

# ETA doc

p 4 - Issues of Rep diagram }  
- Thinking about Rep... } (copy)

p 7-10 - (All) activity

p 11-14 - Just read.

15-18 - Class activities

19-20 - Board notes

here work.

21 - Pairs task - copy

24 - copy to go with novel issued.

~~26 - group activity top of page - 5 groups~~

27-31 - BLAË STUDY GUIDE.

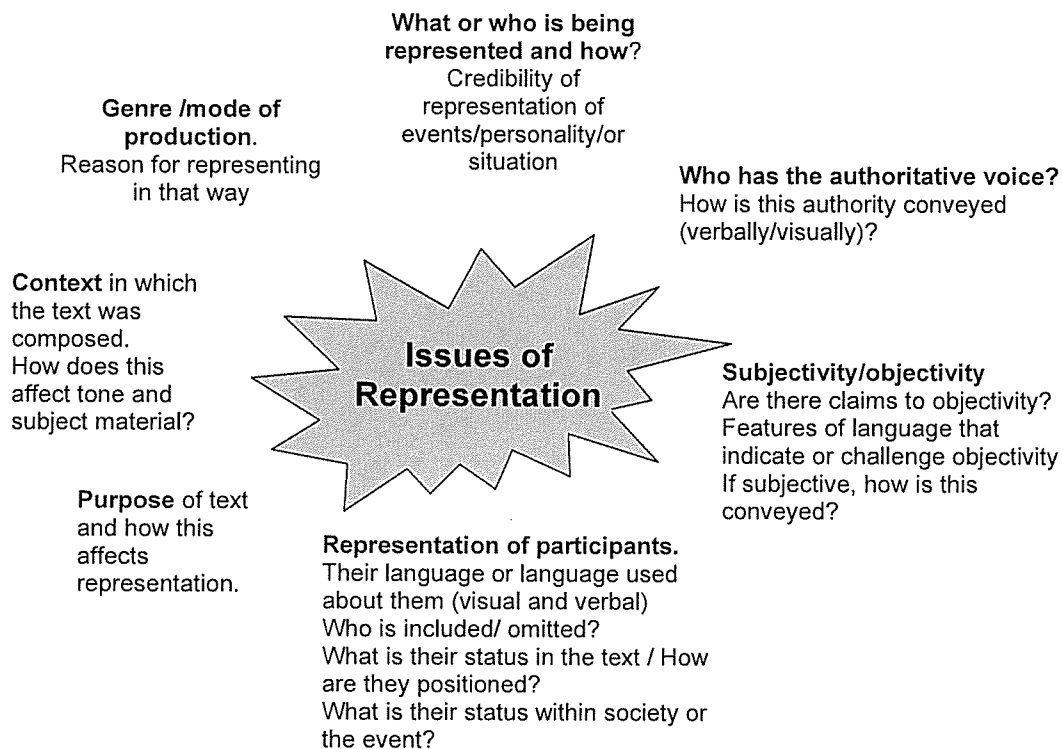
30 - ~~34/33~~ <sup>34 33</sup> group activities - 5 groups. Triptych

35-39 Add text guide, copy + issue.

40-41 -

is that history is, by its very nature, partial as not all events can be documented, causing many to be 'written out'.

Bearing this in mind students should consider how this might affect the representation of events by focusing on the kinds of issues raised in the diagram below.



*The Fiftieth Gate* charts the journey, undertaken by the author who brings to bear different kinds of accounts of and records about the history of his family to try to arrive at some understanding of their experiences of oppression and slaughter.

## THINKING ABOUT REPRESENTATION . . .

### Note to students:

Representation is

- dependent on context (the way the world is perceived at particular times and in particular situations) and
- based on a series of choices (what is included or excluded in the representation and the language – visual or verbal – used to convey it)
- interpreted from within the cultural context and personal experience of the responder.

For example:

- If you are asked to make a representation of your school to friends in Australia or overseas what would this representation entail? What would you include/exclude? What kind of language would you use to influence your audience?

## **What was history about?**

In ancient times historians wrote about politics and the great events of their times. They were also interested in great people who led the country in battle and in government. Historians were interested in the rise and fall of empires and studied the great people. They wanted to know about the lives of kings and queens, generals and presidents, the important people who made decisions which changed the pathway of history and everyday people's lives. There was a belief that certain decisions led to certain results (causes and effects). It was easier to see history this way because the people in charge usually had the education; they were the ones who wrote and who were written about.

## **How did history change?**

In the mid twentieth century, historians started to think about this. What happened to the poor people? What happened to the women? What happened to the conquered people? What were their stories, their memories? In Australia, we wondered about our indigenous people. There were no written memories, so historians had to find other ways of uncovering the past. Suddenly the stories found in the memories of everyday people became important. What was the other side of history, that untold side, and how could we find out these stories? This was when oral history began to be seen as a way of uncovering the past. It was realised that in traditional societies without writing, the memories of people from the past were passed down in the stories told to the next generation and stored in memories and songs. The invention of recording made it possible to store those memories and interviews became an important way of capturing the past.

## **Is History different to memory?**

Many people believe that history and memory are very different things. History they say is about the events, people and places of the past that influence the present. History they say is real, unlike memories and history is common to everyone whereas memories are personal and individual. History is about greatness but memory is about ordinariness. Another feature of history is that there are reasons, causes and events which lead to a conclusion. History has traditionally been a series of stories with a beginning, middle and end. Memories in contrast can be a confusion of different times and places and can have a sense of inaccuracy.

## HISTORY AND MEMORY

### WHAT IS HISTORY?

History is a discourse of documented events, both written and oral. It is a scholarly discipline that claims to record the truth of past events. At its best it is aware and self-conscious about the limitations of its project and its capacity for change; at worst it makes claims to be the exclusive truth.

History is informed by the interests and agendas of the culture and individuals writing and reading it. It is always partial, it cannot tell the “whole” story and its contents depend upon

- *whose* history is being written or recorded ( for example: to what extent can we be sure that all are included?)
- *who* is doing the recording; (for example: at the end of World War 2 did the Baltic states enjoy ‘liberation’ from Germany or suffer Russian ‘oppression’?)
- what *choices* are made by historians as to which material to include and,
- most importantly, how this material is analysed and interpreted. (Baker questions whether he should omit Leo’s illegitimate baby or not “Isn’t the baby part of the family tree too? Should I also bury her amongst the forgotten branches of our past?” (p207))

So the idea of the objectivity of history is a myth or at least an ideal. The reality is that history is composed rather than simply retold as there are questions of selectivity, exclusion and emphasis in the way the history is represented. It is these choices and biases, as well as the information conveyed by documentation that form historical discourse.

### THE LIMITATIONS OF HISTORY

1. History is not an exact science. The story of Genia, in *The Fiftieth Gate*, (‘there were not survivors in Bolszowce’) is a testament to the idea that public historical records or documents don’t necessarily tell the whole story; or indeed, can tell the completely wrong story because ‘she has always been a lone survivor...’ (p228). This causes her enormous stress in itself, particularly when her father Leo reconstructs history to exclude Genia, the Judenrat, the fear of persecution, the ‘other’ baby who threatens Genia’s whole sense of self so that she wonders – ‘Maybe I never existed there.....maybe I am someone else?’ (p239). Yet despite its flaws and omissions, history can carry the responsibility of our sense of self and of our understanding of our place in the world.
2. History cannot communicate the reality of the experience. Aside from the factual omissions, it is impossible for records to reflect what it felt like as an experience. The idea of history as ‘tabulating’ memory is described in the context of the immediate post war attempts to record what happened. The Buchenwald boys, still in their striped uniforms note the facts and figures they remember. Baker says of his father – ‘yesterday’s tattooed prisoner, commissioned to remember by agencies of ‘history.’ (p231) There’s almost the suggestion that in archiving and cataloguing these ‘fragments’ of memory, individual experiences are somehow lost.
3. History tries to impose unity and coherence where there is fragmentation. , History tends to create causal connections in our understanding of events, by explaining events logically, as narrative. The idea that history can be composed as a coherent narrative is seen by Baker to be ludicrous as in this case there is

no coherence in his father's life; rather Yossel's life has been a series of discontinuous, cataclysmic events that undermine any sense of a gradual narrative – 'time did not unfold for my father, it leaped at him...the next terrifying chapter.' (p125)

4. History assumes that an event is "knowable" and can be translated into an accessible mimetic form. This gets us to the heart of the work of Module C – representation and meaning. We have some ways of representing that convey meaning more directly than others. One of them is the story or the recounting of events, their causes and their effects. Add in some details - numbers and dates are good – and how clear and convincing one can be!
5. History involves imaginative reconstruction. To the reader Baker says(p156). 'The final moments can never be retrieved by history' Instead, it requires an act of the imagination, of empathy – so Mark Baker tries to recreate Hinda's last moments in the gas chamber. But how convincing do we find this? It is an attempt at communion but it is also a kind of arrogance...to assume it is possible to be able to understand those final moments of horror.

Students may find it interesting to listen to an account of the recent History Wars relating to Australian history as presented by Hindsight at

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/features/historyundersiege/>

## CONTEXT OF THE TEXT

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE HOLOCAUST

There are many resources readily available for students to find out about the Holocaust

<http://www.remember.org/> has a virtual tour of Auschwitz and the Then and Now exhibition <http://remember.org/then-and-now/> contrasts contemporary photographs of the Auschwitz- Birkenau memorial with images of what they were like 1940-45 as remembered by artist-survivors. There is also a timeline of the history of the Holocaust at <http://www.remember.org/educate/mtimeline.html> and map of Europe with Jews killed in each country

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/holocaust/map.htm>. Students can print off and highlight areas that are mentioned in *The Fiftieth Gate* from this map of concentration camps in Europe

<http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/33dWImages/mapcampsh m700pxw>

### Group Activity: Representing the Holocaust

Choose one of the texts on the sheets below as the springboard or a caption for a virtual museum exhibit, PowerPoint presentation or Smartboard lesson. You will need to research this aspect of the Holocaust to add detail and images to this stimulus. Design your representations of this aspect of the Holocaust in such a way as to inform and engage your audience.

### Introduction to the Holocaust:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHAF0sgzKO>

Known also as **(Ha) Shoah** in Hebrew. The word 'Shoah' means catastrophe.

The Holocaust is referred to as a **Genocide** because it was a systematic and deliberate destruction of a whole ethnic grouping.

The **Persecution** of the Jews occurred in systematic stages:

- moving into ghettos
- starvation
- selection
- transit camps, work camps and death camps

Approximately 6 million Jews were killed in systematic mass murder by the Nazis. Approximately 1.5 to 2 million of these were children.

### The Nazis called the Holocaust - "The Final Solution of the Jewish Question"

There were many plans of how to deal with the Jewish issue including a vague plan to ship all European Jews to Madagascar. It was not until the Wannsee Conference (1942) of senior Nazi officials in Berlin, that the plan for the final solution of mass systematic extermination of Jews was "officially" formalized.

**Third Reich** – Nazi Germany. Totalitarian dictatorship during World War II.

**NAZI** – National Socialist German Workers' Party – 1919 -1945. Led by Adolf Hitler.

**Nazi ideology** stressed racial purity of the German people (Aryan) and 'Lebensraum' – living space for the pure German race.

**Anti-semitism** is the prejudice against the Jewish people. Originated in Ancient times with the claim by some that Jews were responsible for the killing of Jesus.

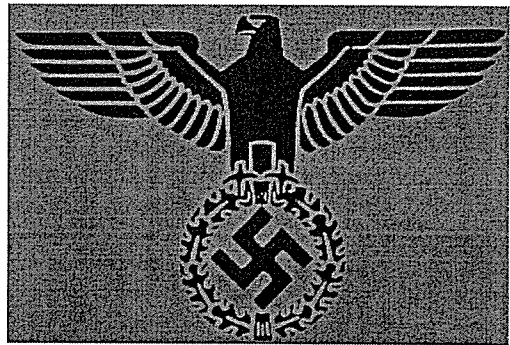
**Ghettos** were areas that Jews were portioned off to live in. Usually they were confined to these areas of a particular city or town and were not allowed movement in or out. Many of the Jewish Ghettos were walled in such as the Warsaw Ghettos.

The **Gypsies** or **Roma** were also persecuted by the Nazis. The death rate during World War II is estimated to be between 500,000 – 1,500,000



**Adolf Hitler** (1889 – 1945) – leader of Germany from 1933-45. Orchestrated the 'final solution to the Jewish Question'

**Mein Kampf** (My Struggle) published in 1925 – Written by Hitler. Autobiography of Hitler's life as well as Hitler's outline of his political philosophy. He wrote it whilst in prison in 1923 after the failed Beer Hall Putsch (rebellion).



Other people **persecuted** by the Nazis included, Russians, Poles, Homosexuals, the disabled and political dissidents.



The **Magen David** (The Star of David) – the identifiable symbol of the Jewish people and named after King David of Ancient Israel. Symbol was used at times to demarcate Jews from non-Jewish population in the Middle Ages and by the Nazis in World War II where Jews had to wear an armband with the star on it and their passports were stamped with the star clearly identifying them as Jews.

*And the Lord said to Cain "Where is your brother? And he said "I know not am I my brother's keeper?" And he said "what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries unto me from the Ground." Genesis*



**Selection** – on arrival to Concentration Camp prisoners were "selected" for work or death.

During World War 2 Jews were killed most effectively through a process of 'gassing' with **Zyklon B** (Cyanide) gas. This was first used in gassing vans in the early stages of the war and then later in purpose built gas chambers in the Concentration camps. The largest camps were in Auschwitz with bunker 1 holding 800 people and bunker 2 holding 1,200 people.

**Medical Experimentation** – was carried out in the concentration camps by registered doctors. Experiments were conducted on the effects on human beings of; sterilization, high altitude, and freezing/hypothermia. The most famous was Josef Mengele – the medical officer in Auschwitz who carried out genetic experimentation on twins.

**Holocaust survivors** – many Jews survived in varying degrees of health and emotional/psychological conditions. More than 30,000 Holocaust survivors made their way to Australia after the war. Holocaust survivors made their way to many other places of the world including the newly created state of Israel in 1948.

### **Concentration Camps:**

Some concentration camps were transit camps, some were labour camps (where inmates were worked to death), and some were extermination camps (primary purpose was to kill inmates)

The most famous camps included:

**Bergen-Belsen** (north-west Germany) transit camp – approx 50,000 deaths

**Dachau** (Germany) labour camp – approx 35,000 deaths

**Buchenwald** (Germany) labour camp – approx 57,000 deaths

**Mauthausen** (Austria) labour camp - approx 122,000 – 300,000 deaths

**Theresienstadt** (Czechoslovakia) transit camp – many inmates sent to extermination camps. During the war there were 15,000 children in Theresienstadt – only 93 of these survived.

**Auschwitz** (Poland) extermination camp – the largest camp. At his trial after the war, the Commandant claimed that 3 million Jews had been killed at Auschwitz.

**Chelmno** (Poland also called Kulmhof) extermination camp – approx 153,000 – 200,000 deaths.

**Belzec** (Poland) extermination camp – approximately 600,000 deaths

**Majdenank** (Poland) extermination camp – approx 360,000 deaths

**Sobibor** (Poland) extermination camp – approx 280,000 deaths

**Treblinka** (Poland) extermination camp – approx 870,000 deaths

There were many more concentration camps than this. Also there were many massacres of Jews in areas of Eastern Europe such as **Babi Yar** (in Ukraine) where the Nazis murdered over 33,000 Jews in a ravine in 2 days during 2 days in 1941.

Online Holocaust memorial site with extensive sources and information  
<http://isurvived.org/>  
<http://isurvived.org/home.html>

**Holocaust denial or revisionism** – claims that the Holocaust didn't happen or not to the extent often quoted. One of the most well-known of these is the notorious British author, David Irving.

# TALMUDIC METHOD

Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*  
(Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1929)

This attitude toward texts had its necessary concomitant in what may again be called the Talmudic hypothetico-deductive method of text interpretation. Confronted with a statement on any subject, the Talmudic student will proceed to raise a series of questions before he satisfies himself of having understood its full meaning. If the statement is not clear enough, he will ask, 'What does the author intend to say here?' If it is too obvious, he will again ask, 'It is too plain, why then expressly say it?' If it is a statement of fact or of a concrete instance, he will then ask, 'What underlying principle does it involve?' If it is broad generalization, he will want to know exactly how much it is to include; and if it is an exception to a general rule, he will want to know how much it is to exclude. He will furthermore want to know all the circumstances under which a certain statement is true, and what qualifications are permissible.

Statements apparently contradictory to each other will be reconciled by the discovery of some subtle distinction, and statements apparently irrelevant to each other will be subtly analyzed into their ultimate elements and shown to contain some common underlying principle. The harmonization of apparent contradictions and the interlinking of apparent irrelevancies are two characteristic features of the Talmudic method of text study. And similarly every other phenomenon about the text becomes a matter of investigation. Why does the author use one word rather than another? What need was there for the mentioning of a specific instance as an illustration? Do certain authorities differ or not? If they do, why do they differ?

All these are legitimate questions for the Talmudic student of texts. And any attempt to answer these questions calls for ingenuity and skill, the power of analysis and association, and the ability to set up hypotheses - and all these must be bolstered up by a wealth of accurate information and the use of good judgment. No limitation is set upon any subject; problems run into one another; they become intricate and interwoven, one throwing light upon the other. And there is a logic underlying this method of reasoning. It is the very same kind of logic which underlies any sort of scientific research, and by which one is enabled to form hypotheses, to test them and to formulate general laws. The Talmudic student approaches the study of texts in the same manner as the scientist approaches the study of nature. Just as the scientist proceeds on the assumption that there is a uniformity and continuity in nature so the Talmudic student proceeds on the assumption that there is a uniformity and continuity in human reasoning. Now this method of text interpretation is sometimes derogatorily referred to as Talmudic quibbling or pilpul. In truth, it is nothing but the application of the scientific method to the study of texts.



# Talmud

A vast collection of Jewish laws, traditions, commentaries and debate.

A passage of law is placed in the centre of the page and different interpretations are written around it so that each page is a discussion among scholars across the centuries.



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Talmud** (**Hebrew**: תלמוד *talmūd* "instruction, learning", from a **root** *lmd* "teach, study") is a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history. It is a central text of mainstream Judaism.

The Talmud has two components: the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law; and the Gemara (c. 500 CE), a discussion of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Tanakh.

The terms *Talmud* and *Gemara* are often used interchangeably. The Gemara is the basis for all codes of rabbinic law and is much quoted in other rabbinic literature. The whole Talmud is also traditionally referred to as **Shas** (ש"ס), a Hebrew abbreviation of *shisha sedarim*, the "six orders" of the Mishnah.

## Role of the Talmud in Judaism

The Talmud is the written record of an oral tradition. It became the basis for many rabbinic legal codes and customs, of which the most important are the Mishneh Torah and the Shulchan Aruch. Orthodox and, to a lesser extent, Conservative Judaism accept the Talmud as authoritative, while Reconstructionist and Reform Judaism do not. This section briefly outlines past and current movements and their view of the Talmud's role.

In the Talmudic method of text study, the starting point is the principle that any text that is deemed worthy of serious study must be assumed to have been written with such care and precision that every term, expression, generalization or exception is significant not so much for what it states as for what it implies. The contents of ideas as well as the diction and phraseology in which they are clothed are to enter into the reasoning.

## The National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP)

*(Nazi party)*

**The Nazi Party:** A political party in Germany between 1919 and 1945 whose last leader was Adolf Hitler, appointed High Chancellor of Germany in 1933.



Reichsadler of Nazi Germany

*A historic eagle national insignia*

### Ideology

After gaining role as High Chancellor, Hitler rapidly established a totalitarian society also known as the Third Reich. The party's ideologies stressed the importance of National Socialism, Fascism, and Anti-Capitalism, while focusing on the failures of communism, liberalism, and democracy. It supported the "racial purity of the German people" and that of other Northwestern Europeans. The impure people were described as an enemy race or Lebensunwertes Leben ("life unworthy of living") which included Jews, Slavs, Roma, Communists, homosexuals, mentally and physically disabled, and many others. Nazism is the ideology and practice of the Nazi Party of Nazi Germany.

### History

<b>Political Parties in the Reichstag</b>	June 1920	May 1924	Dec. 1924	May 1928	Sep. 1930	July 1932	Nov. 1932	Mar. 1933
<u>Communist Party (KPD)</u>	4	62	45	54	77	89	100	81
<u>Social Democratic Party (SDP)</u>	102	100	131	153	143	133	121	120
<u>Catholic Centre Party (BVP)</u>	65	81	88	78	87	97	90	93
<u>Nationalist Party (DNVP)</u>	71	95	103	73	41	37	52	52
<u>Nazi Party (NSDAP)</u>	-	-	-	12	107	230	196	288
<u>Other Parties</u>	98	92	73	121	122	22	35	23

- April, 1920, Hitler advocated that the party should change its name to the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). Hitler had always been hostile to socialist ideas, especially those that involved racial or sexual equality. However, socialism was a popular political philosophy in Germany after the First World War. This was reflected in the growth in the German Social Democrat Party (SDP), the largest political party in Germany.

## THE THIRD REICH

Third Reich is the general term given to Nazi Germany under the regime of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Worker's Party from 1933 to 1945. This term was first coined by writer Arthur Moeller Van Der Bruck in 1922. Its motto was "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuhrer*" which translates as "One People, one Reich, one leader."

Following the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933, the Nazi state proceeded with a policy known as "coordination" within the first months of his leadership. This was the alignment of German individuals and institutions with Nazi goals. Areas including culture, military, education, law, and to some extent religion all came under Nazi control. This was achieved through the success of mobilizing support among Germany's top elites, including those in areas of law enforcement, medical professions and education sectors. Extensive propaganda was also utilized by the Third Reich to appeal for wide-ranging economic, social and cultural goals when necessary, thereby winning over the support of civilians and undercutting anti-Nazi sentiments.

With the death of German president Paul von Hindenburg on August 1934, the Third Reich further began to gain power. Hitler secured the army on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1934, abolished presidency and declared himself the leader (Fuhrer) of German people. All civil servants and military personnel swore a new oath to Hitler as the Fuhrer. Within six months, they either banned or forced into "voluntary" dissolution of all other political parties, effectively removing all Germans of basic civil rights.

In his newfound political status, Hitler stood outside of the state political structure when he deemed that there is a need to adopt a policy or make a decision to preserve the German race. This allowed the agencies of party, state and armed forces to operate outside the rules of law when implementing actions to achieve the ideological goals of the regime. It also allowed them to retain the façade of adhering to the legal norms.

Hitler also had the final say in both domestic and foreign policies. Nazi foreign policy was based on a racist belief that Germany was biologically destined to expand eastward by military force. Its aim was also for "racially superior" Germans to establish a permanent rule in Eastern Europe. The Third Reich's aggressive population policy gave women a key role in achieving this goal of Germany holding total control over desired states. The "racially pure" women were encouraged to bear as many "Aryan" children as possible.

The Third Reich instigated further actions when it called for elimination of "racially inferior" enemies, including people of Jewish origins. Thus the Germans planned and implemented the Holocaust, mass murder of Jews, whom the party considered to be the primary "racial" enemy.

Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. On this day, the Third Reich came to an end.

- February 1920, the NSDAP published its first programme which became known as the "Twenty-Five Points." In the programme the party refused to accept the terms of the Versailles Treaty and called for the reunification of all German people. To reinforce their ideas on nationalism, equal rights were only to be given to German citizens. "Foreigners" and "aliens" would be denied these rights. In twenty-five points Hitler redefined socialism by placing the word 'National' before it. He claimed he was only in favour of equality for those who had "German blood"

- In an attempt to obtain financial contributions from industrialists, Hitler wrote a pamphlet in 1927 entitled *The Road to Resurgence*. Only a small number of these pamphlets were printed and they were only meant for the eyes of the top industrialists in Germany. The reason that the pamphlet was kept secret was that it contained information that would have upset Hitler's working-class supporters. In the pamphlet Hitler implied that the anti-capitalist measures included in the original twenty-five points of the NSDAP programme would not be implemented if he gained power.

- The fortunes of the NSDAP changed with the Wall Street Crash in October 1929. Desperate for capital, the United States began to recall loans from Europe. One of the consequences of this was a rapid increase in unemployment. Germany, whose economy relied heavily on investment from the United States, suffered more than any other country in Europe. Hitler, who was considered a fool in 1928 when he predicted economic disaster, was now seen in a different light. People began to say that if he was clever enough to predict the depression maybe he also knew how to solve it. He used the depression to his advantage, claiming that parliamentary democracy did not work. The NSDAP argued that only Hitler could provide the strong government that Germany needed. Hitler and other Nazi leaders travelled round the country giving speeches putting over this point of view.

- In the General Election that took place in September 1930, the Nazi Party increased its number of representatives in parliament from 14 to 107. Hitler was now the leader of the second largest party in Germany.

- January 30<sup>th</sup> 1933, Paul Hindenburg appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor at the head of a cabinet which included only a minority of Nazi ministers.

- Hitler held a new election in March 1933. With the communists eliminated, the Nazis dominated the election with 43.9%, and with their Nationalist (DNVP) allies, achieved a parliamentary majority (51.8%)

Date	Votes	Percentage	Seats in Reichstag	Background
May 1924	1,918,300	6.5	32	Hitler in prison
December 1924	907,300	3.0	14	Hitler is released from prison
May 1928	810,100	2.6	12	
September 1930	6,409,600	18.3	107	After the financial crisis
July 1932	13,745,800	37.4	230	
November 1932	11,737,000	33.1	196	
March 1933	17,277,000	43.9	288	After Hitler had become Chancellor

*Federal election results from 1924-1933*

**Anti-Semitism:** Prejudice or hostile behaviour toward Jews, often rooted in hatred of their ethnic background, culture, and/or religion.

- Anti-Semitism was coined in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr, an anti-Jewish propagandist in Germany, to describe hatred of the Jews. From the Greek words "anti", meaning "against" and "Semite" (a broad group of non-European ethnic groups including Arabs). The term is a misnomer, since it is used with reference to Jews only rather than to all Semites.
- It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.
- Hostility toward Jews dates to ancient times because of religious differences, a situation worsened as a result of the competition with Christianity.
- From the beginning of Jewish history, Jews were criticized and sometimes punished for their efforts to remain a separate social and religious group - one that refused to adopt the values and the way of life of the non-Jewish societies in which it lived.
- By the 4th century, Christians tended to see Jews as an alien people whose refusal of Christ had condemned them to perpetual migration. The rise of Christianity greatly increased hatred of Jews. They became seen not merely as outsiders but as a people who rejected Jesus and crucified him.
- Developed during the Middle Ages were many of the stereotypes of Jews (e.g., the blood libel, alleged greed, conspiracy against humankind) that have persisted into the modern era.
- The Enlightenment and the French Revolution brought a new religious freedom to Europe in the 18th century but did not reduce anti-Semitism, because Jews continued to be regarded as outsiders.
- In the 19th century violent discrimination intensified and so-called "scientific racism" emerged, which based hostility to the Jews on their supposed biological characteristics and replaced religion as the primary basis for anti-Semitism. Judaism was attacked as an outdated belief that blocked human progress.
- In the 20th century the economic and political dislocations caused by World War I intensified anti-Semitism, and racist anti-Semitism flourished in Nazi Germany. Nazi persecution of the Jews led to the Holocaust, in which an estimated six million Jews were exterminated. Despite the defeat of the Nazis in World War II, anti-Semitism remained a problem in many parts of the world into the 21st century.

Overall, anti-Semitism is more than just prejudice and encompasses all forms of hostility manifested toward Jews throughout history.

# Nazi Ideology

*“Nazism, or National Socialism, refers primarily to the totalitarian ideology and practices of the Nazi Party. Nazism was not a precise, theoretically grounded ideology, or a monolithic movement, but rather a mainly German combination of various ideologies and groups, centred around anger at the Treaty of Versailles and what was considered to have been a Jewish/Communist conspiracy to humiliate Germany at the end of the First World War.”*

## Key Elements of Nazism

- **Racism, Anti-Slavism (negative attitudes towards Slavic Peoples) and Anti-Semitism (hostility towards the Jews)**
  - This led to the belief in the superiority of the White, Germanic, Aryan or Nordic races and the creation of a master race.
  - Racist ideas were also the basis of ‘negative racial policy’, in the form of the exclusion of undesirable individuals from the German race. A result of this notion was the Nazi desire to remove Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, the handicapped, and others, from the German *Volksgemeinschaft* (‘people’s community’). This ‘negative racial policy’ or ‘racial hygiene’ was carried out systematically with great cruelty after 1933.
- **Social Darwinism**
  - A philosophy that originated in the latter half of the 19th century stating that humans are subject to the same laws of natural selection as plants and animals. It also states that the strongest or fittest should survive and flourish in society, while the weak and unfit should be allowed to die.
  - **Eugenics** – scientific field involving the selective breeding of humans in order to achieve desirable traits in future generations. It sometimes included sterilisation and euthanasia.
- **Collectivism** – any moral, political, or social outlook that stresses human interdependence and the importance of a collective, rather than the importance of separate individuals
- **Pan-Germanism** – a political movement aiming for unity of the German-speaking peoples within Europe
- **Nazi Militarism** – the belief that great nations grow from military power, and maintain order in the world
- **‘Führerprinzip’ (Leader Principle)** – belief in the leader; responsibility up the ranks, and authority down the ranks
- **Anti-Marxism, Anti-Communism and Anti-Bolshevism**
- **Anti-Parliamentarism**
  - The rejection of democracy, with the ending of the existence of political parties, labour unions and free press.
  - Totalitarianism and opposition to economic and political liberalism

## ‘The Final Solution’

The Nazis frequently used euphemistic language to disguise the true nature of their crimes. This term was short for Final Solution of the Jewish Question and was the Nazis' own term for their attempt to kill all the Jews in Europe. Since about 1980 it has usually been referred to by most historians as the Holocaust. The Final Solution was the genocide of about six million Jews by the Nazis in 1941-1945.

The term suggests, misleadingly, that there was a real problem and that other solutions had been tried but had failed. From 1933-1939 the Nazis tried to intimidate the German Jews into leaving the country. However, with the Nazi conquests beginning in September 1939 the size of the Jewish population under German rule rose sharply.

The Nazis saw the Jews as a problem for Germany, for Europe and for the world. They wanted to "solve" the problem, once and for all. Late in 1941 the Nazi leadership's state-sponsored racism produced anti-Jewish legislation, economic boycotts, and violence, all of which aimed to systematically isolate Jews from society and drive them out of the country.



View from atop the train of Jews lined up for selection on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Jewish women and children from Subcarpathian Rus who have been selected for death at Auschwitz-Birkenau, walk toward the gas chambers.





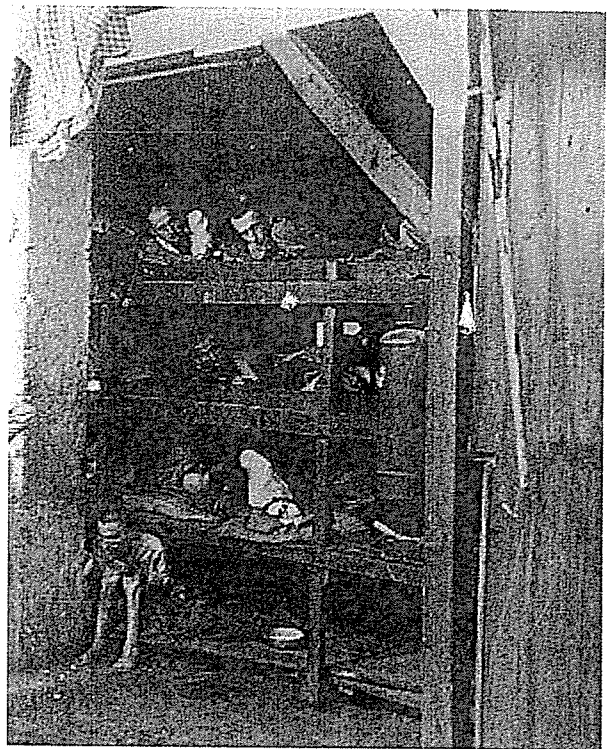
Jewish women and children from Subcarpathian Rus await selection on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



New arrivals to Auschwitz from Subcarpathian Rus attend to their personal belongings.



German soldiers of the Waffen-SS and the Reich Labor Service look on as a member of Einsatzgruppe D prepares to shoot a Ukrainian Jew kneeling on the edge of a mass grave filled with corpses. (1942)



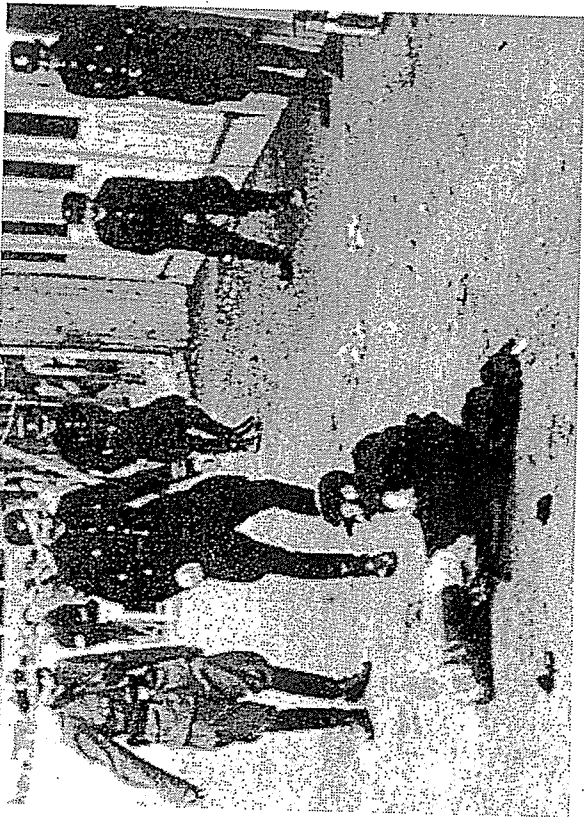
Survivors suffering from malnutrition and a variety of other diseases in a section of the hospital barracks. The inmates in the upper bunks were unable to go to the latrine, making the sanitation in this section intolerable and immediate evacuation necessary. (April 16, 1945)



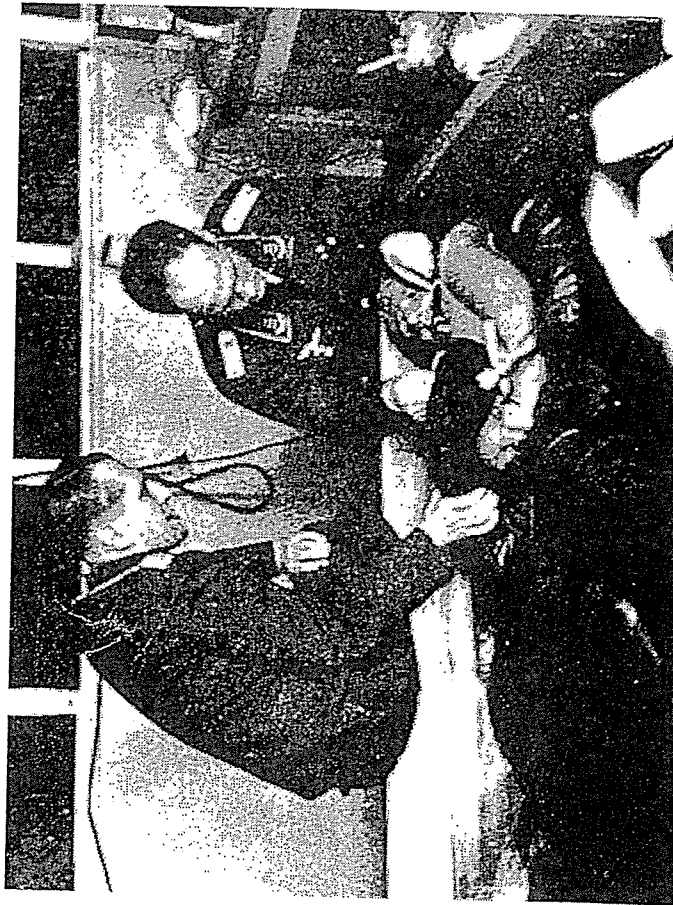
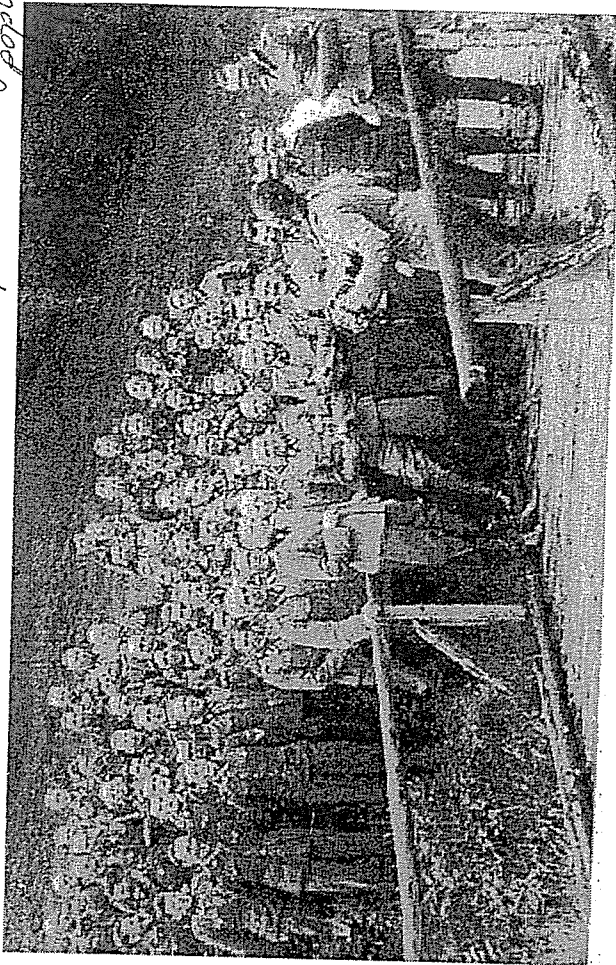
A prisoner being suspended and subjected to low pressure experimentation. (March - August 1942)



Public Humiliation of Jews



Nazi's Celebration of Triumph over the Jewish population.



Nazi's medical experimentation of Jews.



Public Humiliation of Jews.

## Star of David

The Star of David is known in Hebrew as the Shield of David or Magen David. The Shield of David is a generally recognized symbol of Jewish identity and Judaism. The *Magen David* (shield of David, or as it is more commonly known, the Star of David) is the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today, but it is actually a relatively new Jewish symbol. It is supposed to represent the shape of King David's shield (or perhaps the emblem on it), but there is really no support for that claim in any early rabbinic literature.

Scholars such as Franz Rosenzweig have attributed deep theological significance to the symbol. For example, some note that the top triangle strives upward, toward God, while the lower triangle strives downward, toward the real world. Some note that the intertwining makes the triangles inseparable, like the Jewish people. Some say that the three sides represent the three types of Jews: *Kohanim*, Levites and Israel. The symbol of intertwined equilateral triangles is a common one in the Middle East and North Africa, and is thought to bring good luck. It appears occasionally in early Jewish artwork.

In the middle ages, Jews often were required to wear badges to identify themselves as Jews, much as they were in Nazi Germany, but these Jewish badges were not always the familiar *Magen David*. For example, a fifteenth century painting by Nuno Goncalves features a rabbi wearing a six-pointed badge that looks more or less like an asterisk.

In the 17th century, it became a popular practice to put *Magen Davids* on the outside of synagogues, to identify them as Jewish houses of worship in much the same way that a cross identified a Christian house of worship.

The *Magen David* gained popularity as a symbol of Judaism when it was adopted as the emblem of the Zionist movement in 1897, but the symbol continued to be controversial for many years afterward. When the modern state of Israel was founded, there was much debate over whether this symbol should be used on the flag.

A Star of David, often yellow-colored, was used by the Nazis during the Holocaust as a method of identifying Jews. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939 there were initially different local decrees forcing Jews to wear a distinct sign – in the General Government e.g. a white armband with a blue Star of David on it, in the Warthegau a yellow badge in the form of a Star of David on the left side of the breast and on the back.

The requirement to wear the Star of David with the word *Jude* (German for Jew) inscribed was then extended to all Jews over the age of 6 in the Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (by a decree issued on September 1, 1941 signed by Reinhard Heydrich) and was gradually introduced in other German-occupied areas, where local words were used (e.g. *Juif* in French, *Jood* in Dutch).

Today, the *Magen David* is a universally recognized symbol of Jewry. It appears on the flag of the state of Israel, and the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross is known as the Magen David Adom.

# Genocide

## History

Numerous examples of genocides can be found throughout history; some notable 20th century genocides occurred under the Nazi's during the Holocaust, in Bosnia under the Slobodan Milosevic, and the African regions of Rwanda.

## What is it?

The term "genocide" did not exist before 1944. A Polish-Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin formed the term. It was created during the Holocaust and was declared an international crime in the **1948** United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a very specific term, referring to violent crimes committed against groups with the intent to destroy a racial, national, ethnical or religious existence of a group.

These crimes include:

- ***Killing members of the group***: includes killing and actions causing death
- ***Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group***: consists of inflicting trauma on members of the group through various methods of torture such as rape, sexual violence, forced or pressured to use drugs and mutilation.
- ***Deliberately inflicting systematic damage to the group to bring about its obliteration***: includes the deliberate deprivation of resources needed for the group's physical survival, such as clean water, food, clothing; shelter or medical services. These deliberate deprivations can be imposed through confiscation of harvests, blockage of foods, detention camps and forcible relocation.
- ***Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group***: consisting of involuntary sterilization, forced abortion, prohibition of marriage and long-term separation of men and women intended to prevent procreation.
- ***Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group***: may be imposed by direct force or fear of violence, detention and psychological oppression.

The law protects **four** groups:

1. A **national group** means a set of individual whose identity is defined by a national origin.
2. A **racial group** means a set of individuals whose identity is defined by physical characteristics.
3. A **religious group** is a set of individuals whose identity is defined by common religious beliefs, practices or rituals.
4. An **ethnical group** is a set of individuals whose identity is defined by common cultural traditions, language or heritage.

# Zyklon B Gas



- Cyanide-based pesticide infamous for its use by Nazi Germany against human beings in gas chambers of extermination camps during the Holocaust.
- In early 1942, Zyklon B had been selected by the Nazi Regime as the preferred extermination tool for both the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek extermination camps during the Holocaust. The chemical claimed the lives of roughly 1.2 million people in these camps.
- Zyklon B was used by Nazi Germany to poison prisoners in the gas chambers of their network of extermination camps throughout Europe.
- Zyklon B was used at Auschwitz Birkenau, Majdanek, Sachsenhausen and one of the Operation Reinhard camps.
- At the other extermination camps, Carbon monoxide from engine exhaust was used in the gas chambers or mobile gas vans. Most of the victims were Jews and the Zyklon B gas became a central symbol of the Holocaust.
- Zyklon B was used in the concentration camps also for delousing to control typhus. The chemical used in the gas chambers was deliberately made without the warning odorant. In quantitative terms, more than 95% of the Zyklon B delivered to Auschwitz was used for delousing and less than 5% in the homicidal gas chambers.
- In January or February 1940, 250 Gypsy children from Brno in the Buchenwald concentration camp were used as guinea pigs for testing the Zyklon B gas.
- On September 3, 1941, around 600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 sick Polish prisoners were gassed with Zyklon B at Auschwitz camp I; this was the first experiment with the gas at Auschwitz. The experiments lasted more than 20 hours.
- According to Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz, bunker 1 held 800 people, and bunker 2 held 1,200. Once the chamber was full, the doors were screwed shut and solid pellets of Zyklon B were dropped into the chambers through vents in the sidewalls, releasing the cyanide gas. Those inside died within 20 minutes; the speed of death depended on how close the inmate was standing to a gas vent, according to Höss, who estimated that about one third of the victims died immediately.
- Johann Kremer, an SS doctor who oversaw the gassings, testified that: "Shouting and screaming of the victims could be heard through the opening and it was clear that they fought for their lives." When they were removed, if the chamber had been very congested, as they often were, the victims were found half-squatting, their skin colored pink with red and green spots, some foaming at the mouth or bleeding from the ears.

# Ghettos

During World War II, ghettos were city districts (often enclosed) in which the Germans concentrated the municipal and sometimes regional Jewish population and forced them to live under miserable conditions. Ghettos isolated Jews by separating Jewish communities from the non-Jewish population and from other Jewish communities. The Germans established at least 1,000 ghettos in German-occupied and annexed Poland and the Soviet Union alone. German occupation authorities established the first ghetto in Poland in Piotrków Trybunalski in October 1939.

The Germans regarded the establishment of ghettos as a provisional measure to control and segregate Jews while the Nazi leadership in Berlin deliberated upon options to realize the goal of removing the Jewish population. In many places ghettoization lasted a relatively short time. Some ghettos existed for only a few days, others for months or years. With the implementation of the "Final Solution" (the plan to murder all European Jews) beginning in late 1941, the Germans systematically destroyed the ghettos. The Germans and their auxiliaries either shot ghetto residents in mass graves located nearby or deported them, usually by train, to killing centers where they were murdered. German SS and police authorities deported a small minority of Jews from ghettos to forced-labor camps and concentration camps.

There were three types of ghettos: closed ghettos, open ghettos, and destruction ghettos.

The largest ghetto in Poland was the Warsaw ghetto, where over 400,000 Jews were crowded into an area of 1.3 square miles. Other major ghettos were established in the cities of Lodz, Krakow, Bialystok, Lvov, Lublin, Vilna, Kovno, Czestochowa, and Minsk. Tens of thousands of western European Jews were also deported to ghettos in the east.

The Germans ordered Jews residing in ghettos to wear identifying badges or armbands and also required many Jews to perform forced labor for the German Reich. Daily life in the ghettos was administered by Nazi-appointed Jewish councils (Judenraete). A ghetto police force enforced the orders of the German authorities and the ordinances of the Jewish councils, including the facilitation of deportations to killing centers. Jewish police officials, like Jewish council members, served at the whim of the German authorities. The Germans did not hesitate to kill Jewish policemen who were perceived to have failed to carry out orders.

Jews responded to the ghetto restrictions with a variety of resistance efforts. Ghetto residents frequently engaged in so-called illegal activities, such as smuggling food, medicine, weapons or intelligence across the ghetto walls, often without the knowledge or approval of the Jewish councils. Some Jewish councils and some individual council members tolerated or encouraged the illicit trade because the goods were necessary to keep ghetto residents alive. Although the Germans generally demonstrated little concern in principle about religious worship, attendance at cultural events, or participation in youth movements inside the ghetto walls; they often perceived a "security threat" in *any* social gathering and would move ruthlessly to incarcerate or kill perceived ringleaders and participants. The Germans generally forbade any form of consistent schooling or education.

During the Holocaust, ghettos were a central step in the Nazi process of control, dehumanization, and mass murder of the Jews.

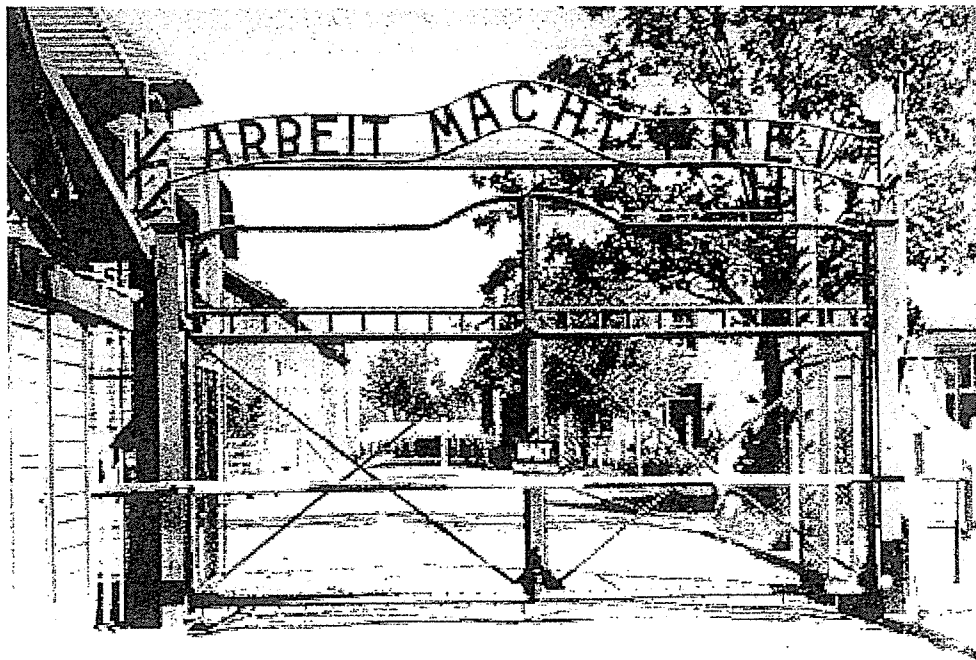




Synagogue converted into a shelter to house Jewish families - Krakow ghetto, 1940 - 1941



Chopping up furniture to use as fuel - Krakow Ghetto, 1940



Entrance gate to Auschwitz concentration camp. "Arbeit Macht Frei": Work makes one free

## Camps -Kaarina Clayhills

### Bergen Belsen

- In April 1943 the Nazis created Bergen-Belsen in Lower Saxony near the city of Celle as a transit centre - Bergen-Belsen was never officially given formal concentration camp status.
- Bergen-Belsen began as a prison camp for captured prisoners of war.
- Most died at Bergen-Belsen from being shot, hung, starved to death, or killed by disease.
- This camp did not fit the standard organization of a concentration camp. It had several camps that segregated the prisoners. Camp officials even traded important prisoners, including Jews, in exchange for money from different governments.
- Composed of numerous camps, established at various times during its existence. There were three main components: the prisoners of war camp, the "residence camp" and the "prisoners' camp"
- The camp population reached over 60,000 by April 15, 1945
- Sanitation was incredibly inadequate, with few toilets and water facilities for the tens of thousands of prisoners. Overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and the lack of adequate food, water, and shelter led to an outbreak of diseases such as typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and dysentery, causing an ever increasing number of deaths.

### Dachau

- On March 22, 1933 a concentration camp for political prisoners was set up in Dachau.
- This camp served as a model for all later concentration camps and as a "school of violence" for the SS men under whose command it stood.
- In the twelve years of its existence over 200.000 persons from all over Europe were imprisoned here and in the numerous subsidiary camps 41 500 were murdered.
- On April 29 1945, American troops liberated the survivors.
- More than 10,000 Jewish men were interned there.
- Inside Dachau the prisoners lived in long wooden huts with each hut housing 270 inmates
- The interior of each hut was divided into five rooms, each containing two rows of bunks, stacked three-high, sleeping a total of 54 persons
- A gas chamber was established and used with the medical experiments

### Buchenwald

- Located in Weimar
- Established in 1937
- Estimated number of victims was more than 56 000. This estimate does not include 13 000 inmates transferred to Auschwitz or other extermination camps
- The camp was built by the prisoners. During 1937, the SS forced the prisoners to carry huge stones from the quarry to the camp. Those who had the misfortune to carry stones that were too small in the eyes of the SS, were immediately killed
- From July 1937 to March 1945, a total of 238,980 prisoners from thirty countries passed through Buchenwald, of these 43,045 were killed or perished in some other fashion there
- A primary cause of death was illness due to harsh camp conditions, with starvation - and its consequent illnesses. Malnourished and suffering from disease, many were literally "worked to death". Many inmates died as a result of human experimentation or fell victim to arbitrary acts perpetrated by the SS guards. Other prisoners were simply murdered, primarily by shooting and hanging

## Concentration Camps

### Treblinka

The extermination camp at Treblinka in which hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered was built in the spring of 1942 near an existing penal labour camp and covered an area of 17 hectares. The camp was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence camouflaged with interwoven greenery to hide what was happening inside. Anti-tank obstacles and rolls of barbed wire were placed outside the fence. Watch towers were additionally positioned around the camp.

The first railway transports of victims destined for destruction arrived at the Treblinka camp on June 22, 1942, and from that time there was a constant stream of fresh arrivals.

Treblinka was in reality a place of mass execution - a death camp like Auschwitz. After New Year, 1943, the number of transports began to diminish. In February or March, 1943, Himmler visited Treblinka, and the eradication of all traces of the crimes by wholesale burning of corpses began.

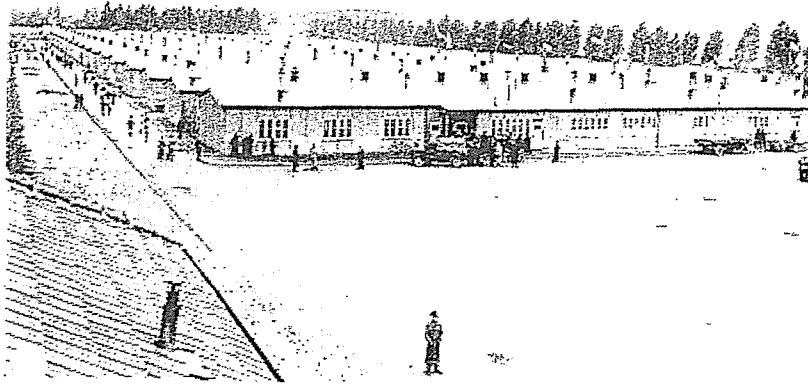
It has been estimated that about 850,000 people were killed here - Jews from occupied Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR, as well as from Germany and Austria. Polish and German Gypsies were also sent to Treblinka.

Treblinka was finally closed in November, 1943.

### Belzec

Belzec was the first of the Nazi German Extermination camps created for implementing Operation Reinhard during the Holocaust. It started as a labour camp in April 1940. It was situated in the Lublin district forty-seven miles north of the major city of Lvov, conveniently between the large Jewish populations of south east Poland and eastern Galicia.

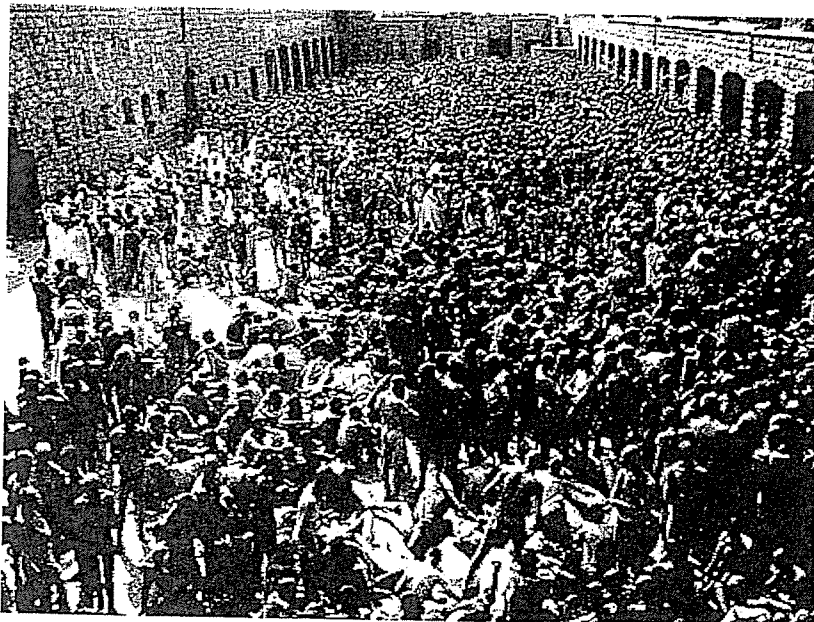
The first commandant of Belzec was SS Colonel General Christian Wirth, a former police officer who had played a leading role in implementing the T4 Euthanasia program. Wirth developed his own ideas on the basis of the experience he had gained in the Euthanasia program and decided to supply the fixed gas chamber with gas produced by the internal-combustion engine of a motorcar.



Prisoners' barracks in the Dachau concentration camp, May 3, 1945



Washing and shaving newly arrived prisoners in the Buchenwald concentration camp, 1940



Six thousand Mauthausen prisoners wait in the camp courtyard for disinfection. After 24 hours, nearly 140 had died. July 1941

Toward the end of the war, anxious to disguise the evidence of their crime, the Germans tried to clean out the graves and burn the corpses.

The Belzec extermination centre began operations March, 1942 and ended operations December 1942. It is estimated that about 600,000 Jews were murdered at Belzec and thousands of Gypsies. Those remaining when the camp ceased to function were transported to the Sobibor death camp and murdered. Only two Jews are known to have survived Belzec: Rudolf Reder and Chaim Herszman. The lack of survivors may be the reason why this camp is so little known despite its number of victims.

### Chelmno

Chelmno extermination camp, also known as the Kulmhof concentration camp, was a Nazi German extermination camp that was situated 70 kilometres from Lodz, near a small village called *Chelmno nad Nerem*. After annexation by Germany Kulmhof was included into Reichsgau Wartheland in 1939. The camp was opened in 1941 to kill the Jews of the Lodz Ghetto and the Warthegau.

At least 153,000 people were killed in the camp, mainly Poles, Jews from the Łódź Ghetto and the surrounding area, along with Gypsies from Greater Poland and some Hungarian Jews, Czechs, and Soviet prisoners of war.

### Majdanek

Majdanek was a German Nazi concentration camp on the outskirts of Lublin, Poland, established during German Nazi occupation of Poland. The camp operated from October 1, 1941 until July 22, 1944, when it was captured nearly intact by the advancing Soviet Red Army. Although conceived as a forced labor camp and not as an extermination camp, over 79,000 people died there (59,000 of them Polish Jews) during the 34 months of its operation.

Among German Nazi concentration camps, Majdanek was unusual in that it was located near a major city, not hidden away at a remote rural location. It is also notable as the best-preserved concentration camp of the Holocaust - as it was close to the former Soviet border, there was too little time for the Nazis to destroy the evidence before the Red Army arrived.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS  
AT THE SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM

MARK BARKER, THE FIFTIETH GATE  
HARPER COLLINS 1997

CAN MEMORY ALTER HISTORY? CAN HISTORY ALTER MEMORY? HOW ARE  
HISTORY AND MEMORY DIFFERENT?

1. Baker commences his novel with the words It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory. What do you think this comment tries to reveal about memory?

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2. In order to further gather facts about his parents' experiences in the Holocaust, Baker interviews an old survivor by the name of Avraham. The purpose of this trip Baker tells us (p. 290) is a fact-finding mission, a further attempt to confirm my version of history through a witness to the events in my father's town. Why does Baker say "my version of history"? Can we have a true and factual version of history? Explain

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3. I was searching for her history in order to vindicate her stories. (p. 177) This quote raises a paradox. If Baker's mother's history contradicted her memories, is this significant for who she is? Conversely, if her history and memory are complimentary, does this in any way have a greater influence on who she is?

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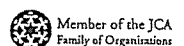
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Sydney Jewish Museum  
148 Darlinghurst Road  
Darlinghurst NSW 2010  
T 02 9360 7999  
F 02 9331 4245  
sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au



4. So when I exhausted memory I turned to history (p. 213). What does this show about the relationship between memory and history?

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5. As memory is handed down to second and third generation descendants, different aspects are highlighted. Depending on the specific interest, age, gender of the listener, the "memory" of a grandparent is re-interpreted. Write an account of your "hearing" of the Museum Guide's story. Compare your account to another student who heard the same survivor story. How do your accounts differ? How do these differences demonstrate the difficulty of studying the concepts of memory, history and time?

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6. As Baker talks to his mother she comments that her shmattes are her memories. What role do you think possessions can play in evoking memories? How does the Museum seek to evoke memory through use of artifacts? Which artifacts were most powerful for you in terms of relating memory?

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7. The stories of the Survivor Guides are upsetting and disturbing both for them and for the listener. Reflect on why it is important for the stories to be told. To what extent is the "horror" an important part of the memory for future generations?

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8. Each Guide's story is unique, yet the experiences they endured are in many instances similar. Does this mean that one story is more "true" than another? Is it possible to have many truths of the same event? To form an opinion on this, you may wish to re-visit the Museum and arrange for a guided tour with a second Survivor Guide.

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9. The Sydney Jewish Museum is dedicated to the Memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The Memorial Spaces, particularly the Children's Memorial, attempt to give name and face to the countless victims through the stories of individuals. How might the goals of this exhibition and those of Baker's novel be similar? Contrast the Memorial with the historical displays in the Museum – do they try and achieve a different goal? What do you see as the key difference? What insight might this give you into issues of history and memory?

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### MIDRASH AS LITERARY DEVICE IN MARK BAKER'S '50TH GATE'

The word MIDRASH comes from the Hebrew root DARASH meaning 'to investigate' or 'seek out'. Indeed Midrash is exactly that – it is an investigation of the Biblical text in order to try and probe its deeper meaning/s.

Midrash therefore refers to both a method of interpretation (exegesis) and a body of literature that is a result of this literary methodology.

Midrash is an ancient form of exegesis but it continues to be practiced in Jewish communities in the present as Jews continue to search for meaning and relevance in their sacred texts. Midrashic method rests upon four basic assumptions concerning the Biblical text (*Ref: James Kugel, The Bible As It Was*):

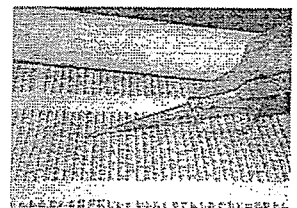
1. The Biblical text is cryptic ie. not self-evident. We therefore need to search the text to understand its true or multi layered meanings.
2. The Biblical text is perfect and self-referential. For example, if the text seems to contradict itself (such as the different accounts of the number of Israelites that left Egypt), this simply means that we have not understood its true meaning OR the answer is to be found elsewhere in the Bible.
3. The Biblical text does not simply describe Israel's collective past but is relevant to its present—particularly to current beliefs and practices.
4. The Biblical text is in some way Divine in origin or divinely inspired.

Midrash is comprised of three elements (*Ref: Jacob Neusner, The Way of Torah*):

1. Exegesis
2. Starting with Scripture
3. Ending in community

Midrash can begin as word play, a concern with textual irregularity, word play, parable and all of the above. Ultimately it seeks to provide a 'lesson' of sorts – whether that be to expound a verse more clearly and with greater relevance to contemporary communal needs, to make a political or theological point or seek out an answer to a question posed by the text itself. It is a varied and immense literature spanning the entirety of Scripture, beginning, some argue, within the Biblical text itself, reaching its greatest heights in classical Rabbinic literature and continuing into the present day.

Midrash is a corpus of literature that has enabled Jewish communities to remain in dialogue with a living Biblical text – bridging the gap between past and future – and enabling the text to intersect and inform the day to day life of generations of Jewish communities.





Consider the midrash below:

*Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rav: When Moses ascended on high [to receive the Torah] he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing taggin to the letters. Moses said: "Lord of the Universe, who stays thy hand?" He replied: "There will be a man at the end of many generations, Akiba Ben Joseph by name, who will expound, upon each title, heaps and heaps of laws." "Lord of the Universe," said Moses, "permit me to see him." He replied: "Turn around."*

*Moses went (into the academy of Rabbi Akiba) and sat down behind eight rows (of Akiba's disciples). Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the master "Whence do you know it?" and the latter replied, "It is a law given to Moses at Sinai, he was comforted."*

This example powerfully illustrates how midrash has allowed the Hebrew Bible to remain a living document in Jewish communities throughout history. The parable spans literally thousands of years as Moses is transported in time from Sinai to the second century yeshiva of the famous Talmudic Rabbi Akiva. Yet the point of the parable is clear: Divine law is immutable and unchanging—it was 'given to Moses at Sinai'. All Akiva is doing is 'interpreting' what is already there. Yet in so doing, he is making the law vital and relevant for the Jewish community in which he lived.

Similarly, in Baker's novel, midrashic technique is used to link and differentiate ancient and modern Jewish history – particularly the experience of the Holocaust. Consider the following passage:

*Our Sages remember: Rabbi Hanina Ben Teradion was studying the Torah and holding a Scroll of the Law to his chest. Our enemies took hold of him, wrapped him in the Scroll, placed bundles of branches around him and set them on fire.*

*His disciples called out, 'Rabbi, what do you see?'*

*He answered them, "The parchment is burning but the letters are soaring high above me."*

*My parents remember:*

*The fire*

*The parchment burning*

*The bodies buried*

*Letters soaring high,*

*Turned to ashen dust.*

*(50th Gate p. 174)*

1. How does Baker make use of midrashic technique in this excerpt? What is his 'textual hook' or 'reference' and what is the broader point he is trying to make?

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2. How does this passage illustrate Baker's view that the persecution suffered by Jews in the Holocaust was somehow qualitatively different from previous persecutions?

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3. Baker's 'retelling' of his grandmother's last day in Chapter 42 could be read as an extended midrash. What is the significance of this chapter in terms of the overall themes of history and memory that the book employs?

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## REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST

### Teacher Background notes:

#### 1. During the Second World War

Information about the Holocaust began as early as 1941 with news that Jews were being rounded up and massacred in Poland and the Soviet Union. These reports grew in scale during 1942 and 43 but were given no prominence in newspapers, appearing on inside pages and as a couple of inches of neutral copy.

For more detail of early reporting see Journalism of the Holocaust

[http://www.ushmm.org/misc-bin/add\\_goback/lectures/kalb.htm](http://www.ushmm.org/misc-bin/add_goback/lectures/kalb.htm)

Students should research the work of Jan Karski, Szmuel Zygelboym and the Bergson group (all easily Googled) all of whom tried to convince authorities that the situation of Jews was dire and required urgent action.

By the end of 1942, reports confirmed that the Nazis intended to exterminate all of European Jewry. Both in the United States and Britain, Jewish groups demanded that their governments take a stand against the atrocities. The two governments then planned a conference to quiet public opinion. They chose inaccessible Bermuda as the conference's venue in order to control the number of reporters and private representatives attending. Nothing was accomplished.

#### The Wannsee Conference and the “final solution”

No representation of the Holocaust would be complete without some reference to the German perspective.

On January 20, 1942, fifteen high-ranking German official leaders met at a villa by Lake Wannsee near Berlin. The purpose of the conference was to devise the “final solution to the Jewish question in Europe”.

The “final solution” was the Nazis' code name for the deliberate, carefully planned destruction, or genocide, of all European Jews. The Nazis used the vague term “final solution” to hide their policy of mass murder from the rest of the world. In fact, the men at Wannsee talked about methods of killing, about liquidation, about “extermination.” A chilling film Conspiracy (2001) directed by Frank Pierson and starring Kenneth Branagh recreates the discussions at the conference.

#### Himmler’s Poznan Speech on the proposed extermination of the Jewish people

A recording of Himmler’s speech to SS Gruppenführers in October 1943 was found by the allies after the war and used as evidence in the Nuremberg trials. Below are some extracts:

*[0:20]* I want to also mention a very difficult subject ... before you, with complete candor. It should be discussed amongst us, yet nevertheless, we will never speak about it in public. Just as we did not hesitate on June 30 to carry out our duty as ordered, and stand comrades who had failed against the wall and shoot them -- about which we have never spoken, and never will speak. That was, thank God, a kind of tact natural to us...Everyone ... shuddered, and everyone was clear that the next time, he would do the same thing again, if it were commanded and necessary.

*[1:27]* I am talking about the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people<sup>[1]</sup>. It is one of those things that is easily said. *[quickly]* “The Jewish people is being exterminated<sup>[2]</sup>,” every Party member will tell you, “perfectly clear, it's part of our plans, we're eliminating the Jews, exterminating<sup>[2]</sup> them, a small matter”. *[less quickly]* And then along they all come, all the 80 million upright Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. *[mockingly]* They say: all the others are swine, but here is a first-class Jew. *[a few people laugh]* And ... *[audience cough]* *[carefully]* ... none of them has seen it, has endured it. Most of you will know what it means when 100 bodies lie together, when 500 are there or when there are 1000. And ... to have seen this through and -- with the

exception of human weakness -- to have remained decent, has made us hard and is a page of glory never mentioned and never to be mentioned...

[3:23] We have taken away the riches that they had, and ... I have given a strict order, which Obergruppenführer Pohl[3] has carried out, we have delivered these riches [carefully] to the Reich, to the State. We have taken nothing from them for ourselves. A few, who have offended against this, will be judged[4] in accordance with an order, [loudly] that I gave at the beginning: he who takes even one Mark of this is a dead man. [less loudly] A number of SS men have offended against this order. They are very few, and they will be dead men [yells] WITHOUT MERCY! We have the moral right, we had the duty to our people to do it, to kill[5] this people who would kill[5] us. We however do not have the right to enrich ourselves with even one fur, with one Mark, with one cigarette, with one watch, with anything. That we do not have. Because we don't want, at the end of all this, to get sick and die from the same bacillus that we have exterminated[2]. I will never see it happen that even one ... bit of putrefaction comes in contact with us, or takes root in us. On the contrary, where it might try to take root, we will burn it out together. But altogether we can say: slowly, carefully] We have carried out this most difficult task for the love of our people. And we have suffered no defect within us, in our soul, or in our character.

<http://www.holocaust-history.org/himmler-poznan/>

## 2. Horror and outrage at the End of the War

Once the war was over and images of the liberation of the death camps flowed out to the world, there was no stopping the tide of horror and outrage that they caused. Students can find these images on the Internet in several Holocaust memorial sites <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/liberation/> . The Nuremberg trials followed where survivor testimonies were recorded.

## 3. The silence of the Fifties and Sixties

In the decades following the war there was very little published about living through the Holocaust. Survivors felt as if they could not make themselves understood as the experience was so far outside normal human behaviour that language could not convey the horror of what actually happened or what it felt like. Their memories were unspeakable and in the face of such catastrophe they could say nothing.

In an Australian study of how the experience of Holocaust survivors was communicated to their children, Ruth Wajnryb documents the nature of this silence. When I heard people ask my father questions about the war - 'Did you lose your family in the war?' 'Did your parents die in the camps?' I knew without knowing that these verbs 'lose' and 'die' were inadequate for the task. I sensed how the differential between their meaning and the reality threatened to engulf and capsize the conversation... Many times I saw him hesitate momentarily when asked such a question; he would seem to be quelling something within; and then he would nod silently. (*The Silence* p. 83)

## 4. Post war politics

Aside from the inadequacy of language to represent the experience, post-war politics dictated whose stories were told. Germany was now needed by the West as a bulwark against Communism in the Cold War. Former enemies were now new allies. The Jews who had stumbled out, barely alive, from the ashes of Europe in 1945, discovered that they were witnesses to events that the world would rather forget.

## 5. Post war films

Films produced in this period are shaped into conventional generic forms. *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1959 is most notable for its message of hope at its end – deeply ironic but often read in terms of the indomitable nature of the human spirit. We don't even find out that this 15 year old girl, so full of potential, dies in a

concentration camp. *Judgement at Nuremberg* in 1961, however, while containing some newsreel footage of the camps, is presented as part of the American myth of righting wrongs and bringing freedom and justice to the oppressed. *The Pawnbroker* (1964) can only express the anguish of the Holocaust in a silent scream – an image of the inexpressible.

## 6 Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Controversy of Representation

It was not until 1978 that a television series entitled *Holocaust* became the catalyst for survivors to begin telling their stories. Perhaps they felt strong enough after more than 30 years or perhaps they noticed that people might listen. In any case, the series invoked the need to bear witness and provided a framework for how to do so.

It was at this time that the controversy began. The series was heavily criticised by Elie Wiesel for the trivialising of the events, calling it "morally objectionable and indecent." So the debate about the morality of turning the Holocaust into art began. Steven Spielberg, director of *Schindler's List* (1993) describes the Holocaust as "an ineffable experience only understood by those who survived the camps." However, the fact that these films are deeply disturbing attests to the need for continuing remembrance. It has also been argued that without the film and television dramatizations and the broadcast of film and photographs from the camps themselves, there would be many who would know nothing about the Holocaust.

The issue of Holocaust films being morally objectionable surfaced again with the release of *Life is Beautiful* (1997) directed and starring Roberto Benigni. The film was criticised by some for what was seen as the callous inappropriateness of its comedy within the imagined reality of the camps. This seems to miss the point of the film which is about a father trying to keep the horrendous reality from his son and through that save his life. The first half of the movie is in the genre of a romantic fantasy as the lowly stranger, through his wit and charm, wins the heart of the princess away from the powerful local Fascist. This introduction sets up the second half of the film not as a realistic portrayal of experience but as a stylised depiction, a game, a story. This is a statement about the unrepresentable – that when we try to look at the events of the Holocaust, no matter how close we may try to get, the reality confounds representation – it is incommunicable.

In a review of *The 50th Gate*, Professor MacKenzie Wark (The New School for Liberal Arts NY) identifies the problem when he says:

Perhaps the book is about what it means to survive -- to obliterate the guilt that comes from living amidst total death by narrating a new story. To say too much, to tell too conclusive a story, runs the risk of erasing what it cannot say, of turning the unspeakable into the unspoken, and the unspoken into the forgotten. What makes this a wise book is that it honours this paradoxical obligation.

### Denying the Holocaust

This impossibility of speaking about the unspeakable is played on by Holocaust deniers – those who say it never happened. The most notorious of these is David Irving who claims that millions of Jews were not gassed in Auschwitz and other camps under the Third Reich. When identified as a Holocaust denier by the historian Deborah Lipstadt, he sued her and Penguin books for libel. When asked by the judge: "Do you deny the Nazis killed millions of Jews in gas chambers in purpose-built establishments?" Irving replied: "Yes. It's logistically impossible," "I deny that it was possible to liquidate millions of people in gas chambers as presented by historians so far." In the judge's ruling he confirmed that David Irving was motivated by ideology and has "deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence".

But this has not put a stop to Holocaust denialism. In fact, it grows apace fanned by the propaganda machine of the Palestine authority and other Arab states. Its most recent manifestation has been the Holocaust Denial conference in Teheran December 2006 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust\\_conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_conference).

## HISTORY AS MEMORY

### Shoah Foundation

Memory, particularly as testimony, or the witnessing of events that have been obscured, can be collective and individual, and can provide the kinds of stories that History leaves out,

So you can appreciate that the process of recording memory is crucial for the survivors themselves and for attempts at truth in history.

After making his award winning film, *Schindler's List* (1993), Steven Spielberg began the *Shoah Foundation* (full title – Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation). The mandate of this non-profit organization was to record video testimonies of the survivors of the Holocaust. To date there have been some 60,000 testimonies collected. Many of these can be accessed from the Shoah Foundation website - <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/>

The objective of the Shoah Foundation is twofold:

1. To record the oral histories of the survivors before they die out
2. To use the Holocaust as an important moral message: "To overcome prejudice, intolerance and bigotry – and the suffering they cause – through the educational use of the Institute's visual history testimonies."

Other important memorials to the Holocaust include museums all around the world. These can be accessed as online museums.

- **Yad Vashem** in Jerusalem, Israel created in 1953 to be both a memorial but also an educational institution on the Holocaust. The Museum can be accessed online - <http://www.yadvashem.org/>. Further useful information on Yad Vashem can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yad\\_Vashem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yad_Vashem).
- **Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum** in USA created in 1993 with a similar mandate as Yad Vashem. The Museum's online exhibitions, oral testimonies and information about the Holocaust can be accessed online - <http://www.ushmm.org/>
- Online museum which includes photos, memoirs, paintings, poems etc about the Holocaust - <http://www.remember.org/>
- Online memorial with extensive resources on Holocaust survivors with a mandate to bear witness to the past so it should never be forgotten - <http://isurvived.org/home.html>

N.B. Any of the above websites can be used as related texts in the *History and Memory* elective

## HISTORY: POLYPHONY, CACOPHONY OR SYMPHONY?

### VOICES IN HISTORY

#### The Fiftieth Gate and the Talmud

Mark Baker tells the story from several perspectives, While *The Fiftieth Gate* is written from the point of view of Mark Baker the narrator, he uses several perspectives, having originally been inspired by the form of the Jewish Talmud - a vast collection of Jewish laws, traditions, commentaries and debate.

A passage of law is placed in the centre of the page and different interpretations are written around it so that each page is a discussion among scholars across the centuries.



#### Exercise 2

##### Student discussion

What similarities are there between the composition of the Talmud and the structure of *The Fiftieth Gate*. How does recording history in the form of the Talmud facilitate the recording of a less 'official' version of history? How does this structure facilitate incorporating different perspectives?

Like the Talmud, *The Fiftieth Gate* is polyphonous, made up of fragments and self reflective. It is innovative in form and approach and explicitly intertextual. As such, it is essentially a postmodern text.

#### Exercise 3

##### Scaffolded writing task: Voices in History

In the following scaffolded writing task, students can explore the many voices in the text, their effects and how these shape the representation of history. This can be approached in various ways, for example as

- an individual task over an extended period
- group activities distributing sections of the tables horizontally or
- a blend of the two in which research for the first two columns are distributed and students individually draw their own conclusions to complete the third.

Examine Mark Raphael Baker's represents history and memory in *The Fiftieth Gate*.

Mark Raphael Baker adopts various roles in the text through which he assumes different voices and stances on the events depicted.

Task: Examine how these different roles influence the representation of history in the text.

Role	Quotations (pg)	How history is shaped.
Narrator		
Son		
Autobiographer		
Historian		
Author		

It is because he is faithful to these voices, as author, , that Baker produces a work that conveys the complexity of lived experience and affirms the tentative and provisional nature of trying to record lived experience.

Baker's different positions on the events complement the variety of other voices in this text.

Task: Examine how these different roles influence the representation of history in the text.

Whose Voices	What they said (pg)	How these shape the representation of history
Voices in the present		
Voices from the past		
Real voices		
Imagined voices		

In gathering these different perspectives of events, Mark Raphael Baker brings together a variety of texts and styles to offset the detachment of historical documents with the richness, complexity and uncertainty of human lives.

Give examples of (pg)	Style and effect	How these shape the representation of history
Transcriptions of dialogue		
Transcriptions of monologue		
Recreated dialogue		
Poetry and song		
Traditional tales		
Personal reflection		
Documents written at the time and place		
Official records		

The clearest distinction of style is that between history and memory, the personal and the public, the spoken and the written. Memory involves personal details and experiences, confusion and doubts, fragmentation. The language of memory is partial, subjective, emotional. As Mark Baker provides the historical facts of the camp in terms of numbers of prisoners, dates etc he is criticised a number of times by his parents for being blinded by the facts he uncovers. "Fecks, fecks," Joe says dismissively a number of times. Genia calls her son's work "shopping lists".

So what we have in *The Fiftieth Gate* is a confluence of different representations – personal stories (memory) and public stories (history). In neither case are we dealing with the material, yet, each story makes its claim on reality. At various times, each also asserts its claim through these different theories of representation drawing on such established criteria as evidence, accuracy, authenticity, authority and detail. Baker sees that his attempts to write his parents' stories is like stealing their memories; he realises that much of what he is doing is for his own sense of identity.

The idea of history as unfinished narratives is captured here and reiterated towards the end of the book on (P302) 'In the end, the beginning'. Just as Baker thinks he has finished the story, he receives a package from Genia's half-brother – scraps of paper from her father's personal files. It contains a letter, photograph and Genia's school report from Bolszowce where she returned briefly after the end of the war. These fragments again shape and alter the story. Stories are never complete. Genia says on (P314) 'It's not all of it, only a bit of my life story; there is a lot I don't



remember..' and advises Mark that he tell the story to his children saying, 'You had a grandmother, you had a grandfather, who...'

It took a lot of courage for Mark Baker and his parents to undertake this extremely difficult task and the pains and strains of the memories are evident in the arguments and frustrations that emerge within the text.

**Class discussion:**

*The Fiftieth Gate* poses the question: If History is to be valid - authentic and true to actual experience - can it afford to ignore the subjective?

Issue: How close can 'objectivity' come to the Truth?

**Exercise 3**

Students divide themselves

into two separated groups according to whether they find objective or subjective representations more helpful in knowing and understanding History. They take turns in defending their position using evidence from *The Fiftieth Gate* and other texts they have encountered which shed light on this issue. As their evidence they should

- outline the event
- describe how it is represented and with what degree of objectivity/subjectivity
- explain why they find this to be convincing.

If students are persuaded to a different point of view, they can move to the other team but then must use their evidence to support the opposing case.

**HISTORY AND THE PRINT MEDIUM**

The medium that Mark Baker has chosen to use for his exploration is the book. Clearly, there are some advantages to this – its sequential form is insistently landmarked by the device of the numbered gates. The opening gate suggests the confusion and loss of darkness and ignorance 'Nothing. I don't recognise a thing. Why did you drag me here?' but we are promised a journey to an end point – the 50th gate.

But aside from this device, there are strong tensions between the work and its physical form, the book. The work resists all sequencing. The memories are fragmented and despite his attempts at some kind of order, there can be no purely logical order of events as the past emerges from the present rather than the other way around. This paradox is strengthened in the ending at the 50th Gate which insists on being a beginning. Why? Just as Genia's revenge on the horrors of the Nazi regime is the continuation of her line through her children, so her son's testament and gift to the dead of the Holocaust is his refusal to leave them in darkness, buried in their mass graves. Instead he brings their stories to light and to a gateway to the future. Their stories do not end with the closing of a book but live from generation to generation enacting the summons by those young men in the Warsaw ghetto: "Remember this, remember this."

## CLOSE STUDY OF TEXT

### INTRODUCTION

In March 1997, Mark Raphael Baker wrote that *The Fiftieth Gate* represented a journey to find light inside darkness. He maintained that there could be no avoidance of memory and that the book took the form of different ways of telling the same story. (Mark Raphael Baker, 'Writing *The Fiftieth Gate*', March 1997).

Mark Baker has described this book as a "journey through memory." The memory of his parents' experiences during the Holocaust forms the subject of Baker's journey "towards the light." To understand the nature of the journey and its eventual destination, it is important to grasp the symbolic significance of both the title, *The Fiftieth Gate*, and the phrase "journey through memory."

The horror and devastation of the Holocaust are well documented in books, films and television productions but. *The Fiftieth Gate* deals with the way the Holocaust experience has shaped the author and his family as well as its habits and traditions. It is an important work because it deals with some fundamental questions about how people can go beyond their pasts, whether tragic or otherwise, and build a different future, as well as issues to do with the individual's ability to control his fate or be controlled by it. The author explores his own sense of responsibility, shame and guilt which stems from an inability to ease his parents' burden or even meaningfully share in it. In the process of this exploration, the author discovers that it is important that memories be passed on and that he should embrace life so that the Holocaust experience can be transcended.

### Student activity:

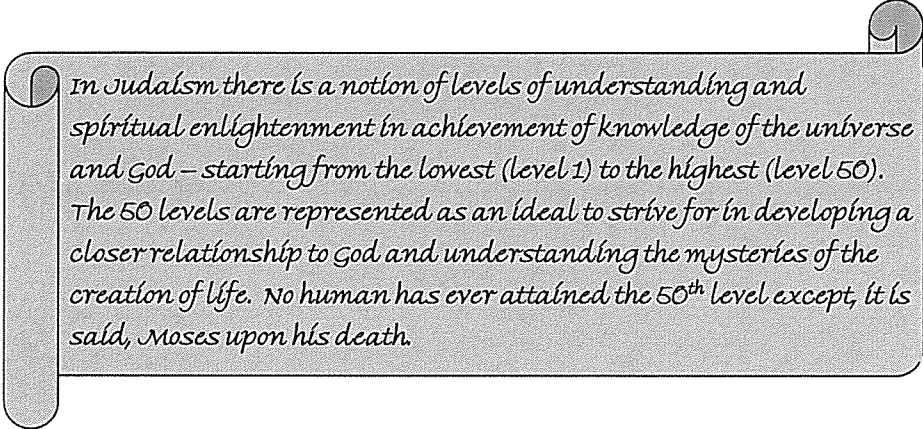
1. Interview a person close to you from an earlier generation to find out
  - Whether they have been protected from or caught up by historical events
  - What historical events have effected your family or those close to you
  - Their memories of those events and
  - How they were affected by them.<sup>1</sup>
2. Write a first person monologue in the voice of your interviewee describing the event and its effect on you.
3. Find an historical account of the event and place it next to your monologue.
4. Write a reflection in which you
  - explore the extent to which the experience described in your monologue finds echoes in the historical account
  - consider relationships between history and memory.

### THE TITLE

Baker describes the fiftieth gate as the "highest knowledge of God" or the hidden light of God which illuminates the world from one end to the other. (Pages 338-339).

However it is clearly not only a religious metaphor but also a personal one. Baker concedes that he was able to observe fifty sections or "gates" in the collective memory of his family after the book was completed. The title assumes both a spiritual significance in the form of enlightenment, new knowledge or perspective and at the same time a personal importance in that the fiftieth gate is seen as a point of closure where previous and future experience meet in the present. The Fiftieth Gate is equated with reaching a state of self-awareness and acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> A transcript of the interview may be used as a student selected text if it is substantive. This could be a powerful combination with the historical account in an assessment or examination.



*In Judaism there is a notion of levels of understanding and spiritual enlightenment in achievement of knowledge of the universe and God – starting from the lowest (level 1) to the highest (level 50). The 50 levels are represented as an ideal to strive for in developing a closer relationship to God and understanding the mysteries of the creation of life. No human has ever attained the 50<sup>th</sup> level except, it is said, Moses upon his death.*

The closure implied in this spiritual view of *The Fiftieth Gate* is not an ending point; rather, it is a point at which one knows the truth of one's perspective - one's identity, heritage, family history, mythology and memory. *The Fiftieth Gate*, as Baker describes it, is a place of awareness not merely of factual truth, but of the truth of one's own perceptions and their place and significance in the collective perception of others. Baker says of the "gate" metaphor that the first and fiftieth gates are the same, but each casts a different perspective.

Baker makes it clear that the idea of a journey through memory is a central organising strand in the book. The journey is undertaken through his parents' memories of their experience during the Holocaust. These are neither complete nor infallible. Baker's own memories of childhood and family mythology, tradition, values and culture are also part of the journey. The journey through his parents' memories helps him gain an insight into his own identity and memory.

The journey is not always a definite one, to a definite place or conclusion. However, Baker gives us a sense of continuing progress and greater revelation. Baker makes his own personal contribution by correcting his parents' memories and filling in gaps in their memory. His own quests for the truth of his parents' experiences and the mystery of his relatives' lives are all discoveries made on his journey toward new realisations about his own life and his own "journey." However, by the end of this journey through memory, Mark Baker, his family and the reader do not achieve an "arrival" or ultimate truth but begin again through the "gates of the heart" for new life experiences.

IGNORE

### PRE-READING

#### Class discussion:

Discuss these questions with the class before studying the text and then have them draw a mindmap of their understanding of the nature of History.

**Acknowledgments**  
It begins where it ends, and ends where it begins: with my parents' stories, and my stories of their stories, and now, their stories of my stories.  
This was the deal: I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory. An exchange of pasts.  
First I interviewed them, over a period of three months, in 1994. Twenty hours of voice on micro-cassette, endless hours of talking-head on video.  
Then we returned to their places of origin, Poland and the Ukraine; 1935 in 1995.  
'Don't take me there,' my parents plead, then surrender.  
'My house! It's no longer there.'  
And then, the wrangling:  
'No more history'  
'The wrong memory'  
To my' parents, for looking back with me, for returning to the places that are no longer, for giving me their memories, and their constant unmeasured love; to them, I give this book, with my unmeasured love.

History: circular or linear?

Interplay of history and memory: is one privileged over the other?

How valid is his historical method?

Is history simply someone's representations? Explain. Implications of this?

A fair exchange?

What expectations of the text do you have from these snippets of dialogue?

### EPIGRAM

There is a palace of hidden treasures.  
In this palace there are forty-nine gates that separate good from evil, the blessing from the curse.  
Beyond them is a fiftieth gate larger than the entire world.  
It is a hidden gate.  
On this gate there is a lock, which has a narrow place where the key may be inserted.  
Come and see.  
Through this gate all other gates may be seen.  
Whoever enters the fiftieth gate sees through God's eyes from one end of the world to the other,  
The darkness or the light.  
Come and see.  
The key is the broken heart, the yearning for prayer, the memory of death.  
The key is the forgotten heart, the murdered prayer, the death of memory.  
It opens the blessing or the curse.  
Come and see.

#### Paired discussion

The epigram is an invocation to the reader to 'come and see' something miraculous.

1. Read the epigram and note repeated ideas. Discuss with your partner what you think the epigram may mean. You should consider

- symbols
- inversion/antithesis
- repetition
- word choice

**IGNORE**

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  - inversion/antithesis
  - repetition
  - word choice

### 3. Group activity

The purpose of this activity to understand what actually happened to the people in the text as conventionally written history. Using the information in the spreadsheet, develop a PowerPoint presentation of the events outlined in *The Fiftieth Gate* relating to

- The town of Wierzbnik
- The town of Bolszowce
- The Beckiermaszyn family
- The Krochmal family
- Mark's research

The information could be presented using photographs, timelines, maps or any other graphical support included in traditional, coherent and linear history.

### Class discussion

Using the group presentations as examples, outline the conventions of writing history. (Students should be able to mention such features of historical writing as:

- its tendency towards linear narrative structure
- focus on events
- use of documents
- assumptions or claims of objectivity

### 4. Representing history

Compile all the extracts from historical documents reproduced in *The Fiftieth Gate*. Choose 3 of the texts and analyse the use of language as in the example below.

The diagram shows a text extract from 'The Fiftieth Gate' with several callouts pointing to specific parts of the text. The text extract is as follows:

**BOLSZOWCE:** Bolszowce, originally Bohuszowce, a small town in the Rohatyn district, situated on the Dniester plains; 1 mile from Halicz and the River Dniester; 15 miles from Lwow to South East. This small town is spread over the marsh plain along the river Zinnia Leap which, in its turn, falls into the Dniester, and along the streamlet of Narajowka. The locality, together with adjacent villages, is in the possession of Kornel Krzeczunowicz, member of the Galician Parliament and . . .

*The Fiftieth Gate, p54*

Callouts and their corresponding text features:

- Use of heading as organiser (points to **BOLSZOWCE:**)
- Specificity and accuracy of names (points to **BOLSZOWCE**, **Bohuszowce**, **Rohatyn district**, **Dniester plains**, **Halicz**, **River Dniester**, **Lwow**, **South East**, **Zinnia Leap**, **Dniester**, **Narajowka**)
- Loose sentence structure for clear sequencing of information and ideas (points to the overall structure of the paragraph)
- Factual detail – frequent use of numerals, dates and statistics (points to **1 mile**, **15 miles**)
- Use of passive to suggest objectivity (points to **is in the possession of**)
- Adjectives act as classifiers rather than imaginative epithets (points to **marsh plain**, **streamlet**)

### 5. Now choose 3 examples of Genia and Yossli's personal accounts. Compare them to your chosen extracts from historical documents.

Consider:

- features of the personal accounts that are not evident in the historical extracts (give examples)
- features of the historical extracts add that are not evident in the personal accounts

Which do you find more reliable – the personal accounts or the documents?  
Give reasons for your decision.

**Group presentation: Tracking memory**

In your groups discuss the implications for history and memory of the following quotations that you have been allocated and present your findings to the class.

You will need to

- contextualise the quotation by identifying the speaker and at what phase of the text it was said
- explain the significance of each quotation for understanding the role of history or memory in representing events
- synthesise your ideas to draw conclusions about the relationships between personal experience, memory and documented events.

Gp	Quotations
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory." (p1)</li> <li>▪ "We know a neglected site of memory has been retrieved." (p3)</li> <li>▪ "My father's family. His friends, his town. In a rock. Buried, their bones inside the tombstone. Beat it with a stick, and what will come out? Water? Bodies? A tune? Only memory." (p12)</li> <li>▪ "I wish I could forget what I remember." (p18)</li> <li>▪ "I turn to a photograph. My mother is casting a bridal smile in the direction of the camera . . . All my memories are framed in black and white images like this one, channelled through snapshot portraits which present the past as a series of frozen moments. I collect my memories in colour-coded albums, each thematically divided into phases of my parents' life: yellow for the few single remnants of their pre-war existence, which casually streams into pictures of their migration and period of courtship." (p32)</li> <li>▪ "My facts from the past are different. He shrugs them off as I regale him with them . . . I disappoint him with details of Polish archives buried in municipal libraries." (pp36-7)</li> <li>▪ "I forgot. The Shul? Where is the Shul? It was near our house. Behind it. Go back. It was here, no? Here on this spot. . . " "This building here. Shhh, people standing outside. It has big doors. Shhh, people standing outside. It had big doors. Shhh. Like these. A mezuzah? Nothing. Shhh. Upstairs stood my mother. Open the doors. They won't know. Shhh. Was here. Shhh. Shhh." " (p47) [Hint – the constant repetition of 'shhh' and the types of memories she is having indicate that she is not just remembering the past but actually reliving it.]</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "They do not remember, so I remind them." (p62)</li> <li>▪ "There was more to this episode than he is prepared to admit and I – his son turned informer – confront him. I thrust his report card under his eyes and command him to read. He obeys, like an intimidated schoolchild." (p62)</li> <li>▪ "I hesitate before reminding her that she was five years old when the war broke out." (p67)</li> <li>▪ "For my father, the rivers have not thawed, until now, when his words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights . . . His eyes have refocused on my document, drawn to the letters that make up the sound of his father's name, but his mind has travelled to another time and place, far from Melbourne, far from me." (pp86-7)</li> <li>▪ "Perhaps it all ends when I return memory to them. Only then can I assume responsibility for their stories. First I must give in order to take.</li> <li>▪ And give generously, details and details, <i>fecks</i> and <i>fecks</i>." (pp100-1)</li> </ul>

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “And anyway, why should I expect a coherent narrative from him? No, time did not unfold for my father but leaped at him, like a jack-in-the-box: the next terrifying chapter.” (p125)</li> <li>▪ “I did not doubt for a moment that she had once lived in this town, nor that she had experienced the events relayed in bits and pieces over the years. It was not the facts that were held under suspicion but her credibility as a survivor.” (p133)</li> <li>▪ “What are these papers except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams, without smells, without fear. Why do I crave the contents of this single lone sentence I discovered on a reel of microfilm, when all it says is what she has repeated throughout her life? Why believe the Soviet apparatchik more than my mother? It’s his word and her word; it does not add a single jot to the stories she told us while washing dishes, or lying in hospital with an ailment which angered me. Does history remember more than memory?” (pp138-9)</li> <li>▪ “You read, you read. Books, books, everywhere. But do you know how it feels?” (p154)</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ““Couldn’t be. Couldn’t be”                      “But Dad,” we both insist. “There was no other place they could have taken you to. All the trains stopped here for selection.”                      “No. I don’t remember this.” “ (p160)</li> <li>▪ “I had become his calendar, making sense of time for him when days, months and even years meant nothing. It was not that he had forgotten something he had once known – he never knew.” (p161)</li> <li>▪ “There are certain things that hurt me very much and I can’t talk about it. It’s enough to say that he wasn’t nice to me; he mistreated . . . he didn’t . . . he never cared about me . . .” (p203)</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “For me, it is a search that had begun one year earlier. No, not a search, an obsession, a raid on my mother’s memory, a son’s theft of her past.” (p211)</li> <li>▪ “So when I exhausted memory I turned to history.” (p213)</li> <li>▪ “Don’t steal my memory,” my mother later erupted. “You think because I was young I don’t remember.” (p221)</li> <li>▪ “The sweet years of my childhood / Remain forever imprinted in my memory, / How rapidly have the years passed by / And I have so quickly aged.” (p227) contrasted to: “The years have vanished never to return, / My home, my mother – nought has remained. / Age and gloom have replaced those happy days, / Only memories are left.” (p228)</li> <li>▪ “. . . what photograph will capture the plight of a motherless child, banished to an orphanage?” (p247)</li> <li>▪ “. . . it always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory . . .” (p316)</li> </ul>

## SYNTHESISING INFORMATION AND IDEAS

### Composition: Representation and Reflection

Develop a triptych to represent key ideas about history and memory. A triptych is a three panel artwork that has a central theme running throughout all three pieces. See an example at <http://www.remember.org/image/beecroft.html>.

Your triptych must directly reflect notions of history and memory revealed in *The Fiftieth Gate*. It can represent any images you choose and should contain textual references from text in form of quotations. You can also use the following two websites as starting points: <http://www.remember.org/>  
<http://isurvived.org/home.html>

After composing your triptych, write

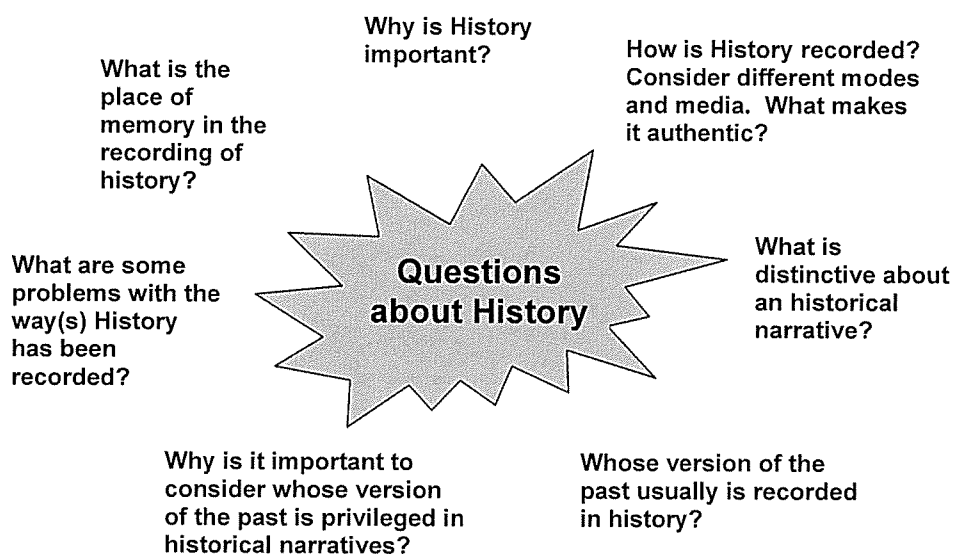
- i. a page explaining your representation outlining
  - the concept of History and Memory portrayed in the triptych
  - your selection of images and what they mean
  - your selection of textual references from *The Fiftieth Gate* and how they connect to the visual images.
  - how the three panels fit together to create an overall message about History and Memory.



- ii. a reflection on
  - any pleasures of composing the triptych
  - any difficulties you had and whether/how you overcame them
  - what you learned from the exercise

### EXPLORING NOTIONS OF HISTORY AND MEMORY

The following diagram may be helpful in stimulating class discussion about History and Memory. The key issue is how to assess truth and authenticity when texts lay claim to these credentials so that students may develop a critical understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning. Use your prescribed text and related texts to help you elaborate on this discussion.



### TEXTS OF STUDENTS' OWN CHOOSING

When looking for related texts – look for texts that explore the past or people's lives. They could be of the distant past or the immediate past. It may not be an event that the composer himself/herself experienced – sometimes texts have composers projecting themselves and imagining what it would have been like and creating a story around that.

At least ONE of these related texts needs to be a non-Holocaust text.

You should try looking for texts about Indigenous Australians. There are many new texts (particularly records of oral testimony) in this area that are suitable. You could also look at current world events, particularly wars, and find peoples personal memoirs of their experiences.

## STUDENT TEMPLATE: TEXTS OF MY OWN CHOOSING

Name of text: \_\_\_\_\_

Composer: \_\_\_\_\_

Source (where you got it from Include date of publication or date of accessing website):

\_\_\_\_\_

Type of text (newspaper article, film, website etc):

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the text represent the past event/personality? What is the focus?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose of this text?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Through whose perspective is it represented? How might this perspective influence the representation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does the representation of the past/person correlate with other representations of this event. Why/why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How have details been selected? Are there any obvious omissions?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To what extent is the representation personal and subjective? Are there claims to objectivity in the subject matter or style? Explain why you think so (analysis of style).

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Do you find this representation of the past believable – why or why not?

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR RELATED TEXTS

In choosing related texts, you are searching for texts that in some way deal with the concept of history and memory (your related text does not have to deal with both notions). You also do not have to find texts about the Holocaust – there are other texts which deal with history and memory and can be related to *The Fiftieth Gate*.

#### **Nonfiction and web sites: Carmel Bird *The Stolen Children -- Their Stories***

The book is a compilation of extracts from the *Bringing Them Home* Report <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen.html> of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Read comments by Carmel Bird at <http://www.carmelbird.com/stolen01.html>.

#### **Film: *Gallipoli* by Peter Weir (1981)**

A fictional re-creation of the story of two young Australians who fought in Gallipoli. The film is a powerful exploration of the nature of collective memory and how legend can become part of the collective creation of the historical account by a particular group of people. As a result, what really happened seems to be less important than what is perceived to have happened.

#### **Graphic Novel: *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman (1977)**

Composer's account of family experiences in the Holocaust. Story represented in graphic form, with animals (symbolic of human personality traits) as the main characters.

#### **Film: *Catch a Fire* by Philip Noyce (2006)**

Exploration of the relationship between an anti-apartheid activist and a police officer during the 1980's in South Africa.

#### **Novel: *Winter Journey* by Diane Armstrong (2006)**

A detective story that is part mystery, part history and part forensic investigation. A journey to retrace the history of a family's past.

#### **Film: *Au Revoir, Les Enfants* by Louis Malle (1987) – award-winning French film**

Director's own memories of being a boy during World War II in a monastery where the Gestapo raided and found three hidden Jewish boys.

**Film: *Rabbit-proof Fence* by Philip Noyce (2002)**

Exploration of Australia's historical narrative from the point of view of two Aboriginal women 'taken' from their families as part of the stolen generation.

**Feature Article: *Hitler's Children* by Joshua Hammer, Newsweek International, March 2000** [http://www.rickross.com/reference/hate\\_groups/hategroups164.html](http://www.rickross.com/reference/hate_groups/hategroups164.html)

Recollections of being a child of Nazis during World War II.

**Film: *Cry Freedom* by Richard Attenborough (1987)**

Exploration of the experiences of two anti-apartheid activists – Steve Biko and Donald Woods – during the Apartheid era.

**Autobiography: *My Stamp on Life* by Max Stern (2004)**

Max Stern's autobiographical recount of his life in pre-war Bratislava, concentration camps during World War II and life in Australia afterwards.

**Epic Poem: *The Odyssey* by Homer (c.650BCE)**

The epic story about the journeys of Odysseus. The text brings in the notion that very often history is (collective) memory. Also looks at the notion of how legend has become the foundation of western (collective) history and memory.

**Autobiographical Account: *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah (2007)**

The composer's personal account of his years as firstly a refugee, then a child soldier in Sierra Leone committing terrible acts. It is also the account of his escape and personal redemption.

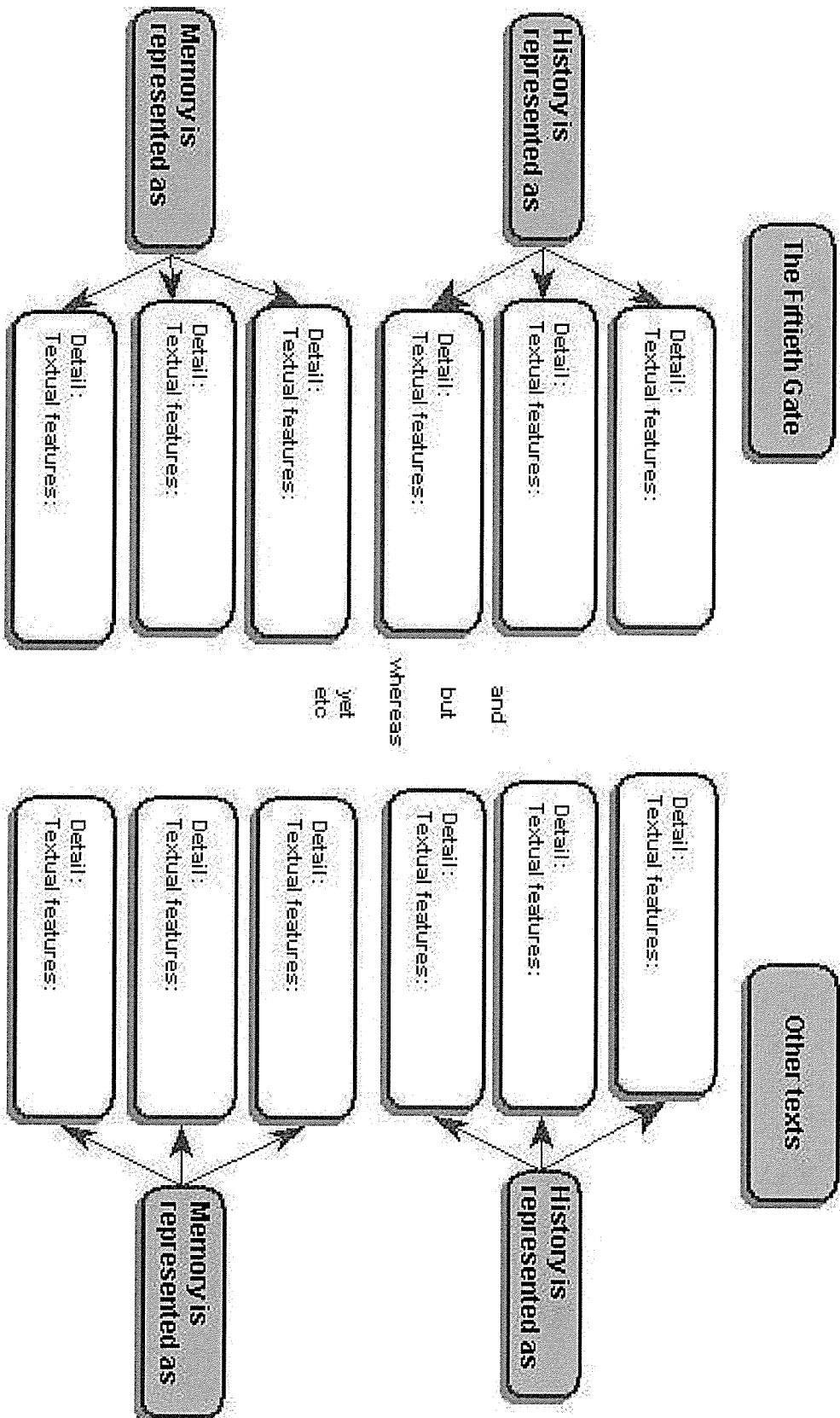
**Student Activity: Organising Information and Ideas 2**

Students may find the following structure helpful in making connections between *The Fiftieth Gate* and texts of their own choosing. It builds on **Organising Information and Ideas 1**

**INTEGRATING TEXTS AND IDEAS**

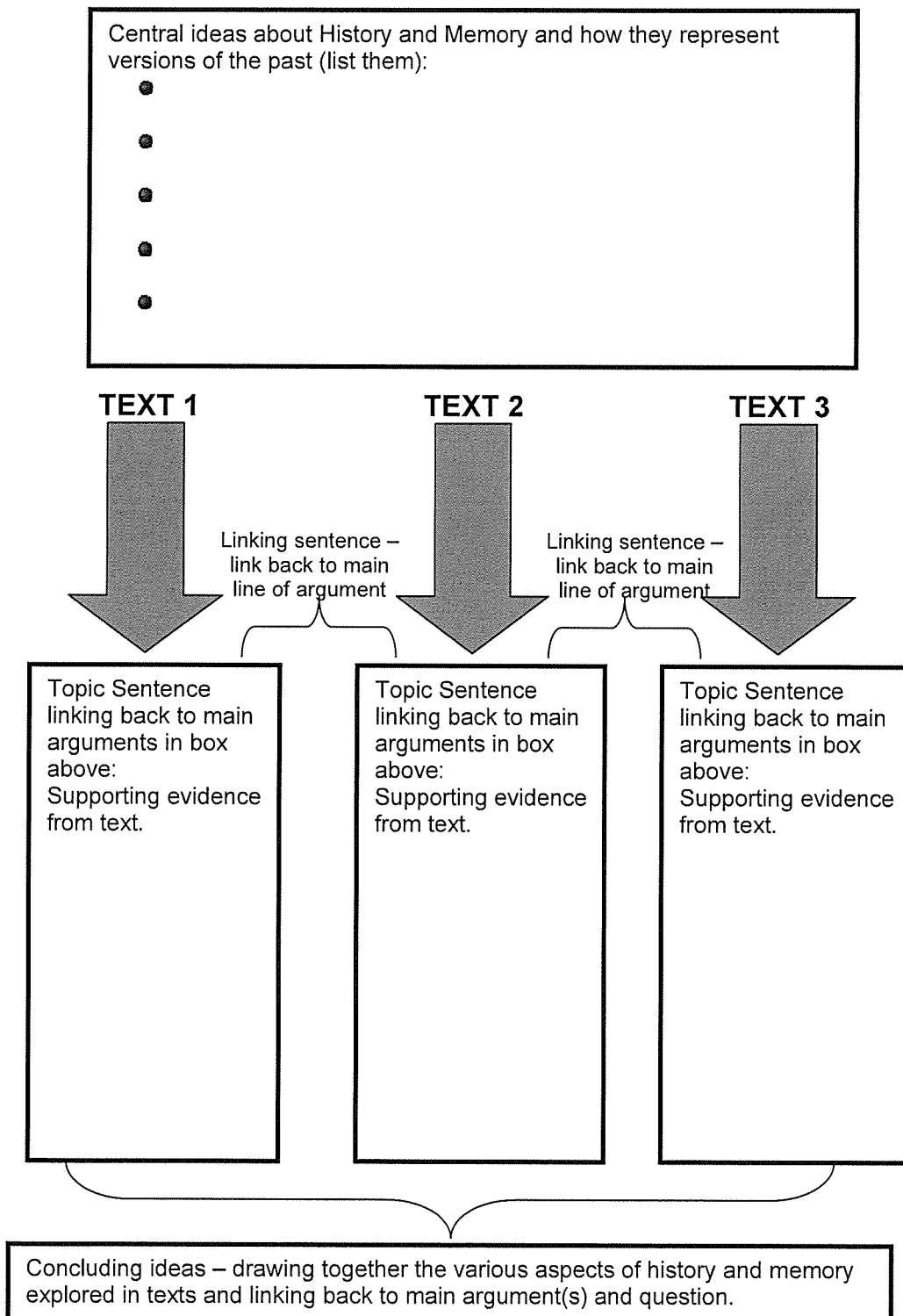
The following frameworks could be used to assist students in drawing together their information into coherent paragraphs and subsequently logical arguments. It is recommended that teachers model and jointly construct examples with their class. This will further support students in developing clear and densely argued responses.

## Relationships between individual memory and documented events



### Building an Argument about History & Memory

Students may find the following scaffold helpful to clarify the way their ideas relate to their various texts.



## ASSESSMENT

### Elective: History and Memory Module C: Representation and text

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- evaluate and show understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning.
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form.

#### The Question:

*The structure of The Fiftieth Gate resists coherent narrative – a linear history. In fact to try and piece one together to map the experiences of Genia and Yossl and the journey of Mark would be doing the text a disservice..*

How does the structure of *The Fiftieth Gate* represent a thesis about the relationships between documented history and personal memory? Has your study of other representations of history and memory supported this thesis? Explain your point of view by referring closely to *The Fiftieth Gate* and to one other text of your own choosing.

Outcomes assessed include: 2, 2A, 4, 6, 10, 12A

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Composes a sophisticated argument showing an insightful understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates detailed and extensive knowledge of the texts and perceptive understanding of the ways that texts shape meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates insightful understanding and evaluation of the ways texts present information and ideas and the significance of purpose, audience and medium of production on the language used in texts.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates sophisticated expression, using appropriate language forms, features and structures.</li> </ul>	<p>A 17 - 20</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Composes a well developed argument showing a well developed understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates detailed knowledge of the texts and perceptive understanding of the ways that texts shape meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates well developed understanding and evaluation of the ways texts present information and ideas, and the impact of purpose, audience and media of production on the language used in texts.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates fluent expression using appropriate language forms, features and structures.</li> </ul>	<p>B 13 - 16</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Composes a sound argument showing an understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates sound knowledge of the texts and understanding of the ways that texts shape meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates sound understanding and evaluation of the ways texts present information and ideas, and the impact of purpose, audience and media of production on the language used in texts.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates sound expression, using appropriate language forms, features and structures.</li> </ul>	<p>C 9 - 12</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Composes a generalised argument showing limited understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates some knowledge of the texts and an understanding of some of the ways that texts shape meaning.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates limited understanding of the ways texts present information and ideas, and the impact of purpose, audience and media of production on the language used in texts.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates variable expression, using some limited appropriate language forms, features and structures.</li> </ul>	<p>D 5 - 8</p>

**Module C: Representation and Text**  
**20 marks**

**Questions 10-11**

**Question 8: Conflicting Perspectives**

**Question 9: History and Memory**

*Outcomes Assessed: H1, H2, H2A, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H10*

*Targeted Performance Bands: 2-6*

Criteria	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates perceptive understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning</li> <li>• Evaluates skilfully the influence of representation in shaping responses to texts dealing with conflicting perspectives/history and memory</li> <li>• Composes a sophisticated response using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form</li> </ul>	17-20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates effective understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning</li> <li>• Evaluates effectively the influence of representation in shaping responses to texts dealing with conflicting perspectives/history and memory</li> <li>• Composes an effective response using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form</li> </ul>	13-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates sound understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning</li> <li>• Demonstrates some evaluation of the influence of representation in shaping responses to texts dealing with conflicting perspectives/history and memory</li> <li>• Composes a sound response using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form</li> </ul>	9-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates limited understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning</li> <li>• Describes the representation of ideas in texts dealing with conflicting perspectives/history and memory</li> <li>• Composes a response that makes some attempt to use language appropriate to audience, purpose and form</li> </ul>	5-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates elementary understanding of the relationship between representation and meaning</li> <li>• Makes an elementary attempt to describe the representation of ideas in texts dealing with conflicting perspectives/history and memory</li> <li>• Composes an elementary response that makes a limited attempt to use language appropriate to audience, purpose and form; may be incomplete</li> </ul>	1-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-attempt, virtual non-attempt, non-serious attempt</li> </ul>	0

**DISCLAIMER**

The information contained in this document is intended for the professional assistance of teaching staff. It does not constitute advice to students. Further it is not the intention of CSSA to provide specific marking outcomes for all possible Trial HSC answers. Rather the purpose is to provide teachers with information so that they can better explore, understand and apply HSC marking requirements, as established by the NSW Board of Studies. No guarantee or warranty is made or implied with respect to the application or use of CSSA Marking Guidelines in relation to any specific trial exam question or answer.



## History and Memory Past HSC Questions

**2008**

Compare how the texts you have studied emphasise the complexities evident in the interplay of history and memory.

In your response refer to your prescribed text and at least ONE other related text of your own choosing.

**2007**

How have the texts studied in this elective challenged your ways of thinking about 'History and Memory'?

Make detailed reference to your prescribed text and at least ONE other related text of your own choosing.

**2005**

'At the heart of representation are acts of deliberate selection and emphasis.'  
Do the texts you have studied demonstrate this in relation to 'History and Memory'?  
Refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.

**2004**

You are the keynote speaker at a conference for young writers and directors.  
The title of your presentation is: *Visions and Versions of History and Memory*.  
In your presentation, explore how and for what purpose composers create their particular  
visions and versions.

Refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.

**2003**

Imagine you are a journalist. You have been asked to contribute an article to an educational  
supplement for HSC students about the ways texts represent *History and Memory*.  
Your headline is *History is Not a Single Story*.

In your article, refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.

**2002**

How has your understanding of events, personalities or situations been shaped by their representations in the texts you have studied?

Base your response on your study of *Telling the Truth* OR *Powerplay* OR *History and Memory*.

Refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.

**2001**

You have created an exhibition of texts entitled: 'History: Whose Story Is It?'  
The exhibition includes your prescribed text and other related texts of your own choosing.

Write your speech for the opening night of the exhibition. In your speech, explain how the exhibition reflects your view of the representations of history and memory.

## Writing a Thesis

“Every essay is an opinion, but not every opinion is a good essay topic.”

A thesis is essentially the position or interpretation in response to a question or topic that you are attempting to *persuade* your reader to accept. This is achieved via reasoned argumentation and literary analysis. A thesis cannot be simply a *statement of fact* and needs to be specific rather than general. It should succinctly present an observation or premise which has conceptual substance rather than simply a clichéd idea or summation. It must be defensible and justified by analytical evaluation. It should also emerge from *your* interpretations of text and should address important issues relating to the topic being examined. Your thesis statement should foreshadow the logical structure of your response.

### Introduction: (Outlining of thesis argument and how it will be proved)

- Argumentation is the process of persuading the reader to accept the validity of your thesis.
- This argument should develop logically, building from one point to the next in an easy to follow and logical sequence.
- Each paragraph should develop *one* coherent point that relates clearly back to the thesis within the logical progression of your argument, and *everything* in the paragraph should be relevant to that one coherent point.
- A *topic sentence* must present the *point* or *idea* that your paragraph needs to make.
- The topic sentence must clearly and explicitly relate to the logical development of your thesis.
- Just as the introduction must give both the topic and the thesis of the paper, the topic sentence must give both the topic and the point of the paragraph.

### Body II: Analysis (Interpretation through Close Reading)

- Each paragraph should clarify, refine, and support carefully detailed interpretations about *what* you think the text means and *how* this meaning is created by close examination of its language and so on.
- Explicit discussion and well chosen and integrated quotations is needed to demonstrate the validity of your argument and showing, *how* the text means *what* you say it means.
- Historical background and biographical information should be discussed in the past tense, but present tense used when writing about the literary text itself

### Conclusion: (Pulling ideas together and restating key ideas in a new or interesting way)

- Forceful restatement of thesis premise and your response to the question being addressed.
- Your opinion must be justified and not simply a claim that can be easily disputed.
- Your aim should be to convincingly restate the legitimacy of what has been argued.

### Marking Criteria:

Papers will be graded essentially on content and organisation in response to the following:

- Does the essay successfully **address** in a **sustained** way, the specific subject it sets out to analyse?
  - Does the essay **interpret** the text, or merely paraphrase and/or summarise?
  - Does the essay **fully develop** the thesis it sets forth in the beginning?
- Does the argument **logically build** from one point to the next

### Thesis Considerations : In determining your thesis consider the following:

- ∅ What is my claim? What am I going to prove?
- ∅ What are the reasons I have to support my claim or assertion?
- ∅ Can I defend this thesis statement through my research?

### Sample Questions

1. How has your understanding of events, personalities or situations been shaped by their representations in the texts you have studied. Refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.
2. "History, without memory, is merely a collection of facts, and consequently without real meaning in our world." Discuss with reference to your prescribed text and two related texts of your own choosing.
3. How has your understanding of events, personalities or situations been shaped by their representations in the texts you have studied?
4. How do the textual form, perspective and language influence meaning in texts? Discuss with reference to your prescribed text and at least two other texts of your own choosing.
5. In what ways have conflicting perspectives on events, personalities or situations been represented in the prescribed text and two other related texts?
6. Analyse and evaluate how the acts of representation, such as the choice of textual forms, features and language, shape meaning and influence responses in your prescribed text and at least two other related materials.
7. Discuss how and why personal experience, memory and documented evidence are all important in shaping and representing history.
8. Analyse the ways in which truths about personalities and situation are represented in the interplay between history and memory in the texts you have studied. In your response refer to your prescribed text and ONE other text of your own choosing.

### Others?

*ideas from all sources*

*little big man. Yale/Harvard -> Hist of Memory.*  
*The Baden Wendell complex. website. Master. Color & United - Negroes*  
*Other ORTs? Incident. Story. Sen. Cohen*

### Online Resources

- <http://www.remember.org>
- <http://www.remember.org/then-and-now/tn05.html>
- <http://www.auschwitz.dk/id6.htm> (Holocaust poetry)
- [http://www.datasync.com/~davidg59/holo\\_art.html](http://www.datasync.com/~davidg59/holo_art.html)
- <http://www.videosift.com/video/Frontline-The-Nazi-Holocaust-documentary-from-1945>
- <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/>
- <http://www.exploratorium.edu/memory/index.html>
- [http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/social\\_studies.html](http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/social_studies.html)
- <http://imet.csus.edu/imet4/PBL/holocaust/The%20Holocaust.htm>
- <http://www.davenport.k12.ia.us/young/holoinfo.html>

## Elective 2 – History and Memory

### Defining History

*Not to know what happened before one was born is to remain always a child. Cicero*

*History. An account mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools. Ambrose Bierce*

*History is a myth that men agree to believe. Napoleon*

*The historian amputates reality. Gaetano Salvemini*

*Not all that is presented to us as history has really happened; and what really happened did not actually happen the way it is presented to us; moreover, what really happened is only a small part of all that happened. Everything in history remains uncertain, the largest events as well as the smallest occurrence. Goethe*

*History is not a catalogue but...a convincing version of events. A.J.P. Taylor*

### Defining Memory

*Memory is a complicated thing, a relative to truth, but not its twin.*

*Barbara Kingsolver*

*Our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.*

*Richard Sheridan*

*We cannot afford to forget any experience,  
not even the most painful. Dag Hammarskjold*

*With its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation,  
its fainting spell, memory fails to be objective. Michel Foucault*

*The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living. Cicero*

*Memory is deceptive because it is coloured by today's events. Albert Einstein*

*Memory is the treasury and guardian of all things. Cicero*

*Memory is the scribe of the soul. Aristotile*

*Life without memory is no life at all...Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our  
feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing. Luis Bunuel*

*Unless we remember we cannot understand. Eward Forster*

*Human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument.  
The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend  
to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even increase by  
incorporating extraneous features. Primo Levi*

*Back on its golden hinges  
The gate of Memory swings,  
And my heart goes into the garden  
And walks with the olden things.*

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

## Objectivity versus Subjectivity

History' is a term that stems from the Latin word for 'story'. History has traditionally been viewed as a sequential series of indisputable events, held in high esteem as being a factual account of past occurrences. It is valued as being authentic because it is a process involving academic evaluation and reflection. By contrast, scholars used to view memory as unreliable and therefore unworthy of being an alternative discourse to history. Post Modernist ideologies however, refute history's supremacy, by citing the innate bias of any historian's selective use of evidence, even if that evidence is reliant on the collection of facts, artefacts and documents. G.R.Elton asserts "that which is deliberately preserved by observers is a drop in the bucket compared with what is left behind by action and without thought of selection for preservation purposes."

An increasing number of modern historians challenge the view that history is necessarily based on verifiable evidence. History can mean different things to different people and as Winston Churchill aptly observed, "History is written by the victors." They posit the idea that academic bias unavoidably influences the choice of evidential material. As Keith Jenkins asserts, "the historian's viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them." Ideological and political agendas can also impact on history's veracity for some aspects of the past can be strategically forgotten while others are remembered. As history itself attests, any interpretation of past events has the potential to vary due to the examiner's personal and cultural prejudices, interests, and academic rationality.

Analysis is often interpretive and as such is subjective in nature and therefore problematic. Many contemporary scholars now assert that a more reliable 'story' of the past needs to include personal memories, especially verbal testimony. Since both history and memory can be unreliable, their integration offers a more tangible and trustworthy representation of the past. Personal experience can flesh out raw data, enriching contextual perceptions as well as triggering insight and understanding. The blending of history and memory is empowering; revealing glimpses of the ordinary and the everyday, enabling the past to be humanised and personalised.

# A Journey through Memory – The Fiftieth Gate

Mark Baker

## Personal experience

As implied by the title, the text involves a process of self-discovery and growing awareness of the past. The journey that is undertaken through the “gates of the heart” involves painstaking historical research which tests the parameters of memory and personal experience but in so doing, verifies the value of verbal history. From an historian’s perspective, documentary evidence has a reality and objectivity of its own. “The names, numbers and expressions on the pages do not change, no matter who is looking at them. For instance, there is no disagreement among historians that the Hossbach Memorandum is a record, reasonably accurate, of a speech made by Adolf Hitler on the 5th November 1937.” Authenticated data provides a ‘truth’ that can be used to fill in the spaces and gaps left by memory, to bed down personal experience within an historical context.

Memory is shown to be fallible and often distorted by age, personal bias and nostalgia. A father’s recollection of being force marched on a cold winter’s day is seemingly contradicted by recorded evidence which alludes to its actually having been an unusually warm afternoon. Such discrepancies however are re-evaluated as being part of the rich tapestry of memory for experience is a continuum that often melds one day into another without strict demarcation of date and detail. On other occasions, memory is graphic, the emotional experience so traumatic that it has seared itself onto the psyche, able to be recalled with vivid clarity. It is the interplay of specificity and generalisation that personalises the Holocaust experience. Baker’s melding of history and memory generates social awareness for a new generation of readers while tapping into a new interest in memoir writing. As Richard Guilliat has noted with reference to the author’s commercial success, “Baker himself says the book is not about the Holocaust but about families, an observation that gets to the heart of the book’s remarkable commercial appeal.

In digging up his parents’ secrets, Baker sets out on a journey that many middle-aged baby-boomers are contemplating - a journey to reach across the generational divide, to know their parents more intimately before it is too late. He has said that he was prompted to write the book after his father underwent heart surgery, telling the reader how he was “gripped by a sense of his inexorable mortality.” With maturity and a family of his own, came the moral imperative that the son hear his parents’ stories and record their lives, “for the sake of our children.” He bluntly tells us that he set out on “a fact-finding mission” to test the version of history that his parents had passed down to him. Eye-witness accounts and documentary evidence was sought

to substantiate the stories, especially for his mother's history since "for her there are no witnesses to interview." He admitted that he doubted veracity of their memories, dreaded that they may have inadvertently falsified history, making their narrative "a tissue of unintended lies". What *A Journey through Memory - The Fiftieth Gate* admirably achieves is a new appreciation for personal experience as a window into the past.

## Representational Process

Baker's text won the Premier's Literary Awards in 1997. It is non-fiction, but is described by some critics as a "literary memoir" in the way that it links historical details of internecine violence with memory. The text is written in a highly imaginative and engaging representational style with many atypical elements for the often dry form of 'non-fiction' texts. A multiplicity of text types are used including narrative, recount and historical report. Using a combination of fiction and non-fiction techniques and features, readers are informed and educated. Empathy is evoked as the Holocaust is brought to life through personal testimony and historical fact within a contemporary context. As Robin Freeman points out, "By combining a personal voice with his research technique and his parents' testimony, he repositions the work within the burgeoning search by Australian (and other) multicultural societies for cultural/ethnic identification. The result is engaging on many levels, "I have won their interest in my history. I share my discoveries with my parents, throwing facts into their stories."

At times however, his mother challenges her son's reliance on historical data. She values personal experience, "You read, you read. Books, books, everywhere. But do you know how it feels?" The process of discovery prompts a re-evaluation of the role played by history's methodical and clinical approach to exploring the past. As an historian, Baker appreciates archival evidence but comes to question the role played by the respective discourses of history and memory. He wonders "Does history remember more than memory? Do... I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being." Memory is legitimised, enabling Baker to enshrine their memories personally and collectively. He realises that "History begins with its memories" and so can proudly, "return memory to them. First I must give in order to take. And give generously, details and details, feks and feks." The family journey proves revelatory, described by Baker as "the highest knowledge of God", a state of enhanced self-awareness and acceptance.

*The Fiftieth Gate* highlights the courage and fortitude of those who survived. Events are presented bluntly, including the flaws and weaknesses of his parents and his own shame and guilt at the way in which he sometimes badgered them for details. This adds credibility. He records how he, "once asked my parents 'How did you survive?'—father says 'luck', mother says 'courage'." Baker becomes well aware of the dual role of son and researcher, made clear by his mother's outburst in response to his constant questions, "Don't interrogate me... I'm your mother, not your prisoner." Notions of memory gain complexity as Baker uses non-fiction techniques to explore their Holocaust experiences. For both parents, memory has a tangible quality, "It is an empty and chaotic landscape of death." Baker reflects it as a tactile,



real place or “site” that becomes equated with factual veracity. We are told that his father traverses this painful “landscape of his past”; gaining a better understanding of the mental trauma that can be involved. Revisiting the concentration camp is particularly painful, “he hugs scarred memories to his chest, whispering bitter secrets unearthed from their hibernation.”

Similar metaphors and geographical imagery is used to refer to Genia’s memories as, “the territory she is reclaiming from her past”. The emotional experience continues to scar her life, “my mother’s town was a place which was also transformed into a city of slaughter—a space where the memories which dance in her head once took place.” Baker’s imaginative representational methods, often highly atypical for the non-fiction genre, enable his readers to grasp the “feelings” of others, to see through their eyes and to get some sense of the past from their pain and vivid memories. Baker also demonstrates how the passage of time often means that the past bears little resemblance to the world of the past. Places, people and experiences become altered by the passage of time. Mark’s father is amazed, when he returns to the location of his youth, by how much it has altered until it is no longer recognisable; “It was much bigger... Nothing, nothing.”

The text’s blunt honesty heightens reader interest. Richard Guillatt describes it as, “a story of intergenerational tensions and times of family conflict during the writing of the book. Baker admits his questions about the past caused pain. As the pain he caused his parents through his relentless pursuit of their history. His acknowledged selfishness in not sparing their feelings.” Readers are able to envisage the family conflict and mixed emotions about the process. We can also see Baker’s perspective and share his need for answers, “I know this is difficult for you,” I plead, “but I need to know.” Guillatt feels that readers can comprehend how his, “parents’ obvious suffering (depression, denial and phobias) has impinged upon Baker’s own childhood.” Memory is recognised as a key to identity, affirmed by Genia’s personal history, “It’s all I have,’ only ‘Memories. Just memories. Nothing more.” The process of changed understanding of what the Holocaust meant on a personal level is evident in many of the insightful comments made by Baker, “So when I exhausted memory I turned to history.”

Baker openly admits that his quest to unravel his parents’ past became, “An obsession, a raid on my mother’s memory, a son’s theft of her past.” His insistent badgering changes the nature of filial relationships, “I—his son turned informer—confront him.” He realises the dangers, the risk of somehow demeaning them by the interrogative process, conscious that he must not, “reduce survivors to supporting actors in their own tragedy.” Baker’s own problems with identity are shown by his growing up as a second-generation Holocaust survivor; “In the absence of a Holocaust, I was compelled to create my own... I turned my own bedroom into a horror-house of memories. My parents never knew of the Nazi memorabilia I collected.” He coped by inventing “a biography for myself from elements of my parents’ lives.”

An attempt to reconcile the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish Diaspora helps make sense of Baker’s own family’s experience. Interviews prove painful but also participatory, drawing the family together while simultaneously testing filial bonds, “I knew then I had to wrap myself in the details of her story, if only to immunise myself against the thing that lay there ... Dark, hiding in the cupboard it was all dark, while outside we could hear the footsteps, the shots, the screams.” Baker begins to see his parents

through different eyes, "I realise how deeply buried is his pain. I have always pitied myself for the grandparents I do not have, rarely considering my father's own orphaned state." He becomes better able to connect with their suffering, giving new impetus to his search for proof, "I was searching for her history in order to vindicate her stories." By learning to really listen, both as historian and son, Baker gains emotional access to the, "empty and chaotic landscape of death" that is repeatedly described by the incidents imprinted on their memories.

## Representation Methods and Techniques

Baker uses the following language devices:

- Factual data
- Statistics
- Informative language
- Emotive language
- Figurative language including similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration
- Imagery
- Visual and aural imagery
- Symbolism
- Irony
- Juxtaposition / Contrast
- Humour
- Colloquialisms and accented dialogue

Baker uses various stylistic devices:

- Historical narrative
- Recollections
- Fictional recreation
- Use of italics for persona; memories
- Dictionary entries
- Poetry
- Documents
- Material from archives
- Letters
- Songs
- Interviews
- Statistics
- Quotes
- Jewish mysticism
- Lullabies
- Prayers
- Fictional recreation

## Language Style

Mark Baker is explicit in his description of his purpose as, “reconstructing their pasts based on historical documentation...the book I imagined was written in two distinct voices that of my parents, embedded in my historical commentary.” He is one of the so-called ‘second-generation’ Holocaust survivors. Their focus is on bearing witness and recording the experiences of their parents in an effort to legitimise and validate their suffering and Berger has described, somehow make sense of the legacy of “an event not personally experienced.” As the offspring of Holocaust victims, there is an emotional inheritance that has left its mark on Baker’s own identity. The charting of their history becomes a representational memorial to the millions who died, his personal connection lending added weight to what is revealed.

He tells us, “I have focused on supplying the archival sources which will guide the reader along the steps I followed in assembling the fragments of my parents’ memories.” The two are interwoven to summon a real appreciation for personal experience. We also form an intimate connection to the author, for there is a *bildungsroman* element to the text for in the son’s chronicling of his parent’s past, there is another story of growing self-awareness and maturation. As the research continues, Baker discovers a testimony of Muller, a SS soldier which supports his mother’s account. His reaction shows the mixed emotions that have prompted his quest. There is satisfaction that he had “found something at last...its really true!” His exclamation showing the significance of what had been found, the inter-relationship of historical evidence and personal memory, “Its perspective I value”.

This multiplicity of experience is represented through the many voices that are presented within the text. This varied ‘voice’ is one of the most dynamic elements of the text, giving a rich resonance to what is revealed and how it is represented. Readers become surrogate witnesses to whispered conversations, shouted orders, fearful scenes of brutality and violence that are filled with the voices of real, recognisable people suffering to make sense of barbarity. The use of Jewish and Yiddish terms adds authenticity for it foregrounds the Jewish context through word like “Judenrat” to describe the Jewish council established during the Nazi occupation. Such words help create a sense of place and culture. They help us identify with the voices that are depicted because Baker is able to give a semblance of what they endured and how they felt. This ability to chronicle their experience develops along with the author’s ability to empathise with his parents’ past. He captures their voices and those of others that are often presented in heavily accented dialogue that adds ethnic and cultural depth as well as authenticity to what is said.

The use of first person narrative explains events in a way that dry, historical discourse cannot imitate. His parents’ stories are reconstructed from conversations and interviews so that their ‘voices’ are heard, not simply reported. This is supported by the historian’s investigation so that their testimony is authenticated and illuminated by primary sources. Baker’s very academic credentials gives added credibility to what his research skills and scholarship expertise uncovers and pieces together. The text’s impact arises not simply from the information that is revealed but the representational techniques that are used to combine the historical and personal details into a woven fabric of experience. Methods such as the use of onomatopoeia, “Tak tak tak” or the echoing of marching jackboots, “Left. Right.Left” interrupts

purely factual accounts, list or statistics in a way that brings the Holocaust vividly to life.

The occasional use of heightened emotive language emphasises the brutality of their past but the narrative force comes from the fact that such moments of heightened description remain occasional. At times, we sense the desperate frustration felt by Baker's father when he tries to communicate a moment, recapture the atmosphere of abandonment and utter vulnerability, "We didn't go like sheep to the slaughter". He paints a different picture that gives greater sense of how the "Aktions" happened again and again so that the victims are left "standing like little lambs. Screams, crying. A massacre of weeping lambs." By challenging the connotations associated with lambs, Baker captures the scene; combining innocence and fear, stunned passivity with screams and weeping.

In an effort to bring his parents to "open the gate" and let the memories flood back, he makes them revisit those places they have locked away in their memories. The horrors are hidden away, emotionally compartmentalised to minimise the damage they can still inflict so many years after the event so that they both acknowledge the same desire but in different ways, "I wish I could forget what I remember." Metaphors help communicate this to readers more effectively than literal language could achieve. Baker informs us, "For my father, the rivers have not thawed, until now, when his words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights." This metaphoric representation can be identified with due to the evocativeness of the terms used. Similarly, the transportation in the cattle trains is captured by references to "shadowy figures [who] grope in the dark, forming a sea of human pillars held upright in a wooden cage." The connotations of entrapment and darkness give tactile impact.

Layered storylines are embedded within an unusual bricolage style; a diverse amalgam of literary and non-literary text types. These enable Baker to imaginatively interweave past and present as well as the varying perspectives of father, mother and son. He informs his reader, "This was the deal...I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory." This creative integration of literary features with an empiricist, realistic approach engages the reader. Baker makes them participants in the revelatory and didactic process of looking at the continuum of experience whereby past experience remains a trigger for present. This is graphically portrayed via the voices of first-hand testimony filtered through hindsight and reflection. Baker learns a great deal about himself in the process, shown through the rhetorical questions that are asked, "Do...I only recognize suffering in numbers and not the laments and cries of a human being?" Figurative and objective language combines with historical archives, documents and statistics to support flawed memories with 'facts'.

## Imagery

Recurring motifs and evocative imagery help generate the confronting magnitude of Baker's non-fiction memoir. Images of darkness pervade his mother's memories, her pain represented in a past that is made up of, "Only images" that are linked with memories of "hiding in darkness" recalled powerfully through her use of repetition, "Pitch black. Pitch black" and recurring visions from a "horrible nightmare". Clear, non-emotional explanations are juxtaposed against sensory language that transposes the reader to other times and places. Sights, sounds, feelings and smells make the graveyards, cemeteries, camps, fields, gates and even the act of running unify the different timeframes represented in the text. The end of one chapter, for example, has Genia describing how she had to run for her life to escape capture while the next chapter opens with a scene from an athletic race where Mark's parents are yelling to him to 'run' in a totally different context. Other effective linking methods include the use of italics to indicate when a different parent is talking and to give a more verbatim account of what they say, as in chapter XVIII.

At times, the description is particularly vivid such as the fictional insert where Baker dramatically depicts the death of his paternal grandmother. To make the reader comprehend the terror and the horror, those last moments are depicted in claustrophobic and nightmarish detail. The atmosphere is captured by the author's ability to place us at the scene amidst the, "writhing heads, arms and legs, dancing contortions...in twisted tongues...Bulging eyes...limp bodies." He conjures the scene in the stark sort of graphic detail found in the poetry of Wilfred Owen. We are made to visualise it, feel the press of the bodies, hear the cries. Their suffering is so palpable that it forces us to recognise their humanity and the barbarity of their fate. This chamber is compared to "a room larger than the world...The point of light, pouring through the fiftieth gate." This is the reality of the Holocaust and Baker's text forces us to witness it as if we were there, sharing their agony. History is dramatised in a way that is rarely found in traditional non-fiction texts.

Anti-realism, mysticism and symbolism interconnect at times when conventional discourse is unable to capture experience. Mysticism transcends reality, imbuing a situation or capturing a feeling with meaning that is impossible to communicate using just concrete evidence. This is particularly evident when the author attempts to conceptualise the significance of gates within the text. We are told of a "child born with infinite memories" lost when touched by an angel while in a reference to gas chamber victims, creative and destructive forces are merged via mystical imagery. His ideas are communicated via an image of, "Letters dancing...angel arms tapping on the gate of God's palace, pouring through the fiftieth gate." This refers to the highest knowledge of God, represented as the "darkness or the light".

Structural use is made of the title's 'fifty gates'; each chapter adding to the knowledge gained. Gates can be opened or closed, equated with opening up either negative or positive memories from the past, "A stream of light rushes past us." This light and dark imagery also helps convey perceptions about identity for father, mother and son, "it always begins in blackness until the first light illuminates the hidden fragments of memory". Metaphorically, the fiftieth gate is "where light hovers inside the darkness" linking to a portal of understanding, "Inside the broken heart".

# Characterisation

## Genia

Genia is a lone survivor and, unlike her husband, has no a concentration camp experience or associates to help define her past or help her cope with it, "for her there are no witnesses to interview...no means of validation". She is a complex woman, both fragile and strong. She explains that "sometimes I know how lucky I really am... Sometimes I feel like a spoiled little child, but only sometimes, when I'm in control." Regrets about her stolen youth and loss of family are never far from her mind and help explain recurring bouts of depression. We learn that "She is more consumed by the past ... She longs for a lost childhood", a phase of her life stolen from her as it was from so many others. Her past is distorted, a series of broken fragments from the past which has left her floundering. Baker's search for the truth however, fills in some of the missing pieces, "Mum, I found something at last. Do you remember you told me you were the only child to survive Bolszowce? Well. It's true. I mean, I believed you, but it's really true."

Her story always begins with the word "Then" for it was "the key to everything; the title she gave her story." She speaks of the 'human cargo' that was transported in the cattle trucks and the children and grandparents who were forced to huddle together before the temple gates whose entrance bore the mocking biblical inscription: "This is the gate of God through which the righteous shall enter". Her inner pain is frequently just below the surface, evident in comments such as, "What I could have been if I had your life" or "Better I should forget." Regrets blanket her view on life and the son as mediator, historian and chronicler watches her with new eyes so that "now, behind the camera, I looked at her, wondering what lay under the clothes which veiled her torment." Readers recognise that it is through Mark's perceptions that his parents are revealed, and that it is as much his journey as much as it is theirs. He reflects that "Executive actions' is not a phrase my mother would have used... She remembers: screaming, the sound of shots, mothers separated from their children."

Vain and egotistical, she battles against the "inexorable signs of age against which she waged a personal war". Battle imagery is again used to describe how she fought "like a victorious soldier displayed in full finery" by going to the beauty parlour and hairdresser. "Her medals, she knew, were her bold, dark eyes and delicately sculptured face, features which still connected her present mien to the image", to the beauty she had been. Superficial trappings become the tokens of existence. Mark reveals that more, "than anything else, she hated exposure". Clothing has special significance for it represent facets of her life that help give it meaning, structure and coherence. She refers to her clothes as "Shmattes" or rags and they represent 'a narrative in her life' She tells us through her son's transcription of her words that: "These shoes danced for me at your barmitzvah" seeing her life signposted by memorial religious events. She also values cultural traditions, Mark telling us, "My mother's faith is more instinctive... Tradition."

Her memories are filled with emotion and she often resorts to metaphorical images to describe what she feels, "Nightfall is to me sadness and darkness and I just can't disconnect my past, you know, I can't forget

these moments for as long as I live.” She and her husband speak in heavy accents that mark their Polish background and this is one of the methods whereby her interrogator son makes her portrait so realistic. It is natural that she should “feel anger inside” and that the process of reliving the past proves to be traumatic. “What do you mean, do I remember? Stop interrogating me. Stop testing me... Because I don’t have a number means I didn’t survive?” Baker tells us, “My mother... is more consumed by the past.” Her sorrow is juxtaposed with the security of the author’s own childhood. He describes how she “buried her head in her hands and wept, her body convulsing to the rhythm of her sobs. I stood on my side of the room, not knowing how to bring comfort to a mother so haunted.”

At first she seems to have little regard for the value of history, questioning “where will the past get you in life?” Once her son has forced her memories from her however, she looks on it more positively, taking pleasure in thinking about how pleased her mother would be about her successes in life if she could look down on her now. Her own offspring represent her own personal “revenge” for the evils that had been perpetuated. She imagines her mother saying, “My poor child is a rich child, not in money, but in what she has achieved and contributed in her life.” This helps reconcile past horrors with the happiness of the present. Verbalising her past has some positive consequences, becoming part of a broader healing process which gives her greater control of her present.

Her story is also recognised as being something of value to be passed onto her children and grandchildren. She realises that it revisiting the horrors of the Holocaust has achieved something representational of the survival of Jewry itself. There is a new appreciation for the need to tell her story and that of fellow survivors, “So always remember it, and your children will remember it. They will survive, they will sing and they will dance.” Memories have been shown to be able to unify the past and give greater joy to the present so that, as Genia tells us, “Once reawakened, they never rest again.” By the end of the process, she speaks joyously of the “fulfilment I get from my family. I’m getting older but I can still say, Lechaim, Lechaim, Lechaim! To Life, To Life, To Life!... The People of Israel Live!”

### Yosel/Joe

Joe’s failing health makes it imperative for his son to record his oral history before it is lost for ever, “I had already caught a glimpse of time doing its charmed dance around his body... His life was a gamble.” Readers get a strong impression of his personality, being “a master of trivia” with a good knowledge of the “minutiae about people”. Age however is taking its toll on both husband and wife and Baker describes his father as being “pitifully angry at his memory for failing him”. Joe is initially dismissive about his son’s intention to record their recollections, mocking his son’s obsession with facts and “my efforts to extract facts from his past”. Details about his mannerisms and habits indicate a strong family bond which is strengthened by their mutual journey into the past.

We learn that his joviality makes him popular with his non-Jewish associates in rural Victoria, “My father Joe is such a good bloke whose infectious smile and dancing eyes lure them into his alien world.” We learn that he enjoys human relationships and that he has an “unquenchable instinct for sociability”. We learn that this stems from his past in the camps.



“where intimacy and friendship were tools of survival”. In a sense, Joe is twice reborn, firstly in Buchenwald and then in Australia. As one of the ‘Buchenwald Boys’, he is part of a closely knit network of fellow victims; “His was a past written on a page of history shared by other survivors.”

The process however has impacted heavily on his faith and the reader is told that he only observes traditional Jewish law and religious practice under pressure from family. While he does not draw strength from his faith, we learn that, “His Jewish world was a shell which protected him.” Survivor friendships form part of a closely-knit network that is very important to him. He hates not recognising somebody from that stage in his life and in this sense his history is different from that of his wife’s. “My father’s fate was not possessed of the same urgency as hers. His was a past written on a page of history shared by other survivors.” His characterisation is evocatively drawn for readers. Sensory detail allows us to witness the process and his reaction to the delving into memories that have long been put aside. Baker shows us the actual process of remembering, “when his hands cease tapping, releasing the tension in his eyes and face, we know a neglected site of memory has been retrieved.”

The father traverses the painful “landscape of his past”. Scars from his past are evident in his “novelist’s imagination for the ghoulish” and a tendency to be “apprehensive” because for him, life holds endless “possibilities for disaster”. He is a strange combination in many ways, a jovial pessimist, always ready to fear the worst. Baker reinforces how Nazi persecution had changed his outlook, for “nothing seems to set the alarm bells ringing as much as public demonstrations of Jewishness.” This metaphor highlights his instinctive fear of being targeted as Jewish. Mark tells us that “his protective antennae are most active where more than three Jews are gathered together.” The process of retrieving the causes for such anxiety make the author reassess his father, making him “realise how deeply buried is his pain... I identify him as a survivor—a parent with a tragic past.”

As the past is slowly revealed, Joe tells his stories “in a matter-of-fact tone, with good humour but never with an enlarged sense of his own role as the chief protagonists of the events he was relating.” The past is personalised and made real but Joe does not represent it as emotionally as Genia does, even though she often fills a few of his narrative gaps. She adds her own appraisal, telling her son, “your father is much cleverer than you think.” She describes him as being “cunning... Strong and obstinate... Now he has abandoned his toughness; all that remains from his past is his luck.”

She sees him as “a survivor” demonstrating that we are the products of our former experiences, changed and shaped by what has happened to us in the past. Baker aptly concludes, “we are the sum of our experiences”, that experience is cumulative.” Once the link with the past is reforged, we are told, “My father, grown older by half a century, speaks in the present tense as if time has not passed.” Real hardship comes when he is persuaded to return to the haunted landscapes of his youth. The resonance of place releases powerful emotions that disturb both son and reader in the pain that obviously accompanies them. When the family revisit the camp, “he hugs scarred memories to his chest, whispering bitter secrets unearthed from their hibernation.” The imagery is powerful, able to feel the trauma and despair so vividly reawakened and “unearthed”. He had sought to close off the past and his son’s determination that forced him to painfully revisit it emotionally and psychologically.

## Representational Impact on Reader

Sydney Morning Herald reviewer, Richard Guillatt has commented that, "Baker himself says the book is not about the Holocaust but about families.... In digging up his parents' secrets, Baker sets out on a journey - a journey to reach across the generational divide, to know their parents more intimately before it is too late...The story is one of the triumph of good over evil, of regeneration over genocide. Issues pertinent to a wider public than Holocaust survivor families are encompassed." This purpose accounts in part for the text's success. The scholarly skill demonstrated by the research process as well as the writing style makes the reader feel "educated" by what is revealed. This didactic element and his imaginative weaving of fact and fictionalised fact together, allows Baker to tap into both "popular" culture as well as enlighten his audience through his parents' voices, how "the tyrants destroyed our world in six years." This represents a unique achievement for non-fiction. As Herald Sun reviewer, Zelda Cawthorne has observed, "Innumerable words have been written about the Holocaust but *The Fiftieth Gate* provides a unique perspective."

Baker enters the story as a participant, filling the gaps left by the absence of any hard data by using representational techniques that humanise clinical evidence. Robin Freeman from Deakin University feels that by "combining a participant's personal voice with his research technique and his parents' testimony", Baker "repositions the work within the burgeoning search by Australian multicultural societies for cultural/ethnic identification." Memory as a personal record of history becomes a key for self-knowledge as well as reflection, "What has time left behind?" At times, the "People's Investigator", "It gnawed at me, the feeling that my father's narrative had surrendered to forgetfulness" but at other times, the son who reaches a new appreciation that Life itself is paramount, "They commemorate by celebrating" their survival. Life is lived to its fullest, dancing, "trading memories".

Baker's text offers hope and inspiration, tempering past trauma with the realisation that, "Freedom is not a happy ending. It is a flame that dances in remembrance, inside the blackness." Remembering their experience and passing on that remembrance to future generations is the way "They will survive, they will sing and they will dance." As Robin Gerster has concluded, "A Melbourne academic historian, Baker adroitly reconstructs [his parents'] story from conversations and interviews supported by a daring use of documentary investigation." This journey through memory jumps across time and continents but as Felicity Bloch observes, it does so, through the innovative combination of "comedy and suspense" that keeps "the reader glued to the page. The intergenerational battle is a perennial source of Jewish humour."

# History and Memory

The images below depict the arrival of European immigrants at Ellis Island, New York, in 1910.

Image One is from The Illustrated Newspaper.

A professional photographer took Image Two.

Compare the representations of this event

Vector - straight up → lefty ideal

Shadow/light focus around globe

Balance space art

left to right  
old to new



clarity suggest excitement positive

Unknown but positive

other participants been off up d art of image. = hope dream aspirations

ect off to new lary posina at new off not had pos

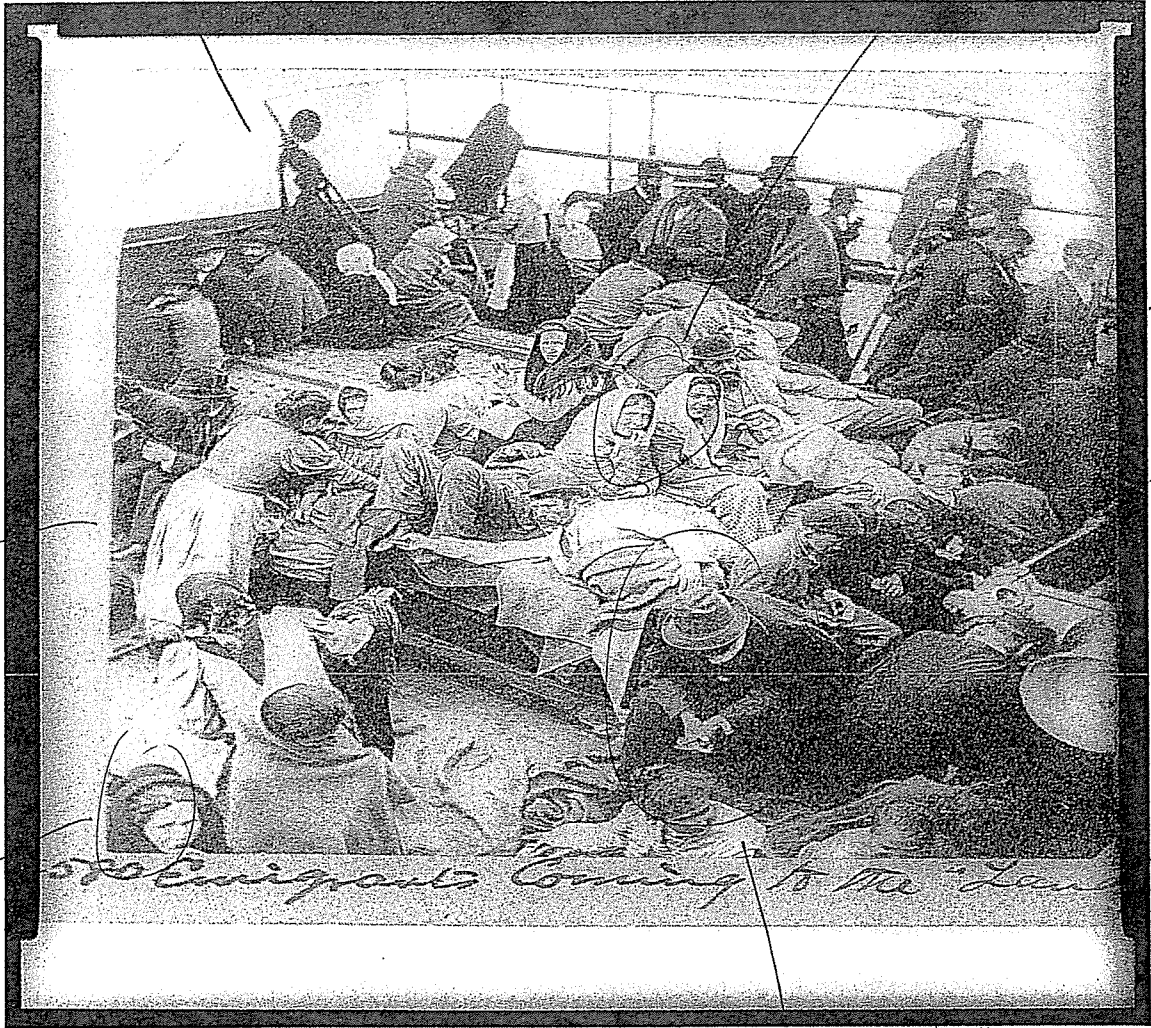
romantic / idealistic impression of migrants arrival in US.

Modality = low artistic impression reflecting ideology

Miscellaneous costume → clean ethnics

Angle High to low  
position of power Migrant lower

Demand engagement with camera on faces  
witness of feeling of fear & apprehension  
Plants symbols



lots of backs

position  
Huddled  
lynx do  
cold  
tired.  
reals

vectors  
looking  
back  
rather  
than forward.

Plots  
high  
medal  
real  
experiences

580 Emigrants Coming to The "Land Of Promise"

Huddled  
juxtap.

**Practice Question**

You have created an exhibition of texts entitled: 'History: Whose Story Is It?' The exhibition includes images of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. Write your speech for the opening night of the exhibition. In your speech, explain how these images reflect your view of the interplay between history and memory.