



OVERVIEW

This program examines the Holocaust through the experience of Irene Fogel Weiss, a Jewish woman who survived the horrors of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Irene shares her personal story, covering how Nazi influences took over her town, the harassment of her family and fellow Jews, their deportation to a Hungarian ghetto, her arrival at Auschwitz, and their death march into Germany. She concludes by examining critical questions around humanity, civility, propaganda, and analyzing information in a search for the truth. These topics pose excellent opportunities for student reflection and discussion, as well as comparisons with contemporary issues facing our localities and our nation. The full playlist for the segments is on our YouTube channel at <https://bit.ly/37GoZQs>.

Segment 1: Introduction (1:48) — Meet Holocaust survivor Irene Fogel Weiss. She talks about why she has chosen to share her story.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What do we mean by the word Holocaust?
- What do you know about the Holocaust?

Segment 2: The Growth of Anti-Semitism (4:44) — We learn about where Irene grew up and how that town began to change as Nazi influences took over.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What countries did Germany control in World War II?
- Were all Germans Nazis?
- Why did the Nazis target the Jewish people?

Segment 3: Isolating Jews from Society (2:11) — Irene explains how Jews were systematically targeted by the Nazis in ways that eroded all of their positions in society.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What did Nazis do to isolate Jews from society?
- How did Nazi actions in Hungary differ from other countries?
- How would it feel if the police targeted you because of your beliefs?

Segment 4: Anti-Semitism Turns to Genocide (5:33) - The Nazis begin displacing Jews from their homes and staging their transport to death camps.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What would it feel like to be forced to leave your home?
- What would you pack if you could only have one suitcase?
- Why did Nazis force women to shave their heads?
- What was the “Final Solution?”

Segment 5: Arrival at Auschwitz (6:37) — Irene describes in detail her deportation from the Munkacs Ghetto, her arrival at Auschwitz, and how the selection at the death camp platforms worked, as Nazis confiscated possessions and separated families. She shares a remarkable historical photo that captured the very moment of her arrival at Auschwitz.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Were all concentration camps also death camps?
- Why did Irene fear going to Poland?
- Why did Nazis separate people at the selection platform?

Segment 6: The Gas Chambers (8:46) — The number of people sent to the gas chambers at Auschwitz was staggering. Irene discusses how she was forced to sort through the belongings of people murdered in the gas chambers, how she watched thousands of people marched into the gas chambers day and night, and how the threat of being sent there herself was constant.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- How much did people in Europe know about what happened at the death camps?
- How did Auschwitz differ from other camps?
- Why were children targeted by the Nazis?
- How did the prisoners cope with what they witnessed?

Segment 7: Being De-Humanized (4:34) — Irene describes how the Nazi government defined the Jewish race as “sub-human.” She discusses the impact of being surrounded by people who do not recognize you as a human being and have no empathy for you.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What were the Nuremberg Laws?
- Who besides the Jewish people did Nazis define as sub-human?
- How did the Jim Crow Laws in the United States compare to the Nuremberg Laws?
- How were Jews de-humanized?

Segment 8: The Death March (3:24) — In a refusal to give up their prisoners to the approaching Allied front, Nazis forced the already sick and starving prisoners out of the camps on foot. Irene was among those forced out of Auschwitz, and she describes how she ended up hundreds of miles away and on the verge of death.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Why did Nazis force prisoners on death marches?
- What were the conditions prisoners faced along their journeys?
- What did you think of Irene’s decision to volunteer to go with her sister to the gas chamber?

Segment 9 The Liberation of the Concentration Camps (4:28) — Irene describes the desperate conditions of the prisoners at liberation. She talks about the realizations that set in during those days, including the loss of family and of their own identities.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What did Allied forces typically find when liberating a camp?
- What kind of support did survivors receive at the end of the war?

Segment 10: Starting Over (3:04) — Irene talks about arriving in the United States and starting school in Brooklyn. She talks about the challenges she faced in learning a new language, as well as facing difficult questions from her classmates. Her experiences had made it very difficult for her to trust in other people.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What happened to Jewish refugees?
- Would you have returned to your hometown?
- How do you reach out to classmates who have been through a difficult challenge?

Segment 11: Why Did We Allow This to Happen? (4:58) — Irene discusses the consequences people faced for helping Jews during the war. She explains the transition she witnessed as people went from being afraid of the consequences to embracing the propaganda. She describes the Holocaust as a breakdown in humanity and a setback for civilization.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the factors that made some people risk their lives to help Jews, but made other people stand by and do nothing?
- How was propaganda a factor in discouraging assistance to Jews?
- What symbols were used in Nazi propaganda to portray the Jews?

Segment 12: Confronting a Nazi (4:17) — In 2015, the German government pressed charges against a former Nazi who worked at Auschwitz. Irene was asked to testify at the trial, and she describes what it was like to confront him.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What were the Nuremberg Trials and what was the outcome?
- Why is Germany still looking for Nazis?
- If you were Irene, would you have gone back to testify against Groening?
- Do you believe his sentence was fair?

Segment 13: The Importance of Civility (1:31) — Irene discusses how the Holocaust is what can result when people cross the boundaries of basic human decency and kindness. She talks about how even small acts against one another can erode our humanity.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What groups are discriminated against in the United States today?
- Have you witnessed bullying or humiliation?

Segment 14: Don't Believe Everything You Hear (1:23) — Irene expresses concerns about our tendencies to follow charismatic leaders. She talks about the importance of critical thinking and analysis to find the truth and make good decisions.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- How do today's leaders try to sway public opinion and develop followers?
- Have you seen examples of propaganda?
- What are some ways to evaluate the validity of what you hear?

Segment 15: Close (2:19) — Irene makes a final statement about how the Holocaust affected her life.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

- What part of Irene's story do you remember most?
- What lessons can be learned from studying the Holocaust?
- What part of Irene's message would you pass down to your children?