This study guide is designed to help students, teachers, and families prepare for and discuss *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial*. It contains background information, lessons and activities for students in grades 6-12.
Dear Educator,

Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial is an excellent classroom resource for teaching students the themes of the Holocaust and its historical context and perspective.

Providing students with background information about the history of Europe in the 1930s, Hitler’s rise to power, and the ramifications of the Holocaust enhances understanding of the Paper Clips project.

When teaching about the Holocaust, educators should consider the age appropriateness of the material. The book Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial and the accompanying film is a positive way to introduce students ages 12-18 to the study of the Holocaust.

This complementary study guide, available through Tolerance Minnesota, a program of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, is a tool to help educators and administrators better comprehend the historical context of Holocaust and the themes and motivations behind Six Million Paper Clips.

The guide offers a history of the Whitwell Holocaust project, a description of the importance of teaching the Holocaust and helpful tips for educators for utilizing the book in grades 6-12.

For a more in depth guide to the Holocaust or educator workshop opportunities, please contact Tolerance Minnesota at 612-338-7816 or on the web at www.ToleranceMinnesota.org.

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Six Million Paper Clips

Introduction to Six Million Paper Clips

Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial is an inspiring story of how a group of students created a project that resulted in international awareness about the Holocaust.

In 1998, the children of Whitwell Middle School in Whitwell, Tennessee began a moving journey. Students and educators chose to study the Holocaust to help students understand the diversity of the world beyond Whitwell, Tennessee.

The students’ introduction to the horrors of the Holocaust resulted in a community-wide project that captivated the imagination of parents and citizens of Whitwell, and individuals and organizations throughout the world.

Overwhelmed by and unable to grasp the number “six million” – which represents the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust – students and teachers devised a way to visualize the number. The group set a goal of collecting six million paper clips to represent each person killed in the Holocaust.

Why Study the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Other individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered grievously during this period, but only the Jews were marked for complete annihilation.

The Holocaust was not an isolated incident in history. It occurred because individuals, organizations and governments made choices that allowed prejudice, hatred and ultimately mass murder to occur.

There was no singular event that led to the Holocaust; it was a culmination of several different factors that the Nazis capitalized on and manipulated to achieve their goals of ridding Jews from Germany and throughout Europe.

Factors that contributed to the Holocaust included:

- The long history of Anti-Semitism in Europe
- World War I
- World economic depression
- Rise of Nationalism

The study of the Holocaust provides one of the most effective tools to discuss prejudice and cultivate appreciation of diversity. A structured study of the Holocaust provides lessons for an investigation of basic morals and human behavior.

It was the hope of the staff at Whitwell that by studying the Holocaust the students would understand that:

- Democratic institutions and values should not be taken for granted, but need to be appreciated and protected;
- Silence and indifference to the suffering of others or the limitation of civil rights in any society can lead to the development and/or perpetuation of oppression, and can also escalate hostilities;
- There were people who risked their lives to help Jews escape and confront the Nazis. People felt it was their moral duty to fight for what was just and right.

“The Paper Clips project has been an affirmation of my beliefs that education is absolutely essential to change; everyone must study the past so that we do not forget or repeat our mistakes.”

Linda Hooper,
Whitwell Middle School Principal
Discussion Suggestions:

The students of Whitwell Middle School learned that the Holocaust still plays an important role in world politics. It continues to be an emotional subject for Holocaust survivors and their families. The Holocaust can also be utilized to encourage discussions and awareness of world events.

• Consider the similarities and differences of government policies during the Holocaust and contemporary policies. Can governmental policies create the potential for ethnic cleansing and genocide, such as those in Rwanda, Bosnia and the Sudan?

• Compare and contrast world responses to the Holocaust and mass killings that have taken place post-Holocaust and currently.

• Study and discuss the topic of civil liberties and why it is important that they be maintained. If one group’s civil liberties are in jeopardy, will others soon follow?

• Explore documentary evidence to support the fact that the Holocaust occurred.

Who Were the Six Million?

By the end of World War II, most of Europe’s Jewish population was destroyed. Before Adolph Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, more than 9.5 million Jews lived throughout Europe. The victims of the Holocaust were regular people who played, worked, sang and laughed. Hitler and his followers convinced Germany that the murder of the Jews was necessary to form a better world.

As Hitler and his army spread through Europe they instituted anti-Jewish laws and began the process of mass murder. They were able to do this because many governments cooperated with the Nazis in their plans to annihilate the Jewish people or were overtaken by the Nazis and forced to institute their policies.

Other Victims of Nazi Persecution

Considered “enemies of the state” and the German people, Jews were marked for complete annihilation. However, they were not the only group persecuted by the Nazi regime.

Hitler and the Nazis feared anyone who would question their authority and challenge the laws of Germany and the Reich. Such groups of people or individuals were immediately rounded up and sent to concentration camps or killed.

The Nazis instituted this type of authoritarian regime in every country they occupied during World War II. Groups who were targeted for special persecution were homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, Poles, the Handicapped, and Sinti-Roma (Gypsies).

What is ‘Genocide’?

Genocide refers to massive crimes committed against specific groups. The word was first coined in 1944 by a Polish-Jewish laywer named Rapheal Lemkin to describe Nazi policies of systematic murder, including the destruction of European Jewry. Lemkin formed the word “genocide” by combining “geno” from the Greek word for race or tribe, with “cide” from the Latin word for killing. The term was adapted by the International Military Tribunal to describe the events of World War II and today is the official word used to describe mass killings based on race and ethnicity.
These groups were targeted by the Nazi regime and suffered much of the same fate as the Jews. They, too, were sent to concentration camps and many were murdered.

Though there is no official number of the other victims killed during World War II the Whitwell students included the number five million to represent the other victims in their paper clip count.

**About the Paper Clips Project**

*What do paper clips have to do with the Holocaust?*

Students from Whitwell Middle School discovered through research that the paper clip was originally invented in Norway, and that many Norwegian citizens wore paper clips on their shirt lapels to protest the German occupation of their country.

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**Norway and the Holocaust**

Germany invaded Norway on April 8-9, 1940, prompting the Norwegian government to escape to London and leave Norway in the hands of fascist organizer Vidkun Quisling, who appointed himself prime minister.

At the time of the German occupation approximately 1,700 Jews lived in Norway. Restrictions on Jews were sporadic until 1942 when Norwegian police, the S.S. and the German police rounded up Jews and sent them to Auschwitz.

The occupation did not sit well with many Norwegian citizens, which prompted the now famous paper clip protest. Norwegian church leaders and other segments of the population also protested the internment and deportation of Jews from Norway.

The Norwegian underground helped 900 Jews escape to neutral Sweden. However, like most occupied countries, the remaining Jews of Norway were sent to the “East” – never to return.

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Since Norwegians (see box) had utilized the paper clip as a sign of protest against the occupation, Whitwell students decided to use paper clips to represent Jews who were killed during the Holocaust.

Students began bringing in paper clips from their homes and their parents’ workplaces, and encouraged other Whitwell Middle School students to do the same.

The students soon realized it would be difficult to collect six million paper clips from the residents of Whitwell. The students and teachers needed an alternative strategy for collecting paper clips if they were to reach their goal of six million.

The students devised a plan: They wrote letters to celebrities, explained the significance of their project, the unheralded history of the paper clip, and asked the celebrities to donate their own paper clips.

The first paper clip came from Lena Glitter, a 94-year-old Holocaust survivor from Washington, D.C. who happened to be a friend of Peter and Dagmar Schroeder, the authors of *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial*.
Making a Children’s Holocaust Memorial. Soon after, other letters and postcards arrived from individuals who were also touched by the project.

Whitwell students read books on the Holocaust and corresponded with Holocaust survivors and their families, many of whom eagerly donated a paper clip on behalf of family members, friends or unknown victims of the Holocaust. Once news spread of the students’ quest for six million paper clips, thousands of people began sending paper clips to Whitwell!

The Memorial in Whitwell, Tennessee

The Children’s Holocaust Memorial at Whitwell Middle School - complete with an official German railcar provided by Peter and Dagmar Schroeder, the authors of Six Million Paper Clips, was dedicated on November 9, 2001.

More than 1,000 people attended the dedication to celebrate what a committed group of people can accomplish. Today students serve as docents for the Memorial by conducting tours, leading people in learning activities, and responding to inquiries about the Paper Clips project.

The highlight of the Memorial – the railcar – is filled with more than six million paper clips, and is surrounded by a garden of flowers, copper sculptures and an iron cubicle with one large paper clip. A metal sculpture of a boy and a girl chasing butterflies stands over the entire Memorial.

The sealed monument holds the more than eleven million paper clips collected by the town, and honors the memory of the 15,000 children that passed through the Terezin concentration camp between the years of 1942-1944. Only 100 of the 15,000 children imprisoned there survived the Holocaust.

Terezin (Theresienstadt in German) was a special camp used for propaganda purposes by the Nazis (see vocabulary on page 9). At the camp, children were part of a clandestine education program in which

Profile of Resistance: The Story of Reidar Dittman

Reidar Dittman was born January 15, 1922 to religious Lutheran parents in a small whaling town in Norway. In October 1940 Dittman was arrested for demonstrating against the Nazis by leading 4,000 young people in anti-German protest songs.

This would be the first of his arrests. After being released he joined the Norwegian Underground Resistance, working as a ship builder for the Germans. Dittman deliberately worked slowly and withheld necessary parts for the ships. When a ship sunk in the harbor, he was arrested and sentenced to life in prison. Dittman was eventually pardoned and returned to the underground movement. He was arrested again and sent to the Buchenwald concentration Camp. Dittman survived the camp and was liberated in 1945. He currently resides in Minnesota.

Rescue and Resistance

Many individuals and organizations helped Jews and stood up against the Nazis. Sadly there were not enough of these brave people to prevent the deaths of the six million Jews, but many people owe their lives to those who stood by their convictions, helped their neighbors, and fought tyranny.

As the students of Whitwell studied the Holocaust they learned how important it is to stand up for their beliefs and how one person can make a difference in the world.

If more people had taken a stand during the Holocaust it could have been prevented. This is important to remember as we try to deal with other genocides currently happening in the world. If we sit idly by, are we as guilty as those who did nothing to stop the Nazis?
they were taught to draw as a means of self expression and to help them channel their emotions in order to endure the harsh reality of the ghetto.

After the war the drawings were found in two suitcases that Mrs. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, the children’s camp teacher, filled and hid before she and the children were sent to Auschwitz.

These drawings are now part of the collection at the Jewish Museum in Prague. Some of the artwork and poetry have been published in the book “I Never Saw Another Butterfly.” The pictures are all that is left to commemorate the lives of the children who perished.

The students of Whitwell were especially moved by the poem, The Butterfly by Pavel Friedmann, a child who lived in Terezin concentration camp in 1942.

They are all that is left to commemorate the lives of the children who perished.

6-4-42

For generations of Whitwell students, a paper clip will never again be just a paper clip. Instead, a paper clip is a reminder of the importance of perseverance, empathy, tolerance, and understanding.

THE BUTTERFLY
The last, the very last, 
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow 
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing 
against a white stone ...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here, 
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.

4-6-42

Holocaust History Timeline

1933
• Adolph Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
• Germany passes laws removing Jews from government jobs, including teachers, lawyers and doctors

1935
• Germany passes The Nuremberg Laws, which deprive Jews of their German citizenship

1938
• November 9–10: “The Night of Broken Glass,” Kristallnacht. Nazis burn synagogues, loot Jewish businesses and homes, arrest and send 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps across Germany

1939
• Germany invades Poland; World War II begins

1940
• April: The first major ghetto in Lodz, Poland is sealed; The Warsaw ghetto is established in October
• German troops invade and occupy Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the northern part of France

1941
• March 24: German forces in North Africa invade Yugoslavia and Greece; in June Germany invades the Soviet Union
• The first killing center is established in Poland

1942
• Systematic mass murder of Jews in gas chambers begins at other killing centers in Poland, including Auschwitz-Birkenau; Germany deports 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka

1943
• April 19–May 16: Warsaw ghetto uprising

1944
• June: D-Day invasion of France launched

1945
• January 27: Auschwitz liberated by Russian troops
• April 30: Adolph Hitler commits suicide
• May 8: World War II officially ends in Europe

1946
• October 18: The Nuremberg Trials begin
Activity: Utilize Symbols to Memorialize the Holocaust and other Tragic Events

For Grades 6-9

The Whitwell students chose to remember those who perished in the Holocaust by collecting paper clips. They chose the paper clip based on their research.

Why do people feel the need to memorialize tragic events? Have your students:

• Think of another symbol to collect to demonstrate the six million killed in the Holocaust. Ask why they chose that symbol? What would they do with the collected items?

• Write a letter to a celebrity or politician convincing them of the need to send them the symbol they have selected to represent the six million

• List other ways students could symbolize the Holocaust? Encourage your students to explore the topic through art, poetry, creative writing or theater.

• Choose how they would want their family remembered after they are gone. Ask students how they can preserve memories and events for future generations?

• Study news reports about the genocide currently happening in Darfur in the Sudan region of Africa. Encourage students to utilize available resources to learn more about the conflict and choose a symbol or another effective tool to let others know about what is happening there.

Once students have addressed the above questions, gather them together to share their ideas and discuss other tragic events that people choose to memorialize.

Additional activities: Create an active campaign to address the genocide in Darfur, keeping in mind that awareness is only one aspect to the campaign. How can students make a difference?

Holocaust Memorials

How we remember events and individuals is a human response to handling tragedy. In recent years there has been debate about how to remember those who died on September 11, 2001.

In Whitwell, Tennessee students and parents decided to take a symbol of death (the railcar) and utilize it as a symbol of rebirth and life.

There have been many Holocaust memorials built around the world as a reminder to future generations about what happened in Europe in the 20th century in the hope that the world will not let an event like the Holocaust happen again.

Important Lessons from the Holocaust

• One person can make a difference in the life of others
• Tolerance and diversity is necessary in the world
• Perceptions and stereotypes shape our thinking
• Teachers and students can learn from one another
• A free and democratic society is not automatically sustained. Its citizens must actively work to nurture, appreciate, and protect the rights of all groups.
Some Holocaust memorials have been dedicated to the memory of those who died, and others have commemorated the struggle, anguish, or the resistance of the victims. Memorials have also been erected to honor the heroism of rescuers and liberators.

Activity: Build a Holocaust Memorial

For Grades 9-12

- Discuss the emotional responses to different types of space. How do we respond differently to open or closed areas and to public or private spaces?

Lead a discussion of ideas that were shared in class that could be translated into a memorial.

- Show the students the film For the Living, which is about the planning and construction of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The film documents the ideas that went into creating the museum. (This video is available from Tolerance Minnesota by calling 612-338-7816.)

Ask students work in groups to brainstorm the types of things and ideas they would want to utilize in their memorial, including materials, symbolism, space and architecture.

- Come together as a class to discuss the ideas

- Decide as a class the theme and ideal the students want to represent.

- Build the memorial.

Tips for Educators

In teaching about the Holocaust, it is helpful to utilize many resources, including:

- Historical documentation: The Holocaust is one of the most documented events of the 20th century;

- Literature, art, theater and film to explore the deep psychological issues raised by the Holocaust;
Liberation and Aftermath

Holocaust survivors were not the only people to witness Nazi atrocities and horrors. As World War II came to an end, Allied troops began to expose the crimes against humanity wrought by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Allied troops found piles of bones, ashes, corpses and survivors suffering from starvation and disease. The concentration camps were beyond anything the young troops could imagine.

On January 27, 1945 Russian troops liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp. It was not until April and May of 1945 that U.S. and British troops began liberating camps in Germany. Liberation was a great moment for the survivors but was by no means the end of their struggle. Many survivors faced malnutrition, typhus and other diseases caused by the conditions they had lived in for several years.

Other survivors returned to their hometowns and homes looking for family members, friends and neighbors, only to discover areas completely destroyed by the ravages of war and to learn of the horrible fates that many suffered at the hands of the Nazis.

After World War II, many Holocaust survivors were surprised by the rampant anti-Semitism that continued after the war and the removal of the Nazis from power. Fearful for their lives, many Holocaust survivors lived in displaced persons camps until they were able to immigrate to the U.S., Israel and other countries.

Survivors

Zvi Gill, a survivor, author and journalist said recently; “The Age of the Survivors is drawing to a close. Before long no one will be left to say, ‘I was there, I saw, I remember what happened.’ All that will be left will be books of literature and research, pictures and films, and multitudinous testimony. This will be a new era. The dark inheritance of the Shoah (Hebrew for Holocaust) that was so indelibly stamped on the survivors’ souls and hearts will become a sacred mission imposed upon humanity.”

The survivors of the Holocaust are the first hand witnesses, and many have shared their personal stories...
with us to remind the world of what happened during World War II and how humanity was capable of perpetrating the worst known crimes against other human beings.

One of the most moving and emotional parts of the Paper Clip Project for Whitwell students was the participation of survivors of the Holocaust. Four survivors, Samuel Sitko, Joe Grabezak, Rachel Gleitman and Bernie Igielski from Long Island, New York spoke to students, faculty and community members at a community program.

For the people of Whitwell this visit placed a name and a face to those who suffered during the Holocaust. The four survivors from New York were the first Holocaust survivors that many in the community had ever met.

Survivor Rachel Gleitman recalled standing in a gas chamber at Auschwitz with her sister and aunt; but the gas never came. Years later she learned that a mechanical error had spared their lives. Bernie Igielski also narrowly avoided being sent to a gas chamber and finally escaped during a two-mile “death march” near the end of World War II.

Joe Grabezak showed the number on his arm that he received at Auschwitz, and by the end of the day the students and townspeople of Whitwell had formed a bond with the survivors that they would never forget.

Activity: Plan a Remembrance Day

For Grades 6-12

Holocaust Remembrance Day is a day that has been set aside for remembering the victims of the Holocaust. The day also serves as a reminder to Americans of what can happen when bigotry, hatred and indifference are unchallenged.

In October of 1980 President Jimmy Carter established a Holocaust Commission to provide guidance for the national Day of Remembrance. In Hebrew

Holocaust Remembrance Day is referred to as Yom HaShoah. In 2005 the United Nations declared January 27 as the international day of Holocaust Remembrance commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz by the Russian forces.

Remembrance of victims of the Holocaust may take many forms. Have your students work together to plan a remembrance day for your school community.

Ideas for a Creating a Holocaust Memorial

• Plan a ceremony and invite the all students, parents, and local community members;

• Write letters to state government officials inviting them to the ceremony or ask them to issue a proclamation commemorating the Holocaust;

• Invite a survivor or survivors and their families to come and speak at the ceremony;

• Write special poems to be read at the ceremony or research poems and writings created in the camps and ghettos;

• Read testimonies of survivors, liberators and rescuers;

• Create an exhibit utilizing artwork and poetry;

• Plant trees or flowers to remember those who died;

• Create a class memorial to dedicate on that day.

For more information about Tolerance Minnesota please call 612-338-7816 or visit www.ToleranceMinnesota.org.
About the Authors of Six Million Paper Clips

Peter Schroeder, a German citizen, has worked as a diplomatic correspondent in Europe, Asia, Israel, and for the last 24 years in North America. Also an economist, Schroeder has authored books on German history, tolerance, the Holocaust, and European-American relations.

He and his wife divide their time between Washington, D.C.; Victoria, Canada; and Germany. The film “Paper Clips” on which the book is based, was screened by president and Mrs. Bush at the White House and was shown on HBO on Nov. 9, 2005.

Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand, a German citizen, has worked as a diplomatic correspondent all over the world. Also a psychologist, Schroeder-Hildebrand was editor in chief of a magazine for parents of handicapped children and is the author of several biographies of Holocaust survivors.

Six Million Paper Clips is published by Kar-Ben Publishing, a division of Lerner Publishing Group.

The Tolerance Minnesota Holocaust Education staff is available to help teachers and students plan a Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration.

Contact Tolerance Minnesota for additional study guides, texts and educational resources about the Holocaust.

www.ToleranceMinnesota.org

Additional Holocaust Resources


Sources for This Study Guide

Tolerance Minnesota/Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) Holocaust Education Research Center

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Florida Holocaust Museum

For more information about Tolerance Minnesota© please call 612-338-7816 or visit www.ToleranceMinnesota.org.