



Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps

BUCHENWALD AND MITTELBAU-DORA

Teaching Materials

**BUCHENWALD AND
MITTELBAU-DORA
MEMORIALS
FOUNDATION**

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This material can be used during class to prepare a visit to a memorial, or it can be implemented after a visit for an in-depth exploration of the topic. It is appropriate for students grade nine and above (all school types), and it is suitable for one to two individual periods (45 min.) or a double period (90 min.).

In this unit students can develop a strong way of identifying with the topics of the concentration camp and young people during National Socialism, since they directly confront the fates of youth from very different backgrounds, who are the same age or even younger. An engagement with these topics illuminates the breadth of persecution across all age groups and the Nazis' racist concept of humanity through the examples of individual biographies.

IMPRINT

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Title Page Photograph:
A liberated child at Boelcke-Kaserne in Nordhausen, mid April 1945. (section)
Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp

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1. PRELIMINARY DIDACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 THE ONLINE EXHIBITION

The online exhibition “**Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps**” was developed in 2021 by the Department *Geschichte in Medien und Öffentlichkeit* of the Historical Institute at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena (Prof. Jens-Christian Wagner and Dr. Daniel Schuch) with students from the same university and in cooperation with the Buchenwald and Mittelbau Memorials Foundation. It provides an opportunity for exploring the history of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camps with a specific age group without being on-site.

It consists of **eight main chapters** (with numerous subchapters).

The chapter “*Herrenkinder and Outcasts: Childhood in the National Socialist Era*” takes a look at the social and historical context: Who were members of the “Volksgemeinschaft” (people’s community)? Who was purposely and systematically excluded, persecuted, and murdered?

The chapters “*Children in the Buchenwald Concentration Camp*” and “*Children in the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp*” present the history of these two concentration camps in subchapters. They examine the history in relation to minors who were inmates in the camps and discuss themes such as the help that these young people received from other inmates and the limited sources of protection within the camp – as well as the debilitating and deadly nature of forced labour.

The core of the exhibition is the chapter “*Hauled off to a Concentration Camp*”, which presents **19 biographies** describing the individual fates of minors in the camps. These include persecuted Jews, Sinti and Roma, young resistance fighters, and girls deported to perform forced labour in the subcamps. These 19 stories demonstrate the wide range of experiences under the persecution of the National Socialists.

The chapter “*Realms of Experience*” discusses how young people faced violence, hunger, and diseases in the camps and also how they developed various **strategies for survival**.

How and where did children experience **liberation**? Who took care of them and how did their lives unfold afterwards? – These questions are also explored in the chapters “*Liberation*” and “*After Liberation*” in an attempt to highlight specific cases.

In conclusion, the chapter “*Child Survivors. Living without a Childhood?*” brings these stories into the **present**, focussing on the role of survivors as protagonists in the culture of remembrance.

There are different **items** on view in the online exhibition:

A core portion of the items on view are **documents** preserved from the concentration camps, which the SS created about the people interned (so-called perpetrator sources). These enable us to trace an individual’s course of internment in the camp. To the extent available, there are **photographs** of people before and after the camp. There are also **eyewitness accounts** of survivors, which are quoted or presented as video or audio segments; these are important, because they convey individual experiences. They are supplemented by photographs of **objects** found on site at the Buchenwald Memorial or personally donated by survivors.

To enlarge and better read or see individual functions, there is a **zoom** function. This can be activated and used by clicking on the item.

1.2 LEARNING GOALS AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES

Main learning goal: Students can work with the online exhibition “*Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps*” and understand the persecution of children and young people in the context of the history of National Socialism.

Partial learning goals: Students can

- gather information from (reliable) Internet sources
- name a range of reasons for the persecution of children and teenagers and understand these events in relation to the history of National Socialism.
- engage with the biographies of persecuted minors and present one of these life stories (orally and/or in a self-chosen mode of presentation)
- explain the advantages and disadvantages of an online exhibition as a medium and back-up their opinions (assignment 3)

The material consists of **three modules**, which each contain multiple tasks.

The following steps in the modules are **suggestions** and can be adapted and expanded, depending on the individual **needs** of the students (type of school, grade, learning level, prior knowledge, etc.). The introduction to the material is intentionally open-ended, in order to give teachers flexibility.

If you first wish to activate general knowledge on the subject, you can start by collecting associations on the topic of the concentration camp, for example through a mind map on the board. The group can then refer back to them, particularly when discussing the individual experiences of minors in concentration camps.

In **module 1**, the students first address the topic of childhood and youth under National Socialism. They explain the different reasons why children and teenagers were excluded, persecuted, and deported to concentration camps; they also look at how minors were influenced by the propaganda and organizations of the Nazis.

Then, in **module 2** they study one biography in the online exhibition of their choice, which they present to their fellow students. Students are given questions as guidelines for orientation during individual study. Teachers can select what kind of work and social interaction that assignment entails.

The aim of **module 3** is to sensitize students towards the use of online exhibitions and reliable internet sources (media competency). To introduce this module, you could compile a list of places from which we source information on (historical) events. As part of this module, students should give and explain their opinion about the online exhibition, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of digital exhibitions in general and taking a position on the potential usefulness of the medium for other young people.

The purpose of this additional module is to demonstrate the variety of available information, to familiarize students with online exhibitions as a knowledge source, and to sensitize them to competently handling information on the Internet and in social media (media competency).

The three modules together form a unit and can be implemented together in a double period before or after a visit to the memorial. They can also be divided up:

- Module 1 before a visit to the memorial, modules 2 and 3 as follow-up,
- Modules 1 and 2 before a visit to the memorial, module 3 as follow-up.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

The **e-guide of the Arlosen Archives** can be used to analyse the numerous historical sources in the on-line exhibition (documents from the period of the concentration camp, so-called perpetrator sources). In the e-guide, various example sources are described, and their relevance is explained.

2. MODULES AND POTENTIAL ASSIGNMENTS

MODULE 1

Go to the website www.jugend-im-kz.de/en and access the page “**Herrenkinder and Outcasts: Children in the National Socialist Era**”.

Examine the two chapters “**Integration into the Volksgemeinschaft**” and “**Excluded – Persecuted – Murdered.**”

- a) Describe how the Nazis influenced children and youth with their ideology.
- b) Name reasons why the Nazis excluded and persecuted certain groups of children and youth.

MODULE 2

In the chapter “**Hauled off to a Concentration Camp**” you will find 19 biographies (life stories) of children and young people, who were deported to the concentration camps Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora.

Select one of these young people and learn about that individual’s story.

Compile the most important information about this person, for example in a mind map, a profile (fact sheet) or a poster. The following questions can be helpful in the process:

- a) What can you learn about the person’s life before they were deported to a camp? Why was this person persecuted?
- b) What did the person have to undergo in the camp?
 - To which camp(s) was the person transported (Buchenwald, Mittelbau-Dora, subcamp)?
 - What do you learn about this person’s life in the camp that you find remarkable?
- c) Did the person experience the liberation of the camp? If yes, how did their life continue after liberation? Did the person talk about their time in the camp?
- d) Why did you choose to study this person? What did you find particularly interesting or impressive?

MODULE 3

- a) Evaluate the exhibition “Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps”. What do you think is good? What do you think could be improved?
- b) Explain the general advantages and disadvantages of an online exhibition.
- c) Discuss whether you would recommend that students visit and work with the online exhibition.

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF THE BIOGRAPHIES IN THE EXHIBITION

NAME AND TITLE	BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	KEY THEMES
<p>KURT ANSIN</p> <p>A Sinto from Magdeburg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born October 2, 1921 · June 1938: Buchenwald, 1939 released · 1943: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from there to Buchenwald and the subcamps Ellrich-Juliushütte and Harzungen in 1944 · survives, starts a family · died 1984 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of the Sinti and Roma · “Arbeitsscheu Reich” (Operation Work-shy Reich)
<p>ERICH DAVIDSOHN</p> <p>As a young “special operation Jew” in Buchenwald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born 1922 in Hanover · November 10, 1938: arrested and transported to Buchenwald · December 1938: released · February 6, 1939: emigration to England 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews · November pogrom
<p>EDUARD TROUPENAT</p> <p>A Resistance fighter deported to Buchenwald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born August 31, 1924 in La Chapelle · 1943: joined the Resistance · Mai 1944: arrested and transported to Buchenwald and from there to the subcamp Holzen · April 1945: death march to Bergen-Belsen · died May 5, 1945 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · resistance in Europe
<p>ROLF KRALOVITZ</p> <p>As a Hungarian Jew from Leipzig to Buchenwald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born 1925 · October 1943: arrested and transported to KZ Buchenwald · assigned to bricklayers’ work detail and works as barber · liberated from Buchenwald · died 2015 in Cologne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews
<p>JEAN LOUIS NETTER</p> <p>A Jewish school schoolboy in the Holzen subcamp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born August 29, 1928 in Paris · August 1944: transported to Buchenwald and on to the subcamp of Holzen · liberated from Bergen-Belsen · return to France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews · Forced labour in subcamps
<p>NAFTALI FÜRST</p> <p>Deported from Bratislava with his brother</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Naftali: born December 18, 1932 · Schmuël: born February 20, 1931 · November 1944: family is transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau · January 1945: brothers are transported to Buchenwald · Naftali: liberated from Buchenwald · Schmuël: liberated during a death march · brothers return to Bratislava, later emigrate to Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews · children’s block 66

NAME AND TITLE	BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	KEY THEMES
<p>JOSEPH SCHLEIFSTEIN (GEB. SZLAJFAZTAJN)</p> <p>A three-year-old in Buchenwald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born March 7, 1941 · January 20, 1945: transport with father to Buchenwald · liberated from Buchenwald · 1947: family emigrates to the US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews · children's transports after liberation
<p>SHRAGA MILSTEIN (GEB. FELIKS MILSZTAJN)</p> <p>From Poland to Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born 1933 · late 1944: transported to Buchenwald · January 1945: transported to Bergen-Belsen, liberated there on April 15 · 1948: emigrates to Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews · children's transports after liberation
<p>JAKOB GERSTE</p> <p>From Nordhausen to Auschwitz and back again</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born May 6, 1926 in Gotha · March 1943: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau · April 1944: transport to Buchenwald and then Mittelbau-Dora · liberation from Bergen-Belsen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Sinti and Roma
<p>FRANZ ROSENBACH</p> <p>From Vienna via Auschwitz to Mittelbau-Dora</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born September 29, 1927 in Horaditz · 1943: arrested, 1944 transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and then to Buchenwald and subcamp Harzungen · liberated during a death march, return to hometown · died 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Sinti and Roma
<p>SIEGFRIED REINHARDT</p> <p>The erasure of an entire family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born January 21, 1926 in Schaffhausen · 1942: arrested by Munich police, subsequent transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau · April 1944: transport to Buchenwald and then to subcamp Harzungen · fate unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Sinti and Roma
<p>EGON PETERMANN</p> <p>Registered as a "gypsy," murdered in Auschwitz</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born February 28, 1930 in Berlin · March 1943: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, to Buchenwald in August 1944 · September 25, 1944: extermination transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Sinti and Roma · extermination transports
<p>MARIA JANINA KOSK (GEB. BRZECKA)</p> <p>Drawing and survival in the Meuselwitz subcamp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born May 3, 1930 · 1944: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from there to Ravensbrück and then on to Meuselwitz, a subcamp of Buchenwald · liberated during a death march · return to Poland · died 2013 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · girls in subcamps · forced labour in the weapons industry

NAME AND TITLE	BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	KEY THEMES
<p>ZAHAVA SZÁSZ STESSEL (GEB. KATALIN SZÁSZ)</p> <p>A Hungarian Jew in the Markleeberg subcamp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born 1930 · 1944: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from there to Bergen-Belsen and from there to Markleeberg, a subcamp of Buchenwald · liberated during a death march · 1947: emigrated to Palestine, and then to the US in 1957 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · girls in subcamps · persecution of Jews · forced labour in weapons industry
<p>SUZANNE ORTS (GEB. PIC)</p> <p>As a teenager in the Résistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born April 12, 1927 in Sète · joins the Resistance · 1944: arrest and transport to Ravensbrück, from there to HASAG-Leipzig, a subcamp of Buchenwald · liberated during a death march · return to France · died 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · girls in subcamps · forced labour in the weapons industry · resistance in Europa
<p>ESTARE WEISER (GEB. KURZ)</p> <p>Born in the concentration camp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born April 13, 1945 as daughter of Anna and Abraham Kurz · June 1945: mother and daughter emigrate to Switzerland · 1951: family emigrates to the US · Estare becomes a history teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews
<p>STEPAN BAZ</p> <p>labour re-education prisoner in Buchenwald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born May 5, 1927 · 1942: deported to Germany for forced labour, works as a civilian labourer near Halle · 1942: Transport ins KZ Buchenwald · liberation of Buchenwald · return to the Ukraine · died 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Arbeitserziehungshäftlinge (AEH, “labour re-education” prisoner) · children’s block 8
<p>STEFAN JERZY ZWEIG</p> <p>The famous Buchenwald child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born January 18, 1941 in Krakow · Summer 1944: transported to Buchenwald with his father · liberated from Buchenwald · emigrated to Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Jews
<p>WILLY BLUM</p> <p>The “forgotten” child on the list</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · born June 26, 1926 in Rübeland · 1943: transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from there to Buchenwald · September 25, 1944: extermination transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · persecution of Sinti and Roma · extermination transports

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE TIMELINE

for at least 90 min. – The times indicated are the suggested minimum. Depending on each learning group and the evaluation of the assignments, more time could be necessary.

MATERIALS AND MEDIA

- beamer/multimedia board
- computer/laptops/tablets for students (possibly smartphones)
- assignments

MODULE	PHASE	TIME	WORK	TYPE OF WORK/FORMAT
MODULE 1 Childhood and Youth during National Socialism – social and historical background	intro	approx. 5 min.	Teacher introduces topic and module.	monologue/ teacher-student discussion
	work time 1	approx. 10 min.	In the chapter “ <i>Integration in the Volksgemeinschaft</i> ” students study childhood and youth in National Socialism and how minors were influenced by propaganda. POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT Describe how the Nazis influenced children and youth with their ideology.	alone or in pairs
	work time 2	approx. 10 min.	Using the chapter “ <i>Excluded – Persecuted – Murdered</i> ” compile reasons why minors were excluded and persecuted. POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT Name reasons why the Nazis excluded and persecuted certain groups of youth and teenagers.	alone or in pairs
	evaluation	5 min.	Bringing together the results; teacher can refer to sources in the exhibition, showing them on a beamer or other enlargement; if desired/necessary discussion of individual sources or reasons for persecution.	group discussion/ student-teacher discussion

MODULE	PHASE	TIME	WORK	TYPE OF WORK/FORMAT
MODULE 2 Minors in concentration camps – biographical work	intro	approx. 5 min.	Teacher introduces the module.	monologue/ teacher-student discussion
	work time	approx. 35 min.	<p>Students select a biography from the chapter <i>“Hauled off to a Concentration Camp”</i> and study that person’s story; they compile what they consider the most important information (profile/fact sheet, poster, mind-map, or other formats); they possibly also develop a presentation format for sharing this with other students.</p> <p>POSSIBLE LEADING QUESTIONS</p> <p>a) What can you learn about the person’s life before they were deported to a camp? Why was this person persecuted?</p> <p>b) What did the person have to undergo in the camp?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To which camp(s) was the person transported (Buchenwald, Mittelbau-Dora, subcamp)? • What do you learn about the life of this person in the camp that you find remarkable? <p>c) Did the person experience the liberation of the camp? If yes, how did their life continue after liberation? Did the person talk about their time in the camp?</p> <p>d) Why did you choose to study this person? What did you find particularly interesting or impressive?</p> <p>The e-guide of the Arolsen Archives can be used to analyse and evaluate the historical sources.</p> <p>Depending on the time available, students can present “their” people or opt to share the information a different way (for example a poster for the classroom).</p>	alone or in pairs

MODULE	PHASE	TIME	WORK	TYPE OF WORK/FORMAT
MODULE 3 Reflection on the online exhibition	work time 1	approx. 5 min.	Students engage with the medium of an online exhibition and develop an opinion. POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT Evaluate the online exhibition “Children and Teenagers in the Concentration Camps.” What do you think is good? What could be improved?	alone or in pairs
	work time 2	approx. 5 min.	POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT Explain the general advantages and disadvantages of an online exhibition.	alone or in pairs
	work time 3	approx. 5 min.	POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENT Discuss whether you would recommend that other students visit and work with this online exhibition.	alone or in pairs
	evaluation	approx. 5 min.	Exchanging ideas about solutions/the discussion of the assignments. Individual students present their ideas or talk in small groups.	student-teacher discussion