

Activities
Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida

The Holocaust
Museum
& EDUCATION CENTER
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

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**Written in Pencil in the
Sealed Railway-Car**
By Dan Pagis

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Publication Society, with the permission of the publisher.]

here in this carload
i am eve
with abel my son
if you see my other son
cain son of man
tell him I

Teaching suggestions:

- Show students only the poem, not the title or author, to start.
- Discuss the names in the poem. Do the students know where they come from and what the Biblical reference is?
- The poem is specific because of the use of the word “carload.” Otherwise, it speaks to the universality of evil.
- After the initial discussion, tell students the title of the poem. Does that alert the students to other avenues of thought?
- Is the poem complete as it stands? If students think there should be more, have them write a completion to the poem. Have them explain the ending they provided.

Excerpts from Survivor's Stories

Abe Price
Poland, 1940

“On the third day we were marched under heavy guard toward the railroad station. Polish people were watching and some were very happy to see what was going on. We were put into cattle cars, about 80 people to a car and the doors were closed; even the little windows were closed from the outside. It was almost impossible to breathe. The train traveled away from the city and inside the cattle car it became unbearably hot. It was the end of July and it was hot even outside. We had no luggage, only the clothes on our bodies.

After traveling a day and night we arrived in Lublin. The Lublin SS under the command of ‘Odillo Globocnick’ were waiting for us. The fresh air felt good when the doors of the cattle car opened.”

“The people are assembled, have to sit on the ground, and must give away their jewelry, watches and money. The Nazi professional killers terrorize the people and force them into cattle cars, 120 to a car. When the doors of the cattle car close and the little windows are also closed it becomes a torture chamber. You ride in that train for two days until you arrive to the destination place. When the doors open, half of the people are dead. The gas chamber is relief from the torture and suffering when riding in a car without air, water and sanitary conditions.”

- 1) Compare and contrast the two excerpts. In what ways is the second description more severe? Given that the later experience was observed, why do you think the author used such strong language?
- 2) How does being transported in cattle cars reflect the perceived status of these human beings in society?
- 3) In what ways was hope being taken away during this experience?

Hella Wartski
Hungary, 1944

“In May 1944, German soldier took us by open trucks to a railway yard. There was a freight train with box type freight cars and the soldiers began shouting for us to quickly board the cars. The doors of the freight cars were high off the ground and the people needed help to climb aboard. There was much confusion because families tried to stay together but couldn’t because the soldiers continued shouting and were pushing, kicking and beating us to make us move faster...My family managed to stay together and we boarded one boxcar. When the boxcar was full and no more people could fit in, the door was bolted shut and we were in near total darkness without the possibility to get out...When the trip ended we didn’t know where we were. We were ordered out to line up on the railway platform. We saw that the place was surrounded by barbed wire, and there were signs indicating that it was electrified. Instead of seeing a sign that would identify the location, we saw a large sign above the entrance to Auschwitz that proclaimed ‘Arbeit Macht Frei.’”

1) In what ways was fear reinforced during this experience?

2) ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ means “Work Makes You Free.” How do you think the prisoners felt when they read this slogan? Why was this an effective tactic for the Nazis?

Box Car Project Exhibit

NOTE: This exhibit is designed for students in grades 6 and up. It is not recommended for students younger than the 7th grade. Elementary teachers planning to use the box car as an educational tool should view the teaching suggestions for the elementary level included in this guide.

The 12-panel exhibit that accompanies the box car is designed to hang on the low-boy for outdoor viewing. Although the panels are weather resistant, we request that they be taken down each night and stored inside the box car.

This teachers' guide includes selected readings to go along with the panels of the exhibit as well as some possible activities.

Panels 1 – 6: Deportation During the Holocaust

- Panel 1: Holocaust definition and basic timeline
- Panel 2: The Final Solution
- Panel 3: Auschwitz timeline and deportation map
- Panel 4: Victims other than Jews
- Panel 5: Voices of the Children, focus on France
- Panel 6: Anne Frank timeline and map

Panels 7 – 12: Genocide in the World

- Panel 7: What is Genocide?
- Panel 8: North and South America
- Panel 9: Europe
- Panel 10: Africa
- Panel 11: Asia
- Panel 12: What Can You Do?

Suggested Readings

- “The Final Solution,” State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education
- Excerpt from “Memoirs of a Survivor: My Life Under Nazi Occupation” by Abe Price
- Excerpt from “Holocaust Survival of Heinz and Hella Wartski”
- *Deportation to Killing Centers*, Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, www.ushmm.org
- Committee on Conscience, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org
- “Dispatch Chad – 20 August 2004” by Ryan Spencer Reed
- *All I Need Know*, lyrics by Christian Smith
- For 4th grade and up, *Erika’s Story*.
- For 5th grade and up, *Hana’s Suitcase*.
- For 8th and up, *Night*.

Read the quotes located at the bottom of the six “Genocide in the World” panels. Choose one and craft a response or illustration through writing, drawing or other type of artwork.

“Peace and justice are two sides of the same coin.”

~Dwight D. Eisenhower

“It does not require many words to speak the truth.”

~ Chief Joseph, Nez Perce Indians

“The opposite of love is not hate – it’s indifference.”

~ Elie Wiesel

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

~ Gandhi

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

~ Mother Teresa

“Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another into the light.”

~ Norman B. Rice

Additional Quotes

“Injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“A destruction, an annihilation that only man can provoke, only man can prevent.”

Elie Wiesel

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

Abraham Lincoln

“Compassion is the basis of all morality.”

Arthur Schopenhauer

“It’s a wonder I haven’t abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.”

Anne Frank

Research one transportation effort during the Holocaust that saved or attempted to save people. How does this event compare to other events in history in which people moved for freedom/self-preservation reasons?

Ex.	Kindertransport	Pilgrims
	Shanghai Ghetto	Cuban refugees
	Fort Ontario, Oswego, NY	Huguenots
	Danish Rescue of Jews	Irish famine

Compare and contrast Holocaust deportation to other forced “transports” in history:

American Indians

Slavery

Japanese Americans

Armenian genocide

China’s Great Leap Forward

What has history taught us about forced relocation?

Does the government ever have the right to force people off their land? Explain.

Is forced relocation happening anywhere in the world today? In what circumstances?

Suggestions for Box Car Pre-visit

Read “Deportations” entry in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*.

- When and why did the Nazis begin the deportation process?
- From which countries did the Nazis deport Jews?
- Create a map of Europe that details the deportations.

Suggestion for Box Car Post-visit

Read “Erika’s Story” by Ruth vanderZee.

- How much of the story is fact? How much is fiction?
- Write out your reaction to the story in a letter to Erika.
- Write a letter to Erika from her parents that might have been tucked into her blanket.
- Write a letter from Erika to her parents, telling them about the woman she has become.

Background Information and Teaching Suggestions

Background information

Chronology of the Holocaust

State of FL Holocaust Curriculum, Grades 9 – 12, Unit 6, Page 9 – 22

www.fldoe.org/holocaust

“The Final Solution”

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia

www.ushmm.org

“German Railways and the Holocaust”

“Deportations to Killing Centers”

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust, Page 78 - 79

European Rail System, 1939 Map

Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida, “The Boxcar: Journey of Redemption” DVD

Additional Activities

After students have viewed the box car, have them reflect on the experience through writing, music or artwork. The Holocaust Museum will provide a scrapbook for student work to be donated to the museum.

Research other transportation events in history. Compare and contrast with the Holocaust. (Examples: American Indians, slavery, Armenian genocide, China’s Cultural Revolution)

8. Using the chronology on the Anne Frank panel, plot the movements of her family on a map of Europe. Answer the following questions using “The Diary of Anne Frank” as well as other resources.

- The Franks left Germany in 1934. Why? Was Amsterdam a good choice? What might have been other possibilities?
- When and why did the Franks go into hiding? How long were they in hiding?
- Which of the Frank family’s movements were by car, truck or train?

9. Current situations around the world: Committee on Conscience, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website. What are the risk factors for genocide? Where are the hot spots in the world today and why?

10. The genocide in Darfur: “Dispatch Chad – 20 August 2004” by Ryan Spencer Reed

11. The genocide in Guatemala: *All I Need Know*, lyrics by Christian Smith

The Boxcar as an Artifact

Make a sketch of the artifact

What is the object? What does it tell us about the people who used it?

When was the object made? How do you know?

Where was the object made (country, city, factory, etc)? How do you know?

Of what materials is the object made? _____

Look carefully at any inscriptions or imprints on the object and list them. What do they tell us about this object?

Based on your observations and discussion, what does this object tell us about history?

Does our view of this object as a neutral artifact change when we know its' later use in the Holocaust? Why?

The Boxcar as an Artifact

Teacher Answer Key

IMPORTANT:

Before beginning this activity, remind students that the boxcar was not originally made by the Nazis to transport people to concentration camps. That fact is a later part of history. For this exercise, students are focusing on the artifact itself and what we can learn from it.

What is the object? What does it tell us about the people who used it?

- A railroad boxcar, freight car, train car; answers will vary.

When was the object made? How do you know?

- 1919; stamped on the Builder's Plate, or Bullet Plate

Where was the object made (country, city, factory, etc)? How do you know?

- Vorm. Schumann Factory, Germany; stamped on the Bullet Plate

Of what materials is the object made?

- Wood and steel (25% of the wood has been replaced due to deterioration).

Look carefully at any inscriptions or imprints on the object and list them. What do they tell us about this object?

Inscription

Vorm. Schumann Factory
1919
5241
Köng Albert
Ausgermustert

Meaning

where it was made
year it was manufactured
built at that factory
King of Belgium (imported steel)
“taken out of service”

Based on your observations and discussion, what does this object tell us about history?

- answers will vary

Does our view of this object as a neutral artifact change when we know its' later use in the Holocaust? Why?

- answers will vary