Brief History of the
HOLOCAUST
A Reference Tool
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TO LEARN, TO FEEL, TO REMEMBER

The Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust*, while sensitizing the public to the universal perils of antisemitism*, racism, hate and indifference. Through its Museum, its commemorative programs and educational initiatives, the Centre promotes respect for diversity and the sanctity of human life.

The collection of the museum is unique in Canada. It holds 8,800 items, many of which are historic documents, photographs and objects that belonged to Jewish families from Europe. The Centre acquires new objects that document the life of Jewish communities before the war and the Holocaust*.

The Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum tells the story of the Holocaust from a unique perspective, that of Montreal survivors. The museum brings to life the human story of the Holocaust through survivor testimony, artefacts and historical archival material. Visitors learn the history of the Holocaust, and gain an understanding of events in Quebec, Canada and the world at that time. They are encouraged to consider the implications of prejudice, racism and anti-Semitism.

The exhibition tells the story of Jewish communities before, during and after the Holocaust. It explores the unimaginable tragedy in which so many lives were lost and the horrors witnessed by the few who survived.

Montreal became home to the third largest survivor population after World War II. Approximately 5,000 survivors still reside in the Montreal area today.
The Holocaust* (Shoah*) was the systematic persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis* and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Millions of others, including the Roma and the Sinti (Gypsies), the physically and mentally challenged, homosexuals, as well as political and religious opponents of Nazism were also targeted for destruction.

The Holocaust* was not an accident in history. Individuals, organisations and governments made choices that promoted and permitted discrimination, prejudice, hatred and ultimately, mass murder to take place.

The teaching of the Holocaust* demands a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. This guide provides background material to the Permanent Exhibition of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum. Pre-visit preparation will reinforce your students’ ability to connect to the subject matter, as they encounter the artefacts, photographs and Holocaust Survivor video testimonies.

This guide presents the history of the Holocaust* in five parts: Historical Context, Holocaust Chronology, Artefacts, Glossary and Bibliography. The definitions of words followed by an asterisk (*) can be found in the glossary.

As an educator you can select the content that speaks to your students’ interests in order to ensure that their visit to the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum is a memorable one.
Pre-Holocaust Jewish Communities

Jews have had a long history of presence in Europe. By 1939, they had lived in Europe for more than 2,000 years.

The first evidence of a Jewish community in Germany dates back to the 4th century in the city of Cologne. The Jewish communities of Germany grew over the years, at times thriving both culturally and economically, and at other times enduring extremely harsh decrees, defamation and ghettoization. By the 20th century, many Jews were well integrated into German society, active in industry and commerce, the arts, sciences and politics. They represented less than 1% of the population of the country (not more than 500,000 people).

There was great diversity between and within the various Jewish communities, with respect to economic situation, level of education, political affiliation, and religious observance. There is no one description that defines all pre-Holocaust Jews or Jewish communities.

The first Jewish community in North America was established in 1654, when 23 Jews arrived in New Amsterdam (New York) after being expelled from Brazil. Jews settled in Canada shortly thereafter. The first synagogue was founded in Montreal in 1768. Before the Second World War, there were about 131,000 Jews in Canada, primarily in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg.
Rise of Nazism

World War I (1914-1918) ended with the defeat of Germany by France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919), a peace agreement, forced Germany to accept moral and financial responsibility for the unprecedented destruction that had devastated Europe. Severe restrictions limited its armed forces, and the production and use of heavy weapons. Germany was ordered to pay reparations and to give up a significant part of its territory and all its colonies. The Treaty was perceived by the Germans as unduly harsh, a belief later exploited by the Nazis*. Military and right-wing leaders propagated the idea that the German army had been betrayed by the Communists, liberals and Jews.

In the midst of the post-war chaos, a democratic parliamentary republic, known as the Weimar Republic, was formed.

There was widespread economic chaos in Germany throughout the 1920s. Inflation and unemployment rose to unprecedented levels and this led to political instability. The Germans lost confidence in their government.

In 1919 German World War I veterans formed the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi Party), which Adolf Hitler became the leader of in 1921. Nazi* ideology was based on militaristic, racial, antisemitic and nationalist policies. After failing to seize power in an armed coup in 1923, the Nazis* turned to electoral politics, exploiting Germany’s fragile democracy.

The Great Depression of 1929, which had an impact on the world economy, created even higher levels of massive unemployment, driving many Germans to seek radical solutions and they were turning to the new Nazi* party.

In the 1930 federal elections, the Nazi* party increased its number of seats from 12 to 107, while actively spreading propaganda, staging street fights and further destabilising Germany.
Adolf Hitler Comes to Power

In 1933 the Nazi* Party and its leader, Adolf Hitler, won the federal elections with 32% of the votes. The Nazis' inflammatory mixture of patriotism and racism drew upon historical myths of a racially pure 'Aryan* nation' that offered simplistic solutions, pledging to end economic instability and restore Germany's role as a world power.

On January 30th, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, head of the German government. After President Hindenburg's death in 1934, Hitler also became president. He was head of state and thus the omnipotent ruler of Germany. Hitler declared himself ultimate dictator of Germany. It is the beginning of the Third Reich* era. Nothing could now stop him from using all the resources at his disposal to expand his racist, antisemitic, anti-democratic and anti-Marxist ideology. There were no remaining barriers to introducing anti-Jewish legislation, the infamous Nuremberg Laws*, which excluded Jews from the social, economic and political life of the country.
Racist and Antisemitic Ideology

Antisemitism* is an ideology based on hatred and discrimination vis-à-vis Jews. It is a form of racism. Antisemitism* had been part of Christian European culture for centuries, but until the 19th century, it mainly involved religious, political and economic discrimination.

Hitler’s book Mein Kampf (“My Struggle”) portrays Jews as Germany’s chief enemy and the primary cause of its economic and social problems.

Book burnings took place at universities across Germany in May 1933. Literature by Jews and non-Jews considered “un-German” was destroyed. Examples include Ernest Hemmingway, Thomas Mann and Helen Keller. Discriminatory policies against “degenerate” artists and musicians led many of them to flee.

Based on popular pseudo-scientific theories, the Jews were, for the first time, defined as a race rather than as a religious group. The Nuremberg Laws* (1935) provided the legal foundations for the Nazis’ exclusion and degradation of Jews. The alleged inferiority of the Jewish people was no longer based on religious differences but on supposedly inherent biological defects.

The Nazis* divided humans into racial categories defined along genetic lines, with “Aryans”* (Germanic peoples) seen as a biologically superior “Master race”, destined to rule the world. The “inferior” races included the Slavs, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), and Blacks. The Jews were placed at the very bottom of this racial hierarchy. To ensure “racial purity”, Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Germans.

From 1933 to 1935, Jewish businesses were boycotted. Jews were barred from the civil service and liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, professors). Eventually, Jews were denied German citizenship.

On November 9-10, 1938 (Kristallnacht), the Nazis* unleashed their first state-organized and coordinated campaign of terror against the Jews of Germany and Austria (which Germany had recently annexed). Over one thousand synagogues were destroyed, Jewish stores were looted and homes ransacked. Over thirty thousand Jewish men and boys were arrested and sent to concentration camps*.

Never before had the Nazis* unleashed this level of mass violence. Kristallnacht was followed by a series of decrees designed to ruthlessly complete the exclusion of Jews from all participation in German economy and society. The persecution of Jews continued to escalate, as the world’s response remained minimal and ineffective.
World War II

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, bringing Poland's allies*, Great Britain and France, into the war. Germany’s technological superiority resulted in Poland’s defeat in less than a month.

In 1940-41, the Nazis* attacked and defeated Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. Despite the non-aggression pact signed between the two countries, German forces attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.

World War II was fought between the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and the Allies* (including Canada). On the European front, World War II ended with Germany’s unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945 to the Western Allies*, and on May 9, 1945 to the Soviets. Japan’s formal surrender came on September 2, 1945.
Ghettos

After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, approximately two million Polish Jews came under German control. Almost immediately, Jews were moved from their homes into ghettos*, usually located in the poor areas of the towns or cities. Their goods were all confiscated. Jews were forced to live in guarded, overcrowded and unsanitary areas. Many of them suffered or perished from hunger, disease, brutal treatment and forced labour.

The Judenrat (Nazi-appointed Jewish council) was charged with carrying out orders issued by the Nazis* for the daily operation of the ghettos*. The Judenrat tried to provide a desperate, starving and overcrowded population with housing, food, health care and sanitation. In addition, they were responsible for supplying the Nazis* with a labour force and, eventually, filling deportation* quotas. Failure to comply with Nazi* orders meant certain death. Hundreds of ghettos* were established across Europe, with more than 400 in Poland alone (for example, in Lodz and Warsaw).

Despite the inhumane conditions, the ghetto population struggled to provide for its physical and spiritual needs, resisting Nazi* efforts to dehumanize them. Orphanages, soup kitchens, and medical care were established. Underground schools, religious and cultural activities continued to operate, demonstrating resourcefulness and a determination to survive.

The Nazis* viewed most ghettos* as a temporary measure. By 1944, all the ghettos* had been liquidated, the remaining population deported to concentration and death camps*. 

Deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto. There were two waves of deportation in Lodz, one in 1942, and one in 1944. Lodz was one of the biggest ghettos in Poland.
Concentration Camps

Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany established a series of detention centres to imprison and murder “enemies of the state”. The camps were an essential part of the systematic oppression by the Nazis. The extensive camp system included over 20,000 camps and sub-camps, ranging from transit and forced labour camps to concentration camps. Disease, starvation, crowded and unsanitary conditions, torture and death were a daily part of concentration camp life. Dachau, Bergen-Belsen or Ravensbruck were all concentration camps.

Transit camps were established in Western Europe where Jews were held prior to being transported to death camps in the East. Deportees were transported in overcrowded, filthy cattle cars without windows, food, water, or a bathroom. Many died during the journey.

In the beginning (1933-1936), the majority of the inmates were political and ideological opponents of the regime (such as Communists and Social Democrats). Later (1936-1942), concentration camps were expanded to include non-political prisoners, like the Jews, the Roma and the Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the handicapped, individuals accused of “asocial” or socially deviant behaviour, and Soviet POWs.

The “Final Solution” and the Creation of the Death Camps

The mass murder of the Jews began in 1941. Death squads, known as the Einsatzgruppen, followed the advancing German army on the Eastern front. Their primary mission was to annihilate the local Jewish population, mostly through mass shootings. Approximately 1.3 million Jews were murdered in this manner.

The Wannsee Conference was held near Berlin on January 20, 1942. High-ranking German officials convened to deliberate the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”, the code name for the elimination of European Jewry. For the first time in history, the annihilation of a people had become official government policy.

Starting in 1942 the Nazis established 6 death camps, all located in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Gas chambers were devised to increase the efficiency of the killing and to make the process more impersonal for the perpetrators. 2.5 million people perished in the gas chambers in these camps. Mass murder had become an industrial process.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest concentration and extermination camp, consisting of 48 sub-camps. At its most efficient, over 10,000 people were murdered there daily. By the end of the war, the fatalities had reached 1.5 million.
Jewish Resistance

Individually and in groups, Jews participated in both planned and spontaneous resistance to the Germans. Despite overwhelming odds, Jews fought against the Nazis* and their collaborators in ghettos*, concentration camps* and death camps*. Examples of armed resistance include the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 1943), and revolts at the death camps* of Treblinka (August 1943) and Sobibor (October 1943).

Jews joined partisan units (both Jewish, like the Bielski, and non-Jewish, like the Zegota group in Poland) that were formed in the forests of Eastern Europe, functioning with minimal arms but with support from the surrounding population. Jews were also active in underground resistance movements throughout Western Europe. Resistance cannot be measured by armed attacks alone. Jews endlessly struggled to maintain their Jewish identity and their humanity. Cultural and educational activities, the preservation of Jewish institutions and clandestine religious activities were some of the acts of spiritual resistance against the Nazi* policy of genocide*.

Nazi collaborators

The Nazis* could never have carried out their deadly scheme without help from others. Governments cooperated in the arrest and deportation* of Jews to death camps*, and in several cases committed atrocities against their Jewish citizens within their own national borders. Such collaboration was a crucial element of the “Final Solution”*. Amongst the collaborators were the French Vichy government, the Ustasha government in Croatia, the Norwegian government; Lithuanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Latvian, and Belorussian pro-Nazi units; as well as paramilitary organizations such as the Hlinka Guard in Slovakia, the Iron Guard in Romania, and the Arrow Cross in Hungary.

Rescuers

Malgré l’indifférence générale constatée à la grandeur de l’Europe et la Despite the widespread indifference of Europeans and the participation of collaborators, thousands risked their lives to save Jews. These remarkable individuals defied the Nazis*, risking constant danger of discovery, imprisonment, and death for themselves and their families. They showed that ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary deeds. The rescuers hid Jews (sometimes not only one Jew but a whole family), provided them with identity documents, which allowed them to flee, organised the flight of many Jews, etc. By helping Jews they risked not only their own lives, but that of their families as well, but they acted in the firm belief that this was the moral obligation.

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem has honoured more than 20,000 such individuals, designated as the “Righteous Among the Nations”.

Picture of a Bielski group of partisans, men and women. They were fighting against the Nazis in the Polish forest. They were led by four Bielski brothers: Tuvia, Alexander, Asael and Aaron. Circa 1943-1944.
Some exceptional communities, ranging from the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to the government of Denmark, demonstrated courage by actively defying the Nazis* and saving Jewish lives.

Liberation

The Allied forces (the Soviet, British, Canadian and American armies) liberated death and concentration camps* as they advanced against Germany between July 1944 and May 1945.

By the end of the war six million Jews, two-thirds of European Jewry, had been murdered by the Nazis* and their collaborators. The nightmare of the war was over, but this new reality brought its unique hardships to the surviving Jews. Unlike other liberated inmates, most attempts by Jewish survivors to find remaining family members ended in failure. Once vibrant communities had been destroyed throughout Europe. Many Jews, dispossessed of their homes and properties, had nowhere to go.

Displaced Persons Camps

Displaced Persons (DP) camps* were established for the Jews who were unable to return to their former lives. In many instances the Allies* were forced to use former concentration camps*, such as Bergen-Belsen, as DP camps*. Many homeless Holocaust* survivors migrated westward to territories liberated by the Allies*, where they were placed in DP camps*.

Many of those who returned to their countries of origin encountered indifference and/or hostility. In Poland, anti-Semitism persisted and there were a number of pogroms*, the most notable one in Kielce in 1946, when 42 Jews were killed. This convinced the majority of Jews that they had no future in Poland and many of them fled to DP camps*, waiting for an opportunity to leave.

Survivors in the DP camps* returned to pre-war community models, establishing schools, religious institutions, social services, and political and cultural organisations.

Those attempting to immigrate to North America faced restrictive quotas and many of them spent extended periods in DP camps*. In 1948 Canada began to open its doors to immigrants and in five years more than 200,000 displaced persons entered the country, including about 25,000 Holocaust* survivors. Montreal became home to the third largest Holocaust survivor population after the war. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 a new destination opened up for the survivors.
Pursuit of Justice: Nuremberg Trial

The Nuremberg Trials* (1945-1946) set in motion the justice system to sentence leading Nazi* war criminals. The trials exposed the world to the horrors of the Nazi genocide*. The so-called Nuremberg follow-up trials, which took place up to 1949, prosecuted other parties involved, such as medical doctors, legal practitioners, the SS*, the police, industrialists and high-ranking government officials.

Eventually, approximately 150 German Nazi* leaders were convicted and 12 executed, but the majority evaded justice. A number of them escaped to South America, including Dr. Mengele, notorious for his medical experiments in Auschwitz. Leading German Nazi* scientists were invited to work in the United States and the Soviet Union. Many continued to live in Germany, while others entered Western countries under assumed identities.

Eichmann Trail

Adolf Eichmann, head of the Gestapo’s* section for Jewish affairs, was captured by the Israeli Secret Service in Argentina in 1960. Responsible for the deportation* of three million Jews to extermination camps, he was brought to Israel to stand trial for crimes against humanity. The Eichmann trial aroused considerable media interest, marking a turning point in Holocaust* awareness. It was also the first public opportunity for survivors to testify about their experiences.

Persuit of Nazi Criminals

Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005), a survivor of the Nazi death camps*, dedicated his life to documenting the crimes committed during the Holocaust* and hunting down the perpetrators still at large. He is credited with mobilizing Western governments to locate and prosecute escaped Nazis*, and with ferreting out nearly 1,100 Nazi* war criminals, including Adolf Eichmann.

In 1979 the United States created an Office of Special Investigations to prosecute Nazis* who had hid their pasts in order to enter the country.

In 1985, the Canadian Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals (the Deschênes Commission) was established to examine issues relating to a number of Nazi* war criminals living in Canada, the circumstances under which they entered, and the legal means to hold them accountable for their crimes. Few were ever prosecuted.

International Justice

Sixty years later the majority of Nazi* war criminals and their collaborators had not been brought to trial.

International rules established during the course of the Nuremberg Trials* formed the basis for the Convention of Human Rights and the Genocide* Convention. They remain inscribed in the constitution of the United Nations.

The Nuremberg Trials* continue to be a precursor for international tribunals established for the prosecution of war criminals. Post-WWII examples of international tribunals include those for crimes committed in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30, 1933</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany.</td>
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<td>March 22, 1933</td>
<td>Dachau concentration camp* is established.</td>
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<td>March 23, 1933</td>
<td>The German parliament passes the Enabling Act which empowers Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.</td>
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<td>April 1, 1933</td>
<td>The Nazis* organize a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many of these boycotts continue throughout much of the 1930s.</td>
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<td>April 7, 1933</td>
<td>The German government passes the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Service which excludes Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affect Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 1933</td>
<td>Nazi* party members, students, professors and others burn books written by Jews, political opponents and other “undesirable” authors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 14, 1934</td>
<td>The Nazi* government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless Jews as well as the Roma (Gypsies) of German citizenship.</td>
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</table>
August 2, 1934  Following the death of German President von Hindenburg, Hitler proclaims himself **Führer** (leader) in addition to his position as Chancellor, becoming absolute dictator. Armed forces must now swear allegiance to him.

April 1, 1935  The Nazis outlaw and arrest many Jehovah's Witnesses because of their refusal to swear allegiance to the state.

June 28, 1935  The Nazis criminalize homosexuality and launch the persecution and imprisonment of homosexuals.

September 15, 1935  The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour and the Reich Citizenship Law are passed. Commonly known as the "Nuremberg Laws", these "racial" laws strip Jews of their German citizenship and forbid them to marry people of "pure German blood". The Nazi government later applies the laws to the Roma (Gypsies) and to Blacks living in Germany.

July 12, 1936  The construction of Sachsenhausen concentration camp begins.

August 1, 1936  The Olympics open in Berlin. Canada participates, as does the United States, reversing a 1933 vote by the U.S. Amateur Athletic Union to boycott the games.

July 15, 1937  The Buchenwald concentration camp is established.

October 25, 1937  Hitler and Mussolini form the Rome-Berlin axis.

March 12 - 13, 1938  "Anschluss" - Germany invades Austria and annexes it to the Third Reich. All the anti-Semitic decrees are immediately implemented in Austria.

July 6 -15, 1938  At the Evian conference in France, 32 nations discuss the Jewish refugee crisis, yet take little action. Canada refuses to change its restrictive immigration policy.

August 17, 1938  German Jews whose names are not obviously Jewish are forced to include the name of "Israel" or "Sara" on official documents.

September 30, 1938  Eager to avoid war, Britain and France sign the Munich Pact which forces Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas of Sudetenland to Germany.

November 9 - 10, 1938  "Kristallnacht", state-organised attacks on Jewish businesses, synagogues, apartments across Germany and Austria.

November 12 - 15, 1938  German Jews are not allowed to pursue their professions, they are forced to close their businesses and their remaining assets are confiscated. Jews of all ages are banned from non-Jewish German schools.
December 1938  The British government allows 10,000 unaccompanied predominantly Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia entry into Britain in a rescue mission called the Kindertransport. The majority of these children will never see their families again.

May 13 – June 17, 1939  Cuba, the United States and Canada refuse to accept the more than 900 refugees – almost all of whom are Jewish – who are on board of the ocean liner St. Louis, which is thus forced to return to Europe.

August 23, 1939  The Soviet Union and Germany sign the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact.

September 1, 1939  German troops invade Poland. Polish defences crumble under a massive land and air assault (Blitzkrieg*).

September 3, 1939  Britain and France declare war on Germany.

September 27-28, 1939  Warsaw falls. The capital of Poland, home to 350,000 Jews, surrenders to German troops after a three-week siege. The Jewish population of Poland is 3.35 million, which is 10% of its total population.

October 1939  As part of the “euthanasia” program*, doctors are instructed to kill physically or mentally “defective” German children and adults. Approximately 200,000 handicapped persons are murdered.

October 12, 1939  Germany begins deportation* of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland.

October 28, 1939  The first Jewish ghetto* in Poland is established in Piotrkow.

November 23, 1939  A visible Jewish badge sewn on clothing or worn as an armband becomes mandatory for Jews aged ten and older in occupied Poland.
1940

April 9 - June 22, 1940  Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France. Most of Western Europe is under Nazi* control.

May 20, 1940  The Auschwitz concentration camp* is established outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.

June 30, 1940  German authorities order the first major ghetto* in Lodz to be sealed, where at least 160,000 Jews are confined.

November, 1940  5,000 Roma and Sinti are deported from Austria to the Lodz ghetto*.

November 15, 1940  German authorities order the Warsaw ghetto* to be sealed off. It is the largest ghetto* both in terms if its surface area and population. The Germans confine more than 350,000 Jews – about 30% of the city’s population – into about 2.4% of the city’s total area.

1941

April 6, 1941  Germany together with its Axis allies* invade Yugoslavia and Greece.

June 22, 1941  German troops invade the Soviet Union and are followed by death squads (Einsatzgruppen*) that massacre over a million Jews.

July 31, 1941  Hermann Goering, General Field Marshall of the Reich, orders Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service) to take measures for the implementation of the "Final Solution*".

September 3, 1941  Zyklon-B, a poisonous gas, is used for the first time to mass murder Soviet prisoners-of-war at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 1941</td>
<td>The Nazi government decrees that Jews over the age of six who reside in Germany must wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.</td>
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<td>September 29-30, 1941</td>
<td>33,000 Jews are massacred at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev.</td>
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<td>December 7, 1941</td>
<td>Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declares war on Japan.</td>
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<td>December 8, 1941</td>
<td>Death by gas begins in Chelmno, one of the six Nazi death camp using special mobile gas vans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 31, 1941</td>
<td>Abba Kovner, in the Vilna Ghetto, calls for Lithuanian armed resistance, leading to the first Jewish fighting force, the United Partisan Organisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20, 1942</td>
<td>At a meeting in Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, the guidelines for the implementation of the &quot;Final Solution&quot; are established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 17, 1942</td>
<td>Killing in gas chambers begins at the Belzec death camp. An estimated 600,000 people, mostly Jews, are murdered before the camp is dismantled in December 1942.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 27, 1942</td>
<td>The Germans begin the systematic deportation of Jews from France, mostly to Auschwitz-Birkenau.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1942</td>
<td>Killing in gas chambers begins at the Sobibor death camp. By November 1943, an estimated 250,000 Jews are killed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 4, 1942</td>
<td>SS officials perform the first selection of weak, sick and “unfit” prisoners for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people are killed. Nine out of ten victims at the Auschwitz complex are Jewish.</td>
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<td>July 15, 1942</td>
<td>The deportation of Dutch Jews begins from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz-Birkenau.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 23, 1942</td>
<td>Gassing operations at the Treblinka death camp begin. By November 1943, an estimated 750,000 Jews and at least 2,000 Roma (Gypsies) are murdered.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
November 1942  Jan Karski, an emissary of the London-based Polish Government-in-Exile provides British and American leaders (including Churchill and Roosevelt) with eyewitness accounts of atrocities against the Jews. No action is taken.

January, 1943  The German army surrenders at Stalingrad, a major turning point in World War II.

March 15, 1943  Deportation* of Jews from Salonika, Greece, to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

April 19 - May 16, 1943  Jewish fighters resist the German attempt to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto*. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is the first mass armed revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.

April 19 - 30, 1943  At the Bermuda Conference, Britain and the United States discuss policies related to the rescue of European Jewry, but no concrete action is taken.

June 1943  Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS*, orders the deportation* of all Jews in the Baltic States and Belorussia to concentration camps*.

August 2, 1943  Jews at the Treblinka death camp* stage a revolt, using weapons stolen from the SS* guards. Of those that escape, most are recaptured and killed.

Late summer, 1943  Armed resistance by Jews in the ghettos* of Bedzin, Bialystok, Czestochowa, Lvov, and Tarnow.

October 1, 1943  Non-Jewish Danish resistance groups launch a three-week operation that ultimately smuggles more than 7,900 Jews and their non-Jewish relatives to safety in Sweden.

October 14, 1943  Armed revolt at the Sobibor death camp*. After the recapture and murder of most of the escapees, the camp is closed and dismantled.
March 19, 1944  
German troops occupy Hungary.

May 15 - July 9, 1944  
Under the guidance of German SS* officials, Hungarian rural police units deport nearly 430,000 Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The majority are gassed upon arrival. Through the monumental efforts of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and others, thousands of Hungarian Jews are saved.

June 6, 1944  
British and American troops launch an invasion in Normandy, France, on what becomes known as D-Day.

June 22, 1944  
A massive Soviet offensive destroys the German front in Belorussia.

July 23, 1944  
Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek death camp*. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.

January 27, 1945  
Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz-Birkenau.

April 6-10, 1945  
Death march of inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp* in Germany.

April 11, 1945  
U.S. troops liberate Buchenwald.

April 15, 1945  
British and Canadian troops liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp*.

April 29, 1945  
U.S. troops liberate the Dachau concentration camp*.

April 30, 1945  
Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

May 7-9, 1945  
The German armed forces surrender unconditionally. The Allies* and the Soviet Union proclaim May 8 as Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2, 1945</td>
<td>Japan surrenders. World War II is officially over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14, 1945 - October 1, 1946</td>
<td>An International Military Tribunal convenes in Nuremberg, Germany. Twenty-two top Nazi leaders stand trial for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 4, 1946</td>
<td>Jews returning to their homes in Kielce, Poland, faced a violent pogrom*. 42 Jews are killed. Several anti-Jewish pogroms break out across Poland. Following the violence, 100,000 Polish Jews leave their native country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 1946 - April 11, 1949</td>
<td>An American military court in Nuremberg tries 177 German industrialists who used slave labour, judges and doctors who took part in Nazi euthanasia programs*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Canada finally opens its doors to Jewish immigration. Between 1939 and 1944, only 4,000 Jews – or 6.5% of all immigrants – had been allowed entrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14, 1948</td>
<td>The State of Israel is established. Jewish immigration is unrestricted, and almost 700,000 are admitted, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DP’s from Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10, 1961</td>
<td>Adolf Eichmann is put on trial in Israel for Crimes Against Humanity. He is convicted and sentenced to death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1985</td>
<td>The Canadian government establishes a Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals.</td>
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</table>
## Estimated Jewish Deaths in the Holocaust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Jewish Population at Outset of WWII</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>65,700</td>
<td>28,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohemia and Moravia</td>
<td>118,310</td>
<td>78,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>1,500-2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>77,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>566,000</td>
<td>134,500-141,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>77,380</td>
<td>60,000-67,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>825,000</td>
<td>550,000-569,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>44,500</td>
<td>7,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>91,500</td>
<td>70,000-71,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>168,000</td>
<td>140,000-143,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3,300,000</td>
<td>2,900,000-3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>609,000</td>
<td>271,000-287,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>88,950</td>
<td>68,000-71,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>3,020,000</td>
<td>1,000,000-1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>56,200-63,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>9,796,840</td>
<td>5,596,029 - 5,860,129</td>
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</table>


* Of this total, 1.5 million victims were children.
The non-Jewish victims of the Nazis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Soviet war prisoners</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Poles</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs (persecuted by the Croatian Ustasha)</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma, Sinti and Lalleri</td>
<td>222,000 to 250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans (political opponents, clergy and other non-secular people, partisans)</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans (Disabled)</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuals</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah Witnesses</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concentration Camp Clothing

Most concentration camp prisoners selected for forced labour were shaved, deloused, deprived of all their clothing and belongings, and given a uniform to wear. For women, this consisted of a thin blue and grey striped dress; for men a pyjama-like jacket and pair of pants of the same material. The more fortunate were also allocated hats and shoes. This clothing was their only protection against the harsh conditions of the Polish climate.

Little is known about the jacket to the right. It belonged to Zigmunt Schick. Zigmunt was born in 1920 in Czechoslovakia, and moved to Antwerp, Belgium with his family when he was seven. In 1942 Zigmunt, like many Belgian Jews, was sent to the camp of Charleville, France. In October 1942 he was deported to Auschwitz where he was selected to work. Sent on a death march in January 1945, he managed to escape with two other prisoners. He was liberated wearing nothing but this jacket. Zigmunt was one of the first Jewish camp survivor to return to Belgium in May 1945. He immigrated to Canada in 1951 with his wife and their son.
The dress to the left belonged to Sonia Tencer, born in 1915 in Vilna, Poland, where her family had lived for hundreds of years. Sonia, whose parents owned a beer and lemonade factory, grew up surrounded by brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

During the Holocaust*, Sonia and her husband were forced into the Vilna Ghetto* together with the rest of their family, where they lived for two years until the ghetto* was liquidated in 1943. Sonia was sent to a forced labour camp together with her sister-in-law and a close friend. These three women made a pact that they would stay together. This mutual support helped them survive the severe conditions in the various camps to which they were sent: Stutthof, Kaiserwald, Strassenhof and Bigoz. They were forced to do hard manual labour, barely surviving on extremely meagre food rations. By the end of the war, Sonia weighed only 80 pounds. Sonia and her two friends survived, as did her parents, who had been hidden by Poles. Sonia remarried in 1949 and immigrated to Montreal.

Identifying the Jews

As anti-Jewish persecution increased, new measures were introduced to isolate and victimise German Jews. In 1938 two laws were passed according to which all official documents were to be marked with a "J" and the name "Sara" or "Israel" was to be added to the holder's given name, singling out Jews and making them easy targets for control and humiliation.

This Identity Card was issued to Maria Louise Cahn on January 4, 1939. Maria Cahn, born on May 7, 1897 in Mainz, Germany, was renamed Maria Louise Sara Cahn.

In November 1938, after Kristallnacht, Maria's husband, Karl was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Maria's mother wrote to Canadian businessman William Birks, who had met Karl briefly many years earlier, and asked him to sponsor them as immigrants. Canada's policy regarding Jewish immigration was very restrictive at the time, so Mr. Birks wrote to Prime Minister MacKenzie King. The Prime Minister replied that there were difficulties involved, "particularly at the present time, when conditions in Europe have increased manifold the numbers of those seeking permits for entry into Canada, and when economic and other conditions in the
Dominion itself make it more than ever necessary that particular care and scrutiny be observed in the granting of applications". He did, however, refer the matter to the Minister of Mines and Resources, who approved their admission. Karl was released because of this approval, and Maria landed in Halifax on March 5, 1939 with her mother, husband, and three sons.

Portrait of a Canadian Holocaust survivor, Jennie Lifschitz

Jennie Lifschitz was born in Montreal on July 8, 1924 to Abraham Lifschitz and Paola Bloomberg. A few months after Jennie’s birth, her parents separated, and Paola returned to Libau (Liepaja), Latvia taking the her children with her. Six years later, in January, 1931, the two older children returned to their father in Montreal, while Jennie stayed with her mother.

Following the Nazi occupation of Latvia on June 29, 1941, anti-Jewish measures were put into place immediately. On the night of December 13, 1941 Jennie’s remaining family in Libau - all but she and her 14-year-old cousin, Bella - were arrested and taken to the beach at Skede, north of Libau, where they were shot and buried in mass graves. Jennie was sent to the Libau ghetto* where she stayed from July 1st, 1942 to October 8th, 1943. She was 18 when she was deported to the Kaizerwald concentration camp, where she became prisoner number 56-164. She remained in this camp until March 17, 1944. She was meant to be sent to the gas chamber but because she had experience in railroad work, she was picked out for work and transferred to another camp to work on German railroads. As the Soviet front was approaching, the Nazis closed the camp and moved the prisoners to another camp. Jennie was finally liberated by the British army at the Neustadt-Holstein camp on May 3, 1945.

Jennie returned to Canada on March 2, 1946 on board the naval vessel called Aquitania. After rejoining her father and siblings in Montreal, she assisted him in his store and restaurant business, eventually opening a lunch counter of her own. On March 7, 1947, she had her first child, a daughter, whom she named Paula after her mother.
Allies: The nations – Canada, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States – that joined together in the war against Germany and its partners – Italy and Japan (known as the Axis powers). Later, the Axis was joined by Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Anschluss: The annexation of Austria by Germany on March 13, 1938.

Antisemitism: Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group. The hatred of Jews dates back to ancient times, but the word “antisemitism” was coined in the late 19th century. Jews were accused of conspiring to dominate the world, an idea perpetuated through false publications such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. A new dimension was added to traditional hatred of Jew with the emerging “pseudo-science” of racial stereotyping. The Nazis* drew from these “theories” in their war against the Jews, which culminated in the murder of two-thirds of European Jewry.

Aryan: The Nazis* took a term used to describe an ancient tribe and applied it to themselves, falsely claiming that their own “Aryan race” was superior to all other racial groups. The term “non-Aryan” was used to designate Jews, part-Jews and others of supposedly inferior race.

Blitzkrieg: German for “lightning war”, used to describe the speed, efficiency and intensity of Germany’s military attack against its opponents.

Bund: A secular Jewish socialist party which was founded in Western Russia in the late 1800s. It was a cultural movement rather than a territorial one and
was thus at odds with most Zionist movements. The Bund was active in the underground resistance during the Holocaust*.

**Concentration Camp:** Any internment camp for holding “enemies of the Third Reich*”. The construction of concentration camps began almost immediately after Hitler came to power. Thousands of camps were established during the war.

**Death Camp:** Extermination centres established in occupied Poland for the mass murder of Jews and other victims, primarily by poison gas. These were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

**Death Marches:** Trapped between the Soviets in the East and the Allies* in the West, the Nazis* emptied concentration camps*, forcing inmates to march long distances toward camps in Germany. Facing intolerable conditions and brutal treatment, thousands died on route as a result of mistreatment, starvation and shootings.

**Deportation:** The removal of people from their homes for purposes of “resettlement”. The Jews of Europe were designated for deportation to ghettos*, concentration camps* and extermination centres.

**Displaced Persons (DP) Camps:** Camps established after World War II for those who had been liberated but could not to return to their former homes. Tens of thousands of Jews remained in the camps for a number of years until they were able to immigrate to other countries.

**Einsatzgruppen** (German, literally “operational squads”): Mobile killing units of the Nazi SS*.

**Euthanasia:** Nazi* euphemism for the deliberate killing of the institutionalised physically and mentally handicapped.

“**Final Solution of the Jewish Question**”: Nazi* euphemism for the extermination of European Jewry.

**Führer:** Leader in German.

**Genocide:** (from Greek genos, “race”, and Latin caedes, “killing”): A word coined by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943 to describe the official government policy for the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, cultural, or religious group. The term ‘genocide’ is defined by the United Nations in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). Genocide is defined as an act committed with the intention to exterminate a national, ethnic, racial or religious group (in whole or in part). Its current legal definition does not include the extermination of political opponents. Members of the group are murdered or systematically persecuted through various means to reach this goal: murder, “measures intended to prevent births within the group”, “the transfer of children of the group to another group”, etc. Genocide is committed by those in power, in their name or with their open or implied consent. Genocide is considered a crime against humanity.
Gestapo (German): Secret State Police of Nazi* Germany, created in 1933.

Ghetto: The Nazis* revived the medieval term to describe their device of concentration and control, the compulsory “Jewish Quarter”. Established in poor areas, Jews were forced to live in overcrowded and desperate conditions.

Holocaust: Systematic, state-sponsored murder of approximately six million Jews between 1933 and 1945, committed by the Nazis* and their collaborators. The word “holocaust” is a Greek word meaning sacrifice, especially by fire.

In addition to committing the Holocaust, the Nazis* persecuted other victims, too: the Roma and Sinti (their genocide* is named Samudaripen), the disabled (T4 program), the homosexuals, the Slavs, the political opponents, etc.

Judaism: the monotheistic religion of the Jews, whose spiritual and ethical principles are embodied chiefly in the Torah (Old Testament, or the five books of Moses) and in the Talmud (Jewish law and ethics).

Jude: the German word for Jew.

Kapo: Concentration camp* inmates designated by the Nazis* to positions of authority.

Nazi: The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), established in 1919. In 1933 the Nazi Party achieved political control of Germany through democratic election.

Nuremberg Laws: A series of laws promulgated in 1935, which defined who was Jewish and which introduced their systematic discrimination and persecution.

Nuremberg Trials: Trials against major Nazi* figures held in Nuremberg, Germany in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

Partisans: Groups operating in enemy-occupied territory using guerrilla tactics. Some partisan groups were Jewish or included Jewish members, while others were made up entirely of non-Jewish resistance fighters.

Pogrom: Derived from Russian, literally meaning “devastation”. An organised, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of Jews.

Shoah: The Hebrew word for Holocaust*, a biblical term meaning “catastrophe”, “destruction”, “disaster”.

Shtetl: A small Jewish town or village in Eastern Europe.

SS (schutzstaffel: protection squad): Guard detachments originally formed in 1925 as Hitler’s personal guard. From 1929, under Himmler, the SS became the most powerful affiliated organisation of the Nazi* Party. By mid-1934, they had established control of the police and security systems, forming the basis of the Nazi* police state and the major instrument of racial terror in the concentration camps* and in occupied Europe.
Third Reich: The Nazi* designation of Germany and its regime from 1933 to 1945. Historically, the First Reich was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806. The Second Reich referred to the German Empire from 1871 to 1918.

Yiddish: The language of Eastern European Jews and their descendants. Yiddish is based on middle-high German, infused with many Hebrew words and expressions and using the Hebrew script.

Zyklon B: Hydrogen cyanide. A poisonous gas originally developed as an insecticide, and later used in the Nazi* gas chambers for the purposes of mass murder.
For students

This is a brief selection of books that can be used to introduce the topic of the Holocaust before your visit at the Museum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen Levine</td>
<td>Hana’s Suitcase</td>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>history</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Boyne</td>
<td>Boy in the Stripped Pyjama</td>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Frank</td>
<td>Anne Frank Diary</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>biography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruud Van der Rol et al</td>
<td>Anne Frank, A Life</td>
<td>14-15</td>
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<td>Eric Walters</td>
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<td>Art Spiegelman</td>
<td>Maus</td>
<td>16-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elie Wiesel</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>16-18</td>
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Short Bibliography


Websites


Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre
Musée commémoratif
de l’Holocauste à Montréal
Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum

Un lieu d’espoir :
un appel à l’action citoyenne
A place to learn and be inspired to act

5151, ch. de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine
514 345-2605

HORAIRE

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Apprendre
To learn

Ressentir
To feel

Se souvenir
To remember

Asir
To act

Bénéficiaire de la Beneficiary of
FEDERATION CJA

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