

**IMPLEMENTING HOLOCAUST LITERATURE IN SOCIAL
STUDIES ENGLISH AND ENGLISH LITERATURE AND
CULTURE IN NORWEGIAN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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1. Introduction

How can literature concerning the Holocaust be used as a theme in the major subjects of Social Studies English "Samfunnsfaglig engelsk" and English Literature and Culture "Engelskspråklig litteratur og kultur" for third-year students in Norwegian upper secondary schools to promote literature knowledge as well as cultural and historical understanding in coherence with the curriculum?

I would like to establish in which way literature of different genres can be used thematically by the students to acquire a broader understanding of the Holocaust as a major event; an event which has had a sizable effect on American society and the world as a whole. Through different literary works, namely *The Complete Maus* by Art Spiegelman – a Holocaust survival biography depicted as a cartoon, *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance* by Jack Sutin – a memoir, *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick – a book composed of two connected short stories about a Holocaust survivor, and six selected poems; "Never Shall I Forget" by Elie Wiesel, "Shipment to Maidanek" by Ephraim Fogel, *Holocaust* by Charles Reznikoff, "I Keep Forgetting", and "Leaving You" by Lily Brett and "Riddle" by William Heyen, which have all been taken from the collection *Holocaust Poetry* by Hilda Schiff, I will discuss their relevance for this subject. I will attempt to analyze the literature on an educational level in order to find out how and why the respective texts can indeed be used for an educational purpose. Furthermore I will look at how the students should be asked to deal with these works, as well as with this topic for example what could be interesting for the students to discuss within each text. Additionally, questions concerning each text will be submitted to the students, which can aid them toward a better understanding. Moreover, since the texts represent different genres, but deal with the same topic, the students will also be able to discuss the relationship between form and content: in other words, they will be able to experience how the choice of genre affects the message and tone of the texts, as well as the impact it has on the reader.

In the subjects of Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture, reading and working with Holocaust literature is relevant in terms of the curriculum. In Social Studies English some of the goals in the curriculum that are applicable are as follows: to be able to analyze the linguistic tools applied to texts of different genres, to

be able to discuss long texts with a social perspective and to discuss various points of view in society questions, and to discuss how historical events have influenced the development of the American society. In English Literature and Culture some goals are to be able to discuss the connection between form and content, to be able to use the right terminology to analyze literature, to be able to talk about literature in a precise and varied way, to discuss points of view in literature texts, and to be able to interpret literary texts in a cultural-historic as well as a social perspective (Utdanningsdirektoratet).

It is unavoidable that the selected texts have a Jewish perspective since the Jewish victims were those numerically, and overwhelmingly the most affected by the Holocaust as a group. However, that is not to say that the suffering of other groups such as the Roma people, homosexuals, and others should not be considered or studied, since the diversity of the Holocaust is an important aspect to know about, but literature concerning the sufferings of other groups is not as easily obtainable. I have attempted finding literature that portrays the Holocaust from the perspective of other groups, but I have not been able to come across anything of significance – and certainly not by Anglophone authors. It is therefore important to discuss why Holocaust literature focusing on the non-Jewish victims is so inaccessible, which is something I will attempt to elaborate on later in this thesis, as well as state how I plan to implement this question into the teaching of this subject.

By learning about the Holocaust through individual narratives, either through non-fictional narratives, or through fictional ones, a personal connection between the protagonist and reader is established. The reader will also be able to relate to the story on a personal level, something that is quite unique and something that cannot easily be acquired through reading facts or history books. This personal touch is very important in the identification process between the reader and the narrative since it triggers the students' understanding, motivation to read as well as their emotions. The reader will in many cases be able to feel as if (s)he knows the protagonist, and will through that feel involved in the events taking place in the narrative, which again lead to a deeper understanding and interest in the matter.

Other kinds of literature, or simple facts will usually present the victims anonymously, or as a group, which makes the identification process much more difficult. It is important that the students are aware of the fact that the various texts,

even if they are so-called true stories, can never fully represent reality. This is not to say that the texts should be taken with a pinch of salt, but the immediate facts and truths are portrayed through the eyes of the author in any way one wishes to look at it. In addition, each reader will perceive the texts in his or her own way since (s)he was not there experiencing the events, and will never be able to fully understand, hear, feel, or smell it. The reader's only possibility of engaging with the story is by imagining it, and the best way one can do this is through personal narratives, which create a link between the reader and the period.

The selected literature deals with suffering, survival and trauma – both during the Holocaust itself, afterwards from the survivor's point of view, and through the eyes of the subsequent generation. Studying this is something that will help the students understand the magnitude of the Holocaust in a wider perspective.

When selecting the texts to work with, the age and maturity level of the students have been taken into consideration. Both the language and the subject that the texts deal with should be at a level understandable for the students, but at the same time, it should require them to reach and aim for further knowledge. In addition, the specific works have been chosen because they possess a high quality, and, because they are of various genres (poetry, personal memoir, a biography as a graphic novel and a short story) they let the students learn about the Holocaust from different perspectives and angles of expression. Another factor that I have considered is the utilization of literature that is likely to be interesting for students in this age group, many of whom have often been required to read literature that they have found tedious in school. I have therefore made a selection of literature based on whether the different works appear to be thrilling, stimulating, educational and moving. Literature that can move, stimulate and educate the students will help them grow as human beings. Furthermore, in the curriculum cross-curricular teaching and learning on different levels is of considerable importance and this is best acquired in a non-linear way through gaining knowledge from different fields at the same time, in the way that I aim to show in this thesis.

The reason why I have chosen to deal with this topic is because the Holocaust has been of great interest for me for many years. Ever since I read my first Holocaust-survivor story it has captured and completely mesmerized me. The unspeakable, unimaginable magnitude of the Holocaust is extremely captivating. The millions of

individual tragedies and stories – all revolving around the very same topic are so forceful, yet heartbreaking. Reading these stories is also in a way reading of a fight of good against evil and although the good did not always prevail, their stories will when one reads them. In addition to that, my personal opinion is that the Holocaust should be given a larger position in the curriculum in Norwegian schools even so many decades after it happened precisely because it is not just a horrendous genocide mostly revolving around Jews but shows what humanity is capable of and how it can affect humans for generations. It is not only a historical issue, but also a humanitarian one. It might be a cliché that only by learning from history, humankind can ensure that a similar thing does not happen again, but it is nevertheless true. Learning about this topic – and especially from a personal point of view, will hopefully create awareness and empathy among the students.

2. How Literary Works About the Holocaust can be Integrated into English Teaching in Norwegian Upper Secondary Schools

I have envisioned that this specific topic be dealt with over a course module of approximately six weeks, which will be needed to introduce the topic, read and work with the literature in a fulfilling way, as well as work on the presentations. In this course the students will first be presented with the term “Holocaust literature”, which, in all likelihood, is unknown to most of the students. They will be informed about what the class is going to be doing during this period – which will start by determining what and how much the students know about the Holocaust. It is probable that there might be an information gap between some of the students. This may be caused both by differing fields of interests among them and by their different backgrounds and schools. The stress that is put on learning about the Holocaust varies among schools. Therefore, establishing what the students know is crucial, and at the same time easily accomplished, for example, by having a small quiz in class.

Subsequently the teacher will be able to adjust the information (s)he gives about the Holocaust according to how much the students know. This information can be about the Holocaust in general or specifically regarding points brought up in connection to the different texts the students are about to read. These points include the question of survivor vs. victim, survival guilt or trauma, collective memory and the question of speaking about the almost unspeakable events, which are matters that need to be brought up for discussion. In addition, the issue of who the Holocaust victims were will be addressed in class. Besides the suffering of the Jewish people, facts about who the other groups who suffered were will be addressed. We will discuss in class the reason why Holocaust literature is mainly about and represented by Jews, and not its other victims, and whether this is problematic. The students will be allowed to come up with theories for this.

In general people have not been aware of the suffering of non-Jewish Holocaust victims, and this has only in the recent years become an issue. Some of the reasons for this can be assumed to have to do with the fact that the Jewish people were more resourceful than, for example, the Roma people, and with the fact that many of them emigrated to the western world where they were able to express themselves freely, whereas the Roma people still largely lived in rural communities in eastern Europe. The Roma were, and also to some extent today remain, very non-assimilated, illiterate, with no large self-organization, and thus they had no chance of expressing themselves in such a profound way (Kubilius 2006). Other groups, such as the homosexuals also may have been met with opposition if trying to speak up: being homosexual was still regarded as sinful and taboo in the post-war years and was not spoken of. Only in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses (Encyclopedia Britannica). Moreover, the disabled victims of the Holocaust were predominantly exterminated at once through the euthanasia program; hence there is no one to give a first account assessment of what they went through (United States Holocaust Museum).

The literature the students are going to work with will be presented to them with introductions specific to the books or poems to help trigger the students' interest in all of the selected works. It is important that the students have positive anticipations about all of the works, even if some of the works represent a genre they do not typically like.

The students will be working in four groups and deal with one work or a selection of poems per group. Dividing the students into groups is no easy task. A decision has to be made regarding who is to work together and who is to concentrate on which work. However, through Imsen's *Lærerens verden* I have reached the conclusion that the best way to divide the students into the groups is to make the selection myself depending on the qualities of the students and making the groups as heterogeneous as possible (Imsen 1997: 272). This way different perspectives and solutions on the subject are stimulated to come forth. Heterogeneous groups can be of great advantage when working on such a complex topic. The fact that the students have different abilities and interests will set a process in motion where the students are forced to discuss, see other perspectives than their own as well as explain their own perspective to others. This will also aid the students in remembering what they have been reading about (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 2001: 33). In addition, the students will be put together, as far as it is achievable, in groups where there will be at least one academically strong student to make sure that the group stays focused and will present a good result. Also, each group should contain students who are responsible, good mediators, good at analyzing texts, and so forth. The weaker students in the class will be divided between the groups so that each group is more or less at the same level when it comes to composition and abilities (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 2001: 35). Determining which group is to work with which text(s) will never be a fair decision. I suspect that some of the works will initially come across as more interesting than others to the students and some of the students may choose the same work, or in the opposite case, there may be conflicts within each group which text(s) to choose. The most evenhanded way to go about this situation would, in my opinion, be to have a drawing where each group is given a specific work at random.

Making this activity a group work has many advantages, one of the most important being that the students will be able to benefit and learn from each other (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 2001: 9). Whenever one person is unsure of something in the text (s)he can discuss the matter with the others and will in that way be able to learn much more and be given different perspectives than would be possible when working alone. It must be stressed that the students must be aware of the fact that they must cooperate in order to succeed at this task. They will not be

given individual marks and must therefore show that they as a group are able to produce something together. It makes it more difficult for the students to avoid participation if the group knows that it is the common result that matters. This will also motivate and encourage all the students to do a good job. Students who do not contribute enough will also in most cases feel coerced by the rest of the group, which is another factor that will help the group reach its goal (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec 2001: 16).

The students will be asked to read both at home and in class for around three weeks during which time each group can informally discuss the texts together whenever they see the need for it. At the same time, while reading in class it is important that the reading process is not interrupted by the teacher or by other elements, which take the students' focus away from their reading. The students can only immerse themselves completely if they are able to read in an undisturbed way and should therefore have the opportunity to do so. However, "while-reading" activities can be advantageous if they give the students a deeper understanding of the material. In that case they must be carefully planned, and the students must be informed beforehand. Thus, it is advisable that the groups agree ahead of time that they will have a limited discussion after each chapter, for example. To facilitate the discussion it may also be helpful if the groups are given a set of questions relating to their own texts mid-way through the reading process. This could perhaps bring up issues or questions that the groups have not thought about discussing yet and will give them new ideas and promote further assessments. On top of that, at the end of the reading process the students will be doing "post-reading" activities in which they can further discuss what they have been reading (Eikrem 1999: 43). Consequently I have enclosed "while-reading" as well as "post-reading" questions for each text, which the students as a group should discuss in order to gain a deeper understanding for their own material. The post-reading questions, in addition to the students' own findings, should assist the students in the preparation for the presentation the group will hold at the end of the six-week period for the rest of the class. There, each group will be asked to present the text they have been reading, the plot, the analysis, the characters, as well as their own thoughts and questions regarding it. It is important that the students are aware that the teacher does not expect the students to present an analysis similar to his or her own, but that they are entitled to having their own

opinions and ideas, and that there is no fixed set of answers to any of the texts. To sum it all up, the class will also in the last session discuss the topic as a whole, what they have learnt from it and what the students make of learning about the Holocaust in this manner.

3. Works of literature

The two first works I am going to deal with; *Maus* and *Jack and Rochelle* are both testimonies by survivors of the Holocaust, which were told to and later published by their own children. Although the means of communicating their stories are different, they have a similar effect on the reader. A member of the second generation functions as the mediator, retelling the story that he has heard throughout his life in a way of storytelling to the reader. The reader will have the impression of listening to a story being told to them. Reading narratives by the second generation in addition gives an insight into how the children of Holocaust survivors regard their parents as well as how the children have felt growing up with parents who have survived the Holocaust. Some of the poems that I will be discussing are also written by the second generation, whereas one is by a Holocaust survivor and the rest are by other writers who have wanted to focus on this topic. All of the poems are based on and integrate historical facts. Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* is, in contrast to the other narratives, a fictional one. A fictional narrative or poem is of no less value than factual narratives since they still manage to touch the reader, and because there is no reason why something similar to the contents of the narrative or poem should not have occurred in connection to the Holocaust.

3.1. *Maus*

Art Spiegelman's *Maus – a survivor's tale* – consisting of the two volumes *My father bleeds history* and *And here my troubles began* was published in 1986 and 1992, with both of the volumes published as *The Complete Maus* in 1996. It is a very moving account about the horrors Vladek Spiegelman went through during the Holocaust as it was told to his son, Art in the 1970s. What distinguishes this Holocaust survivor story from so many others is that it is a graphic novel i.e. a novel written in the form of a cartoon, but usually published in a book format and longer than a typical comic magazine (Flechter-Spear, Jason-Benjamin and Coperland: 2005). This makes the story extremely pungent and vivid as the illustrations, dialogues and storytelling provide such a convincing description of the events that it is transformed into our minds as if we were there ourselves. The book has the form of an embedded narrative in which Vladek tells his son about his life and experiences during the Holocaust while Art writes it down or records it. The reader sees Art ask his father questions about the events, and gets the impression that (s)he personally is also listening to Vladek's tale of his experiences during the Holocaust. As well as containing the Holocaust narrative, the book also focuses on Vladek's and Art's lives in the present and the relationship between the two of them.

Born in Czestochowa, in western Poland in 1906, Vladek Spiegelman was a charismatic and successful textile merchant. He got married to Anja, Art's mother, who was from a wealthy family in a nearby town, and moved in with her family. Together they had a son, Richieu, who did not make it through the war. They lived a happy life together, from when they were married in 1937 until the German invasion in 1939. The book lets us follow Vladek being drafted to the Polish army, as a prisoner of war, making his way back to Anja, Richieu and the rest of their family. From then on, the reader sees how more and more laws are imposed on the Jews, restricting them, making the living conditions unbearable and finally putting them into the ghetto at the end of 1941. From then on, Vladek, Anja, and her family – at first – manage to escape deportation to the concentration camps by working or by bribery and hide away in different hiding places in the ghetto until the very end of 1943. After that Anja and Vladek escape together out of the ghetto and pay nice Poles to let them

stay with them. However, in 1944, believing that they would be smuggled to Hungary, which was still unoccupied at that time, Anja and Vladek are deceived by the smugglers, who have alerted the police, and they are then transported to Auschwitz. There they are both subject to tremendous hardship, which Vladek vividly describes – but they also manage to live through it by being resourceful and lucky. They both survive and experience the liberation – which was also extreme on Vladek’s account, and find each other again after the war. In 1946, they go to Sweden as refugees, where Art is born, but they move to the US a few years later. Both Vladek and Anja suffered from having experienced the Holocaust as Art remembers from his childhood. This suffering even led to Anja’s suicide in 1968.

Art Spiegelman himself, born in 1948, is a contributing editor and artist for the *New Yorker*, and *Raw* – a famous magazine of comics and graphics, of which he is also the co-founder. For his book *Maus*, Art Spiegelman has been awarded many prizes – including the renowned Pulitzer Prize.

The conditions of the Holocaust shown with illustrations rather than naked text makes it much more compelling than it would have been otherwise. Describing, comprehending or imagining the Holocaust has been said to be impossible to do; yet the presence of the drawings may make it a little less difficult to understand. In today’s world, where young people are so used to have information given to them directly through films or images, the impact of a purely textual narrative to the imagination may be less significant than the visual anchor provided in this comic. By portraying the narrative in this way Spiegelman manages to show as well as to tell, in a far more attention-grabbing way than can be done in any other genre. The cartoon format can also be a refreshing change from the regular literature that students are required to read, and might even catch the attention of those otherwise not very keen on reading.

Drawn in black and white, the book indicated the atrocities and seriousness of the Holocaust and helps the book portraying this. Another reason might be that it is too difficult to portray something so horrible in colors since the Holocaust is unimaginable nonetheless. At the same time it may also aid in showing that the Holocaust happened at a time when photography and films were generally black and white because the photographic development had not come as far as it has today. When seeing films or photography from that time one is by and large not accustomed

to seeing it in color, and therefore portraying the Holocaust in color may not make it seem as genuine.

The narrative makes use of non-standard and incorrect English in the passages where Vladek's voice is heard, namely in the dialogues and in the embedded story of his experience during the Holocaust. It may be argued that this could be problematic for learners of English, as they may perceive Vladek's English as correct. However, at upper secondary school level one can expect that students will know that his English is non-standard and therefore it should not be a problem. In addition, the students also possess significant knowledge on global English and its many varieties, including immigrant language (Crystal 2003: 144). For the narrative's authenticity it is of advantage that Vladek's voice is portrayed in its true way since his voice is a large part of the narrative. By and by, one ceases to notice the inadequacies as well.

The first chapter in the book begins with a quote from Adolf Hitler: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human", on which Spiegelman bases his father's depiction of the Holocaust (Spiegelman 1996: 10). In fact all the different peoples and nationalities are portrayed as animals – the Jews as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the Americans as dogs, and the Swedes as reindeer, to name a few. This alludes to the ridiculousness of classifying people into different races and is therefore a very strong metaphor for the prejudices and stereotypes of different peoples, and something that might be interesting to discuss in class. The Jews/mice are seen as vermin by the others and always hunted, but they are also very resourceful and manage to hide and sneak away. The Germans/cats, on the other hand, hunt the mice, play with them are very cunning and good at hunting and will devour nearly everything. This is an excellent portrayal of the relationship between the Jews and the Germans, which is perhaps the most focal one in the story. The Americans/dogs, who become more significant later in the story, are stronger than the cats and chase them, and they are seen as loyal and benevolent. The Poles/pigs are viewed as stupid and dirty – something that might allude to the fact that Jews stereotypically are not fond of Poles and also not fond of pigs. However, there are some examples of noble and good Poles throughout the story such as Mrs. Motonowa or the governess for instance. Discussing these stereotypes, the reasons why they are used, their function in and impact on the story, and whether using them causes

problems or enhances the story could be motivating to discuss among the groups (Johnson 2001).

While reading, the non-human animals, which are humanized in the story, become a part of the story to the point where one does not think of them as animals anymore. As the story and events progress, and the reader becomes more mesmerized in the narrative, one begins to forget that the animals are animals, since the events become more significant than the way the characters look. One almost begins to think of them as humans in every way who only happen look a little bit different from one another. Because Art Spiegelman manages to create this illusion by portraying the animals so humanlike, he demonstrates that races in fact do not matter or even exist – that one cannot see “race” once one gets to know the person behind the shell. At the same time, as the story progresses one notices that the mice and cats become more and more animal-like in their ways: the cats become more vicious, toy with their victims just for their own amusement, whereas the mice have to go into hiding, disguise themselves, scavenge for food and are even forced into betraying and exploiting their own kind for the sheer chance of their own survival.

As mentioned *Maus* is Vladek’s life story about his life in Poland before the war, his family, and his own background and about what he went through during the Holocaust. As well as being a personal account of what Vladek experienced during the Holocaust it at the same time gives an excellent picture of the Holocaust as a whole. The first volume of *Maus* is titled “My father bleeds history”, and this is precisely what the book does. The delineation of the historical events is so well done that it is an outstanding source of historical knowledge. As an example, Vladek tells his son about when and how he was drafted into the Polish army just a few days before the war, being a prisoner of war and the outcome of that (Spiegelman 1996: 46-63). The book also shows, how, in late 1941, the Jews were moved into ghettos, what the orders for them to do so looked like as well as showing the small living space they were assigned to (Spiegelman 1996: 84). At the back of the book there is also a map of Poland from that time which shows the division of Poland, the cities mentioned in the book as well as the different death camps, all of which makes it easier for the reader to follow the events in the book. Furthermore, with his drawings, Spiegelman manages to represent details that are difficult to imagine in an unillustrated text. The students will be able to acquire extensive detailed information about the concentration camps

and the way they were organized, the way that the victims of the Holocaust suffered and how the Holocaust industry was carried out. The book presents a map of how Auschwitz looked (Spiegelman 1996: 166), how the barracks were organized in terms of space and had a kapo who was in charge (Spiegelman 1996: 190-191). It illustrates what gas chambers looked like and how they worked, as well as showing the mass graves where people were burnt alive (Spiegelman 1996: 230-232), and much more. In addition the reader learns, for instance, about the bunkers and hiding places that Anja and Vladek had, by seeing detailed illustrations of how they functioned, which contribute to them being able to postpone being deported to Auschwitz (Spiegelman 1996: 112, 114, 123 and 149). Vladek's detailed story on how he and Anja managed to stay alive, contrasting the choices made by others who were not so lucky, helps answering some of the questions that the students might have about how it was possible to survive the Holocaust, as an example. This is also something that calls for an interesting debate on whether it was indeed possible to survive during the Holocaust due to one's own abilities, or if survival was mere coincidence or luck. However, in the book, a Holocaust survivor, Pavel, who is also Art's psychologist, tells Art that survival was random and that dying should be no less admirable than surviving (Spiegelman 1996: 205). This, too, is an interesting claim, which should be discussed.

Another focal relationship in the book is the relationship between father and son – Vladek and Art Spiegelman. Vladek is a difficult man to understand as he in his old age suffers from many problems such as being very stingy, grumpy, annoying and rather unlikable. This very much contrasts with the way Vladek comes across as a young man during the Holocaust when he is preoccupied with keeping his family alive, is rather heroic, skillful and resourceful. However bothersome Vladek is, one does feel sympathetic on his account knowing that what he has gone through must have made him the way he is. Art highly despises his father's way of being and often tries to avoid him in order to avoid facing his complaints and miserliness, which both embarrass and irritate Art. Although Art does admire his father for going through the Holocaust, which he tells to his psychologist (Spiegelman 1996: 205), he does not quite understand why his father turned out to be the way he is since so many other Holocaust survivors he knows do not at all possess the same traits. Throughout the book one gets to know both Vladek and Art very well – to the point where one feels as

if one almost knows them in reality. This may be due to the extensive use of dialogues and illustrations of them spending time together in the book, in which Art depicts everyday situations with his father, his father's new wife Mala, and his own wife, Françoise. It is also fascinating to observe what Vladek's opinion of his son's story about himself is, seeing how Art feels about writing it, how depressed telling his father's story is making him, and how Art himself is affected by the Holocaust through guilt even if he did not experience it himself. It humanizes and makes Art and his father very complex characters that one is able to understand and identify with even if the story is so different from anything a typical Norwegian student has experienced in his or her life.

It can be assumed that the students will have learnt about character classification at this point so they can be asked to discuss the characters and different animals in *Maus*. This they can do, also to find out if there is a connection between the characters assigned to be either round or flat and the specific animals. As E. M. Forster explains in *Aspects of the Novel* (1928) a flat character is constructed around an idea or quality, do not develop or change like the round characters do. In addition they can be summed up in a single sentence. Round characters are the opposite. They develop throughout the story, and they are able to move the reader to feel different emotions (Forster, E. M. 1969: 63-80). In relation to that, the cats/Germans in the book are all the same personality wise, whereas some of the pigs are round characters, although nevertheless mostly flat. All the mice that are introduced individually in the story, however, are round. Having the students pondering about this in groups may lead them to some answers on whether this is accidental or if there is a purpose behind the specific characters being either round or flat.

Reading about and seeing the psychological problems Vladek suffers from, such as extensive saving in order not to waste anything than can be used, the wish for empathy, admiration and understanding from the surroundings, the need to prove that he is right, mistrust in others and depression enables the students to achieve an insight into his suffering, even after a traumatic event. It is an important part of the maturing process to be able to feel empathy for others, and learning about the psychological affects of the Holocaust. No matter how much Vladek's behavior gets on one's nerves, one cannot help feeling touched and humble towards him knowing what he has been through. Survival guilt, the most prevalent psychological problem among

survivors of a traumatic event, is also an important psychological problem that Vladek suffers from, and which even Art also seems to suffer from in the second generation. Art's psychologist at one point suggests "Maybe your father needed to show that he was always right – that he could always survive- because he felt guilty about surviving" (Spiegelman 1996: 202), to which Art also agrees. In relation to this, the students can be asked to debate some of the reasons why Vladek feels guilty about surviving the Holocaust and how he shows this in the story. Art, on the other hand, also seems to be suffering from survival guilt, passed on by his father to him. He feels guilty and unsure about publishing *Maus*, thinking that it might ridicule his father, as he is not always portrayed in a flattering way (Spiegelman 1996: 204). Also, Art feels guilty about not being the perfect son like his brother who was killed during the Holocaust and guilty about his mother's suicide. As he himself puts it: "I know this is insane, but I sometimes wish I had been in Auschwitz with my parents so I could really know what they lived through! ... I guess it's some kind of guilt about having an easier life than they did" (Spiegelman 1996: 176). Moreover, Art tells his wife Françoise about how he himself used to have nightmares as a child about S.S men coming into his class and dragging the Jewish children away and that he used to fantasize about Zyklon B coming out of the shower instead of water (Spiegelman 1996: 176). This is an example of what has been called collective memory, which is most likely a new term for many of the students. Collective memory is a memory which is passed on through generation in a culture or by a people where the group shares a remembrance from the past (Nord 1998: 409-410). In relation to this, the students can be asked to show examples of how Vladek still suffers from the Holocaust and how the Holocaust has also affected Art. Generally it would be safe to say that it is probable that not many students know about the aspect of survival guilt or survival trauma, as well as collective memory in reference to the Holocaust, although learning about it can make them understand the extent through which it has affected its victims – not just the immediate victims, but also further generations.

3.2. Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance

The book *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance* was published in 1995 by Jack and Rochelle's son Lawrence Sutin. He is an award-winning memoirist and biographer who was born in 1951 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He grew up in Minneapolis with his parents, his grandfather and his four year older sister. Later on he went to study at the University of Michigan and Harvard Law School (Sutin 1995: 203).

The narrative is a memoir of his parents' lives, largely focusing on their survival through the Holocaust. In the book, Rochelle and Jack take turns narrating what happened to them as individuals, and together – each from their own point of view. Now and then they interrupt each other, because, as Lawrence Sutin writes: “This is the way they have told these stories for the past fifty years: side by side, listening intently each to the other, at the ready to speak up lest a single detail be lost” (Sutin 1995: x preface). This is also the most likely reason why Lawrence Sutin has chosen to present his parents' story in this way – it is the most natural way to him, and the way he has always been used to hearing it. In this way he also lets the readers take part in his own childhood experience of listening to his parents' storytelling. Sutin has tried to keep the narrative as exact as possible, having acquired the material through numerous of interview sessions with his parents. Jack and Rochelle themselves have also read through the text to make sure of its accuracy (Sutin 1995: IX preface). At the same time, the narrative consists exclusively of his parents' memories, which may not in all cases represent the exact historical facts. By portraying the story like this, Sutin also gives the reader the experience of listening to his parents' story in the same way that he has been used to it. In addition the reader is able to feel closeness to the story, as if it is being told to him or her exclusively.

Jack and Rochelle's story can be summarized as follows: the two of them grew up in the nearby towns of Stolpce and Mir in the same area of eastern Poland that now belongs to Belarus. The narrative does not reveal exactly which year they were born in, but according to my own calculations it must have been around 1924. Rochelle grew up in a very wealthy, and rather secular (for that time) household with

two younger sisters in a protective environment. However, she was fully aware of the fact that the rest of the Polish population generally resented her for being a Jew, and she was used to name-calling in school. Jack grew up in Mir, a city with a famous yeshiva, a Jewish school for religious studies, and population that consisted of about 25 percent Jews. Although not very religious, Jack came from a family that valued Jewish traditions. He too felt the tension from his surroundings due to him being Jewish. At the mere age of 12, Jack had to go to a Jewish gymnasium and live on his own in a nearby city, as the closest gymnasium would not take him. This enabled him to be independent at a young age. Because the area that the two of them lived in belonged to Eastern Poland, the Soviet Army and not Nazi-Germany invaded in 1939. For two years they were subject to Soviet rule and were forced to give away most of their wealth due to the communist agenda. This especially affected Rochelle's family who was very wealthy, and consequently could not live as well as they were used to. During this time the couple knew about each other and had met once at a school dance. Jack liked Rochelle very much, whereas Rochelle did not think much of Jack.

In 1941 the Germans succeeded in invading eastern Poland and thus Jack and Rochelle's lives became extremely challenging. They both reminisce about the measures they then had to succumb to – forced labor, turning in almost everything they owned, moving into ghettos. After only a year, Rochelle finds out that she is the only survivor in her family after her entire family had been murdered. Her father had been taken away and killed together with the prominent people of Stolpce as early as 1941. Rochelle's mother and youngest sister were to frail to work in the ghetto and her other sister refused to work for the Germans, whereas Rochelle worked in a sawmill. One autumn day in 1942 the Germans liquidated all the people in the ghetto who did not have jobs. A friend of Rochelle who had seen her family being rounded up managed to tell her that her mother's last words were for her to take revenge. Jack, who was in a different ghetto, had first run away only to come back to see if his parents were still alive after hearing rumors of mass slaughter in the Mir ghetto. Only his father had survived in hiding. As no Poles would hide any Jews, Jack and his father had no choice but to go back to the ghetto, from which they and the remaining Jews the survivors were taken to a castle where they were held captive. With the help of a Jew, who infiltrated the German police, many of the Jews, including Jack and his father, managed to escape into the nearby Nalibocka forest in the summer of 1942

where they settled down with and join a group of Jewish partisans. Rochelle, at that point, had no one but herself to care for and decided that she did not want a passive death. She wanted to be in control of her life even if it meant being killed in the attempt. Therefore she made the decision to escape from her ghetto together with a few fellow inmates.

In the autumn of 1942 she made her escape and succeeded in a miraculous way. After fearful meetings with Soviet partisans Rochelle in the end found some Jewish partisans and is taken to Jack's bunker who had been waiting for her. A few weeks earlier Jack had had a dream at night that Rochelle would arrive, and he was certain that it was true. During their time in the woods – which lasted nearly two years – the two of them grew closer, eventually becoming inseparable. As partisans, an unconventional military unit opposing a foreign occupation, they went through a great deal of daunting challenges, such as surprise attacks by the Germans and Soviets, disease and lack of food. In details they describe how they got by in various situations – both the terrifying and the happier moments that were part of their daily life, such as joining an atrad, a large Jewish partisan camp deep in the woods. In the spring of 1944 the area Jack and Rochelle were in was liberated by the Soviet army upon which they try to escape westward in order for Jack not to be drafted into the Soviet Army. They vividly describe their attempts making it to the west, and their many narrow escapes from a certain fate. Finally they made it to Germany, of all places, where they lived in a Displaced Persons camp, a temporary camp for refugees due to forced migration, for four years before they were finally allowed to immigrate to the US in 1949. Jack and Rochelle also give an account of how their lives have been after settling down there safely.

Although *Jack and Rochelle*, unlike *Maus* is a book without illustrations it is a forcefully gripping memoir of the Holocaust and what two teenagers went through in order to survive. Events, feelings, situations, places and objects are described in so much detail and so vividly that illustrations are not needed. While reading, one can easily create a picture in one's mind of how it must have been to be there and how it must have looked. Their story is told with a natural suspense and the reader is instantly drawn into the story and can visualize it without any hindrance.

A key factor when choosing literature for students in this age group is catching their attention is important, which this book does. The book contains photographs of Jack and Rochelle when they were young, together with their families, as well as with their own family as adults. These photos are not necessarily needed, but it helps, especially for younger readers, to see what the protagonists look and looked like. The photos also make it easier to identify with and follow both the story and the persons.

Initially, the narrative largely focuses on the lives the two had prior to the Holocaust, as Lawrence Sutin wants to show that his parents were normal teenagers coming from normal families, and thus being able to see photographs from that time can be of value to the reader. The fact that the students will be the same age as Jack and Rochelle were when they went through the Holocaust is another factor that makes it easier for the students to identify with the protagonists despite the fact that Jack and Rochelle being forced to live lives that were vastly different from those of Norwegian teenagers today. However, the students will be able to discuss whether there is anything in the narrative that make them identify with Jack or Rochelle at any level, despite all the obvious differences.

Like *Maus*, *Jack and Rochelle* also contains a map of Poland where the locations mentioned in the narrative are placed. This aids understanding of the story as it lets the reader follow and look up places on the map in order to find out where the events spoken of took place.

The language used in the book is also readily understood by someone of this age group since the narrative is composed by two voices telling a story as it was. Jack and Rochelle narrate very straightforwardly without any advanced vocabulary, although they do make use of a few Yiddish expressions. Those expressions are explained in brackets. The book does not make use of Jack or Rochelle's language quite as it is in reality. Because the two of them only began learning English in their adulthood their story was most likely told to their son in Yiddish, which was the home language while Lawrence Sutin was growing up. Therefore the students need to be aware that some translation has been involved in this process. However, the usage of Yiddish expressions now and then makes the narrative seem more authentic and personal.

The strength and courage Jack and Rochelle possess is quite admirable. The most notable kind is perhaps the bravery they show running away from the Germans,

as well as fighting back. The fact that there was any Jewish resistance at all during the Holocaust may be new for many of the students since one is instead mostly accustomed to hearing about the various vile measures inflicted upon the Jews, from which there was hardly any opportunity to escape, let alone fight back. Therefore it is very refreshing to read about how the couple made it through. The students will have an opportunity to discuss if they think it made the victims of the Holocaust, who did not fight back, weaker than the few who did resist, or if they think being able to resist in many cases only depended on coincidence.

Because the story is so intense, and so easy to identify with, it can be very inspiring for the students to read. The story possesses much strength and hope. Jack and Rochelle are close to death a number of times – Jack falls severely ill (Sutin 1995: 125), but luckily recovers, they are ambushed by the Germans, but avoid being killed or discovered on three accounts (Sutin 1995: 94, 113 and 129), to name a few examples. It is as if destiny wants Jack and Rochelle to make it through the war together.

Jack describes in a detailed way how he was part of the Jewish resistance in the Nalibocka forest, how the raids on Polish farmers cooperating with the Nazis that he took part in were carried out, how they fought the German retreating forces at the end of the war, and how they participated in real resistance activity by placing mines on railroads (Sutin 1995: 121 and 139). This was the way he as a young man was able to fight back and get his revenge. For Rochelle, whose mother's last words to her had been to take revenge, it was conflicting for her not physically being able to do anything. Hardly any of the women were able to participate actively, since the organization of the atrad made them stay at the site, although at the end of the war Rochelle and the other women were able to physically take revenge on German soldiers who had been captured by the atrad (Sutin 1995: 142 – 143). As well as the outer strength they possess, they also have an inner strength that is very touching to read about. For instance, after Rochelle finds out that her entire family had been liquidated, and starts thinking, she does not fear anything – not even death:

In fact, as my head started to clear, I even began to feel a crazy sense of freedom. I had been helping my mother care for my younger sisters – scavenging bits of wood from the sawmill to serve as fuel for the stove. But

now they were gone. And so there was nothing to prevent me from doing whatever I had to do. My life was my own to give up, so to speak. (Sutin 1995: 71)

Taking revenge was important for the two of them because of what had happened to their families and friends, but after the war they both think that the greatest revenge of all is surviving and having a family of their own (Sutin 1995: 143). That way the bloodline of their families would continue, and they are able to tell their story to further generations instead of them dying in a meaningless assault that would leave nothing for the future.

In addition to the astonishing strength that the reader is witness to while reading their story, (s)he will also gain an insight into a different side to the Holocaust – the Holocaust as it was carried out in the east where the Jews were killed town by town, ghetto by ghetto and being shot at mass graves. During the war Jack and Rochelle knew nothing about the concentration camps. As far as they were concerned all Jews were being killed the same way their families had been (Sutin 1995: 115). Even less known than how the Holocaust was conducted in the east, is probably the partisan activity that was the most prominent in the great forests in eastern Poland. However, both the Bielski brothers, who are mentioned in the narrative, as well as Zorin's partisan group, which is the one Jack and Rochelle join, is relatively well-known. Thus, it is interesting for the students to put this narrative in relation to these historical facts, and perhaps try to find out more about partisan activities during the Holocaust. Jack and Rochelle also give vivid descriptions of life as partisans; how the bunkers looked, how they were hidden and equipped, which type of food they would cook and how, and how they would relieve themselves (Sutin 1995: 65-67). Imagining someone, hidden in the forest is most likely extremely difficult to imagine for a student nowadays and therefore such an accurate description is valuable if one even wants to attempt visualizing it. Moreover, the two of them try to give a picture of the human relations between the partisans, and they do this without sparing any details of the brutal reality of living in such an inhumane way. The partisans had short and casual relationships among each other since all they could do was live in the moment (Sutin 1995: 108). If anyone became pregnant, the child was usually left outside to die or toddlers who made too much noise were

strangled, either by the mother or by the other partisans if she could not do it (Sutin 1995: 109 and 112). Family ties were also sometimes broken down:

[...] a mother and a daughter who ran away from the Mir ghetto the same time that Jack did. What happened to them shows how family bounds could break down terribly under the weight of hardship. The daughter was maybe seventeen, and the mother was somewhere in her forties – an age that seemed very old to the Jewish youth who were hiding in the forest. Well, the daughter found a young group who was willing to accept her but not her mother. [...] what she told her mother at that point was that she, the daughter, had a chance to survive and that the mother was only a burden to her. [...] the daughter convinced the mother to drink the poison! The mother didn't want to, but the daughter basically forced it upon her as the only way out. [...] The mother suffered for a whole day before she went – gasping, suffocating, thrashing. (Sutin 1995: 111 and 112)

Such circumstances are very difficult to understand for anyone, let alone a younger person with less life experience, but knowing that such incidents occurred, and will continue to do so in extreme situations is crucial to know.

As in *Maus*, there is an allusion to animals. Jack and Rochelle often compare their existence in the forest with living like a squirrel under the earth, being forced to live and act like animals – plucking lice off each other, scavenging for food and committing acts one would not normally do living in a humane environment (Jack and Rochelle: 67, 110 and 142-143). Here the students can be asked to discuss what distinguishes humans from animals and how extreme the circumstances need to be for humans to lose their humanity.

Jack and Rochelle also deals with post-Holocaust trauma. Rochelle recounts having nightmares about the Holocaust, dreaming that someone would be coming for her, beat her up and take her away (Sutin 1995: 197). Their son also testifies that he supposes that going through what they did has also made his parents more intense, clinging, tense and fierce compared to his friends' parents. Moreover, he remembers that while growing up his own everyday worries as adolescence received very little understanding from his parents. Whichever problems he had could never measure up

to those his parents endured (Sutin 1995: 208 and 211). Sutin also, in the afterword, recalls himself having nightmares about Nazis as a child (Sutin 1995: 211), but he does not think the fact that his parents were open towards talking about the Holocaust with him and his sister has damaged him in any way. It has left a mark upon him, but one that he sees as necessary in order to know his own parents and his own background (Sutin 1995: IX preface). As a son of Holocaust survivors, Sutin has always felt that the Holocaust affected him as well, and that is one of the reasons why he felt obliged to tell his parents' story. He wants their story to survive so that later generations within his own family as well as others can take part in it, in order to be aware that the world is capable of something as horrific as the Holocaust (Sutin 1995: 208, 218). For many survivors talking about the Holocaust has been a dilemma. The ones who chose not to speak to their children about their experience may have done that because they wanted to spare their children the troubles of listening to what they went through. As Sutin explains, the reason why he has suffered from nightmares and collective memory is because his parents chose to tell him their stories. It is therefore understandable that some parents chose not to talk about the past since they did not want to scar their children. The students will be able to debate the reasons for and against talking about the Holocaust, and what they think the best solution is.

In the afterword Sutin also in touches upon the subject of survivor vs. victim. Sutin does not like the word "survivor" since he think it judges those who did not survive and implies a survival-of-the-fittest agenda, which also goes hand in hand with the Nazi belief. According to his way of thinking, both those who did not make it through, and those who did are victims. This is an important claim which might enable a good discussion.

3.3. *The Shawl*

Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* portrays Rosa, a Holocaust victim, both during the Holocaust, as well as subsequently, forty years later, struggling to cope with the world around her while at the same time suffering from the traumas that have been inflicted on her. *The Shawl* consists of two parts "The Shawl" – a short story first published in 1980 depicting Rosa as a young woman during the Holocaust and its sequel novella

“Rosa” published in 1983, depicting the same woman in late 1970s Miami. The two stories were published together in 1989. *The Shawl* deals with fictional characters, unlike *Maus* and *Jack and Rochelle*, but this makes the story no less heartrending. Overall *The Shawl* is a very touching depiction of the Holocaust and of a very troubled woman, who the reader gets to know very personally through her own thoughts, in the aftermath of the horror.

The author who is “one of the three greatest living American authors”, according to the editor of the 1984 volume of *Best American Short Stories* (Lowin 2009), was born in Brooklyn in 1928. While growing up she always had a fondness for reading, and at some point during her college years she decided to become a writer and has since received several awards and fellowships. Ozick’s Jewish identity is very important to her, and during the 1960s she decided to become a “Jewish writer”, striving to concern herself with Jewish themes and the Jewish textual tradition in her writings (Lowin 2009). Ozick herself has no direct link to the Holocaust, in the sense that she experienced it herself or had immediate relatives who did, yet, she still feels compelled to write about it. She does not want to make fiction of such an event since she thinks all accounts of the Holocaust should be authentic in the sense that they should not invent or tamper with the truth, although simultaneously she cannot avoid writing about it because “it comes, it invades. I cannot not write about it” (Kremer 2001: 149). After publishing *The Shawl*, Ozick was criticized by a Holocaust survivor who thought that she falsified a historic event by making it a fiction, whereupon Ozick replied with a letter in the *New Yorker*:

Every Jew should feel as if he himself came out of Egypt... The Exodus took place more than 4000 years ago, and yet the Haggadah enjoins me to incorporate it into my own mind and flesh, to so act as if it happened directly and intensely to me, not as a mere witness but as a participant. Well, if I am enjoined to belong to an event that occurred 4000 years ago, how much more strongly am I obliged to belong to an event that occurred only 40 years ago? (qtd. in Kremer 2001: 175).

“The Shawl” begins *in medias res* when Rosa, her niece, Stella and Rosa’s baby, Magda, are walking down a road most likely being transported to a concentration

camp. They are so thin and frail that they can hardly walk and they are terribly hungry. Magda is concealed in a shawl, which both hides and nourishes her because she is sucking on it. The three of them are starving and Rosa gives almost all of her food to Magda. Then the three women appear to be in a concentration camp where Magda is hidden inside the shawl and keeps quiet until one day Stella takes the shawl away from Magda because she feels cold herself. This causes Magda to be discovered by the guards in the concentration camp who murder the baby by throwing her against the electric fence.

Forty years later in "Rosa" Rosa finds herself in Miami living in a dirty and cluttered room in a hotel where she mostly keeps to herself. She has just smashed up her store in New York and now lives in Miami at Stella's expense. Rosa lives a lonely life, still attached to her past and suffering severely from the traumas that have been caused by her experiences in the Holocaust. The traumas make her think crazy thoughts; imagining that Magda is still alive and that Stella is a bloodsucker who wants Rosa dead. Rosa feels paranoid because she thinks her underwear has been stolen and is suspicious of other people's intentions. Depression has also taken its toll on her because she cannot have the life she lived prior to the Holocaust back, all of which the reader will gain a significant insight into throughout the story. There is somewhat of a turning point in the story where Rosa meets an elderly man named Persky. They start conversing and Rosa opens up to him a little. He makes Rosa reconsider her own life and at one the end of the story Rosa is at one point unable to see Magda, which may allude to a possible change. This second part of the book takes place over roughly a day and a half.

The narrative is written in the third person with Rosa as the focalizer, meaning that the reader experiences all events through Rosa's eyes, gaining a deep insight into her mentality, thoughts and opinions. Due to the focus on what goes on in Rosa's mind, which is the most imperative issue in the story, the reader is able to achieve an understanding of and sympathy for Rosa's character. Relating to and identifying with Rosa may be challenging since she is complex and troubled in ways that border on insanity. Nevertheless, readers of this book story cannot help but feel sorry for Rosa and in that way they are able to connect to the story and the character. She is an exceedingly traumatized human being who suffers from all the pain inflicted to her, which plays out in different ways. Through moments in the story where her thoughts

digress, the reader is able to decipher what the reason behind her behavior in specific situations may be and is thus able to see both the cause and the effect of Holocaust trauma. Looking at the different causes and the effects, which are revealed in the book, is something that the students can do in order to get a grasp that an event like the Holocaust can traumatize a person to the point where it seems as if it never ended.

The Shawl contains so many images and metaphors to describe the conditions of the Holocaust that it is necessary for the readers to study the text carefully in order not to miss any nuances to the story. Therefore it is of advantage that the students are able to interpret the story together as a group since this will help each of them understand more. The most prominent metaphor, the shawl, is a symbol of Rosa's murdered baby. It brings Magda back and makes Rosa envision Magda at different ages for Rosa believes that Magda is still alive even if she deep inside knows that Magda died a long time ago (Ozick 1989: 62, 64). Other metaphors that are used are those that refer to the conditions in the concentration camp, such as "wind with pieces of black in it" and "bitter fatty floating smoke that greased Rosa's skin" (Ozick 1989: 6, 9), alluding to the crematorium in the death camp, and "thick turd-braids, and the slow stinking maroon waterfall that slunk down from the upper bunks" representing the incomprehensible unhygienic conditions in the concentration camps (Ozick 1989: 8-9). Interpreting some of these metaphors may prove to be a challenge, but the students can engage themselves in trying to spot some of them by carefully reading the story. Through them the atrocities of the Holocaust experienced by Rosa through Ozick's use of language become endlessly distressing.

Rosa's relationship with other people is very trying. She is suspicious of everyone including her own niece, Stella. Rosa blames Stella for Magda's death, which she indirectly caused during the Holocaust. Death would probably have been unavoidable in the end anyway since Magda was a baby and she would most likely be discovered at one point or another. To Rosa, Stella is the "angel of death", about whom she has cannibal dreams. Rosa also thinks she needs to pacify Stella by pretending to get along with her and call her pretty things in order not get on her bad side (Ozick 1989: 15). Except for a letter and a phone call, Stella is always seen through Rosa's eyes and remains a flat character throughout the story. It is problematic for Rosa that Stella does not care about the Holocaust anymore, that she

has put it behind her, and appears unable to understand what Rosa struggles with. Stella thinks Rosa is a madwoman who needs to get over the Holocaust in order to have a life. She writes insulting letters to Rosa where she puts Rosa down for her attachment to the shawl, which Stella does not let Rosa have all the time (Ozick 1989: 31-32). Rosa, on her part, thinks that her niece is very ignorant of the Holocaust, as if it did not happen to her, and pretends to be like all other Americans until she opens her mouth and a foreign accent comes out (Ozick 1989: 33). In this way, Rosa and Stella are complete polar opposites in their approach to their pasts. Stella has decided to forget what she has been through, has started a new life where she tries to fit into the American society. Does this mean that she has dealt with her past and consciously decided to put it behind her and focus on the future, or does it mean that she is ignorant, as Rosa claims, trying to pretend that it had nothing to do with her? As for Rosa, it is perhaps understandable that she is so affected by the Holocaust, both since she was older than Stella when it happened and had lost more. By preoccupying herself so much with the Holocaust she does not hide from her past or try to forget it, and she is willing to talk about it, but due to that she is unable to be happy. Trying to see both Rosa's and Stella's point of view in order to get a broader understanding of these conflicting characters would be an interesting task. The students can try to determine what the pros and cons of both approaches to the past are – which positive and negative aspects of each way of dealing with the Holocaust there are.

The other elderly Jewish people in Miami appear to Rosa to live superficial lives, only caring about their appearance or other trivial aspects of life. In Rosa's opinion, life among these people is like being in a zoo – none of them know what real life is (Ozick 1989: 16-17). In New York, too, Rosa had tried telling people about her experiences in the Holocaust, but no one had wanted to listen to her or try to understand. That was the reason why she had destroyed her store, she reveals to Persky, and she says that she smashed it up because she did not like the people who came there: "Whoever came they were like deaf people. Whatever you explained to them, they didn't understand" (Ozick 1989: 27). In a letter to Magda Rosa writes: "The New World! That's why I smashed up my store! Because here they make up lying theories. University people do the same: they take human beings for specimens" (Ozick 1989: 43). Throughout the story it is revealed that Rosa receives several letters from scientists and psychiatrists who want to take an interest in Holocaust

trauma and who want to make a study of the survival trauma that Rosa suffers from. This enrages Rosa, who feels singled out, as if she is treated like a specimen and not a human being. She detests the word “survivor”, feeling as if she is part of a human circus that is to be studied as if she were a rare case:

An excitement over other people’s suffering. [...] Consider what words they used: *Survivor*. Something new. As long as they didn’t have to say *human being*. It used to be *refugee*, but now there was no such creature, no more refugees, only survivors. A name like a number – counted apart from the ordinary swarm. Blue digits on the arm, what difference? They don’t call you a woman anyhow. *Survivor*. Even when your bones get melted into the grains of the earth, still they’ll forget *human being*. Survivor, and survivor; always and always. (Ozick 1989: 36-37)

Another relationship in “Rosa” is that with Simon Persky, an elderly man Rosa meets at the Laundromat (Ozick 1989: 17-18). He is very friendly with her and wants her to tell him her troubles, and seems as if he wants to be a friend (Ozick 1989: 21-22). However, although he wants to help her, even he is also unable to fully understand what she has gone through (Ozick 1989: 58). Rosa finds it difficult to connect with Persky who is of a different generation and comes from a less privileged background than herself (Ozick 1989: 20). The one “normal relationship” she has is that with her deceased daughter, Magda, to whom Rosa is able to open up to, and who always understands. Rosa always envisions Magda as the perfect daughter who can do no wrong. Rosa talks to Magda every day through letters in which she is able to unload her troubles and live her lost life through Magda (Ozick 1989: 40). The fact that Magda may have been the result of Rosa being raped by Germans is brought up several times in the story, both by Stella who thinks Magda looked too Aryan (Ozick 1989: 5), and by Rosa herself. In a letter to Magda Rosa tries to certify – perhaps to herself – that Magda’s father was a friend of her own family before the Holocaust, but admits to having been raped by a German, more than once. She, however, disregards the possibility of Magda being the offspring of a Nazi by saying that she was too ill to conceive at that time (Ozick 1989: 43). It seems as if Rosa is trying to create an illusion of Magda and a perfect past, even if it the truth may be a little different. It is

plausible that by creating this illusion, Rosa is able to hide some of the pain and shame she is dealing with when it comes to the loss of her child and the truth behind it.

While reading *The Shawl* one may ponder about survival, and at what cost, which is something the students can talk about. Rosa is so traumatized and dysfunctional that she has no joy in life. On several occasions Rosa claims that thieves have taken her life (Ozick 1989: 28). She is unable to let go of the life she had in Warsaw before the Holocaust where she lived in a privileged family, was studying to become a chemist and immersed herself in culture. She feels as if she has lost everything; not only her family, but also her culture, language, career and her future. She has lost too much to be able to start over again (Ozick 1989: 40-41). At the same time she is incapable of coming to terms with the Holocaust since she does not understand why it happened to her who came from a family which was so assimilated and cultured – a family that was even better than most Poles (Ozick 1989: 69). She cannot identify with the other victims who were so unlike her own family, who were uncultured and primitive, according to her (Ozick 1989: 66-67). Rosa survival is bitter. As well as feeling that she has lost everything she also feels very ashamed of whom she has become and embarrassed by her own helplessness (Ozick 1989: 20). To Persky she explains:

My niece Stella [...] says that in America cats have nine lives, but we – we're less than cats so we got three. The life before, the life during, the life after. [...] The life after is now. The life before was our *real* life, at home, where we were born. [...] Before is a dream. After is a joke. Only during stays. And to call that a life is a lie. (Ozick 1989: 58)

This quote will make the reader wonder if it is really possible to have a fulfilling life if one has lost as much as Rosa has. Will life always seem like an imitation? How is it possible to live after losing so much?

3.4. Holocaust poetry

Reading poetry is very different from reading prose. Poetry offers a compressed insight into a state of mind, and much can be expressed with very few words. Poems will also have the effect of letting the reader experience a feeling or a state of mind, and also lets the reader speculate and read between the lines. This is why the approach to poetry must be different as well.

Students commonly have a tense relationship with poetry believing that it is too difficult to understand and that the teacher possesses the only key to the correct interpretation. According to Ibsen and Wiland, students are able to receive a new understanding of poetry if the approach changes. Instead of reading an entire poem in one go, students will achieve a deeper focus and a more insightful comprehension if one line is read at a time, where each line is reflected upon before moving on to the next one. They will then be able to interpret a poem, line by line, and adjust their findings after reading the entire poem and being able to see it as a whole (Ibsen and Wiland 2000: 110). It is important that the students also know that the teacher is not seeking an interpretation corresponding with his or her own – they should know that their findings are just as valuable as those of the teacher, at least if they are substantiated in the text.

The selected poems share many similarities which connect them. Naturally, all of the poems deal with the Holocaust and appeal to the emotions of the reader while describing the evil of it, but there are also other traits which connect them. Repetitions of words or sentences occur in most of the poems and some of the poems deal with remembering vs. forgetting the Holocaust.

The students should try to establish how the respective poems make them feel and what their message might be. They should also look at the form and structure to be able to say how the interpretation of the poems can be done on the basis of that. In addition, the students should try to deliberate how the Holocaust is portrayed in each poem, and if they are taught anything about the Holocaust or its aftermath from the poem. Within each analysis of poem there are suggestions to what the students can discuss and look for. These suggestions only serve as a basis for further discussion,

and will be elaborated and extended with more precise questions that have been enclosed.

3.4.1. “Never Shall I Forget” by Elie Wiesel

The poem “Never Shall I Forget” is taken from Elie Wiesel’s 1958 novel *Night*, portraying life and death in the concentration camps. Born in Hungary, Wiesel was deported to Auschwitz together with all of his family, emerging as the only survivor. After the Holocaust Wiesel first immigrated to Paris and then to the US. He is one of the best-known Holocaust writers, a professor and an activist having won many prizes for his achievements, including the Nobel Peace Prize (Schiff 1995: 219).

In this poem, which consists of six stanzas, the speaker puts a very strong emphasis on the word “never” by repeating it over and over again for a total of eight times – at least once in every stanza. The poem both starts and ends with the word “never”. This repetition may reflect just how greatly the Holocaust has affected the speaker, and it is even highlighted in the fifth stanza; “Never will I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God himself” (Wiesel 1958), which denotes the intense meaning of “never”. The speaker also stresses all of the examples of things that he will not forget by using the demonstrative pronoun, showing that there is a specific night and smoke and specific moments and flames that he will never be able to forget. The poem makes use of many metaphors. “Smoke” and “flames” are mentioned on two stanzas of the poem and are likely to represent the gas chambers, although “flames” may also overall indicate the destruction represented by the Holocaust, which means destruction by flames in Greek. There is also imagery in the poem that alludes to God and the fact that there was no interference in the tragic events by a higher force. For example, the “nocturnal silence” may indicate that there was no God to stop the atrocities. In addition, there is a “silent blue sky”, a personification representing the very same thing. All the different “moments” are also personified because they have murdered the speaker’s God – his faith, and his soul – his life and who he used to be. Furthermore, those “moments” have also turned the speaker’s “dreams to dust”, meaning that all the hopes and aspirations he had for the

future are meaningless and do not matter to him anymore. Finally, “God Himself” is a metaphor for eternity. The speaker says that he will never be able to forget what he has seen even if he is to live as long as “God Himself”, meaning that it is in truth completely impossible to ever forget the events the poem recounts. The students will be able to look at the form, structure and use of words in the poem in order to interpret and understand this poem.

“Never Shall I Forget” is a poem that reveals the deep despondency of its speaker. In the poem, the speaker remembers the horrendous occurrences that he was witness to in the concentration camps – occurrences that have marked him for life and changed his outlook on life itself. He talks about the gas chambers, from which children went up in smoke, the nights which have turned his life into one long night, the silent nights which have deprived of him the desire to live, and the flames that have consumed his faith, and all the other moments he experienced which have destroyed his God and his soul, as well as his future. He will never be able to forget, even if he is doomed to live forever. The fact that the experiences the speaker had in the concentration camps are rooted so deeply in him is very touching. Although identifying with a speaker whom the reader does not know, or has any base to build an identification with may be difficult, the reader cannot help but feel empathy with him and perhaps wonder what it is exactly that he went through. In addition, it is likely that the experiences that the speaker had may be relevant for Holocaust victims in general, and that they might have the same feelings looking back at what they went through. For the students it can be insightful to establish how the speaker has been affected by the Holocaust, and what the students think the speaker has gone through.

3.4.2. “Shipment to Maidanek” by Ephraim Fogel

“Shipment to Maidanek” was written by Ephraim Fogel, a little known author and scholar (Schiff 1995: 210). It is very harshly written and presents people as items – like goods which must be accounted, for or ingredients in a recipe. The speaker of the poem speaks to someone who has to deal with these items – telling that person how to go about in the right manner in order to manage the items. It is not clear who the speaker is since it is a very impersonal voice, where the reader is left to wonder who

the speaker is. The poem consists of seven stanzas with three or four lines. These briefly and anonymously describe the different people who have arrived to the concentration camp, and what is to be done to them. However, there are three stanzas that only consist of one line, namely listing the total of Jews, which is much higher than that of the other peoples, the total of all the people and that they should be cremated. Why these specific stanzas are so short compared to the others can be an interesting topic to discuss. One reason might be that the contents of these sentences are very profound and the reader, while reading those stanzas, will be need to stop and take in what the stanzas say, which is easier done with shorter stanzas. In the other stanzas, where the different peoples are listed, all of the people are presented with imperfect and negative qualities, e.g. “three poets, hopelessly insane” and “a Spaniard with a subversive laugh”. This might aid to show the victims anonymously according to the Nazi agenda, and according to the belief that those who the Nazis set out to exterminate were people of a lesser rank. This will also create an engaging basis for discussion among the students.

The way in which this poem is written resembles the way that the Nazis thought of their victims – as items. Since it is written as a recipe, where different victims from different nations are the ingredients, and the direction states how they are to be treated – sorted and marked systematically, and finally how they are to be cooked: Thoroughly cremated. This makes it a grotesque poem to read. Because the poem is written in such a nonchalant way it manages to shock, disgust and remind the reader of the terrible massacres of the Holocaust as well as the unimaginable evil and absurdity of the Nazis, who, as a supposedly modern nation were able to perform such acts of violence that are so barbaric. The students will in this poem be presented to details on the Holocaust was carried out, which many of them might know beforehand, such as the precise way of keeping order.

3.4.3. *Holocaust* by Charles Reznikoff

This excerpt I will use from the long narrative poem *Holocaust* is taken from the book *Holocaust Poetry* by Hilda Schiff. The poem written in 1975 by Charles Reznikoff

almost has the feel of a factual text is based on details from the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials (Schiff 1995: 216). Born in 1894, Charles Reznikoff was an American narrative poet and one of the Objectivist poets: a group of poets who aimed to “treat the poem as an object and to emphasize sincerity, intelligence, and the poet's ability to look clearly at the world” (Knowledgerush). Reznikoff was educated in the fields of law and journalism, which taught him to present facts and information in a straightforward way, as he does in *Holocaust* without commenting on it directly (Schiff 1995: 216).

Its length and style makes this poem stand out from both traditional poetry and the other poems presented in this thesis. Because of its length, the poem is able to offer a detailed description of events during the Holocaust. The extract consists of 20 stanzas where an unidentified speaker is addressing an audience, which is also unidentified. As in a poem, there are breaks between each stanza. The breaks are used when a change of scene is introduced in the same way as a paragraph in prose. The writer has also made use of a stronger break between some of the stanzas with the aid of a short dotted line, which might imply the change of focus from one character to another. In the third, fourth, eleventh and thirteenth stanza, there seems to be less order in the structure. There are many indentions, dashes, colons and semicolons, as well as longer sentences. This makes the sentences more difficult to read and causes the reader to read more slowly to be able to understand, which correlate with the contents in those stanzas; the poem intensifies and there is talk of death and selection. Such comments can form a basis of discussion around the structure of this poem and in addition the students can be asked to discuss what makes this poem a poem, and not a factual text. In addition they can discuss why Charles Reznikoff chose to present his poem in this way, with so many facts, instead of indeed publishing it as a simple text.

The poem touches upon the destinies of several individuals who are subject to the Holocaust: A boy of 15, from Lodz in Poland through which the reader learns about the terrible conditions and starvation in the ghettos before the reader follows him being transported to a concentration camp. His journey and conditions in the freight he is transported in, as well as his arrival at the camp where the SS men are shouting and a band is playing are described. The poem brings up the fact that most of the people being transported to the camps did not believe, or did not want to

believe that mass extermination was taking place. In the camp, the boy is among the few who are selected for work, where he is to pile up the clothes and belongings of those who are taken to the gas chambers. Then the poem concentrates on a man who recognizes the boy from his hometown. This man is working and sees his wife and children among the dead and then decides to kill himself, although both the SS and his friends stop him. However, the man manages to escape into the woods by diverting the attention from himself. The next victims the poem focuses on are the children, many of whom are orphans without anyone to take care of them. They too are transported to the camps in freight cars. The children, dirty and not properly dressed, live in extremely poor conditions before they are killed, either thrown out of windows into trucks to be taken to the gas chambers or shot by the SS. The poem also talks about Jews from many distant countries being pushed together in freight cars and transported for days to the concentration camps without anything to drink or eat, and then being brought to selection. Then it reveals the destiny of those selected for death: Some were gassed in vans, whereas others were taken to crowded gas chambers, and when the gas chambers were too full, the rest were burned alive while an orchestra was playing in order to drown the screams. It also mentions the destiny of a woman whose child was taken away from her and thrown into the fire, upon which the mother throws herself at the electric fence in the camp. Finally, the poem touches upon the subject of mass graves where the reader is presented with a situation where a mass grave is being opened, the bones ground and spread across the fields, and the rest of the corpses burnt.

All in all, the poem manages to educate the reader of the many atrocities carried out in the Holocaust in a very compressed way. As mentioned earlier, Reznikoff writes in a very matter-of-fact style, where the reader is fed with extensive information and details surrounding the Holocaust. However, the reader is also presented with individual destinies, which create a basis for identification with those mentioned. By reading this poem the students will learn a lot about the Holocaust in general: The ghettos, the concentration camps, the selection and what followed. It is therefore a very good introduction to the Holocaust, where none of the ghastly details are spared, such as the grinding of the bones, the orchestra playing and the children thrown from the second floor into waiting vans. The different details given about the

Holocaust in the poem can be a trigger for the students to find out more about the different details that are given.

3.4.4. “I Keep Forgetting” by Lily Brett

This poem by Lily Brett deals with being able to remember the Holocaust and details from it. Brett is the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, and was born in Germany after the war before immigrating to Australia with her parents, where she is a well-known poet and novelist. She now lives in New York City (Schiff 1995: 209). The poem concerns itself with fact and statistics from the Holocaust, which the speaker keeps trying to remember. It is divided in fourteen short stanzas which each contains a piece of fact or statistic about the Holocaust. The poem in the opening stanza reveals that this is what the poem is about with the speaker saying that it is vital for her knowing these facts. There is no punctuation in the poem, but each piece of information is restricted to one stanza making the reader focus and take one thing in at a time.

This poem may usefully be studied in contrasts with Wiesel’s “Never Will I Forget” – whereas the speaker in that poem is unable to forget, the speaker in “I Keep Forgetting” wants to remember, but cannot since she needs to check the facts in books. In addition the events from the Holocaust that the speaker of Brett’s poem are not events that she has experienced herself since it is impossible that a person would know such statistics without having learnt about them. Thus, this poem deals with collective memory – as mentioned, a shared memory passed on within a group of people. In addition, this poem also makes use of a lot of repetition by listing all of the things the speaker does to be able to remember, what she forgets and what she is able to remember. The students will be able to discuss the similarities and differences between this poem and Elie Wiesel’s poem and in addition discuss who they think the speaker of this poem is and whom the speaker is talking to.

There are two clear changes of mood within the poem: in the ninth and eleventh stanza. In the stanzas leading up the ninth stanza the focus is on the different facts the speaker needs to look up to confirm that she is right about, but in

the ninth and tenth stanza there is a sense of doubt by the speaker whether she remembers certain facts. Then the mood shifts again in the eleventh stanza, where the speaker applies remembering facts to everyday situations in her own life, by saying that she has a good memory being able to remember phone numbers and conversations. Here, the students will be able to talk about what the speaker's wish to remember facts about the Holocaust means, the doubt in the speaker's mind whether she is able to remember as well as the comparison with being able to remember everyday facts from her own life.

Statistics are usually very impersonal, and anonymous, but the statistics in this poem are very easy to imagine and very visual. An example of this are the number of people allocated to a room in the Warsaw and Lodz ghetto – 7.2 and 5.8 people, which are absurd numbers, but statistical common in surveys. Even the higher numbers mentioned, such as the number of people cremated daily in Auschwitz, although difficult to imagine, are very visual. The fact that this poem deals so much with numbers and statistics are similar to the facts and statistics that the Nazis used to keep during the Holocaust. The students will be able to discuss what they make of these numbers and why they are such an important part of this poem.

3.4.5. “Leaving You” by Lily Brett

The second poem by Lily Brett also deals with being a part of the Holocaust through a collective memory. It revolves around the speaker who is learning to accept that she did not experience the Holocaust herself. For a long time she has felt that she had experienced Auschwitz, the Lodz Ghetto, the cattle wagons, or the selection, the fear, the smell of the mattresses and the feeling of having her lungs filled with smoke from flesh, but is only now beginning to realize that those were her mother's experiences and not her own.

Like in “I Keep Forgetting”, this poem also has very short stanzas, with no punctuation at all. Some of the thirteen stanzas of the poem even make up incomplete sentences, where the break between the stanzas and the sentences may aid to show a focus on a particular stanza, such as the second to last one; “to live with death”. By

doing this, that particular stanza becomes more significant and the reader has to slow down in order to follow it. The seventh and eleventh stanza in the poem both begin with the preposition with: “with ration cards and work permits”, and “with smoke from flesh”. These two stanzas have a connection since they both may aim to sum up what it was like to live through the Holocaust. There are two significant breaks in the poem; in the first thirteen stanzas the speaker talks about all the events from the Holocaust she thought that she had experienced herself, before, in the last stanza the speaker focuses on her mother and leaving her behind. The students will be able to discuss the use of incomplete sentences in the stanzas, and what the speaker means by the contrasting last stanza of having difficulties leaving her mother.

Brett in this poem also manages to portray how many children of Holocaust survivor probably felt, where the Holocaust manages to take its toll on them making it a collective memory that can be difficult to let go of. The students will be asked to try to define who the speaker of the poem is and what her connection to the Holocaust is.

3.4.6. “Riddle” by William Heyen

“Riddle”, by William Heyen is a poem that strives to ask the question of whom was responsible for the Holocaust manslaughter when stripped down to each individual life being lost, as well as touching upon the subject of not forgetting the fearful events. Heyen, an American poet, is unlike all the other poets, or writers, whose works I have discussed, not Jewish. In fact, Heyen is of German descent, and some of it even Nazi, and therefore distinguishes himself from all the other writers. Heyen writes extensively and almost exclusively about the Holocaust (Schiff 1995: 212).

In “Riddle” a lot of repetition is used, where the question of the Riddle; “who killed the Jews?” is asked several times. The usage of the repetition makes it easier to remember the poem and a rhythm is created. It also makes the reader anticipate an answer to this question or want to find the answer to it on his or her own. The different actions that were carried out by the Nazis conducting the mass murder of the Holocaust are also repeated as well as the denial by the participants of the Holocaust of having anything to do with it. The poem scrutinizes everyone who did

their part in the Holocaust machinery; was it Adolf Eichmann – the main organizer for the deportation of millions of Jews to the concentration camps, Albert Speer – Hitler’s architect, the typist, the engineer, those who signed the papers, those who stood guard, those who herded the victims into the gas, those who dropped the pellets of gas, or those who spread the ashes or those who hosed the walls after shootings or a gassing had taken place, who were responsible? The poem also examines the role of other Germans who did not directly partake in the Holocaust. Are they innocent because they did not do anything, or guilty for being passive? Did they not know what was happening, see it, or hear about it? These are very important questions, which will compel the reader to think about this riddle him or herself. The students will also be able to talk about why Adolf Eichmann and Albert Speer are included in the poem, between a typist and an engineer, which are quite common professions. Whether this has any meaning or not will be interesting to discuss. Throughout history, every link, however big or small, in the Holocaust machinery has claimed its innocence by saying that they were only following orders. However, as good as no one would be to blame if just following orders makes a person innocent. Finding out how the students judge this problem, and how they see it would be intriguing. This problem also has so many aspects to it, so it will most likely be a basis for an interesting discussion.

In addition to focusing on those involved in the Holocaust, the poem also gives examples of victims of the Holocaust, and how they died. This emphasizes the fact that someone has to be guilty of the Holocaust, and that someone did something.

Another challenge the poem touches upon is remembering the Holocaust so many years after it took place. The stars, the sun and the moon, which are eternal, will always remember what happened, but will we? The different items left behind – a crate of gold teeth, a mountain of shoes, and a lampshade made from skin, items that were once a part of many individuals, prevail to remind us that something atrocious has taken place not too long ago. This is a good starting point for the students to discuss what Heyen’s purpose of writing this poem was. The students can furthermore discuss why Heyen thinks it is important that we remember the Holocaust, and in addition, which purpose the students think it has that humankind reminds itself of it.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis I have looked at how it is possible to teach about the Holocaust in the subjects of Social Studies English and English Literature and Culture. Thus teaching about history through the study of English literature on the Holocaust enabling cross-curricular learning. I have given an account of how I regard it as most beneficial that this is done: by introducing the topic and determining how much the students know, explaining terms and issues they will come across in the literature they will read, as well as elucidating how the literature should be studied by the students. I have also given an outline of how and why the students ought to be organized in different groups to read one piece of literature each. Subsequently I have given a brief analysis of the books; *Maus*, *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance*, and *The Shawl* and a series of poems, "Never Shall I Forget", "Shipment to Maidanek", *Holocaust*, "I Keep Forgetting", "Leaving You" and "Riddle", in order to determine how the students can study them, and what they can learn. At the end of the course module the class will sum up what they have learned and what the students think about learning about the Holocaust in this way.

After examining this literature I am quite certain that it is very achievable to teach about the Holocaust through literature on the subject in English. By reading personal accounts on the Holocaust the students will hopefully learn more about the subject, and it will addition make the students grow as people and gain a better understanding, integrity and empathy towards other people. In addition the students will most likely gain a better appreciation for different types of literature since these specific works will most likely interest the students.

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6. Study Questions (Appendix)

The questions as follow are the questions each group of students will be given containing while-reading as well as post-reading questions.

6.1. Study Questions: *Maus*

While-reading questions:

- The relationship between Vladek and Art seems to be quite complicated. What do you make of their relationship?
- What is your impression of Vladek in general and when taking into account what he has been through?
- All the characters in the book are portrayed as animals. What do you make of this?

Post-reading questions:

- *Maus* is a graphic novel, which is probably a new term to you. What effect does it have that the book is written like a cartoon, in your opinion? How do the message and the contents come across depicted in this way?
- The book is completely written in black and white. What do you think made Art Spiegelman avoid colors in his book?
- Vladek speaks incorrect English throughout the narrative. Why do you think Art Spiegelman chose to let him speak the way he probably did instead of changing it to correct English? Show a few examples you find examples of Vladek's incorrect English.

- Why do you think the different nationalities are portrayed as specific animals? What are the connections between the animals and nationalities? Is the animal metaphor problematic in any way, in your eyes? Explain why, or why not.
- What do you think Spiegelman wanted to achieve anything by portraying the characters as animals?
- Say something about who is a round and who is a flat character in *Maus* and what makes the specific characters either round or flat. What is the connection between who is a round, or who is a flat character and the different animals in the story?
- How did Vladek and Anja manage to survive the Holocaust? Was it possible to survive the Holocaust and what did that depend on?
- On page 205 in the book, Pavel, Art's psychologist tells Art that survival was random and that dying in the Holocaust was no less admirable than surviving it. What is your opinion on his claim?
- What does Vladek's think about having his son write about his story, and how does Art feel writing about it?
- Vladek suffers a lot because of what he has been through. Write down some examples of things Vladek says or does which show that he is still suffering from the Holocaust.
- Art seems to also show that he also bears some trauma due to the Holocaust. Give some examples.
- What did you learn about the Holocaust through *Maus*? What is your own opinion on using this book in order to learn about the Holocaust?

6.2. Study Questions: *Jack and Rochelle: A Holocaust Story of Love and Resistance*

While-reading questions:

- Jack and Rochelle go through a lot at a very young age. What is your impression of Jack and Rochelle while reading their story and what do you make of it as a whole?
- Describe Jack and Rochelle briefly.
- Their many experiences through the Holocaust are quite astonishing. What was the most surprising thing to you?

Post-reading questions:

- This narrative is presented as a story the reader is listening to. Which affect does it have that Sutin chose to write it in this way and not in any other way?
- What have you learned about the Holocaust that you did not know before by reading this narrative?
- Jack and Rochelle were around the same age as you are when they went through the Holocaust. How are you able to identify with them?
- Picture yourself in Jack or Rochelle's shoes. Realistically thinking, how do you think you would go about in the same situation?
- Do you think you would be able to live the way that they did in the woods for two years? Explain why or why not.
- Try to find out more about partisan activities during the Holocaust, and about Zorin and the Bielski brothers.
- In the book Jack and Rochelle speak about mothers who killed their babies, a daughter who was responsible for her mother's death as well as feeling like an

animal living the way they did. What do you think it takes for someone to lose his or her humanity?

- Lawrence Sutin mentions the way that he thinks the Holocaust have taken its toll on his parents in the aftermath. Give some examples of this.
- Lawrence Sutin also talks about how the Holocaust has affected him, but yet he thinks it is important for Holocaust survivors to talk to their children about the Holocaust. Give some pros and cons of talking to your children about such a dramatic event, and give your own opinion on the matter.
- Lawrence Sutin also does not like the term survivor because he thinks this judges those who did not survive. Elaborate what he means by this and what your own opinion is.

6.3. Study Questions: *The Shawl*

While reading questions:

- What happens in the short story, "The Shawl"? Give an account of the events.
- Rosa seems to be a very complex character, which is dealing with a lot of pain. Describe Rosa and give some examples of a way that she shows her character traits.
- Rosa speaks poorly of her niece, Stella, throughout the story. Why do you think Rosa dislikes Stella so much?

Post-reading questions:

- Describe the relationship between Rosa and Stella. Discuss in your group what the negative and positive aspects of Stella's way of dealing with the past vs. the way that Rosa has chosen to deal with it. Which problems do you see concerning each of the women's choice?

- In “The Shawl” many metaphors have been applied to describe the conditions of the concentration camp and the way that the three women. Give some examples of this.
- Rosa is a very troubled and traumatized person, which is shown through many examples throughout the story. Point to a few examples which show this. Why do you think Rosa behaves the way that she does? Why is Rosa so exceedingly traumatized? Give examples of reasons why you think the Holocaust has affected her so much in particular.
- Rosa is unable to identify with other Holocaust victims. Why does she herself think she is different from them, and has this affected her in any way, in your opinion?
- Explain Rosa’s relationship with Magda, her deceased daughter. How is this relation different from all other relations Rosa has? Explain why.
- Rosa claims that thieves have taken her life, and while getting to know her character one understands how much she has lost. Discuss whether it is possible to live after an event like the Holocaust, and also how this can be accomplished.

6.4. Study Questions: The Poems

While-reading questions:

- What kind of feeling did it give you reading “Never Will I Forget”, “Shipment to Maidanek”, “From Holocaust”, “Never Will I Forget”, “Leaving You” and “Riddle”?
- Can you describe the feelings the speaker in “Never Shall I Forget” must have?
- What do you think the effect is that the victims in “Shipment to Maidanek” are listed as items?
- In “From Holocaust”, how is the reader taught about the Holocaust?
- Why do you think it is important for the speaker in “I Keep Forgetting” to remember details on the Holocaust?
- Why do you think the speaker in “Leaving You” for so long thought that she was part of the Holocaust?

- What is the riddle in William Heyen's poem? Explain why.

Post-reading questions:

- In "Never Shall I Forget" there is a speaker who talks about the atrocities of the Holocaust. Who do you think the speaker is and what has he been through?
- There is a lot of repetition and usage of the demonstrative pronoun in this poem. Give examples and explain why you think they are used.
- Which metaphors can you find in the poem "Never Shall I Forget", and what do you think they mean?
- In "Shipment to Maidanek" the people who have arrived at the concentration camp possess negative qualities and are rather anonymously described. What do you make of this?
- There are three lines in this poem that stand on their own. Why do you think the writer chose this structure?
- Which perspective do you think the Holocaust is seen from in this poem and why do you think Ephraim Fogel chose this perspective?
- What do you think Fogel's intentions with this poem were? Does he succeed?
- *Holocaust* is a very untraditional poem. Why do you think Charles Reznikoff wrote it this way and how can you tell that it is a poem, and not a factual text?
- What is the purpose of the breaks between the stanzas in this poem, do you think?
- Some of the stanzas in this poem differ a little from the other stanzas in terms of structure and punctuation. Can you identify these stanzas and explain why you think these specific stanzas are different?
- The poem *Holocaust* presents many details on the Holocaust. Did you learn anything new about the Holocaust through this poem, and if so, what?
- In "I Keep Forgetting", why does the speaker need to look up details on the Holocaust, whereas otherwise having a good memory?

- Do you think the speaker has experienced the Holocaust herself? Why/why not? Explain.
- This poem resembles Wiesel's "I Will Never Forget" in many ways. Can you give examples of the reason for this?
- What do you make of all the statistics in this poem?
- In the poem "Leaving You", the speaker first talks about the belief that she was a part of the Holocaust, before she in the last stanza talks about her mother. What is the connection between her mother and the Holocaust, would you say?
- Who is the speaker in this poem and what is her connection to the Holocaust?
- There are many breaks in the middle of sentences in this poem resulting in short and incomplete sentences. Explain what you think the purpose of this is, and give some examples of such sentences.
- What do you make of William Heyen's poem, "Riddle"? Who does the poem blame for participating and what are your own opinion and thoughts on who is to blame for the Holocaust?
- In "Riddle" there are many repetitions. Can you give examples of some of the repetitions and explain why you think they are used?
- William Heyen himself is of German descent. Do you think that has anything to do with why he chose to write this poem? Explain why you think the way you do.
- His poem also touches upon remembering the Holocaust. Do you think it is important to remember the Holocaust? Explain why, or why not.

