

INSIDE THE GLASS CASE

Lesson Plan:
*Royal Army Medical Corps
Report*

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HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER
ZEKELMAN FAMILY CAMPUS





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- Recommended grade levels** • Grades 9-12
- Suggested timeframe** • 1-2 class periods

Historical Context

The Camp System

- The Nazi government established a series of camps to imprison perceived political, ideological, and racial opponents.
- As the Nazis invaded other countries across Europe and expanded their areas of control, they established tens of thousands of concentration camps.
- The conditions at these camps were horrible and many people imprisoned there died from exhaustion, starvation, disease, and exposure.

Bergen Belsen

- Bergen Belsen was a camp located in Germany that was initially established in 1940 for prisoners of war (POWs.)
- By 1943, it became a concentration camp. It was comprised of several subcamps for different groups of people - POWs, Roma, criminals, gay men, and, of course, Jews.
- The conditions of the camp were horrible and many of the prisoners kept there died from starvation, exposure, disease, and exhaustion.
- Towards the end of the war, many camps farther east were liquidated and the prisoners were sent by train or by foot on death marches to camps farther west. Many were sent to Bergen Belsen.
- In total, around 50,000 people died at Bergen-Belsen, including Anne and Margot Frank.
- On April 15, 1945 the British Army liberated Bergen Belsen. Approximately 60,000 prisoners were liberated.

Liberation

- As the Allies advanced across Europe at the end of World War II, they encountered camps filled with sick and weak prisoners and liberated them.
- The first major camp to be liberated was Majdanek, located near Lublin, Poland. It was liberated by Soviet troops in the summer of 1944.



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Liberation (continued)

- Liberators encountered unimaginably horrifying conditions when they arrived at the camps. Many were traumatized by what they saw.
- The troops, doctors, and relief workers did what they could to nurse the prisoners back to health, but many were too weak and sick to survive. Many died within days or weeks of [liberation](#).
- Survivors had mixed reactions to their freedom.

DP Camps

- From 1945 - 1952 more than 250,000 Jewish [displaced persons](#) (DPs) lived in camps and other centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy run by the [UNRRA](#).
- While in these [DP camps](#), survivors continued to recover physically from what they had experienced in the Holocaust and tried to reunite with their families and friends. In addition, many planned their emigration to new countries. Most moved to the United States and Israel.
- In many DP camps, the conditions were horrible and many survivors suffered from trauma and guilt. Most were eager to live normal lives.

Goals & Objectives

Students will know:

- How to identify/recognize the impact of liberation on the survivors and how different survivors underwent a process of returning to life after the war.

Students will be able to:

- Create an original essay or piece of artwork that reflects their understanding of the trauma and guilt caused by the imprisonment.
- Understand that the trauma of loss and “survivor’s guilt” made returning to life challenging.



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Procedure

Step 1:

- Share background information on liberation, using Bergen Belsen as the example.

Step 2:

- Together as a class, discuss the following questions:
 - When the liberators encountered the camps, what might they have thought or felt? What might they have been able to do?
 - When the survivors were liberated, what might they have thought or felt? What challenges - both emotional and physical - might they have faced?

Step 3:

- Post the words “Returning to Life” on the board, and ask students to brainstorm its meaning together as a class.
- Notes:
 - Definition from Echoes & Reflections: A term referring to how Holocaust survivors began to rebuild their lives following the Holocaust.)
 - The phrase is “returning” and not just “return” because the survivors did not return to life in any clear moment. Rather, it is an ongoing process, and many survivors are still returning to life even today.

Step 4:

- Distribute copies of the Royal Army Medical Corps Report and instruct students to read through it. After they’ve read the text, have students free-write about their own reaction to the Royal Army Medical Corps Report.
- Set a timer for 5 minutes, and instruct students to keep their pens/pencils moving the entire time. Ideally, students should write their response by hand, and not type it.
- Ask for volunteers to share their responses, and remind them that this is a difficult subject to talk about and learn about, so a range of emotions is to be expected.

Step 5:

- As a class, discuss the students’ responses and reflect together on the complexity of liberation both the dehumanization that had occurred, and the sharp shift to freedom. Be sure to discuss the significance of the lipstick in this conversation.



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Procedure (continued)

Step 6:

- Return to the initial conversation about the thoughts, feelings, and challenges that the liberators and survivors faced upon liberation. Ask students to share new reflections in light of what they have learned already during this lesson.

Step 7:

- To explore this idea further, break students into groups and allow them to explore "[The Anguish of Liberation in Art 1945-1947](#)" gallery from Yad Vashem. Each art piece in this gallery was created by a survivor between 1945 and 1947. They will attempt to investigate how survivors reacted to the liberation through art by using the "see, think, wonder" method.
- Each group should select one piece (or can be assigned one piece) to analyze and unpack. They will then present their piece and summarize their discussion for the whole class. The groups should, in their presentations, answer why they believe the survivors created these pieces and what does it say to their strength that they could revisit such a dark time in their lives.

Step 8 (Exit Ticket):

- End the lesson by explaining to students that many survivors lived in DP camps after they were liberated, and then emigrated to new countries. There is no single experience and each survivor had his or her own experience.
- Allow students to create their own piece of art or writing that reflects their understanding of liberation and its effects.

Content Standards

7.2.4 World War II

- Responses to Genocide – investigate the responses to Hitler’s Final Solution policy by the Allies, the U.S. government, international organizations, and individuals. Examples may include but are not limited to: concentration camp liberation, Nuremberg war crimes tribunals, and actions by individuals such as Oskar Schindler and Irena Sendler.

7.1.3 Global or Cross-Temporal Expectations

- Genocide in the 20th Century – differentiate genocide from other atrocities and forms of mass killing and explain its extent, causes, and consequences in the 20th century and to the present.



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Content Standards (continued)

7.2.6 Interregional or Comparative Expectations

- Case Studies of Genocide – analyze the development, enactment, and consequences of, as well as the international community’s responses to, the Holocaust (or Shoah), Armenian Genocide, and at least one other genocide. Examples may include but are not limited to: investigating the ideology and policies that led to genocide; policies to address and prevent genocide; cases studies of genocides such as Herero and Namaqua, Cambodia, Rwanda, Ukraine, and/or Bosnia.

C3 Framework:

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.
- D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.