

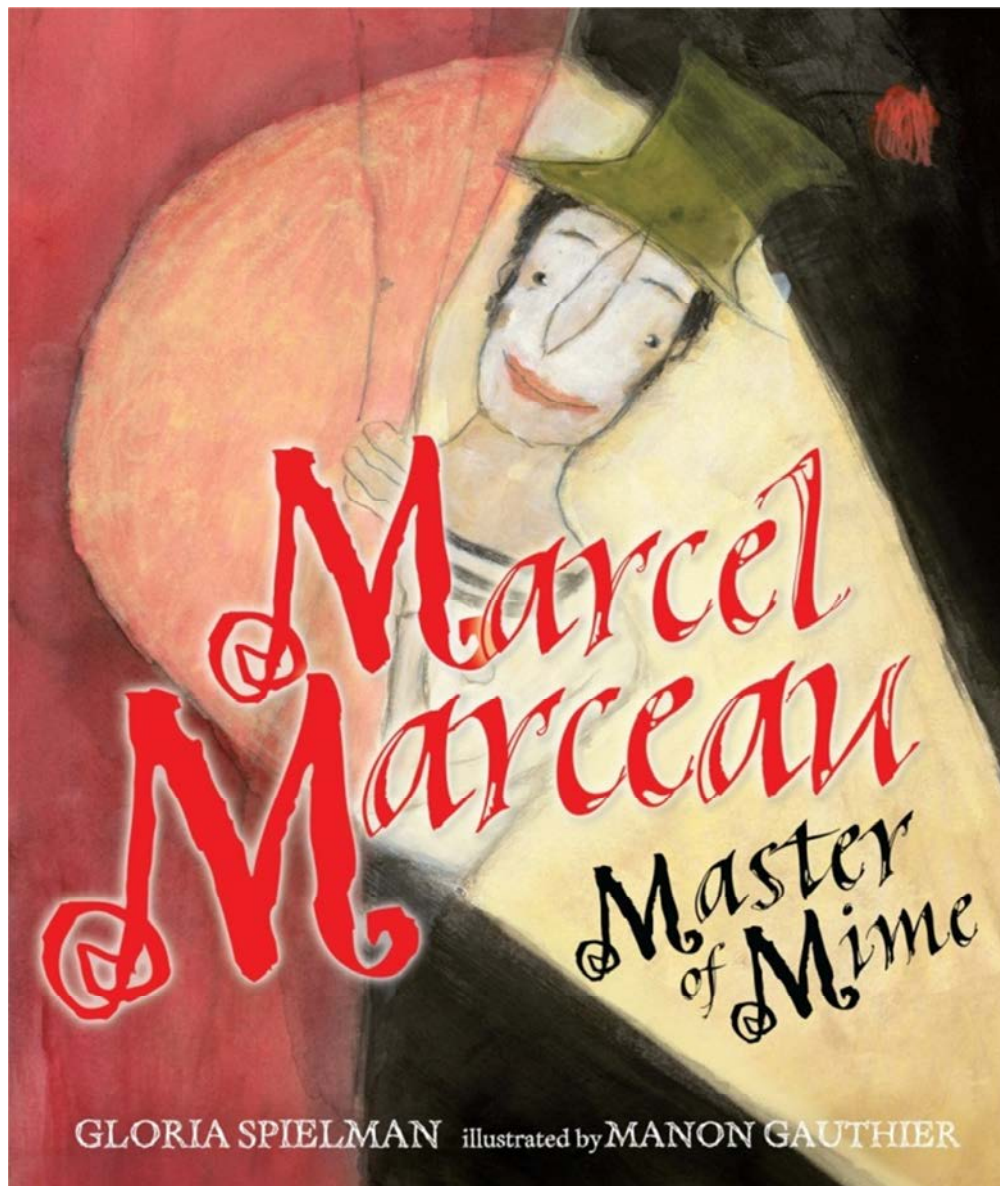
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# Why Teach About the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the systematic and deliberate murder of groups, primarily Jews, disliked by the Nazis in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Hitler and his followers convinced Germany and its allies that the murder of innocent people was necessary to create a New World Order.

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. Within classroom investigation of the Holocaust, students can realize that the Holocaust was personal, not just an historical event, and they can recognize the importance of democratic values and personal freedoms, as well as the responsibilities of citizenship in the world.

## How to Use This Guide

As younger students learn about the Holocaust, it can be difficult for them to understand the danger and how a person's dreams are used during tragedy. Using the life of Marcel Marceau, this book shows how a person's dreams and bravery can be used for the greater good of humanity during a time overrun by fear. Marcel Marceau used his talent to protect and create a safe space for Jewish children, and revived a dying art form to share his story with the world in the years to follow World War II.

Additionally, the book can be used with upper grades as supplemental material when teaching a unit about the Holocaust. Older students can benefit from thinking critically about the way a historically inspired story is presented. Students can read actively and deeply, making inferences and interpretations based on the text and visuals (and their interplay) in a picture book.

## About the Book



### Author

Gloria Spielman was born in London. She spent much of her childhood reading stories and writing her own. She has a Bachelor's degree in Hebrew and Jewish History and a Master's degree in Linguistics. She is the author of *Janusz Korczak's Children* (Kar-Ben). She lives in Israel with her five children, her American husband, David, and many books.

### About the Illustrator

Manon Gauthier lives in Montreal, Canada, where she works as a professional illustrator. A graphic designer by training, she decided to devote herself entirely to books for children in 2006. She likes mixing techniques and media. Her work has been recognized by the Governor General of Canada Awards and has won the Illustration *Jeunesse* Prize.

## Context

Setting is the time and place in a piece of literature. In *Marcel Marceau, Master of Mime*, the book begins prior to World War II and spans its duration. Marcel lives in Strasbourg, which is significant because it is on the border between France and Germany in the Alsatian region. Many Jews fled the area; those who did not were eventually deported to concentration camps when Nazis took control of the area.

# Vocabulary and Allusions

**Charlie Chaplin:** a British actor born in 1889 who rose to fame in humorous silent black and white movies in the early years of film. His style of acting influenced Marcel Marceau when he was young.

**Kosher:** following certain Jewish dietary guidelines. Marcel's father was a kosher butcher. This means that he only butchered and sold meat that followed specific rules about preparation and cleanliness.

**Nazis:** a political group who ruled Germany. Nazis wanted to have control over Europe. During World War II, Nazis waged the Holocaust, or the systematic destruction of people they disliked or disagreed with, including Jewish people.

**Ghetto:** an area of a city lived in by a minority group, especially a run-down and densely populated area lived in by a group that experiences discrimination.

**Concentration camp:** any of the prison camps used for holding or exterminating prisoners under the rule of Hitler in Nazi Germany.

**French Resistance:** groups of individuals working against the Nazis using different methods including guerrilla warfare, underground press and secret intelligence.

**Deported:** to be sent out of a country permanently by its government.

**Auschwitz:** Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp and extermination camp, located in southern Poland.

**Mime:** an actor who uses gestures and facial expressions, but no words, to convey a story.

## Questions:

### For before reading:

1. Ask students if they have ever seen a mime performance.
2. Ask students to think about what it means to have a dream and a goal.

### For reading together:

1. Why was Marcel fascinated by Charlie Chaplin?
2. What was causing Europe to change into a dangerous place?
3. Who are the Nazis? What do they want?
4. What special talents did Marcel have?
5. What brave deeds did Marcel do?
6. How did other people feel about miming? What did Marcel think?

### For post-reading discussion:

1. How do the illustrations help tell the story?
2. What does this story show about talents?
3. One of the themes of this book is performing and pretending. What examples of that do you remember? What message about performing does the book suggest?
4. What are some different examples of courage in the book?

## Suggested activities:

### Express History through Mime:

Learn about the art form mime by inviting an expert to instruct your class. Artist-in-resident programs, local theater companies and colleges/universities can be resources in your community. Also, watch footage of Marcel Marceau perform on YouTube. Create a follow up assignment which challenges students to work in groups to present a historical moment to the class using mime as a medium.

### Children's Picture Book:

Students can research and write a biography in the form of a children's picture book. Limit biography subjects in a meaningful way relevant to what you are learning in class (for example, Holocaust survivors, people involved in World War II, etc.).

### String Timeline:

Along the walls of a classroom, attach string so that it is taut and accessible by students. Give each student five index cards and five paper clips. Ask students to research a person (give clear parameters or assign topics) and ask students to identify and mark on the cards:

1. Birthdate and description of subject's childhood.
2. Pivotal moment from subject's childhood.
3. Example of a time the subject took initiative toward fulfilling a goal.
4. A description of the subject's greatest accomplishment.
5. Date of death (if relevant) and influence the person had on others.

Ask students to label each card with their subjects' names. Students should place index cards on the string timeline in the appropriate places. The class can walk through the gallery to see the progression of all their subjects and to understand the relative similarities and differences in their subjects.

### Biography Cocoa Klatsch:

Students independently research and write a biography about a subject. In addition, students work together as a class to create a list of 5-10 questions that they each must write out answers for "as" their subject. Appropriate questions will depend on your class' curricula, but might include: How did World War II affect your life? What are your dreams for the future?, et cetera. Students will "invite" their subjects to come to class to share cocoa and discuss their lives and historical events. Students should come in costume, well prepared to talk about their subjects' lives, accomplishments and thoughts on historical events of their lifetimes while enjoying cocoa and cookies.

### Living wax museum:

Students independently research biographies and create display boards with information about their subjects' lives. Students dress up as their subjects and "become" them in a living wax museum. As "museum patrons" stroll around the exhibits, the wax figures come to life and share the details of their autobiographies.