



The Lodz Ghetto Photographs of Henryk Ross

A COLLECTION OF HOLOCAUST PHOTOGRAPHS

Henryk Ross (born Poland, 1910; died Israel, 1991) *The ruins of synagogue on Wolborska Street, demolished by the Germans, 1940* Image printed from original 35mm negative Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift from Archive of Modern Conflict, 2007 © 2015 Art Gallery of Ontario

Lesson Plan I: Life in the Ghetto

The complexity of life in the Lodz Ghetto can be seen through thousands of photographs taken by Henryk Ross that show the everyday existence of the ghetto's Jewish population. This lesson encourages students to examine daily life in the ghetto.

Most residents had no running water or sanitation and faced starvation and overcrowding. These images force us to confront issues of social class, leadership, gender, poverty, forced labour, destruction of religious institutions, starvation and death. How do Henryk Ross's photographs represent the complexity of life in the Lodz Ghetto?

LEARNING STRATEGIES

RELATED IMAGES Visit this link to see the photographs for this lesson: www.ago.net/ross-lesson-1

Image Analysis

Using the Analyzing Visual Images strategy and the Critical Analysis Process for exploring an artwork (see below), print off the Related Images with the captions on their reverse sides and arrange them into the specified groups. Place each group of images on tables or display them on a wall for students to see. Ensure there is an obvious separation between each set of images.

If your students have not used the Analyzing Visual Images strategy before, model it for the class using another image from the collection. After modelling the strategy, divide students into evenly numbered groups and assign each group a set of images. Each student should select an image from the group and apply the Analyzing Visual

Images strategy. More than one student may select the same image.

After completing this process, students should read the captions from the backs of the photographs and share their observations and analyses with the group. When all of the students have shared their ideas, ask them to discuss the following questions: What do the images in this collection have in common? What differences do you see within this collection of images? What title would you give to this collection of images? After completing this discussion, the groups should rotate to the next set of images and repeat the process. Continue this process until each group has worked with all four image sets.

Think/Pair/Share

Once your students have seen all four collections of images, they should return to their seats and participate in a **Think, Pair, Share** discussion using a large piece of paper with two columns labelled “Collection Similarities” and “Collection Differences.” Students should start writing individually in their notebooks, pair to fill in the large piece of paper, and then share their ideas with the whole group.

Exit Card

The last piece of this lesson is an **Exit Card**. On their exit card, ask your students to do two things. First, they should answer the question: How do the photographs of Henryk Ross represent the complexity of life in the Lodz Ghetto? Second, ask students to pose a question of their own about the images. Students should hand in these cards as they exit the room.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Analyzing Visual Images and Stereotyping

<https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/teaching-strategies/analyzing-visual-images-stereotyping>

This video shows Nazi footage of the Lodz Ghetto in the winter of 1940.

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_fi.php?MediaId=189

Testimony of Leo Schneiderman on life in the Lodz Ghetto.

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?MediaId=1178

Testimony of Blanka Rothschild on life in the Lodz Ghetto.

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?MediaId=1097

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS PROCESS AT THE AGO

The **Critical Analysis Process** is a central part of the Ontario arts curriculum. The process helps students develop and express an informed response to an image or work of art – in this case, the photographs of Henryk Ross – using critical thinking skills. In the curriculum, the process has five stages at the elementary level and four stages at the secondary level.

At the AGO, the critical analysis process we use with both elementary- and secondary-level students has three stages: **Description, Analysis and Interpretation** and **Cultural Context**. Our process begins with a description

of the concrete visual information found in the work (**what you see**), moves through a critical analysis based on contextual information provided as needed (**understanding what you see**) and encourages interpretation through personal meaning-making (**what you think about what you see**). Woven throughout these stages is cultural context: the personal, social and historical context of the creator and the work (**what was happening at the time**).

These questions have been adapted for exploring the photographs of Henryk Ross.

Examples of questions by stage:

DESCRIPTION

- What is your first impression?
- What captures your attention?
- How does this photograph make you feel?
- What does this photograph remind you of?
- What puzzles you? What questions do you have?
- What is happening in this photograph?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What clues tell you when and where this photograph was taken?

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- How does this photograph evoke feelings, ideas and images?
- What do you think the theme or subject of the photograph is? Why?
- What message or meaning do you think the photograph communicates?

- What do you think is the purpose of this photograph?
- Has your point of view changed from your initial reaction? How and why?
- How effective are the photographer's choices in communicating his intended message?

CULTURAL CONTEXT

- When and where was the work created? By whom?
- What was happening in society during that time? Socially? Historically? Politically?
- What was happening in Ross's life when the photograph was created?
- Who was the intended audience for the photograph? How has the audience changed?
- Whose voices do we hear? Whose voices do we not hear?