until a few years ago, and I realized that, where we stayed, this barrack was the worst of them all because we were just put into this barrack, very, very many of us. And there was nothing there. At night whenever we fell asleep, we just fell on top of each other. There was no room to straighten a leg or anything. That's how we lived. And very many got sick and died. And I had a terrible illness. It was one of the illness that was...many had. I started to get...my lips broke out. Sores.

1:07:30

And then it went inside. Down my palate and down my throat. I couldn't swallow, and I remember just my saliva was running and we had to...I was together with this couple of girls who, as I said, I remember them from Debrecen, and they were in the same school with me, and then also this sisters (Viola and Anitsa K.) I remember from Debrecen, who I was friendly with, especially the one who was my age and her older sister. And we really supported each another.

Highlight the words that reveal Aniko's is unaware of the fate of her family.

When does Aniko realize that she was at the "worst place" at Auschwitz? Highlight the words that tell you this.

What made her barracks the "worst of them all"?

What is Aniko's physical condition?

How does Aniko feel about the girls she lived with in the barracks?

1:08:13

Because I was so, so ill, you know what a (*se l'*)*appel*. There was *appel* very often when they blew the whistle, in no time we had to be out, day or night, whatever the weather was ...and stand in rows of five like this (gestures).

This SS woman with the dog would come and count us. And we would stand there sometimes for hours, counting us, counting us over and over again. And if you couldn't stand up, then everyday, I think, a truck came to which they threw on the truck the bodies whether you were dead or very ill.

So at one point I couldn't stand up, and I said, "I don't care." I really never cared. None of us cared at that point. There was no such thing as fear or anything.

And they held me up. We did those things for each other. It's just amazing what very young people can do and face and live up to.

What would you call *appel* in English?

What feelings might have passed through Aniko and her friends as they endured hours of being counted?

Aniko says that "None of us cared at that point. There was no such thing as fear or anything." If it wasn't fear, what kept her standing up?

Is Aniko's attitude toward young people similar to those expressed by most grown ups? The media? How is it similar or different?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV-HZE28BHs>

Nechama Shnoerson Video Testimony

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV-HZE28BHs>

19:38

We ended up in this concentration camp. It is called Stutthof. That's where they brought us. What we had to do is get undressed. Leave all our clothes right next to us. Completely naked. Go into a place where it was a shower. We were throwing over us water. Go out the other side. And there they gave us different clothing, whatever you could grab, a pair of shoes, a skirt, a dress, whatever. It was not ours. Whatever was left there, it was not ours. They assigned on each one of us a number, not with a tattoo, just with a pencil, that we should know our number—5429. And then they sent us into barracks. And we stayed there that night.

The second day they asked us all of us to get out of the barracks and line up and they start choosing. Some children were still with us, children meaning not any more younger than 8, 9, which my little sister was. And every mother with a little girl like that was put on another line. Knowing that they was going to be taken away from me, I asked the German, "Can I come along?" And he said, "No."

And I said, "But I want to go together with my mother and my sister." And he said, "No, you cannot. And I said, "But I do want to be with them." So he gave me with a...he had a stick in his hand and he gave me over my head... (gestures).

I probably lost my conscious.

But when I woke up from it with a lot of my friends around me, they weren't there anymore.

How was Nechama's experience of entering Stutthof similar to Aniko's experience in Auschwitz? How was it different?

Infer. Why do you think there were no children under 8 or 9?

Highlight the words that tell you what happened to Nechama when she pleaded to be with her family.

What experience of Aniko Friedberg's does this call to mind?

Which took me probably over a year and half later to find out what really happened to them. They were taken to Auschwitz to the crematoriums. That was the end of my family starting to fall apart.

At this point I was left only with my sister in Stutthof, not even being together with her closely. I knew she was there because she was in different wagons when we was brought into Stutthof. We lost each other's places and we lost each other. We didn't know where she was and she didn't know where I was. Different barracks, different places, and we lost each other. So actually I was left alone (22:57 Transferred to Thorn)

How long can one live on one slice of bread and a little bit of water? People started to die of starvation. People started to get very sick. And there was no help, medical help. So they just shoot you when they notice the person cannot work anymore. And the camp started to get slower, smaller and smaller. And one day when I felt I am at the end of my strength, Hardly walking out from the camp going to work, I thought, "I am going to do just what somebody else did, try to escape and run into a house, maybe beg for something."

And when I noticed that the German wasn't watching me, I did. And I came into her house, and I asked them, "Just leave me. I am not asking for anything. Just let me sit here and warm. Don't give me anything. I don't want anything, just let me sit here. And they didn't. And they didn't give me nothing, not a piece of bread or a bite of bread, just let me sit there in the warm, and just sitting there,

Infer. What does it mean to be taken "to the crematoriums"?

Infer. What does it tell you about camp life that Nechama did not see her sister at Stutthof?

Highlight the words that tell you what living conditions were like in Thorn.

How might these conditions have motivated Nechama to escape into a house.

What words would you use to describe Nechama as she escapes into the house and spends the day there.

I felt I am back in the world I hadn't seen for years now. Going back, it was time to go back, because I had to go back to camp. I did not go so carefully and the German noticed me. So he ran over, seeing me come from the outside, and he beat me up on my back. I got 25 bad lashes over my back, and during the night I picked myself up a little bit and I said, "He's not going to catch me again."

Sure enough on the second morning, I escaped again. And I came into a house, and I said, "I'm hungry, and I'm barefoot, and I cannot continue working to make the Germans happy. Can you just help me with some food, and I'll do everything you want me into this house. Just let me stay. I'll feed your cows, and I'll feed your pigs, and I'll wash your floors, I'll sew it for you, I'll do anything, just let me stay with you." And they did.

And I was working there a full day, and every potato I threw into the cows or to the pigs, the second potato was in my mouth. I filled myself up with so much of it...I cannot tell you how many, and packed my pockets full of them. When I...by the time I had the evening, I had to go back.

Made sure first of all that the German will not see me, but I had even in my pockets some potatoes I could give my friends
And I did it every day for two weeks.

That picked me up to have the death road that we had to go right after that. Because one morning we woke up, and they didn't take us to work.

Highlight the words that tell you how Nechama is punished for her escape.

Infer. Was the escape worth the punishment? How do you know?

How was Nechama's behavior different on her second escape?

What do you think is meant by the term "death road"? Is this a literal or figurative expression?

But we had to escape from the Russians that they were starting to come closer to us.

(Interviewer: When was this?)
That was already in the early days of January 1945.

(Interviewer: Still bitter winter.)

Bad winter. I was ashamed that my stomach was full. Because they died on the road from starvation, from cold, and if they fell fainting, so the German killed them right there and then. They wouldn't let us carry them.

One evening they took us into the woods, the Germans, and they said, "Listen, your time has just come. We leave you here. We cannot stay with you anymore. We leave you here, and you do whatever you want to do." What could we've done? Nobody had the strength to do, and nobody knew where we are, so we stayed there, and early in the morning, the Russians came there.

The first Russian that I saw on a beautiful horse, and if I tell you the couple of hundred people who were left, everybody falling on the floor, kissing the horse's legs, and the Russian, and screaming out of hysterics, thanking them for coming for our liberation

That's a picture that I will never in my life get out of my mind. Never. I turned around and I said to myself, "So what good is it? Where's my mother? Where's my father? Where are my sisters?
So what am I here now, left alive, I don't even know if my family is alive."



<http://0.tqn.com/d/history1900s/1/0/D/6/EasternEurope3.JPG>

Highlight Stutthof on the map.
Color in Germany and Russian.
Draw an arrow to show how the Russians had advanced when Nechama is forced to leave Stutthof.

Why does Nechama feel ashamed of herself on the death march from Stutthof?

How do the survivors feel when they see the Russians?

What complicates Nechama's feelings upon her liberation by the Russians?

So who wants to live? I really had no need for it. Life was not important to me at this point anymore.

28:39

[After working on a Russian farm for six months, Nechama was reunited with her sister, Zlata.]

We found each other.
She was without hair, she had typhoid, and to see each other all over again, it was probably the most beautiful moment of my life.

This is my full family in 1932. Full family portrait. My mother all the way in the middle in the top. Father right next to her on the right. My oldest sister on her left. Grandma holding on her lap my little sister Ganya. In the middle is Edith,
And myself sitting on my father's lap
A child of three.

Stop at 29:38

How would you describe Nechama's feelings at this point? Do they surprise you? Why or why not?

Infer. What might have contributed to the differences in the physical condition of Nechama and her sister Zlata?
