

Teaching the Holocaust in Elementary School

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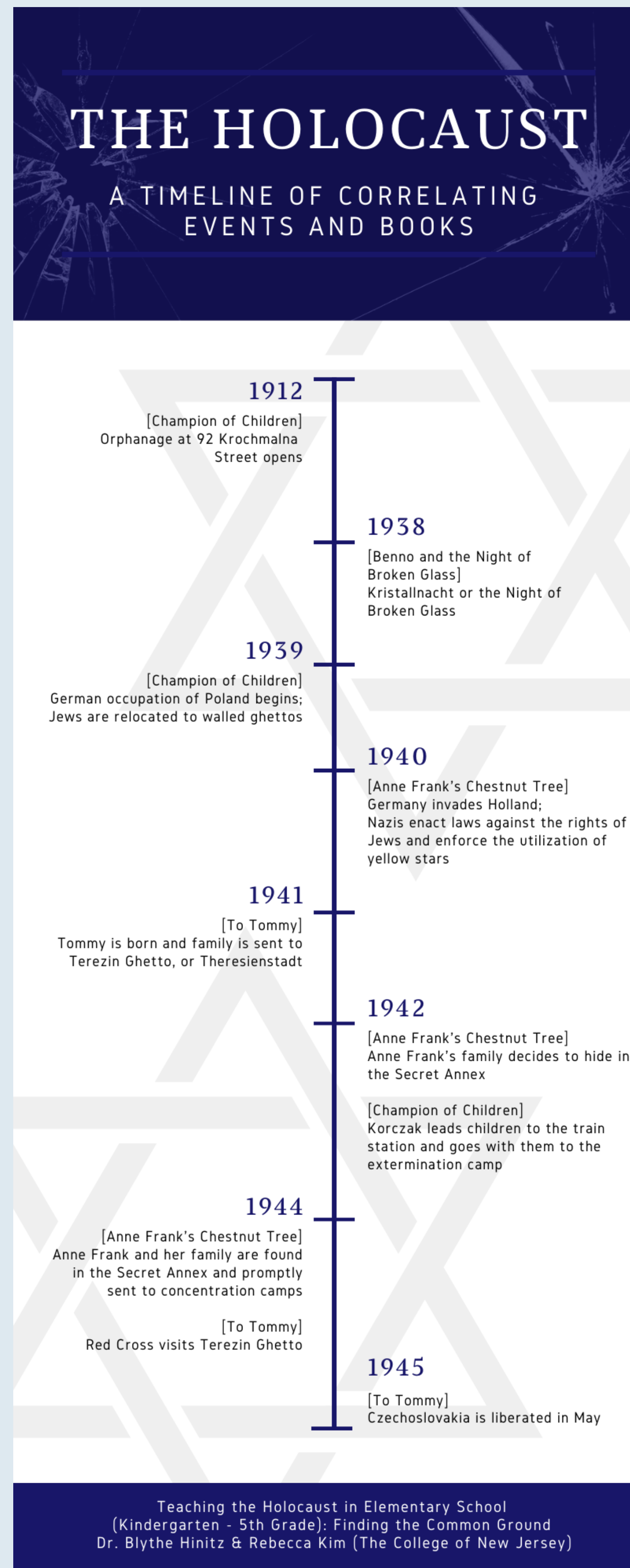
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Abstract

Within the field of elementary education, Holocaust education is often looked upon with uncertainty due to the lack of substantial knowledge regarding the integration of such a serious topic into elementary school curriculums. From reviewing a sample of elementary school classrooms, it is apparent that elementary educators are quite oblivious to the strategies and methods available to promote student awareness of the aforementioned content. Consequently, Holocaust education is not nearly as present as it should be in elementary classrooms across the State of New Jersey, despite the establishment of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education in the New Jersey Department of Education. As elementary education highly emphasizes and accentuates the need for proper literacy development, there is potential for children's literature to be applied as a vehicle for educating young students about the Holocaust.

References

- (1) Bogacki, T. (2009). *The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux- Frances Foster Books.
- (2) Fritta, B. (2010). *Tommy*. (E. Tokovsky, & S. Kaplamsky, Trans.) Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Vashem, The International School for Holocaust Studies.
- (3) Kohuth, J. (2013). *Anne Frank's Chestnut Tree*. NY: Random House.
- (4) Wiviott, M. (2010). *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass*. Minneapolis, MN: KAR-BEN Publishing [A division of Lerner Publishing Group].



Children's Literature and Trade Books

To Tommy, For His Third Birthday by Bedřich Fritta

In order to commemorate the third birthday of his son, Tommy, Bedřich Fritta illustrated a series of ink drawings during his time at the Theresienstadt ghetto. The settings of Fritta's illustrations dwell in the space between fantasy and reality, testifying to the artist's hopes and dreams for his young son, despite their harsh circumstances.

The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak by Tomek Bogacki

The story of Janusz Korczak, a man who dedicated himself to loving the orphaned Jewish children of Poland, is explored in this children's picture book. Tomek Bogacki produces a general perspective into the life of this extraordinary historical figure who refused to abandon his children.

Benno and the Night of Broken Glass by Meg Wiviott

Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, is often considered to be "the beginning of the end." Told through the perspective of a stray cat named Benno, the picture book provides vivid details and illustrations that exposes the grimness that was Kristallnacht.

Anne Frank's Chestnut Tree by Jane Kohuth

The chestnut tree, mentioned several times in Anne Frank's diary entries, takes the spotlight in this children's picture book by Jane Kohuth. Having encouraged the young Jewish author to remain hopeful during her time in the Secret Annex, the chestnut tree remains a symbol of inspiration.

Usage of Timeline

The timeline seeks to produce a visible flow of the historical events detailed in all four children's picture books. The integration of the books into one timeline allows educators to visualize the connections amongst the various historical figures present during the Holocaust.