

## QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AFTER THE *IRENE OPDYKE* VIDEO

1. How is Irene's decision like the Danish Pastoral Letter?  
It reflects the idea that to make the choice to help others involves action. It is not just enough to have the belief in what is right.
2. Describe the scene that leads to Irene's "choice."  
Irene had witnessed the execution by hanging of Jews and she knew that if her friends were discovered they could also be killed.
3. What were Irene's choices?  
She could have refused to hide these people or kept quiet. She also could have turned them down in order to save her own life.
4. What incidents influenced Irene's decision to help?  
Irene was brought up in a religious home where she was taught the value of human life and the responsibility of one person for another.
5. Did Irene understand the risks?  
It was very clear that Irene knew that by protecting these Jews she was putting her one life in danger. The consequences for her actions were very apparent after the public hangings.
6. Did Irene see herself as heroic or extraordinary?  
She saw her actions as being ordinary because that was the only way she knew how to behave - which was righteous.
7. How did the Major's role change once he discovered the Jews? Is he also a rescuer because he allowed Irene to go? Or does he remain a perpetrator because he stands by and watches the events around him without doing anything to stop it?  
Opinions will vary.
8. What lessons can we learn from this incident?  
Student responses should include references to individual responsibility for one another.
9. What might have happened to the victims of the Holocaust if there were more people who acted as Irene Opdyke did?  
If more people had spoken out, it is very likely that the millions of Jews and millions of other victims of the Holocaust could have been save.
10. Are Irene's actions ordinary or extraordinary? Explain.

Perspective of  
LEON BASS  
International Liberators Conference  
Washington, DC - October 1981

"But in the final analysis, my friends, if we want to avoid another Holocaust, if we want to make sure that this doesn't happen again, we have a personal responsibility to do something about it. We know it's nice to say that you are going to give a large sum of money to the NAACP or you're going to give a large sum of money to B'nai Brith. But that is the easy way out.

... (the) tough part of the program is when you walk out of here and you go back to where you live and where you work. When you're on the job and your boss tells you an anti-Semitic joke, do you laugh...? When you're sitting around the bridge table and somebody talks about the dirty niggers or the spics moving in down the street, do you sit there quietly and never say anything? If so, you are contributing to another Holocaust.

It was James Baldwin who said, "God gave man the rainbow sign/No more water the fire next time." You are throwing fuel on that fire when you keep your mouth shut.

Trying to love the unlovable is the challenge, my friends. When we ignore the disinherited, the dispossessed, the poor among us, we are contributing to another Holocaust...

...If we're going to survive, if we're going to make this world a better place, when we leave here, we'll take the message back with us. We'll move out to the forefront where the battle happens to be waging and that's with the disinherited and the dispossessed. I would like to remember again the words of James Baldwin who said:

"Either we love one another  
Or the seas will engulf us  
And the light will go out."

## QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

George Santayana - American Philosopher

"You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor."

Leviticus 19:16

"O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other not that ye may despise each other. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you..."

Surah 49, Verse 13 The Holy Qur'an (Koran)

"In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you."

Jesus, Matthew 7:12 and Leviticus 19:18

"Whoever saves a single life, saves an entire world."

The Talmud

"All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

"The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference."

Elie Wiesel

You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus, Matthew 19:19 and Leviticus 19:17

"We all have memories of times we should have done something and didn't. And it gets in the way of the rest of your life."

Marion Pritchard, a Dutch rescuer during  
World War II

"The time is always right to do what is right."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

"There is but one race - humanity."

George Moore

## GLOSSARY OF HOLOCAUST TERMS, PLACES, AND PERSONALITIES

### ARYAN RACE

"Aryan" was originally applied to people who spoke any of the Indo-European language. The Nazis, however, primarily applied the term to the people of Northern European racial background. Their aim was to avoid what they considered the "bastardization of the German race" and to preserve the purity of European blood.

### AUSCHWITZ

Concentration and extermination camp in upper Silesia, Poland. Established in 1940 as a concentration camp, it became an extermination camp in early 1942. Eventually, it consisted of three sections: Auschwitz I was the main camp, Auschwitz II (Birkenau) was an extermination camp; Auschwitz III (Monowitz) was the I.G. Farben labor camp, also known as Buna. In addition, Auschwitz has numerous subsidiary camps.

### CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Immediately after their assumption of power on January 30, 1933, the Nazis established concentration camps for the imprisonment of all "enemies" of their regime, actual and potential opponents (e.g. Communist, Socialist, Monarchist), Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies, homosexuals, and other "asocials" were included later on. The general round-up of Jews did not start until 1938. Before then, only Jews who fit one of the earlier categories were interned in camps. The first three concentration camps were Dachau (near Munich), Buchenwald (near Weimar), and Sachsenhausen (near Berlin).

### EXTERMINATION

Nazi camps for the mass killing by gas of Jews and others (e.g. Gypsies, Russian prisoners-of-war, ill prisoners). Known as "death camps", these were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. All were located in Eastern Europe.

### GENOCIDE

The partial or entire destruction of religious, racial or national groups.

### GESTAPO

Abbreviation for Geheime Staats Polizei, German term for the German Secret State Police during Nazi regime; used terrorist methods.

### GHETTO

The Nazis revived the medieval ghetto to describe their compulsory "Jewish Quarter" (Wohnbezirk). These were poor sections of the city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to reside. Surrounded by barbed wire or walls, the ghettos were sealed. Established mostly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Lodz, Warsaw, Vilna, Riga, Minsk), the ghettos were characterized by overcrowding, starvation and heavy labor. All were eventually dissolved and the Jews deported to death camps.

### GYPSIES

A nomadic people, believed to have come originally from northwest India, from where they

immigrated to Persia in the first millennium. They divided into five groups that still exist today. Traveling in small caravans, their bands were led by elders. Gypsies appeared in Western Europe in the 15th century. By the 16th century they had spread throughout Europe where they were persecuted almost as relentlessly as the Jews. It is believed that approximately 500,000 perished during the Holocaust. Most gypsy victims were shot, not gassed.

#### HITLER, ADOLPH

Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor. He was born in Austria, but he settled in Germany in 1913. At the outbreak of World War I he enlisted in the Bavarian Army, became a corporal and received the Iron Cross First Class for bravery. Returning to Munich after the war, he joined the newly formed German Worker's Party which was soon reorganized under his leadership as the Nazi Socialist German Worker Party (NSDAP). In November \_\_\_ he unsuccessfully attempted to forcibly bring Germany under nationalist control. When his coup, known as the "Beer Hall Putsch" failed, Hitler was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison. It was during this time that he wrote *Mein Kampf*. Serving only nine months of his sentence, Hitler quickly reentered German politics and soon outpolled his political rival in national elections. In January 1933 Hindenburg made Hitler chancellor of a coalition cabinet but Hitler (who took office on January 30, 1933) immediately began setting up a dictatorship. In 1934 the chancellorship and presidency were united in the person of the Fuhrer. Soon all other parties were outlawed and opposition brutally suppressed. By 1936 Hitler implemented his dream of a "Greater Germany" first annexing Austria; then with the acquiescence of the Western democracies, he annexed Sudentanland (the German province of Czechoslovakia) and finally Czechoslovakia itself. On September 1, 1939 Hitler's armies invaded Poland. By this time the Western democracies realized that no agreement with Hitler could be honored and World War II began. Although initially victorious on all fronts, Hitler's armies began to suffer setbacks shortly after America joined the war in December 1941. Although the war was obviously lost by early 1945, Hitler insisted that Germany fight to the death. On April 30, 1945, Hitler committed suicide rather than be captured alive.

#### HOLOCAUST

The destruction of some six million Jews by the Nazis and their followers in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Other individuals and groups suffered grievously during this period, but only the Jews were marked for complete and utter annihilation. The term "holocaust" literally means "a completely burned sacrifice." The term tends to offer a sacrificial connotation. The word "shoal" originally was a Biblical term meaning "widespread disaster."

#### JUDENREIN

German for "clean of Jews", denoting areas where all Jews had either been murdered or deported.

#### LIQUIDATE

To dispose of, to get rid of, as by killing.

#### PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION

A major piece of anti-Semitic propaganda, written in Paris by members of the Russian Secret Police. Essentially it was a copy of a French polemic by the French lawyer, Maurice Joly, and directed against Napoleon III. Substituting Jewish leaders, the *Protocols* maintained that Jews

were plotting world dominion by setting Christian against Christian, corrupting Christian morals and attempting to destroy the economic and political viability of the West. It gained great popularity after World War I and was translated into many languages. It encouraged anti-Semitism in Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States. It has long been repudiated as an absurd and hateful lie. The Book currently has been reprinted and is widely distributed by neo-nazis and third world countries that are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel.

#### RIGHTEOUS OF THE NATIONS

Term applied to those non-Jews who saved Jews from their Nazi persecutors at the risk of their own lives. Also known as the "Righteous Gentiles."

#### SS

Abbreviation usually written with two lightning symbols standing for Schutzstaffel (Protective Units). Originally organized as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a giant organization by Heinrich Himmler. Although various SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.

#### WARSAW GHETTO

Established in November 1940, the Ghetto was surrounded by a wall confining almost 500,000 Jews. Nearly 45,000 Jews died there in 1941 alone, due to overcrowding, forced labor, lack of sanitation, starvation and disease. A revolt took place in the Ghetto in April 1943 when the Germans, commanded by General Jurgan Stroop, attempted to raze the Ghetto and deport the remaining inhabitants to Treblinka. The uprising, led by Mordecai Anielewicz, lasted 28 days.

#### YELLOW BADGE

A distinctive sign which Jews were compelled to wear in the Middle Ages. The Nazis adopted the concept, forcing Jews under their control to wear a distinctive badge or arm band with the star of David.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ORDINARY HEROES  
*They were for the most part, ordinary human beings,  
who could not believe there was nothing they could do.*

BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*MAUS, A SURVIVOR'S TALE, Parts I and II,*

Art Spiegelman. Pantheon Books, New York, 1986. The story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist, who tries to come to terms with his father's terrifying story and history itself. It is told in cartoon form with the Nazis as cats and the Jews as mice.

*A PICTURE BOOK OF ANNE FRANK*

David A. Adler. Illustrated by Karen Rietz. Holliday House, 1994. A chronicle of the life of Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl, who kept a diary during her family's attempts to hide from the Nazis in the 1940s.

*THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL*

Anne Frank. Pocket Books, 1947. True story based on the diary of a young Jewish girl whose family hid from the Nazis in occupied Holland.

*JACOB'S RESCUE: A HOLOCAUST STORY*

Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin. Bantam Doubleday, 1994. A haunting story of a man's terrifying childhood recollection when a brave Polish couple, Alex and Mela Roslan, hid him and other Jewish children from the Nazis. Based on a true story. Includes photographs of Jacob and his family and Alex and Mela Roslan.

*DEAR WILLIE RUDD*

Libba Moore Gray and Peter M. Fiore (illustrator). Simon & Schuster, 1994. A fifty-year-old woman reminisces about Willie Rudd, the black woman caregiver of her youth. She writes a loving letter to her and attaches it to a kite.

*HIDING TO SURVIVE: STORIES OF JEWISH CHILDREN RESCUED FROM THE HOLOCAUST*

Maxine B. Rosenberg. Clarion Books, 1994. A photographic and narrative retelling of the stories of Holocaust survivors and their rescuers. The heroism of those who resisted the tyrannical authority of the Nazis is an affirmation of the indomitable human spirit.

*THE RESCUERS: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*

Gay Block and Malka Drucker. Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc. 1992. A photographic biography of the hidden heroes of the Holocaust. Ordinary people recount the efforts they made to save Jews.

*RAOUL WALLENBERG*

Michael Nicholson and David Winner. Gareth Stevens, Inc. 1989. The story of Raoul Wallenberg, one of the greatest heroes of the Holocaust, who rescued an estimated 100,000 Jews in Hungary.

*GET ON BOARD: THE STORY OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD*

Jim Haskins. Scholastic Hardcover, 1994. A detailed historical account of the Underground Railroad, including stories of brave slaves and courageous others who helped them to attain freedom.

*RESCUE IN DENMARK*

Harold Flender. Simon & Schuster, 1963. How occupied Denmark rose as a nation to save Danish Jews from extermination, culminating in a heroic rescue using small boats to bear them to safety in Sweden.

*THE HUNTED CHILDREN*

Donald Lowrie. Norton, 1963. The story of men and women who outwitted the Nazi perpetrators to save refugees in Southern France in WWII.

*PASSAGE TO FREEDOM*

Ken Mochizuki. Illustrated by Dom Lee. Afterword by Hiroki Sugihara. Lee and Low Books, 1997. In 1940 Chiune Sugihara, Japanese consul to Lithuania, rescued 6000 Jews fleeing from the German army. This is his story as seen through the eyes of his five-year-old son Hiroki.

*THE HIDDEN CHILDREN*

Howard Greenfield. Illustrated with photographs. Tichnor & Fields, 1994. This compelling book details the recollections of thirteen hidden children during the Holocaust. It introduces the plight of European Jewry during World War II at a level a young reader can understand.

*THE BRACELET*

Yoshiko Uchida. Illustrated by Joanna Yardly. Philomed, 1994. Drawing on her own childhood as a Japanese-American during World War II, the author has created a powerful story about friendship and material culture. Beautifully illustrated, the main character, seven-year-old Emi, acts as an eloquent spokesperson for those who were forced to live in West Coast internment camps.

*WORDS THAT HURT, WORDS THAT HEAL*

Joseph Telushkin. William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1996. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." In our hearts we know this is untrue. Discovering the wisdom of knowing how to choose our words so that they will build bridges, rather than erect barriers to understanding, is the basis for this book.

*TELL ME A MITZVAH*

Danny Siegel and Judith Friedman (illustrator), 1993. A mitzvah is a commandment, but the word has become a synonym for "those sublime kind deeds that people do for others." The stories of "mitzvah people" are presented here - of people who repair the world.



*PASSAGE TO FREEDOM: The Sugihara Story*

Ken Mochizuki. Lee & Low Books, 1997. The dramatic story of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who saved 6000 Jews during the Holocaust.

*THINGS WE COULDN'T SAY*

Diet Eman with James Schaap. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Diet Eman, a member of the Dutch resistance, tells the story of how she rescued Jews during World War II.

*RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS*

The Editors of Conari Press, 1993. Imagine what would happen if there were an outbreak of kindness in the world, if everybody did one kind thing on a daily basis. This book will inspire you to start - with the small, the particular, the individual - to bring delight and goodness to yourself and others.

*HEROES AND OTHER MIRACLE WORKERS*

Danny Siegel, 1997. A collection of stories of ordinary people who contribute greatly to kindness in the world.

*SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES*

Eleanor Coer, 1977. Yearling, Dell Publishing Company. Based on the real life story of a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, 12 year old Sadako, who folded hundreds of paper cranes as a symbol of healing and hope for her country.

**TEACHER GUIDED ACTIVITY AND SOURCE BOOKS**

*ANNE FRANK'S THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL: A STUDENT CASEBOOK TO ISSUES, SOURCES, AND HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS*

Hedda Rosner Kopf. Greenwood Press, 1997. This casebook enriches Anne Frank's remarkable diary with historical documents that illuminate the political and social context of anti-Semitism in Germany and the Holocaust.

*STARTING SMALL: TEACHING TOLERANCE IN PRESCHOOL AND THE EARLY GRADES*

By Teaching Tolerance, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997. This resource book describes educational projects across America which envision classroom communities where equity, cooperation, and citizenship are clearly evident.

*GOOD PEOPLE*

Danny Siegel, 1995. This book is about good people. It is about the many ways they use their human talents to make good things happen in this world. Includes a myriad of methods to become involved with the good works of good people around the world.

*TEACHING VALUES - REACHING KIDS*

Linda Schwartz and Bev Armstrong (illustrator), 1997. The Learning Works. This is a book about values and how to teach them to students through discussions, role-playing, and writing.

*WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR: A KID'S GUIDE TO BUILDING CHARACTER*

Barbara A. Lewis, 1998. This book assumes you want to be a person of good character. It also assumes that you are capable of building your own positive character traits. Included are descriptions of particular character traits, quotations, dilemmas to challenge decision-making skills, activities, true stories of real kids, and other resources for character building.

*THE COURAGE TO CARE: RESCUERS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST*

Sr. Carol Rittner and Sondra Meyers, 1986. New York University Press. A collection of stories of rescuers who hid Jews during World War II. (See film by the same title.)

**DRAMA**

*ANGEL IN THE NIGHT*

Joanna H. Kraus. The Dramatic Publishing Company. (1995) Woodstock, IL.

Set in 1942 (and today), this is the true story of Marysia Pawlina Szul, a teenager who hid four Jews in her barn without her family's approval. She alone cared for them for two years during the Nazi invasion of Poland. Study guide included.

**CURRICULUM**

*YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE*

A three-lesson integrated social studies/language arts curriculum for middle school students providing practice in individual and moral decision-making. This Holocaust case history activity is a production of the Avenue of the Righteous, 840 Vernon Avenue, Glencoe, IL 60022 (847/835-4800)

**WEBSITES**

AVENUE OF THE RIGHTEOUS – [www.avenueoftherighteous.org](http://www.avenueoftherighteous.org)

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD - [www.npca.org/walk.html](http://www.npca.org/walk.html)

HOLOCAUST GENOCIDE PROJECT - [www.iearn.org/hgp/](http://www.iearn.org/hgp/)

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS - [www.actsofkindness.org](http://www.actsofkindness.org)

**FILMS**

*ROCK IN THE ROAD*

BFA Educational Media, 2349 Chafee Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146. Tel. 314/569-0211. An animated film which depicts the serious issue of our role response to conflict. Are we the perpetrator, victim, bystander or rescuer?

*THE COURAGE TO CARE*

A documentary that retells the stories of the Righteous Gentiles who hid Jews during the Holocaust. Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, Publications Department, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, Tel 212/490-2525.

*WEAPONS OF THE SPIRIT*

A documentary film by Pierre Sauvage who tells the true story of the heroes of Le Chambin Sur Lignon, France. This small village saved the lives of 5000 European Jews during the Holocaust.

*SCHINDLER'S LIST*

Steven Spielberg, Director

*MIRACLE AT MIDNIGHT*

Walt Disney Productions

*RESCUERS*

Barbara Streisand, Director