

Hana's Suitcase

Resources for Classroom Use

Prepared in May 2010 for the Holocaust Institute of Western Australia
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by Shirley Atlas

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Hana's Suitcase-Resources for Classroom Use

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Following on from the success of the *Hana's Suitcase* presentations in Perth in 2010, the *Holocaust Institute of Western Australia* has produced an educational booklet for use in schools.

The story of *Hana's Suitcase* begins with Fumiko Ishioka, Curator of the *Tokyo Holocaust Centre*. Her determination to teach Japanese children of the plight of millions of Jewish children in World War 2, led to the acquisition of a suitcase which had belonged to Hana Brady a young Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia, who was murdered soon after arriving in Auschwitz in 1944. Fumiko's tireless efforts to uncover Hana's story eventually resulted in her discovery of Hana's older brother George, alive and living in Canada. Their collaboration ultimately resulted in the writing of this very moving story by Karen Levine

The story, told in many forms - a book, a play and a documentary - has travelled to many schools throughout the world.

The educational booklet was prepared by Shirley Atlas, Committee member of the Holocaust Institute and Jewish Studies Teacher at Carmel School, for distribution to all Secondary Schools in Western Australia. Printing was kindly donated by Pilpel Print.

The booklet is designed for use in years 6 -12 and contains activities that specifically target this age group. These activities are educational as well as stimulating and evocative. Through this medium, children receive factual and accurate information about the Holocaust, but are also challenged to examine the wider issues of human rights, prejudice, racism and genocide and their impact on individuals, both victims and perpetrators, and on society in general.

It is an outstanding resource and it is hoped that it will be widely used throughout schools in Western Australia.

Gavin Chapeikin

Committee Member, Holocaust Institute of WA

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SYNOPSIS OF STORY

This remarkable and true story attempts to piece together the life of Hana Brady who was murdered at Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944, aged 13, having spent 2 years in Theresienstadt concentration camp in Prague. Born in the Czechoslovakian city of Nove Mesto, Hana's carefree childhood is cut short when Hitler comes to power. At first, the laws restricting Jews are a nuisance, but as the months roll on, Hana and her brother George find that they can no longer go to the movies, play in the park, skate on the lake or even go to school. Her friends, though faithful at first, become afraid to associate with her and she finds herself isolated and lonely.

Shortly after this, Hana's mother is taken to Ravensbruck women's concentration camp in Germany. She never sees her again. Within months, their father Karel is also taken from them, leaving Hana and George alone in the world. Although a non-Jewish uncle takes them in, it is not long before they, too, are transported to Theresienstadt. Hana is murdered two years later on her arrival at Auschwitz.

Half way around the world from the devastation of Europe and 50 years later, Fumiko Ishioka, museum curator of the Tokyo Holocaust Centre, inspired by the testimonies of Holocaust survivors she meets at a conference in Israel, becomes determined to teach Japanese children of the plight of millions of Jewish children in World War 2.

From Auschwitz she acquires a few artefacts: a child's sock, a shoe, a child's sweater, an empty can of Zyklon B poisonous gas and Hana's suitcase, the first items for her Holocaust exhibit. Fumiko is determined to discover the identity of the owner of the suitcase, in order to give a face and a life to this child and explores many avenues in her search for information.

On a trip to Czechoslovakia and the museum of Theresienstadt, Fumiko is delighted to learn that Hana's older brother, George, is alive and living in Canada. Her letters to George eventually result in his trip to Japan and to the writing of this moving story by author Karen Levine - a testimony to the life of Hana and other children like her.

ENGLISH/SOSE ACTIVITIES

These activities have been specifically designed for use with students from Years 6-9.

- **Show bag** -This activity focuses on the centrality of the suitcase as representing Hana's life. Students are to select 4 or 5 objects that are significant in their own lives, for example: a shawl belonging to a grandmother, a prayer book, a stuffed toy, a favourite recipe etc. These are placed in a suitably decorated bag. Students then do an oral or written presentation telling the story of their lives as represented by the objects in their bag.
- **Cover** - Students should design a cover for a book about themselves. A written piece explaining how the cover reflects the student's life or an oral presentation on their life should accompany this. A classroom noticeboard can then be dedicated to the 'covers' created.

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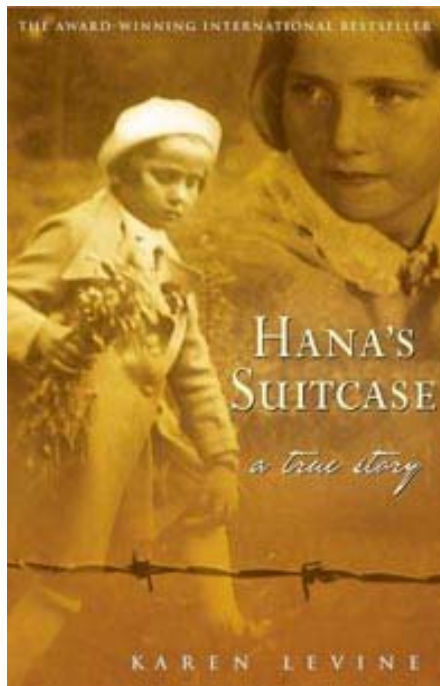
DISCUSSION – USE OF IMAGES

A prominent feature of this book is the use of pictures, which have been incorporated within the narrative. Clearly Levine wants readers to understand that this is a true story and to this end she provides photos and documentation of both Hana and Fumiko's story. Discuss how the photos work in creating this sense of a true story using some of the following prompts:

- What is the purpose of the pictures in this book?
- How do they add to the Hana/Fumiko story?
- How do they add to our understanding of the historical events at that time?
- What do we learn from the pictures which cannot be learned from text alone?

The Cover:

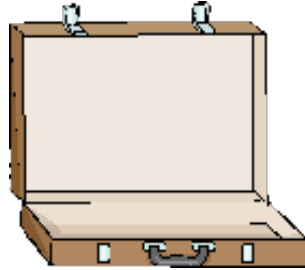
- Draw students' attention to the cover and highlight the fact that it is a collage of 3 different images which are used to encapsulate Hana's life – 2 photographs of Hana with an image of barbed wire in the foreground.
- What purpose should a cover serve?
- What purpose does *this* cover serve?
- What information is conveyed in this cover?
- Do you think the cover picture reflects your understanding of Hana's character? If not, which other photos from the book would you have selected? Why?



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This activity was designed by Fumiko Ishioka and Lara Brady, George Brady's daughter and is a great way for students to interact with Fumiko and Lara and make the experience "real".

What would you like to put inside "Hana's Suitcase"?



Since Hana's brother, George Brady, began sharing his memories with us in 2001, Hana's Suitcase has begun its new journey. It has been travelling to many schools. The story has also been told by a book, a documentary, and a play. So many students have learned about Hana and shared with us their own ideas on what they can do to make this world a better place. Hana's Suitcase is no longer empty. It is filled not just with sad memories, but with hope for the future.

What message would *you* like to put inside "Hana's Suitcase"?

Send us your own unique idea on what you believe you can do to make this world a better place. You can express your ideas with drawings, poems, or photos.

E-mail them to tokyoholocaustcenter@gmail.com



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SOSE ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. Discuss other genocides from the 20th Century. Explain how genocides that have taken place since 1900 have affected not only the victims and perpetrators but also the world at large (e.g., famine in Ukraine, the Holocaust, mass executions under Pol Pot, Rwandan genocide, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia).

Some quotes relating to the story to discuss:

- “We went through the selection process, with the thumb they just point to the left or right. At the time I did not know it, but to the right meant living and hard labour, to the left meant you went straight to the gas chamber.”
George Brady speaking about arriving at Auschwitz.
- “I am a Hiroshima survivor. I only learned about the Holocaust when I went to Europe. So, when the Holocaust Centre opened, I came and offered my help. Hiroshima survivors were not singled out as victims. We Japanese started the war; we did not try to stop it. Our sins are big. The Holocaust victims are not the same. They were singled out because they were Jewish. That is the difference.”
Machiyo Kurokawa, Holocaust Centre board member.
- “I am amazed that these people resisted. That they ever dared, that they were not too afraid of what would happen to them. Their courage.”
Students studying Hana's Suitcase.
- “When I go to Auschwitz and Hitler and the Nazis are not here, and I am here, they didn't manage to put me away. Somehow, I managed to escape the fate and that I am here to tell the story makes me feel I am the victor.”
George Brady speaking at Auschwitz.
- “Hana's story taught us so many things, but George's story taught us the importance of not giving up. I would like to grow up and not give up.”
Japanese student.
- “I have seen enough death. We must not allow such a tragedy to happen again. We need to keep telling children about the war, about the Holocaust, so we can build peace.”
Machiyo Kurokawa, Holocaust Centre board member.

2. Identify newspaper articles that deal with human rights issues, prejudice, ethnic wars, anti-Semitism, racism, and inequality and relate recurrent themes of prejudice existent in our society today with the Holocaust.

Process:

1. Over a two-week period, have students scan local and national newspapers, current events and news magazines and news websites for articles that focus on human rights issues, prejudice and the oppression of a group of people.
 - a. Have students gather as many articles as they can – a minimum of five.
 - b. The Amnesty International website maintains a library of past news releases and offers an excellent page of links to related human rights websites.
2. Have students write a brief summary of each article, and identify the type of prejudice, oppression, or human rights issue they have discovered in the article.
3. Have students paste their articles and summaries on a poster board, so they can all be viewed and compared easily.

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4. Have students share their posters with the class, briefly summarizing the prejudice and human rights issue highlighted in each article, and making general comparisons regarding all of their articles.
5. Hold a discussion with the class, comparing prejudice and oppression in current events with those that initiated the Holocaust. How are the two situations similar? How are they different? Why is prejudice and inequality ever present? Are there any solutions?

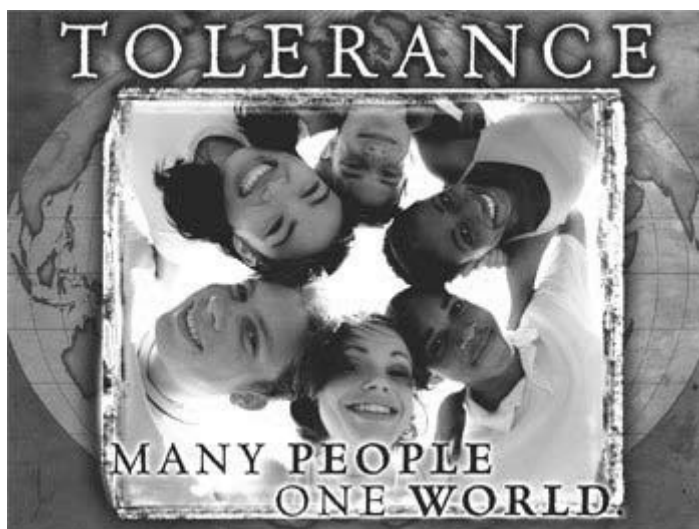
ACTIVITIES FOR RELIGION AND LIFE (BELIEFS AND VALUES)

Explain the importance of an individual's personal experience as a child (e.g., development of trust, expectations of having needs met, having strong role models) as an influence on his or her later attitude and behaviour towards children.

Explain the nature and role of relationships and the importance of reciprocity in meeting the social and emotional needs of individuals, families, and groups.

Explain the relationship between prejudice and discrimination, and assess the impact of both on ideas of self-worth; assess the role of stereotyping as a barrier to full participation in society.

How important is it for us to tell the stories of Holocaust survivors? Why is the story of Hana and George so compelling?



SOURCES

Hana's Suitcase, Karen Levine, Allen & Unwin, 2003, ISBN 978-1-74114-167-2

http://www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781741141672.pdf

http://www.hotdocs.ca/resources/images/uploads/HANNA_SUITCASE_EduPackage.pdf

<http://www.socstrp.org/issues/PDF/2.1.10.pdf>