

Writing Prompt:

Choose a *community of conscience* from the time of the Holocaust, whether or not in the examples included. After appropriate research, discuss and reflect upon the choices made by individuals and/or groups that created and sustained this *community of conscience*. Drawing on the lessons of this community during the time of the Holocaust, discuss the choices you, as an individual, and your community, as a group, can make to create and sustain a *community of conscience*. Reflect upon what actions you can take to assure that your community will never be shattered by intolerance.

Research Suggestions:

The following web sites will help you in your research:

<http://www.ushmm.org/>
<http://www.chambon.org/>
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/uprising/>
<http://www.gfh.org.il/english/>
<http://www.yadvashem.org.il>
<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com>
<http://www.jfr.org/stories/stories.html>
<http://www.holocaustchronicle.org>

Teachers may also wish to consult:

<http://www.facinghistory.org>

Writing Contest Criteria:

Essay or poem must be typed or word processed and must include a cover sheet with student name, grade, school, and teacher name, telephone number and, if available, email address. Essays must include word count and poems must include line count. Essays and poems should not include or refer to the specific school.

Essay must be no more than 1000 words in length.

Essay may be persuasive, narrative, informative, or a combination thereof, but it must communicate a clear idea and be based on accurate information. Please include at the end of the essay the resource(s) consulted.

Poem must be no more than 30 lines and must be based on accurate information. Please include at the end of the poem the resource(s) consulted.

All entries become the property of Chapman University.

Your school's winning essay(s) and/or poem(s) must be postmarked by **February 14, 2003** and mailed to:

Dr. Marilyn Harran
The Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education
Chapman University
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866

Please visit our web site: <http://www.chapman.edu/holocaust/writing>

You may also contact:

Dr. Marilyn Harran at (714) 628-7377 / harran@chapman.edu or
Professor Jan Osborn at (714) 628-7221 / josborn@chapman.edu.

Fourth Annual Holocaust Writing Contest

Conscience and Community: Choices of Courage

We invite you to participate in the Fourth Annual Holocaust Writing Contest, sponsored by Chapman University and The "1939" Club, including Shoah Survivors of Orange County and Long Beach, one of the largest and most active Holocaust survivor organizations in the United States.

Each school is invited to submit a total of two entries, consisting of essay(s) and/or poem(s) for the first and second prizes in the middle school and high school competitions. These school representatives will be eligible to win the first prize of \$500 and the second prize of \$250 in each category in the middle and high school competitions.

School representatives in attendance at the awards ceremony will receive certificates and *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures*, a unique one-volume history of the Holocaust.

Each school in attendance at the awards ceremony will receive a copy of the award-winning documentary *Weapons of the Spirit* (classroom version), written, produced, and directed by Pierre Sauvage, and a copy of the *Teacher's Discussion Guide* to the film, prepared by the Anti-Defamation League.

The two student representatives from each school, with their teacher and/or principal (depending on seat availability), are invited to the awards ceremony on **Friday, March 14, at 1 p.m. in Memorial Auditorium at Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866.** The highlights of the event will include:

- the reading of the two winning essays (one middle school and one high school)
- the reading of the two winning poems (one middle school and one high school)
- a reception to honor our guests
- the opportunity to meet and talk with Holocaust survivors



Eva Héritier, daughter of rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, holds Jewish infant Pierre Sauvage in 1944



Mordechai Anielewicz with fellow members of the Hashomer Hatzair socialist Zionist youth movement

The villagers of the area of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, located some 300 miles south of Paris, opened their homes and their hearts to those in need. The village became a safe haven for Jews fleeing the Nazis and their French collaborators. No one was refused; some Jews were hidden by the villagers for nearly four years. The example was set by Pastor André Trocmé and his wife Magda, who believed that they must never turn away those who were their "neighbors." The villagers of Le Chambon hid Jews in their homes and helped them cross the border to safety in Switzerland. Although many of the villagers were quite poor, they were never too poor to share with those in even greater need. As a result, some 5,000 Christians saved approximately 5,000 Jews in Le Chambon and the surrounding area.

Standing at the right of this photo, pictured with his friends in the Hashomer Hatzair socialist Zionist youth group, is young Mordechai Anielewicz. This photo was taken in 1938, a year before Poland would be attacked by Germany, plunging Europe into World War II. In November 1942, Mordechai became commander of the ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization). On May 8, 1943, Mordechai, only 24-years-old, would perish leading the Warsaw Ghetto revolt. Although he might have sought personal safety, Mordechai instead chose to create a community of resistance among the remaining Jews of Warsaw and to lead them in a fight against the vastly larger and well-armed German forces. In a final letter he wrote: "My life's dream has come true; I have lived to see Jewish resistance in the ghetto in all its greatness and glory."

Background for Writing Prompt:

During their years in power, the Nazis and their collaborators worked to shatter communities throughout Europe, dividing people from one another. They narrowed the definition of *community* to people "like us" and through the use of intimidation, terror, and brutality, they sought to silence voices of *conscience* who opposed them. Intolerance can shatter any community.

In Germany, soon after coming to power, the Nazis began systematically to deprive Jews of their rights as citizens to vote, to sit on a park bench, to own a business or to practice a profession. They killed those with disabilities, children and adults, whom they regarded as "unworthy of life." The Nazis targeted those who by their opposition, by their stance of *conscience*, defined themselves as the "other."

With the outbreak of war, the Nazis and their collaborators ruthlessly separated Jews from their communities, expelled them from their homes, and sent millions to the concentration and death camps. Entire communities were wiped off the face of the earth.

Yet, in the midst of a world of silence and fear, there were those who rejected this narrow definition of community, and, as a matter of conscience, refused to allow the bonds of community to be broken. They sought to save lives and preserve community. Those expelled from their homes faced the challenge of creating new communities—*communities of resistance*—under the most difficult of circumstances. These individuals and communities struggled against all odds to maintain the dignity of the human spirit.

The individuals whose stories are told below are only a few of those whose lives reflect the ideals of *conscience and community*.



Jewish refugees are ferried out of Denmark aboard Danish fishing boats bound for Sweden



Janusz Korczak and Stefania Wilczynska pose with children and staff members at the Rozyczka summer camp

Occupied by Germany in April 1940, the Danish government was allowed to continue to rule the country, and government officials insisted that the country's Jews not be harmed. That situation changed dramatically in early October 1943 when the German police began to arrest Danish Jews. The Danes, however, would not allow their national community to be shattered and their fellow citizens deported. They warned their Jewish neighbors, helped them to hide and assisted in their escape to the shore. In the course of only three weeks, some 7,200 Danish Jews, along with 700 of their non-Jewish relatives, were transported by fishing boats to safety in neutral Sweden. The people of Denmark had remained united as a community, refusing to bow to oppression and resolutely acting according to conscience.

This photograph, taken before the war, portrays physician, writer, and educator Janusz Korczak at his happiest, surrounded by the children he so loved. Founder of progressive orphanages for both Jewish and Catholic children in Warsaw, Korczak devoted his life to shielding children from injustice. His orphanages became "just communities" with their own courts and parliaments. Refusing numerous offers to be smuggled out of the Warsaw ghetto, Korczak remained with the 200 children in his orphanage, doing everything within his power to feed and shelter them. On August 5-6, 1942, his efforts to protect them from deportation failed. Refusing offers to be spared, and with a defiant dignity, Korczak led those under his care, his kingdom of children, onto the train that would take them to the death camp Treblinka.

Photo credits:

Sauvage photo courtesy of Chambon Foundation; Anielewicz photo: Leah Hammerstein Silverstein, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives; refugees photo: Frihedsmuseet, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives; Korczak photo: Romuald Wroblewski, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.