

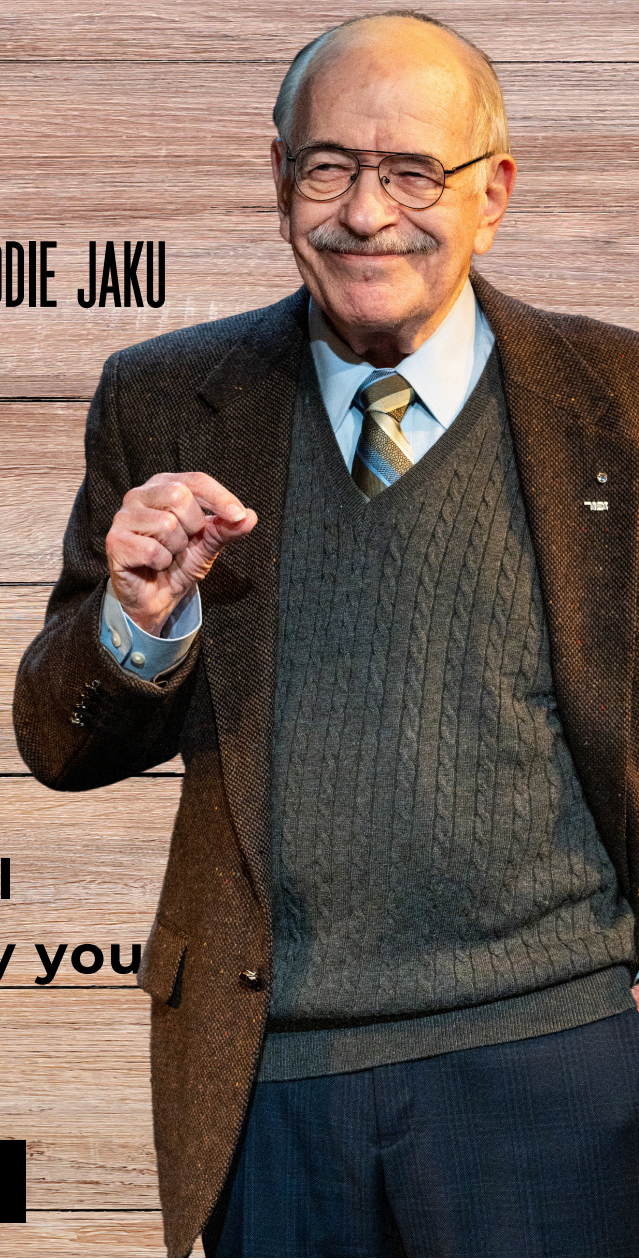
# THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH

BY MARK ST. GERMAIN

BASED ON THE MEMOIR OF THE SAME NAME BY EDDIE JAKU

STARRING KENNETH TIGAR

DIRECTED BY RON LAGOMARSINO



**“Hate is the beginning of a disease, like cancer. It may kill your enemy, but it will destroy you in the process too.”**

**— Eddie Jaku**

**STUDY GUIDE**

# THE PLAY

This remarkable production brings to life the extraordinary journey of Eddie Jaku, who endured innumerable harrowing experiences while navigating and evading multiple Nazi concentration camps during a dark chapter in history. Eddie's story is one of unimaginable grief and tragic loss, yet it is also a testament to the indomitable spirit of the human soul. Defying all odds, he declared himself "The Happiest Man on Earth," a testament to his resilience and determination to find light even in the darkest circumstances. With boundless courage, Kenneth Tigar, as Eddie Jaku, shares the profound narrative of his first 100 years, encapsulating both the depths of human cruelty and the heights of human strength and hope.

Commissioned by BSC through the Sydelle Blatt New Works Commission Fund/ Sponsored in part by Diane Troderman, Richard & Carol Seltzer/ Additional support by Jewish Women's Foundation of the Berkshires

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# PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE

This guide is meant to be a practical education resource for teachers to draw connections between the play and core curricular subjects being studied in the classroom. The guide contains background information on the play, as well as suggested activities that can be used to explore the play's key themes either before or after viewing the performance.

The activities and topics are organized in modules that can be used independently or interdependently according to class level and time availability.

## **Teachers can use this guide to:**

- Enhance student appreciation of the experience of live theatre.
- Introduce students to relevant cultural & historical topics that support classroom learning.
- Creatively draw connections to topics addressed in the play as they relate to core curriculum.
- Gather instructional tools, which can be used to plan lessons in alignment with national learning standards.

## **BEFORE THE PLAY**

Share resources from this guide to provide context that may prove useful to their understanding of the historical context. We strongly suggest referring to the TedX talk given by Eddie Jaku linked in resources later in this guide. Go over the tips for theatre etiquette with your class.

## **THE DAY OF THE PLAY**

Barrington Stage wants to remind you that this is live theatre; and for some of us, it can be church. Just like in church, you are welcome to come as you are — to hoot and holler or to sit quietly in reverence. Worship and engage however you feel most comfortable. Laugh audibly and have natural emotional and sometimes vocalized responses if you feel it. Just remember that while it's okay to engage, we should aim to neither distract nor thwart the performance.

Please arrive 10-15 minutes before the performance to allow time before the show for students to use the restrooms, which are located in the theatre lobby.

It is recommended that you assign one chaperone for every fifteen- twenty students and ask your chaperones to disperse themselves amongst the student group to help support best behavior during the performance.

## **AFTER THE PLAY**

We will host talkbacks after the show. Please remain seated and prepare your questions for the cast. Teachers may choose to lead one of the post-show lessons found in this guide in order to help students draw connections to the curriculum.

# THEATRE ETIQUETTE

We are so glad you are joining us for this important play. This play is performed by one person over an 80 minute period with no intermission. Cell phones and movement or noise in the audience can be very disruptive to the performance. Please have a discussion about what is required from a respectful audience. We discourage anyone from leaving their seats except in case of emergency.

## **A few more requests from BSC:**

- Silence or turn off all electronic devices, including cell phones, as the glow from your device is distracting.
- There is no photography allowed during the show.
- Please be seated promptly in your assigned seat.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. There is no intermission.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theatre you are attending and the location of the fire exits.

## **CONTENT ADVISORIES**

This show is based on the true story of Holocaust survivor Eddie Jaku. The source material contains vivid, real-life accounts of atrocities committed against Jewish people and other minorities during the Holocaust, including genocide, torture, murder, forced starvation, forced labor, mass extermination, etc.



**"It is important to me to bring back The Happiest Man on Earth because we must never forget what happened in the Holocaust. Mark St. Germain's beautiful play, and Kenneth Tigar's extraordinary performance struck a chord with audiences this summer, and they will again in the fall. I am especially thrilled to present a series of student matinees so that young people in Berkshire County can witness this important story."**

**BSC Artistic Director, Alan Paul**

# CHARACTER LIST

Although *Happiest Man on Earth* is a one person play, there are several characters introduced and even played by Kenneth Tigar. Here is a list of characters that appear during the performance.

**Eddie Jaku-** (1920-2021) our protagonist was born Abraham Jakobowicz in Leipzig, Germany. Jaku is a Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to promoting kindness, tolerance and resilience. Jaku published his autobiography *The Happiest Man on Earth* at the age of 100 and passed away in 2021 at the age of 101.

**Flore Molho-** (1923-2022) Eddie's wife who he met after being liberated from the Nazis. She had been transported to France by the Belgian resistance, but returned to Brussels after the war.

**Isidore-** immigrant from Poland and Eddie Jaku's father.

**Lina-** Eddie Jaku's mother.

**LULU-** Eddie's dachshund

**Helmut Hoer** - an engineering student, and Eddie's only friend at Jeter and Scheerer Engineering Academy.

**Dr. Mengele-** the Nazi doctor at Auschwitz extermination camp (1943–45) who selected prisoners for execution in the gas chambers and conducted medical experiments on inmates as part of pseudoscientific racial studies.

**Kurt Hirschfeld** - Eddie's friend at Auschwitz, whom he is eventually reunited with after the war.

**Professor Neubert-** neurosurgeon, who offered Eddie a job manufacturing the specialized operating tables used in neurosurgery.

**Wilhelm Krauss** -worked delivering drums of food to prisoners at the factory.

**Dr. Kinderman** - A prisoner in Block 29 at Auschwitz who helps remove the bullet from Eddie after he has been shot.

**SS Hauptscharführer-** the hangman of Buchenwald

**Nurse Emma-** An American nurse who attends to Eddie once he is liberated. Eddie had to be treated for Cholera and Typhoid.



“Kindness is the greatest wealth of all. Small acts of kindness last longer than a lifetime. This lesson, that kindness and generosity and faith in your fellow man are more important than money, is the first and greatest lesson my father ever taught me. And in this way he will always be with us, and always live forever.”

— Eddie Jaku

# AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT, MARK ST. GERMAIN

BY JANE O'LEARY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



MARK ST. GERMAIN (Playwright) is an Associate Artist, and has had many plays premiere at BSC, including Freud's Last Session, Dancing Lessons, The Best of Enemies, The God Committee and Becoming Dr. Ruth. Other plays include Out of Gas on Lover's Leap, Camping with Henry and Tom and Relativity. He has partnered with composer Randy Courts for musicals and John Markus for the comedy The Fabulous Lipitones. He has written for television and film, directed the documentary My Dog, An Unconditional Love Story; and scripted Carroll Ballard's film Duma. His books include the humorous memoir Walking Evil and the thriller The Mirror Man. The film of Freud's Last Session, starring Sir Anthony Hopkins and Anthony Goode, will be released this holiday season. He wishes to thank Eddie Jaku's sons, Michael and Andre, for their help in bringing The Happiest Man to the stage.

**Question: So many stories about the Holocaust exist, what made you choose Eddie Jaku?**

**MARK ST GERMAIN:** *Well, what drew me to it wasn't the subject at the beginning, it was the title. Because, when I saw a book called The Happiest Man on Earth, I wanted to find out who the happiest man on earth was. It was a real surprise to learn that it was Eddie Jaku, and it was a shock to read about all the things he had gone through. And a bigger shock, to realize that he was able to fashion his life afterwards; that he became the happiest man on earth. And as he said, after having gone through all he did, "happiness is a choice."*

**Why is this story important now?**

**Mark:** *I think that it's a story of victory- of light over darkness, of a way to look at the world and see the best that you can in it. And despite all you've gone through, and compared to Eddie Jaku, the experiences most of us have gone through in our lives, are minor impact situations. We have not been locked up in concentration camps. We have not been starved. We have not been spit at. Eddie had all those things happen. And he had to run for his life several times. So having gone through that, and then he gets back to a world that he had been shut away from; the courage he had to put his life back together, to me is amazing. He didn't turn bitter. He didn't decide everyone in the world is bad, and I don't want to be here. There were many Holocaust survivors who took their own lives, which is something I didn't know. That shocked me when I learned about it. But I'm sure they got out, and they said, "This is the world that did this to me.", and were unable to face it. Eddie faced it, and he decided he would look for the best in everyone. He would give people a chance. It took him [time]. It was a process. It was definitely not something that happened overnight. He was someone who did not want to be in crowds and did not want to be with people. He was fortunate enough to fall in love. And that began to open his world again. And when he had his son, it opened his world further.*



# **AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT MARK ST. GERMAIN BY JANE O'LEARY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CONT.)**

## **How do you choose which parts of his story to include?**

*Mark: Well, it was really a choice of trying to balance the story, in the sense that he had so many events happen to him. Half of the ordeals he went through are not in the play, right? People would just be stunned to read how many extra trials he went through. But I was trying to tell the story in the most human way possible, so that occasionally, you can see (as he did in his life), how laughter had become something that was a tool to him. It really helped him get through many dark moments. And so I wanted to include that as part of the play as well. I think when people walk out, they're going to feel, (I think they're going to feel) life-affirmed. And Eddie, could do this, and he tells us this in the play many times, "Just look at what you have around you! Look at your parents, look at your children. These are gifts that are given to you and appreciate them!"*

## **What do you hope the audience takes away from this show?**

*Mark: I think that courage is possible. You always have the choice to be afraid. And then you have the choice to be afraid and yet show courage and try to get through it. And that's what Eddie did. There was much for him to be afraid of, constantly. But he just kept plowing ahead, plowing ahead. And he believed that life was a gift, an important gift, and he wanted to save his and save the lives of anyone around him that he could. And he carried that lesson into his life after the war was finally over, and he was a free man.*

## **What did you learn from writing this play?**

*Mark: What I've learned is to be very careful about what you complain about. Realize how insignificant things really tend to overwhelm us, and complicate our world. And we're not fighting for our lives every day, we're not fighting for a meal every day. We're all in comfortable circumstances. And to try to appreciate that. It's hard because you forget about it. You remember after coming out of a play like this. I think there's a glow that you feel and you [feel] you will remember it. And then like every other feeling it kind of dissipates. And the challenge is to keep [the lesson] in mind. Keep in mind being able to appreciate what's around you.*

## **What would you like to say about the play that I should have asked about?**

*Mark: I just wanted to say that I was grateful for Eddie's two sons, who were very helpful in answering questions that I had about their father and about the book. And they're very excited that he's been brought back to life. They saw a clip of Ken Tigar, who plays Eddie, and one of them wrote back and said it was like seeing my father alive again. And that's a wonderful tribute to Ken.*

*Thank you so much for your beautiful play Mark. I cannot wait to invite student audiences in to see the show.*

## **SOLO SHOWS**

### **BY MOIRA O’SULLIVAN, LITERARY AND ARTISTIC COORDINATOR**

“The Happiest Man on Earth” is a great example of a solo show, or storytelling with only one person commanding the stage, recounting his experiences for the audience. Solo shows are their own special challenge, but offer a lot of exciting possibilities. When creating a one-person show, the writer must consider how to keep it interesting for the audience, who may be used to seeing dialogue between multiple characters and watching the story unfold from the outside looking in. In “Happiest Man,” the main character speaks directly to the audience, inviting them to share in his memories. This makes the experience feel intimate and personal and makes it easy to develop empathy with the character.

The technical design of a solo show can help bring the story to life. In this play, the scenic designer chose to create a set that could transform into many different locations. By using wooden planks on the walls and a single basic chair, table and bench, the actor could use his physicality and movement to make us imagine all the places he goes in the story. For a play like “Happiest Man,” which travels through many countries, cities, and buildings, this kind of set is perfect for sparking the audience’s imagination. What aids this even more is the lighting design. The cracks between wooden planks on the walls allow different colored lights to shine through, which, when combined with varying brightness and movement, can create the illusion of a train passing in the night or a building catching fire. There are also many different colored lights used throughout to set the mood of a specific scene; blue lights for a sad, lonely moment, or bright amber for a moment of joy or hope. Lighting can transform a set and help create the suggestion of specific places. The last key element to a one man show like this is the sound design. As the actor brings the audience inside his memories, there are sound effects that make it feel more real, like gunshots or radio announcements. These realistic sound cues, along with some orchestrated music, can underscore the story being told so that we can dive even deeper into the experience of really being there.

As the actor playing Eddie recounts his experience, he goes in and out of speaking directly to the audience (also known as direct address) and speaking as some of the characters he encounters (jumping in with lines spoken by his father or his friend at the camp). To make sure that these moments are clear to the audience, the performer uses different voices (cadence, pitch, or accents) as well as physicalities (the way they stand, their hand gestures). Everyone has their own ways of behaving, and being as specific about those small details as possible helps the actor to switch characters moment to moment and helps viewers understand who he is playing at any given time.

While extremely challenging, solo shows offer a new way to interact with a story. In “Happiest Man,” writing it for one performer made it possible to tell a story that spans years and miles all while in the same room. As you watch, consider what elements especially transported you, and which moments made you feel like you were really there with Eddie.

# SYNOPSIS

## THE PLAY

This remarkable production brings to life the extraordinary journey of Eddie Jaku, who endured innumerable harrowing experiences while navigating and evading multiple Nazi concentration camps during a dark chapter in history. Eddie's story is one of unimaginable grief and tragic loss, yet it is also a testament to the indomitable spirit of the human soul. Defying all odds, he declared himself "The Happiest Man on Earth," a testament to his resilience and determination to find light even in the darkest circumstances. With boundless courage, Kenneth Tigar, as Eddie Jaku, shares the profound narrative of his first 100 years, encapsulating both the depths of human cruelty and the heights of human strength and hope.

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**"Powerful and magnificent"**  
*-Broadway World*



# TIMELINE OF History

Here's a few important dates and events throughout Eddie Jaku's life.

## 1920 - 1933



1920- Eddie Jaku born Leipzig, Germany  
Abraham Salomon Jakobowicz; 14 April  
1920

1933- Hitler came to power- Jaku is  
kicked out of school in Leipzig

## 1934 - 1938

Attends Jeter and Shearer an engineering  
academy, in Tuttlingen while assuming the  
identity of a gentile Walter Schleif

November 9, 1938- Kristallnacht -(After  
graduating from school, with First Honors, Eddie  
returns home to encounter Krystallnacht and is  
taken by the Nazis and sent to Buchenwald)



## 1939 - 1940

Father is ordered to take Eddie to an aeronautical  
factory in Dessau, but instead they attempt to  
escape to Brussels. During the attempt to  
escape, Eddie is separated from his father.

May of 1940, Germany invaded Belgium- Eddie  
arrives in Dunkirk in an attempt to escape, but is  
unable to board a ship to England. He walks for 2  
and a half months from sun up to sundown to the  
South of France.



## 1941 - 1943

In Lyon, he is arrested and put on a train to Auschwitz. He steals  
engineering tools and is able to use them to escape the train car and  
jump the train. Once free from the train, he jumps other trains back to  
Brussels (where he is reunited with his parents).

Winter of 1943, Jaku's apartment is raided by the Belgian police. He was  
moved with his parents to a transit camp in Malines, where they stayed  
for months until they rounded up 1500 Jews for deportation. He was  
again sent to Auschwitz, where his parents are killed and Eddie meets  
Dr. Mengele.



# TIMELINE OF History

Here's a few important dates and events throughout Eddie Jaku's life.

## 1943 - 1944

Eddie obtains work at the IG Farben  
Factory and makes a friend Wilhelm  
Krauss who helps him escape.



## 1944 - 1945

After escaping, Eddie is shot and ends up  
sneaking back into Auschwitz where he is treated  
for his bullet wound by fellow prisoner Dr.  
Kinderman.



## 1945

January 18, 1945, Eddie is part of the evacuation of  
Auschwitz and the Death March. Upon reaching the  
city of Gleiwitz, the prisoners were divided up and  
he and Kurt were separated.

Eddie is loaded onto a train to Buchenwald, but  
eventually escapes the Death March and evades  
capture. Eventually he is found by an American  
Tank and rescued.

May 9, 1945 in Berlin, the German High Command  
signed the acts of unconditional surrender of the  
German Armed Forces.



## 1945

After the liberation, Eddie sets off on foot for  
Belgium looking for any remaining family. He is  
reunited with his friend Kurt and meets his future  
wife Flore and has his first child.

1950 he emigrates to Australia where he passed  
away in October 2021.





# GLOSSARY

**Adolf Hitler**- Adolf Hitler, also known as Der Führer (German: “The Leader”), was the leader of Germany’s Nazi Party, and one of the most powerful and notorious dictators of the 20th century. Hitler took absolute power in Germany by 1933. Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939 led to the outbreak of World War II, and by 1941, Nazi forces had used vicious “blitzkrieg” military tactics to occupy much of Europe. Hitler was anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish), racist and promoted the idea of ethnic purity, which he then used to justify the genocide of approximately 11 million people deemed racially inferior, including 6 million Jews.

**Allied Powers**- Allied powers, also called Allies, were the countries allied in opposition to the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) in World War I or to the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) in World War II. The major Allied powers in World War I were Great Britain (and the British Empire), France, and the Russian Empire. In World War II the chief Allied powers were Great Britain, France (except during the German occupation, 1940–44), the Soviet Union, the United States, and China.

**Aptitude test** - An aptitude test is designed to assess what a person is capable of doing or to predict what a person is able to learn or do given the right education and instruction. It was used to predict or steer people towards certain careers or occupations.

**Auschwitz**- Nazi Germany’s largest concentration and extermination camp. Located in southern Poland, Auschwitz was actually three camps in one: a prison camp, an extermination camp, and a slave-labor camp. As the most lethal of the Nazi extermination camps, between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died at Auschwitz; 90 percent of them were Jews.

**Auschwitz Tattoo** - The numbered tattoos that have today become an identifying mark of Holocaust survivors originated in Auschwitz, the largest Nazi concentration camp in Europe. There, incoming prisoners went through the infamous selektion (selection process). An SS officer would sort the prisoners into two lines: those sent to the right were immediately killed in the gas chambers, those sent to the left were put to work in the forced labor camps. After their heads were shaved and their personal possessions removed, the prisoners were officially registered by being given a numerical tattoo on the inner forearm. These tattoos were just one of the ways in which the Nazis dehumanized their prisoners. Despite the perception that all Holocaust prisoners were given tattoos, it was only the prisoners of Auschwitz after 1941 who were branded this way.



## GLOSSARY

**Bayonet** - A bayonet is a knife, dagger, sword, or spike-shaped weapon designed to fit on the end of the muzzle of a rifle, carbine, musket or similar firearm, allowing it to be used as a spear-like weapon.

**Buchenwald** - was one of the biggest of the Nazi concentration camps established on German soil. Its name means “beech forest” in German, and it stood on a wooded hill about 4.5 miles (7 km) northwest of Weimar, Germany. Set up in 1937, it initially housed political prisoners and other targeted groups, including Jews.

**Cholera** is an acute diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria. People can get sick when they swallow food or water contaminated with *cholerae* bacteria. The infection is often mild or without symptoms, but can sometimes be severe and life-threatening

**Concentration camps** are an internment center for political prisoners and members of national or minority groups confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment, usually by executive decree or military order. Persons are placed in such camps often on the basis of identification with a particular ethnic or political group. The first German concentration camps were established in 1933 for the confinement of opponents of the Nazi Party, many of whom were Jewish. After the outbreak of World War II the camp inmates were required to work for their wages in food; those unable to work usually died of starvation, and those who did not starve often died of overwork. The most shocking extension of this system was the establishment after 1940 of extermination centers, or “death camps” where the mass genocide of millions of people were carried out.

**Death Marches**- were massive forced transfers of prisoners from one Nazi camp to other locations, which involved walking long distances resulting in numerous deaths of weakened people. Towards the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews, from Nazi camps near the Eastern Front were moved to camps inside Germany to continue the use of prisoners' slave labor, to remove evidence of crimes against humanity, and to keep the prisoners from bargaining with the Allies.. Prisoners were marched to train stations, often a long way; transported for days at a time without food in freight trains; then forced to march again to a new camp. Those who lagged behind or fell were shot. The largest death march, referenced in the play, took place in January 1945. Nine days before the Soviet Red Army arrived at the Auschwitz concentration camp, the Germans marched 56,000 prisoners toward a train station at Wodzisław, 35 miles away, to be transported to other camps. Around 15,000 died on the way.

**Dr. Joseph Mengele** was the Nazi doctor at Auschwitz extermination camp (1943–45) who selected prisoners for execution in the gas chambers and conducted medical experiments on inmates in pseudoscientific racial studies. Mengele’s experiments often resulted in the death of the subject. He is referred to as the “Angel of Death.”

## GLOSSARY

**“Economically Indispensable Jews”** - If you say that someone or something is indispensable, you mean that they are absolutely essential and other people or things cannot function without them. During the Nazi regime, this designation was given to Jewish people who were of high value to the Nazi party due to their skills or training.

**Fascist** - someone who believes in fascism, a political ideology and mass movement that dominated many parts of central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1919 and 1945.

Fascist parties and movements differed significantly from one another, but they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy and political and cultural liberalism, a belief in natural social hierarchy and the rule of elites. At the end of World War II, the major European fascist parties were broken up, and in some countries they were officially banned.

**Gas Chambers** - During the Holocaust, Nazi Germany employed gas chambers for the purpose of killing Jews and other targeted groups. The chambers were established at concentration camps and usually disguised as bathhouses. Men, women, and children were herded into the chambers after being told that they were going to take showers. The doors were closed, and poison gas was released.

**Gentile-** a person who is not Jewish

**German Panzers** -were a series of battle tanks fielded by the German army in the 1930s and '40s. The six tanks in the series provided the striking power of Germany's panzer (armored) divisions throughout the war.

**Gestapo-** (German: “Secret State Police”), the political police of Nazi Germany. The Gestapo ruthlessly eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories and was often responsible for the roundup of Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

**Goy** -Hebrew and Yiddish term for a non-Jewish person; synonymous with "gentile."

**Herman Goering** was a German politician, military leader, and convicted war criminal. He was one of the most powerful figures in the Nazi Party, which ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. Following the establishment of the Nazi state, Göring amassed power and political capital to become the second most powerful man in Germany. In September 1939, Hitler gave a speech to the Reichstag designating him as his successor.

**The Holocaust** - Name given to the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II. The Holocaust was notable for its especially brutal, systematic, and premeditated nature.



## GLOSSARY

**Krieg** - “total war,” or a war which is unrestricted in terms of the weapons used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the accepted rules of war are disregarded. In a total war, there is no regard for civilian losses.

**Kristallnacht** (German: “Crystal Night”) the night of November 9–10, 1938, when German Nazis and sympathizers attacked Jewish persons and property. More than 1,000 synagogues were burned or damaged. Rioters ransacked and looted about 7,500 Jewish businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and vandalized Jewish hospitals, homes, schools, and cemeteries. The attackers were often neighbors. Some 30,000 Jewish males aged 16 to 60 were arrested. To accommodate so many new prisoners, the concentration camps were expanded.

After the pogrom or mob attack ended, it was given the name: Kristallnacht—meaning “crystal night” or “night of broken glass.” After Kristallnacht, the Nazi regime made Jewish survival in Germany impossible.

**Latrine Pit** - A pit latrine is a large hole in the ground that collects human waste.

**Nazi Party** - was the political party of the mass movement known as National Socialism. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, the party came to power in Germany in 1933 and governed by totalitarian methods until 1945.

**Shabbos Dinner** - Shabbos or Shabbat is the Jewish Day of Rest. It happens each week from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. One constant theme in Shabbat observance across time and territory is the centrality of home life with family members and guests. Friday night dinner is the most popular Shabbos meal. Family meals are occasions for singing, studying, and celebrating together, as well as for consuming distinctive Shabbos foods. Typical Shabbos foods include challah (braided bread) and wine, which are both blessed before the meal begins.

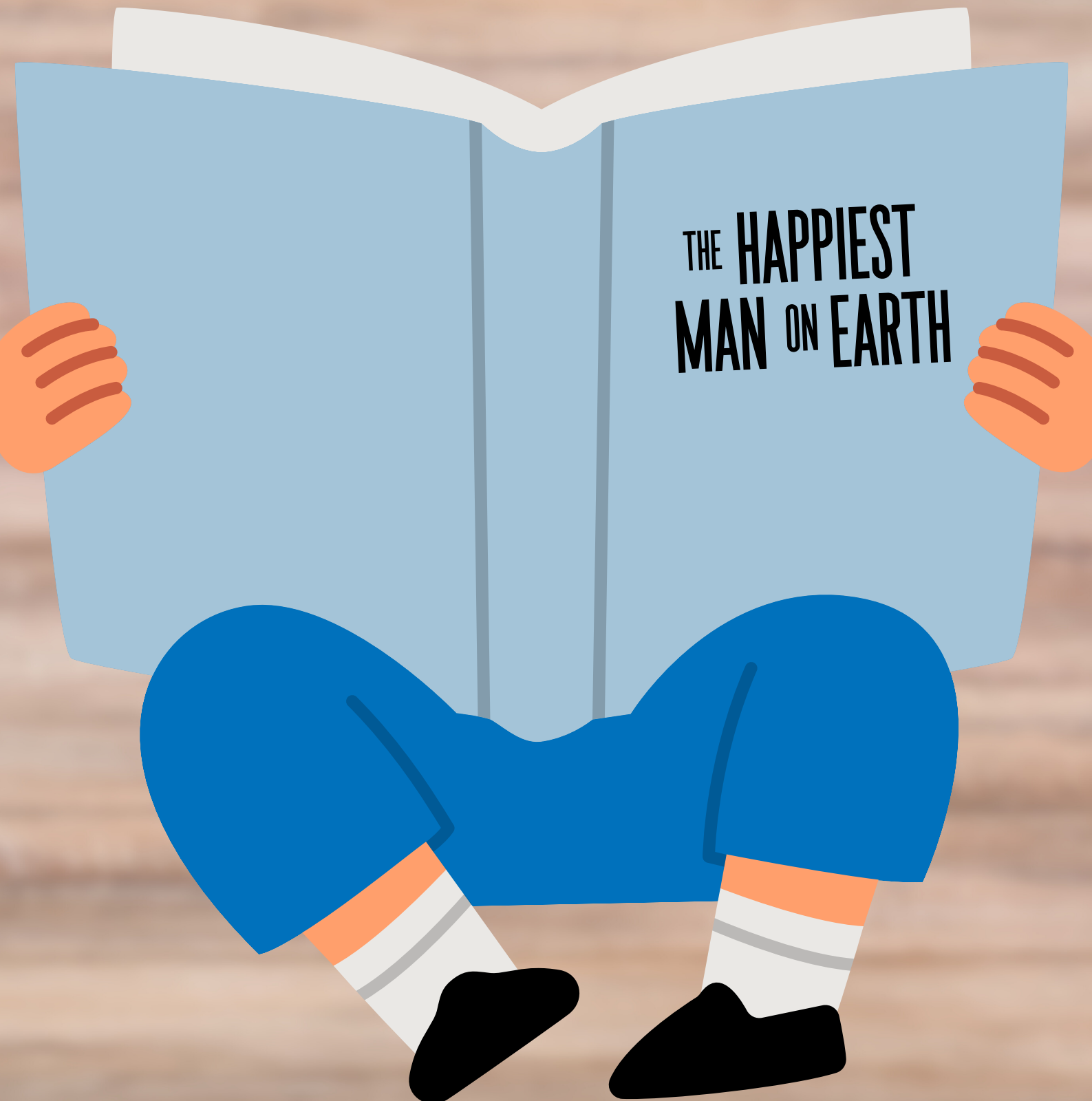
**SS** - is an abbreviation of Schutzstaffel which means “Protective Echelon” in German. They were the black-uniformed elite corps and self-described “political soldiers” of the Nazi Party. Founded by Adolf Hitler in April 1925 as a small personal bodyguard, the SS grew with the success of the Nazi movement and gathered immense police and military powers.

**Swastika** -is an ancient religious and cultural symbol in many cultures, but was appropriated by the Nazi Party and by neo-Nazis. In Nazi Germany, the swastika with its arms turned clockwise became the national symbol. On September 15, 1935, the black swastika on a white circle with a red background became the national flag of Germany. This use of the swastika ended in World War II with the German surrender in May 1945, though the swastika is still used by neo-Nazi groups.

**Third Reich**- the official Nazi name for their regime in Germany from January 1933 to May 1945. They considered themselves the successors of the medieval and early modern Holy Roman Empire of 800 to 1806 (the First Reich) and the German Empire of 1871 to 1918 (the Second Reich).

**Typhoid** - is a life-threatening infection caused by the bacterium Salmonella Typhi. It is usually spread through contaminated food or water. Once Salmonella Typhi bacteria are ingested, they multiply and spread into the bloodstream. Symptoms include high fever, flu-like symptoms and diarrhea.

# RECOMMENDED READING



**The Association of Jewish Libraries' Sydney Taylor Book Award is presented annually to outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience.**

**Here is a sampling of both fiction and nonfiction YA and middle grade titles recommended by the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, and Scholastic for young people wanting to read and learn more about the Holocaust.**

**Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow**

By Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Grades 7-10

This well-researched, large-format book describes the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, and World War II and its aftermath, through the eyes of 12 ordinary young people in Germany, including those who participated in the Hitler Youth movement and those who resisted.

**The Nazi Hunters: How a Team of Spies and Survivors Captured the World's Most Notorious Nazi**

by Neal Bascomb

Grades 8 and Up

With maps, photographs, and notes, Bascomb delivers a dramatic account of how an elite team of Israeli spies tracked down and prosecuted Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, who was living in Argentina under an alias. (Nonfiction, 2014 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

**I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust**  
by Livia Bitton-Jackson

Grades 8 and Up

The author describes her experiences during World War II, when she and her family were sent to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz (Nonfiction, 1997 Honor Book for Older Readers).

**Someday We Will Fly**

by Rachel deWoskin

A 15-year-old girl escapes Warsaw with her father and baby sister in 1940. They find refuge with other Jewish refugees in Shanghai but face poverty, hunger, boredom, loneliness, worry, fear, and humiliation.

**Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation**

Adapted by Ari Folman. Illus.

by David Polonsky

Grades 8 and Up

This graphic novel brings Anne Frank's diary to vivid life. Though the fear Anne and the other residents of the Secret Annex experienced is palpable, so are the moments of boredom and even humor—readers will be reminded that these were real people. (Nonfiction, 2019 Notable Book for Older Readers)

## **The Librarian of Auschwitz**

by Antonio Iturbe. Tr. From Spanish by Lilit Thwaites.

Grades 8 and Up

Conveying the importance of hope even during the darkest hour, this powerful story is loosely based on the life of 14-year-old Dita Kraus, who took possession of a handful of books smuggled into the Auschwitz concentration camp. (Fiction, 2018 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

## **To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen's Account of a War Criminal Trial**

by Kathy Kacer with Jordana Lebowitz

Grades 7 and Up

The granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, Lebowitz blogged about attending the first week of the trial of Oskar Groening, a member of the German SS known as "the bookkeeper of Auschwitz." This stirring work chronicles both Lebowitz's account and the trial testimony. (Nonfiction, 2018 Honor Book for Teen Readers)

## **Resistance**

by Jennifer A. Nielsen

Grades 6-10

When her family is uprooted in Nazi-occupied Poland, teenager Chaya Linder is determined to make a difference. Chaya works as a courier to Jews trapped in various ghettos throughout Poland, bringing them food and supplies and smuggling out children. When she is forced to flee North, she takes part in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, helping the rebellion's leader, Mordechai Anielewicz. (Fiction, 2019 Notable Book for Teen Readers)

## **The Berlin Boxing Club**

by Robert Sharenow

Grades 9 and Up

Karl Stern, an assimilated 14-year-old Jew living in 1930s Berlin, becomes the unlikely student of Max Schmeling, a boxing champion and source of German pride. This coming-of-age novel entwines Karl's personal struggles with historical events as he tries to protect his family. Well-developed characters and a tense plot propel this page-turner. (Fiction, Award Winner for Teen Readers)

## **What the Night Sings**

by Vesper Stamper. Illus. by Vesper Stamper

Grades 7 and Up

This beautifully illustrated novel tells the story of teen Holocaust survivor Gerta Rausch, who finds out she is Jewish on the day she is taken to a concentration camp with her father. Gerta plays the viola with an orchestra at the camp and struggles to reconcile her identity and desires in the wake of tragedy. (Fiction, 2019 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

## **The Boy Who Dared** by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Grades 9 - 11

Author Susan Campbell Bartoletti has taken one episode from her Newbery Honor Book, *Hitler Youth*, and fleshed it out into a thought-provoking novel. When 16-year-old Helmuth Hübener listens to the BBC news on an illegal short-wave radio, he quickly discovers Germany is lying to the people.

## **Night** by Elie Wiesel

Grades 9 - 12

A terrifying account of the Nazi death-camp horror that turns a young Jewish boy into an agonized witness to the death of his family, his innocence, and his god. *Night* is a 1960 memoir by Elie Wiesel based on his Holocaust experiences with his father in the Nazi German concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald in 1944–1945, toward the end of the Second World War in Europe.

## **Milkweed** by Jerry Spinelli

Grades 9 - 12

Newbery Medalist Jerry Spinelli takes us to one of the most devastating settings imaginable—Nazi-occupied Warsaw of World War II—and tells a tale of heartbreak, hope, and survival through the bright eyes of a young orphan.

## **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak

Grades 9 - 12

Celebrating the way that books and stories unite people in the face of tragedy, this haunting, weighty, and transformative book is impossible to forget. The novel follows the adventures of a young girl, Liesel Meminger. Narrated by Death, the novel presents the lives and viewpoints of the many victims of the ongoing war. Themes throughout the story include death, literature, and love.

## **Hidden Like Anne Frank** by Marcel Prins and Peter Henk Steenhuis

Grades 9 - 12

Fourteen unforgettable true stories of children hidden away during World War II. Before the end of the war, 8 year old Jaap Sitters would hide in secret rooms and behind walls. He would suffer from hunger, sickness, and the looming threat of Nazi raids. But he would live.

## Books by Eddie Jaku

### **The Happiest Man on Earth: The Beautiful Life of an Auschwitz Survivor**

by Eddie Jaku

Grades 9-12

In this uplifting memoir in the vein of *The Last Lecture* and *Man's Search for Meaning*, a Holocaust survivor pays tribute to those who were lost by telling his story, sharing his wisdom, and living his best possible life. This book was the source material for the play by MARK ST GERMAIN

### **The Happiest Boy on Earth: The Incredible Story of the Happiest Man on Earth**

by Eddie Jaku

8+ years

A picture book adaptation for younger readers based on the extraordinary bestselling adult title *THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH*. Life can be beautiful if you make it beautiful. It is up to you. The story is framed as a conversation between 101-year-old Eddie and his great grandchildren - who are bursting with questions about the life of their grandfather. The story of Eddie's life unfolds beautifully, sensitively, heartbreakingly through his words, and exquisite illustrations by Nathaniel Eckstrom. SHORTLISTED FOR DYMCKS BOOK OF THE YEAR 2022 FOR YOUNGER READERS

#### **Sources:**

<https://www.slj.com/story/Commemorate-Holocaust-Remembrance-Day-with-this-Booklist-libraries-students>

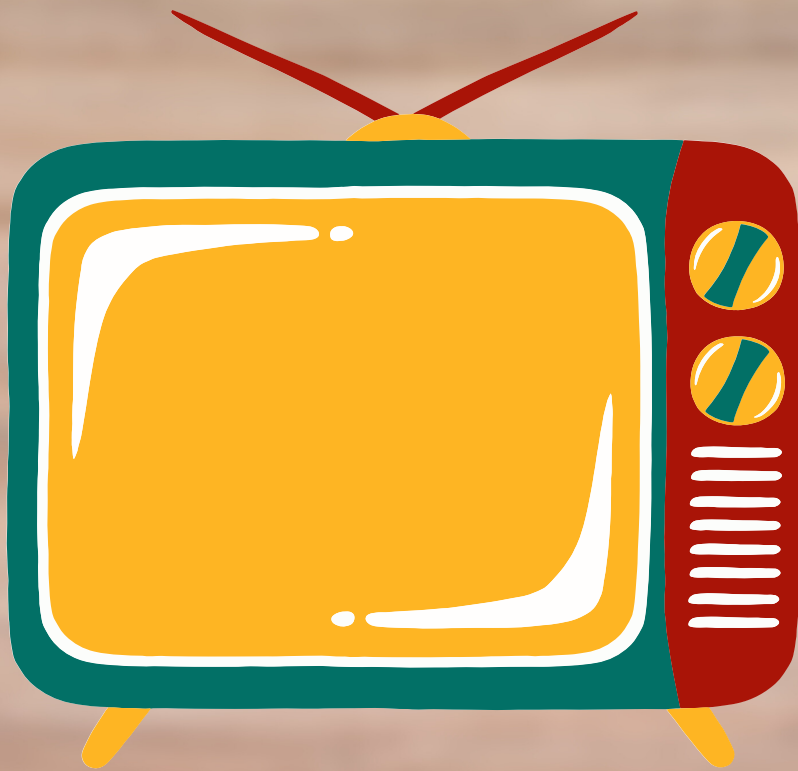
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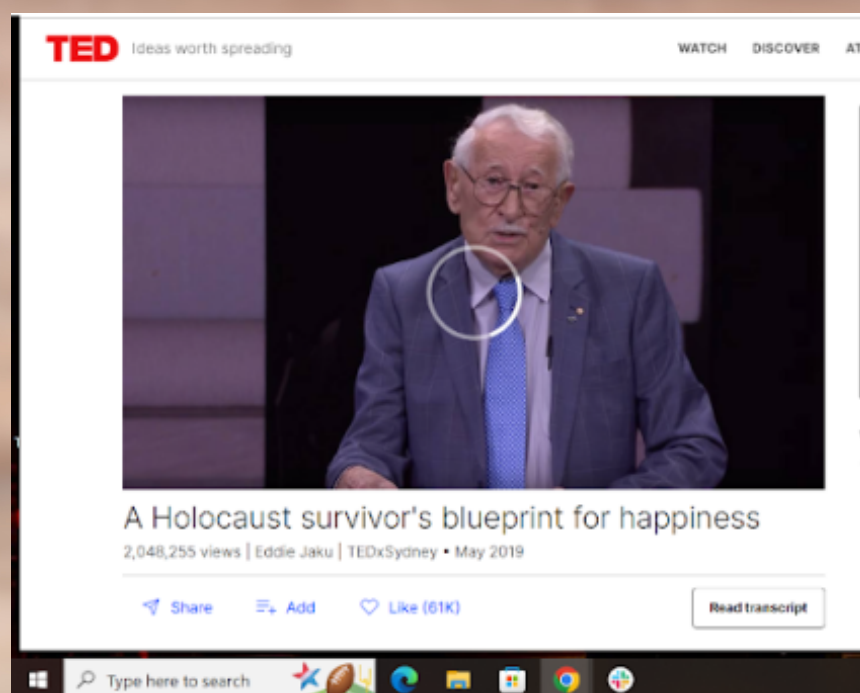
# RECOMMENDED WATCHING

- Eddie Jaku's TEDxSydney talk from May 2019

In this deeply moving talk, Eddie Jaku -- a 99-year-old Holocaust survivor -- recounts his experiences and the powerful lessons he learned about the search for happiness.

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/eddie\\_jaku\\_a\\_holocaust\\_survivor\\_s\\_blueprint\\_for\\_happiness](https://www.ted.com/talks/eddie_jaku_a_holocaust_survivor_s_blueprint_for_happiness)

TEDx was created in the spirit of TED's mission, "ideas worth spreading." It supports independent organizers who want to create a TED-like event in their own community.





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 1



## THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH



In groups or individually, have students consider the following questions:

- How does this source present information? What is the mood and what is the tone of the document (personal/impersonal, formal/informal, detached/emotional)? What adjectives do you think best describe how events are portrayed in the source?
- What does this source reveal, if anything, about the decisions and actions of survivors, liberators, perpetrators, or other people involved in the Holocaust?

Ask students what they think is the biggest difference between learning about an event from someone who experienced it versus learning from a history book or other secondary source. What is the benefit of learning about an event from someone who experienced it directly?

Have students conduct research on their own and read a secondary source account of one of the historical details/events described in *The Happiest Man on Earth*. (Kristallnacht, Auschwitz, death marches, etc.)

Provide students with a secondary source account (book, newspaper article, etc) of one of the historical events described in *The Happiest Man on Earth*.



- Compare this source with Eddie's testimony in *The Happiest Man on Earth*—Identify three ways that this source reinforces Eddie's description of his experience.
- What elements of Eddie's personal story resonate with you?

(Adapted from lesson by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)







# CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 2



## THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH



YES \_\_\_\_\_ Undecided \_\_\_\_\_ N

1. Do you think that people today can learn something from this story? If so, what? If not, why not?
2. Could a government such as the one Hitler created ever have taken shape in the United States? Why or why not?

**Spectrum of Difference:** Ask your group the following questions and ask them to place themselves on an imaginary line linking the affirmative or negative to the questions below (or come up with your own).

Group members place themselves on the continuum based on how much they agree or disagree. Once they pick a position on the line you can ask them their reasons for the choices made. If someone changes their mind after hearing someone speak, they can move based on their new position.





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 3



## THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH



Prompt: What groups are still discriminated against today in the United States? Describe other examples of segregation, discrimination, and persecution in today's global society. What steps can be taken to fight these examples of inhuman behavior?

### Think, Pair, Share:

In an activity based on the Think, Pair, Share strategy, students write and discuss their ideas with a partner before sharing them with the larger group. This format gives students the opportunity to thoughtfully respond to questions

in written form and to engage in meaningful dialogue with other students about these issues. It is a helpful way to give students time to compose their ideas before sharing them with the class.



# Further Discussion Questions

1. What scenes from *The Happiest Man on Earth* do you remember most vividly? Have they made you look at the world or your family differently?
- 
- 
- 

2. Names are a big part of our identity. As *The Happiest Man on Earth* begins, Eddie introduces himself in the following way:

"My name is Abraham "Adi" Salomon Jakubowicz, but in English, much easier, friends call me Eddie Jaku. So please, call me Eddie." Yet, when his family assigns him the alias of "Walter Schleif" he is very upset, a feeling he held all the way through his graduation: "When he called for "Walter Schleif" I fought hard not to cry." He reclaims his name at the concentration camp when he runs into his school friend, Helmut.

*Discuss: Why is the alias Walter Schleif so upsetting for Eddie? Why does he embrace the name Eddie? What are some other parts of our identity? (Ethnicity, Nationality, Religion..)*

3. In the following excerpt, Eddie describes the horrors of "Kristallnacht," and the people behind it.

"It wasn't just Fascist thugs, but people we knew who joined in the looting and the violence. There! The Heiden's, the Brocks, the Coles! When they finished destroying our property they gathered up Jews, many of them children, and threw them onto the river ice to break through into freezing water. On the banks people cried, "Shoot them! Shoot them!" How could this happen? How could my friends become enemies? One day we were neighbors, the next they were murderers! "What are you doing, what is wrong with you? THIS IS MADNESS!" As they took me away, I looked back for my family, back on what was my home, and stopped being proud to be a German. Never again."

*Why do you think the non-Jewish neighbors took part in these attacks?*

# Further Discussion Questions

4. How does Eddie's relationship with his name and identity change as his story progresses?

5. Consider the following passage from the play. *This is not the only time Eddie found himself questioning whether someone was a friend or foe.*

*"One day I saw a Nazi soldier with a familiar face. It was Helmut, from school!"*

EDDIE

*I don't understand how you can be a guard here. Why?*

HELMUT

*(panicked) Wait, I didn't know you were a Jew.*

EDDIE

*I was a human being, the same I am now! Helmut, we were friends!*

HELMUT

*SHHH! Shhh. Listen, Walter, Eddie, I want to help you, I do. But I can't let you escape, you see that,*

*don't you?*

EDDIE

*Schwein!*

*EDDIE SPITS ON HIS SHOES, WALKS AWAY.*

*(to audience)*

*The next day the Commander of the camp sent for me.*

a) How do you think Eddie felt seeing him as a Nazi soldier? How do you think Helmut felt realizing that Eddie was a Jew? Do you think either of them had changed since their time at school?

b) The following day the Commander of the camp sent for Eddie, having learned he was a talented engineer. Do you think Helmut played a role in this? Why or why not?



# RESOURCES

- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum - <https://www.ushmm.org/>**
- **Holocaust Survivors & Friends Education Center: Schedule a lecture by a Holocaust survivor at your school! The survivors will speak to as many students as the auditorium or multi-purpose room will hold. We hope that you will take advantage of their eye witness testimony, a privilege that will not always be available to us.**
- **Contact: Diane P. Freer, Coordinator Lectures by Survivors Program Email: [survivors@crisny.org](mailto:survivors@crisny.org) Phone: 518-694-9984 Website: [www.holocausteducation.org](http://www.holocausteducation.org)**
  
- **Eddie Jaku, Holocaust survivor and self-proclaimed happiest man on Earth, dies at 101**
- **Eddie Jaku's obituary NPR**
- **ADL's Holocaust education program, Echoes and Reflections, [echoesandreflections.org](http://echoesandreflections.org)**
- **Timeline of the Holocaust**
  - **<https://timelineoftheholocaust.org/>**
  
- **Maps that explain WWII**
  - **<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/world-war-ii-maps>**
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- **<https://www.vox.com/2014/11/13/7148855/40-maps-that-explain-world-war-ii>**
  
- **Resources on the death marches**
  - **<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/death-marches-maps>**
  - **<https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/death-marches-evidence-and-memory/>**



# REVIEWS

- [Review: THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH at Barrington Stage Company \(broadwayworld.com\)](#)
- <https://www.wamc.org/arts-culture/2023-06-04/the-happiest-man-on-earth-is-an-eloquent-tale-of-brutality-turning-to-love-of-life>
- [At 101, Holocaust survivor Eddie Janku declared himself 'The Happiest Man on Earth.' Playwright Mark St. Germain brings Janku's memoir, life lessons to the stage | Arts-theater | berkshireeagle.com](#)