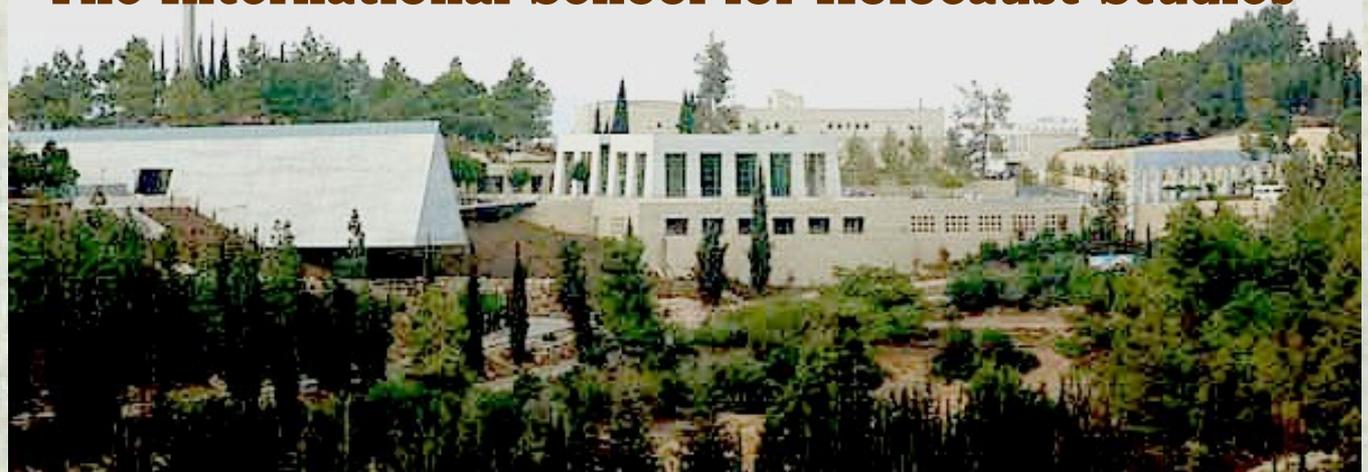


**Teaching Holocaust History:**  
**Principles of the Educational**  
**Philosophy**  
**at Yad Vashem**

**Lea Roshkovsky**

**The International School for Holocaust Studies**



# Yad Vashem: A Mountain of Remembrance



Collection

Research

Museum

Education

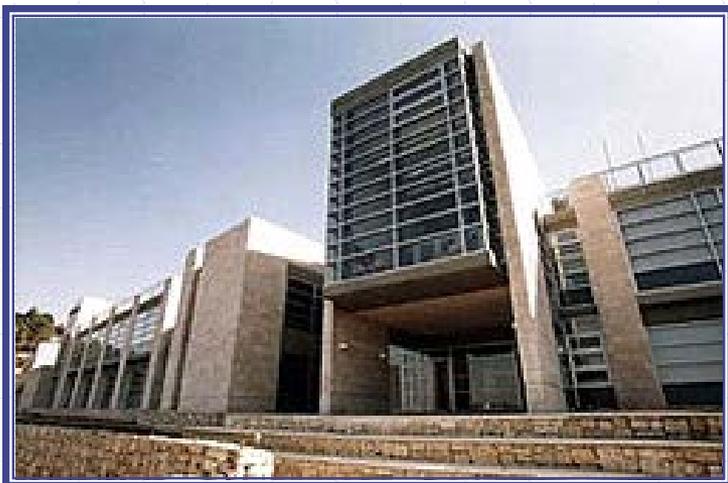
A unique location that fosters cooperation and reinforcement between archives, researchers, libraries, the publishing division, the historical museum, and the International School for Holocaust Studies.





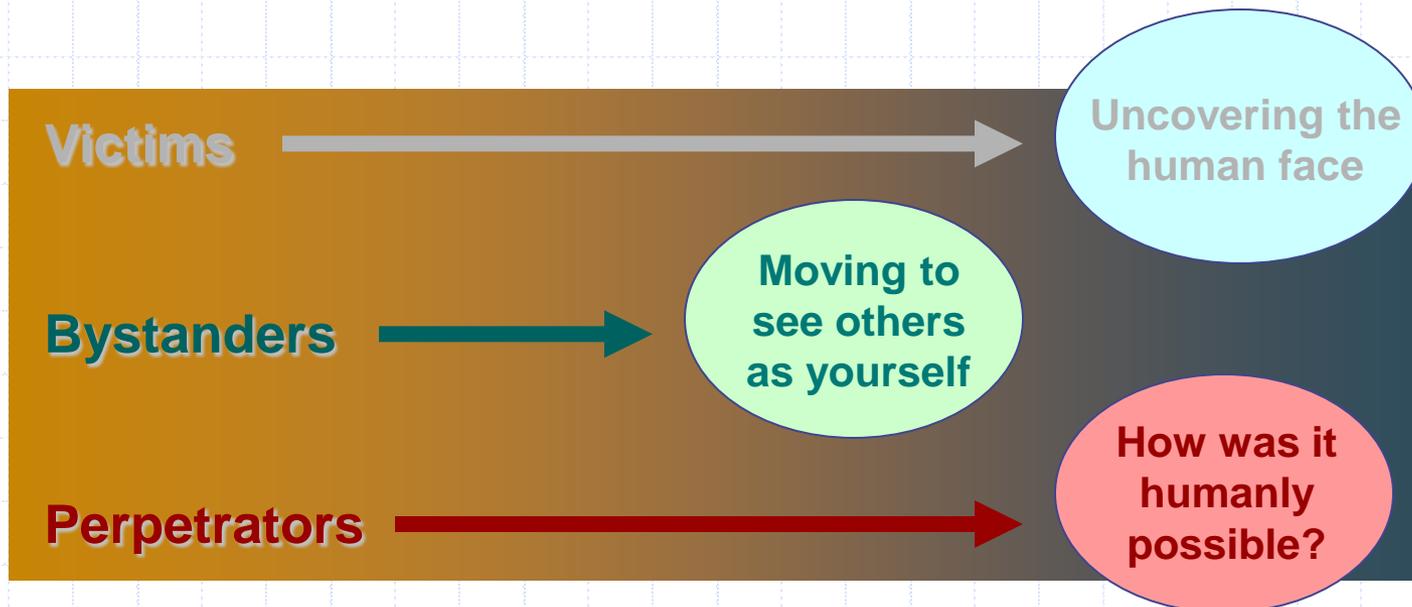
## The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem

- Established in 1993, a unique institution in the world
- Mission: Enrich knowledge of educators & provide pedagogical guidelines
- Interdisciplinary and multi-faceted approach to Holocaust education
- More than 100 staff members develop programs and resources for different audiences



# Educational Approaches of Yad Vashem

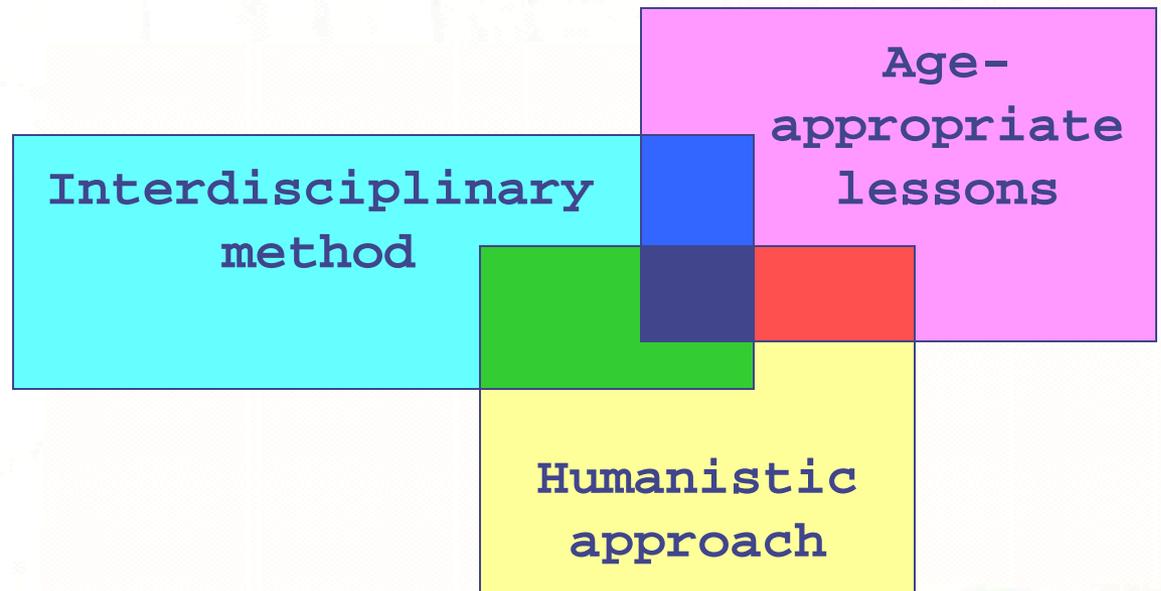
- Focus on life before, during and after the Holocaust
- Emphasis on **personal stories** in addition to the historical narrative
- Interdisciplinary and age-appropriate methodology



# Yad Vashem's methodology applied to the teaching of Holocaust history:

Challenges to teaching about the Holocaust:

- a) The subject is complex.
- b) The details may be frightening and shocking.
- c) Comprehension of the Holocaust is vital to understanding the modern world.



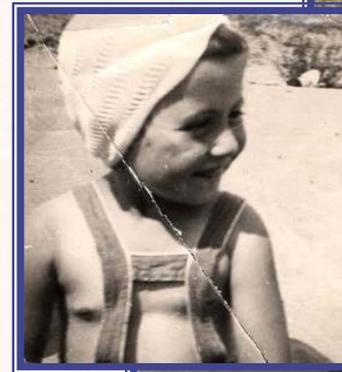
# A Humanistic Approach: Each Person Has a Name

Bystanders

Victims

HUMAN  
BEINGS

Perpetrators



# A Humanistic Approach to Victims



Mother and children in Lodz ghetto

- Focus on the pre-war Jewish world to appreciate what we lost
- Discussion of moral dilemmas and the “choiceless choices” of Jews during the Holocaust
- Return to life: the survivors’ tragedies did not end when the war ended.



# **A Humanistic Approach to Victims: Choiceless Choices**



# A Humanistic Approach to Bystanders

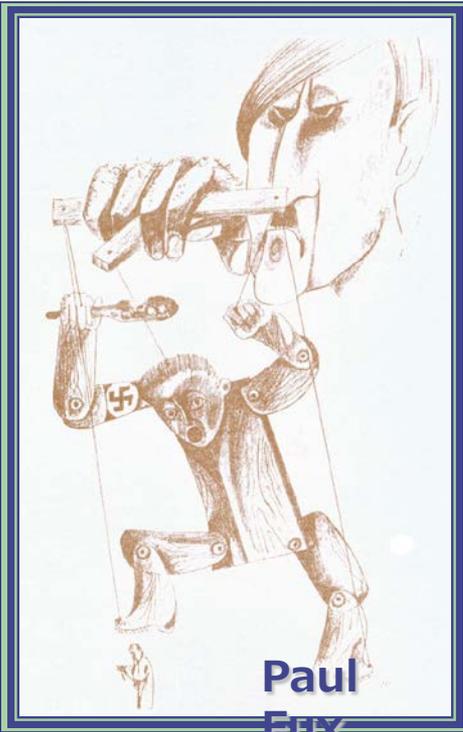
- Varying extremes of behavior by the local populace
- Majority of bystanders were passive and indifferent, ignoring their choices
- Ordinary people can reach a “turning point” to make a moral choice for good or evil
- The Righteous Among the Nations: their motives and dilemmas



Image from *Schindler's List*



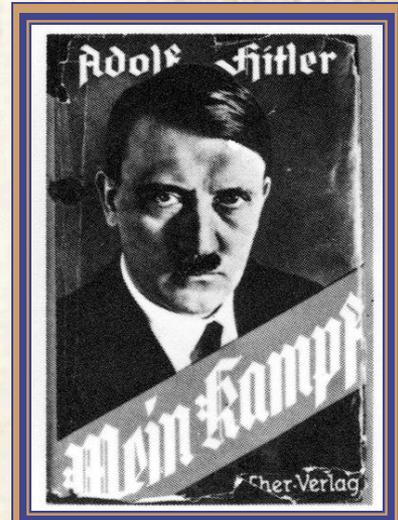
# A Humanistic Approach to Perpetrators



- Human beings who chose to murder and perpetrate cruelty
- Important to differentiate between the Nazi leadership and the rank and file of “ordinary Germans.”

Influenced by:

- Skillful propaganda
- Human weaknesses
- Obedience to orders in a totalitarian regime



# **An Interdisciplinary Approach**

- **Studies based on historical research**
- **Emotional insight can be achieved through art, music, literature, theology, sociology, psychology, etc.**
- **Students will go through three stages in the educational process:**
  - 1) Learning of information: facts vs. interpretation, objective info vs. rationalization, historical truth vs. moral values inferred**
  - 2) Dialogue between the student and the material: use of original documents and testimonies**
  - 3) Conclusions and inferring of moral values: relevancy to student's life and the modern world**

**The interdisciplinary method appeals to a new generation of students, stimulates critical insights, highlights dilemmas and choices, and reveals the complexity of Holocaust-related issues.**

# An Interdisciplinary Approach: Life Before the War



## Vilna

A heavenly Jerusalem on the earth  
Was the city of Vilna to us.  
The spirit of the Gaon swept over it still  
With sacred stubbornness and grace.

[...]

I met a Vilna glazier here,  
Carrying with him his whole city;  
When I saw him, I used to follow him round —  
I was following the Messiah, it seemed.

— *by A.N. Stencl.*  
*Translation by Elinor Robinson*



Butchers' Street in pre-war  
Vilnius

# An Interdisciplinary Approach: The Holocaust



Ladislav

Written in pencil in  
the sealed railway car

Here in this carload  
I am Eve  
With Abel my son.  
If you see my other son,  
Cain son of Man,  
Tell him that I...

— *By Dan Pagis*



Paul

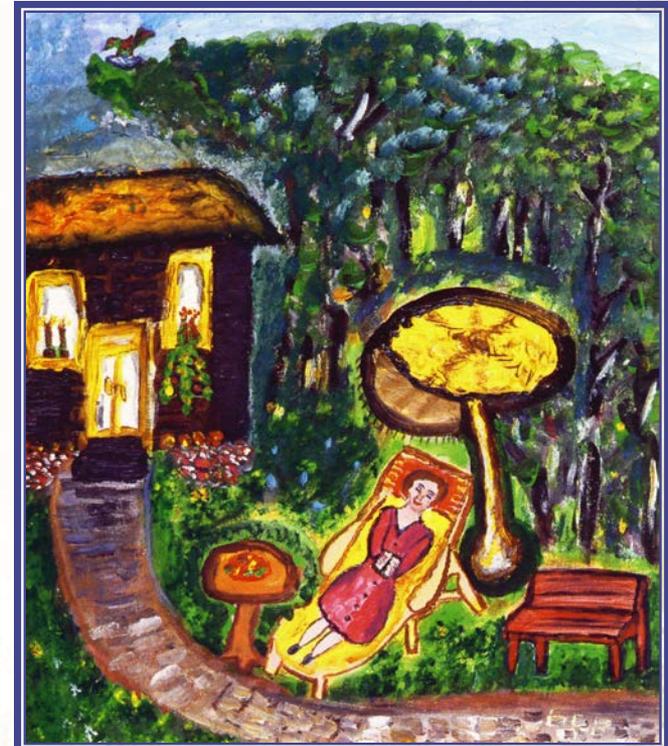
# An Interdisciplinary Approach: Return to Life

My parents were too preoccupied with their problems to respond to my problem... Only now I realize how difficult it was to be a parent in those days. How it was during the war in the ghetto, whereas in a normal situation today I cannot make the life of my children easier. Days and nights I think about it, I shed many tears, but – alas... How terrible it was for my parents to watch me and my younger sister, Tamara, growing up, to imagine our future!

- Irena Lusky, *In the Moment of Truth*



Irena Lusky



Irena Lusky

# An Age-Appropriate Educational Approach

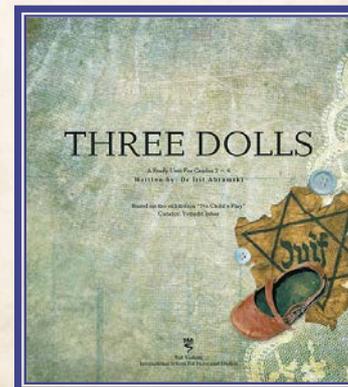
“Even under the harshest conditions, the children continued to be children—to play, to enjoy toys and search for amusements. This capability to fantasize and play often gave them the power to deal with the harsh environment of the Holocaust.”

— From the Educational Rationale of *Three Dolls*

- Children today mature earlier and can accept complex information
- Students have access to many forms of mass media
- Schools are moderators in an ongoing dialogue about history

## Questions from *Three Dolls*:

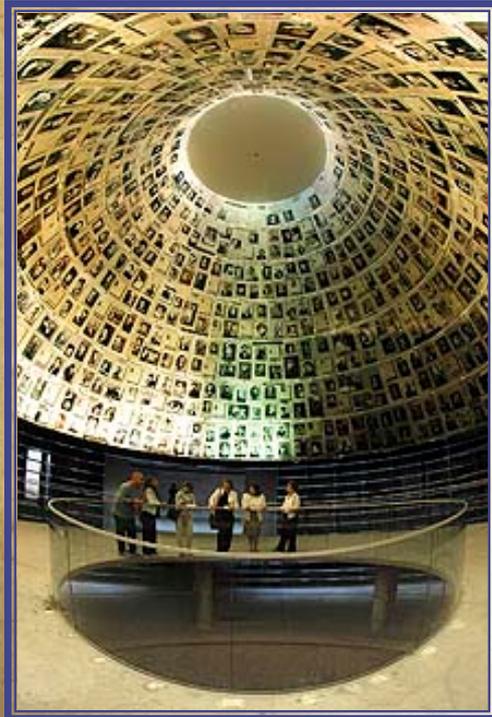
- What is the difference in appearance of the three dolls?
- What can we learn about the fate of each doll from its appearance?
- What is the secret of each doll?



# Conclusion: Yad Vashem's Methodology of Holocaust Education

Two questions students should ask themselves:

- Why do I study the Holocaust?
- What does the Holocaust imply for me?



## Holocaust as unprecedented:

- **Totality**
- **Worldwide scale**
- **Ideological aspects**

## Holocaust as universal:

- **It can happen again**
- **Moral implications**
- **An avoidable tragedy serves as a warning**

It is impossible to separate all the aspects of the Holocaust; our studies are universal for any human being. Yad Vashem's educational approach teaches about the Holocaust as part of the Jewish experience and part of world history.