

INTRODUCTION

These brief epilogues convey the fates of the six young people whose lives students explored. Six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. Students now intimately know at least four of those who perished. Of the six young people introduced in this lesson, only Jakub is known to have survived (Esther’s fate is unknown). This number is proportionate to the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust relative to the entire Jewish population of Europe – about two of every three Jews lost their lives. These stories make personal the tragic consequences of the Holocaust and provide students with an opportunity to reflect on all that was lost.

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Anni Hazkelson, Epilogue

By 1935, as Anni was writing her diary, there were 43,500 Jews in Riga, making up 11% of the population. After the Germans conquered Latvia in 1941, most of them were shot and killed in the Rumbula forest.

Anni's diary was found by a German soldier in the family's apartment. Believing it had value, he sent it to a friend in Germany for safekeeping. It was found and donated to Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, Israel. Although Anni pasted a photo of herself and wrote her first name in the opening pages of the diary, her family name was a mystery and for years she was known only as "Anni X." After parts of the diary were published in an Israeli newspaper in 1986, Anni was identified by two survivors who had attended school with her.

Based on a page of testimony filled out for Anni, she was shot and killed in the Rumbula forest with her family on October 30, 1941 or November 1, 1941.

By studying about Anni's life, the wish she expressed in her diary on September 23, 1934, "Most of all, I want not to be forgotten after my death" is fulfilled.



Anni, Riga, Latvia, 1934

SOURCE: Diary of a Jewish Girl from Riga, Latvia - Anni Hazkelson - written 1934-1939, Yad Vashem Archives 0.33/6412

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Esther, Epilogue

The German army entered Esther's *shtetl* of Grójec on Sept. 8, 1939. They terrorized the Jews and burned down the synagogue. In July 1940 over 5,000 Grójec Jews were forced into a ghetto, along with hundreds of Jews from western Poland. They suffered from hunger, epidemics, and lack of heat. Most were deported and murdered in the Treblinka death camp in summer 1942, the majority after having been sent first to the Warsaw ghetto.

Esther submitted her autobiography to YIVO's 1939 contest. Sadly, World War II began on the very day the prize winners were to be announced.

Because she submitted the autobiography without using her actual full name or date of birth, there is not enough information to determine Esther's fate.

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Hannah Senesh, Epilogue

Nazi Germany occupied Hungary in March 1944 in order to prevent Hungary from abandoning its alliance with the Axis powers and leaving the war. Although Hungary had persecuted many members of the over 800,000 Jews in the country before then, the large majority had continued to live in relative safety. This changed after the Germans arrived. Over the course of 56 days in the spring and summer of 1944, German and Hungarian authorities deported nearly 440,000 Jews from the provinces almost exclusively to Auschwitz. The overwhelming majority was gassed upon arrival. Some 250,000 Jews remained in the capital Budapest. Beginning in the autumn they were subjected to brutal and often deadly treatment, especially by members of the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross party. All told, some 568,000 Hungarian Jews died in the Holocaust.

Hannah had a burning desire to help her mother and the Jews of Hungary. In 1943 she enlisted in the British army and trained for a secret mission. She became one of 32 Jewish paratroopers from British Mandatory Palestine dropped behind enemy lines in Europe. She managed to reach Hungary but was caught. She was interrogated as a spy and brutally tortured. She refused to reveal any information, even when her mother was arrested and threatened with death. Hannah was executed by firing squad on November 7, 1944. She refused to wear a blindfold.

Hannah realized her ambition to become a writer and is best-known for her poems. Among them is this one, known as “A Walk to Caesarea,” which has been set to music.¹

*Oh God, My God, I pray that these things never end,
the sand and the sea,
the rustle of the waters,
the lightning of the Heavens,
the prayer of Man.*

* * *



Hannah as a young woman in Eretz Israel
SOURCE: Yad Vashem Archives, YVA 3213/3

1. The song can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgEHWyQsi_k.

Jakub Harefuler, Epilogue

Jakub's city of Warsaw surrendered to the German army on September 28, 1939. In 1940 the Jews, who had made up approximately 30% of the city's population, were imprisoned in a ghetto that was only 2.4% of the city's area. By 1942, the ghetto enclosed almost half a million people in horrific conditions of overcrowding, severe hunger and widespread disease. Deportations began on July 22, 1942. Within 7 weeks, almost 300,000 Jews of Warsaw were murdered at the Treblinka death camp. Underground groups in the ghetto heroically rose up to fight the Germans in January 1943 and again, in a larger uprising, in April 1943. Ultimately, the ghetto was liquidated and most of the remaining Jews were killed in Majdanek, in other death camps or in a variety of labor camps.

Jakub managed to survive the Holocaust by escaping to the Soviet Union before he could be deported to a death camp. After the end of World War II he returned to Poland but did not stay long. He realized his dream of immigrating to British Mandatory Palestine and arrived there in early 1948, in time to see the State of Israel established.

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Petr Ginz, Epilogue

The Nazis conquered Prague on March 15, 1939. Beginning in September 1941, they began to deport the Jews; most of Petr's family, neighbors and teachers were taken away. Petr was branded a "*mischlinge*" by the Nazis because he was born from a "mixed" marriage between an "Aryan" and a Jew. He was thus given a reprieve from deportation, but only until 1942 when, at the age of 14, he was wrenched away from his parents and his sister and sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto.

The horrific conditions in Theresienstadt did not stifle Petr's creativity or his curiosity. He wrote novels, short stories and poetry. In his cramped barracks, he co-created, wrote, and illustrated a secret weekly magazine, *Vedem* (In the Lead), with the other teenage boys who lived there.

Petr produced an astonishing amount of artwork in the ghetto, creating more than 100 drawings, watercolors, and other art. He drew "Moon Landscape" when space exploration was still just a dream.

He read an exceptional number of books and made plans for his further education. His diary lists books he planned to read and things he would study, as well as whether he fulfilled these plans. He created maps and studied the geography of a world that was closed to him.

On September 28, 1944, Petr was deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. He was murdered in the gas chambers upon arrival. He was 16.

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Moon Landscape

#583/11

Petr Ginz (1928-1944)

Moon Landscape, 1942-1944

Pencil on paper

21x14.6 cm

Collection of the Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem

Gift of Otto Ginz, Haifa

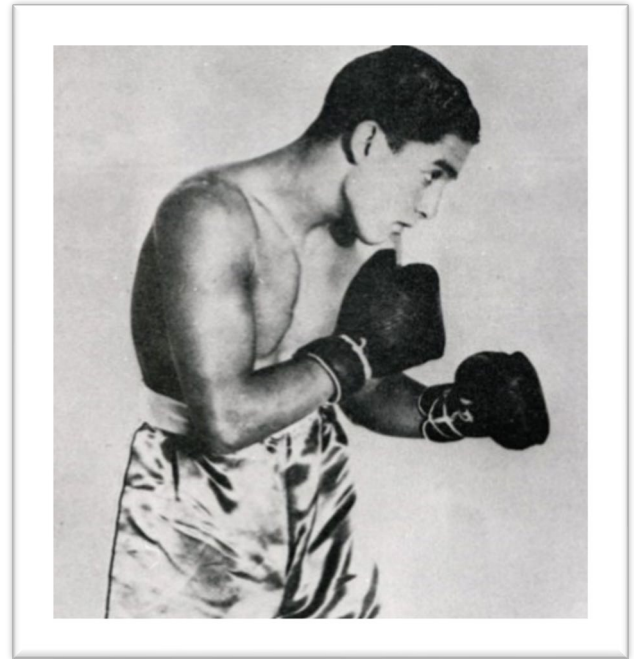
Victor “Young” Perez, Epilogue

Young remained in Paris despite rising antisemitism in the 1930s and France’s defeat by Germany in 1940. In 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo. He was sent first to the Drancy transit camp and from there to Auschwitz where he became a slave laborer.

After Young was recognized, he was forced to box for the amusement of the camp guards, who sometimes pit him against men who were much taller and heavier. Young always won. He was fighting for his life. The winner was rewarded with extra food; the loser was killed. Young boxed twice each week for 15 months, sharing the extra rations he received with his fellow inmates. He could have been killed for doing so. Noah Klieger, a fellow prisoner, remembers Young saying, “That doesn’t matter. Man isn’t born to live for himself.”

In January 1945, with the Soviet army rapidly advancing, the Nazis abandoned Auschwitz, forcing approximately 57,000 prisoners on a “death march” to the west. Young was among them. On January 21, 1945 he found some bread and rushed to share it with his friends. He was killed by a guard before he could do so. Klieger has said, “As small as he was in the boxing ring, he was great and noble in human spirit.”

Victor “Young” Perez was inducted into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 1986. To this day he remains the youngest world champion in flyweight history.



Victor “Young” Perez, 1931

Source: Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, The Oster Visual Documentation Center. Courtesy of Andre Nahum, www.bh.org.il.

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