

"MEMORY OF THE CAMPS"

ABOUT THE FILM:

This hour-long documentary on the liberation of the German concentration camps was assembled in London in 1945 from footage shot by the service and newsreel cameramen accompanying the British, American, and Russian armies. However, the documentary was left unfinished, with missing sound tracks and a missing sixth reel. But the directors, including Alfred Hitchcock, had developed a script to go with the pictures, and in May 1985, FRONTLINE first presented this documentary -- unedited and as close as possible to what the producers intended 60 years ago.

A NOTE TO TEACHERS:

The stunning and disturbing footage in "Memory of the Camps" can have a lasting impact on viewers. That is part of its power as a teaching tool. However, its graphic nature can also make it inappropriate for audiences who are unprepared. For that reason, we strongly recommend that "Memory of the Camps" not be used as a stand-alone or as an introduction. Rather, it is best suited for students who are already engaged in studying related subjects and who have foundational knowledge of the Holocaust and the history of World War II. This guide is written for college-level classrooms or events involving adults.

EDUCATOR RESOURCES:

Film Notes

Fact Sheet

Map

Using "Memory of the Camps"

Preparing for a Screening

Topics / Subject Areas

Discussion Prompts

Selected Quotes

Internet Resources

Purchasing the Film

"Memory of the Camps" can be purchased from **Shop PBS for Teachers**

[<http://teacher.shop.pbs.org/home/index.jsp>]. Also, teachers and students can watch the

film streamed in its entirety on **FRONTLINE's Web site**

[<http://www.pbs.org/frontline/shows/camp>].

Credits

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[graphics note from writer– I expect this page and the following page to be reproduced as handouts, so layout should include all needed logos & credits]

FILM NOTES for "MEMORY OF THE CAMPS"

This hour-long documentary on the liberation of the German concentration camps was assembled in London in 1945, but it was never completed. It was constructed from footage shot by the service and newsreel cameramen accompanying the British, American, and Russian armies, but it wasn't shown until May 7, 1985 when FRONTLINE first presented it to mark the 40th anniversary of the liberation. FRONTLINE broadcast the film just as it was found in the archives of London's Imperial War Museum, unedited, with the missing sound tracks, and with the title given to it by the Museum -- "Memory of the Camps."

The project originated in February 1945 in the Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force). "Memory of the Camps" was intended to document unflinchingly the conditions of the camps in order to shake and humiliate the Germans and prove to them beyond any possible challenge that crimes against humanity were committed and that the German people -- and not just the Nazis and SS -- bore responsibility.

A variety of bureaucratic and technical glitches delayed completion of the film. In the end, it was unfinished, and the British military command felt the need for a more congenial approach to improving Anglo-German relations. They worried that the film might increase the chaos and demoralization.

Despite being shelved for decades, five of the film's six reels had survived in a 55-minute fine-cut print without titles or credits. (The quality of the print reflects the fact that the negative was lost and it was made from a nitrate positive cutting copy, the equivalent of a work-print today.) Missing was a sixth reel comprised of Russian footage of the liberation of Auschwitz and Maidanek, presumed to have been taken to Moscow

The editing of the footage was done by a team of accomplished filmmakers, including Alfred Hitchcock. One of Hitchcock's important contributions was the inclusion of wide establishing shots which support the documentary feel of the film and showed that the events in the film could not have been staged. According to Peter Tanner, one of the film's editors, Hitchcock's concern was that "we should try to prevent people thinking that any of this was faked...so Hitch was very careful to try to get material which could not possibly be seen to be faked in any way."

FACT SHEET

Insert downloadable map of the sites visited in the film

"Memory of the Camps" includes footage from a handful of the hundreds of prison, labor and concentration camps, including:

Bergen-Belsen – approx. 50,000 dead, including 14,000 who were too sick to survive after liberation

Dachau – 188,000 total prisoners, 28,000 dead between 1940-45. Unknown how many deaths between 1933-1939.

Buchenwald – between 33,000-43,000 dead

Ebensee – approx. 20,000 dead

Mauthausen – 119,000 dead

Ludwigslust (Wöbbelin) – at least 1,000 dead

Ohrdruf – a sub camp of Buchenwald

Auschwitz – 1.1-1.6 million dead

Sources: Jewish Virtual Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

USING "MEMORY OF THE CAMPS"

PREPARING FOR A SCREENING

The footage in "Memory of the Camps" is beyond graphic. It is gruesome and disturbing. To ensure that a screening is productive, and to honor the victims, you might consider extending your normal preparation routine:

- View the film ahead of time to give yourself an opportunity to reflect. That way you won't be dealing with your own raw emotions and trying to lead a discussion at the same time. It might also help to familiarize yourself with the resources in this guide and with those available to you and your students at FRONTLINE's "Memory of the Camps" Web site [URL: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp].
- Carefully think through your reasons for choosing to show such a graphic film and be prepared to clearly articulate those reasons to your students prior to the screening. Without telling people what their reaction should be, explain why you think the film is important.
- Caution students that what they are about to see is shocking. Engage students in a brief conversation about how different people react when they see things that make them uncomfortable and as a class, determine what would constitute respectful and disrespectful behavior during the screening. You might frame the portion of the discussion about respect by asking students how they would behave if a child or grandchild of one of the prisoners were sitting next to them. You might also offer students who are upset the opportunity to leave class and make available a loaner tape that they can screen in private later.
- The film does not provide historical background, but it is very important that students have enough knowledge of geography and history to be able to place the images in context. To provide some of that background, you might review with students the reproducible map and film notes included in this guide. You may also want to assign students to read selected materials available on the Web sites listed in the links section of the FRONTLINE Web site. [URL: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp/links.html>]
- If showing the film in its entirety seems like too much for your students to take in, or if time is a concern, you may want to simply screen the first part of the film, which shows footage from Bergen-Belsen. If you stop the film at this point, you might want to read to students the narration that concludes the film. A transcript is available on the FRONTLINE Web site. [URL: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp/tapes.html>]
- Immediately after the film ends, pause for a few moments of silence to allow students to reflect and to respectfully transition into discussion. You might even invite everyone to take a deep breath. If you typically assign students to keep a journal, it

would be appropriate to let them write some of their own thoughts privately before being asked to share publicly.

TOPICS / SUBJECT AREAS

Anthropology
Anti-Semitism / Prejudice
Ethics
Genocide
Human Rights
Jewish Studies
Law
Media Studies

Military History
Modern History – World War II
Philosophy
Political Science
Psychology
Religion
Sociology

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

This is the kind of film that demands time for reflection. You may want to consider using the following as writing prompts rather than discussion prompts. The questions are designed for a variety of purposes and levels of inquiry. Rather than try to work through them all, find one or two that best suit your needs.

General

- What did you know about the concentration camps prior to viewing the film? Which of your ideas were confirmed by the film? Which were contradicted? Which things in the film filled in gaps in your knowledge?
- The film's narration ends with "Unless the world learns the lessons these pictures teach, night will fall. But, by God's grace, we who live will learn." In your view, what are the lessons of these pictures?
- Which images or moments from the film were most powerful to you? Why do you think you found these particular images or moments so compelling?
- Given what you have seen in the film, consider the lasting impact of these events on:
 - U.S. military policy
 - U.S. foreign policy
 - The current conflict between the State of Israel and Arab powers in the region, including the Palestinians
 - Theology and the belief in a protective divine power
 - Definitions of humanity
 - Definitions of evil
 - Jewish culture
 - Jewish self-reliance/willingness (or unwillingness) to trust non-Jews

Media Studies

- Identify the target audience of this film when it was made. On what evidence do you base your conclusion? How does that target audience differ from audiences for the film today?
- Compare the graphic nature of the footage in "Memory of the Camps" with footage labeled as "graphic" today. What are the differences?
- Consider how audiences immediately following the war might have interpreted this footage, made before the abilities existed for digital technologies to create realistic-looking footage. Compare that reaction to the potential reaction of audiences now. If you were a World Court judge, would you accept this footage as evidence? Why or why not?

- Look at current references to "Nazis," "fascists," "Hitler," and "evil" in popular culture, media, and politics. In your view, where are the terms being used appropriately? If you were responsible for crafting a policy for journalists, what guidelines would you provide to reporters for usage of these references?
- How would you describe the delivery style of the narrator? What messages do you think the style conveys?

Philosophy / Religion

- Use Hannah Arendt's concept of the 'banality of evil' to assess and analyze the images of guards and bystanders depicted in the film.
- List the adjectives that best describe your culture's approach to burial (e.g., solemn, sacred, respectful, etc.). Compare the burial practices from your own heritage with what you see in the film. How does what you see in the film compare with what would have been the normal burial customs of Jews, Gypsies, Christians, and other victims? Why are burial rituals an important part of cultural expression and preservation?

Responsibility

- Aside from the formal post-war trials of Nazi and SS leaders, what kinds of punishments did the camp liberators mete out? What is the difference between punishment and justice? What might constitute justice for the perpetrators of the things you see in "Memory of the Camps?" Are there things we can do today to help achieve justice?
- The Allied military authorities who governed the camps immediately following liberation made a point of showing the conditions of the camps to German civilians. In your view, was it important for the Allies to lay responsibility at the feet of all Germans and not just hold SS leaders and camp guards accountable? What was the effect of that approach to responsibility?
- The opening narration describes Hitler coming to power: "It had seemed a good sort of bargain...especially if it meant a vista bright with the promise of grandeur and conquest." Consider how voters today make "bargains." Would you vote for a candidate whose economic policies you liked, but whose social vision you rejected? Would you vote for a candidate that made you feel proud to be an American but who favored discrimination against particular groups? Justify your position.
- The narrator says, "The dead have been buried. It remains for us to care for these, the living." Specifically, what "care" are the liberators obligated to provide and why? Do people today still bear this responsibility? Do you?

- The narrator says that the purpose of the film is to "serve our collective memory." What is "collective memory" and why might it be important? How long should something like this Holocaust be kept as part of the "collective memory?"

Human Rights

- What specific camp structures and policies contributed to the ability of one group of people to de-humanize another?
- How do you restore humanity to people who have been de-humanized? What kinds of things did the soldiers who liberated the camps do?
- Research the safeguards put into place after World War II to prevent future humanitarian atrocities. How effective have they been? What are today's obstacles to the prevention of genocide?
- The film barely mentions the Nazis' particular targeting of Jews. How might this omission have served the filmmakers' interests at the time? How might it have served to reinforce the very anti-Semitism that infused the extermination camps?

SELECTED QUOTES

These can be used as discussion or writing prompts, or they might be read aloud by students as a transition between viewing and discussion or as part of a ritual to honor the victims.

- ◆ "Most of the people seemed listless beyond hope and astonishment."
- ◆ "The faces of the bystanders showed just a little of the hate that Germany had inspired – and some of the anguish, too."
- ◆ "There were children, too, in Belsen camp, though what crime they had committed was difficult to imagine."
- ◆ "The things in this camp are beyond describing. When you actually see them for yourself, you know what you're fighting for here."
- ◆ "Corruption was fostered for it gave another excuse for killing."
- ◆ "All this seemed so remote from humanity, so far beyond the behavior of man."
- ◆ "It had to be seen to be believed."
- ◆ "They were able to see the mountains, but what use are mountains without food?"
- ◆ "These were the rest – hurriedly murdered lest they be set free to live a normal life."

- ◆ "In terms of barbarity and brutality they had traveled backwards for 12,000 years."

RESOURCES

Memory of the Camps

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp/]

This FRONTLINE Web site for the film includes a full transcript of the film as well as links to organizations providing additional information on the Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II and on strategies for teaching about the Holocaust.