

## A Greek Girl in Auschwitz – Rebecca Yomtov Hauser’s Story

*“If I’m alive, I’m going to live. And I prefer to live as a survivor and not as a victim.” ~ Rebecca Yomtov Hauser*

### Overview

In this lesson, students will be exposed to the moving story of Rebecca Yomtov Hauser, a 20-year-old Jewish girl who lived in Ioannina, Greece with her family, until 1944, when the entire Ioannina Jewish community was rounded up and sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in southern Poland. Students will view Rebecca’s account of her experiences, from the moment she and her family were forcibly removed from their home, to the moment she was liberated and learned that she was the only survivor in her immediate family, by watching the short documentary, *A Greek Girl in Auschwitz – Rebecca Yomtov Hauser’s Story*. Through intermingling film clips with intensive class discussion and critical thinking activities, students will learn about Rebecca’s traumatic experiences throughout and after the Holocaust, as well as her undeniable strength, resilience, and courage. This lesson culminates with a group project where students assume roles on the Board of Directors of the National Council for Jewish Women and attempt to design impactful ways to aid survivors in 1945, ultimately exploring the importance of positive civic action in their own lives today.

### Key Words

Auschwitz-Birkenau  
Hunger/Food Insecurity  
Gas Chambers & Crematoriums  
Tattoos  
Bergen-Belsen  
Liberation  
Post-Holocaust survival  
Grief  
Anti-Semitism  
Holocaust Denial  
National Council of Jewish Woman  
U.S. Immigration (for Holocaust survivors)  
Civic Action

### Essential Questions

- What was the process of being removed from their homes and forced to travel to Auschwitz like for Rebecca and others?
- What were the conditions like at Auschwitz?
- What role did hunger and starvation play in daily life during the Holocaust? What role do these issues play in modern society?
- How was life experienced at Bergen-Belsen?
- Why was escape, or surviving an escape, from a concentration camp so unlikely?
- What does Rebecca’s story teach us about the lasting difficulties and traumatic impacts of the Holocaust, even after liberation?
- What did it take on the part of others (civic groups such as the National Council of Jewish Women, individuals, governments, etc.) to allow some of the survivors, such as Rebecca, to rebuild their lives?
- Rebecca’s advice includes, “Stay positive. Live one day at a time. Do the best thing you can do every day and don’t dwell on things you can do nothing about.” What are some specific examples of how one can follow this advice in daily life?
- Why do survivors such as Rebecca share their stories, despite the painful memories involved?

- Why is it important to study the Holocaust, educate others about the Holocaust, and correct any misinformation (such as that presented by Holocaust deniers)?

### Materials

- *A Greek Girl in Auschwitz – Rebecca Yomtov Hauser’s Story*
  - This short documentary is available for free viewing at [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_fMIWKR6JjZOLkq3fT\\_OtPcrnF3iMZyv](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_fMIWKR6JjZOLkq3fT_OtPcrnF3iMZyv) . It is divided into 7 short chapters, with a total running time of approximately 32 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. Teachers should edit/omit questions as they see fit. These questions can also be tailored to create a viewing worksheet rather than solely used for class discussion.
- *Hunger and Food Insecurity*, reading and questions attached
- DO SOMETHING statements, attached
- Post-It Notes
- *Group Activity - National Council of Jewish Women Board of Directors Meeting*, attached
- Chart paper and/or poster board, markers, and other art supplies (optional)
- Discussion Questions for *A Greek Girl in Auschwitz – Rebecca Yomtov Hauser’s Story*
- **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/>.

### Duration

- Two or more 60-90 minute periods
- Teachers can choose to edit the various discussion questions and activities 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: <http://k12database.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>

### Warm Up: Considering and Connecting with “HOME”

1. As a warm-up, write the word “HOME” on the board and ask students to think about this word. While students can simply answer in narrative writing, teachers may want to offer students the choice of responding with art/drawing, poetry, or other creative means. While students work, prompt them with questions that encourage further thinking:
  - Where and/or what is “home” to you?
  - What does your “home” mean to you?
  - What sounds and smells do you associate with “home?”
  - What emotions and feelings do you associate with “home?”
- **Teacher note:** Teachers should be mindful as to whether any students, for whatever reason (i.e., a student who is homeless, who is in foster care, or is a recent immigrant), may be uncomfortable with a discussion of home, or for whom the concept of home may not be positive. Discuss any situation like this privately and prepare for ensuring the student isn’t made uncomfortable during the warm up.)
2. After students have had 5 (or more) minutes to consider and respond, encourage students to share their thoughts regarding home. Teachers should note words that stand out from student responses on a sheet of chart paper labeled HOME. As students share, ask additional questions to further encourage thinking:
  - Is “home” always a specific physical place? Are there other characteristics that might define home, that have nothing to do with physical structures? Explain.
  - Why is home so important to many people?
  - What types of experiences and memories are often associated with home?
3. Next, layer into the conversation a discussion about traveling:
  - Do you like to travel away from home? Why or why not?
  - Have you ever taken a trip before? Where did you go and what was it like? Did you get homesick at all? Why or why not?
  - What makes you comfortable when you are going on a long trip?
    - Encourage students to consider physical comforts (i.e., snacks, a favorite blanket and pillow, electronics, books, a good seat, etc.) as well as mental and emotional comforts (i.e., choices, taking a trip you actually want to take, knowing the itinerary, feeling safe, having some say in where you are going/what you are doing, etc.)
    - Note student responses to this question of comfort and travel on a second sheet of chart paper labeled TRAVEL.
  - What can be difficult about traveling away from home?

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4. Next, ask students to share examples throughout history when people have been forcibly removed from their homes. Encourage students to consider historical examples (i.e., American Indian Removal, Japanese Internment, etc.) as well as current events (i.e., recent events in Syria.) Tell students that they are going to be watching the story of a Holocaust survivor, Rebecca Yomtov Hauser, who currently resides in Carrboro, North Carolina (as of 2015.) Rebecca, like many other Jews, was forcibly removed from her home, put on a train, and imprisoned in Auschwitz. Additional overview information to share with students:
  - Rebecca was born in Ioannina, a small Jewish community in northwestern Greece. Rebecca lived with her mother, father and three brothers. The Jews lived separately from the rest of the town and life was peaceful. It was March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944, when everything changed. The entire Ioannina Jewish community, including Rebecca and her family, was rounded up and sent to Birkenau concentration camp in southern

Poland. Birkenau is one of three major camps that make up the Auschwitz death camp. Rebecca was just 20 years old. Almost a year later, Rebecca was relocated to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in northern Germany. Bergen-Belsen was later liberated by British troops. Rebecca was the only survivor in her immediate family.

5. Play chapter 1 of the documentary, then discuss:

➤ **Chapter 1: Two Weeks on a Train to Auschwitz - "I Couldn't Stop Trembling" (6 min., 29 sec.)**

- What occurred on March 25, 1944? What do you imagine this experience was like? What do you think Rebecca and her family were thinking and feeling at this time? Did they have any idea of what was ahead of them? Explain.
- Think back to all the positive associations you shared regarding your understanding of "home." Consider the fact that Rebecca and her family, as do many individuals, likely shared some of your same thoughts and feelings. Given this, what would be most difficult and excruciating about being so cruelly and forcibly removed like this?
- What were they allowed to carry?
- What did Rebecca's mother decide was most important to carry and why? How did she cleverly maximize the amount the family could carry?
- If this happened to you, what do you think you would realistically select to take in the limited amount of time provided?

6. Return to the image at minute 4:00 and ask students to examine it again.

- What do you notice about the people gathered here?
- How old would you estimate the children are?
- What do you think is happening in this photo?
- Who do you think took this photo?
- Assuming the women around them are their mothers or grandmothers, how do you imagine these women felt during this time? How do you think the older men and younger men felt?
- Rebecca mentions that the men and women were separated, and that she was with her mother who "was holding her close, from fear and for warmth." What do you think this experience would be like for a mother in particular?

7. Let students know that sadly, this image is of women and children who were waiting for entrance into the undressing rooms for the gas chambers. "The undressing rooms of the gas chambers were not sufficient for the masses of Hungarian Jews who arrived daily in the summer of 1944. They therefore had to wait until the undressing rooms were ready to absorb them. The common waiting place was the grove closest to the crematorium." Source: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/last-moments.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/last-moments.asp)

8. Return to the image at minute 2:40 – 3:00 of chapter 1 and ask students to silently consider the woman pictured for a moment. Ask students to silently consider:

- What do you see?
- What emotions do you think she is feeling and why?
- What is going through her head? What is going through her heart?

9. Tell students you want them to continue considering the individual pictured and what she is experiencing by writing down what they imagine her "inner monologue" to be. Tell students they should write out, in first person, what she is thinking, feeling, experiencing, etc. Teachers can continue offering questions to further prompt student thinking while they write. (What are you afraid of in this moment and why? Who are you worried about and why? What do you think is going to happen?)

10. After students have had 5 or more minutes to free write, teachers may want to have students share their responses. (A few students could volunteer to share with the class, or students can each turn to a partner and share in pairs.) Afterwards, let students know that the image is of a Fani Haim, who was 15 or 16 years-old when the picture was taken on March 24, 1944, in Ioannina, Greece. In this image, Fani is weeping and bidding goodbye to her family members, who were being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp through Larissa city. Of the 1,960 Jews deported from Ioannina, only 110 survived, and Ms. Haim was among them. She settled in Athens, had a family and died in 2008. (Sources: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum\\_photos/02/12.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum_photos/02/12.asp) ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/nyregion/review-of-exhibition-on-jews-in-greece-during-the-holocaust-in-glen-cove.html? r=0>)
11. Next, draw student attention back to the list of travel comfort preferences created earlier. Discuss:
- As people like Fani and Rebecca and their families were forced onto the trains, which of these comfort items did they have?
  - What do you think would have been most difficult throughout this journey, which lasted two weeks (i.e., no food, no toilets, cramped conditions, no control in the situation, high stress and emotions, etc.)?
  - Do you think not knowing what to exactly expect made things harder or easier at this point?
  - Some of you mentioned family in our earlier conversations regarding home and/or travel. Why did Rebecca decide to walk away from her mother to be with her friends? Does this sound like something you might do? Do you sometimes want to be with your friends rather than your parents? Rebecca still seems to hold guilt about walking away from her mother, even though she was ultimately just behaving like any young person might and desired some exercise after a 2-week train trip in cramped, claustrophobic quarters. If you had the opportunity, what would you say to Rebecca to try and ease her guilt?
  - While Rebecca’s behavior was something any teenager might do at any time, what larger lesson might this teach us about life? What lessons can we learn from a single moment like this?
  - Consider the quote in the title of this chapter, “I couldn’t stop trembling.” Have you ever been in a situation where you were so overrun with various emotions – fear, anxiety, nervousness, etc. – that your body wouldn’t stop shaking? What were those situations? What does her physical response tell us about the situation she was experiencing?
12. Next, continue through chapters 2, 3, and 4, stopping after each short chapter to discuss and debrief with students:
- **Chapter 2: Arriving at Auschwitz #77128 - “We Were There To Be Murdered” (4 min., 17 sec.)**
- What took place upon arrival at Auschwitz?
  - How do you feel seeing the number tattooed on Rebecca’s arm?
  - How does it make feel seeing the image of the children with their tattooed numbers? How old would you estimate these children are?
  - Why were people tattooed in this way at Auschwitz?
    - Point out to students that while many people assume that all Jewish prisoners were tattooed during the Holocaust, Auschwitz was actually the only camp that tattooed prisoners’ arms. (A few other camps utilized bracelets or ID tags, but none tattooed arms.)
    - *Additional information to share with students about tattooing at Auschwitz can be found at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056>.*
  - Describe the experience in the showers. What was the soap made of?
  - Where do you think the clothes and shoes came from that they were forced to dress in?
  - Consider the piles of shoes you saw in this chapter (minute 1:35-1:50). What might you say each pair of shoes represents?

- Rebecca talks about stories she heard of the crematorium, and what had happened to others at the camp. It made her think the people sharing this information were “crazy.” Why do you think she thought this?
- She speaks again of leaving her mother, having found out what happened to her. What do we learn of her mother’s and father’s fate? How do you think this impacted Rebecca?
- Rebecca says, “It was unbelievable. You couldn’t imagine human beings capable of doing such atrocities. But it was the truth.” Why is it so important for everyone to study and know this truth?
- Rebecca said that the crematoriums worked day and night – “the smoke and smell and flames were there to be seen every day.” Consider this statement in terms of a person’s five senses (sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste.) What were prisoners experiencing in each of these areas on a daily basis and what do you think the cumulative impact on each person was?

➤ **Chapter 3: Life In Auschwitz - “I thought we were all going to die” (4 min., 28 sec.)**

- What was the layout of the camp and barracks according to Rebecca?
- How many people slept in a single bed? Were blankets and sheets available? What were the “beds” made out of?
- What was particularly sad and difficult about Rebecca’s sleeping conditions? Why do you think she chuckles about this?
- What was the routine each day? What were conditions like?
- What type of labor was required of Rebecca and the other prisoners? What were they fed? What toll do you imagine all of this took on her and others? (Ensure students consider the combination of required hard work; little food provided; limited calories provided, especially given the calories expended in hard labor; cramped and unsanitary living conditions; the overall mental anguish; etc.)
- How did the guards and supervisors treat the workers? Who were these individuals serving as guards and supervisors, and what do you think they were feeling and thinking when carrying out such barbaric acts against the prisoners? Why do you think they did these unimaginable things, ultimately supporting the system of genocide in this way?
  - It is important to discuss with students that there were hundreds and hundreds of individuals – soldiers, officials, every day citizens – who played a role in the Holocaust. These were not monsters – they were people who also had lives and families and hopes and dreams – but who for whatever reason, agreed to participate in these horrific events in various ways.
  - The USHMM offers an activity, *Assessing & Defining Responsibility in the Holocaust*, that teachers may want to utilize with students. It can be found on page 15 & 16 of Carolina K-12’s lesson, “The Crime of the Bystander in the Holocaust”:  
<http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/CrimeofBystanderinHolocaust1.pdf>
- Why did Rebecca say there was no way they would let anyone leave the camp alive?
- How did the winter and snow impact conditions? What do you imagine it would be like to work in threadbare clothes, in freezing weather and snow, while starving?
- Rebecca notes she would have liked to escape, but even if she did, she would have faced numerous challenges. What difficulties would she have faced?
  - Ensure students consider all aspects of this, including: she didn’t know where to go if she actually did get out without being killed; she was unfamiliar with the area; she didn’t speak the local language; she had no idea where her family or friends were to even return to them; it was winter and freezing cold; she didn’t have adequate clothing; she was being starved and worked to death and thus in poor health; etc.
- What happened to the woman who tried to escape? Why did they execute her in this particular way?
- Why did Rebecca not feel sorry for the executed woman? What does it say about the state of mind Rebecca was in, and what does this tell us of her living conditions?
- Overall, in what ways did the Nazis strive to make prisoners feel subhuman? Were the Nazis “successful” in this goal? Why or why not?

- *Additional information about Auschwitz can be found at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005189>.*
- **Chapter 4: Potato Peels – “When You’re Hungry, You are Hungry” (3 min., 38 sec.)**
  - What did Rebecca learn about the kitchen at 6 PM?
  - Does it surprise you to hear her characterize potato peels as “a treasure to have?” Explain.
  - What happened when Rebecca decided to try and stop by at another time?
  - What does the fact that she was obsessed over potato peels, and risking her life for those peels, tell us about the reality of life at Auschwitz?
  - Think about what you eat throughout the course of a day and imagine how that compares to what Rebecca and other prisoners were getting at Auschwitz. What do you think hunger and starvation on such an intense level does to a person? How do you think one manages to survive starvation like this?
  - Elie Wiesel and other survivors (see also the video and lesson plan of survivor Renee Fink) 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. Why do you think that is the case?
  - Starvation during the Holocaust - from the ghettos to concentration camps to people on the run and in hiding – was commonly an issue, and even a tactic utilized by the Nazis. What other periods of history has hunger and starvation been an issue?
  - What issues regarding hunger exist today in North Carolina, the USA and globally?
  - Have you ever helped at a homeless shelter’s kitchen or volunteered for or contributed to a food pantry? What is the purpose of such organizations and what was your experience like when helping or volunteering there?

#### **Hunger & Food Insecurity Today**

13. Tell students that you want them to take a moment to examine hunger and food insecurity in North Carolina. While hunger today in North Carolina is different than the hunger and starvation that was forced upon people during the Holocaust, it is none the less problematic. Discuss:
  - Do you know what it means to be “food insecure?” (Ensure students understand that food insecurity means that “consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year.” Common terms associated with food insecurity are “hungry and at risk of hunger.” (Source: USDA)
  - Do you think that food insecurity/hunger is a problem in North Carolina? Explain. What about in your school and/or community?
  - Why is it that you may not know if and when your classmates are dealing with inadequate nutrition and food? Why do you think this is an issue people are sometimes ashamed of?
  - How do you think North Carolina ranks regarding the percentage of our population that deals with food insecurity?
    - Let students know that between 2010-14 North Carolina regularly ranked among the top ten states with the highest percentage of citizens experiencing food shortages. In terms of children alone, 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%.
    - To view North Carolina hunger statistics by county, go to: <http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/data-by-county-in-each-state.html>
  - While it might not be surprising to hear of people who experienced hunger during times of war or oppression, such as during the Holocaust, does it surprise you to hear these statistics? Why or why not?
14. As a homework assignment, pass out the attached “Hunger and Food Insecurity,” instructing students to read it and answer the questions for homework.



### **Hunger and Food Insecurity: DO SOMETHING**

15. Prior to the beginning of class, write out the following statements on large pieces of chart paper and post them around the room. (Teachers should alter and edit the statements as they see fit, based on their own unique classroom and community situation.)
  - Many students at this school don't know very much about the problems of hunger and food insecurity in our state, nor do they care.
  - Some people in the community wrongly assume that people who are hungry deserve it. They assume that people experiencing food insecurity are lazy, are irresponsible in some way, or that they refuse to get a job.
  - There are families in this community where the adults and/or the children miss meals because of food insecurity.
  - There are elderly people who live alone in this community. They often don't have healthy meals to eat and are lonely since they are often homebound and have little social contact.
  - There are children in our community, and students at this school, who are hungry several days per week due to lack of food provided at home. They are often too embarrassed to ask for help.
  - During the Holocaust, many people stood by while others suffered. Today, many citizens also stand by as members of their own communities suffer from food insecurity and hunger. Some people even tease or bully people who are less fortunate than they are.
  
16. As students enter, break them up into 6 groups. Instruct students to review their thoughts to the homework reading and questions in groups for around 5 minutes. After a quick full class debrief to ensure students registered the main points of the reading, provide each group with a stack of Post-It notes. Draw student attention to the statements posted around the room and tell them that as a group, they will spend 2 minutes at each statement, discussing the various ways they could combat the issue described. They should write each idea they discuss on the Post-Its provided, sticking them to the paper before rotating clockwise to the next statement. When arriving at their second statement, students should first spend time considering the ideas other groups have posted, then adding their own ideas. Students should finish up at the same statement they started with. Once students are back where they started, a spokesperson in each group can summarize all the ideas for that statement that have been collected. Teachers can then facilitate further discussion of the issues and the ideas provided.
  
17. Close the discussion by focusing on the last statement that connects the themes of hunger and apathy today to those same themes during the Holocaust. Point out to students that one of the best ways to channel any emotional responses they have to the hate and cruelty of the Holocaust is to do something to fight those same themes in today's society, whether related to food insecurity or another issue. Teachers may want to provide information about local volunteer opportunities that related to these issues for interested students. Teachers who are interested in further exploring this theme in class might want to have students research hunger and food insecurity in their city or county, or arrange a service learning project for the entire class that focuses on this issue.

### **Liberation and Post-Holocaust Survival**

18. Transition students into thinking again about Rebecca Hauser and what they have learned from her story thus far. Let students know that they will be watching the final three chapters of her testimony, the first picking up with her life in the Spring of 1945. As the Allied troops moved closer and closer to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazis transferred Rebecca and many other prisoners to Bergen-Belsen in northern Germany. Play chapters 5-6, stopping after each to discuss.
- **Chapter 5: Liberation at Bergen-Belsen – “We are Liberated, I Can’t Die Now” (5 min., 14 sec.)**
- Why do you think people starting getting sick as the weather warmed up?



- How were the dead disposed of?
- On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen camp. What does the video teach us about conditions in the camp?
- At this point what is Rebecca's condition? Beyond what she shares, what inferences could you make about her condition based on all she has endured?
- There were special rations provided for those who couldn't "assimilate normal foods" – what does this mean and what does this tell us regarding the realities experienced in the camps?
- How do you imagine Rebecca felt when waking in a clean bed in a hospital?
- What kept Rebecca going throughout this time?
- Rebecca notes, "We were a little afraid coming out, because everything we left behind was gone." While liberation was certainly a great thing, what does this comment tell us about the reality of Jewish lives after the war?
- In this chapter you saw images of eye glasses, toothbrushes, shoes, hair...what does it all symbolize?

➤ *Additional information about Bergen-Belsen can be found at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005224>.*

19. Before moving on to chapter 6, write the word "GRIEVE" on the board and tell students you want them to pause for a moment and consider what it means to grieve. Instruct students to "Think-Pair-Share" using the following questions:
- What does it mean to grieve? What are some of the emotions people often experience when grieving? How might such emotions impact other aspects of a person's life?
  - Why is grieving important?
  - How do many people typically celebrate, honor, and remember their loved ones after they pass away?
  - What are some of the traditional customs relating to grieving a loved one in your own family or community?
  - What is the purpose of such customs?
20. Tell students you will return to their thoughts on grieving after watching chapter 6. Play the chapter and afterwards, discuss:

➤ **Chapter 6: Back in Greece Alone - "Where are my brothers?" (3 min., 14 sec.)**

- After liberation, what was difficult for Rebecca?
- Why was it traumatic for her to be alone back in Greece, particularly given what she'd just experienced? How could she support herself, pick up the pieces of her life, and go on living?
- What does Rebecca learn regarding the fate of her brothers? How does this information impact her?
- Consider the fact that all this time Rebecca was fighting for her life in hope of seeing her brothers again, when she finally learns they were murdered. What could you say to her or do for her at this point to try and help give her the courage to go on and to help her heal?
- Rebecca notes that war is one thing - "You have a war and you have atrocities in the war. I tried to kill you...you tried to kill me..." – but the Jews didn't wage a war. In Rebecca's words, "We didn't do anything but being Jewish!" Can you think of other times and/or events throughout history or currently that involved this type of mass killing (genocide)?
- Reconsider your earlier thoughts on grieving. Not only has Rebecca experienced the unimaginable while imprisoned in a concentration camp, but she now knows her entire immediate family has been murdered. How did Rebecca grieve? Which of the customs that you earlier noted was Rebecca able to participate in when grieving her family? How do you think the lack of closure, support during grieving, etc. impacted her, and perhaps still impacts her today?
- At this point, what is Rebecca's ultimate choice regarding life?
- Why do you think she chose to go on, to live, to tell her story?

21. Finish the film by playing chapter 7 and afterwards discussing:

➤ **Chapter 7: A New Life – “I chose to live my life as a survivor, not a victim” (4 min, 18 sec.)**

- How did Rebecca finally connect with family in America?
- In what ways did they care for her from far away?
- Rebecca mentions finding a home open to survivors that was sponsored by the American Council of Jewish Women. Have you heard of this organization, or the National Council of Jewish Women before? Do you know anything about the NCJW? (Let students know they will learn more about this group at the end of the lesson.)
- In what ways does the staff at the shelter assist Rebecca?
- Rebecca noted that the shelter director helped her figure out how she could go to America to be with her family, without waiting 10 years. Why couldn't she just go and be with her family, who wanted to aid her in this tragic time?
- What were her options for immigrating to America without a 10 year wait? Why were these the only options for Rebecca?
- If Rebecca had been unable to immigrate to America, how might her life have been different after the war? Even if she had immigrated, but had to first wait the 10 years, how might her life have been different?
- How did Rebecca finally make her way to America in 1947, two years after liberation?
  - Let students know that after a 2-week voyage by ship from Athens, Rebecca reached New York City, where she lived with her Uncle and her cousins on a student visa. She worked to rebuild her life, attending school and eventually marrying and having her own children. Rebecca and her husband moved to North Carolina in the 1980s to be closer to their sons, who had moved to the state in the 1970s. She currently (2015) resides in Carrboro NC.
- Does it surprise you to know that there are Holocaust survivors living in North Carolina, some perhaps even in or near your own community? Why or why not?
  - It is easy to forget, especially for students, that Holocaust survivors aren't just figures in textbooks and movies – they are individuals who may be living right next door without our knowing. Teachers can use this as an opportunity to discuss how it is important to remember that everyone has a story – the people we live near, shop with, sit beside at school, pass on the street corner as they ask for change, etc. - even though we'll often never know that story.
  - Teachers can further use this as a bridge into talking about the tenets of Judaism, which has a basic premise of valuing and respecting all people. Some students may never have met a Jew and are sometimes guided by misinformed, bigoted information – this provides an opportunity to educate students about the basic values Jews are commanded to follow, and even connect Jewish values to other religions.
- How did Rebecca's uncle and his family treat her? While this was an incredible opportunity for her, what would have still been difficult for her?
  - Ensure students consider the complicated aspects of this time in Rebecca's life. While she has been liberated and has finally been brought safely to America, she has experienced more upheaval and loss than a person can imagine. For many people, just a move to a new country would be nerve wrenching. For Rebecca, she is making this move on top of an incalculable amount of trauma.
  - For more on post-traumatic stress syndrome as related to the Holocaust, go to <http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/psychological-trauma-and-the-holocaust>.
- Why does Rebecca decide to not erase the tattooed number off her arm?
  - Teachers can also discuss another modern issue related to Holocaust tattoos, which involves descendants of the victim/survivor tattooing the same number on their own arm today. Students can

discuss whether this is an appropriate remembrance, or if civic actions are a better choice. Read more at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/01/world/middleeast/with-tattoos-young-israelis-bear-holocaust-scars-of-relatives.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

- Rebecca notes how her American family encouraged her to forget the trauma of her past and live the new life they offered her. When she mentioned it, her uncle would say “Don’t think about it...you have a new life. Just put it aside and just try to live your new life.” Do you think this was good advice? Why or why not?
  - Rebecca’s advice to us at the end of her testimony is, “Stay positive. Live one day at a time. Do the best thing you can do every day and don’t dwell on things you can do nothing about.” How does this advice, coming from her, make you feel? Do you think most people in our school and society in general are living their life in this way? Explain. What can we do better to live by these lovely words?
  - The film ends with Rebecca saying, “If I’m alive, I’m going to live! And I prefer to live as a survivor and not a victim.” Given that she says this despite all she has been through, what words would you use to describe Rebecca? How does her story make you feel?
  - You had likely learned about the Holocaust and heard about Auschwitz before, but how does hearing about these things first hand from Rebecca impact your understanding?
  - What does Rebecca’s story teach us about the lasting difficulties and traumatic impacts of the Holocaust, even after liberation?
  - As you consider Rebecca’s very moving story, does it surprise you to hear that there are people in the world who are Holocaust deniers (people who say the Holocaust didn’t happen, or distort the facts of what actually did happen)? How is such ignorance an insult to people such as Rebecca and others who suffered, if not all of humanity? Why is it important for you to care about Holocaust education, and to correct anyone who tries to deny or distort the facts of the Holocaust?
    - Explain to students that “denial and distortion of the Holocaust almost always reflect anti-Semitism,” and it is crucial to speak out against such hate and intolerance. “The Nazi persecution of the Jews began with hateful words, escalated to discrimination and dehumanization, and culminated in genocide. The consequences for Jews were horrific, but suffering and death was not limited to them. Millions of others were victimized, displaced, forced into slave labor, and murdered. The Holocaust shows that when one group is targeted, all people are vulnerable. Today, in a world witnessing rising anti-Semitism, awareness of this fact is critical. A society that tolerates anti-Semitism is susceptible to other forms of racism, hatred, and oppression.” For more information about Holocaust denial, go to <http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion> (also the source for the quotes in this passage.)
  - Rebecca notes that she “chose to live my life as a survivor, not a victim.” What does this mean? How do you think such a choice plays out in a person’s daily life? Do you think we sometimes only look at Holocaust survivors as “victims,” rather than focusing on the courageous strength they exhibit by living and continuing to tell their story?
  - Overall, what are you left thinking or feeling after hearing Rebecca’s story? If you met Rebecca, what would you want to ask her or say to her?
  - What are some actions you could take in your own daily life that would honor Rebecca and (indirectly) show gratitude to her for sharing her experiences? In what ways would helping others and actively working to make your community better honor Rebecca and other survivors?
- *Information about women during the Holocaust can be found at*  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005176>.
- Information about the Holocaust in Greece can be found at*  
<http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-features/special-focus/holocaust-in-greece>

### **The National Council of Jewish Women in 1945 – What Would You Do?**

22. As a closing activity, have students reconsider everything that Rebecca went through, and what needs she and other survivors would have had after the war based on these experiences. Tell students they are to imagine they are a member of the Board of Directors for the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) in 1945, and

that they must determine 2-3 projects that will help to aid Holocaust survivors. Remind students that NCJW is the group that operated the shelter for Jewish women in Greece that Rebecca stayed at, so that is one example of the type of things the NCJW actually did. Divide students into small groups (4 or greater) and provide them with the attached activity sheet. Each group should choose or be assigned the roles of Board Chair, Secretary, Marketing Director, and Spokesperson. Go over the duties of each role as well as the steps for completion. Some things to point out before groups get started with their board meetings:

- Considering all needs of those liberated directly after the Holocaust, great and small, is important. Think about all the things people utilize on a daily basis, from tooth brushes to teddy bears. Survivors had nothing, and in this context, big differences could be made even by addressing seemingly small needs (such as providing toiletries.)
- Think about your goals. For example, is your goal to try and assist as many people as possible, or assist fewer people but in a more comprehensive way? Or, is your goal to try and meet a need that other groups are likely overlooking?
- Practice your presentation, which you will present to the remainder of class as if we are potential donors. Once all groups have presented, the class will vote on which project they would fund.

23. Take any questions students have then let them know how much time they have to work on this. (Depending on the timing of each class, students can be told to be prepared to present in as little as 15 minutes, or the following day in class. To lessen the time needed, teachers can also change the activity and have students create only one project.) Go over the expectations for independent group work and instruct students to begin. Teachers may want to provide chart paper, poster board, markers, etc. to assist students in their brainstorming and final visual creation.

### Day 3 (or Day 2, continued)

24. When the time comes for students to present, teachers should first review the expectations for being a respectful audience member. Specifically, instruct students that they should not work on their own projects while others are presenting. Students should also be instructed to take notes on each project presented so that they can make an educated vote for which projects they would fund at the end of all presentations. Students should note the title of the proposed projects, list a few words/phrases to describe it, then perhaps use a personal rating system on their paper to help them vote later. Once all students have presented, allow the class to vote on the project they most liked and feel would be most impactful. (Each student should vote for one project. While students can vote for their own idea, they should ONLY do so if they truly feel no other idea topped it.) After the vote, let students know the top three – five projects voted for funding and discuss:
- Which project ideas do you think would have been most impactful and why? Which ideas were the most realistic and why?
  - Were there common needs many of our proposed projects addressed? What were these and why do you think they were the needs most focused on?
  - Having listened to all our project ideas, are there needs that no projects addressed? Explain.
  - Why did you vote for the project you voted for?
25. Afterwards, share information about the NCJW's actual actions between 1930 and 1950. Have students compare their actual actions to the ideas they came up with, discussing similarities, differences and challenges. (Were there any areas the NCJW covered that students forgot, or vice versa? Which ideas may have been hardest to implement and why?)
- The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) was founded in 1893 and continues to be a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

- Rescued Jewish children from Germany and places them with American families through the German-Jewish Children's Aid Society.
- Reunited thousands of displaced persons with family members through the Port and Dock Department.
- Opened group homes in Athens and Paris for single Jewish women who survived the Holocaust.
- Created the Ship-a-Box program, sending toys, books, and educational materials to young Holocaust survivors and generations of Israeli children for the next 50 years.
- Funded the department of education at Hebrew University in Israel for the training of teachers.
- Worked in displaced persons camps in Germany, Belgium, and Holland.
- Established a US fellowship program to train social workers and educators for work with Holocaust survivors.
- Organized the first nationwide Council on Aging Collaboration for senior citizens, providing recreation and friendship opportunities.
- Formed the German-Jewish Children's Aid with coalition partners, rescuing children from Nazi oppression and placing them in private homes in America.
- For more information, go to <http://www.ncjw.org>

### **The Importance of Civic Action**

#### **26. Further discuss:**

- Why are civic groups such as the NCJW so important?
- Given the actions of the NCJW during and after the Holocaust, what impact did this collection of individual people have on survivors who were so in need?
- What role do civic and volunteer groups play in society today? Why is participation in such groups by individuals like yourselves important? Why is it dangerous to assume someone else is "solving the problem?"
- In what way is Rebecca, despite all she has been through, making a positive impact through civic action? Why do you think she continues to tell and retell her story today, despite all of the terrible memories and pain it possibly causes her? What does this teach us regarding Rebecca's character?
- Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand at times of comfort or convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy." How did this quote apply to the American Civil Rights Movement, and how does it likewise apply to the Holocaust? How does this quote apply to Rebecca, her will to survive and her choice to continue telling her story today? How does this quote apply to you and how you live each day?
- What will you personally take away from Rebecca's story? What can you do (great or small) to honor her and show that her words meant something to you?
- Remember Rebecca's advice: "Stay positive. Live one day at a time. Do the best thing you can do every day and don't dwell on things you can do nothing about." What are some examples of how you can do this, as well as encourage others to do this, both in your daily life and through civic action?

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

## Hunger & Food Insecurity

Millions of people worldwide suffer from **hunger** and **undernutrition**. A major factor contributing to this international problem is **food insecurity**. This condition exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious food for a healthy and productive life. Food insecurity may be chronic, seasonal, or temporary.



The United Nations estimates there are 840 million undernourished people in the world. The majority of undernourished people reside in developing countries, most of which are on the continents of Africa and Asia. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that nearly 11 percent of U.S. households are food insecure, with approximately one-third of these households experiencing moderate to severe hunger.

In developing countries, the root causes of food insecurity include: poverty, war and civil conflict, corruption, national policies that do not promote equal access to food for all, environmental degradation, barriers to trade, insufficient agricultural development, population growth, low levels of education, social and gender inequality, poor health status, cultural insensitivity, and natural disasters.

In the United States, the primary cause of food insecurity is **poverty**. Low levels of education, poor health status, and certain disabilities also increase the risk of food insecurity for individuals and households in the United States.

Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to food insecurity than others. Vulnerable groups include: victims of conflict (e.g., refugees and displaced people); migrant workers; marginal populations (e.g., school dropouts, unemployed people, homeless people, and orphans); dependent populations (e.g., elderly people, children under five, and disabled and ill people); women of reproductive age; ethnic minorities; and low literacy households.

Food insecurity and malnutrition result in terrible human suffering. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 60 percent of all childhood deaths in the developing world are associated with chronic hunger and malnutrition. Persistent malnutrition leaves children weak, vulnerable, and less able to fight common childhood illnesses. Malnourished children in the United States suffer from poorer health status, compromised immune systems, and higher rates of illnesses such as colds, headaches, and fatigue. Adolescents and adults also suffer harsh consequences of food insecurity and malnutrition, including decreased energy levels, failure to grow and mature, difficulty learning, decreased ability to resist infections and illnesses, shortened life expectancy, and low birth weight.

Food insecurity may also result in severe social, psychological, and behavioral consequences. Food-insecure individuals may experience negative feelings such as alienation, powerlessness, stress, and anxiety. They may experience reduced productivity at work and school, and reduced income earnings. The worry over obtaining food can lead to anger, pessimism, and irritability. Negative consequences for children include: higher levels of aggressive or violent behavior, hyperactivity, anxiety, difficulty with social interactions (e.g., more withdrawn or socially disruptive), poor school performance, increased school absences, and a greater need for mental health care services (e.g., for depression or suicidal behaviors).

Between 2010-14 North Carolina regularly ranked among the top ten states in the U.S. with the highest percentage of citizens experiencing food shortages. NC has several cities with some the highest levels of food insecurity in the nation: Asheville, Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem. North Carolina also has one

the highest percentages (again, ranked in the top 10 states) of children under 18 years of age who are food insecure on a regular basis: over 1 in 4 (26.7%). Additional facts about North Carolina:

- Approximately 160,000 different people in NC receive emergency food assistance in any given week. This is equivalent to feeding nearly every resident of Asheville, Chapel Hill and Elizabeth City every week.
- 81% of NC households receiving food assistance don't know where their next meal is coming from.
- 36% of food pantries in NC have had to turn people away for a lack of food to give them.
- 73% of the NC households we serve have had to choose between paying for food or paying for health care or medicine.
- 75% of households served by food banks have had to choose between buying food and heating their homes.
- 61% of families served by food banks have been forced to choose between paying for food or paying for housing.
- An estimated 22% of these households have a member who has served in the military; 6% have a member currently serving.
- In North Carolina (2014), 826,000 students were eligible to receive free or reduced priced meals at school through the National School Lunch Program. Of that number, only a mere 140,854 received meals during the summer months through the Summer Nutrition Programs. In other words, 83 percent of economically disadvantaged, school-age children may have experienced hunger during the summer months.

Sources: <http://www.faqs.org/nutrition/Erq-Foo/Food-Insecurity.html> ; <http://ncfoodbanks.org/hunger-in-north-carolina/> ; <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/news/2014-15/20150129-01>

**Answer the following questions on notebook paper:**

1. What factors contribute to food insecurity:

Developing Countries	United States

2. What groups of people are most at risk for being food insecure?
3. What impact does chronic hunger have on the health of children?
4. What consequences can hunger have beyond the physical issues?
5. Having now learned more about the negative impact of hunger, how do you think hunger and starvation impacted Rebecca Hauser's circumstances during the Holocaust?
6. Is food insecurity a problem in North Carolina? Explain.
7. How do you feel hearing that 22% of families using food banks in North Carolina contain a member who is a veteran, and that 6% of families using food banks have a family member currently serving?
8. What types of programs exist to try and help people who are food insecure and experiencing chronic hunger?



## DO SOMETHING STATEMENTS

*(Teachers should write these statements on large pieces of chart paper and hang them around the room prior to class.)*

Many students at this school don't know very much about the problems of hunger and food insecurity in our state, nor do they care.

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Some people in the community wrongly assume that people who are hungry deserve it. They wrongly assume that people experiencing food insecurity are lazy, are irresponsible in some way, or that they refuse to get a job.

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There are families in this community where the adults and/or the children miss meals because of food insecurity.

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There are elderly people who live alone in this community. They often don't have healthy meals to eat and are lonely since they are often homebound and have little social contact.

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There are children in our community, and students at this school, who are hungry several days per week due to lack of food provided at home. They are often too embarrassed to ask for help.

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During the Holocaust, many people stood by while others suffered. Today, many citizens also stand by as members of their own communities suffer from food insecurity and hunger. Some people even tease or bully people who are less fortunate than they are.

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

**GROUP ACTIVITY:**  
**National Council of Jewish Women Board of Directors**

Your group represents the Board of Directors for the National Council of Jewish Women in 1945. At today's meeting, you and your fellow board members will determine 2-3 projects to aid Holocaust survivors. You will present these projects at a fundraising meeting, where potential donors will determine whether or not they want to donate to your projects. Before beginning your meeting, determine who in your group will assume the following roles:

- The **Board Chair** is responsible for facilitating the board meeting by leading the group through the steps below. The Chair will pose questions for discussion, ensure everyone contributes, and keep the group on track.
- The **Secretary** will take notes throughout the board meeting and ensure a list of NEEDS is documented.
- The **Marketing Director** will be responsible for creating a visual display to help describe your projects to potential funders and convince them to donate. The visual may include various art and illustrations, text and catch phrases, and other creative components. The entire board will contribute ideas and assistance.
- The **Spokesperson**, with the help of the entire group, will prepare a presentation that describes your projects and creatively convinces donors to give their money to your cause. The Spokesperson will present a 2-3 minute presentation, utilizing the visual created by the group.

1. Discuss the various **needs** of recently liberated Jews.
  - Consider ALL needs (i.e., physical needs, psychological needs, emotional needs, etc.), keeping in mind that these individuals, from young to old, are mostly left with nothing.
  - Some needs you have learned about through Rebecca's story, others you will infer based on what you have learned about the Holocaust and liberation in general.
  - *The Secretary should take notes and keep a master list titled NEEDS.*
2. Additionally, consider who will likely be most vulnerable of the survivors, and which of the most basic needs are likely going unmet for these groups.
  - *The Secretary, with the entire board's assistance, should attempt to group related needs together. At this point the board should try to rank or star those that are most immediate and important, where possible.*
3. As a board, begin to brainstorm various ways to provide assistance that will meet some of the needs you have identified.
  - Are there particular groups of survivors you want to target for assistance? As hard as it is to admit, you can't assist all people or address all of the many needs. Your board will need to have an honest discussion about who to target for assistance, which needs to address, and why you feel this is most important.
4. Determine 2-3 projects (in addition to the group home you are already operating in Greece for Jewish women survivors) you can implement to aid Holocaust survivors.
  - Give each project a name.
  - Provide a detailed description of what the project will do/provide.
  - Note what needs it will address, and for who specifically.
  - Explain why the project is so important by describing the ultimate impact it will have.
  - *The Marketing Director, with the assistance of the entire board, will use a piece of chart paper to illustrate and highlight your projects. This will serve as a visual for explaining your projects when you present them to an audience of potential funders.*

5. Be prepared to present your three ideas at a meeting with potential donors.
  - Your goal is to passionately explain your projects, who they are helping and the difference they will make in such a way that the audience of donors will want to donate money to your projects.
  - *The Spokesperson, with the help of the entire group, will determine how to best describe the projects as well as how to creatively convince the donors to give their money to this cause. The Spokesperson will then present this final 2-3 minute presentation, utilizing the visual created by the group.*

**NOTES:**

## Discussion Questions

### A Greek Girl in Auschwitz – Rebecca Yomtov Hauser’s Story

*“If I’m alive, I’m going to live. And I prefer to live as a survivor and not as a victim.” ~ Rebecca Yomtov Hauser*

Rebecca was born in Ioannina, a small Jewish community in northwestern Greece. Rebecca lived with her mother, father and three brothers. The Jews lived separately from the rest of the town but life was peaceful. It was March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944, when everything changed. The entire Ioannina Jewish community, including Rebecca and her family, was rounded up and sent to Birkenau concentration camp in southern Poland. Birkenau is one of three major camps that make up the Auschwitz death camp. Rebecca was just 20 years old. Almost a year later, Rebecca was relocated to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in northern Germany. Bergen-Belsen was later liberated by British troops. Rebecca was the only survivor in her immediate family.

#### ➤ Chapter 1: Two Weeks on a Train to Auschwitz - “I Couldn’t Stop Trembling” (6 min., 29 sec.)

- What occurred on March 25, 1944? What do you imagine this experience was like? What do you think Rebecca and her family were thinking and feeling at this time? Did they have any idea of what was ahead of them? Explain.
- Think back to all the positive associations you shared regarding your understanding of “home.” Consider the fact that Rebecca and her family, as do many individuals, likely shared some of your same thoughts and feelings. Given this, what would be most difficult and excruciating about being so cruelly and forcibly removed like this?
- What were they allowed to carry?
- What did Rebecca’s mother decide was most important to carry and why? How did she cleverly maximize the amount the family could carry?
- If this happened to you, what do you think you would realistically select to take in the limited amount of time provided?
- Reconsider the image at minute 4:00.
  - What do you notice about the people gathered here?
  - How old would you estimate the children are?
  - What do you think is happening in this photo?
  - Who do you think took this photo?
  - Assuming the women around them are their mothers or grandmothers, how do you imagine these women felt during this time?
  - How do you think the older men and younger men felt?
  - Rebecca mentions that the men and women were separated, and that she was with her mother who “was holding her close, from fear and for warmth.” What do you think this experience would be like for a mother in particular?
  - This image is of women and children who were waiting for entrance into the undressing rooms for the crematories. “The undressing rooms of the gas chambers were not sufficient for the masses of Hungarian Jews who arrived daily in the summer of 1944. They therefore had to wait until the undressing rooms were ready to absorb them. The common waiting place was the grove closest to the crematorium.” Source: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/last-moments.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/last-moments.asp)
- Reconsider the image at minute 2:40 – 3:00 of chapter 1. What do you see? What emotions do you think she is feeling and why? What is going through her head? What is going through her heart?
  - The image is of a Fani Haim, who was 15 or 16 years-old when the picture was taken on March 24, 1944, in Ioannina, Greece. In this image, Fani is weeping and bidding goodbye to her family members, who were being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp through Larissa city. Of the 1,960 Jews deported from Ioannina, only 110 survived, and Ms. Haim was among them. She settled in Athens, had a family and died in 2008. (Sources: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum\\_photos/02/12.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum_photos/02/12.asp) ;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/nyregion/review-of-exhibition-on-jews-in-greece-during-the-holocaust-in-glen-cove.html? r=0>

- As people like Fani and Rebecca and their families were forced onto the trains, what comfort items did they have?
- What do you think would have been most difficult throughout this journey, which lasted two weeks (i.e., no food, no toilets, cramped conditions, no control in the situation, high stress and emotions, etc.)?
- Do you think not knowing what to exactly expect made things harder or easier at this point?
- Some of you mentioned family in our earlier conversations regarding home and/or travel. Why did Rebecca decide to walk away from her mother to be with her friends? Does this sound like something you might do? Do you sometimes want to be with your friends rather than your parents? Rebecca still seems to hold guilt about walking away from her mother, even though she was ultimately just behaving like any young person might and desired some exercise after a 2 week train trip in cramped, claustrophobic quarters. If you had the opportunity, what would you say to Rebecca to try and ease her guilt?
- While Rebecca's behavior was something any teenager might do at any time, what larger lesson might this teach us about life? What lessons can we learn from a single moment like this?
- Consider the quote in the title of this chapter, "I couldn't stop trembling." Have you ever been in a situation where you were so overrun with various emotions – fear, anxiety, nervousness, etc. – that your body wouldn't stop shaking? What were those situations? What does her physical response tell us about the situation she was experiencing?

➤ **Chapter 2: Arriving at Auschwitz #77128 - "We Were There To Be Murdered" (4 min., 17 sec.)**

- What took place upon arrival at Auschwitz?
- How do you feel seeing the number tattooed on Rebecca's arm?
- How does it make feel seeing the image of the children with their tattooed numbers? How old would you estimate these children are?
- Why were people tattooed in this way at Auschwitz?
  - Point out to students that while many people assume that all Jewish prisoners were tattooed during the Holocaust, Auschwitz was actually the only camp that tattooed prisoners' arms. (A few other camps utilized bracelets or ID tags, but none tattooed arms.)
  - *Additional information to share with students about tattooing at Auschwitz can be found at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056>.*
- Describe the experience in the showers. What was the soap made of?
- Where do you think the clothes and shoes came from that they were forced to dress in?
- Consider the piles of shoes you saw in this chapter (minute 1:35-1:50). What might you say each pair of shoes represents?
- Rebecca talks about stories she heard of the crematorium, and what had happened to others at the camp. It made her think the people sharing this information were "crazy." Why do you think she thought this?
- She speaks again of leaving her mother, having found out what happened to her. What do we learn of her mother's and father's fate? How do you think this impacted Rebecca?
- Rebecca says, "It was unbelievable. You couldn't imagine human beings capable of doing such atrocities. But it was the truth." Why is it so important for everyone to study and know this truth?
- Rebecca said that the crematoriums worked day and night – "the smoke and smell and flames were there to be seen every day." Consider this statement in terms of a person's five senses (sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste.) What were prisoners experiencing in each of these areas on a daily basis and what do you think the cumulative impact on each person was?

➤ **Chapter 3: Life In Auschwitz - "I thought we were all going to die" (4 min., 28 sec.)**

- What was the layout of the camp and barracks according to Rebecca?

- How many people slept in a single bed? Were blankets and sheets available? What were the “beds” made out of?
- What was particularly sad and difficult about Rebecca’s sleeping conditions? Why do you think she chuckles about this?
- What was the routine each day? What were conditions like?
- What type of labor was required of Rebecca and the other prisoners? What were they fed? What toll do you imagine all of this took on her and others? (Ensure students consider the combination of required hard work; little food provided; limited calories provided, especially given the calories expended in hard labor; cramped and unsanitary living conditions; the overall mental anguish; etc.)
- How did the guards and supervisors treat the workers? Who were these individuals serving as guards and supervisors, and what do you think they were feeling and thinking when carrying out such barbaric acts against the prisoners? Why do you think they did these unimaginable things, ultimately supporting the system of genocide in this way?
  - It is important to discuss that there were hundreds and hundreds of individuals – soldiers, officials, every day citizens – who played a role in the Holocaust. These were not monsters – they were people who also had lives and families and hopes and dreams – but who for whatever reason, agreed to participate in these horrific events in various ways.
- Why did Rebecca say there was no way they would let anyone leave the camp alive?
- How did the winter and snow impact conditions? What do you imagine it would be like to work in threadbare clothes, in freezing weather and snow, while starving?
- Rebecca notes she would have liked to escape, but even if she did, she would have faced numerous challenges. What difficulties would she have faced?
  - Consider all aspects of this, including: she didn’t know where to go if she actually did get out without being killed; she was unfamiliar with the area; she didn’t speak the local language; she had no idea where her family or friends were to even return to them; it was winter and freezing cold; she didn’t have adequate clothing; she was being starved and worked to death and thus in poor health; etc.
- What happened to the woman who tried to escape? Why did they execute her in this particular way?
- Why did Rebecca not feel sorry for the executed woman? What does it say about the state of mind Rebecca was in, and what does this tell us of her living conditions?
- Overall, in what ways did the Nazis strive to make prisoners feel subhuman? Were the Nazis “successful” in this goal? Why or why not?

➤ **Chapter 4: Potato Peels – “When You’re Hungry, You are Hungry” (3 min., 38 sec.)**

- What did Rebecca learn about the kitchen at 6 PM?
- Does it surprise you to hear her characterize potato peels as “a treasure to have?” Explain.
- What happened when Rebecca decided to try and stop by at another time?
- What does the fact that she was obsessed over potato peels, and risking her life for those peels, tell us about the reality of life at Auschwitz?
- Think about what you eat throughout the course of a day and imagine how that compares to what Rebecca and other prisoners were getting at Auschwitz. What do you think hunger and starvation on such an intense level does to a person? How do you think one manages to survive starvation like this?
- Elie Wiesel and other survivors (see also the video and lesson plan of survivor Renee Fink) 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. Why do you think that is the case?
- Starvation during the Holocaust - from the ghettos to concentration camps to people on the run and in hiding – was commonly an issue, and even a tactic utilized by the Nazis. What other periods of history has hunger and starvation been an issue?
- What issues regarding hunger exist today in North Carolina, the USA and globally?

- Have you ever helped at a homeless shelter’s kitchen or volunteered for or contributed to a food pantry? What is the purpose of such organizations and what was your experience like when helping or volunteering there?

➤ **Chapter 5: Liberation at Bergen-Belsen – “We are Liberated, I Can’t Die Now” (5 min., 14 sec.)**

- Why do you think people started getting sick as the weather warmed up?
- How were the dead disposed of?
- On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen camp. What does the video teach us about conditions in the camp?
- At this point what is Rebecca’s condition? Beyond what she shares, what inferences could you make about her condition based on all she has endured?
- There were special rations provided for those who couldn’t “assimilate normal foods” – what does this mean and what does this tell us regarding the realities experienced in the camps?
- How do you imagine Rebecca felt when waking in a clean bed in a hospital?
- What kept Rebecca going throughout this time?
- Rebecca notes, “We were a little afraid coming out, because everything we left behind was gone.” While liberation was certainly a great thing, what does this comment tell us about the reality of Jewish lives after the war?
- In this chapter you saw images of eye glasses, toothbrushes, shoes, hair...what does it all symbolize?

➤ **Chapter 6: Back in Greece Alone - “Where are my brothers?” (3 min., 14 sec.)**

- After liberation, what was difficult for Rebecca?
- Why was it traumatic for her to be alone back in Greece, particularly given what she’d just experienced? How could she support herself, pick up the pieces of her life, and go on living?
- What does Rebecca learn regarding the fate of her brothers? How does this information impact her?
- Consider the fact that all this time Rebecca was fighting for her life in hope of seeing her brothers again, when she finally learns they were murdered. What could you say to her or do for her at this point to try and help give her the courage to go on and to help her heal?
- Rebecca notes that war is one thing - “You have a war and you have atrocities in the war. I tried to kill you...you tried to kill me...” – but the Jews didn’t wage a war. In Rebecca’s words, “We didn’t do anything but being Jewish!” Can you think of other times and/or events throughout history or currently that involved this type of mass killing (genocide)?
- Consider the process for grieving and what customs and traditions people normally go through. Not only has Rebecca experienced the unimaginable while imprisoned in a concentration camp, but she now knows her entire immediate family has been murdered. How did Rebecca grieve? Which of the typical customs of grieving was Rebecca able to participate in when suffering through the loss of her family? How do you think the lack of closure, support during grieving, etc. impacted her, and perhaps still impacts her today?
- At this point, what is Rebecca’s ultimate choice regarding life?
- Why do you think she chose to go on, to live, to tell her story?

➤ **Chapter 7: A New Life – “I chose to live my life as a survivor, not a victim” (4 min, 18 sec.)**

- How did Rebecca finally connect with family in America?
- In what ways did they care for her from far away?
- Rebecca mentions finding a home open to survivors that was sponsored by the American Council of Jewish Women. In what ways did this organization aid survivors? What is their role in society today?
- In what ways does the staff at the shelter assist Rebecca?



- Rebecca noted that the shelter director helped her figure out how she could go to America to be with her family, without waiting 10 years. Why couldn't she just go and be with her family, who wanted to aid her in this tragic time?
- What were her options for immigrating to America without a 10 year wait? Why were these the only options for Rebecca?
- If Rebecca had been unable to immigrate to America, how might her life have been different after the war? Even if she had immigrated, but had to first wait the 10 years, how might her life have been different?
- How did Rebecca finally make her way to America in 1947, two years after liberation?
  - After a 2-week voyage by ship from Athens, Rebecca reached New York City, where she lived with her Uncle and her cousins on a student visa. She worked to rebuild her life, attending school and eventually marrying and having her own children. Rebecca and her husband moved to North Carolina in the 1980s to be closer to their sons, who had moved to the state in the 1970s. She currently (2015) resides in Carrboro NC.
- Does it surprise you to know that there are Holocaust survivors living in North Carolina, some perhaps even in or near your own community? Why or why not?
  - It is easy to forget that Holocaust survivors aren't just figures in textbooks and movies – they are individuals who may be living right next door without our knowing. Teachers can use this as an opportunity to discuss how it is important to remember that everyone has a story – the people we live near, shop with, sit beside at school, pass on the street corner as they ask for change, etc. - even though we'll often never know that story.
  - Teachers can further use this as a bridge into talking about the tenants of Judaism, which has a basic premise of valuing and respecting all people. Some students may never have met a Jew and are sometimes guided by misinformed, bigoted information – this provides an opportunity to educate students about the basic values Jews are commanded to follow, and even connect Jewish values to other religions.
- How did Rebecca's uncle and his family treat her? While this was an incredible opportunity for her, what would have still been difficult for her?
  - Consider the complicated aspects of this time in Rebecca's life. While she has been liberated and has finally been brought safely to America, she has experienced more upheaval and loss than a person can imagine. For many people, just a move to a new country would be nerve wrenching. For Rebecca, she is making this move on top of an incalculable amount of trauma.
- Why does Rebecca decide to not erase the tattooed number off her arm?
- Rebecca notes how her American family encouraged her to forget the trauma of her past and live the new life they offered her. When she mentioned it, her uncle would say "Don't think about it...you have a new life. Just put it aside and just try to live your new life." Do you think this was good advice? Why or why not?
- Rebecca's advice to us at the end of her testimony is, "Stay positive. Live one day at a time. Do the best thing you can do every day and don't dwell on things you can do nothing about." How does this advice, coming from her, make you feel? Do you think most people in our school and society in general are living their life in this way? Explain. What can we do better to live by these lovely words?
- The film ends with Rebecca saying, "If I'm alive, I'm going to live! And I prefer to live as a survivor and not a victim." Given that she says this despite all she has been through, what words would you use to describe Rebecca? How does her story make you feel?
- You had likely learned about the Holocaust and heard about Auschwitz before, but how does hearing about these things first hand from Rebecca impact your understanding?
- What does Rebecca's story teach us about the lasting difficulties and traumatic impacts of the Holocaust, even after liberation?
- As you consider Rebecca's very moving story, does it surprise you to hear that there are people in the world who are Holocaust deniers (people who say the Holocaust didn't happen, or distort the facts of what actually

did happen)? How is such ignorance an insult to people such as Rebecca and others who suffered, if not all of humanity? Why is it important for you to care about Holocaust education, and to correct anyone who tries to deny or distort the facts of the Holocaust?

- Discuss that “denial and distortion of the Holocaust almost always reflect anti-Semitism,” and it is crucial to speak out against such hate and intolerance. “The Nazi persecution of the Jews began with hateful words, escalated to discrimination and dehumanization, and culminated in genocide. The consequences for Jews were horrific, but suffering and death was not limited to them. Millions of others were victimized, displaced, forced into slave labor, and murdered. The Holocaust shows that when one group is targeted, all people are vulnerable. Today, in a world witnessing rising anti-Semitism, awareness of this fact is critical. A society that tolerates anti-Semitism is susceptible to other forms of racism, hatred, and oppression.” For more information about Holocaust denial, go to <http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion> (also the source for the quotes in this passage.)
- Rebecca notes that she “chose to live my life as a survivor, not a victim.” What does this mean? How do you think such a choice plays out in a person’s daily life? Do you think we sometimes only look at Holocaust survivors as “victims,” rather than focusing on the courageous strength they exhibit by living and continuing to tell their story?
- Overall, what are you left thinking or feeling after hearing Rebecca’s story? If you met Rebecca, what would you want to ask her or say to her?
- What are some actions you could take in your own daily life that would honor Rebecca and (indirectly) show gratitude to her for sharing her experiences? In what ways would helping others and actively working to make your community better honor Rebecca and other survivors?