

The Holocaust and the poetry

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MOTIVATION:

- Why do people made arts?
- Why did people write poetry during the Holocaust?
- What do you think wich Subjects of the works of art were oppsessions for people who made art durring the Holocaust?
- ANSWERS: daily live, landscape, deportations, portraits...
- What was the meaninig of art for people in camps?
- ANSWERS: Art as escape from reality
- Art as a means of connection with the outside world

DISCUSSION WHIT PUPILS:

- *I drew and drew, this is my life. I know very little about anything else except painting. I love it.*
- *I never rationally thought that I was going to die, but there was an unbelievable urge to create. I was in the same position as all the people around me, and I realized that they were close to death. But I never thought of myself like that. I was floating. I was outside the reality of existence. My task was simply to portray what was happening. I was a spectator. (Halina Olomucki)*

Halina Olomucki (1919-)
Figures in the Ghetto
Warsaw after 1945



DISCUSSION WITH PUPILS ABOUT PAINTING

- What kind of feeling do you read in this painting?
- Where are these people?
- What do you feel when you watch this painting?

Introduction for work:

- Pupils work in small groups (4 groups)
- Teacher talks about biography of Primo Levi.
- Every group analyze one poem from Primo Levi
- They analyze those elements of poems: topic of poem, feelings, motives, form of poems, rhythm, and after every poems get specific questions
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Biography of Primo Levi

- **Primo Levi:** a Jewish-Italian poet and writer, was born in Turin in 1919. Before the Second World War he was an industrial chemist. In 1943 he was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where he survived due to his “usefulness” to the Nazis as a chemist. His most famous prose work is *“If This is a Man”* in which he wrote about his experiences in Auschwitz. Haunted by his Holocaust experiences, he committed suicide in 1987.

1. GROUP

- **Reveille**
- In the brutal nights we used to dream
Dense violent dreams,
Dreamed with soul and body:
To return; to eat; to tell the story.
Until the dawn command
Sounded brief, low
'Wstawac'
And the heart cracked in the breast.

Now we have found our homes again,
Our bellies are full,
We're through telling the story.
It's time. Soon we'll hear again
The strange command:
'Wstawac'

Questions after reading poem

- Which topic preoccupates poet in this poem?
- What does he think about people during the holocaust and what after?
- What do you think about people who could help but didn't?
- Do you think that it was difficult to decide to help? (Why?)

2. GROUP

- **Shema**
- You who live secure
In your warm houses
Who return at evening to find
Hot food and friendly faces:

Consider whether this is a man,
Who labours in the mud
Who knows no peace
Who fights for a crust of bread
Who dies at a yes or a no.
Consider whether this is a woman,
Without hair or name
With no more strength to remember
Eyes empty and womb cold
As a frog in winter.

Consider that this has been:
I commend these words to you.
Engrave them on your hearts
When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,
When you go to bed, when you rise.
Repeat them to your children.
Or may your house crumble,
Disease render you powerless,
Your offspring avert their faces from you.

Questions after reading poem

- What do you feel after reading?
- What happens to man and women?
- Why do we need to remember what happened?
- What is the meaning of poem?

3. GROUP

- **The Survivor**
- Once more he sees his companions' faces
Livid in the first faint light,
Gray with cement dust,
Nebulous in the mist,
Tinged with death in their uneasy sleep.
At night, under the heavy burden
Of their dreams, their jaws move,
Chewing a non-existent turnip.
'Stand back, leave me alone, submerged people,
Go away. I haven't dispossessed anyone,
Haven't usurped anyone's bread.
No one died in my place. No one.
Go back into your mist.
It's not my fault if I live and breathe,
Eat, drink, sleep and put on clothes

Questions after reading poem

- How does the Survivor feel?
- How do you understand his position?
- Does he want to talk about his experience?
(Why?)

4. GROUP

- **To My Friends**

- Dear friends, and here I say friends
the broad sense of the word:
Wife, sister, associates, relatives,
Schoolmates of both sexes,
People seen only once
Or frequented all my life;
Provided that between us, for at least
a moment,
A line has been stretched,
A well-defined bond.
I speak for you, companions of a
crowded
Road, not without its difficulties,
And for you too, who have lost
Soul, courage, the desire to live;

- Or no one, or someone, or perhaps
only one person, or you
Who are reading me: remember the
time
Before the wax hardened,
When everyone was like a seal.
Each of us bears the imprint
Of a friend met along the way;
In each the trace of each.
For good or evil
In wisdom or in folly
Everyone stamped by everyone.
Now that the time crowds in
And the undertakings are finished,
To all of you the humble wish
That autumn will be long and mild.

Questions after reeding poem

- To whom the song is dedicated?
- Why survivors fascinate him?
- How the poet sees time after the Holocaust?
- How the Holocaust changed the view of the poet to friendship?

CONCLUSION

- Artists warn to future generations to educate their children about Holocaust.
- Art she brought meaning to the chaos and absurdity of everyday life in camps.
- Art is an urge that is not afraid of death.

HOME WORK

- Write a letter to one person who was artist during the holocaust.
- Search information on internet about this person and write what happened with his/her art work.