

Holocaust Memory: From Child Survivor Testimonies to Children's and Young Adult Literature

Course Designation: GER/ENG (300-level; possibility for students enrolled for German credit to complete some readings and assignments in German)

Credit Hours: 3

Semester/Term:

Meeting Days/Time/Location:

Instructor Information

Instructor: Katherine Kerschen

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Office Hours:

Course Description

Over seven decades later, the world is still grappling with the Holocaust. How can an atrocity so extreme be comprehended, represented, or conveyed to non-witnesses and future generations? The testimonies of survivors have long been seen as a unique and critical contribution to the promulgation of Holocaust memory, as these testimonies can provide direct witness to the event. However, the default assumption that testimonies and memoirs are primarily litanies of facts rather than (literary) narratives is problematized when considering the witness accounts of child survivors, those of the '1.5 generation': "too young to have had an adult understanding what was happening to them, but old enough to have *been there*" (Suleiman, 2002, p. 277). These accounts call into question the relationship between fact and memory, a line that is further blurred in the many works belonging to the genre known as "Holocaust Children's Literature." What is the function of such (semi-)fictional narratives in the transmission of knowledge and memory? And more crucially, what impact do they have on young readers developing an initial understanding of the Holocaust? In this course we will investigate these questions through an analysis of witness accounts from child survivors and popular works of juvenile and YA literature, exploring such themes as authenticity, empathy, and the ethics of teaching the Holocaust.

In this course students will build upon their previous historical knowledge of the Holocaust to consider critically ways in which the events of the Holocaust are represented, specifically in narrative media forms (literary and cinematic). The focus is on analyzing both fiction and non-fiction in terms of their relationship to the event (of the Holocaust) itself and their impact on the

reader/viewer. All class discussions will be in English, but students enrolled in GER 400 will be expected to complete the majority of their reading and writing assignments in German.

Prerequisites: GER 302 (if taking the course for GER 400 credit)

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the key components of Holocaust testimonies and memoirs.
- Understand and explain different intellectual traditions regarding Holocaust representation and transmission of Holocaust memory.
- Analyze how the themes of authenticity, empathy, and identification are represented in fictional Holocaust narratives.
- Critically evaluate how knowledge of the Holocaust is transmitted to young people via juvenile and YA literature.
- Develop logical and compelling arguments about literary and cinematic texts.
- Clearly and effectively communicate observations, opinions, and analysis about literature in discussion and in written assignments.
- **For GER 400:** compose short written texts in German with a high degree of grammatical accuracy, varied vocabulary, and in a formal register.

Required Materials

The primary texts for this course, which are listed below and which you should purchase online or from the bookstore, are testimonies/memoirs of child survivors and fictional Holocaust narratives aimed at children or young adults. Additional readings, including scholarly articles and book excerpts, will be accessible on the LMS course page.

- *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Anne Frank.
 - German version: *Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank*
- *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*. Benjamin Wilkomirski.
 - German version: *Bruchstücke. Aus einer Kindheit 1939-1948*.
- *Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story*. Lila Perl & Marion Blumenthal Lazan.
- *Number the Stars*. Lois Lowry.
- *Friedrich*. Hans Peter Richter.
 - German version: *Damals war es Friedrich*.
- **One additional nonfiction memoir/testimony and one fictional narrative, see "Additional Readings" at the end of the syllabus**

Additionally, you will be required to watch one of the following movies on your own time as part of a group presentation. All can be either watched online or rented from the library.

- *The Book Thief*. Dir. Brian Percival, 20th Century Fox, 2013.

- *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Dir. Mark Herman, Miramax Pictures, 2008.
- *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Dir. Donna Deitch, Showtime, 1999.
- *Jakob the Liar*. Dir. Peter Kassovitz, Columbia Pictures, 1999.
 - German original film: *Jakob der Lügner*. Dir. Frank Beyer, Progress Film, 1975.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Active Participation – 15%

You are expected to participate actively in this class, which means that you should come to class on time, have completed all assigned readings and assignments, ask questions of the instructor, and participate in group work and class discussions. Simply being present in the course but not engaging with the material and the other students will not be sufficient to succeed in this class. Regular class attendance is also part of your participation grade. You may miss no more than 3 class sessions without prior approval from the instructor or an attested excuse (e.g. medical or family emergency). All additional absences will result in a successive lowering of your participation grade.

Homework – 20%

Throughout the semester you will be responsible for completing short homework assignments in addition to the regularly scheduled reading. The homework will consist mainly of weekly contributions to our class discussion forum on the LMS course page. Each week I will post a prompt or discussion question to the forum (note there will be two forums: one in German for students enrolled in GER 400 and one in English for all other students). You must post a 2-3 sentence response and comment on at least two of your classmates' responses. All responses and comments must be posted by midnight on Friday. Any additional homework assignments will be announced in class and on the LMS course page and must be completed by the beginning of class on the day that they are due. **Late homework assignments will not be accepted unless previously discussed with the instructor!**

Short Response Papers – 25%

In addition to the regularly assigned readings, during the semester you will read one nonfiction testimony and one work of children's/YA literature of your choosing (see the list of Additional Readings for suggestions). You are required to turn in a short response paper **for each text** (written in German for students receiving credit for GER 400). Each paper should be approximately 500 words in length and should aim to summarize the text and briefly interpret it in light of the themes discussed in the course.

Group Presentation – 15%

You are required to give one group presentation during the semester. The presentation should be about 20 minutes long, plus 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion afterwards. The presentation will be based on a movie that has a child in the Holocaust as

its central protagonist. In a group of no more than 4 students, you must choose a movie, watch it on your own time, and then present it to the class. Your presentation should include a summary of the film's plot, background information about the context in which it was made (and the book on which it was based), and an analysis of the film in light of the theoretical readings discussed in the course. Each group member must speak for at least 5 minutes. You may also show a few scenes or clips from the movie to illustrate your points or to analyze with the class; these do not count towards the 20 minute time limit.

Final Paper – 30%

At the end of the semester you will complete a final paper in lieu of a written exam. The final paper must be turned in no later than Thursday, December 15th. You do not need to turn in a paper copy, only upload an electronic copy to our LMS course page. The formal requirements of the paper are:

- 3000-4000 words in length
- MLA formatting
- Written in English (for all students)

The final paper should build on the themes discussed in the course. You may choose to analyze a work discussed in the course in more detail (with appropriate scholarly sources) or explore other Holocaust narratives by and for children. Please use the list of Additional Readings as a starting point, as well as conducting your own research.

Course Schedule

Dates and assignments are subject to change. Check the LMS course page for updates.

Week	Topic	Due
1	Introduction The child's perspective	"The 1.5 Generation: Thinking about Child Survivors and the Holocaust" (Suleiman) <i>Fragments</i> pp. 1-XX
2	What is witness literature? Memory vs. history	<i>Fragments</i> pp. XX- XX; "Figural Realism in Witness Literature" (White) <i>Fragments</i> pp. XX-XX
3	What expectations can we place on testimonies? Controversy surrounding <i>Fragments</i>	<i>Fragments</i> pp. XX-XX <i>Holocaust Representations in History</i> , chp. 13 ("What does it mean to lie about the Holocaust?")

4	<p>"Empathetic projection"</p> <p>Memory vs. experience</p> <p>Presentation on <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i></p>	<p><i>Four Perfect Pebbles</i> chp. 1-2; "Questions of Authenticity" (Ezrahi)</p> <p>"To Feel the Horror" (Weissman, introduction to <i>Fantasies of Witnessing</i>)</p>
5	<p>Holocaust memory through a child's eyes</p> <p>Issues of victim identification</p>	<p><i>Four Perfect Pebbles</i> chp. 3-6</p> <p><i>Four Perfect Pebbles</i> chp. 7-end; "Holocaust Reading: Memory and Identification" (Eaglestone)</p>
6	<p>Survivor stories v. survivor testimonies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio documentary "Hana's Suitcase" - Interactive online experience <p>Mediated memory</p>	<p>excerpts from <i>Survivors: True Stories of Children in the Holocaust</i> (Zullo & Bovsum)</p> <p>excerpts from <i>Survivors: True Stories of Children in the Holocaust</i> (Zullo & Bovsum)</p>
7	<p>Why does children's Holocaust literature exist?</p> <p>How young is too young to learn about the Holocaust?</p> <p>Presentation on <i>The Book Thief</i></p>	<p><i>Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust</i> (Dauvillier) pt. 1; "The problem of childhood, children's literature, and Holocaust representation" (Kertzer)</p> <p><i>Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust</i> (Dauvillier) pt. 2</p>
8	<p>Good, evil, and cartoons</p> <p>Propaganda cartoons from WWII</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looney Toons 1 - Looney Toons 2 - Looney Toons 3 <p>The Holocaust in fiction</p> <p>Response paper #1 (nonfiction) due</p>	<p>"Holocaust Literature for Children: The Presentation of Evil" (Farnham)</p> <p><i>Number the Stars</i> chp. 1-12</p>

9	The Holocaust in fiction Representations of the Holocaust in Germany	<i>Number the Stars</i> chp. 13-17 <i>Friedrich</i> pp. 1-XX; "Confronting the Ovens: The Holocaust and Juvenile Fiction" (Kimmel)
10	German children's literature Presentations on <i>Jakob the Liar</i> and <i>Jakob der Lügner</i> Pedagogical value of Holocaust literature directed at children	<i>Friedrich</i> pp. XX-XX <i>Friedrich</i> pp. XX – XX; "Reading the Shards and Fragments: Holocaust Literature for Young Readers" (Russell)
11	Anne Frank: An "American" icon Presentation on <i>The Devil's Arithmetic</i>	<i>Diary of Anne Frank</i> pp. XX-XX; "Who Owns Anne Frank?" (Ozick) <i>Anne Frank</i> pp. XX-XX
12	The appropriation of survivor experiences	<i>Anne Frank</i> pp. XX-XX; "Promiscuous Reading: The Problem of Identification and Anne Frank's Diary" (Bernstein) <i>Anne Frank</i> pp. XX-XX
13	<i>No class- Thanksgiving Break</i>	
14	Clips from the Anne Frank play and movies Response paper #2 (fiction) due Ethical considerations in teaching the Holocaust	<i>Anne Frank</i> pp. XX-XX "Reconsidering Anne Frank: Teaching the Diary in its Historical and Cultural Context" (Bos)
15	Pedagogical approaches Informal final project presentations; catch-up day	excerpts from <i>Shedding Light on the Darkness: A Guide to Teaching the Holocaust</i> (Lauckner & Jokiniemi)
	<i>Finals Week</i>	Final Paper

*The readings listed here are representative but do not constitute the full reading list

Additional Readings

This is not an exhaustive list of readings on this topic, merely a starting point. You are encouraged to do your own research to find further readings that you can use for your short papers and final paper.

Children's and Young Adult Literature (Fiction):

Jakob der Lügner. Jurek Becker. (available in English translation under the title "Jacob the Liar")

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas. John Boyne.

Torn Thread. Anne Isaacs.

Fatelessness. Imre Kertész

Good Night, Maman. Norma Fox Mazer.

Reise im August. Gudrun Pausewang. (available in English translation under the title "The Final Journey")

The Upstairs Room. Johanna Reiss

The Journey Back. Johanna Reiss.

The Devil's Arithmetic. Jane Yolen.

The Book Thief. Markus Zusak.

Find more here: <https://www.holocaustkidlit.com/>

Children's Books (Picture Books):

Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust. Loïc Dauvillier, illustrated by Marc Lizano. (***required reading in syllabus**).

The Whispering Town. Jennifer Elvgren, illustrated by Fabio Santomauro.

Star of Fear, Star of Hope. Jo Hoestlandt, illustrated by Johanna Kang.

The Harmonica. Tony Johnston, illustrated by Ron Mazellan.

Survivors of the Holocaust: True Stories of Six Extraordinary Children. Edited by Keith Shackleton, illustrated by Zane Whittingham.

Wiviott, Meg. *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass.* Meg Wiviott, illustrated by Josee Bisailon,

Nonfiction Testimonies and Memoirs:

Boas, Jacob, editor. *We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in The Holocaust.* New York, Henry Holt, 1995.

Bitton-Jackson, Livia. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust.* New York, Simon & Schuster, 1997.

Bitton-Jackson, Livia. *My Bridges of Hope: Searching for Life and Love After Auschwitz.* New York, Aladdin Paperbacks, 2001.

Edvardson, Cordelia. *Gebranntes Kind sucht das Feuer*, translated by Anna-Lise Kornitzky, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1986. (available in English translation under the title "Burned Kind Seeks the Fire: A Memoir")

Levine, Karen. *Hana's Suitcase* (Holocaust Remembrance Series for Young Readers).

Sierakowiak, David. *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto*, edited by Alan Adelson, translated by Kamil Turowski, New York, Oxford UP, 1996.

Weissmann Klein, Gerda. *All But My Life*. New York, Hill and Wang, 1995.

One Survivor Remembers. Directed by Kary Antholis, HBO, 1995. (Short film documentary of Gerda Weissmann Klein's testimony)

Zullo, Allan, and Mara Bovsun. *Survivors: True stories of children in the Holocaust*. Scholastic, 2004.

Scholarly Sources - Theoretical

Bernard-Donals, Michael, and Richard Glejzer, editors. *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

Garbarini, Alexandra. *Diaries and the Holocaust*. Yale UP, 2006.

Kertzer, Adrienne. *My Mother's Voice: Children, Literature, and the Holocaust*. Peterborough, Canada, Broadview Press, 2002.

Langer, Lawrence. *Holocaust Testimonies: The ruins of memory*. Yale UP, 1991.

Schwarz, Daniel. *Imagining the Holocaust*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Shapiro, Robert Moses, editor. *Holocaust Chronicles: Individualizing the Holocaust through Diaries and Other Contemporaneous Personal Accounts*. Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1999.

Young, James. *Writing and Re-writing the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Indiana UP, 1988.

Scholarly Sources – Pedagogical

Eaglestone, Robert and Barry Langford, editors. *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film*. London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

Hirsch, Marianne, and Irene Kacandes, editors. *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*. Modern Language Association, 2004.

Lauckner, Nancy A., and Miriam Jokiniemi. *Shedding Light on the Darkness: A Guide to Teaching the Holocaust*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2000.

Schweber, Simone. *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice*. Teachers College Press, 2004.

Works Cited from Syllabus

- Bernstein, Susan David. "Promiscuous reading: The Problem of identification and Anne Frank's Diary." *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*, edited by Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.
- Bos, Pascale. "Reconsidering Anne Frank: Teaching the Diary in Its Historical and Cultural Context." *Anne Franke's The Diary of Anne Frank*, edited by Harold Bloom, Infobase Publishing, 2010.
- Eaglestone, Robert. "Holocaust Reading: Memory and Identification." *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*. New York, Oxford UP, 2004.
- Ezrahi, Sidra DeKoven. "Questions of Authenticity." *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, edited by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, Modern Language Association, 2004.
- Farnham, James F. "Holocaust Literature for Children: The Presentation of Evil." *University of Hartford Studies in Literature*, vol. 18, no. 2-3, 1986, pp. 55-62.
- Kertzner, Adrienne. "The Problem of Childhood, Children's Literature, and Holocaust Representation." *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, edited by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, Modern Language Association, 2004.
- Kimmel, Eric. "Confronting the Ovens: The Holocaust and Juvenile Fiction." *Horn Book*, Feb. 1977, pp. 84-91.
- Magilow, Daniel H., and Lisa Silverman. *Holocaust Representations in History: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Ozick, Cynthia. "Who Owns Anne Frank?" *The New Yorker*, 28 Sept. 1997, retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1997/10/06/who-owns-anne-frank>
- Russell, David L. "Reading the Shards and Fragments: Holocaust Literature for Young Readers." *the Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1997, pp. 267-280.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking about Child Survivors and the Holocaust." *American Imago*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2002, pp. 277-295.
- Weissman, Gary. *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Cornell UP, 2018.
- White, Hayden. "Figural Realism in Witness Literature." *Parallax*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2004, pp. 113-124.