

Worksheet – Auschwitz – Source A



Photographs taken of a Polish girl named Czeslawa Kwoka. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Czeslawa arrived with her family at Auschwitz on Dec. 13, 1942, and died on March 12, 1943. She was 14.

Auschwitz Museum

Supplementary Material



Here, the photographs have been colourised by Brazilian artist Marina Amaral. Note that the red triangle on her uniform means that Czeslawa was a political prisoner. Jews had yellow triangles on their uniforms.

Questions about Source A

1. What evidence does Source A give about where these photographs were taken?
2. What was the purpose of these photographs?
3. What do you notice about Czeslawa's appearance in these photographs? Does this reveal anything about *dehumanisation*?
4. Does the supplementary material affect the way you feel about Source A? If so, how?

Worksheet – Auschwitz – Source B

“Prominent guests from Berlin were present at the inauguration of the first crematorium in March 1943. The “program” consisted of the gassing and burning of 8,000 Kracow Jews. The guests, both officers and civilians, were extremely satisfied with the results and the special peep-hole fitted into the door of the gas chamber was in constant use. They were lavish in their praise of this newly erected installation.”

Excerpt from the Vrba-Wetzler Report

Supplementary Information

Two Slovakian Jewish prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, escaped the camp in April 1944. They co-wrote a report (in Slovak) in late April 1944 describing the geography and functioning of the camps, the daily lives of prisoners, numbers, origin, categories of prisoners and who was selected for “work” or death. Vrba and Wetzler hoped to prevent further deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz.

Questions about Source B

1. What is the origin of Source B?
2. What is the perspective of the source?
3. What was the purpose of Source B?
4. What does Source B reveal about German attitudes towards Jews in Auschwitz?

Worksheet – Auschwitz – Source C

“Listen to me, kid. Don't forget that you are in a concentration camp. In this place, it is every man for himself, and you cannot think of others. Not even you father. In this place, there is no such thing as father, brother, friend. Each of us lives and dies alone. Let me give you good advice: stop giving your ration of bread and soup to your old father. You cannot help him anymore. And you are hurting yourself. In fact, you should be getting his rations...”

Excerpt from Elie Wiesel's memoir, *Night*, written in 1960. The excerpt relates to Wiesel's time as a prisoner in Auschwitz. He is the “kid” being given advice by an older inmate.

Supplementary Information

Many years later Wiesel explained why he wrote *Night*, saying “... I believe that we may use words to break the prison, to break the walls around the prison. That is why I wrote that book. And that is why I wrote the others. First of all, to establish the prison. That there was a time when everything was a prison. Time itself was a prison. Afterwards, other words had to be found to break down the walls...”

Do not see in *Night* as a prison which is sealed from within, seven times. *Night* is a foundation to say look, this is what happened. Can we continue? Even if the answer is no, I would say we must continue. We must invoke a meaning, even when there is no meaning. We must formulate a prayer for hope, even if there is no hope.”

Questions about Source C

1. What does Source C reveal about living conditions in Auschwitz?
2. What aspects of *dehumanisation* are revealed by this excerpt?
3. What is the perspective of Source C?
4. What is the purpose of Source C? Use the Supplementary Information in your response.

Worksheet – Auschwitz – Source D

“Seventy years after the Nuremberg trials, something truly extraordinary happened in a German courtroom last week. Reinhold Hanning, a 94-year-old former Auschwitz guard who will go down in history as one of the last of Hitler’s perpetrators to be charged for his role in the Third Reich, offered an apology.

Hanning declared he was “sincerely sorry” and “ashamed” that he had belonged to a criminal organization that committed mass murder and countless atrocities, and that he had never done anything to prevent such actions.”

This quote is from a news article published by Reuters on May 5, 2016, titled “Commentary: Long overdue, a Nazi finally says sorry”. By Andrew Nagorski.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/sustainability/commentary-long-overdue-a-nazi-finally-says-sorry-idUSKCN0XV1MW/>

Questions about Source D

1. Who is Reinhold Hanning?
2. What does he apologise for? What does he not apologise for?
3. Why do you think he made an apology?
4. Assess the reliability of:
 - a. Source D. (Can you trust this source to be telling the truth?)
 - b. Hanning and his apology. (Can you trust Hanning to be telling the truth?)

Worksheet – Auschwitz – Source E

"Once a day we were given a dish of watery soup to share between five people. So I always say that the greatest pain, besides the longing for parents, was the pain of hunger. For youngsters you don't have a solution, only hunger. Hunger was on our minds the whole time. Sometimes we got a piece of bread to share between five people. There was always a fight for a piece of the bread, and we youngest always lost – we were not strong enough. I don't know how I survived. We only existed there, and many died. In the morning, in the cold, almost frozen to death, we stood for roll call. I don't know how or why but we continued to live. It was absolute torture."

Testimony of Zwi Bacharach, who was 15 when he arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/ceremonies/witness-testimony.html>

Questions about Source E

1. What type of source is this?
 - a. What is the value of this type of source for a historian studying life in Auschwitz-Birkenau?
2. What is the perspective of Source E?
3. What does Source E reveal about *dehumanisation* in Auschwitz?