

**HOLOCAUST STUDIES UNIT**  
**Twelfth Grade English Curriculum – Survival in Auschwitz**

**GOAL:**

The overall goal of the twelfth grade English unit is for students to analyze the reality of genocide.

**TEXTBOOK CONNECTIONS:**

Prentice Hall Literature, The British Tradition, Unit 6, page 1064, *Wartime Speech*, Sir Winston Churchill, BBC, London, 19 May 1940 and page 1032, *The Demon Lover*, Elizabeth Bowen

In the 1930s, Sir Winston Churchill warned against the ominous ambitions of the Nazis. In his famous radio address, Churchill vigorously spoke out against Nazi invasion of European countries. While Churchill made this stirring speech in 1940, the Nazis were in the midst of the opening a new death camp, Auschwitz. Holocaust Survivor and Author, Primo Levi describes the horror of his experience as a prisoner of Auschwitz in *Survival in Auschwitz*. Read Churchill's speech and *Survival in Auschwitz*. In his speech, Churchill explains that even the most drastic of measures are needed which are no way a comparison to "the struggle for life and honor, for right and freedom..." This address was given before most of the Holocaust victims were murdered. What were the world's reactions to this speech? Was this speech foreshadowing events to come or were Nazi atrocities impossible to predict? Elizabeth Bowen wrote *The Demon Lover* based on her experience growing up in London during "the Blitz" from September 1940 to May 1941. Compare and Contrast the World War II experience in Britain to that of the Nazi-occupied countries and of the Holocaust Survivors in those countries.

**LANGUAGE ARTS BENCHMARK:**

LA.E. 2.4.1. The student analyzes the effectiveness of complex elements of plot, such as setting, major events, problems, conflicts, and resolutions..

**CHARACTER EDUCATION CORRELATION:**

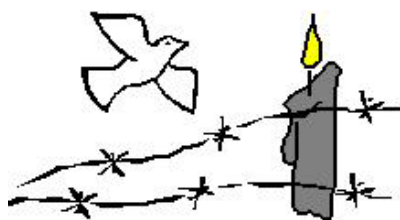
PILLARS: Responsibility, Fairness, Citizenship, and Respect

**ESOL STRATEGIES:**

Read Alouds, Modeling, Visuals, Realia, Alternative Assessment, Prior Knowledge

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Holocaust Studies

To borrow class sets of books, videos, or posters call the Lending Library, Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education at Florida Atlantic University:  
(561)-297-2929, or email [rgatens@fau.edu](mailto:rgatens@fau.edu).  
One copy of this book is housed in the media center of all schools.

**ACTIVITY ONE**

**Objectives**

- To understand what motivated Levi's writing.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Map Handout
- Levi Biography Handout/Transparency
- Background/Setting Information – Survival in Auschwitz Handout/Transparency
- Vocabulary Transparency
- Journal Handout

**Homework**

- Read Survival in Auschwitz pages 22-41, Chapters 2 and 3.
- Journals: Students should create a reading journal in which they trace the dehumanization acts/destruction of humanity in the Lager and give their own critical opinion of the chapter. Students may use their own paper, or use the handout provided on page 13.

**Activities**

1. Assess student knowledge about the Holocaust by conducting a class KWL. Show map on page 10 to refresh students about the Allied and Axis powers and the setting of Survival in Auschwitz, Poland. Point out to students the author of this story, Primo Levi, was deported there from Italy.
2. Provide students with a sketch of the author's life. See Transparency page 11.

Primo Levi (1919-1987) was born in Turin, Italy and graduated summa cum laude from the University there in 1941 majoring in chemistry. An assimilated Jew with a background in the classics, he believed in the scientific/humanistic ideal of "man the maker of all things." He was a member of "Guistizia e Libertá", Justice and Liberty, an anti-Fascist resistance group, and was arrested in the foot hills of the Alps on December 13, 1943. He was held in a camp at Fossoli until deported to Auschwitz on February 22, 1944. He remained there from February 26, 1944, until January 12, 1945 when he was freed by the Russian army. After a nine-month journey home, he resumed his life in Turin where he married and worked as a chemist for a local paint company. From 1975 until his death in 1987, he devoted himself to his writing. Levi suffered from depression and ill health. In 1987, Levi committed suicide. In addition to *Survival in Auschwitz* published in 1947, Levi authored *The Reawakening* (1963), *Moments of Reprieve* (1986), *The Periodic Table* (1975), and *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986). *Survival in Auschwitz* was originally titled *If This Is a Man*. Students need to keep the significance of the original title in mind as they read.

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3. Use the transparency on page 12 to provide students with background information about Holocaust facts and concepts that will be developed in the book.
4. Introduce the reading of the book from the poem aloud on page 11 of Survival in Auschwitz, and then have the students read it silently. Discuss:
  - **Why is there no title to the poem?** *Inform students that the real title, “Shema” is omitted. Levi has titled this poem after a Jewish prayer. “Shema means “hear, listen” in Hebrew. The theme of Levi’s poem parallels this Jewish prayer, which is interesting because Levi himself is not religious.*
  - **To whom is the poem addressed?** *To humanity; to those who have not suffered*
  - **Using the words in the poem, what indignities have men endured?** *Working under terrible conditions, fighting for food, dying on someone’s whim, being degraded and humiliated*
  - **What is his curse on humanity?** *Mankind must think about how this happened and prevent a future occurrence.*
  - **Why would Levi write a poem with such a focus and use it as the forward to this memoir?** *The poem could have been used as the theme for the importance of remembering, the dire consequences of forgetting, and/or the responsibility of each person to fight against tyranny.*
  - **Notice line 5 “Consider if this is a man.” Ask students to look on the copyright page for a similar title.** *Inform students that If This Is A Man was the original title of Levi’s novel.*
  - **Which “man” is Levi referring to?** *He could be referring to himself and his own degradation in the camp, or any other individual.*
  - **Why do you think the title of Levi’s original story changed?** *Point out to students that the publishers may have changed this title to highlight Levi’s intricate themes throughout the book more clearly – further discussion of the two titles will follow.*
  - **What tone does the original title infer about the focus of the novel?** *The original title suggested the assault of one individual and his war with inhumanity.*
  - **What tone does the new title, Survival in Auschwitz, and subtitle, The Nazi Assault on Humanity, suggest about the focus of the novel?** *The new title incorporates more than just one individual’s struggle. It incorporates the Nazi’s assault on not just men, women, and children, but on humanity itself. The new title suggests that the theme of the book is not only to tell the story of one man’s experience, but also to awaken the world to the affects of such a political/prison system on human beings and warn of dangers unleashed by a totalitarian*

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system. Thus, this memoir provides a civic message as well as informing as to what the Lager was on his personal level.

- **Think about the word *Survival* and think about the Holocaust; how many different ways could one ‘survive’ the Holocaust?** *Levi will discuss in the story personal survival tactics, group survival tactics, pure physical survival, and moral/emotional survival – while reading the novel, please note when these triumphs, sometimes very small, occur. Furthermore, the human race as a whole must survive the Holocaust in order to not repeat the injustice and hate that killed millions.*
5. As an additional assignment, students can do outside research and read Levi’s other poems, such as “Buna,” a poem about the camp in which Levi was assigned. The poem can be found in Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness edited by Carolyn Forché.
  6. Before reading, introduce and discuss important vocabulary words and concepts. See page 13.
  7. Read the author’s preface aloud. Discuss:
    - **What is meant by, “a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind”?** *Levi wants to examine a xenophobic society in which those considered outsiders are the enemy, and any behavior against them is not only accepted, but encouraged.*
    - **What do you believe is the source of these feelings?** *Levi believes that the idea (every stranger is an enemy) held by many people and many nations, taken to its extreme, can lead to genocide. People fear those who are different and look for scapegoats they can blame for their own failures. The irony is that Levi and many other assimilated Jews did not consider themselves ‘strangers’ in their own countries.*
    - **What is a syllogism?** *A syllogism stems from the philosopher, Socrates. It is a pattern of reasoning in which the presence of a connecting idea in two separate sentences allows us to come up with a new sentence that will be true if the first two (the premises) are true. The most famous syllogism of all is the model proposed by Aristotle himself (the first one):*

<i>All men are mortal.</i>	<i>All dogs have ears.</i>
<i>Socrates is a man.</i>	<i>Human beings have ears.</i>
<i>Therefore, Socrates is mortal.</i>	<i>Therefore, human beings are dogs.</i>
    - *In the first syllogism, the connecting idea (or “middle term”) is “man.” Since there are a number of ways each statement could be developed (“Some men are mortal,” “No men are mortal,” etc.), Aristotle attempted to see which general patterns allowed a valid conclusion. What is especially important is that he saw that validity did not depend on the actual truth of the statements, as we can see from the second example above about dogs and humans.*

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- **What is the syllogism Levi uses in the novel? Is his syllogism valid and/or truthful?**

*Humans are treated with humanity.*

*Jews and anti-socials are not human,*

*Therefore, Jews and anti-socials are treated inhumanely. (Concentration camps)*

- **What do you think is Levi's primary purpose for writing?** *Levi is writing out of a need to bear witness and achieve "interior liberation." He also may need to free himself from what is known as "Survivor's Guilt," which is a legacy of the Nazi system haunting many survivors as long as they live. Although physically free, psychologically Levi still is plagued by memories of Auschwitz and what the Holocaust reveals about the human condition.*
- **Why does Levi feel lucky that the officers decided they needed a larger work force?** *In the Preface, Levi tells us he is lucky that officials decided they needed a larger work force for the war industry; otherwise, he would have died more quickly from smaller rations or have been sent to death immediately after disembarking.*

8. Have students silently read Chapter 1, "The Journey," on pages 13-21. Discuss:

- **What picture do you draw of Primo Levi and the surrounding setting?** *Students should see Levi as a 24-year old man subjected to racial laws between 1939-1943; he was involved in the fate of his country and would have been killed had he admitted his affiliation with the resistance group.*
- **How involved was Levi in the war effort?** *The beginning of Chapter One states that he was involved with a partisan (resistance/freedom fighter) band called, Justice and Liberty. The group was planning in the mountains of Italy when discovered by a Fascist Militia, Nazi supporters.*
- **How is Levi's style and in what tense is the book written?** *He is precise; the book is written in the present tense and he calmly and soberly tells the reader specifics and details.*
- **How is the book modeled?** *It's modeled in chapters based on the weekly production report used in a factory; it's detached and unsentimental. Each chapter focuses on information about its title and provides a chronological picture of life in the Lager. He provides information about the harsh reality of the daily struggle to survive and maintaining one's humanity. He will accomplish this through vignettes and character analysis, which illustrate the dynamics of camp life. Levi is the voice of the witness.*
- **What have the 650 Italian Jews been told?** *They are to prepare for a two-week journey to an unknown destination; however, many know they are on their way to death.*

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- **How do they prepare for their departure?** *Mothers cook food and pack for the trip; some men pray; others get drunk. Interestingly, women are all imaged as nurturing mothers as he expects them to be, while men act quite individually. Point out that this is the last warmth Levi will see for over a year.*
- **What emotional range do people run?** *Resigned, rebellious, alone, panic; even though some realize that they are facing death, there is a sense of hope that they will live if they do what they have been told.*
- **In what way do the Nazis victimize Jews prior to their departure?** *If all Jews don't appear, ten will be shot for each person missing.*
- **Does Levi's connection to the past of the Jewish people seem unusual?** *He previously had little connection to his Jewish faith; yet, he realizes that he will be sharing the fate of his fellow Jews who have been persecuted for centuries. While reviewing vocabulary, the teacher has already discussed assimilation. The teacher can discuss the fact that many Jews in Western Europe became assimilated over the years; many of whom would consider themselves Italian (or their home country's nationality) first, then Jewish.*
- **Why do people view Jews as different?** *As Levi believes, people view "others" as enemies. A person that believes this would view anyone who has different customs, religious practices, and different values than themselves as "strangers" and "enemies." Jews have different traditional and cultural customs than other religions. Antisemitism, the longest lasting pathology in history, nourishes the practice of distancing oneself from those considered to be "the other."*
- **What language used by the Germans promotes a sense of degradation and dehumanization?** *They refer to the Jews as "pieces" thus, reducing them to inventory – not people. Discuss the motivation behind such a term and refer back to the syllogism. If Jews are not considered human, then they need not evoke empathy. It is easier to strip them of their dignity, possessions, and their lives.*
- **What simile and metaphor does Levi use to describe the transport?** *"Goods wagon closed from the outside, with men, women, and children pressed together without pity, like cheap merchandise for a journey towards nothingness." Although "like cheap merchandise is a simile for how the people are pushed in together, Levi is using a direct metaphor of the factory model. Ask students to explain this. Jews are the "cheap merchandise," and the business is*

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*the death business. They are packed the way one might pack an item which doesn't damage; this human cargo is treated like objects.*

- **How does Levi personify “night” in this section?** *He draws attention to the fate of others in his car. He says that they never learned specifics, but, “the night swallowed them up.”*
- **What other author/survivor also used “night” as a metaphor in a Holocaust memoir?** *Elie Wiesel – Night.*
- **What picture does Levi paint of the first people he encounters upon disembarking?** *He sees strange looking inmates whose role is to empty the cars and remove the luggage to where it will be opened and sorted. Clothing in good shape will be sent to Germany and recycled for those who lost their possessions in the Allied bombings. Of the 650 deported with Levi, 96 men and 29 women went to the labor camp; the rest died in the gas chambers. Of the 650, twenty-three came home to Italy.*
- **With hindsight, what does Levi realize about these men?** *Levi realizes that a metamorphosis awaits him; by the next day, he would look like them, in rags, filthy, apart from humanity. Point out that the Nazis use pointless brutality toward these people; brutality was important for those dealing with Jews. In order for them to do their jobs more effectively, they need to dehumanize their victims.*
- **Why does Levi use classical mythological and Dante’s Inferno references in this section? Why not old Jewish/Biblical references?** *Levi references mythology and the Italian writer Dante rather than Jewish writers who wrote in Yiddish because he has grown up in Italy, studied in Italy, and speaks Italian; Levi’s roots are in the Western cultural heritage rather than in Eastern Europe. He considers himself culturally and ethnically Jewish, but is “assimilated” into the Italian culture and is not necessarily religious.*
- **Who is Charon?** *According to Greek mythology, when someone dies, Hermes, the messenger god, guides the dead to the boundary of the underworld, the river Styx where the ferryman Charon ferries those who could pay the fare. In the ancient world people are buried with coins on their eyes or under their tongue to pay this fee; those who do not have it wander until they find the pauper’s entrance to Hades. Explain that hell is under the control of Hades, the lord of the underworld, who lives in a dark palace with his wife Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the Harvest. For the six months of the year Persephone spends with her husband, Demeter grieves for her, but when she returns, the fields bloom with Demeter’s happiness.*



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9. Explain to students the concept of the journal, how it will be graded, and how they will track the instances of man's inhumanity against man in the book. The attached worksheet on page 14 may be used for clarity, or the students may chart on their own piece of paper. Students will be recording the dehumanization tactics used against the prisoners of the Lager, and the destruction of humanity as a whole throughout the chapters of the novel. Also, students will be giving their critical opinion of the chapter, and towards the end of the novel, be able to record examples that helped Levi to reconnect with his own humanity. If the teacher chooses, students may be able to use this journal on the final essay examination.

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## Primo Levi Biography

From Professor David Vander Velde: <http://kunmr2.chem.ukans.edu/~dave/levi.html>

Primo Levi (1919-1987) lived almost his entire life in the same apartment building on Corso Re Umberto in Turin, Italy. He received a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Turin in 1942. After the Second World War, he developed a process for varnishing copper wire, and eventually became manager of the manufacturing plant where the process was commercialized. During his career as an industrial chemist, he wrote only in his spare time, and apparently never considered a career as a fulltime writer. His study, the place where he wrote all his books, was the room where he had been born.



*Primo Levi in his study; photo nsanti/Sygma*

Levi might never have written at all, or been published, except for the time he spent away from Turin: he survived a year in Auschwitz and eight months afterwards as a refugee in Russia before he could make his way home. Biographer Myriam Anissimov, who wrote Primo Levi: Tragedy of An Optimist, states, *"Levi needed to tell his story and to be listened to. 'I returned from the camp with an absolute, pathological narrative charge.'"*

His survival in the camp depended on several chance factors; encountering an Italian POW, a Piedmontese bricklayer, who at the risk of his own life stole extra soup to sustain Levi and a friend; being one of three Jewish inmates chosen to work in a chemistry laboratory in the camp, so he spent the winter of 1944-45 working in a heated building rather than doing manual labor outside in the equivalent of pajamas; contracting scarlet fever just before the Russians reached the camp, thus avoiding the death march that the healthier inmates faced; the Germans ordered to kill all the remaining prisoners instead fled from the Russians. But without much doubt, it was his determination to survive and bear witness to what he had seen that was the biggest factor. His books, Survival in Auschwitz, The Truce, The Drowned and the Saved, and The Periodic Table chronicle those events, in crystal clear prose. Levi's approach to science and to writing were one and the same. He wanted to bring the same precision of observation and expression to both.

Levi jumped to his death in his apartment building in 1987. Because he left no note behind, it will always be a matter of speculation to what extent Holocaust denial, and widespread indifference about the events he lived through, led to his suicide. He did not ever choose categorically to forgive his oppressors; but neither did he categorically refuse to forgive. "Forgiveness is not a word of mine. It is wished upon me, because all the letters I receive, especially from young Catholic readers, take that stance. They ask me if I have forgiven. I believe that I am a just man, in my own way. I can forgive one man and not another. I can only consider justice case by case."

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

SURVIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ: The Nazi Assault on Humanity

(If This Is A Man)

- **The rise of the Nazi party, the Holocaust, and World War II occurred from the years of 1933-1945.**
- **Hatred of Jews because of their religion was not invented at this time, but had roots stemming from 2000 years ago (i.e. Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, Martin Luther).**
- **Antisemitism, or, hatred of Jews as a race of people, partners with the false idea that Jews are a race and that there are races of individuals that are inferior to other's races.**
- **Even in America at this time, our southern schools were still segregated and new immigrants received a complete lack of respect and prosperity from her citizens.**
- **Many citizens, both in America and in Europe, became “assimilated” with the culture in which they lived. Many would “drop” traditional aspects of their own culture, even religious customs, and become part of “mainstream” society. Those that kept their customs, even their language, may have been persecuted for it.**
- **Hitler began taking over countries and imprisoning their Jews, Gypsies, and others deemed “sub-human” to the Aryan Race beginning with Poland and continuing through the remainder of Europe and Asia.**
- **Even Jews who “looked-Aryan” and did not practice their religion were targeted.**
- **Hitler believed, falsely, that being Jewish was a race, and that nothing a person could do, including conversion, would change that. This concept is not true; there are Jews of every race and culture.**
- **Hitler made “non-aggression” pacts with both Russia (Stalin) and Italy (Mussolini) but sinisterly broke both pacts.**
- **Fascists stationed in Italy took Levi in 1943. He was deported to Auschwitz one year later - one year before the end of the war.**

## VOCABULARY

**FASCIST** - a believer of fascism or other right-wing authoritarian, dictatorship views

**LAGER** – Levi’s name for the camp – from old German “storehouse.”

**JEWISH RACE** – a falsity; there is no such thing as a Jewish race; Jewish identity is based on culture, common ancestry, tradition, and/or the religion of Judaism.

**RACIAL LAWS** – Laws that are made by nations to separate individuals or restrict freedoms and rights to certain individuals - Hitler’s Racial Laws were called the Nuremberg Laws.

**ANTITHESIS** - a contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangements of words, or sentences (example: they promised freedom and provided slavery)

**ASSIMILATION** – the adaptation of the mainstream culture

**ORGANIZED** – a concept applied in “survival” when a person gains favor from those in a more powerful position through his/her ingenuity.

**XENOPHOBIA** – fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign

**YIDDISH** – High German language written in Hebrew characters that was spoken by many Jews and particularly Jews of central and eastern European origin. The majority of the Yiddish speaking population was lost when two-thirds of European Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

**TORAH** – The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. The entire body of religious law and learning including both sacred literature and oral tradition.

**TALMUD** – The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the Mishnah, codification of the oral tradition, and the Gemara, rabbinic commentary on the Mishnah. The Talmud constitutes the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism.

**SHEMA** – A liturgical prayer consisting of three Scriptural passages recited twice daily by adult Jewish males to affirm their faith.

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**JOURNAL CHART**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

**DEHUMANIZATION TACTICS**

**EFFECTS ON THE INMATE**

**CRITICAL OPINION OR NOTES ON CHAPTER:**

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**EXAMPLES THAT HELPED LEVI TO RECONNECT TO HIS HUMANITY:**

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**ACTIVITY TWO**

**Objective**

- To become familiar with euphemisms used to confuse and hide the truth.
- To realize how the abnormal becomes ordinary in the Lager.
- To connect with Levi’s figurative writing style.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Handout: “Euphemisms in Survival.”
- Handout: “Figurative Language Worksheet”

**Homework**

- Read Survival in Auschwitz pages 42-64, Chapters 4 and 5.

**Activities**

1. Ask a student volunteer to discuss any instances of dehumanization added to their journal from Chapter 1.
2. Teacher may want to review the concept of *irony* with students.
3. Discuss pages 22-41:
  - **What is ironic about the inscription Levi sees at Auschwitz I?** *After a twenty minute truck ride, Levi reaches Auschwitz I; here he sees the ironic inscription, “Arbeit Macht Frei,” Work Gives Freedom, atop the gates. Work here is not productive; Levi calls it, “useless and senseless.”*
  - **What is odd about this and other uses of language by the Nazis?** *The use of language is important in understanding the world created by the Nazis; Language is used to trick, hide, and pillage. Because of the controlled abnormality and duplicity of this situation, Auschwitz has been referred before to as “Planet Auschwitz.”*
4. Show transparency of Euphemisms on page 20, and discuss both euphemisms used in the novel and continued use in today’s society. **Discuss how and why language was perverted:** Point out that the use of Euphemisms was another way Nazis could control and dehumanize prisoners. **Does doublespeak continue to be used?** “Smart bombs,” “collateral damage.”

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### 5. Continue discussion:

- **What is the story of Tantalus, and why does he use it as a comparison?** *In Classical Mythology, Tantalus, a son of Zeus, king of the gods, who when inviting his immortal relatives to dinner wanted to serve them the best he could offer. He made a stew of his greatest possession, his son, Pelops. The gods detested human sacrifice, and as a punishment sent him to Hell where he was condemned to an eternity. He would stand in water up to his neck but could never quench his thirst because the water level receded when he bent to drink. Also, he could never taste the fruit above his head - out of reach. Levi uses this comparison because he is living out this hell of hunger in Auschwitz.*
- **What is the reality of this myth to Levi?** *Like Tantalus, unending hunger and thirst are reenacted through a torturous dream. But unlike Tantalus, Levi has not committed an unspeakable act; Jews and others have done nothing other than to have been born.*
- **How does Levi describe the waiting room in which they are dying of thirst?** *He describes this as hell, but he says, “We are not dead.” What he describes is his life in hell, while he is here on earth.*
- **What is the intake process of the prisoners?** *1. remove their clothing 2. shave body hair 3. shower and spray with disinfectant 4. give clogs and rags to wear 5. tattooed 6. placed in huts and forbidden to sit down. (Teacher should comment that these are examples of dehumanizing efforts students should be noting in their journals.)*
- **What happens to prisoners’ clothing and other possessions?** *Items are sorted in a place at Auschwitz known as “Canada” and then sent to Germany. Prisoners are given one set of clothing, and every six weeks the clothes are steam cleaned; they are never washed so items are dirty and stained. Valuables end up in the pockets of the SS and of the Reichsbank.*
- **How are the prisoners senselessly taunted?** *Prisoners are not allowed to either sit on the bunks or eat an icicle, nor are they given food or clothes when they come out of the shower. They are forced to run naked in the snow.*
- **What seems unusual with regard to the Hungarian doctor?** *They learn he is a criminal, not a Jew. He knows but does not really answer their questions. When asked about their women, he says they will see them again soon, but the implication is that they will be reunited in death.*
- **What is ironic with the Nazis obsession with cleanliness and disinfection?** *Although the officers themselves seem clean and organized and they seem to detest filth, they allow the*



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*prisoners to live in filth and conditions which breed disease (dehumanizing tactic).*

- **Explain why Levi used the term “the demolition of man” as referring to the Nazi persecution.** *This is a key concept that will be developed throughout the book. The ‘process’ of demolition is conceived to strip a person of his dignity and humanity, lose their total identity, and strip them of their individuality. They no longer have possessions, a name, control of their body. They have lost language; no one listens when they speak, and when their captors speak, it is of things foreign to them. Here violence replaces words. The Nazis attempt to reduce men to animals. Thus, he infers that the Nazis purposely create beasts from human beings in order to control and murder them without regard. Later in the novel (p87) Levi refers to the Lager as a “gigantic biological and social experiment.”*
  - **What does it infer for someone to have a low number?** *It could infer they have learned how to live within the system and have adapted.*
  - **When does Levi feel embarrassed by his naivety?** *When he asks for a toothbrush, he does not realize that he is in a place where his jailor’s only expectation is his death through his labor.*
  - **What is the effect of the security and duplicity driven by the Nazis?** *The effect is that the true nature of the camp is concealed. Nazis have hidden the truth and kept most Jews in the dark about what would befall them. Many Jews do not understand that death is the only way out of the Lager, not work.*
  - **Compare the differences between life in the Lager and Levi’s previous life. Why is “why” excluded from one’s vocabulary here?** *Why has no meaning here; one lives to die. This is a world unlike any other. Here human beings matter less than the numbers to which they add up. Here reason and logic do not exist; they are replaced with luck and violence.*
6. Explain the layout of the Auschwitz compound. Levi learns that he is at Monowitz, which is one of the three camps making up the Auschwitz complex. Auschwitz I is the original camp inhabited by Polish political prisoners and Jewish workers; Auschwitz II is known as Birkenau, the site of the death camp, crematoria, and labor camp. Auschwitz III is the generic name applied to the entire web of industrial slave labor camps surrounding Auschwitz. Monowitz is a chemical complex owned by I. G. Farben, which intended to produce synthetic rubber called ‘buna.’ The factory is located here to make use of the cheap labor supply made available by the SS. The camp never produced any product. Explain that conditions here (referred to as Monowitz, or “the

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

Buna”) are better than in Birkenau; here prisoners have blankets, shower twice a week, have soap, and straw mattresses. The teacher should comment or show more information and pictures of Auschwitz (see below for Internet links to Arial maps of Auschwitz). There is tremendous information available about this genocide since the Nazis were efficient record keepers. Teachers may reference the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website <http://www.ushmm.org> as the source of many primary documents.

- <http://motlc.wiesenthal.org/albums/palbum/p00/a0007p2.html> - Simon Wiesenthal website
- [http://www.auschwitz-muzeum.oswiecim.pl/html/eng/historia\\_KL/monowice\\_ok.html](http://www.auschwitz-muzeum.oswiecim.pl/html/eng/historia_KL/monowice_ok.html)

The Auschwitz Museum website

7. Assign partners to create a schematic of the camp based upon Levi’s description on pages 31-32. Call attention to the close quarters, lack of toilet facilities. Have partners share their renditions of the camp to others.
8. Explore the color-coded badges worn by prisoners in the camps. **What function do badges serve in such a structured society? Why is there a need for few SS men in the camp?** (Criminals are given privileges for being in charge of Jews; however, when a Jew makes a mistake, the kapo may be held liable).

### Color badge

Yellow

Purple

Pink

Green

Red

Black

### Inmate

Jew

Jehovah Witness

Homosexual

Criminal

Political

Asocial (Gypsy)

9. Continue Discussion:

- **What valuable survival lessons does Levi learn quickly?** *Not to ask why but to reply “yes”, to pretend to understand even when he doesn’t, to savor every bit of nourishment given, to protect his meager possessions from theft, to follow rules to the exact demand. A prisoner who doesn’t understand had little chance for survival; his visibility would result in extra beatings; instant obedience is required. There’s no tolerance for any one who doesn’t understand the command being given.*
- **In what way are shoes a metaphor for life in the Lager?** *Ill-fitting ones result in infection, which can be fatal; hospitalization places one at greater risk of selection for death. Poor shoes make one slower and makes the wearer the recipient of kapo’s blows.*

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- **How is the act of washing which we take for granted an act of resistance?** *It is done not for cleanliness but for moral survival, to preserve civilized behavior and to remind a man of being human not an animal. (This is an example of how Levi tries to reconnect to his humanity.)*
- **How does regimentation of life affect many inmates?** *They have trouble adjusting, grow depressed, give up hope and become the walking dead with no will to live (later in the book, these individuals will be referred to as musselmen).*
- **What is Steinlauf’s philosophy?** *Deprived of freedom, Levi tells us the last remaining power is to “refuse to consent.” Discuss that the purpose of the Lager is to reduce men to beasts and that by washing and walking with good posture, one remains vital and rejects being an animal. The ritual of washing, even in dirty water, is a reminder that one is human and emphasizes self-respect which is completely counter to the Nazi attempt to degrade, humiliate, and brutalize Jewish self-respect.*
- **What is Levi’s reaction to Steinlauf?** *Levi feels the greater issue is how a man handles what happens to him; the Lager presents a larger moral decision than whether to be clean or not. It is about ethical and moral choices in a setting where corruption and evil thrive. Levi’s interest is human behavior; not only of victim but of the torturer. **How does this apply to your life?***

10. Have students begin tracking the figurative language Levi uses throughout the book such as metaphors, similes, personification, and alliteration. Review with students the definitions and examples of these terms if needed. Note previously discussed examples of metaphors within Survival in Auschwitz in Activities 1 and 2.

## EUPHEMISMS

Action(AKTION)	Mission to seek out Jews and kill
Auxiliary equipment	Gas vans
Bath houses	Gas chambers
Cleansing	Sent through the death process
Disinfection	Gassing to death
Evacuate to the east	Deport to a death camp
“Final Solution”	Murder of all Jews
Hairdresser	Head shaver
Protective custody	Imprisonment
Quarantine district	Ghetto
Resettlement	Deportation to a death camp
Selection	Choosing whom to kill
Shot while trying to escape	Executed
Shower	Gas chamber
Special Action	Mass murder
Special treatment	Taking Jews through the death process
Treated appropriately	Murdered

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE WORKSHEET**

Directions: In the novel, find ten instances of simile, metaphor, personification, foreshadowing, or irony. Write down the page number where the sentence is located, and explain the comparison of the language used.

Page #	Sentence	Comparison

**ACTIVITY THREE**

**Objective**

- To understand the fleeting nature of life in the Lager.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Quiz 1, Pages 1-62

**Homework**

- Read Survival in Auschwitz pages 65-108, Chapters 6-9.

**Activities**

1. Ask for student volunteer to share new entries in his or her journal.
2. Discuss pages 42-64:
  - **Compare the relationship of the slave to master in the Lager.** *Fear motivates the slave, while hatred motivates the master. The master's hatred has enslaved him as well.*
  - **How can you evaluate the importance of selfhood in the Lager?** *"Self" is the only thing one can lose in the lager; everything else is taken away. The loss of sense of self of each prisoner is the end product the Nazis desire.*
  - **What evidence is there that inmates have lost sense of self already?** *Null Achtzehn no longer remembers his name; he becomes and is known by the last three numbers of his tattoo, zero eighteen, or, "Null Achtzehn" in German. This man has become the walking dead not caring about anything; he has lost his will to survive. Point out to students to notice in the novel future references of Null Achtzehn and his symbolism.*
  - **Why is visiting the infirmary, the Ka-Be, a mixed blessing?** *The frequent selections place life in jeopardy more often than in the general camp, there is no medicine, but there is a respite from work and the blows of the kapo. This affords a time to reflect and reconnect with life outside the Lager – a connection back to humanity.*
  - **How is "the reveille," and other music symbolic for Levi?** *The music is symbolic of the Nazi's attempt to annihilate the inmates "first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards" (51). The teacher should point out the passage on page 51, which explains how*

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

*Levi felt the music was a continual reminder of the daily degradation. The subtitle of this book, The Nazi Assault on Humanity, relates to this theme of dehumanization.*

- **What mistake does Levi make in his unfamiliarity with camp procedures?** *By bringing his cap, gloves, bowl, and spoon with him, he loses them and has to reacquire them. Had he known, he could have left them with some one he trusted or sold them.*
  - **From what we have read so far, what can you tell about the intelligence one has/had before imprisonment?** *First, we can tell a prisoner's intelligence is irrelevant in the Lager. Doctor, lawyer, or civil clerk worker, everyone is dehumanized. In this world, everything is upside down; death, suffering, and humiliation are the goal of those in charge. Prisoners are even nursed back to health and then sent to the gas chambers.*
  - **Why are friendships necessary for survival?** *Friends show concern, protect each other, help one to remain human.*
  - **Describe why Levi admires Alberto:** *Alberto and Levi were best friends. Levi knew Alberto from his university days. What Levi admires the most is that beyond Alberto's intelligence and intuition, he remained uncorrupted by the weapons of the Lager to destroy his humanity.*
  - **How do the men endure their daily plight?** *In order to survive, all of their energy is focused on making it through, minute to minute, because they are unable to escape this crisis. They seldom dream in the future, because this may give them a false hope of survival.*
  - **Have dreams helped you to overcome a tragedy or problem in your life?** *Answers vary*
  - **Why do bodily functions assume major proportion here?** *We normally take these things for granted; here men have to carry buckets to dump into the latrine, cannot use the bathroom when they need, have to fight their body's functions. Those who carry out the bucket call more attention to themselves in a world in which invisibility aids survival.*
  - **For many of us, daily routine provides comfort. How does Levi feel about his daily routine in the Lager? Does it give him comfort?** *Answers vary*
  - **Some people escape their life through sleep; can this happen here?** *Sleep provides little rest since the sleeper is subject to his bunkmates' movements, smells, and body.*
3. After reviewing all discussion questions with students, give Quiz One.

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**QUIZ I – Survival in Auschwitz**  
Pages 1-64

**Directions:** Circle T if the statement is True. Circle F if the statement is False. If the statement is False, write a statement on the line below that will change it to a True statement.

- T or F 1. The Jewish people are a separate race.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 2. Levi was a religious Jew, taken from his home at the age on 24 by fascist militia on Dec. 13, 1943.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 3. Each of the three camps comprising Auschwitz had their own crematorium.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 4. Levi refers to the Tantalus myth to describe his nightmare because in his dream he is tortured by the inability to eat the food surrounding him.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 5. The introductory poem to Survival in Auschwitz makes reference to the original title of the book.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 6. Null Achtzehn is a prisoner driven to assault other prisoners.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- T or F 7. The Jews were the only ones to wear color coded badges in the camps.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Circle the best answer to the following multiple-choice questions:

8. Arbeit Macht Frei was inscribed over the gates entering Auschwitz. Choose the proper literal translation:
- a. work and obey
  - b. work means life
  - c. abandon all hope
  - d. work gives freedom
9. In describing the transport process by train to Auschwitz, which word does Levi report that the Nazis used to describe the Jews in a way that dehumanizes them?
- a. cattle
  - b. pieces
  - c. criminals
  - d. beasts



## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

10. How did Levi's first experience in the KaBe provide him an opportunity to "feel human?"
- He had his own bed.
  - It did not smell as bad.
  - He had time to think and reflect on life with the other patients.
  - He had a German doctor that was especially kind.
11. Which of these statements best describes Levi's relationship with his best friend Alberto:
- Levi felt sorry for him because guard picked on him.
  - Levi was jealous that Alberto was so well-liked by the other prisoners.
  - Levi admired him for the way he remained uncorrupted by life in the Lager.
  - Levi taught him how to adapt to life in the Lager.
12. What is the significance of the following passage:  
"Will we perhaps be able to survive the illnesses and escape the selections, perhaps even resist the work and hunger which wear us out-but then afterwards?"
- It points the reader to consider the meaning of survival in more than just a physical sense.
  - It points the reader to explore the nature of the Nazi evil mind.
  - It helps the reader understand how much of a work load they received.
  - It helps the reader understand how frightened they were.
13. Steinlauf tells Levi, "We still possess one power...the power to refuse our consent."  
What does he mean by that?
- refusal to work past the point of exhaustion
  - refusal to polish shoes
  - refusal to be reduced to beasts
  - refusal to wash with dirty water
14. Levi tries to quench his thirst by breaking an icicle hanging outside a window. The guard brutally snatches it away. When Levi asks, 'why', which one of the following best represents the guard's response?
- the guard beat Levi for breaking regulations
  - the guard took his bread ration away
  - the guard replied, "there is no why here"
  - the guard instructed him not to speak to guards ever again.
15. What is Levi describing in the passage below taken from Chapter One, "The Journey"?
- "We looked at each other without a word. It was all incomprehensible and mad, but one thing we had understood. This is the metamorphosis that awaited us. Tomorrow we would be like them."
- Levi's reaction to the other upon his arrival at the first detention camp.
  - Levi's reaction to the inmates who welcomed them to Auschwitz.
  - Levi's reaction to the inmates who took their luggage upon arriving to Auschwitz.
  - Levi's reaction to the behavior of some of his fellow Jews the night before deportation.

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**Directions: Short answer:** Using details and quotes from the novel, answer the following questions in the space provided.

16. Explain the relationship of the three different titles of this book (original, new, and subtitle).

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17. Describe the “intake” process.

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18. Levi writes, “Then for the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offense, the demolition of man. In a moment, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it be conceivably so.”

What does Levi mean by “the demolition of man”?

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19. Describe Levi’s reaction to hearing the reveille music in the infirmary. How does it relate to the subtitle of the book?

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20. Describe a few of the metaphors and/or comparisons to Literature that Levi uses to give the reader a sense of life in the Lager.

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## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

### ANSWERS TO QUIZ ONE

1. F – Jewish identity is based on based on culture, common ancestry, tradition, and/or the religion of Judaism.
2. F – not religious, in the mountains
3. F – only Birkenau
4. T
5. T
6. F – He was the prisoner known by the last 3 #s of his name or forgot his name.
7. F - everyone
8. D
9. B
10. C
11. C
12. A
13. C
14. C
15. C
16. *The original title suggested the assault of one individual and his war with inhumanity. The new title incorporates more than just one individual's struggle. It incorporates the Nazi's assault on not just men, women, and children, but on humanity itself. The new title suggests that the theme of the book is not only to tell the story of one man's experience, but also to awaken the world to the affects of such a political/prison system on human beings and warn of dangers unleashed by a totalitarian system. Thus, this memoir provides a civic message as well as informing as to what the Lager was on his personal level.*
17. *1. remove their clothing 2. shave body hair 3. shower and spray with disinfectant 4. give clogs and rags to wear 5. tattooed 6. placed in huts and forbidden to sit down.*
18. Answers vary
19. Answers vary
20. Answers vary

**ACTIVITY FOUR**

**Objective**

- To understand the sadistic and cruel way in which Jews were treated.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Life in the Lager Transparency

**Homework**

- Read Survival in Auschwitz pages 109-123.

**Activities**

1. Have student volunteer to share a part of his/her journal.
2. Discuss pages 65-108:
  - **Why does making one's bed and having all buttons in place seem ironic?** *The Germans have no concern for life yet demand that the straw mattress be smooth and five buttons be on each jacket. This is an example of how life, values, and ethics are upside down here.*
  - **How do you think food, friendship, and weather conditions influence an inmate's life?** *Not only is food meager, but its caloric content differs depending where one stands in the line. Vying for the right place in line is an important tactic for maximizing food intake. Snow and mud not only make working conditions tougher but are harder on the feet. If one cannot work, he will not survive. Friends protect and motivate one's survival.*
  - **Why does his description of Buna as gray tell us so much about this environment?** *If it were green, it would be a place teeming with life. This is a factory of death; it is regimented and institutional. Prisons do not want to stimulate; they want to numb those who are inmates.*
  - **Compare a good day in the Lager to what we consider a good day.** *Point out this is an impossible task as such comparisons are meaningless when comparing two different worlds. Our lives are rich, complex, and offer many choices; "Planet Auschwitz" has no relevance to even the worst places in our life. We desire wealth and possessions; while they desire the basic need of freedom and liberty. The teacher should point out how fragile life for them is when small things like sunshine and an unexpected small amount of soup could make a good*

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day.

- **What events in life can change a person’s mind from desiring wealth and possessions to the basic needs of love, respect, and freedom?** *Answers vary*
  - **How important is the operation of the exchange market in the Lager?** *Essential*
  - **What skills are essential for inmate survival?** *Anonymity*
  - **How are items for barter acquired?** *Organizing and barter are the currency here, and life focuses around acquiring extra food. Inmates charge for certain services, and some workers receive tobacco which can be traded. Teacher should refer back to vocabulary page for definition of “organize.”*
  - **Do the consequences for trafficking on the exchange market seem appropriate to the crime?** *If a Jew is caught, he is guilty of a political crime and will be condemned to heavy labor in a coal mine; this is a death sentence since he will die within a few weeks from conditions there. However, a civilian would become a prisoner for a set term after which he would return to his non-prisoner status.*
  - **Levi relates that whatever knowledge one has of the world has no meaning in the Lager. Focus on word pairings of just and unjust, good and evil, or the dead and the living, which we are told have lost their meaning here. Are there other examples you can think of in our world that invite redefinition?** *Answers vary*
  - **Analyze Levi’s conclusions/categories about the nature of men when the veneer of civilization has been removed? (key overriding theme of the book)** *Levi believes, first that when every civilized institution is taken away, the prisoner or victim will not be without all inhibitions. The prisoner will fall into two groups: the drowned who withdraw from life, and the saved who maintain relationships with others and manage to delay their deaths as long as possible. Teacher may want to point out that this concept is not only incorporated in this book but also in Levi’s last book entitled, The Drowned and the Saved.*
3. Ask students to diagram the rank of each in the camp. Most of the häftling will become musselmen and thus belong to the drowned (doomed for selection). The saved include non-Jewish prominents, some Prominents are criminals, some are Jews who have survived through their professional specialty and others who have survived at the expense of other Jews. They include: the häftling director, kapos, pikolos, cooks, nurses, the night guards, hut sweepers, superintendent of the latrine, superintendent of the showers, doctors, tailors, shoemakers, musicians, and young attractive homosexuals. Some of the prominent häftling are not much

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better in their treatment of their fellow Jews than the Nazis. Levi realizes that it is easy for some people to lose ethical and moral values when they've been stripped of everything they consider of value.

4. Continue discussion of chapter:

- **Explain what Levi means when he says, “Survival without renunciation of any part of one’s own moral world -apart from powerful and direct interventions by fortune- was conceded only to very few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints.”** *In the Lager the rule of conduct is every man for himself; no one feels pity for or helps the weak (see page 13). The man who remains a moral man is truly a man. Many will use any means available including deceit and manipulation to stay alive. Teacher note to reinvestigate the theme of moral survival through the book (reference back page 40).*
- **How do the following people approach life in the Lager?** *Teacher may use transparency with names on page 31 to facilitate this discussion.*

Schepschel

Schepschel makes petty deals but betrays his accomplice to get a better job.

Alfred L.

Alfred L. is aloof and disciplined and selfishly plays the system to be noticed.

Elias

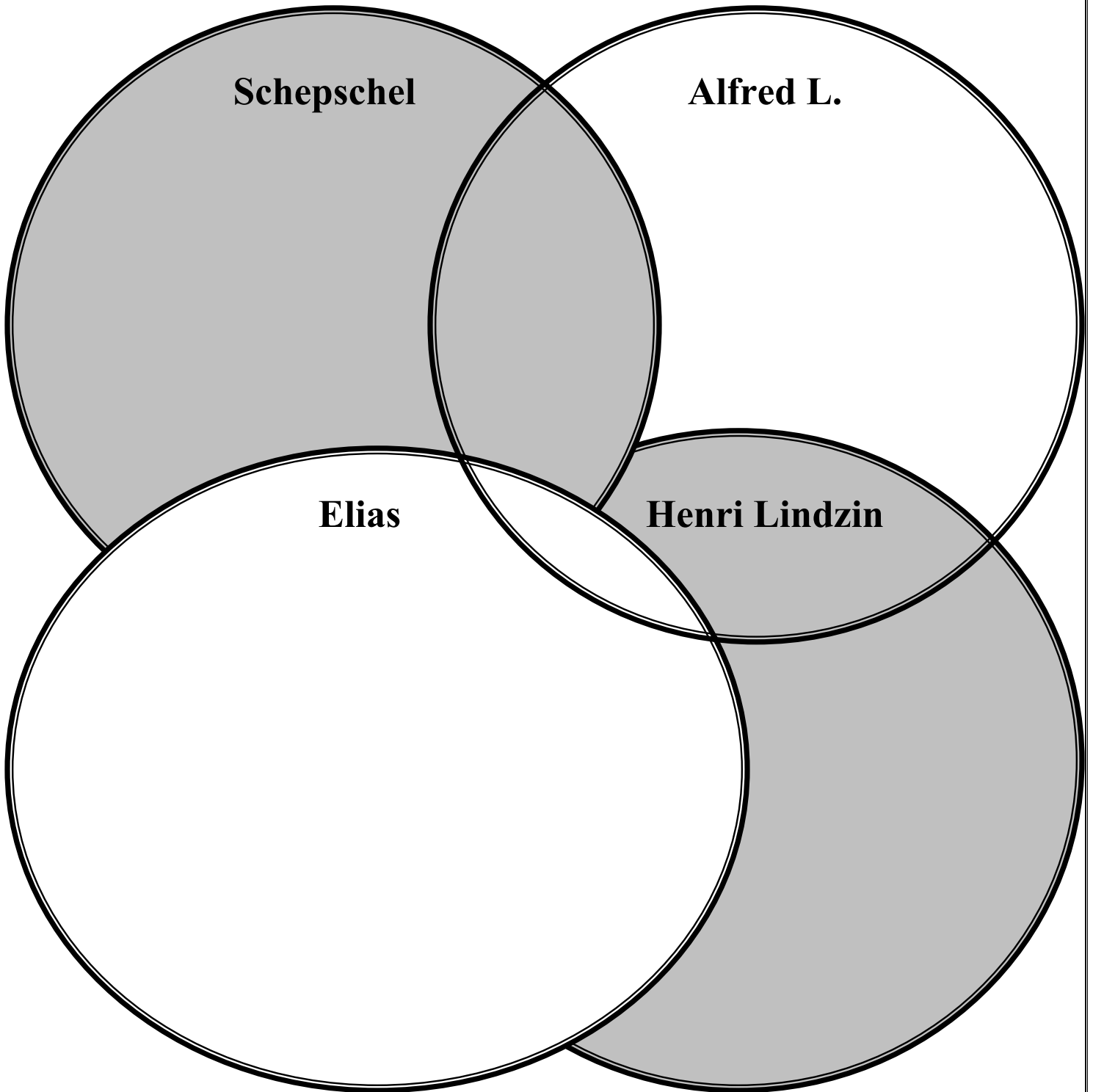
Elias prospers in the Lager unlike his experience in the “normal” world.

Henri Lindzin

Henri is calculatingly organizational and uses the art of persuasion, pity, and theft to his benefit.

- **Up to this point in the novel, why is Henri the one who most affects Levi?** *Both he and Levi are men of science and culture. Levi most regrets that Henri squanders his gifts rather than using them to enrich humanity. He seems cold-blooded as he “works” the system.*
- **What decision has Levi made in this regard?** *He has chosen to remain a man rather than becoming a beast; he has chosen to keep his dignity and integrity intact. He manages to survive because of his moral code, luck, and his ability; although he would not put himself in the category as “few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints.”*

# LIFE IN THE LAGER



**ACTIVITY FIVE**

**Objective**

- To understand the impact of being a Nazi prisoner.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Quiz Two

**Homework**

- Read Survival in Auschwitz pages 123-151.

**Activities**

1. Ask for volunteers to discuss the recent journal entries.
2. Novel discussion, pages 101-123:
  - **Why are the dehumanization tactics, many of which you have charted in your journals, an essential ingredient to running this camp system?** *Answers vary*
  - **In what way are the inmates in other modern prisons around the world dehumanized? American prisons? Serbian detention camps?** *Answers vary*
  - **What makes Auschwitz distinctive from other detention centers, work camps, and prisons?** *Auschwitz is a front to use the prisoners until they cannot work or are no longer needed. Auschwitz purpose is extermination and death without cause or judgment.*
  - **What advantages will there be if Levi can work as a chemist?** *It will engage his mind drawing his past into his present as well as getting him away from hard labor outside.*
  - **Why does the "chemical examination" serve as an incentive for him to live?** *It reaffirms that he is still an intellectually able and alert human being. It is his reconnection with his scientific and rational side.*
  - **In what way does Dr. Pannwitz embody the evil of the Nazi system and how does Levi contradict his beliefs of Jews?** *Dr. Pannwitz believes that Jews are subhuman; yet, Levi demonstrates his ability, knowledge, and competence.*
  - **What effect does Levi's encounter with Dr. Pannwitz leave with Levi?** *Levi attains a psychological boost from his own performance and it makes him feel in command of himself.*
  - **Assess the absurdities of interview between Levi and Dr. Pannwitz.** *The absurdity of the*



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*interview is that there even is an interview in the Lager. The officers still look at Levi like he is a beast. He does not look like a professional man; yet, his intellect is able to save his body.*

- **How does Alex bring Levi into touch with reality?** *He wipes his dirty hand on Levi's shoulder and this brings Levi back to reality that the Lager is a place of inhumanity.*
- **Hope plays a role in most people's lives. Is this the case here?** *Not really, no one knows what is going to happen from minute to minute. The only way to survive is by living in the present.*
- **How does Levi react to Kuhn offering prayers for not being selected for death?** *Levi reacts by saying, "If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn's prayer." Levi has trouble understanding how someone could thank God when so many other millions have died. He is frustrated that Kuhn believes that his prayer saved him from selection, or that God has any power over this situation.*
- **How do the Germans react to news of Allied victories and the bombing of Buna?** *All ranks of Germans are harsher in the treatment they give prisoners who they see as reminders of German failure to achieve victory.*
- **What is altruistic about what Lorenzo does for Levi?** *He saves Levi's life with no reward to himself.*
- **Discuss the psychological and physical boost he gives Levi.** *He provides extra rations, incentive to carry on, reinforces that Levi is a human being.*
- **How does his behavior differ from other civilians in the camp?** *He shares part of his ration, writes to Levi's family, won't accept anything in return for what he does.*
- **What did Levi most value from Lorenzo's friendship?** *He helps him remember that he is a man not a beast.*
- **Discuss the opinion most civilians have of the inmates.** *Not worthy, sneaky, thieves, not human.*
- **Why is language here void of precision?** *There is no way to express what is happening to those in a camp. The accepted meanings have no validity; a new vocabulary is needed.*
- **Explain Levi's idea of "free words"?** *Levi believes that one's language becomes insufficient in the Lager: cold and fear mean something entirely different if you are in your home, and a 'free' man, than in the Lager. The Lager requires a new language of its own. (Reference to page 123).*
- **Why is the selection process nonsensical?** *They kill men to make room for others; no one*

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

*knows the criteria used. Chance plays a major role. Murder itself is a moral outrage; murder for the crime of being born is mindboggling.*

- **How does reconnecting with the literature of Levi’s past help him with salvation?** *He feels a purpose other than animal, a number, or beast. He is connected to something that used to be real and pleasurable for him in the past.*
- **How does Levi use Dante to help reconnect to his sensitivity in the Lager?** *He recites Dante to help Jean learn Italian.*
- **What emotional feelings does this recitation do for Levi?** *It gives him more of a will to live.*
- **What parallel does Levi see between Ulysses’ resistance and his own life?** *Levi is pushed to resist.*
- **In what way does Jean reaffirm that man is not evil by nature?** *He does not abuse his privileged position as a messenger-clerk (a Pikolo, high ranking of the Prominents) and has a good relationship with those in inferior positions. He helps to save prisoners from punishment through his persuasion and personality.*

3. Review discussion questions and journals before giving Quiz Two (page 33).

### Optional Research Paper – Levi and Dante

*As an additional, independent assignment, have students research the information below to organize a critical research paper. Use references from the library and Internet for the paper.*

1. Devise a critical research paper that discusses Dante’s influence in Levi’s writing and influences in Survival in Auschwitz.
2. As an introduction, define a “canto” by investigating *Ulysses*, Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, and *Hercules*. Discuss how the canto relates to Levi’s writing.
3. Compare the similarities between Levi and Dante: Hint: How do both make ‘trips’ to Hell? How do both express inhumanity?
4. Analyze Dante’s influence on Levi’s life and work:
  - How does Levi use Dante to help him reconnect to his sensitivity in the Lager. Hint: How does he help Jean learn Italian?
  - What emotional feelings does this recitation do for Levi?
  - Why does Dante strike a cord with Levi?
  - What parallel does Levi see between Ulysses’ resistance and his own life?
  - How does this inspire him?
  - How does reconnecting with the literature of Levi’s past help him with salvation?
5. Conclude the paper analyzing each man’s beliefs if man is, or is not, evil by nature?

TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

QUIZ II – Survival in Auschwitz  
Pages 65-123

**Directions:** Circle T if the statement is True. Circle F if the statement is False. If the statement is False, write a statement on the line below that will change it to a True statement.

T or F 1. If a Jew is caught using the exchange market, he is guilty of a political crime and will be condemned to heavy labor in a coal mine.

\_\_\_\_\_

T or F 2. Levi is relieved when it snows because it is a time when the prisoners get a break from work.

\_\_\_\_\_

T or F 3. Dante was a friend of Levi's from the outside world.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Circle the best answer to the following multiple-choice questions:

4. Levi was eager to pass the chemical examination and become a Specialist for which reason?
  - a. It would greatly increase his chances for survival.
  - b. He missed being a chemist.
  - c. He was promised to be released early.
  - d. He could help his friends with medications they may need.
5. Which of the following is not true of the Buna?
  - a. It is the name of the factory where Levi worked.
  - b. The Buna was as large as a city.
  - c. The Buna produced an endless supply of rubber.
  - d. The prison workers who worked at the Buna came from many different lagers.
6. Levi writes: According to Henri's theory, there are three methods open to man to escape extermination which still allow him to retain the name of man. (98)

Which one of the following is not included?

- a. organization
  - b. pity
  - c. theft
  - d. betrayal
7. How did Levi's recitation of the Canto of Ulysses to Jean most benefit Levi?
    - a. It helped him to remember how smart he was.
    - b. It gave him a chance to practice his native language.
    - c. It made him feel human.
    - d. It made Jean like him more.

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

8. What was it about Alfred L.'s survival system that Levi believed made him one of the 'saved'?
- He disciplined himself to become a potential Prominent.
  - He stole food from those who were ready to die.
  - He bartered low caloric foods for high caloric foods.
  - He gave gifts to the Kapo in order to receive special treatment.

9. Who is Levi describing in the following passage?

“They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen.” (90)

- those referred to by Levi as the drowned
  - those just selected for the gas chambers
  - those coming in from the Ghettos
  - those referred to by Levi as the saved
10. Levi believes which of the following about Elias, should he survive Auschwitz?
- He will become a part of the rescue helpers team.
  - He will die in route to a real hospital.
  - He will become a writer and speaker.
  - He will probably end up in jail or a lunatic asylum.

11. Which of the following is a 'musselman'(88)?

- term used by the older prisoners for the strongest prisoners
- term used by the older prisoners to describe the weak, the inept, for those doomed for selection
- term used by younger prisoners to describe the Kapos.
- term used by younger prisoners for the Nazi officers.

12. Which of the following is true of the food provided to the prisoners?

- The bigger your bowl the more food you will receive.
- If you don't look the food attendants in the eye you will receive more.
- One's place in line determined the nutritional value of the food.
- More food will be given to those at the end of the line.

13. The chapter title 'This Side of Good and Evil' refers to which of the following?

- the goodness of the prisoners versus the evil of the SS
- the good prisoners of the Lager vs. the evil prisoners
- the moral system outside the Lager
- the moral system inside the Lager

14. Which language was most spoken in Levi's camp?

- German
- Hungarian
- Yiddish
- Polish

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

15. Having a low prisoner number suggested which of the following?
- a. greater adaptation to the system of the Lager
  - b. old in age
  - c. young in age
  - d. greater knowledge of escape routes out of the Lager
16. With respect to the exchange market, which of the following was of primary importance?
- a. the KaBe (the infirmary)
  - b. the Kitchen
  - c. the crematorium
  - d. the Buna

**Directions: Short answer:** Using details and quotes from the novel, answer the following questions in the space provided.

17. During the course of Levi’s chemical examination he meets Dr. Pannwitz. Explain the following passage: “From that day I have thought about Dr. Pannwitz many times and in many ways” (105).

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18. Explain Levi’s description of a good day in the Lager:

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19. Describe the hierarchy of the camp. Define Pikolo and why Levi considered Jean to be an exceptional Pikolo (109-110)

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20. Explain how Levi learned and understands why “there is no WHY in the Lager?”

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**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

**ANSWERS TO QUIZ II**

1. T
2. F - Prisoner must work harder in the snow
3. F – An author who he references often
4. A
5. C
6. D
7. C
8. A
9. A
10. D
11. B
12. C
13. D
14. C
15. A
16. A
17. Answers vary
18. Answers vary
19. Answers vary
20. Answers vary

**ACTIVITY SIX**

**Objective**

- To empathize with life in the work camp.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.

**Homework**

- Finish reading Survival in Auschwitz pages to its conclusion from pages 151-173.

**Activities**

1. Review previous quiz and answers.
2. Discuss pages 123-151:
  - **In what way does Levi’s emotional stability help him face obstacles?** *He looks at the positive side.*
  - **What has he learned about survival here?** *Preserve your strength, do not rush; people die of exhaustion more frequently than from a kapo’s blows. People need to work at the same pace. There is nothing to be gained from being an overachiever here.*
  - **How are the “rules for success” so different from the real world?** *Answers vary*
  - **Analyze the logic behind the camp slang. Why does “tomorrow morning” mean “never.”** *Since one had no idea of what might happen from moment to moment, tomorrow morning is as uncertain as next month or next year.*
  - **Does Levi’s interaction with Kraus Páli seem unusual for him?** *Answers vary – refer students to page 134.*
  - **Why would he tell Kraus his dream, make comments such as what a good boy he must have been as a civilian, “and he is nothing to me?”** *Levi realizes that Páli will not survive but tries to comfort him while maintaining distance and not becoming emotionally involved. He knows that Kraus cannot adapt to the way of life in the Lager and will forfeit his life.*
  - **What is ironic about having passed the test and being selected for the Chemical Kommando?** *He does the same labor as everyone else; he just carries chemicals which burn his skin rather than building materials.*

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

- **How many others help Levi with the chemical work detail?** *There were two others who were protected from the hunger and cold of that winter.*
- **Why does the future look bleak until he begins work in the laboratory?** *As winter approaches, the plant is bombed more frequently; there's a greater chance the Nazis will liquidate those Jews remaining alive; winter brings greater physical hardships.*
- **In what ways does working in the laboratory alter his life and that of his friends?**
  - *He receives new clothing and a weekly shave which makes him feel less like a beast.*
  - *He is returned to a world which is familiar and comfortable.*
  - *He has become a prominent because of his occupation.*
  - *He works inside where the temperatures are warm.*
  - *He has the opportunity to steal items to barter for food which he shares with his best friend Alberto.*
  - *He is not doing heavy labor and can use the bathroom when he needs to.*
  - *His mind receives the stimulation it has been lacking which provides an incentive for enduring.*
  - *He has a greater chance for survival.*
- **Why do you think the Nazis continued their efforts to get the plant operational when it was obvious that the Russians will be at Buna soon?** *The teacher should point out that Nazi hatred was so unrelenting that nothing could stop the machine of death that had begun.*
- **The three girls in the laboratory treat Levi as a non-person, not speaking to him, blaming him for damage they have done, complaining about their lives in front of him. They are disgusted by his smell and have no compassion for his ordeal. How do their conversations call attention to the fragility of life?** *They complain how quickly the year has passed; for Levi it was a year of horror and dehumanization which hasn't passed quickly enough. He was robbed of all pleasures and promises of life.*
- **Speculate about how small things make life that much better.** *The men are encouraged and feel stronger receiving extra soup from the Italian civilian worker, stealing brooms and files to sell for food, receiving tickets for special service. These allow them to acquire extra nourishment which will keep them alive. In addition, Levi has access to paper and pencil and can make the connection to his previous life.*
- **Why does Levi admire the actions of the prisoner, who is referred to as “The Last One,” involved in the sabotage at Birkenau who he says brings glory, not infamy?”** *Jews*



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*involved in this plot physically resisted and sent a message to the Nazis that despite overwhelming odds, they chose to die fighting against Nazi tyranny. This man is tough; Levi is ashamed that he does not have the strength to undertake such action.*

- **Is Levi being too hard on himself?** *He does not credit himself for remaining alive for another day; this also is resistance.*

**ACTIVITY SEVEN**

**Objective**

- To analyze how the prisoners began to change back from prisoners to men.

**Materials**

- Levi, P. Survival in Auschwitz. New York. Touchtone. 1996.
- Final Test and Essay Exam

**Materials**

- Students should choose an essay from the Final Essay List for homework.

**Activities**

1. Discuss conclusion of book and afterward:
  - **How does scarlet fever change Levi's life?** *He is inside during the brutal weather, receives uninterrupted rest, and is not subject to the death march. Explain that with the approach of Russian troops, the SS chose to march inmates away from the camp with the intention of killing them; not to mention, wipe out all witnesses to their crimes. Those left behind are expected to die within a short period of time anyway. Ironically, instead of using available trains and trucks to move troops to the front, railroad cars are used to bring Jews to their deaths. Ideological ends are judged more important than victory in war.*
  - **What happens to many men who leave on the "evacuation" (death) march?** *The Nazis marched about 20,000 prisoners from different camps in January. They are shot when they cannot keep up. Levi learns almost none survived this march, including Alberto.*
  - **Why is Alberto's death such a momentous loss to Levi?** *He is a moral role model in Levi's life since he did not become a doer of evil when facing these challenging hardships. His integrity of character reinforces the idea that even in the depths of despair, human beings don't have to sacrifice their morality and ethics (teacher should key in to these different levels of survival).*
  - **Describe Levi's experience with freedom during this period of limbo.** *After aerial bombardment and the fleeing of the Germans, his feelings alternate between desperation and hope until the Russians enter the camp.*

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

- **Why is this transition period traumatic?** *During this period of time in limbo, there is no food; the prisoners need to fend for themselves by searching and cooperating together for potatoes and other items.*
  - **Who along with Levi helped the infirmary prisoners gain back a sense of humanity?**  
*Charles and Arthur*
  - **What are some examples of how these three men helped their fellow infirmary prisoners?**  
*They searched out necessities, found potatoes, and a stove.*
  - **Why do these actions help to transform them from beasts back to men?** *By the three men providing the necessities and potatoes, they received bread from other inmates in gratitude. This concept would have been inconceivable in the Lager as they knew it. They willingly shared and cared for each other; the act of being a caregiver helps awaken his sense of moral duty. They take control of their lives and are active rather than passive players.*
  - **Should the men have shared their limited food with the other inmates?** *Answers vary*
  - **Should those with less chance of survival have been given food?** *Answers vary*
  - **How can the sick present a danger to the others?** *Answers vary*
  - **Why does the arrival of the Russians seem anti-climatic?** *The prisoners had already been free for ten days.*
  - **In what way does the phrase, “In the Lager, it is useless to think, because events happen for the most part in an unforeseeable manner...” typify Levi’s experiences at this time?**  
*Even though they are free, death is still the biggest winner.*
2. Have students read aloud pp. 175-187 in which Levi discusses this book with Philip Roth. Discuss the insights he provides about his experiences.
- **How is it that he compares himself with *Robinson Crusoe*?** *The part luck plays in his survival, and man’s change in the Lager environment. Evaluate the significance of this literary reference.*
  - **How much do you think Levi’s intelligence played an important part in his survival?**  
*Answers vary*
  - **What is the significance of the book’s origin title, If This Is a Man?** *This title raises questions of conscience. Can one still be called “a man” if his dignity and integrity are tarnished? Levi would probably say no.*
  - **Which parts of Levi’s character serves as a role model for today?** *In spite of a system calculated to bring about human degradation, Levi made decisions, which did not*

## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

*compromise his moral values. He remained human despite Nazi determination to reduce him to a beast, and he was determined to bear witness through his writings, thereby hoping to educate and elevate humanity.*

- **Discuss whether it seems unusual that Levi does not analyze the special meaning of the Lager.** *To him surviving does not seem to be an ennobling experience.*
  - **Levi has said, “Those who deny Auschwitz would be ready to remake it.”** *What does he mean?*
3. After review of discussion questions, Give students final Quiz and Essay Exam.
  4. Show, *The Truce*, a movie based on Levi’s trip back home to Italy following his liberation. While watching the film, have students assess the factors that enable Levi to survive.

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Final – Survival in Auschwitz

**Directions:** Circle T if the statement is True. Circle F if the statement is False. If the statement is False, write a statement on the line below that will change it to a True statement.

T or F            1. Contracting dysentery was worked to ensure in Levis survival.  
\_\_\_\_\_

T or F            2. Of the 96 Italian Jews sent to the labor camp, only 21 were still alive when the second winter began.  
\_\_\_\_\_

T or F            3. The smallest of things in the Lager made the difference of surviving from one day to the next.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Circle the best answer to the following multiple-choice questions:

4. Levi states: “I believe that it was really due to Lorenzo that I am alive today.” How did Lorenzo most contribute to Levi’s survival? (121-22)
  - a. Lorenzo gave him extra bread rations
  - b. Lorenzo gave him things he could trade on the exchange market
  - c. Lorenzo brought him extra pints of soup he could share with his friends
  - d. Lorenzo’s goodness helped Levi to remember that he was still a man
5. Which of the following best represents what Levi refers to as “free words.”
  - a. words that prisoners cannot use while in the Lager
  - b. words having to do with liberty
  - c. words that have lost or changed their meaning at Auschwitz
  - d. words that the prisoners used when freed from Auschwitz
6. What is Levi’s reaction to Kuhn when he prays to God for sparing him from selection?
  - a. Levi spits at Kuhn.
  - b. Levi begins to pray.
  - c. Levi imagines God spitting at this prayer.
  - d. Levi ignores all of his actions.
7. Levi gives greatest weight to which of the following for his survival:
  - a. luck
  - b. money
  - c. liberation soldiers
  - d. intelligence

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

8. What did Levi believe most helped him to survive a second winter?
  - a. his extra blanket
  - b. working in the laboratory protected him from the cold
  - c. the extra soup Lorenzo brought him
  - d. walking around the factory warmed him and gave him strength
  
9. Which of the following is not true of Levi's last experience in the infirmary?
  - a. Levi went to the infirmary because of scarlet fever.
  - b. The camp was bombed by the allies.
  - c. He was very excited about surviving after the Germans left.
  - d. He brought all his personal belongings unlike his first time in the Kabe.
  
10. How did civilians (those who passed by the Lager everyday) view the Lager prisoners?
  - a. with kindness
  - b. with indifference
  - c. deserving of their plight
  - d. unjustifiably imprisoned
  
11. From ten thousand prisoners, how many along with Levi were selected to work in the laboratory?
  - a. one
  - b. two
  - c. three
  - d. four
  
12. How many of the 20,0000 prisoners from the different camps survived the evacuation march?
  - a. more than half
  - b. about half
  - c. less than half
  - d. almost no one survived
  
13. Of the original 96 Italian Jews who were sent to the labor camp, 29 survived until October. How many did not survive the October selection process?
  - a. eight
  - b. one
  - c. half
  - d. almost none

**Directions: Short answer:** Using details and quotes from the novel, answer the following questions in the space provided.

14. How does Kraus represent the idea that the logic of the world outside the Lager became inverted inside the system of the Lager?

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**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

15. Describe the selection process when room had to be made in the camp for new prisoners as it did in Oct 1944. Comment on how this reflected the fragility of life in the Lager.

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16. In the last chapter, “The Story of Ten Days,” Levi writes, “ The law of the Lager said ‘eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbor’, and left no room for gratitude.” How did the patients in Levi’s room while in the infirmary defy this law?

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17. Who is the Last One? What effect did he have on Levi?

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18. Specifically describe three different ways that working in the laboratory helped in Levi’s survival:

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19. Choose two inmates (friends) of Levi who help him awaken his will to live and the courage to endure and, for each, tell why.

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20. In your opinion has Levi provided “documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind” – support your opinion from Levi’s story.

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**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

**FINAL PERFORMANCE ESSAYS**

**SURVIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ**

**Directions:** PLEASE READ each of the following essay themes CAREFULLY and choose **one** to write about.

**KEYS for a good essay:**

1. Make sure you answer each question or prompt asked of you before you conclude your paper.
2. Have a plan.... Organize first so you don't miss an important point.
3. Use the same language/wording that is in the question to ensure you are keeping with the topic and not straying off.
4. Include quotes, instances, and/or passages in the novel to back up your opinion or point.
5. Watch grammar and spelling.

**LANGUAGE:** Write an essay about how language is used to better understand the world created by the Nazis. Levi writes: "Our language lacks words to express this offense- the demolition of man"

Hints for this essay:

- How does Survival in Auschwitz illustrate the limitations of language in describing the horrific conditions of the Lager and the atrocities committed by the Nazis?
- How does it illustrate the ways in which the Nazis manipulated language to dehumanize and degrade the Jews and create a world in which they were viewed and treated as less than human?

**PERSONAL REACTION:** Write an essay that discusses Levi's motives for writing Survival in Auschwitz and how the book affected you.

Hints for this essay:

- "The need to tell our story to the 'rest', to make the 'rest participate in it'. The book has been written to satisfy this need."
- Read the preface again.
- How did your 'participation' in this story affect you?
- What was the most disturbing and shocking account of Levi's account?
- Describe the feelings you had reading Survival in Auschwitz and why?
- What impact did the ending have on you?

**ORIGINAL TITLE:** Write an essay discussing the significance of the original title of this book, If This Is Man.

Hints for this essay:

- Why do you think Levi originally titled his book this way?
- How does this idea relate to the subtitle, The Nazi assault on Humanity?
- Discuss how Levi's account illustrates the subtitle. Provide examples of things that helped Levi remain connected to his humanity.



## TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz

**GENOCIDE:** Write an essay describing what do you think Survival in Auschwitz says about the conditions in life where Genocide can take place?

Hints for this essay:

- Levi writes in the preface “Many people-many nations-can find themselves holding, more or less wittingly, that ‘ every stranger is an enemy’.”
- Discuss how, according to Levi, this idea taken to its logical conclusion leads to the death camps.
- At the end of preface Levi writes, “It seems to me unnecessary to add that none of the facts are invented,” yet he wrote it anyway. Why?

**HUMAN NATURE:** Write an essay describing Levi’s view of human nature

Hints for this essay:

- How did Jean affirm this view?
- Incorporate his discussion of the drowned and the saved.
- Relate this discussion to the original title of the book.
- Agree or disagree with Levi’s view. Why?

**HUMANITY LOST AND GAINED:** Write an essay describing how the Nazis purposely used dehumanization tactics and took away every civilized institution to turn men into beasts. Discuss how a few men triumphed against this and reconnected with humanity at the end.

Hints for this essay:

- As an introduction, explain how men were turned to beasts – use your journal.
- Relate this experience to the original title of the book and the subtitle.
- Write an essay to recount how the last ten days in the infirmary helped Levi, Charles and Arthur feel like men again. Reread “Story of Ten Days.”

**TWELFTH GRADE ENGLISH CURRICULUM – Survival in Auschwitz**

**ANSWERS FINAL TEST**

1. F – Scarlet Fever
2. T
3. T
4. D
5. C
6. C
7. A
8. B
9. C
10. C
11. B
12. D
13. A
14. Answers vary
15. Answers vary
16. Answers vary
17. Answers vary
18. Answers vary
19. Answers vary
20. Answers vary

**ACTIVITY EIGHT**

**Objective**

- To share the experience of a Holocaust Survivor.

**Materials**

- FAU Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education to schedule Survivor: 561-297-2929.

**Homework**

- Have students develop a list of questions for the Survivor who will speak to the class.

**Activities**

- A Holocaust Survivor will speak to the class; with permission this session should be taped to develop a school video archive of survivor testimony.
- Students should write a letter to the survivor expressing the impact of the message on their own life.

*Contributing writers to this unit were Lisa Lee and Brenda Rudman*