

## Lesson 11: Liberation



### Essential Questions:

How were the atrocities encountered by liberators different from the destruction caused by conventional warfare that they had experienced? What is the importance of the liberators' first-hand, eyewitness accounts of Nazi mass atrocities?

### Overview:

During World War II, Jews who lived in Germany or in countries that had been occupied by Germany were imprisoned in labor camps, concentration camps, and death camps. They were liberated from these camps by Soviet, British and American soldiers in 1944 and 1945.

The first concentration camp to be liberated was Majdanek. The prisoners in Majdanek were liberated by Soviet troops in July 1944. Soon thereafter Soviet troops reached other Nazi camps and freed their inmates. British and American troops reached Nazi camps in the spring of 1945, liberating tens of thousands of prisoners.

Our Liberation exhibit touches on an enormous topic in history. The Holocaust Museum in Boston or Auschwitz and Birkenau Memorial Museum (<https://www.auschwitz.org/en/education/resources-for-teachers/>) would be highly recommended for further resources.

### Materials:

Reader Boards and Propaganda Video Screens

Prison Camp Uniforms

M8 Greyhound



### Procedure:

Direct the students to read the Liberation, Holocaust Reader boards and Video Screens.

Discuss what they have read on the story boards and ask the students if there was any facts or information that stuck out to them.

Point out the quote, "Escape was not our goal since it was so unrealistic. What we wanted was to survive, to live long enough to tell the world what had happened..." Buchenwald Survivor ask the students to think about the quote and reflect on what they meant. Ask the students to discuss their thoughts about the quote.

## **Concentration Camp Uniforms**

Discuss with the students who wore these uniforms and what they represent.

The black triangle meant the prisoner was asocial or work-shy. Examples that the Nazis defined as such; Roma and Sinti (known by the exonym Gypsies), alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, vagrants, beggars, pacifists and conscription resisters. The yellow(faded) triangle sewn over the black signified this person was also Jewish.

Ask the students what they feel when they see the artifacts and who might have worn them. Ask how they would feel about wearing them and how they would feel about being marked like that.

## **M8 Light Armored Car (Greyhound)**

The M8 Greyhound was a reconnaissance vehicle that would often scout ahead of the main force to locate the enemy before engaging them. An M8, like the one here in the museum was the first vehicle to reach the Mauthausen-Gusen camp to liberate it.

Ask the students to look at the pictures of the on the reader rails and story boards around the Liberation exhibit area. When they have had sufficient time to explore the area (approx. 5 minutes). Ask them to discuss or write down their reactions if they were the first soldiers to see those camps and to liberate them. What would they be thinking when then saw those atrocities for the first time?