The New England Holocaust Memorial
A Study Guide
Facing History and Ourselves would like to acknowledge its gratitude to the New England Holocaust Memorial Committee which provided funding for this guide.

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Facing History would like to acknowledge Phyllis Goldstein who wrote the manuscript for this study guide in collaboration with the Facing History team under the direction of Margot Stern Strom and Marc Skvirsky; Joe Wiellette for his design and production efforts; Cathy McCarney for her help in copy-editing the manuscript; and Tracy O’Brien for her assistance with permissions. We are also grateful to Barbara Halley for the unit she developed on monuments. It inspired many of the lessons in this guide.

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Printed in the United States of America.
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OVERVIEW

A memorial is a way of remembering the past. Anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays are memorials. So are photo albums, diaries, and many poems. Monuments are also memorials. They are public structures that speak to an entire community. Some tell of acts of courage, while others recall great tragedies. Each aims to preserve the collective memory of the generation that built the monument and shape the memories of generations to come. Monuments and other memorials have been a part of American life since the nation was founded. Many of them have become a part of the nation’s identity.

On October 21, 1995, a group of New Englanders—many of them Holocaust survivors—dedicated a memorial in the heart of Boston near the Freedom Trail. It was the result of a competition open to anyone who wished to enter. To guide the selection process, the committee defined the purpose of the monument:

This will be a memorial to the Shoah—the Holocaust—in which the Nazi Third Reich systematically murdered six million Jewish men, women, and children. The Nazis intended the destruction of Jewish life to be total and permanent. Jews were to have been removed from history and memory. The memorial will be for the six million—a place to grieve for the victims and to mark the loss of their culture to history.

The Nazis and their collaborators victimized many other groups, murdering countless other people, each of equal worth and importance. Still others, including survivors, those who aided them, and those who liberated them, were caught up in this great tragedy and carry the burden of that memory throughout their lives. In seeking a universal understanding of the Shoah, we acknowledge the place of each unique experience in the horror of that collective history.

To remember this suffering is to recognize the danger and evil that are present whenever one group persecutes another. The Holocaust was the ultimate act of prejudice—in this case antisemitism. Wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Shoah can happen again.

The memory of the Shoah is the legacy and responsibility of all humanity. The committee’s objectives in building this memorial are to witness history and reaffirm the basic rights of all people.
The six luminous glass towers designed by architect Stanley Saitowitz reflects that statement of purpose. Stephan Ross, the founder of the New England Holocaust Memorial Committee and a survivor views the monument as a lesson for the living “that such an atrocity should never happen to any people, anywhere, ever again.” For survivors like Zezette Larsen, the Memorial is “a place to go to, a place to reflect.” They have no other monuments to their loved ones. Still she warns that “without educational programs like Facing History’s, it will simply remain a monument.”

For nearly 20 years, Facing History and Ourselves has been teaching about the Holocaust and bringing the memories of the survivors to the classrooms. Their testimonies change the way students and teachers view history and themselves by revealing that the Holocaust happened to real people, people with names and faces and families and dreams—people just like us.

Facing History students complete their classroom study with lessons about monuments and memorials. Many then create their own unique designs. A visit to the New England Holocaust Memorial can enhance those lessons by helping students understand that while the history of the Holocaust is a Jewish story and a German story, it is also a human story. It teaches lessons that the world has not yet learned. There are far too many places where hate and intolerance still exist. By confronting this history, students discover how unexamined prejudices encourage racism and antisemitism by turning neighbor against neighbor. They make connections between history and the moral choices they face in their lives. And they come to understand that the world they live in is the result of choices made by countless individuals and groups. Even the smallest of those decisions can have enormous consequences.

This guide uses the Memorial to help students reflect on those lessons. It is divided into three sections. The Pre-View section introduces students to the concept of a monument and considers the role monuments play in shaping and preserving memory. It also traces some of the history of the New England Holocaust Memorial. The second section is to be used in conjunction with a visit to the Memorial. It offers activities and ideas for exploring its central themes. The final section entitled “Reflections” prompts discussion of the Memorial and encourages students to create their own monuments. The questions and activities grouped under the heading “Connections” are a starting point for helping students explore monuments. Teachers are encouraged to select the ones that relate most directly to their particular students and add new activities as appropriate.

*Margot Stern Strom*
Our identity is shaped, at least in part, by our history. One way a community builds and preserves memory is through monuments that honor its heroes or mark its tragedies. As Professor James E. Young explains, memorials often become places where groups gather to create a common past. “They become communities precisely by having shared (if only vicariously) the experiences of their neighbors. At some point, it may even be the activity of remembering together that becomes the shared memory.” Two monuments built in honor of George Washington reveal how a monument can become a part of a nation’s identity.

During his lifetime, Americans viewed Washington as a man with strengths and weaknesses. They freely criticized his leadership. Indeed when he left the presidency in 1797, he was very unpopular. Yet just a few years later, he would be memorialized as the nation’s first hero. Hailed as “first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen,” his likeness appeared on thousands of George Washington paintings and lithographs. Dozens of cities and towns, including the capital of the United States, were named for him. Sculptors and architects built monuments that showed him as a triumphant warrior or compared him to the gods of ancient Greece and Rome.

The monuments on this page and the next one are two of the many memorials to Washington designed in the early 1800s. Horatio Greenough of Boston spent nine years creating a statue that likened the nation’s first president to the Roman god Zeus. Although the work was much admired by the artists and scholars of the day, ordinary citizens were “shocked at the nudity of the figure.” When the statue was unveiled in 1843, it was supposed to stand in the great rotunda, the central hall of the Capitol—the place where Congress meets. But after seeing the statue, many congressmen had second thoughts about the idea. For a time, they put it on the east lawn of the Capitol. Later they hid it away in the new Smithsonian Institution.

Robert Mills, an architect and engineer from South Carolina, created the memorial now known as “the Washington Monument.” Like Greenough, Mills also looked to the ancient world for inspiration. He found it not in a statue but in an
obelisk—a tall, four-sided stone pillar that rises gradually to a point. The Romans, like
the Egyptians before them, used obelisks as monuments to great leaders. The one Mills
designed was taller and more elaborate than theirs. Built of white marble blocks, it was
to stand 555 feet high, making it the tallest structure in the world at the time. The
interior walls were to be lined with blocks donated by governments, civic groups, and
individuals from all parts of the nation and the world. Mills planned a staircase that led
to the top of the monument so that visitors could enjoy a panoramic view of the city.
Around the base of the monument, he envisioned a Greek temple 100 feet high and 250
feet in diameter.

A group of patriotic citizens formed the Washington Memorial Society to build the
monument. They planned to raise the money from private donations. They quickly
discovered that raising funds a dollar or two at a time was a
very slow process. Although the group had enough money
to lay the cornerstone by July 4, 1848, construction was
delayed again and again due to a lack of money. Work
stopped for other reasons too. For example, in 1854,
members of an anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant political
party often referred to as the Know-Nothings gathered at
the monument one evening at midnight, overpowered the
guard, and stole a stone donated by the Pope. After
defacing it, they threw the marble block into the Potomac
River. A year later they illegally took possession of the
entire monument. Many Americans were so outraged at
their behavior that they refused to contribute to the
memorial. As a result, all work came to a halt.

During the Civil War, the partially completed
monument became an eye-sore. To many Americans, it
seemed to symbolize the nation’s deep divisions.
Construction did not begin again until 1876, when
Congress decided to finish the project at the public
expense. By then Mills was dead and a new architect took over the project. With the
help of the Army Corps of Engineers, George P. Marsh simplified Mills’s design and
abandoned plans for a Greek temple. The redesigned memorial was completed on
December 6, 1884 and dedicated on February 21, 1885, 37 years after the cornerstone
was laid.

At the dedication, one speaker contrasted the monument to the
obelisks of ancient times. He reminded people that while they were carved from a single piece of stone, the new monument was built of many blocks “held firmly in position by their own weight and pressure.” Those stones symbolized the “national strength and grandeur, which can only be secured by the union of many in one.”

The new monument quickly became a part of national life. People gathered there to celebrate the Fourth of July and other important events in the life of the nation. It also became the object of national pilgrimages. Each year thousands of people visited the monument and other memorials in the nation’s capital. Even those who have never been to the city are familiar with the towering structure. They have seen it in countless photographs, films, and paintings. It has become a symbol of the nation and an integral part of its identity.

**Connections**

How does the building of the Washington Monument support Young’s view of the role memorials play in building shared memories? Uniting a community? How do your answers explain why the builders of the Washington Monument laid the cornerstone on July 4, 1848? Why Congress decided to fund the memorial in 1876?

A monument uses symbols to tell a story. What symbols did Greenough use in his memorial and why did he choose them? For example, why do you think he showed Washington in a toga? What does the sword represent? Why do you think one hand is pointing skyward?

How would you describe the Washington Monument? What ideas does it express? What symbols are used to express those ideas? Why, for example, were individuals, groups, and governments encouraged to donate stones in Washington’s honor? Why does the monument have a staircase that allows visitors to climb to the top and look out over the city?

In the early 1930s, a 14-year-old student wrote an essay about the Washington Monument:

> The Washington Monument was built with stones contributed by the nations of the world to honor the founder of this Republic. In its shadow, it seems the creator’s finger is
pointing to the stars. From Arlington, where sleep the men who loved freedom more than life, it looks like a giant’s spike that God might have driven into the earth and said, “Here I stake a claim for the home of liberty.”

In the 1960s, the prime minister of India called the monument and other memorials in Washington DC “temples to which each generation must pay tribute and, in doing so, must catch some of the fire that burnt in the hearts of those who were the torch bearers of freedom not only for this country, but for the world.” Compare their views of the monument with your own ideas. What similarities do you notice? How do you account for differences?

How do you explain why Horatio Greenough’s monument was hidden away, while the one Mills designed has become a national memorial?

Within the Washington Monument are 190 carved blocks. Every state and territory donated a stone, as did 22 towns and cities. American citizens living in China sent a stone. So did the governments of China, Brazil, Greece, Japan, Siam (now Thailand), Switzerland, Turkey, Wales, the Free City of Bremen in what is now Germany, and the Cherokee Nation. Stones were also donated by churches, Sunday schools, temperance societies, state militias, volunteer fire departments, literary and professional societies, businesses, and labor groups. The only one that was ever damaged was the one sent by the Pope. Why did the Know-Nothings destroy that stone? What does their action suggest about the power of a monument to preserve and shape memory?

When George Washington was president of the United States, people freely criticized his every action. Yet only a few years after he left office, he would be memorialized as a godlike hero. Why do you think he was remembered as larger than life rather than as an ordinary person who accomplished great things? How might those who have a different view of the nation’s founding tell their story? How might they preserve their memory of the past and shape the memories of generations to come?
WHO IS REMEMBERED?

Perhaps the most important question in building a monument is who will be remembered—that is, whose story will be told. In the early 1800s, most memorials honored the leaders of the American Revolution rather than the soldiers who fought and died for their country. During the Civil War, many people came to believe that it was not enough to honor leaders. They also wanted to honor the men those officers led into battle. In 1863, Congress created the first military cemeteries as memorials to all those who served their country in time of war.

In the years after the Civil War, hundreds of communities built their own memorials. Some honored a single individual, but many paid tribute to everyone in the community who fought. Two such monuments can be found on Boston Common. One is a called “The Monument to the Soldiers and Sailors of the Civil War.” It looks much like Civil War memorials in cities across the nation. Like them, it lists the names of all those who died in the fighting. The other, which lies near the intersection of Beacon and Park streets, honors a single regiment—the 54th.

The 54th was the Union Army’s first African American regiment. The state of Massachusetts organized the group soon after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January of 1863. Earlier, blacks eager to enlist in the army were turned away. Now abolitionist Frederick Douglass and others encouraged them to take part in the fighting. His two sons were among the first to volunteer. They were joined by men from not only other parts of the North but also Canada and the Caribbean.

Within months, the soldiers were ready for battle. On May 28, 1863, they marched down Beacon Street toward the docks to the cheers of hundreds of onlookers. At the head of the parade was a white Bostonian, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. Although the Union was willing to let African Americans fight in the war, it did not allow them to serve as officers. The men who led the 54th and
other African American regiments were white. Despite such examples of racism and prejudice, African-American soldiers in the 54th and other all-black regiments had a distinguished history. On July 18, the 54th stormed Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Hopelessly outnumbered, Shaw and hundreds of his men were killed in the battle. Among the heroes that day was Sergeant William H. Carney, the first African American awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery.

Even before the war ended, many people were memorializing the regiment. Currier & Ives, the famous printmakers, created a lithograph that showed the 54th Regiment attacking Fort Wagner. The First South Carolina Volunteers, many of whom were former slaves, named their camp after Colonel Shaw. When the regiment was disbanded at the end of the war, their officer told the men:

> It seems fitting to me that the last hours of our existence as a regiment should be passed amidst the unmarked graves of your comrades—at Fort Wagner. Near you rest the bones of Colonel Shaw, buried by an enemy’s hand, in the same grave with his black soldiers, who fell at his side; where in the future, your children’s children will come on pilgrimages to pay homage to the ashes of those that fell in this glorious struggle.

After the war, a number of people in Massachusetts decided to honor the regiment by building a monument. It would take the group 19 years to raise the money. In 1883, members hired a young sculptor named Augustus Saint-Gaudens to design a monument to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th. Although the committee was pleased with the design, members of the Shaw family strongly objected to a memorial that showed only the colonel. They insisted that the monument include the men he led into battle.

At the family’s request, Saint-Gaudens redesigned the memorial to include 23 black soldiers as a symbol of the entire regiment. When the new monument was finally dedicated on May 31, 1897, 200 African American veterans of the Civil War from the 54th Regiment, the 55th Infantry, and the 5th Cavalry marched with pride through the streets of Boston. Yet the discrimination that dogged African Americans during the war was reflected in the new monument. Although both black and white Americans spoke at the dedication, only the words of white Americans were carved into the base of the memorial. Although the names of white officers in the 54th Regiment were carefully listed on the monument, no African American soldier was identified. The names of black soldiers killed at Fort Wagner in 1863 were not added to the memorial until 1982.
Describe the monument to Shaw and the 54th. What symbols did Saint-Gaudens use in the memorial? What do those symbols stand for? What ideas do they express? How is this memorial like the ones Greenough and Mills built to George Washington? What differences seem most striking?

In 1994, just before Memorial Day, the *Boston Globe* reported on the condition of the 400 veterans’ monuments in Massachusetts. Many had been vandalized and neglected but not the one to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment. Not only was it well-tended but “for the last four months, a bouquet of fresh flowers has been placed in Shaw’s hands. No one knows by whom.” The reporter also noted that the monument had “served to bring the community together when it was restored in 1982 after the bitter years of school busing [for integration].” Henry Lee, the president of the Friends of the Public Garden and the Common, said of that restoration, “In a little way, it brought blacks and whites together just as it did in the war.” How do you account for recent interest in the monument after years of neglect? What might prompt people to restore it? To leave flowers? What do your answers suggest about the way monuments shape the memories of generations to come? About the way each generation finds new meaning in its monuments?

Henry Lee’s great-grandfather helped raise the money for the monument to the 54th Regiment. He sees the monument as “an eternal reminder of people of both races who gave their lives together in harmony; a source of conscience to whites, a source of pride to blacks. And it’s a reminder to carry on.” How does the monument express those ideas?

In 1863, the United States became the first nation in the world to set aside land in honor of those who served in the armed forces. These cemeteries became the final resting places for soldiers and sailors who fought on both sides in the Civil War. Among the graves are memorials to both black and white Americans; to Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. In time, it would also include women who served in the armed forces as well as men. In 1866, the United States built a monument at Arlington National Cemetery to all of the “unknown dead” of the Civil War. Similar monuments honor “unknown soldiers” in the nation’s other wars.
How are such monuments like those built to the heroes of the American Revolution? What differences seem most striking?

At the dedication of a national cemetery at Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln stated:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is, rather, for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

How does Lincoln use the word *dedicate*? Is he *dedicating* a piece of land as a memorial or a nation to an ideal? Did he view the cemetery as a way of preserving memory for his own generation or shaping the memories of generations to come?
MONUMENTS AND TRUTH

In building a monument, people decide not only who to remember but also how they will be remembered. Will they portray heroes as godlike figures or as ordinary people who have acted in extraordinary ways?

In 1884, about 20 years after the Civil War ended in the United States, the Municipal Council of Calais, France, asked a sculptor named August Rodin to build a monument to an event in the history of the town. In 1346, England and France were in the midst of a long, bitter war. As part of that war, the English surrounded Calais, refusing to allow anyone to enter or leave the city. After eleven months of hunger and suffering, six burghers—prominent citizens of the town—ended the siege by asking the enemy to take their lives and spare the community. Years later, Jean Froissart, a French writer, created a poem commemorating their courage. It tells of how the six marched out of town with “bare heads and feet, with ropes round their necks, and the keys of the town and castle in their hands.”

Rodin decided to show the burghers as real people “strung out the one behind the other, because, in the devotion to their city and their fear of death, each one is isolated, face to face with his conscience. They still ask themselves if they possess the strength to accomplish the supreme sacrifice.”

Their souls drive them ahead but their feet refuse to follow. They drag themselves with difficulty, as much owing to the weakness caused by the famine as to the horror of the trials awaiting them. Certainly, if I have succeeded in showing how much the body, even worn out by the cruelest of sufferings, can still cling to life, how much it still rules a soul inspired by courage, I can congratulate myself for having lived up to a noble theme.
Rodin planned to place his memorial at eye-level in front of Town Hall. There, as one historian has noted, passers-by would be confronted with the six burghers.

Dressed in garments which fall in heavy folds and add a physical burden to their gestures and uncertain bearing, they seem in transition between life and death, between sleeping and waking.... Powerless to alter the inevitable consequence of their decision, united only by their common resolve, each participant enacts his own drama, irresolute, deeply self-absorbed, and infinitely sad.

Members of the town’s monument committee held a different view of heroism and sacrifice. They would have preferred a monument that showed the six men arranged into a pyramid with the most prominent of the burghers at the top and angels hovering overhead. The artist and the committee battled over the memorial for months. When the finished work was finally unveiled in June of 1895, the compromises each side made were clearly visible.

Rodin had succeeded in overcoming the Committee’s objections to the way the figures looked. But he was unable to persuade them to allow the monument to stand in front of Town Hall where it could become part of the life of the community. Instead it was placed near the edge of a public garden and surrounded by an iron grill. Not until 1925, long after the artist had died, was the memorial moved to Town Hall Square.

**CONNECTIONS**

How did the Municipal Council want the burghers remembered? How did Rodin want them remembered? How are their views similar? How significant are the differences in their interpretation of the past? The public was not consulted about the monument. How important was that omission?

Why do you think Rodin wanted the monument at eye level in front of Town Hall? Why do you think the Municipal Council objected to the idea?
In designing a memorial, the artist considers such questions as:

- What is the message?
- Who is the messenger?
- Who is the audience?
- What will the audience learn from this memorial?

How did Rodin answer those questions in creating the “Burghers of Calais”? How did the Municipal Council answer those questions? How were their differences resolved? What does your answer suggest about who controlled memory in Calais? How important is the power to change history to reflect the lessons leaders want remembered and taught?
REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

After World War II, communities and nations planned memorials to those who died in the struggle. But many of these monuments were unlike those created in the past. Almost from the start, the Nazis had fought two wars. One was waged on the battlefields of Europe and North Africa. The other took place in secret and its victims were not soldiers but civilians—Jewish children, women, and men whose only “crime” was their ancestry. When both wars finally ended in 1945 with Germany’s defeat, many survivors were determined to bear witness. As one wrote, “I felt I was a witness to disaster and charged with the sacred mission of carrying the Ghetto’s history through the flames and barbed wire until such time I could hurl it into the face of the world. It seemed to me that this mission would give me the strength to endure everything.”

Survivors also felt a need to mourn. Isabella Leitner writes of why May is an especially difficult month for her:

The world ended in May. I was born in May. I died in May. We started the journey of ugliness on May 29th. We headed for Auschwitz. We arrived on May 31st.

The scent of spring wasn’t delicious. The earth didn’t smile. It shrieked in pain. The air was filled with the stench of death. Unnatural death. The smoke was thick. The sun couldn’t crack through. The scent was the smell of burning flesh. The burning flesh was your mother.

I am condemned to walk the earth for all my days with the stench of burning flesh in my nostrils. My nostrils are damned. May is damned. May should be abolished. May hurts. There should be only eleven months in a year. May should be set aside for tears. For six million years, to cleanse the earth.

For more than twenty years, I have walked zombie-like toward the end of May, deeply depressed, losing jobs, losing lovers, uncomprehending. And then June would come, and there would be new zeal, new life.

Now I am older, and I don’t remember all the pain, and June hurts, and so does May. May laughs sometimes, and so does June, and now in May I bend down to smell the flowers, and for moments I don’t recall the smell of burning flesh. That is not happiness, only relief, and relief is blessed. Now I want to reinstate the month of May. I want to reincarnate the month, reincarnate the dead. I want to tell my mother that I kept her
faith, that I lived because she wanted me to, that the strength she imbued me with is not for sale, that the god in man is worth living for, and I will make sure that I hand that down to those who come after me.

I will tell them to make what is good in all of us their religion, as it was yours, Mother, and then you will always be alive and the housepainter [Hitler] will always be dead. And children someday will plant flowers in Auschwitz, where the sun couldn’t crack through the smoke of burning flesh. Mother, I will keep you alive.

After the Holocaust, some survivors returned to their former homes only to find strangers living in their houses. Their synagogues were destroyed and their cemeteries in ruins. In many places, the Nazis had machine-gunned the tombstones and then ground the broken slabs into dust. In others, the stones were used to pave roadways, sidewalks, and courtyards. Even those left untouched had crumbled from years of neglect.

A number of survivors tried to reconsecrate their cemeteries. Sometimes this meant gathering up the broken gravestones and piling them into great heaps. In a few places, people built pyramids and obelisks from the broken fragments of the tombstones. James E. Young writes that these memorials remind us that “memory is never seamless but always a montage of collected fragments, recomposed by each person and generation.”

Five years after the war, Jews living in nations around the world built a Holocaust memorial in Poland in what was once the Warsaw Ghetto. It was the first to mark both the heroism of Jewish resistance to the Nazis and the destruction of the Jews in Eastern Europe. The sculptor, Natan Rapoport, was a Jew born in Warsaw in 1911. He fled the city three months before the Germans invaded Poland in 1939 and eventually made his way to the former Soviet Union. He was living in Siberia when he learned that 1,200 Jews in Warsaw armed with two submachine guns and 17 rifles held off 2,100 well-armed German soldiers for nearly a month—from April 19, 1943, to May 16. Soon after the Nazis put down the revolt, they...
reduced the ghetto to rubble and killed the Jews outright or deported them to death camps. Only a handful managed to escape. Rapoport was so deeply moved by the story that he later told friends that he lived only so that he might some day commemorate the uprising.

In 1948, Rapoport’s monument was unveiled near the place where the revolt began. Today it stands in the midst of a well-kept square surrounded by apartment buildings. But then, it was the only structure standing in “a moonscape of rubble.” The seven heroic men and women on the monument’s western wall appeared to be fighting their way out of the stone and rubble, out of the burning ghetto.

The monument is dedicated “To the Jewish People—Its Heroes and Its Martyrs.” But at first glance, viewers see only the heroes. The martyrs are on the opposite side of the monument. They are represented by twelve stooped and huddled figures, one for each the twelve tribes of Israel. They seem to be marching from right to left across the monument before disappearing into the granite. Three Nazi helmets and two bayonets in the background suggest their fate. Eleven of the twelve trudge along with their eyes on the ground. The twelfth is a rabbi holding a Torah scroll in one arm. He alone looks up to the heavens as if to beseech God.

In 1964, the Poles dedicated another memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, this one was at Treblinka, a Nazi death camp where 850,000 Jews were killed. In a nation now nearly empty of Jews, sculptor Franciszek Duszenko and architect Adam Haupt created a memorial that resembles a huge graveyard. It contains 17,000 granite shards set in concrete. Several hundred of the stones were inscribed with the names of Jewish villages destroyed during the Holocaust. At the center of the shattered landscape is a 40-foot obelisk that is split from top to bottom. A menorah, a candelabra with seven branches, is carved into the top of the structure. At the base is a stone tablet with the words “Never Again” in Yiddish, Russian, English, French, German, and Polish.
It has been said that we erect monuments so that shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget. What did the Jewish survivors want to remember? What did they want the world never to forget? How are the memorials they built similar to monuments built before World War II? What differences seem most striking?

Before World War II, Jews made up about 10 percent of Poland’s population. Today only a handful of Jews live in the country. Whose memory is being shaped by memorials like those shown on these pages?

When asked why his monuments feature individuals rather than abstract symbols, Natan Rapoport replied, “Could I have made a stone with a hole in it and said, ‘Voila! The heroism of the Jews’?” How would you answer the questions he raises? Does a monument have to be lifelike to show heroism?

Only one of the sharp-toothed granite stones at Treblinka is inscribed with a person’s name. In 1978, on the hundredth anniversary of Janusz Korczak’s birth, a stone carved with his name was set among the others. Before the war, Korczak was a Jewish physician in Warsaw and one of the most respected men in Poland. Thousands of Christians and Jews tuned in regularly to his radio show to hear his advice on child-rearing. He also ran an orphanage in what became the Warsaw Ghetto where he fought a losing battle to protect his young charges. When the deportations to the death camps began, a number of Christians offered to hide the doctor. He refused, choosing to remain with the orphans. An observer later recalled the day Korczak and the children were shipped to Treblinka.
I’ll never forget the sight to the end of my life. It wasn’t just entering a boxcar—it was a silent but organized protest against the murderers, a march the like of which no human eye had ever seen before. The children went four-by-four. Korczak went first with his head held high, leading a child with each hand. The second group was led by Stefa Wilczynska [Korczak’s assistant]. They went to their death with a look full of contempt for their assassins. When the ghetto policemen saw Korczak, they snapped to attention and saluted. “Who is that man?” asked the Germans. I couldn’t control myself any longer, but I hid the flood of tears that ran down my cheeks with my hands. I sobbed and sobbed at our helplessness in the face of such murder.

Why were observers so moved by the deportation of Korczak and his orphans? Why was the event described as “a silent but organized protest against the murderers”? In what sense was it a protest? How do your answers explain why Korczak’s name is still honored in Poland? Why every year on the anniversary of his deportation, people leave freshly-cut flowers and wreaths on his stone at Treblinka? Sometimes the note that accompanies the flowers is written in Hebrew and sometimes in Polish.

Find out about the memorials built to other victims of the Nazis. For example, what monuments have been built to the “Gypsies”? Poles? Russians? Homosexuals? The mentally and physically disabled? How are those memorials like the ones shown here? What differences seem most striking?
In the 1980s, a group of New Englanders, many of them survivors of the Holocaust, formed a committee to build a memorial. A site was selected across from Boston’s City Hall. Unlike the Holocaust monuments in Poland, it would not be located in a place where mass murders took place. Instead it would stand along the Freedom Trail, near monuments to the freedoms Americans won in Revolutionary times.

The committee turned to the community as a whole for advice on what kind of monument to build. The group held a number of open meetings from March through October of 1990. The following statements represent some of the many ideas and perspectives that were expressed at those gatherings. As you read them, think about how, after hearing these concerns, an artist might answer the following questions.

- What is the purpose of the memorial?
- Whose story will be told and why?
- Who will visit the monument?
- What will they learn from the experience?

When I’m gone, who will tell? My children may remember, but a memorial will help us all remember.

To focus on the acts of resistance and rescue, would distort the truth of the Holocaust; it was not a history of rescue, of resistance, of liberation. It was a history of the death of millions of unarmed civilians, aided by a host of collaborators, and made possible by the callous indifference of the civilized world, by people who turned their backs, barred their gates, and abandoned the victims to their fate. This was the truth of the Holocaust, and we must honor and respect this truth and leave no doubt whatsoever that it was the murder of one-third of the Jewish people.

[The monument] is to memorialize those who did not survive ... and to make us think why it happened, to use the Jewish experience to show what can happen to others, and to prevent it from happening again.

Do we want this memorial to focus on the Jewish experience or not? Does the artist have free rein to incorporate any of the other victims?... Yes, we want this to be a Jewish memorial,
but it should have universal meaning; the lesson is that this should never happen again to anyone. The word Shoah represents the Jewish experience in the Nazi period, the deliberate destruction of the Jewish people. To say this is not to deny that other groups were also persecuted.

Nine million people were killed in the camps, of which six million—two thirds—were Jews. Ninety-eight percent of the people who see this memorial will not be Jewish; we want to say to them that the system was set up to exterminate Jews but it also killed other people—like you. The memorial should not say it could happen to you but it did happen to you. The Holocaust was not only a Jewish experience.... Some numbers presented are as high as twelve million people.

Boston is pre-eminently a city of immigrants, whose history is already reflected in much of our public art..., there is a need for a Jewish monument which also universalizes the Holocaust history.

Are we limiting the message to the [Holocaust] as the Germans defined it? Or do we talk about the rest of the world that turned its back, the people who knew and who did nothing, the leaders who allowed it to continue?

My entire family was killed; for us a Memorial is a necessity because we have no graves.... We are losing people now and the survivors must help to make this Memorial a reality... we cannot wait. Even now, new dates are replacing the old dates: November 9th will be celebrated as the date on which the Berlin Wall came down, a new beginning for Germany.... To us, November 9th is the anniversary of Kristallnacht.... By the year 2000, I am afraid that people will say “Stop talking about the Holocaust.”

The word Holocaust is being misused. It is not synonymous with genocide. Everywhere, before and after, millions of people have been killed, all over the world, as in Cambodia and Ethiopia, but the Shoah was different. If the war had continued for another three months, the plan of total destruction would have succeeded. Other victims can be mentioned but comparisons should not be made, and the focus must be on the Jews.
The message I want to leave my children would be from horror to hope.... I will always remember the outstretched hand of the U.S. soldier who liberated me as a gesture of hope, not despair.

We must not neglect to memorialize what was lost—the culture that died with the victims, the lost contributions to our civilization and our world, the beauty that could have been created. Although the Memorial must reflect the unequal balance, that those who survived achieved a small victory amidst a catastrophic loss, it can also reflect that we are an eternal people, that we have survived and revived ourselves.

The Memorial makers should remember that the Jews who were sent to the death camps did not abandon their religion. The only thing my father could take was his tallis [prayer shawl] and tefillin [an object used in prayer]. And with this he went into the crematorium... with all the persecution he still did not give up his religion.

The Memorial should acknowledge the loss of Jewish culture and the indifference of the world.... Its lesson should be the guarantee of “never again” to any people... it should stand as a symbol against prejudice and discrimination.

Names are very important; people were thrown into mass graves without names; the memorial should speak against this anonymity that epitomized the Holocaust. As a liberator, I am troubled that 30 to 50 years from today, most of us will not be here to explain what we experienced.... The Memorial is for generations yet to come, a constant reminder of what took place, so that it can never happen again. It should serve as a warning not to sit silently in the face of prejudice, whether based on race, religion, or color.

The input of the survivors is tremendously important. My generation cannot provide the themes; it is up to you—the survivors to identify the themes and issues.... I need to be reminded so I can tell my children.... My experience cannot be as real as yours, but I am no less committed.

The Memorial should be a place that I, as a child of survivors,
could come to, to mourn, in the same way that families go to grave sites to mourn their loved ones.... Please make it a place that I will want to come to and want to help to build.

**Connections**

The monument committee sent the statements included in this reading to architects and sculptors interested in creating a memorial. What might they learn from the statements? Which message do you feel is most important? On what issues are people united? On what issues do they disagree?

If you had attended the meetings, what would you have told the committee? Whose views of the memorial are closest to your own?

How can a memorial to an event important to a particular group have universal meaning?
SELECTING A DESIGN

At meetings sponsored by the New England Holocaust Memorial, many individuals and groups shared their memories, exchanged ideas, and voiced opinions. As members of the committee listened and learned, they decided to continue the process by holding an open design competition. They prepared special packets for all those interested in submitting a design. The packet included a statement of purpose.

This will be a memorial to the Shoah—the Holocaust—in which the Nazi Third Reich systematically murdered six million Jewish men, women, and children. The Nazis intended the destruction of Jewish life to be total and permanent. Jews were to have been removed from history and memory. The memorial will be for the six million—a place to grieve for the victims and to mark the loss of their culture to history.

The Nazis and their collaborators victimized many other groups, murdering countless other people, each of equal worth and importance. Still others, including survivors, those who aided them, and those who liberated them, were caught up in this great tragedy and carry the burden of that memory throughout their lives. In seeking a universal understanding of the Shoah, we acknowledge the place of each unique experience in the horror of that collective history.

To remember this suffering is to recognize the danger and evil that are present whenever one group persecutes another. The Holocaust was the ultimate act of prejudice—in this case antisemitism. Wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Shoah can happen again.

The memory of the Shoah is the legacy and responsibility of all humanity. The committee’s objectives in building this memorial are to witness history and reaffirm the basic rights of all people.

Nearly 1000 individuals and teams registered and 520 submitted proposals. The committee chose a jury of seven renown scholars, architects, and artists to narrow the list to five. In the end, the jury selected seven finalists and invited the community to comment on their designs. Those designs are shown on these pages. As you study each proposal and read the designer’s description, answer the following questions.
• What does this design help you to remember about the Holocaust?
• What does it make you want to learn about the Holocaust?
• How does it and the Freedom Trail location help you to see the relevance of the lessons of the Holocaust in today’s world?
• What sort of experience do you expect a Holocaust memorial to provide the individual and the community?

Six striking glass towers, lit at night by gas lights... for the six death camps, the six million Jews, the candles of the menorah... a city of ice in remembrance of the Shoah.

Stanley Saitowitz, Stanley Saitowitz Architects, San Francisco, CA

Hidden within an “endless” meadow of yellow grasses... are the buried meanings of the Holocaust... explanations are replaced by a void, a beautiful, empty place.... the life of the grasses suggests regeneration and healing—the sustaining power of the Jewish people and culture.

Nancy J. Locke and Jan Longwell, Ithaca, NY
A sloping path leads to a series of room-like spaces with arched brick walls... a wound and permanent scar... creating a place to grieve for the victims and the loss of their culture to history... on one side, manicured grass indicates new growth, hopes for future generations.

CHUNG NGUYEN AND CHUONG NGUYEN, MC ARCHITECTS, Stafford, TX

Twenty-four doors in the middle of a green park... a series of choices... wide open doors inscribed to “tolerance,” “liberty,”... half-closed doors to “prejudice,” “tyranny,”... one is completely closed, inscribed with “as they marched to their graves, they recited for each other the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer of mourning...”

CISSY SCHMIDT AND MATTHEW PICKNER, Brooklyn, NY

A 300-foot labyrinth of benches with names of the 350 concentration camps inscribed in white marble... a place for children to explore... a memorial marker to the many who were buried in the unmarked graves.

ROBERT J. STEIN AND JERRY WEDGE, STEIN & ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS, Boston, MA
The memorial recedes from form so [the inexpressible] can find its own way... a simple, dark rectangle set in the earth... silver-blue slate, with 36 small flames shining through for the 36 righteous then the surface changes to steel which... as one walks creates a... second chamber to... resonate in the non-verbal chamber of our being.

Hali Jane Weiss, Richard Gluckman, Architects, New York, NY

A broken glass sculpture of a Star of David, dramatically lit at night... in the midst of the trees and the path with symbols suggesting railroad tracks into the death camps... alongside is a sculpture, suggesting the lion of Judea... holding a book with details of the Holocaust chronology

Troy West, Anker West, and Ginidir Marshall, Troy West Associates, Wakefield RI and Newark, NJ

**Connections**

Describe the details of each design. What message do they convey? At whom is the message aimed?

Review your answers to the four questions with your classmates. Which memorial provoked the most powerful responses? If you were a judge, which design would you have chosen? What criteria did you use to make your decision?

Which design in your view best reflects the purpose of the Memorial as defined by the committee?
VISITING THE NEW ENGLAND HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

The visual arts allow us to come close to experiencing the world as someone else sees it. As you walk through the Memorial, pay attention to:

- where it is located.
- what you see.
- what you hear.
- what you can touch.
- how you feel.
- what you are thinking.

Describe what you saw, heard, and felt as you studied the Memorial. What parts of the Memorial had the greatest effect on you? What details contributed to your response?

What is the message of the Memorial? Who is the messenger? Who is the audience—that is, at whom is the message aimed?

One critic defines public art as “accessible art of any kind that cares about/challenges/involves and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment.” How well does the memorial fit that definition? Is it public art?

Alex Krieger, the Director of the Urban Design Program at Harvard University, says of the design:

I think one of the most significant aspects of this incredible design is its location and its juxtaposition with what we think of as the cradle of liberty. The fact that millions of people who visit the Freedom Trail to learn about the creation of liberty, will in one moment, in one brief moment, be able to ponder what the absence of liberty holds, I think is particularly extraordinary.

How important is the site to the experience of viewing the memorial? How would the experience be different if it were tucked away in a suburban park? Or placed near a factory?
The word *remember* is the first and the last word you see as you walk through the monument. What are we to remember? At the dedication ceremony, on October 22, 1995, Elie Wiesel, a writer and Holocaust survivor, reflected on that question:

I believe in names. We all do.... If we could erect a wall in Boston with all the names of all those who perished... this wall would probably encircle not only Boston but the entire state of Massachusetts. But we don’t know the names. How many names simply vanished from human memory? What about those who left no trace? ... A million and half [were] children. A million and a half children, I will repeat these words to the end of my life, a million and a half children. Even their names have vanished—why? And what can we do to bring these names back?

You will look at these towers. I hope that when you will look at them, you will stop for a second, just for one second, and try to remember one of those children; a face, a smile. Catch a word, seize a prayer, take a dream that was muted, a dream that was killed. Take what you can so that for a second you, too, will be part of an extraordinary story that no one can remember but no one should forget.

What will you remember? What must you remember? You will remember the heroes, those who fought. And they were glorious. And they were valiant in the Warsaw Ghetto, in all the ghettos, without arms, without help, they stood against what was then the mightiest legion in the world. In the Warsaw Ghetto, a thousand young persons, boys and girls, resisted the German legions longer than the French army resisted the German army....

Think of the solitude of the victims, how alone they were. The world knew and stood silent. Remember that. Oh, I know, and we must know and we must remember with gratitude, the sacrifice of our nation, here. I know millions of American young people went to war to fight fascism, Nazism, to save the world from this scourge of hatred. And we must remember them with infinite, eternal gratitude. But the war against Jews,
the war against the Jewish people, against the children, the old, the teachers, the students, the workers, the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, that war went on and on. And why wasn’t it stopped? I will ask this question again and again as I have done for all my adult life.... Think about that when you see these six towers of memory.

....And when you see these towers, think of hatred that must be vanquished today; it is growing. Unbelievable, but it is true, it is growing. If Auschwitz didn’t eliminate antisemitism, what will? If Treblinka didn’t eradicate hatred, what will? If those places didn’t teach our generation at least, and the ones to come, of the necessity, the urgency to bring people together as we usher in a new century, what will? I don’t know what, but I do know we must. We have no choice.

Whenever, wherever injustice prevails, we must act immediately.... We cannot give evil another chance. We look for hope—there is a marvelous saying by a great Hasidic master who said, “If you look for the spark, you will find it in the ashes.”

**CONNECTIONS**

What does Wiesel want visitors to remember? What symbols does he believe will help them remember? What would you want visitors to remember? What symbols will help them do so?

Stanley Saitowitz designed the New England Holocaust Memorial. He said of the six towers:

- Some think of it as six candles, others call it a menorah.
- Some a colonnade walling the civic plaza, others six towers of spirit.
- Some six columns for six million Jews, others six exhausts of life.
- Some call it a city of ice, others remember a ruin of some civilization.
- Some speak of six pillars of breath, others six chambers of gas.
- Some think of it as a fragment of Boston City Hall, others call the buried chambers Hell.
- Some think the pits of fire are six death camps, others feel the shadows of six million numbers tattoo their flesh.
What do you remember when you see the six towers? Which of the interpretations Saitowitz lists is closest to your own? What do you remember when you look into the pits of fire?

What other symbols did you notice as you walked through the memorial? What meaning did you find in them? What did they help you remember? What did they urge that you not forget?
A TIMELINE OF THE HOLOCAUST

The New England Holocaust Memorial uses words as well as symbols to tell its story. As you read the words that are inscribed on the monument, think about why they were chosen and what they suggest about the things the builders would like for you to remember. Visitors approaching the Memorial from the Faneuil Hall side encounter a large black granite panel. It defines the purpose of the Memorial and outlines key historical events that led to the Holocaust.
Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis created a regime of hate and victimization in Germany that eventually consumed most of Europe. Driven by racist beliefs, they killed as many as eleven million men, women, and children in their quest to dominate Europe and create a “pure and superior” race. The Nazis singled out the Jews for total extermination—their very existence to be erased from history and memory. Before their defeat in 1945, the Nazi regime murdered six million Jews—more than half of Europe’s Jewish population.

Those who perished have been silenced forever. Those who witnessed and survived the horrors carry with them the burden of memory. Through their voices, we seek to comprehend the acts of inhumanity that can stem from the seeds of prejudice.

To remember their suffering is to recognize the danger and even that are possible whenever one group persecutes another. As you walk this Freedom Trail pause here to reflect on the consequences of a world in which there is no freedom—a world in which basic human rights are not protected. And know that wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Holocaust can happen again.

**Connections**

Who do the monument builders see as the audience for the Memorial? What is the message? How does the timeline support that message?

What does the timeline suggest about how the Holocaust happened? What does it suggest about why it happened? What events would you add to the timeline? What events would you omit?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1933 | **January**  
The Nazi party takes power in Germany. Hitler becomes Chancellor. |
| 1933 | **February**  
Nazis “temporarily restrict” civil liberties for all citizens—never to be restored. |
| 1933 | **March**  
The concentration camp at Dachau is established. |
| 1933 | **May**  
Trade unions are closed. Books declared contrary to Nazi beliefs are publicly burned. |
| 1935 | **September**  
The German government enacts the Nuremberg Laws—codifying the “racial” definition of Jews and depriving them of citizenship and fundamental rights. The Nazis intensify persecution of political dissidents and others considered “inferior,” including Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals. Many are sent to concentration camps. |
| 1938 | **November**  
| 1939 | **December**  
Nazis seize control of Jewish-owned businesses. |
| 1939 | **September**  
Germany invades Poland. World War II begins. Nazis order Polish Jews into restricted ghettos and force them into slave labor. |
| 1939 | **October**  
Hitler orders the so-called “Euthanasia” program leading to the systematic murder of the mentally and physically disabled in Germany and Austria. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Nazis begin deporting German Jews to Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Nazis begin the first mass murder of Jews at Treblinka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Germany attacks the Soviet Union. Mobile killing units begin the systematic slaughter of the Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>In two days, mobile killing units shoot 33,771 Ukrainian Jews at BabiYar—the largest single massacre of the Holocaust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>The death camp at Chelmno begins operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Wannsee Conference: The Nazis coordinate the “Final Solution”—a plan to kill all European Jews through mass exterminations. Six death camps equipped with gas chambers soon begin full scale operation in Poland: Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. During peak operations, thousands of people a day are murdered in these death factories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>US and Allied forces defeat the Nazis and liberate the remaining concentration camp survivors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As visitors enter the first tower, they pass over the word Remember inscribed in the pathway both in English and Yiddish, the language of the Jews of Eastern Europe. On each side of the six glass towers are brief quotations from Holocaust survivors and witnesses. Their voices open a window to the past. As you read their words, think about the questions they raise. The curator of a museum once wrote:

Questions.
Questions are more important than answers.
Questions open doors, admit possibilities, encourage options, reject absolutes.
Questions make connections.
Museums should be about questions.

So should monuments and other memorials.

As visitors leave the final tower, they again see the word Remember, this time inscribed in Hebrew. At the end of the path stands a large black granite panel. It bears a legendary quotation by Martin Niemoeller, a Lutheran minister.

They came first for the Communists,
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me,
and by that time no one was left to speak up.
NOTHING BELONGS to us anymore.
They have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair. If we speak, they will not listen to us. And if they listen, they will not understand. They have even taken away our names.

MY NUMBER is 174517. I will carry the tattoo on my left arm until I die.

Primo Levi
Holocaust Survivor

A chemist captured in Italy while trying to join the partisans. Became an author after the war.

WHEN MY PARENTS were sent off to the camp, I gave my good shoes to my father because I thought he’d need them if he did physical labor. When I saw my mother for the last time, I hugged and said I hoped she didn’t have to work too hard.

I NEVER DREAMED they’d be dead within such a short time of their departure.

Jack Polak
Holocaust Survivor

Captured by the Nazis in Amsterdam

Majdanek
AT FIRST THE BODIES weren’t burned, they were buried. In January, 1944, we were forced to dig up the bodies so they could be burned.

WHEN THE LAST MASS GRAVE was opened, I recognized my whole family—my mother, my sisters, and their kids. They were all in there.

MOTKE ZAIDL
Holocaust Survivor

Deported from Lithuania and forced to work the death detail at Chelmno.

MY YOUNGER SISTER went up to a Nazi soldier with one of her friends. Standing naked, embracing each other, she asked to be spared. He looked into her eyes and shot the two of them.

THEY FELL TOGETHER in their embrace—my sister and her young friend.

RIVKA YOSSELEVSCKA
Holocaust Survivor

A young mother who witnessed the murder of her entire family.
**ILSE, A CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF MINE,**

once found a raspberry in the camp and carried it in her pocket all day to present to me that night on a leaf.

**IMAGINE A WORLD** in which your entire possession is one raspberry and you give it to your friend.

**GERDA WEISSMAN KLEIN**

_Holocaust Survivor_

Deported from Germany as a teenager. Later married the US Army officer who led the troops that rescued her.

**FROM OUR BARRACKS** we could see the gas chambers. A heart-rending cry of women and children reached us there. We were overcome by a feeling of helplessness. There we were, watching and unable to do anything.

**WE HAD ALREADY WORKED OUT** a plan of escape. But at that moment I decided—*We must not simply escape. We must destroy the fascists and the camp.***

**ALEXANDER PERCHERSKY**

_Holocaust Survivor_

Captured Russian soldier who led the prisoner revolt at Sobibor.

**S O B I B O R**
I WAS CHOSEN to work as a barber outside the gas chamber. The Nazis needed the women’s hair. They told us “make those women believe that they are just getting a haircut.”

WE ALREADY KNEW it was the last place they went in alive.

ABRAHAM BOMBA  
Holocaust Survivor
Barber who escaped Treblinka and survived in hiding.

IN ONE TRANSPORT, people refused to be taken to the gas chambers. A tragic struggle developed. They destroyed everything in sight and broke the crates filled with gold taken from the prisoners. They grabbed sticks and anything they could get their hands on to fight.

BUT THE GUARDS’ BULLETS cut them down. When morning came, the yard was still full of the dead.

JACOB WIERNIK  
Holocaust Survivor
Construction worker forced to build the gas chambers at Treblinka.
I was assigned to work outside digging ditches. We dug in the freezing cold and rain, wearing only the thin, striped dressed issued to us. The ditches weren’t to be used for any particular purpose.

The Nazis were merely trying to work us to death. And many did die of sickness, cold, exhaustion, and starvation.

Sally Sander
Holocaust Survivor

Dressmaker who was forced to make uniforms for German flyers.

Transports arrived every day, mainly from Poland, but also from other European countries—Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and others. In one transport there was a Ukrainian woman. She possessed documents that proved she was a genuine Aryan, and yet she went to the gas chamber.

Once you crossed the gate to the camp, there was no chance to get out of there alive.

Chaim Hirszman
Holocaust Survivor

Metal worker imprisoned at Belzec.
**Aime Bonifas**  
*Holocaust Survivor*

French resistance fighter who later became Pastor of the French Reformed Church.

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**George Kaiser**  
*American Soldier*

Participated in the Liberation in 1945.

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**Some Catholics**, including Father Amyot, invited me to join them in prayer. Seven or eight of us gathered, secretly of course, in the shed used as a lavatory.

**In prayer**, we laid before God our suffering, our rags, our filth, our fatigue, our exposure, our hunger, and our misery.

I remember stooping down and picking up a piece of something black near the crematorium. I realized it was a bone. I was going to throw it down again, and I thought, my God, this may be all that’s left of someone.

So I wrapped it up and carried it with me. A couple of days later, I dug it out of my pocket and buried it.
CONNECTIONS

What voices are included in the quotations on the glass pillars? Why do you think they were chosen? Why does the quotation attributed to Martin Niemoeller stand alone? Which of the quotations is the most meaningful to you? To your family and friends? What quotations would you want to add to the pillars?

The following facts are carved along the pathway through the memorial. What do they add to the story the Memorial tells?

- The Nazis considered the Slavic peoples to be “sub human”—the elite were to be exterminated and the rest were to be used for slave labor. Millions died under German occupation.
- There were many acts of Jewish resistance against the Nazis. With little or no resources, they rebelled in the ghettos, fought as partisans in the forests, and revolted as prisoners in the camps.
- Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto revolted against the Nazis on April 19, 1943. A handful of Jews heroically held off the German army for several weeks. Finally, the Nazis destroyed the ghetto.
- German homosexuals were early victims of Nazi persecution. Many were imprisoned. Some were castrated or used in medical experiments. Thousands died in concentration camps.
- In Poland, alone, the German army killed more than six million Polish citizens—Jews and Christians—including 2,600 Catholic priests.
- By late 1942, the United States and its allies were aware of the death camps, but did nothing to destroy them.

How does the Memorial reflect universal ideas by focusing on a particular history? How important is it that the larger community find meaning in a monument dedicated to a particular group?
BUILDING A MONUMENT

If you were to build a monument in your community, what would you ask the world to remember? What would you want visitors to never forget? What symbols would you use to convey your message? Whom would you like to visit your monument? Where would you place it?

In planning your monument, you may wish to work alone or in a team. Begin by deciding what individual, idea, or event you would like to memorialize and why.

- Sketch possible ideas for your monument on paper or in plasticine clay. You may want to research possible images for your monument before choosing a design.
- Decide on an appropriate design, choose building materials for your monument, and select an appropriate site for the completed work.
- Build a three-dimensional model of your monument and then write a short essay explaining the concept behind your monument and the process involved in creating it. The following questions may help you organize your thoughts.
  - What is the title of the monument?
  - What prompted you to create this particular monument? What are the ideas underlying your monument?
  - What forms did you choose to express those ideas and why did you choose them?
  - Describe the details of your monument that you think are the most powerful or important.
  - What setting do you envision for your monument? Why did you choose this setting and scale?
  - How do you hope people will respond to your monument?

Share your essay and your monument with your classmates. Discuss the process as well as the final product. What did you learn about the relationship between history and memory by building a monument? What did you learn about yourself and the memories that shape your identity?
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For a fuller treatment of ideas and concepts developed in this guide, see *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. Other books of interest available from Facing History and Ourselves include:

- **Elements of Time**: a companion manual to the Facing History videotape collection of Holocaust testimonies—the result of a five-year collaborative project between Facing History and the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University made possible through the vision and support of Eli Evans and the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The book includes transcriptions of the videos along with essays by some of the many scholars who have addressed Facing History conferences.

- **I Promised I Would Tell**: Sonia Weitz’s poetry and remembrances of life in the Krakow Ghetto and various concentration camps including Plaszow and Auschwitz.

Teachers can also borrow videos from Facing History and Ourselves to extend and enrich this study guide. Possibilities include *America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference; The Camera of My Family; Childhood Memories* [testimonies of survivors]; *It Is Memory* [a look at Natan Rapoport and his art]; *Portraits of Holocaust Survivors* [from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies]; *Survivors of the Holocaust*; and a unit on monuments complete with slides and teaching suggestions. Also available is a video produced by the New England Holocaust Committee. It is entitled *A Community Remembers*.

The following books can also be used to explore specific topics and/or concepts highlighted in this guide: