

*Creation of this lesson plan was generously supported by the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies*

## **Survival and Resistance: Hidden Children of the Holocaust**

### **Overview**

By the end of World War II in 1945, six million Jews were dead and as many as 1.5 million of them were children. For the children who did survive, most did so in hiding, many with the assistance of brave resisters. In this lesson, students will learn about the hidden children of the Holocaust with a focus on the personal story of Renee Fink, a Dutch Jew and current North Carolina resident who was placed into hiding at the age of four. Through a Power Point presentation, in depth class discussion, readings, and viewing “On the Back of a Stranger’s Bicycle, Renee Fink’s Story,” students will learn about the impact of World War II on the Netherlands in general and on Jews in particular; resistance during the Holocaust; hidden children of the Holocaust; and the way one individual – Renee Fink – was impacted. By integrating Renee’s testimony with historical facts, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the realities experienced by individual lives throughout this tumultuous period. As a final project, students will connect themes of the Holocaust to North Carolina events (past and present) by focusing on North Carolinians who have fought against various examples of injustice, hate, intolerance, etc. in their own community. Students will create an award and speech to honor these North Carolinians, gaining an understanding of the difference one person can make.

**Teacher Note Regarding Lesson Length:** So that teachers have multiple options for integrating this material in their classroom, all necessary readings and potential discussion questions are attached to this document, with pages 1-16 offering detailed instructions and discussion questions, and pages 17-34 containing handout options. Teachers should edit and omit the contents of the procedure and handouts to match their own classroom’s time constraints.

### **Key topics**

- Children of the Holocaust
- Hidden children
- Rotterdam Blitz
- Nuremburg Laws
- Resistance
- Dutch Underground/Holland Resistance Fighters
- February Strike
- Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944
- Righteous Among the Nations (“Righteous Christians”/“Righteous gentiles”)
- Yad Vashem
- Anne Frank
  - *While this lesson does not address Anne Frank directly, it can serve as an excellent supplemental resource when studying the book and addressing Jewish hiding as a means of survival.*

### **Grades**

Middle & High School

### **Materials**

- “Survival and Resistance” accompanying PPT available in Carolina K-12’s Database of K-12 Resources
  - <https://k12database.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2015/01/HiddenChildrenPPT.pdf>

- To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”; upon completion of presentation, hit ESC on your keyboard to exit the file.
- To receive an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)
- The material from the PPT is also available in the attached handout, “Survival & Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation,” should teachers prefer to cover this material via an assigned reading rather than a PPT (p. 17-20)
- “On the Back of a Stranger's Bicycle, Renee Fink’s Story”
  - This short documentary is available for free viewing at [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_fMIWkr6jZHWrs7GgLop0qz4kNoA35r](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_fMIWkr6jZHWrs7GgLop0qz4kNoA35r). It is divided into 4 short chapters, with a total running time of approximately 22 minutes.
  - For teachers who choose to utilize the documentary without the remainder of the lesson, the entire list of discussion questions for the film can be found at the end of this document. (p. 31-34)
- “Hidden Children,” reading and questions attached (p. 21-25)
- “Yad Vashem - The Righteous Among The Nations,” reading attached (p. 26-27)
- “Final Project: The Righteous in North Carolina,” assignment attached (p. 28)
- “The Legacy of Hidden Children,” speech excerpt and questions attached (p. 29-30)
- Discussion Questions for “On the Back of a Stranger's Bicycle, Renee Fink’s Story” (p. 31-34)
- **Optional:** Invite a Holocaust survivor to speak to the class about his/her experiences. For example, residents in the Piedmont region/Triangle area can contact the Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education of North Carolina at <http://www.holocaustspeakersbureau.org/>.

### Essential Questions

- In what ways did Germany’s invasion and occupation of the Netherlands compare and contrast to other European countries?
- In what ways did the Dutch resist assimilation into Nazi ideals and culture?
- What were Dutch individuals risking by participating in various types of resistance, from strikes and boycotts to participation in the underground movement?
- Despite efforts of resistance, what was the impact of the Nazi invasion on the lives of Jewish people in particular who lived in the Netherlands?
- What were the experiences of Jewish children growing up under Nazi rule and how was their childhood impacted?
- What were the challenges faced by children who hid physically, children who hid their identities, and the rescuers who assisted them?
- Why is it important to study the Holocaust and learn about the experiences of hidden children, even though it is upsetting history?
- In what ways have people continued to fight the themes present during the Holocaust (hate, intolerance, injustice, etc.) throughout history and into present times?

### Duration

- Two or more 60-90 minute class periods
- Teachers can choose to edit the various discussion questions, readings, activities, etc. provided based on their time constraints. Thus, final lesson duration will vary.

### Preparation

- Teaching Holocaust history demands a high level of sensitivity and keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. Teachers are encouraged to read the “Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust” by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum before broaching this subject matter: <http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/general-teaching-guidelines>

- To effectively study sensitive history such as the Holocaust, a firm foundation of respect and tolerance must be present in the classroom. See Carolina K-12's "Activities" section of the Database of K-12 Resources for assistance: <https://database.civics.unc.edu/activity/> (Search by topics such as "Classroom Management/Setting Expectations," "Character Education" and "Discussing Controversial Issues")
- Before beginning your study of the Holocaust, prepare students that this is a very difficult period of history to examine. Let students know that they may find themselves feeling upset at various points and that this is understandable. Explain to students that even though the material is difficult, it is still critical that we learn about this past to honor those who suffered and ensure history does not repeat itself. Encourage students to debrief their feelings throughout the lesson, either in discussion (class, small group, or partner), journaling, artistic responses, etc.
- Students should have a basic understanding of Holocaust history before engaging in this lesson. See Carolina K-12's additional lessons available at <http://k12database.unc.edu/lesson/?s=&lesson-topic=holocaust>

### Pre-Lesson Assignment

**Exploring Childhood:** Tell students to think of an item that represents a part of their childhood in some way (anything from a favorite stuffed animal or blanket to a baby picture.) The only stipulation is that this item must be significant and/or relative to their childhood, and must be an item that is appropriate for sharing, and that they are comfortable sharing. Instruct students to bring this item in to share with classmates the next day. Students should be prepared to share the following information with class:

- What the item is (describe it)
- How the item represents their childhood, what it shares about their childhood and what it says about childhood in general
- Why it is special to them

➤ **Teacher Notes:** Ideally, teachers will share an item from their own childhood in this format to provide an example to students of what they should prepare for. Teachers should also be mindful as to whether there are any students who for whatever reason (i.e., a student in foster care or who has familial complications) may not have access to a childhood item or may be uncomfortable sharing about their childhood publically. Discuss any situation like this privately, provide an alternate assignment and prepare for ensuring the student isn't made uncomfortable during the classroom's sharing of childhood items.

### Procedure

#### Day 1

#### Survival and Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation

1. Let students know that they are going to have the special opportunity to learn from a Dutch Holocaust survivor (and North Carolina resident) named Renee Fink by watching a video of her telling her story. Renee was born to a Jewish couple in the Netherlands two years before the start of World War II. Renee's family was **assimilated**, meaning they were **secular Jews** and did not practice the laws of Judaism. In 1942, at the age of 4, she was sent into hiding with a Catholic family brave enough to take her in. The van den Brink family already had 8 children of their own living at home, and despite the fact that hiding a Jew was punishable by death (for every member of the family), they cared for Renee until the war ended in 1945. She never saw her birth parents again. Renee came to the United States in 1948. Let students know that her story will allow us to focus on two lesser known aspects of the Holocaust: the impact of the war in the Netherlands, and the experiences of children who were hidden (physically and in the open, by changing their identity.)

Tell students you first want to go review some background information with them regarding "Survival and Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation."

Begin by asking students what they already know about the impact of World War II and the Holocaust in the Netherlands.

2. Next, discuss the accompanying “Survival and Resistance” PPT with students (available in Carolina K-12’s database or by e-mailing a file request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)), providing additional information as needed. Remind students that this information will provide a good informational foundation in order to get the most out of Renee Fink’s testimony, which they will be watching later in the lesson. (Teachers should use the PPT as a basis for discussion, rather than lecture. Instruct students to take notes in whatever format is typically required. Some suggestions discussion questions are provided below. These can be addressed as a whole class, or teachers may want to have students partner up to talk about particular questions as well.)
  - **Teacher Note:** The material from the PPT is also available in the attached handout, “Survival & Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation,” should teachers prefer to cover this material via an assigned reading rather than a PPT.
3. Questions to discuss throughout the PPT:
  - Slide 2: While we often focus on the loss of Jewish life when studying the Holocaust, many other groups of people were under attack as well. Why do you think these groups in particular were targeted?
    - Teachers can explore the fact that it is difficult to comprehend a number so high. One project that sought to visualize this is the Paper Clips Project, should teachers want to integrate this concept: <http://oneclipatatime.org/paper-clips-project/>
  - Slide 3: Do you already know anything about the bombing of Rotterdam, beginning on May 14, 1940?
    - Additional information to discuss with students: **The Rotterdam Blitz** was the aerial bombardment of Rotterdam by the German air force on May 14, 1940. The objective was to support the German troops fighting in the city, break Dutch resistance and force the Dutch to surrender. Even though preceding negotiations between the Dutch government and the German Army resulted in a ceasefire, nonetheless, the Germans bombarded and destroyed almost the entire historic city center, killing nearly nine hundred civilians and leaving thousands of others homeless. The Germans threatened to add to the catastrophic bombing by destroying the city of Utrecht (capital and most populous city) next if the Dutch Government did not surrender. The Dutch surrendered to the Germans early the next morning. (Sources: <http://ww2today.com/14th-may-1940-rotterdam-bombed;> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotterdam\\_Blitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotterdam_Blitz))
  - Slide 4: What do you think would have been most terrifying about this time? Why do you think it was generally impossible for Jews to escape the Netherlands? (Later in the PPT, let students know they will learn what made escape from the Netherlands particularly more difficult.)
  - Slide 5-6: Do you know anything about the Hunger Winter? (Let students know they will learn about this later in the lesson as well.)
  - Slide 7-9: What is meant by passive, non-violent resistance? What are the pros and cons of this type of resistance? Why are relatively passive actions like booing a newsreel, boycotting films and listening to banned radio stations actually very important and highly dangerous actions during this time? What were the Dutch risking by using non-violent resistance in this way? How do you think Hitler and the Nazis responded to such resistance? In what other periods of history was this type of resistance utilized and to what effect? Was non-resistance used in America, by whom, and why?
  - Slides 10-11: Why do you think the Nazis took these actions in particular?
  - Slides 12-14: What were Dutch individuals risking by participating in various types of resistance, from strikes and boycotts to participation in the underground movement? What does it say about a person’s character to stand up to injustice, despite the risks?

4. After finishing with slides 15-17, allow students to pose any questions they may have, then culminate by discussing:
  - Often we focus on Germany when considering the Holocaust, but what does this information teach us regarding the broader impact of the Nazis, and on the Netherlands in particular?
  - What did you learn or reconsider from this reading that you didn't already know or hadn't thought about before?

### **Exploring Childhood**

5. Next, write the word childhood on the board and remind students that they are going to be exploring the life story of Renee Fink, a Jewish child living in the Netherlands during the various events they just learned about. Tell students you'd like them to take some time to explore the concept of childhood by considering everything (i.e., words, phrases, experiences, etc.) that comes to mind when they think about this word. Their thoughts can be based on their own personal childhood or on what comes to mind in general. Ask students to take a few minutes to jot down their thoughts. Once students are ready to share, chart their answers in a list at the front of the room. Further prompt their thinking by asking:
  - What do you associate with being a child?
  - What do you think children need/should have? Why?
  - In what ways do you think your childhood impacts who you become later in life?
6. Tell students you'd like them to focus on their own personal associations of childhood by sharing the item they brought from home. Go over expectations for sharing by asking students:
  - When we are sharing something personal, or speaking to others, how do we want to be treated?
  - What will make you feel respected and heard? (i.e. look at the person speaking, smile at them, don't giggle or gossip, make positive comments afterwards, etc.)
7. Students can share as a whole class, or in the interest of time, in small groups. The class as a whole, or the small groups, should circle up to face each other and each take 2 minutes to show their item and summarize the questions they were tasked with considering:
  - What the item is (describe it)
  - How the item represents their childhood, what it shares about their childhood and what it says about childhood in general
  - Why it is special to them
8. Let students know up front that their time must be limited to 2 minutes each, and thus you (or an assigned time keeper if sharing in small groups) may need to cut them off if they go over. Explain to them that this will not be done out of disrespect or a lack of interest, but only in the interest of time. Tell students that once each of them finishes, the rest of the class/group will clap as a show of support.
9. After all students have shared, discuss as a class:
  - By sharing these items, what types of things did we learn about each other's childhoods and childhood in general?
  - Based on what you and others shared, how would you describe childhood? Think back to our brainstorm about childhood (from step #3), what additional words, phrases, thoughts, etc. would you now add? (Add additional thoughts to the list.)
  - What were your favorite activities to do as a child and why?
  - Again consider what you think are the necessary components of childhood - what do babies, toddlers, and children need? (Ensure students consider physical, emotional, cultural, etc. needs.)
  - In times of danger (i.e. war, starvation, etc.), why do you think people often first worry about caring for and protecting children?

- **Teacher Note:** As an optional or additional exercise, students can be instructed to find and share newspaper headlines from their childhoods as a way of discussing if and how history influences their lives, and/or what types of events influence a person's life (i.e., surviving a terrorist attack, participating in a boycott or protest, growing up during a time of war, etc.)

### Children During the Holocaust

10. Explain to students that as they continue to consider childhood and their own experiences as a child, you want them to focus on what it would have been like to be a child during the Holocaust, specifically a Jewish child or a child of another targeted group. Ask:
- What do you imagine it was like to be a Jewish child growing up under Nazi rule? How do you imagine the childhoods of such children were impacted? How might the experiences of children have differed from the experiences of adults?
  - Looking at the list we've created, how might these words and phrases of childhood experiences and emotions compare and contrast to those of a Jewish child who grew up during Nazi rule? Are there any aspects of childhood that might be the same, regardless of what was happening in the world around the child? Explain.
  - What was the survival rate of children during the Holocaust?
11. Tell students that as of 1939, around nine million Jews lived in territories that Nazi Germany and its allies would eventually occupy. By the war's end in 1945, six million of those Jews were dead and as many as 1.5 million of them were children (*Source: US Holocaust Museum.*) Discuss:
- Why do you think the ratio of child survival was so low?
  - How does hearing about this low survival rate make you feel? What does it say about a government and/or society that promotes harming innocent people, especially children?
  - For the children who did survive, what do you predict enabled them to do so?

### An Introduction to Hidden Children - "On the Back of a Stranger's Bicycle: Renee Fink's Story"

12. Explain that for the most part, the children who survived the Holocaust did so in hiding. Ask:
- What do you already know about hiding as a means of survival during the Holocaust?
13. Allow students to share any prior knowledge they may have. Some students might be familiar with the story of **Anne Frank**, who was hidden with her family during the war. Explain that there are thousands of other stories of children who were hidden during the war. Sometimes for years, they lived in **physical hiding** - out of their captors' sight, in convents, orphanages, haylofts, forests, basements or sewers. Others **hid in the open**, changing their names, pretending to be Christian and hiding their identities. Jewish families were often torn apart, when in desperate attempts to save their children, parents made the agonizing decision to leave their little ones with strangers. And, frequently, children were left to fend for themselves, wandering through forests and villages in search of food and shelter.
14. Tell students they are now going to hear from Renee Fink, the Chapel Hill, NC resident who actually experienced and survived the Holocaust as a hidden child. Tell students they are going to watch the first chapter of an interview with her then discuss what they learned. Suggested discussion questions are provided below. Teachers should edit and omit questions as they see fit.

➤ **Chapter 1: A New Home (5 minutes, 48 seconds)**

- Where was Renee born? (Sheveningen) Why was she and her family (as well as other Jewish people) forced to move inland to Bilthoven?
  - Teachers may want to discuss with students how the Nazis discriminated against ALL Jews, regardless of their station in life or the degree of their "Jewishness". Renee's family, for example, was completely assimilated but still targeted.

- What were the various ways Renee’s life began to change “little by little” after the May 10th, 1940 Nazi invasion?
- What other types of restrictions do you know Jewish people experienced during this time?
- You saw an image of the **Nuremberg Laws** in this chapter. What do you already know about these laws in particular?
  - Additional information to share with students: “At their annual rally held in Nuremberg in September 1935, Nazi party leaders announced new laws that institutionalized many of the racial theories underpinning Nazi ideology. The so-called Nuremberg Race Laws were the cornerstone of the legalized persecution of Jews in Germany, excluding them from Reich citizenship and prohibiting them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of “German or German-related blood.” Ancillary ordinances to these laws deprived German Jews of most political entitlements, including the right to vote or hold public office. The Nuremberg Race Laws represented a major shift from traditional antisemitism, which defined Jews by religious belief, to a conception of Jews as members of a race, defined by blood and by lineage. For this reason, the Nuremberg Race Laws did not identify a “Jew” as someone with particular religious convictions but, instead, as someone with three or four Jewish grandparents. Many Germans who had not practiced Judaism or who had not done so for years found themselves caught in the grip of Nazi terror. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity could be defined as Jews.” (Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007902>)
- How do you think children were impacted by this gradual yet dramatic change?
- Renee refers to the events of May, 1940, which is when Rotterdam (located in Holland, in the Netherlands) was bombed by the Germans (also known as the **Rotterdam Blitz**.) What did you just learn about these events? (Students should refer back to information covered in the PPT.)
  - Let students know they will see some images of this bombing in Chapter 2, when Renee again refers to it.
- Renee comments that they “were lower than dogs or cockroaches.” What does she mean?
- In 1942, two years after the Rotterdam Blitz, life for Jews became more dangerous in Holland. How did Renee manage to go into hiding?
- Have you ever heard of or do you already know anything about the **Dutch Underground**, or the **Holland Resistance Fighters**? (Have students share their thoughts to gauge any background knowledge, correcting any misinformation if needed.)
- Renee refers to people called the “**Righteous Among the Nations**” or “**Righteous Christians**” in Holland. Have you heard either of these terms before? Who were these people and what was their role during the war?
  - Let students know that they will learn more about this later in the lesson, but that these are terms initiated by the State of Israel to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews. Yad Vashem, the Shoah Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953 by the **Knesset (Israeli parliament)** to commemorate these heroes.
- Who were the **NSB**, or the **NSBayers**?
- How do you think Holland was impacted given the dichotomy of having high numbers of both collaborators and resisters? What does this say about the sentiments of many Dutch citizens? What would be the pros and cons of this for the Jewish community in particular? For the non-Jewish community?
- What did you learn about the van den Brinks? Why does Renee say they risked hiding her?
- Renee comments, “They had a very strong idea of humility and doing the right thing and for them it wasn’t very complicated.” What does she mean? What does this tell you about the character of the van den Brinks?
- What were the van den Brinks risking by taking Renee into their home?
- How long did Renee live with them?

15. Tell students that they will hear more of Renee’s story tomorrow, but you first want them to get more of an understanding of the realities and experiences of hidden children during the Holocaust. Provide students with copies of the attached reading and corresponding questions on Hidden Children. Instruct students to read each section, stopping to think about and answering the corresponding questions on notebook paper.

➤ **Teacher Notes:**

- Since the reading is 5 pages, if class time permits, allow students to get started in class, perhaps reading and discussing the questions with partners; students should then finish for homework.
- Let students know that they may find the information in the reading upsetting. Explain that even though the material can be difficult to think about, it is still crucial that we learn about this past to honor those who suffered as well as ensure history does not repeat itself. Encourage students to debrief their feelings as needed.

## Day 2

### Hidden Children of the Holocaust

16. Start class by discussing student answers to the homework questions. Discuss further:
- Think about a child you love, perhaps a little brother or a little sister. While it is unimaginable that they could experience something like this, try to consider it for a moment. How would you feel knowing someone you love was in this situation?
  - You might not consider yourself a child, but this information also applies to people who were your age. Again, while we can’t possibly know what this was actually like, try to imagine you are own your own in this way. What would it be like to try and survive on your own in the forest? Or, what would it be like to move in with strangers and pretend to be someone completely different than who you are? (Remind students that Renee was unable to bring any tangible reminders of her home...no photos of her parents, not a favorite blanket or toy, etc.)
  - Based on what you’ve learned thus far, do you think it would be harder to hide physically or to hide in the open by assuming another identity? Explain.
    - As students discuss, continue to point out that while we may try to imagine such experiences, in actuality it is impossible for us to fully comprehend what individual people felt and dealt with during the Holocaust.
17. Tell students they are going to view the rest of Renee Fink’s testimony today. After each chapter, stop and discuss, allowing time for students to debrief and ask questions themselves. (Again, teachers should edit/omit questions as they see fit.)

➤ **Chapter 2: Knowledge Was Dangerous** (4 minutes, 54 seconds)

- What is Renee’s memory of how she came to the van den Brink house?
- As a four year old, did Renee have any idea what was going on? What do you imagine this experience would have been like for her? What would this have been like for her parents?
- Renee says that, “knowledge was dangerous.” What does she mean and why was this the case?
- What does Renee mean when she says the woman was just a “tiny cog in a very large machine?” Why do you think the resistance movement was set up in this way?
- Can you think of other examples when knowledge is dangerous? Have you ever had an experience when it’s safer not to know? Explain.
- What was the woman on the bicycle risking by participating in the Underground?
- What was Renee told regarding her new home upon arrival?
- What do you think she means when she says she was in “survival mode?”
- What do you imagine would have been hardest for her in the beginning?
- Renee says that she initially “lost her tongue” upon arriving. What does she mean?



- In addition to being in a strange, new place, what additional fears was Renee faced with?
- Why were there constant searches of homes by Germans in the van den Brink's neighborhood? How do you imagine the family, as well as Renee, felt during these searches? What would have happened to Renee and the van den Brink family had the Germans realized she was Jewish?
- When there was a search, how did the van den Brinks conceal Renee's true identity?

➤ **Chapter 3: Hunger Winter of 1944** (4 minutes, 13 seconds)

- While Renee went on with life at the van den Brinks, she notes that she was very homesick. Can you think of a time when you were homesick? Explain the situation and how you felt. How does your situation compare/contrast to Renee's?
- What limited information does Renee have and share regarding the remainder of her family? What would be difficult about not knowing for sure what happened to each of your loved ones?
- Why did Renee's aunt and uncle work for the Underground, despite the risks? She recounts her uncle having said, "We're dead, either way, so we might as well make our lives count for something." What message was he conveying? How would you characterize this attitude?
- What does Renee's grandmother go through in order to visit her?
- What challenges regarding food does Renee describe?
- What did Renee and the van den Brinks eat to survive?
- Renee would go to bed as a child dreaming about getting the end piece of bread. What does this tell us about the reality of her situation? (Discuss with students how Elie Wiesel and other survivors [see also the video and lesson plan of survivor Rebecca Hauser] talk about how food becomes an absolute obsession when one is starving. All one can think about is food - it takes over all thought processes.)
- Even though they had a limited supply of food, Renee notes that the van den Brinks shared with those in need as long as they could. What does this tell you regarding their character?
- Summarize Renee's description of the **Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944**. What did the family eat to survive during this time? Additional information to discuss with students regarding the **Hunger Winter**:
  - Towards the end of World War II, food supplies became increasingly scarce in the Netherlands, resulting in mass starvation during the Dutch famine of 1944, or "Hunger Winter." Over 4.5 million people suffered throughout the winter, with as many as 18,000 – 22,000 dying of starvation. A number of factors combined to cause starvation of the Dutch people throughout "Hunger winter." First, the winter itself was unusually harsh. Also, conditions had grown increasingly worse in Nazi-occupied Netherlands after D-Day (June 6, 1944.) While Allied Forces were able to liberate the southern part of the country, their efforts to reach the remainder of the Netherlands proved more difficult. Part of the German administration's retaliation involved placing an embargo on all food and fuel shipments to the western Netherlands. By the time the embargo was partially lifted in early November 1944, allowing restricted food transports over water, the unusually early and harsh winter had already set in. The canals froze over and became impassable for barges, thus food could not be delivered. Further complicating the situation, the retreating German army destroyed docks and bridges to flood the country and impede the Allied advance. As the Netherlands became one of the main western battlefields, the widespread dislocation and destruction of the war ruined much of its agricultural land and made the transport of existing food difficult.

With the gas and electricity and heat turned off, the 4.5 million people living in the affected area were very cold and very hungry. In search of food, people would walk for miles to trade valuables for food at farms. Tulip bulbs and sugarbeets were commonly consumed. (Renee mentions "ersatz bread" in her testimony.) Furniture and houses were dismantled to provide fuel for heating. From September 1944 until early 1945 the deaths of 18,000 Dutch people were attributed to malnutrition as the primary cause and in many more as a contributing factor. The

Dutch Famine ended with the liberation of the western Netherlands in May 1945. (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch\\_famine\\_of\\_1944](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_famine_of_1944))

➤ **Chapter 4: Surviving Survival (8 minutes, 51 seconds)**

- What types of changes did Renee have to make immediately upon arriving at the van den Brinks?
- Renee commented that, “Jewish children who went into hiding had a tendency to be very obedient and very quiet and not make waves.” Why do you think this was the case?
- Why did Renee characterize this time as a time of “constant fear?”
- Why was Renee unable to go to school? How did Renee learn to read and write?
- What types of hiding does Renee talk about? What hardships does she note that came with hiding?
- Which do you imagine would be more difficult and/or frightening, hiding physically or hiding in the open by concealing who you are? Why?
- Renee mentions parents leaving their babies in drawers or giving them to strangers, hiding children under piles of coals and hoping they would not be discovered before soldiers stabbed into the coal in search of hidden people, and even throwing their children off of trains. What does such behavior tell us about the reality of life for Jewish families at this time?
- In what ways did some people take advantage of families and their children in need of being hidden? How did the van den Brinks differ?
- Do you think wealthier Jews had an easier time? Could they have bought their way out of Holland? Could they have paid for some comforts deprived otherwise?
- Renee comments that, “the toughest part of our lives was surviving survival.” What do you think she means? What challenges did hidden children face after the war?
- Does it surprise you to hear that Renee wanted to stay with the van den Brinks, rather than return to her grandmother? Why do you think she felt this way?
- Renee mentions “**deniers** and **reversionists**.” Who are these people and what do they believe? What argument does Renee pose to them? Are there any “deniers” today? What are they denying? What motivates them?
- Even though it involves remembering unimaginable pain, why does Renee continue to tell her story?

**Surviving Survival: Renee’s Journey to Chapel Hill, North Carolina**

18. While viewing and discussing the last chapter, allow students to pose any remaining questions they may have. Point out to students that often when studying the Holocaust, we only learn about the experience of Jews during the war, when they were victimized, mistreated, and often murdered. And while we learn that some people survived and we celebrate this, we often forget to think about what their life would be like after liberation. Life as they knew it was over. They had experienced the unimaginable, suffered beyond comprehension, many had no family or friends still living to speak of, not to mention the post-war mental and physical state of a survivor could be incredibly poor. And yet, Renee survived survival and to this day lives in North Carolina to tell her story. It is truly brave and remarkable.

A bit of information is shared regarding Renee’s life in this chapter. Additional information to share includes:

- Renee came to the United States in 1948. She was 10 ½ years old at this point. After landing in Hoboken, New Jersey with her grandmother, Renee was sent to live with cousins in the Adirondack Mountains, since it was not financially possible for her grandmother to care for her. Renee comments regarding this difficult time, “Though I adored my grandmother with whom I came to the U.S., sadly we couldn't live together. She had lost everyone and everything in her life and though she had the emotional strength, she didn't have the finances to support us...after the war her circumstances were totally reduced. She and I would hunt in the woods for mushrooms to eat and some pieces of wood for our little stove that served to heat the house and cook our meager food. She always managed but could not support us in the U.S. So she went back and forth between New York and Amsterdam and

never had her own home again. The family in the Adirondacks did not welcome her. She was the one person who loved me and I adored and loved her.”

Renee’s cousins did not speak Dutch and she did not speak English. Renee enrolled in school and via immersion, learned English. (Throughout the years, she sadly lost the ability to speak her native language of Dutch, since she never had the opportunity to do so.) She missed Holland, her Dutch family and grandmother very much. She never discovered exactly what happened to her birth parents.

Renee went to college and got married. She and her husband lived in northern New Jersey for three decades, then moved south to Virginia where her husband wanted to develop his fledgling furniture business. They visited Chapel Hill, NC for an outing one day and fell madly in love with the area. She and her husband moved to Chapel Hill in 1988, where she has lived ever since. As of 2015, Renee resides in Pittsboro, NC. She still remains close with the van den Brink family.

**19. Optional culminating discussion questions:**

- Summarize all of the difficulties Renee faced. (Ensure students note separation from her family, lack of knowledge about her family, living in a completely new place, fear of being discovered, raids, hunger, constant fear and anxiety, loss, separation, etc.) How do you think she managed to make it through each day given this enormity of hardships? Do you think this was this easier or harder for a child?
- What impact do you think this entire experience had on Renee? What role do you think Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome played for Holocaust survivors?
- Think back to the items you shared from your own childhood. Why were they special? Do you think hidden children like Renee were impacted later in life by not having access to such special items from their childhood? Explain.
- What would be most difficult about hiding your identity? What do you think was the most difficult aspect of Renee’s story in particular?
- Renee was born into the Jewish religion but had to act as a Catholic when in hiding. In what ways might this impact her identity as a child? How could it have affected her identity as an adult?
- Many of you are likely familiar with **Anne Frank**. In what way did her experience as a hidden child compare to Renee’s?
- What do you imagine was most difficult about this cumulative experience for the van den Brinks?
- What impact do you think this experience had on the van den Brinks, not only protecting Renee for several years, but then having to give her up?
- Given the risks, why do you think the van den Brink’s took the risk of harboring Renee?
- In what ways is the Holocaust still impacting people today? How might the children of survivors such as Renee be impacted, as well as their children’s children?
- How did you feel hearing Renee tell her story? How is hearing a person share his/her experiences different than reading a textbook or an article?
- If you could ask Renee a question, what else would you want to know? If you could speak to the van den Brinks, what would you say or want to know?
- When studying the Holocaust, we sometimes don’t consider the life for survivors after the war. Renee herself mentions that the hardest thing for her was “surviving survival.” Why would picking up the pieces of their lives after liberation be just as hard, if not harder, than the war years?
- How might Renee’s experiences compare and contrast to the experiences of modern day immigrants? To recent refugees’ experiences? To children who are in foster care or adopted?
- What lessons can we learn from the stories of hidden children? What is their legacy?

**Culminating Project: Yad Vashem, the Righteous Among the Nations**

- 20.** Provide students with the attached handout, “Yad Vashem: The Righteous Among the Nations” and instruct students to read it. Afterwards, discuss:

- Who were/are the Righteous Among the Nations?
- How would you characterize these people? (Make sure to call student attention to the fact that these were ultimately ordinary people who did extraordinary things, and they were NOT Jewish.)
- How do these righteous individuals compare to those who looked the other way and even said they did not know what was happening right under their noses?
- What were the various ways the Righteous Among the Nations assisted Jews?
- What were they risking by being rescuers?
- The reading states that “The Righteous Among the Nations teach us that every person can make a difference.” Do you agree? Explain.
- What are some of the various ways an individual – even you - can make a positive difference today?

**21.** To culminate this lesson, tell students that they have been selected to attend and present at a reception in honor of “The Righteous of North Carolina,” where active citizens from our state will be honored. Provide students with the attached project description and discuss with students that while there has not been a holocaust or mass genocide in North Carolina, there have been various events where North Carolinians have had to fight against similar themes to those that were present during the Holocaust (i.e., injustice, hate, intolerance, etc.) Discuss:

- What events throughout American history, and in particular, North Carolina’s history, occurred that involved themes also present during the Holocaust?
  - Ensure students consider events and periods such as: colonial treatment of Native Americans, slavery, Trail of Tears, Jim Crow laws, Wilmington Race Riot, Japanese Internment, North Carolina eugenics, incidents involving the Ku Klux Klan, gay rights, immigrant rights, etc. Teachers may also want to reference current hate groups active in North Carolina. Information is available at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map#s=NC>.
- Who were some of the North Carolinians that fought for the rights of people throughout such events? What were they risking by refusing to be a bystander?
  - Teachers should provide students an example to help them make these types of connections so that they can choose their award recipient.
  - For example, Abraham H. Galloway (1837-1870) was a fiery young slave rebel, radical abolitionist, and Union spy who rose out of bondage to become one of the most significant and stirring black leaders in the South during the Civil War. Throughout his brief, mercurial life, Galloway fought against slavery and injustice. He risked his life behind enemy lines, recruited black soldiers for the North, and fought racism in the Union army's ranks. He also stood at the forefront of an African American political movement that flourished in the Union-occupied parts of North Carolina, even leading a historic delegation of black southerners to the White House to meet with President Lincoln and to demand the full rights of citizenship. He later became one of the first black men elected to the North Carolina legislature.

**22.** Go over the remaining details of the project. Teachers should determine how much class time (if any) and homework time will be allotted for research and completion of the assignment. Ensure students understand that they will be delivering their speech and presenting their award in class at a “mock reception” for “The Righteous of North Carolina.” Teachers should also determine if and how much class time will be given for rehearsing speeches. On the day students are to make their presentations, teachers may want to set the stage for a true reception by providing or allowing students to bring in snacks, encouraging students to dress up, etc.

### **Optional Culminating Activities**

- **Service Projects:** An excellent addition to any study of the Holocaust is having students channel their often strong emotional responses into a service learning or volunteer project that helps those less fortunate today, or tackles similar themes to those present in the Holocaust (injustice, hate, bullying, etc.) in a positive way. For example, teachers might have students focus on the issue of hunger (a issue that

certainly impacted Renee) and connect it to the thousands of people in North Carolina who are today food insecure. (According to NC Food Facts, North Carolina has one the highest percentages in the United States of children under 18 years of age who are food insecure on a regular basis: in N.C. over 1 in 4, or 26.7%. Between 2010-14 North Carolina regularly ranked among the top ten states with the highest percentage of citizens experiencing food shortages.) After discussing this issue in class and researching it further, students might develop a plan to combat hunger locally (i.e., hosting a food drive, volunteering at a local pantry, etc.)

There are many web resources available for such projects, from inspiration to assistance with and curriculum for planning and execution. Check out [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org) or <http://www.crfcap.org/>. (CRF's CAP project offers free curriculum for teaching students about government, public policy, and how to impact these elements with a Civic Action Project. The entire curriculum is free by signing up online. Students who then implement their CAP can even be featured on the national website.)

- **The Legacy of Hidden Children:** Explain to students that child survivors, such as Renee Fink, are the last generation of eyewitnesses to the Holocaust. In 1991, the first Hidden Child Foundation International Conference of Child Survivors and Their Families took place, allowing for the stories of the survival of hidden children to begin to circulate more widely. Provide the attached reading "The Legacy of Hidden Children" to students, letting them know that these are remarks given by Abraham Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Instruct students to read and answer the corresponding questions. Once students have finished, allow them to share their thoughts to the questions in groups or with the class:
  - Why do you think the stories of hidden children of the Holocaust were unknown for so long?
  - Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), says that surviving hidden children can "speak volumes about inhumanity and depravity," but also "the humanity and power of those who refused to allow evil to reign unchecked." What does he mean?
  - Why is Foxman alive today?
  - Although the Holocaust was a horrific period of history, in what way can it also offer "hope and redemption to humanity" according to Foxman?
  - Foxman states, "Our mission is to educate future generations so that no people, no nation, may again suffer the evil of the Holocaust." In your opinion, how can we fulfill this mission? What are the best ways to educate the public and make them care about this history, and its impact on life today? What can our school do? Our class? Your family? YOU?
  - In what ways are some of the themes from the Holocaust still active in our society today? What is our responsibility, according to Foxman?
  - What is the Anti-Defamation League? Why do we need organizations like this?
  - In your opinion, what is the greatest lesson to be learned from the Hidden Children of the Holocaust?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Survival and Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation

by Linda M. Woolf, Ph.D. (<http://www2.webster.edu/~woolfm/netherlands.html>)

*I looked out of the open window, over a large area of Amsterdam, over all the roofs and on to the horizon, which was such a pale blue that it was hard to see the dividing line. As long as this exists, I thought, and I may live to see it, this sunshine, these cloudless skies, while this lasts I cannot be unhappy.*

These words were written by Anne Frank in February of 1944 - a young girl's description of life from an attic overlooking Amsterdam. For many individuals today, Anne Frank's diary represents their only glimpse of Nazi assault on the Netherlands - a narrow window onto that which was the Holocaust in Europe.

Between the time that Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933 until the end of World War II in 1945, over six million Jews including as many as 1.5 million children were killed by the Nazis. **Less well known is that five million other individuals lost their lives as a result of Nazi ideology including the physically and mentally disabled, Poles, dissidents, Roma and Sinti, communists, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.** The Holocaust was an incredibly complex moment marked by atrocity in human history. While the media often presents it as a singular event, **each country with its diverse population and peoples experienced the Nazi assault uniquely.** The Netherlands was no exception.

The Netherlands had maintained during World War I, a policy of neutrality. While many of their neighbors fell to the Germans during World War I, the Netherlands remained outside of the war. With the advent of World War II, the Netherlands sought to again remain neutral - a hope bolstered by a promise of nonaggression made with Hitler. However, as with so many other promises made by Hitler and the Nazis, this assurance proved worthless. On **May 10, 1940**, the German army began its invasion of the Netherlands. Despite valiant efforts made on the part of the Dutch military, the Netherlands fell to the Germans after only five days of fighting. After the **bombing of Rotterdam**, the Dutch capitulated.

Those five days were characterized by shock and horror particularly for the Jews of Holland. Persecuted individuals who had initially fled to the Netherlands as a safe harbor were particularly horrified. For those five days, many attempted to flee the country. However, these frantic, desperate attempts were generally unsuccessful.

At the time of Holland's capitulation, **approximately 140,000 Jews resided in the Netherlands.** By the time of the war's end, the Nazis had deported 107,000 Jews out of Holland. Of these, only 5,000 survived to return home following the war and 30,000 managed to survive in hiding or by other means. Thus, **over 75% of Holland's Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis.**

Why was loss of life so high in the Netherlands? Were the Dutch particularly anti-Semitic or callous? The answer to both is "no". **Many Dutch have been honored by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel, as "righteous gentiles."** However, several factors, some of which made escape during those five days impossible, are responsible for this tragic loss of life, primarily, the Netherlands' unique geographic and cultural features.

Attempts at escape from the Netherlands under Nazi control were virtually impossible. First, countries bordering on the Netherlands were under German control. Thus, flight across the Dutch border only meant entrance into another Nazi controlled country. Second, the west and north borders of the Netherlands consist of North Sea coastline. Safe passage through German patrolled waters was highly dangerous.

Additionally, the Netherlands in 1940 was a densely populated country. The land mass is approximately one and a half times the size of Massachusetts. Yet, it was home to over nine million individuals. The land was flat providing little forested, mountainous terrain suited for partisan activity or refuge. In essence, the geography of the Netherlands provided no place to run and few places to hide.

Culturally, Dutch society was stratified largely on the basis of religion. Thus, close friendships between Jews and Christians were uncommon in wartime Holland. Additionally, between 20,000 and 25,000 Dutchmen volunteered to serve in the *Waffen-SS*, the Dutch section of the Nazi SS. And there was strong propaganda by the Nazis to persuade the Dutch to join the German Army and fight with them side by side. All of this made it difficult for Jews to find a place of hiding within the homes of Gentile neighbors - individuals that they did not know. For those Jews with Christian friends, to accept shelter carried with it the knowledge that discovery placed their friend's lives into jeopardy. Additionally, most Jews who went into hiding did so as individuals. Rarely, were entire families hidden as in the case of the Franks. Thus, **to go into hiding not only endangered the well-being of one's Gentile benefactors but often meant abandoning other family members including elder parents, spouses, siblings, or children.**

Failure to hide almost assured deportation to Auschwitz or the death camp of Sobibor. Sixty thousand Jews were deported to Auschwitz; only nine hundred and seventy-two survived. Thirty-four thousand Jews were deported to Sobibor; only two - two out of thirty-four thousand - lived to return to the Netherlands.

In 1938, Germany annexed Austria and overnight German law went into effect including all restrictive anti-Jewish legislation. The invasion of Czechoslovakia (March 1939) and Poland (September 1939) resulted in immediate martial Nazi law and leadership. However, the invasion of the Netherlands resulted in neither. While the royal family including Queen Wilhelmina fled into exile in Britain, civilian leaders were not replaced. Rather, the Dutch civilian administration was subsumed by a civil German administration. Additionally, Dutch law remained in effect.

What accounts for this unique pattern of Nazi behavior in the Netherlands and how did this impact Dutch resistance to Nazi assault?

Hitler and his associates did not want to alienate the Dutch people - a people they considered to be of "superior" Germanic breeding. As a result of the Dutch religious stratification, the Dutch people could be certified as almost 100 percent Aryan. Hitler's ultimate goal was to make the Netherlands a part of Germany following the war. Through annexation of the Netherlands, Hitler hoped to further infuse the new Reich with the Aryan ideal. With this goal in mind, the transition to Nazi rule in the Netherlands was less abrupt and dramatic. While the Dutch had heard of the atrocities against Jews from Vienna and other cities following Nazi invasion - Jews forced to get down on their hands and knees to scrub the streets, synagogues burned to the ground, the rounding up of Jews into ghettos, and worse - none of this happened upon implementation of German civil administration.

This relatively uneventful transition had several effects. First, although the Dutch people were shocked and demoralized by the unexpected loss, they relaxed a bit. Many were deceived into believing that the Nazi occupation would not entail great hardship or the anticipated atrocities. Second, Dutch culture and tradition reinforced the idea of obedience to the law. These two factors combined led many to believe that all they needed to do was outlast the German occupation. Many believed that the war would be short-lived and thus, through a process of seeming cooperation and delay, the impact of Nazi occupation on the Dutch, including Dutch Jews, would be negligible. Unfortunately, the Nazi occupation lasted five years with devastating consequences for all of the Netherlands including the Hunger Winter of 1944- 1945.

The resistance movement was slow to form in the Netherlands. As Nazi oppression slowly took shape, so did Dutch resistance. Hitler underestimated the Dutch people and the Nazis were unprepared to deal with the

primarily non militaristic character of Dutch resistance. In many ways, there are some striking similarities between the Dutch resistance and the spiritual resistance on the part of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Much of Dutch resistance can be characterized as either passive resistance or non-violent active resistance. For example, immediately following the Nazi occupation, American and British films were banned from theaters replaced by German movies including German newsreels. Dutch patrons took to walking out or booing during the newsreels. Thus, new laws were passed prohibiting such behavior. Subsequently, attendance at films dropped. Radio broadcasts under Nazi control consisted principally of propaganda. Thus, while it was illegal to listen to British radio, many Dutch began to listen to the BBC and radio broadcasts from the Dutch government in exile. In 1943, over one million radio sets were confiscated by the Nazis in response to these acts of resistance.

Additionally, the Dutch resisted becoming assimilated into Nazi ideals and culture. They considered themselves Dutch and looked towards the day for renewed Dutch independence. Subtle acts of rebellion occurred that underscore this desire. On Prince Bernard's birthday, many people took to wearing orange carnations - orange being the symbol of the Dutch ruling family. When mailing letters, stamps were affixed to the upper left hand corner as many believed the upper right hand corner was reserved solely for the stamp of Queen Wilhelmina. Symbolic gestures that their heart's remained true to the Netherlands. Only one-and-a-half percent of the Dutch population joined the Dutch Nazi party. In 1943, when university students were required to sign an oath of loyalty to the occupying forces, over eighty-five percent refused to sign and thousands rushed into hiding.

Many a Dutch were active in speaking out or publishing against the Nazis. These activities occurred in spite of the great risk involved. To be caught meant imprisonment or deportation possibly to Mauthausen from where few returned. Clergy regularly read letters from the pulpit. Underground newspapers flourished and were particularly invaluable after the confiscation of radio sets and the loss of electricity during the later years of the war.

Following the Nazi invasion, Dutch Jewry continued to enjoy the benefit of equal citizenship under Dutch law. However, soon, small oppressive measures were taken and began to escalate. First, Jews were prohibited from serving as volunteer air-raid wardens. Later, German Jews were ordered to leave the Hague and other coastal towns and the process of registration began. In September of 1940, it was decreed that Jews could no longer be admitted into civil service, not impacting those already in these positions. However, just two months later, all Jews were dismissed from civil service including the Chief Justice of the Dutch Supreme Court and forty-one university professors. Students and fellow professors protested. The last decree of 1940 mandated the registration of all Jewish businesses.

Nineteen forty-one began with the mandate for registration of all Jews living in the Netherlands. Maps were drawn up identifying the name, age, gender, marital status, and location of all Jews living in each city and town.

In response to these oppressive measures against the Jews, the **Dutch Communist Party** - a political party already deemed illegal by the Nazis but still operating within the Netherlands - organized what has become known as the **February Strike**. On Tuesday, February 25, 1941, municipal workers of Amsterdam went on strike essentially shutting down public transportation within the city. Over the course of the day, the strike intensified as metal and shipyard workers, white collar workers, and manual laborers joined the strike. The strike continued until Thursday, spreading across the country to other cities. An infuriated Nazi administration struck back hard, squashing the strike. It however, remains the only such general anti-pogrom strike to have occurred in Nazi-occupied Europe.

In 1943, more mass strikes broke out in response to deportations and conscription of Dutch labor into Germany. The 1944, the railroad workers strike, while in and of itself an act of resistance, was further



supported by a secret underground organization which provided financial support to the striking workers. This group also worked to provide food and money to those in hiding.

Finally, **underground resistance groups** were organized to serve a variety of functions including the rescue and sheltering of Jews and other persecuted individuals. Underground cells were involved in the manufacture of false papers or acted as couriers of secret documents to countries outside of the Netherlands to assist Allied war efforts. It is estimated that over fifty to sixty thousand individuals were directly involved in underground activities with hundreds of thousands more offering assistance. More than ten thousand lost their lives as a direct result of their courageous efforts.

*Paper presented at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, April 6, 1999.*

<http://www2.webster.edu/~woolfilm/netherlands.html>

**Consider the following questions and answer on notebook paper:**

- While we often focus on the loss of Jewish life when studying the Holocaust, what additional groups lost their lives in great numbers? Why do you think these individuals were targeted?
- What factors made it virtually impossible for Jewish people to flee the Netherlands or find a place to hide?
- Although German law went into effect in 1938, including all restrictive anti-Jewish legislation, in what ways was life unchanged or slow to change in the Netherlands? Why was the transition less dramatic than it was in other places?
- What occurred during the bombing of Rotterdam in May of 1940?
- In what ways did the Dutch resist assimilation into Nazi ideals and culture?
- Eventually, Dutch Jews began to lose their rights. What oppressive measures began to impact their lives?
- What was the February Strike?
- What role did underground resistance groups play?
- What were Dutch individuals risking by participating in various types of resistance, from strikes and boycotts to participation in the underground movement? What does it say about a person's character to stand up to injustice, despite the risks?
- Despite efforts of resistance, what was the impact on the lives of Jewish people in particular who lived in the Netherlands?
- Often we only think of Germany when considering the Holocaust, but what does this article teach us regarding the broader impact of the Nazis, and on the Netherlands in particular?
- What questions do you have about this article or related issues?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hidden Children of the Holocaust

When Germany came under Nazi rule, the country worked to bring about the complete eradication of the entire Jewish population. The Nazi strategy demanded that not only adults be marked for destruction but that children be targeted as well. In fact, in each European country conquered by the Germans, the survival rate of children was much lower than that of the overall Jewish population. It is estimated that **one and a half million Jewish children, from infants to older teens, were gassed or shot to death** in Nazi-occupied Europe. This means that **nine out of ten Jewish children were murdered and very few escaped**. Those who were sent to concentration camps were killed upon arrival. Only an occasional, healthy-looking teenager managed to slip through the system.

For the most part, the children who survived did so in hiding. Sometimes for years, they lived in **physical hiding** - out of their captors' sight, in convents, orphanages, haylofts, woods, basements or sewers. Some **hid their identity**, living openly but concealing their names and pretending to be Christian. Often, families were torn apart, when in desperate attempts to save their children, parents made the agonizing decision to leave their little ones with strangers. And, frequently, children were left to fend for themselves, wandering through forests and villages in search of food and shelter.

Children in hiding, many of them very young, had to learn basic survival skills, one of which was being silent. Some children had to live in a quiet way so that they would not be discovered; others, like children who were living with Christian families had to be silent about their Jewish Christian identity. One mistake could cost them their lives as well as the lives of those who were protecting them.

- 1. How did the survival rate of Jewish children compare to that of the overall Jewish population? Why do you think this was the case?**
- 2. How did the majority of surviving children manage to do so? What do you think it took on their part to survive in this manner?**

### Physical Hiding

Physical hiding represented an attempt to hide one's complete existence from the outside world. Such hidden children faced constant fear, dilemmas, and danger. There was a life in shadows, where the faintest noise could lead to discovery and death.

Cabinets, basements, convents, orphanages, haylofts, woods, sewers...any remote spot could become a place to hide. Some Jewish families and/or children were hidden by neighbors and sympathizers, but at great risk to the people hiding them. Others built hiding places in their own homes - in the attic, under the floor, or in the walls. Some people hid children and/or entire families for free, others required payment. The size, comfort, and security of hiding places for Jews varied tremendously.

*...We stayed in what was actually a cabinet, only sixty or seventy centimeters wide. The length of it would have been a couple of meters, because we could all lie on top of each other comfortably. My parents couldn't stand, but I could, and I sort of walked between them. This cabinet was in a cellar, so it was well hidden. Our presence there was so secret, not even the children of the hiding family knew that we were there. That was where we stayed for thirteen months! ~Richard Rozen, six years old when he went into hiding*

Each day, hidden children woke up, knowing that they must be extremely quiet and still, and that no matter what, they would not be allowed to leave the confinement of their hiding place. Many of these children would

go months, even years, without seeing daylight. There was no playing, running, talking or laughing. Even the slightest noise could risk the safety of a hidden child and his or her family.

In "bunkers" (hiding places within ghettos) the imminence of Nazi capture was very great. Jews would retreat to their hiding places when their deportation to camps was pending. Nazis would go from house to house, scouring for fake doors, fake walls, mats covering an opening, etc. Everyone would hold their breath in fear and anticipation. At such times, the youngest (babies) were the most vulnerable. Babies were too young to understand the seriousness of the situation and could not be kept from crying. Mothers were often forced to make unimaginable decisions.

*When we got to the loft, we found it crowded and the people very tense. There was one young woman trying to comfort an infant who was crying. It was just a tiny baby, but he wouldn't go to sleep, and she couldn't stop him from crying. Finally she was given a choice by the other adults: Take your crying baby and leave -- or kill the infant.*  
~Kim Fendrick, six years old when she went into hiding

**3. What were the various locations Jews would hide? Of these locations, which do you think would be hardest to hide in and why?**

**4. Describe the conditions in which Richard Rozen hid for 13 months when he was six years old.**

**5. What do you think Jewish parents worried about most during this time?**

Though families were sometimes able to prepare and bring some food and provisions with them, no one could pack enough supplies for months or even years of hiding. Those hiding often struggled for food and water. With most of the general population on rations, people in hiding had an even more difficult time finding supplies. With no access to a regular supply of water, there was limited clean water for bathing or washing clothing. Lice and diseases were thus rampant.

*Some people couldn't take the stench and the darkness, so they left, but ten of us remained in that sewer - for fourteen months! During that time we never went outside or saw daylight. We lived with webs and moss hanging on the wall. The river not only smelled terrible, but also it was full of diseases. We got dysentery, and I remember Pavel and I were sick with unrelenting diarrhea. There was only enough clean water for each of us to have half a cup a day. My parents didn't even drink theirs; they gave it to Pavel and me so that we wouldn't die from dehydration.*  
~Dr. Kristine Keren, born in 1935

*Even though I wasn't eating much, I was being eaten unbelievably. The lice down there were very bold. They would walk out onto my face. Everywhere I put my hand, there was another one. Fortunately Rosia had a pair of scissors and cut off all my hair. There were body lice too. They would lay eggs in the seams of our clothing. For the whole six or seven months I was down there in the hole, the only real fun I had was cracking the nits with my thumbnail. It was the only way in which I had even the slightest control over what was going on in my life.*  
~Lola Kaufman, seven years old when went into hiding

Being completely secluded also had many other problems. If someone got sick, they could not be taken to a doctor, nor could one be brought to them. When loved ones died, disposing of bodies was equally challenging.

Though daily life and the problems those in hiding encountered were difficult to deal with, the real fear was being found. Sometimes the owners of the house they were staying in would be arrested. Sometimes their location was leaked and the need to evacuate arose immediately. Thus, many hiding Jews had to move and find new hiding spots frequently. When discovered, adults and children were deported to concentration camps and faced likely death.

6. Describe the conditions in which Kristine Keren and Lola Kaufman hid in as children.

7. Based on everything you've considered, what do you think would be most difficult about hiding? What do you think would be most difficult regarding hiding for a child in particular?

### Hidden Identities

Instead of hiding physically, some children took on a different name and identity in an attempt to hide their Jewish ancestry. Hiding their true identity was a very large responsibility for those so young, a responsibility that could mean life or death.

Finding a rescuer was quite difficult, particularly since taking in such a person meant risking one's life and the lives of all family members. Further, a rescuer never knew how long they would be responsible for the child. Yet despite the risks, thousands of Jewish children survived the Holocaust because they were protected by people and institutions of other faiths. Dozens of Catholic convents in German-occupied Poland independently took in Jewish youngsters. Belgian Catholics hid hundreds of children in their homes, schools, and orphanages, and French Protestant townspeople in and around Le Chambon-sur-Lignon sheltered several thousand Jews. In Albania and Yugoslavia, some Muslim families concealed youngsters.

Children quickly learned to master the prayers and rituals of their "adopted" religion in order to keep their Jewish identity hidden from even their closest friends. Many Jewish youngsters were baptized into Christianity, with or without the consent of their parents. To appear Gentile, many children had to go to church. Having never been to church, these children had to find ways to cover for their lack of knowledge.

*We had to live and behave as Christians. I was expected to go to confession because I was old enough to have already had my first communion. I didn't have the slightest idea what to do, but I found a way to handle it. I'd made friends with some Ukrainian children, and I said to one girl, 'Tell me how to go to confession in Ukrainian and I'll tell you how we do it in Polish.' So she told me what to do and what to say. Then she said, 'Well, how do you do it in Polish?' I said, 'It's exactly the same, but you speak Polish.' I got away with that -- and I went to confession. My problem was that I couldn't bring myself to lie to a priest. I told him it was my first confession. I didn't realize at the time that girls had to wear white dresses and be part of a special ceremony when making their first communion. The priest either didn't pay attention to what I said or else he was a wonderful man, but he didn't give me away.*

*~Rosa Sirota*

A hidden child's safety and security demanded strict secrecy. Foster families created elaborate explanations for the presence of a new face in their home, identifying the child as a distant relative, friend, or surviving member of a bombed-out household. Convents and orphanages withheld youngsters' Jewish identities from classmates, and staff. Organized rescue groups frequently moved children around and kept records in code to prevent their charges' discovery. In some rescue networks, parents were not permitted to contact their children or know their whereabouts. The children themselves also well understood the need for security. They kept away from situations where their true identity might be exposed, held fast to their false names and religion, and avoided mannerisms or language that might be construed as "Jewish" or foreign.

Among the most painful memories for hidden children was their separation from parents, grandparents, and siblings. For a variety of reasons—the lack of space, the inability or unwillingness of a rescuer to take in an entire family, or the decision of the parents not to abandon other family members in the ghetto—many Jewish children went into hiding alone. Separation tormented both parents and children. Each feared for the other's safety and was powerless to do anything about it. Youngster and parent often had to bear their grief in silence so as not to jeopardize the safety of the other. For many hidden children, the wartime separation became permanent.

Jewish children who lived in hiding generally were treated well by their rescuers. But not all youngsters had such experiences. Because they could not turn to local authorities for help or were afraid of being turned out, some children had to endure abuse by their “protectors.” Further, some individuals took advantage of a persecuted family’s desperation by collecting money, then refused to follow through on their promise of aiding the Jewish child—or worse, turning them over to the authorities for an additional reward. At times, stress, anguish, and fear drove benefactors to turn out the Jewish children from their homes.

- 8. What was a rescuer risking by taking in a Jewish child? Why do you think some people still did this, despite the risks?**
- 9. What were the various difficulties a Jewish child hiding their identity dealt with?**
- 10. Why did many hiding children have to be moved frequently? In what ways might this make the process of hiding even more difficult?**
- 11. Why do you think family members were often not told where their children were being hid?**
- 12. While many children being hid were treated well, what are examples of how some were taken advantage of?**
- 13. Overall, what do you think would be most difficult regarding hiding your true identity while living out in the open?**

## **Risks**

Life in hiding was always hazardous. Throughout German-occupied Europe, the Nazis made a concerted effort to locate Jews in hiding. German officials and their collaborators harshly penalized those who aided Jews and offered rewards to individuals willing to turn in Jews.

Beginning in March 1943, the Gestapo (the German secret state police) granted some Jews in Germany reprieve from deportation in exchange for tracking down other Jews who had gone underground. By spring 1945, when the Nazi regime lay in ruins, these informers had turned in as many as 2,000 Jews.

In other countries, neighbors betrayed others for money or out of support for the regime. In German-occupied Poland, blackmailers squeezed money or property from Jews by threatening to turn them in to the authorities.

Jews in hiding were discovered by chance during raids seeking conscripts for forced labor, resistance cells, black marketers, or by random searches of documents. A slip of the tongue, improperly prepared false documents, or gossip could lead to arrest and deportation.

- 14. Imagine being a Jewish child in hiding during the war. Rank what you think would be your top 5 worries while in hiding based on what you’ve read.**

## **After the War**

When the war ended in 1945, the surviving remnant of Europe’s Jews immediately began the difficult and painful search for family members. Parents sought out the children they had placed in convents, orphanages, or with foster families. Local Jewish committees in Europe tried to register the living and account for the dead. Tracing services set up by the International Red Cross and Jewish relief organizations aided the searches, but often the quests were protracted because the Nazis, the war, and the mass relocations of populations in central and Eastern Europe had displaced millions of people.

The quest for family was much more than a search for relatives. It often involved some traumatic soul searching for children to rediscover their true identity. Even though these children were the survivors and the future, many did not identify with being Jewish. After years of concealing their true identity, Jewishness for some hidden Jewish children had come to symbolize persecution while Christianity stood for security. Those who had been too young to remember their parents knew only their adopted family, religion, and often nationality. Many truly loved their foster families and refused to be given into the arms of a “stranger.” In a few instances, some youngsters had to be physically taken from their foster families. Thus, for a number of hidden children, the war’s end did not bring an end to the traumatic experiences.

*“I had been separated from my mother so long that mother didn’t mean anything to me.”*

*~ Renee Fritz, Jewish child hidden in Belgium*

Following the war, Jewish parents often spent months and years searching for the children they had sent into hiding. In fortunate instances, they found their offspring with the original rescuer. Many, however, resorted to tracing services, newspaper notices, and survivor registries in the hope of finding their children. Time and again, the search for family ended in tragedy. For parents, it was the discovery that their child had been killed or had disappeared. For hidden children, it was the revelation that there were no surviving family members to reclaim them.

In hundreds of cases, rescuers refused to release hidden children to their families or Jewish organizations. Some demanded that the child be “redeemed” through financial remuneration. Others had grown attached to their charges and did not want to give them up. In the more difficult cases, courts had to decide to whom to award custody of the child. Some rescuers defied court decisions and hid the children for a second time. The future of the thousands of orphaned Jewish children became a pressing matter. In the Netherlands, more than half of the 4,000 to 6,000 surviving Jewish children were declared “war foster children” (Oorlogspleegkinderen), and most were placed under a state committee’s guardianship. The vast majority were returned to a surviving family member or a Jewish organization, but more than 300 were given to non-Jewish families.

**15. Why was reuniting families challenging after the war?**

**16. Why was the process of rediscovering their identities so difficult for many children?**

**17. In what ways did many searches for family end in tragedy?**

**18. In what ways did the release and future of many Jewish children become complicated after the war was over?**

**19. What questions do you still have?**

*Text for this reading is from the following sources:*

[http://history1900s.about.com/od/holocaust/a/hiddenchildren\\_4.htm](http://history1900s.about.com/od/holocaust/a/hiddenchildren_4.htm)

<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/hidden-children/pdf/StudyGuide.pdf>

<http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/hidden-children/insideX/>

[http://archive.adl.org/children\\_holocaust/about\\_children\\_of.html](http://archive.adl.org/children_holocaust/about_children_of.html)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Yad Vashem - The Righteous Among The Nations

*"I believe that it was really due to Lorenzo that I am alive today; and not so much for his material aid, as for his having constantly reminded me by his presence... that there still existed a just world outside our own, something and someone still pure and whole... for which it was worth surviving" Primo Levi describes his rescuer, Lorenzo Perrone (If This Is A Man)*

Attitudes towards the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbors were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews property. In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the *Righteous Among the Nations*. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.

Most rescuers were ordinary people. Some acted out of political, ideological or religious convictions; others were not idealists, but merely human beings who cared about the people around them. In many cases they never planned to become rescuers and were totally unprepared for the moment in which they had to make such a far-reaching decision. They were ordinary human beings, and it is precisely their humanity that touches us and should serve as a model.

There were different degrees of help: some people gave food to Jews, thrusting an apple into their pocket or leaving food where they would pass on their way to work. Others directed Jews to people who could help them; some sheltered Jews for one night and told them they would have to leave in the morning. Only few assumed the entire responsibility for the Jews' survival.

The price that rescuers had to pay for their action differed from one country to another. In Eastern Europe, the Germans executed not only the people who sheltered Jews, but their entire family as well. Notices warning the population against helping the Jews were posted everywhere. In Western Europe...some of the *Righteous Among the Nations* were incarcerated in camps and killed. Rescuers and rescued lived under constant fear of being caught; there was always the danger of denunciation by neighbors or collaborators. Those who decided to shelter Jews had to sacrifice their normal lives, living against the accepted norms of the society in which they lived.

The main forms of help extended by the *Righteous Among the Nations* included:

- **Hiding Jews in the rescuers' home or on their property.** In the rural areas in Eastern Europe hideouts or bunkers, as they were called, were dug under houses, cowsheds, barns, where the Jews would be concealed from sight. In addition to the threat of death that hung over the Jews' heads, physical conditions in such dark, cold, airless and crowded places over long periods of time were very hard to bear. The rescuers, whose life was terrorized too, would provide food – not an easy feat for poor families in wartime – removing the excrements, and taking care of all their wards' needs. Jews were also hidden in attics, hideouts in the forest, and in any place that could provide shelter and concealment, such as a cemetery, sewers, animal cages in a zoo, etc. Sometimes the hiding Jews were presented as non-Jews, as relatives or adopted children. Jews were also hidden in apartments in cities, and children were placed in convents with the nuns

concealing their true identity. In Western Europe Jews were mostly hidden in houses, farms or convents.

- **Providing false papers and false identities.** In order for Jews to assume the identity of non-Jews they needed false papers and assistance in establishing an existence under an assumed identity. Rescuers in this case would be forgers or officials who produced false documents, clergy who faked baptism certificates, and some foreign diplomats who issued visas or passports contrary to their country's instructions and policy. Diplomats in Budapest in late 1944 issued protective papers and hung their countries flags over whole buildings, so as to put Jews under their country's diplomatic immunity. Some German rescuers, like Oskar Schindler, used deceitful pretexts to protect their workers from deportation claiming the Jews were required by the army for the war effort.
- **Smuggling and assisting Jews to escape.** Some rescuers helped Jews get out of a zone of special danger in order to escape to a less dangerous location. Smuggling Jews out of ghettos and prisons, helping them cross borders into unoccupied countries or into areas where the persecution was less intense, for example to neutral Switzerland, into Italian controlled parts where there were no deportations, or Hungary before the German occupation in March 1944. There was also a large Jewish community in Japanese occupied Shanghai, inclusive of 40,000-50,000 European Jews.
- **The rescue of children.** Parents were faced with agonizing dilemmas to separate from their children and give them away in the hope of increasing their chances of survival. In some cases children who were left alone after their parents had been killed would be taken in by families or convents. In many cases it was individuals who decided to take in a child; in other cases and in some countries, especially Poland, Belgium, Holland and France, there were underground organizations that found homes for children, provided the necessary funds, food and medication, and made sure that the children were well cared for.

Yad Vashem is the only organization in the world that gives official recognition to those non-Jews who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Since the 1960s the title of *Righteous Among the Nations* has been awarded to some 24,355 people from over 47 countries and nationalities. There are Christians from all denominations and churches, Muslims and agnostics; men and women of all ages; they come from all walks of life; highly educated people as well as illiterate peasants; public figures as well as people from society's margins; city dwellers and farmers from the remotest corners of Europe; university professors, teachers, physicians, clergy, nuns, diplomats, simple workers, servants, resistance fighters, policemen, peasants, fishermen, a zoo director, a circus owner, and many more.

Bystanders were the rule, rescuers were the exception. However difficult and frightening, the fact that some found the courage to become rescuers demonstrates that some freedom of choice existed, and that saving Jews was not beyond the capacity of ordinary people throughout occupied Europe. The *Righteous Among the Nations* teach us that **every person can make a difference.**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Final Project:**  
**The Righteous in North Carolina**  
**“Every person can make a difference.”**

Because of the brave actions of people such as the van den Brinks, Renee Fink was able to survive the Holocaust and rebuild a life in North Carolina. Yad Vashem honors the *Righteous Among the Nations*, people such as the van den Brinks and others who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust, despite great risk. While North Carolina has not experienced a holocaust, there have been many situations throughout our state’s history when people have bravely fought against related themes of injustice, hate, intolerance, racism, bigotry, apathy, etc. – all of which certainly contributed to the Holocaust. Consider:

- What events throughout American history, and in particular, North Carolina’s history, occurred that involved themes also present during the Holocaust?
- Who were some of the North Carolinians that fought for the rights of people throughout such events? What were they risking by refusing to be a bystander?

Considering these questions, create an award for the *Righteous in North Carolina*. Just as Yad Vashem researches and honors individuals who made a difference during the Holocaust, your assignment is to do the same for a North Carolinian who has made a difference. Specifically, the individual you choose to honor must have combatted a theme or themes related to the Holocaust in some way.

1. **Choose** a person who you believe deserves to be honored as the *Righteous in North Carolina*. The person can be from any time period (including present day). The person must have fought against similar themes that the *Righteous Among the Nations* fought, such as injustice, hate, intolerance, etc.
2. **Research** your chosen individual further. Take detailed notes regarding:
  - Who they were
  - What they did
  - How they resisted and/or assisted others
  - Why they chose to do what they did (and not be a bystander)
  - What they risked
  - How their actions/ideas made a difference
3. After you have completed your research, **write a speech** in which you honor this individual as a *Righteous in North Carolina*. Your speech should share the details of your research in a creative way as you pretend to speak to an audience about why this person is deserving of such an award. Your final speech should be approximately 2 minutes in length and should have a beginning, middle and end. You will **deliver your speech** at a reception honoring all recipients of *Righteous in North Carolina* awards. The reception will be held in class on \_\_\_\_\_ (due date). You will turn in your typed speech for a grade on this date.
4. **Design and construct an actual award**. At the end of your speech, you will pretend to present the recipient (or, a family member or friend of the recipient) with an actual award that you have artistically designed and created. The award you design should literally or figuratively represent your chosen North Carolinian and/or his/her actions and accomplishments in some way. Awards can be designed as a common award type (a certificate, a plaque, etc.) or can be more creative and abstract (a statue, a physical shape symbolic of the person’s work or life, etc.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Legacy of Hidden Children

*In August 2003, more than 500 child survivors of the Holocaust from across the United States, Israel, Latin America and Europe gathered to hear from peers, experts and writers for the third Hidden Child Foundation International Conference of Child Survivors and Their Families in Washington, D.C. The Hidden Child survivors are the last generation of eyewitnesses to the horror of Hitler's "Final Solution" who survived certain death at the hands of the Nazis because they were hidden by Christians and often received new identities as Christians. Many Hidden Children were the sole survivors of large, extended families, though some managed to hide along with a sibling, a parent or other relative. For many decades after the Holocaust, much of the history of the Hidden Children was unknown. It wasn't until 1991, at the first international gathering of Hidden Children, that their stories of survival became known to a wider audience. Abraham Foxman made the following remarks on August 27, 2003 at the conference:*

The last generation of eyewitnesses to the horror of the Holocaust is gathering in Washington this week for the third time in 12 years. They are the Hidden Children - those who survived certain death at the hands of the Nazis because they were hidden by Christians, as I was, and often received new identities as Christians.

As a group of survivors, we can speak volumes about the inhumanity and depravity of the Nazi era, but we can also testify to the humanity and power of those who refused to allow evil to reign unchecked. And we can work to ensure that these lessons are not lost today, an age marked by a resurgence of anti-Semitism on multiple, interconnected frontiers: political, governmental, educational and technological.

We learn from our experience as Hidden Children that when ordinary citizens take a stand and refuse to give in to evil, the miracle of survival can occur.

Indeed, I owe my life to a brave woman whose act of incredible moral courage ensured that I lived when so many others died. When the Nazis began to assemble Jews into the Vilna Ghetto, my parents entrusted me to my Polish Catholic nanny, Bronislawa Kurpi. She took me, baptized me and raised me as a Catholic. In a world beset by brutality, cruelty and destruction, she risked her life to save me. It is this part of the Holocaust that offers hope and redemption to humanity...

The voice and legacy of the Hidden Children are the reminder to all good people to have the moral courage to stand up and condemn anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry wherever it shows itself. As much as we expect this from our political leaders, we should also expect this from ourselves. As we move further away from the Holocaust, our story of moral integrity and courage is that much more relevant and poignant. Our mission is to educate future generations so that no people, no nation, may again suffer the evil of the Holocaust.

Source: [http://archive.adl.org/holocaust/oped\\_hidden\\_children.html#.UqdtclukrAg](http://archive.adl.org/holocaust/oped_hidden_children.html#.UqdtclukrAg)

### Answer:

1. Why do you think the stories of hidden children of the Holocaust were unknown for so long?

2. Foxman says that surviving hidden children can “speak volumes about inhumanity and depravity,” but also “the humanity and power of those who refused to allow evil to reign unchecked.” What does he mean?
  
3. Although the Holocaust was a horrific period of history, in what ways can it also offer “hope and redemption to humanity” according to Foxman?
  
4. In what ways are some of the themes from the Holocaust still active in our society today? What is our responsibility, according to Foxman?
  
5. Foxman states, “Our mission is to educate future generations so that no people, no nation, may again suffer the evil of the Holocaust.” In your opinion, how can we fulfill this mission? What are the best ways to educate the public and make them care about this history, and its impact on life today?
  
6. In your opinion, what is the greatest lesson to be learned from the hidden children of the Holocaust?

**Discussion Questions for  
“On the Back of a Stranger's Bicycle, Renee Fink's Story”**

**Overview:** Renee Fink was born in the Netherlands two years before the start of World War II. She was taken, at the age of 4, from her home, to a Catholic family she had never met. Renee remained there until the war ended in 1945. She never saw her birth parents again. They were betrayed and were killed in a concentration camp. Renee came to the United States in 1948.

Available for viewing at:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_fMIWkr6JjZHWrs7GgLop0qz4kNoA35r](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_fMIWkr6JjZHWrs7GgLop0qz4kNoA35r)

➤ **Chapter 1: A New Home (5 minutes, 48 seconds)**

- Where was Renee born? (Sheveningen) Why was she and her family (as well as other Jewish people) forced to move inland to Bilthoven?
- What were the various ways Renee's life began to change “little by little” after the May 10th, 1940 Nazi invasion?
- What other types of restrictions do you know Jewish people experienced during this time?
- You saw an image of the **Nuremberg Laws** in this chapter. What do you already know about these laws in particular?
- How do you think children were impacted by this gradual yet dramatic change?
- Renee refers to the events of May, 1940, which is when Rotterdam (located in Holland, in the Netherlands) was bombed by the Germans (also known as the Rotterdam Blitz.) What did you just learn about these events? (Students should refer back to information covered in the PPT.)
  - Let students know they will see some images of this bombing in Chapter 2, when Renee again refers to it.
- Renee comments that they “were lower than dogs or cockroaches.” What does she mean?
- In 1942, two years after the Rotterdam Blitz, life for Jews became more dangerous in Holland. How did Renee manage to go into hiding?
- What do you already know about the **Dutch Underground**, or the **Holland Resistance Fighters**?
- Renee refers to people called the “**Righteous Among the Nations**” or “**Righteous Christians**” in Holland. Have you heard either of these terms before? Who were these people and what was their role during the war?
- Who were the NSB, or the NSBayers?
- How do you think Holland was impacted given the dichotomy of having high numbers of both collaborators and resisters? What would be the pros and cons of this for the Jewish community in particular? For the non-Jewish community?
- What did you learn about the van den Brinks? Why does Renee say they risked hiding her?
- Renee comments, “They had a very strong idea of humility and doing the right thing and for them it wasn't very complicated.” What does she mean? What does this tell you about the character of the van den Brinks?
- What were the van den Brinks risking by taking Renee into their home?
- How long did Renee live with them?

➤ **Chapter 2: Knowledge Was Dangerous (4 minutes, 54 seconds)**

- What is Renee's memory of how she came to the van den Brink house?
- As a four year old, did Renee have any idea what was going on? What do you imagine this experience would have been like for her? What would this have been like for her parents?
- Renee says that “knowledge was dangerous.” What does she mean and why was this the case?
- What does Renee mean when she says the woman was just a “tiny cog in a very large machine?” Why do you think the resistance movement was set up in this way?

- Can you think of other examples when knowledge is dangerous? Have you ever had an experience when it's safer not to know? Explain.
- What was the woman on the bicycle risking by participating in the Underground?
- What was Renee told regarding her new home upon arrival?
- What do you think she means when she says she was in "survival mode?"
- What do you imagine would have been hardest for her in the beginning?
- Renee says that she initially "lost her tongue" upon arriving. What does she mean?
- In addition to being in a strange, new place, what additional fears was Renee faced with?
- Why were there constant searches of homes by Germans in the van den Brink's neighborhood? How do you imagine the family, as well as Renee, felt during these searches? What would have happened to Renee and the van den Brink family had the Germans realized she was Jewish?
- When there was a search, how did the van den Brinks conceal Renee's true identity?

➤ **Chapter 3: Hunger Winter of 1944 (4 minutes, 13 seconds)**

- While Renee went on with life at the van den Brinks, she notes that she was very homesick. Can you think of a time when you were homesick? Explain the situation and how you felt. How does your situation compare/contrast to Renee's?
- What limited information does Renee have and share regarding the remainder of her family? What would be difficult about not knowing for sure what happened to each of your loved ones?
- Why did Renee's aunt and uncle work for the Underground, despite the risks? She recounts her uncle having said, "We're dead, either way, so we might as well make our lives count for something." What message was he conveying? How would you characterize this attitude?
- What does Renee's grandmother go through in order to visit her?
- What challenges regarding food does Renee describe?
- What did Renee and the van den Brinks eat to survive?
- Renee would go to bed as a child dreaming about getting the end piece of bread. What does this tell us about the reality of her situation?
- Even though they had a limited supply of food, Renee notes that the van den Brinks shared with those in need as long as they could. What does this tell you regarding their character?
- Summarize Renee's description of the **Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944**. What did the family eat to survive during this time?

➤ **Chapter 4: Surviving Survival (8 minutes, 51 seconds)**

- What types of changes did Renee have to make immediately upon arriving at the van den Brinks?
- Renee commented that "Jewish children who went into hiding had a tendency to be very obedient and very quiet and not make waves." Why do you think this was the case?
- Why did Renee characterize this time as a time of "constant fear?"
- Why was Renee unable to go to school?
- What types of hiding does Renee talk about? What hardships does she note that came with hiding?
- Which do you imagine would be more difficult and/or frightening, hiding physically or hiding in the open by concealing who you are? Why?
- Renee mentions parents leaving their babies in drawers or giving them to strangers, hiding children under piles of coals and hoping they would be discovered before soldiers stabbed into the coal in search of hidden people, and even throwing their children off of trains. What does such behavior tell us about the reality of life for Jewish families at this time?
- In what ways did some people take advantage of families and their children in need of being hidden? How did the van den Brinks differ?
- Renee comments that "the toughest part of our lives was surviving survival." What do you think she means? What challenges did hidden children face after the war?

- Does it surprise you to hear that Renee wanted to stay with the van den Brinks, rather than return to her grandmother? Why do you think she felt this way?
- Why was it difficult for Renee to leave the van den Brinks when the time came to do so?
- Renee mentions “deniers and revisionists.” Who are these people and what do they believe? What argument does Renee pose to them?
- Even though it involves remembering unimaginable pain, why does Renee continue to tell her story?

➤ **Culminating discussion questions:**

- Summarize all of the difficulties Renee faced. (Ensure students note separation from her family, lack of knowledge about her family, living in a completely new place, fear of being discovered, raids, hunger, constant fear and anxiety, loss, separation, etc.) How do you think she managed to make it through each day given this enormity of hardships? What impact do you think this entire experience had on Renee?
- Think back to the items you shared from your own childhood. Why were they special? Do you think hidden children like Renee were impacted later in life by not having access to such special items from their childhood? Explain.
- What would be most difficult about hiding your identity? What do you think was the most difficult aspect of Renee’s story in particular?
- Renee was born into the Jewish religion but had to act as a Catholic when in hiding. In what ways might this impact her identity as a child? How could it have affected her identity as an adult?
- What do you imagine was most difficult about this experience for the van den Brinks?
- What impact do you think this experience had on the van den Brinks, not only protecting Renee for several years, but then having to give her up?
- Given the risks, why do you think the van den Brink’s took the risk of harboring Renee?
- In what ways is the Holocaust still impacting people today? How might the children of survivors such as Renee be impacted, as well as their children’s children?
- How did you feel hearing Renee tell her story? How is hearing a person share his/her experiences different than reading a textbook or an article?
- If you could ask Renee a question, what else would you want to know? If you could speak to the van den Brinks, what would you say or want to know?
- When studying the Holocaust, we sometimes don’t consider the life for survivors after the war. Renee herself mentions that the hardest thing for her was “surviving survival.” Why would picking up the pieces of their lives after liberation be just as hard, if not harder, than the war years?
- What lessons can we learn from the stories of hidden children? What is their legacy?