



Handout 2A: How did Oscar Haber feel when the camps were liberated?

For use with the lesson "Exploring Survivors' Testimonies via Found Poems"

Notes

This oral history excerpt is paired with Oral History Excerpt 2B for use in the lesson "Exploring Survivors Testimonies via Found Poems." The excerpt is from an oral history interview that Arwen Donahue conducted with Oscar Haber in 2000.

About Oscar Haber:

Oscar Haber was born in 1910 to a farming family of Orthodox Jews in Poland. Early on during the war, Haber worked at the Pustków camp as a dentist. As conditions worsened in Poland, however, a patient provided him with false papers that allowed Haber and his wife, Fryda, to pass as non-Jewish Poles. Haber called the decision to accept the false papers the hardest decision of his life; only three brothers from his large family survived the Holocaust. Under this new identity, Haber was asked to fight with the Armia Krajowa and eventually befriended a non-Jewish Pole named Franciszek Musial, who eventually arranged for Haber and Fryda to live with his sister until the camps were liberated. Haber moved to Israel for a time and raised his son there, but eventually followed his son after his son relocated to Kentucky.

Do Now:

1. Silently and closely read the oral history excerpt below.
 2. After reading, circle one word and one phrase that stands out to you.
 3. Be prepared to share your reasoning as to why you selected your word and your phrase.
-

Arwen Donahue: Did you feel in any way as if you were free [during the period of liberation]?

Oscar Haber: It was a very, very mixed feeling. On one side you felt the Russians are coming, you will not be more in danger as a Pole, but as a Jew, you continue to be in danger. And then came the reality. You find out what happened. Because until now, you heard only, they killed here, they killed here, they killed here. But the disaster so big, you realized only slowly when you were liberated. When you came to the big city, Kraków, which has before the war ninety thousand Jews, and you barely find five or six people who are Jews. That was a trauma. And you were asking yourself, why me? Because there were wiser people than me, speaking Polish better than me or the same like me, having connection with people. Why didn't they survive? And what is the role we have to play by being alive? Try to organize a Jewish life, or forget about it? No Jews, no Jewish life. You are Polish. Go on, be a Pole. And that's what many Jews did. There are until today Jews which are living as Poles. They said, "Forget about it." But we couldn't do it. Our roots are too strong.



About the Source

Citation: Donahue, Arwen. *This is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 50.