



LAST STOP BEFORE THE LAST STOP

TRANSIT IN TEREZÍN

In this lesson, students will study the complexity of Terezín (Theresienstadt) transit camp through the eyes of two survivors: Norbert Troller and Edith Friedlander. Through these vastly different first person accounts, documents, maps and primary sources, students will learn of Nazi deception and horrors inflicted on prisoners at Terezín. Students will work in groups to investigate and make meaning of multiple artifacts.



Essential Questions:

1. What was the role of transit during the Holocaust?
2. What role did art play for some survivors, including Norbert Troller?
3. How does the experience at Terezín differ from experiences at other camps?
4. What knowledge can be gained by examining primary source materials?

Lesson Objectives:

1. Students will view a variety of primary source materials to learn about how transit was used to, within, and from Terezín
2. Students will analyze documents, looking for diction, tone, and stylistic choices that help us understand life in Terezín
3. Students will understand various forms of spiritual resistance that helped sustain prisoners in Terezín

Subjects:

Social Studies
ELA
Arts

Grades:

9-12

Authors:

Lisa Bauman
Kim Klett

EXTERNAL LINKS 

- [Leo Baeck Institute](#)
- [Online exhibit: “The Last Stop Before the Last Stop”](#) - Leo Baeck Institute
- [The Defiant Requiem Foundation - Education](#)
- [Theresienstadt Ghetto and Transit Camp](#) - Yad Vashem
- [Theresienstadt: Key Dates](#) - USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia
- [Theresienstadt](#) - USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia
- Echoes and Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- Facing History and Ourselves [Preparing Students for Difficult Conversations](#)

Cover image:
Photograph of Edith Fiedlander hiking with her parents in the Austrian countryside on a vacation, probably near Salzburg, circa 1936

CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

Terezín was opened in 1941 and called Theresienstadt by the Nazis. They sought to emulate the ghettos being created in Eastern Europe in Czechoslovakia with a specific goal of creating a “show” ghetto/camp that could be leveraged for propaganda purposes if and when that was needed.

The prisoners that were sent to Terezín often included decorated Jewish veterans from World War I, intellectuals, writers, artists, composers, spiritual leaders, and other more-respected Jewish members of society. Half-Jews, Jewish peoples married to Aryans, the wealthy elderly, and many children were also sent to the ghetto.

Terezín was considered the “Kingdom of Deceit”. From the very beginning, Terezín was falsely advertised to Jews as a self-governing, autonomous town where Jewish peoples could live in relative comfort until the war passed. Many Jews paid for tickets or signed their property away in exchange for admission into Terezín—much of the relinquished property was subsequently sold by the Nazis to financially support the Third Reich. Upon entering the ghetto, deportees were further stripped of any personal belongings they brought with them and were given nothing in return save for some soup, potatoes, and bread.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Map of Terezín - make copies or project for students to see (worksheet 1)
- [Artifacts for Group #1](#)
- [Artifacts for Group #2](#)
- [Artifacts for Group #3](#)
- [Artifacts for Group #4](#)
- [Artifacts for Group #5](#)
- [Artifacts for Group #6](#)

LESSON SEQUENCE

QUICK WRITE

Give students 3 minutes to reflect on the title “Last Stop Before the Last Stop”.

1. What does this mean?
2. What does it bring to mind?
3. How do you think this might connect with what you know about the Holocaust?

MINI LESSON & WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

Define transit; then explore this site from the online exhibit: “The Last Stop Before the Last Stop”

Show the map & discuss the geography of Terezín (see Worksheet 1)

Discuss primary source materials, explaining that primary sources are original objects or documents, such as newspaper articles from the time period, diaries, photographs, interviews, etc.

Ask students why primary source materials are so important when studying history, and explain that they will be analyzing a set of primary source materials, including artwork, excerpts from a letter written immediately after the end of WWII, an autobiography excerpt, and a photograph.

GROUP ANALYSIS

Divide students into six groups and give them their corresponding folder of artifacts - allow the groups at least 20 minutes to examine the materials and discuss their findings.

Tell students that they should read the letter and autobiography excerpts carefully, analyzing the diction and tone, as well as highlighting key events in the excerpts and anything that surprises them. Ask them to use highlighters to mark these on the paper (if using paper).

For the art piece, they should also analyze by looking carefully at the work and making observations about not only what is happening in the picture/painting, but also considering choices the artist made, such as the medium used, the use of color (or lack thereof), what is included and possibly what is omitted in the picture.

The photograph should be looked at with attention to detail, knowing these are photos of Edith Friedlander, and considering how they fit into what we know of her life.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Each group will then spend at least another 20 minutes putting together a poster or digital presentation. They will display their documents on it (if they have paper documents; if using Google folders, then each group should prepare a discussion presentation to share with the class their findings, projecting each item in the classroom so others can follow). If creating posters, students should title them and can embellish with their own artwork, if so inclined.

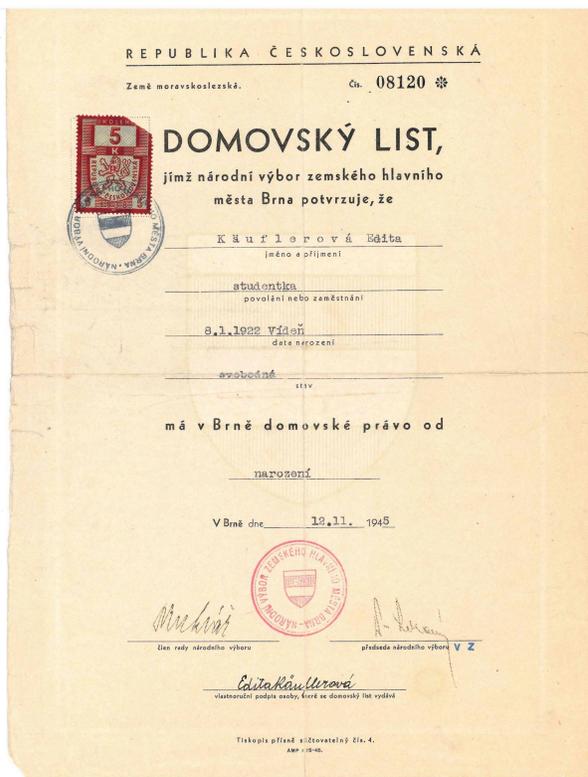
Posters/presentations should be presented in numerical order, since they are in chronological order of the letter and autobiography. This way, as each group presents, the other groups will be able to make connections to their own group's findings.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

To look further into Edith Friedlander's immigration journey, the teacher can share with students the laws and regulations that made this journey quite difficult (see USHMM articles: [United States Immigration and Refugee Law, 1921-1980](#) | [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#) and [Documents required to obtain a](#)

[visa | Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)).

Utilizing the Leo Baeck Institute’s archives for Edith Friedlander, students can analyze documentation verifying Edith’s birth in Brne, Czechoslovakia. Since her birth certificate was likely destroyed, she would have needed documentation of her birthplace and citizenship before she could leave Czechoslovakia as well as Edith’s naturalization certificate



KEY TERMS / VOCABULARY**DEPORTATION**

The forced removal of Jews in Nazi-occupied countries from their homes.

EMIGRATION

Departure from a place of abode, natural home, or country for life or residence elsewhere.

GHETTO

A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group are compelled to live.

TEREZÍN

A fortress town 30 miles north of Prague; between 1941 and 1945, it was first used as a ghetto for Jews of Central and Western Europe, but its functions evolved into that of a concentration/transit camp.

THERESIENSTADT

German name for Terezín (see above)

WORKSHEET 1 MAP OF TEREZÍN



Theresienstadt and other Nazi camps during WWII. Public domain.