

English II Honors

Summer Reading Study Guide

Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust

Welcome to English II Honors. This title is important for a myriad of reasons. First, it speaks to the inhumane horror perpetuated by the Nazis throughout and beyond continental Europe. Next, it helps us to remember the victims of this dark historical period in a unique way via diaries, memoirs, letters, etc. Lastly, it serves as an apropos forerunner to our first quarter novel, *Fatherland*. Read the book, and complete this guide by the time you return to school in August. Be prepared for an objective quiz and composition test on this very important piece of non-fiction. Although it may sound trite, it still holds true into the 21st century that if we fail to understand our history, we are destined to repeat it.

Be sure to check out *The Death Toll* chart, the *Chronology* of events, and the maps. All these items can be found in the back of the book and will enhance your understanding and perspective of this tragic event.

Preface

Why does Meltzer tell us that we should remember what is now known as the Holocaust?

Book One: History of Hatred

“Not Citizens, Only Subjects”

1. Is anti-Semitism unique to German culture?
2. Establish a concise history of anti-Semitism preceding Hitler’s ascension to power.
3. How did anti-Semitism creep into the scientific world?
4. Was there an anti-Semitic political foundation in Germany prior to World War I?

“Hitler’s Magic Formula”

1. Examine how differently history could read today if Hitler had been a successful artist in his youth in Vienna.
2. Why did Hitler emigrate from Austria to Germany in 1913?
3. Describe the sense of betrayal that was pervasive among the German soldiers who shockingly accepted defeat in November of 1918.
4. Explain how the Treaty of Versailles and the fledgling Weimar Republic led to a broader and more vocal anti-Semitic movement. How did the treaty and weak democracy also clear the path for a dictator to rise to power?

5. How, too, did the economic depression that struck Germany in the 1920's lead to his rise to power?
6. Examine *Mein Kampf*. Was there any mystery about what he intended to do if he ever gained control of the German government?
7. Is there a history of anti-Semitism within the Christian culture, or is it exclusive to Germany?
8. Examine the failed Nazi putsch of '23. What did Hitler learn that allowed him to turn democracy against itself in Germany?

"Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer"

1. Establish Goering's and Goebbels's roles in helping to quickly turn Germany into a dictatorship shortly after Hitler became Chancellor in '33. Include the emergency decree that a senile President Hindenburg signed which further stripped Germans of their civil liberties.
2. Describe how the passage from Bella Fromm's diary is a manifestation of the brain-washing that German youth were subjected to. How was this all part of Hitler's master plan?
3. What did the American reporter, William Shirer, witness that affirmed the success of how the propaganda machine successfully deified Hitler?
4. Examine the early Nazi concentration camps as a forerunner to the death camps. How did the Nazis try to rob people of their dignity and humanity? Explain how the poem that inmate Sachsenhausen was forced to recite worked toward this end.

"The Protection of German Blood and German Honor"

1. Was there any veracity in the notion that the Jews dominated industry, finance, government, and politics prior to Hitler's rise to power?
2. How did the Nazis systematically rob the Jews of their possessions, employment, freedom, and lives? Was there a historical precedent for this?
3. Analyze the story of Ernst Meier. Why can his teacher's directives be considered inhumane and barbaric?
4. Examine the published essay of Erna Listing. How is this evidence of successful brainwashing within the German school system?
5. How can the Nuremberg laws be considered the "writing on the wall" for German Jews to emigrate elsewhere?
6. What did Bella Fromm observe that pushed her to emigrate from Germany?

"Flight—to Nowhere"

1. What could the European powers have done prior to the outbreak of World War II to stop Hitler's aggression?
2. How did their apathy toward said aggression shrink the possibility for Jewish emigration from Germany?
3. Establish what more the United States could have done to save lives between '33-'45.
4. Explain the profitable travel trade that sprang up during this time. Establish how people profited from the misery of Jewish emigration.

Book Two: Destruction of the Jews

“The Night of Broken Glass”

1. How did Hitler use the murder of Ernst vom Rath as the catalyst for the Night of Broken Glass?
2. Establish whether or not there was any true vocal outcry in response to the atrocities of that night. What did happen to Father Lichtenberg after he courageously spoke against the criminal act sponsored by the Nazi government?

“A Prophecy”

1. Describe how anti-Semitism was an unfortunate reality that predates Nazi rule by centuries, particularly in Eastern Europe. Again, how did discrimination obviate their emigration from countries in which they were persecuted? Consider why pogroms were pervasive throughout this part of the world.
2. How did the Jews in Poland react to the pogroms, and how does this foreshadow the revolts that Jews led from the Warsaw ghettos later on.
3. Describe the *Einsatzgruppen*, and establish how these mobile killing units were completely depraved. Who ran these mobile units (he'll be a character in *Fatherland*)?
4. Describe the inhumanity that's rampant in Rivka Yosselevscka's story.
5. Establish how Gebirtig's song is a battle cry for Jewish rebellion against their Nazi oppressors.

“Phantoms in the Ghetto”

1. Describe the ghetto as a transitional (temporary) measure.
2. Describe the living conditions of the Polish ghettos.
3. Give a commentary on the lives of children that lived in this sordid environment.
4. Were some able to remain courageous and steadfast in their will to survive?

“Gangs of Slaves”

1. Describe the profound impact that slave labor had on German wartime industry. Was slave labor limited to the Jewish race only?
2. Synthesize the stories of the victims of the aforementioned slave labor. How does the song of the forced labor concisely illustrate their plight?

“One little Spark”

1. Find common threads among these victims' stories that illustrate how strong the Jews will to live was.
2. How did they try to maintain normalcy in their daily lives while living in the ghettos?
3. Describe how the Jews in the Warsaw ghettos were able to maintain their culture, literacy, and religion via “the underground.”

“The Final Solution”

1. Heydrich, who was given authority to orchestrate “The Final Solution,” expected resistance when meeting with the heads of agencies at Wannsee. Did he encounter any from the heads of agencies, many of whom were not Nazis?
2. What conclusion did Bernard Goldstein, leader of the underground *Bund* in Warsaw, come to? Establish why many Jews within the Warsaw ghettos did not share his position.
3. How does the ballad that ends this section reflect the world’s knowledge of the Holocaust? Did the Allies know that the Jews were being systematically murdered?

“The Blue Tattoo”

1. How does the statistical evidence at the beginning of this section affirm the horrifying efficiency of the Nazi extermination of the Jews?
2. Assess the tragic lie “Arbeit Macht Frei” which was the huge sign on the gates of Auschwitz.
3. Synthesize the stories of those who survived the initial “selection” process.
4. How does “the blue tattoo” exacerbate the dehumanization of those who were forced to do slave labor in these camps?
5. Examine why the *kapos* in these camps so quickly and brutally turned against their own.

“Zyklon B”

1. What was this chemical?
2. Describe what Gerstein saw at Belzec when the chemical was used in a gas chamber.
3. Analyze the experiments done on the prisoners.
4. Establish how Johann Kremer quickly lost his moral compass as a doctor and human being while working at Auschwitz.

Book Three: Spirit of Resistance

“To Die with Dignity”

1. Assess the incredible story of Sima.
2. A minority of Jews resisted (rebelled); a minority collaborated with the Nazis. However, most Jews passively accepted their persecution. Establish the reasons for this.
3. Describe the different forms of resistance that are not physical revolts.
4. What did the Ghetto Councils (*Judenrat*) believe that was diametrically opposed to what the resistance leaders knew? Establish the Ghetto Council’s position as wishful thinking.
5. Although there were members in these councils who wanted to save fellow Jews, establish the role of many Jewish council members as one of the darkest periods in Jewish history.
6. What was the courageous goal of the Jewish resistance? To simply what?

“I Want to Live”

1. Describe the heroism exemplified by the Baum movement. Why was this group particularly courageous?
2. Describe the bold actions of the Jews who were being led to cattle cars in Lithuania.
3. How does the resistance oath of Kovno capture the spirit of sincere, bold resistance?

“Ghetto Uprising”

1. Was armed resistance uncommon in the hundreds of ghettos that spread across occupied Europe?
2. Describe the courage and resolve of the fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Consider the depleted numbers of Jews when assessing this important revolt. How did this act as a catalyst for future uprisings.
3. Describe the partisan movement as an important part of the resistance movement.

“Revolt in the Death Camps”

1. Analyze the Treblinka uprising in this death camp. What was the goal? Did the rebels have unrealistic expectations?
2. Examine Himmler’s directive after the Sobibor uprising. Why was the revolt a success?
3. Explain the fortitude that Rosa showed all the way to the grave. What was her final wish before being executed?

“The Only Hope Left”

1. Examine Primo Levi’s return to Italy. Did he transition smoothly back to daily routine? Consider the lingering effects of his time in Auschwitz.
2. Describe the miracle reunion of the Wiesenthals.
3. Explain why so many Jews could not return to their native lands after the euphoria of liberation wore off. Consider why the Zionist movement picked up momentum and led to the creation of Israel as an autonomous nation.
4. Analyze why problems still exist in the Middle East to this day between Israel and Palestine.
5. Describe the Nuremberg Trials. Was true justice a product of these trials?
6. Examine The Death Toll chart. What conclusions can be drawn by simply analyzing these statistics?

“Never to Forget”

Paraphrase why we should never forget this dark stain on the pages of human history.

Be prepared for subjective and objective assessments when you get back in August!