

First Last

English 8 Hour 7

Mrs. Weaver

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Courage in the Face of Danger

Between 1914-1918 war broke out in Europe. Germany was fighting for more land and control. After four long years, they suffered a terrible defeat. This caused resentment for many years. Jobs were scarce. People were unable to find work. On top of that, Germany was expected to pay fines after losing WWI.

One man claimed he could fix Germany and bring it back to its former glory. That man's name was Adolf Hitler. He rose to power on promises of revenge, economic growth, and a solution to all of Germany's problems. Unfortunately, his solution would end with the deaths of over six million Jewish people.

Hitler's plan included demonizing the Jews, stripping them of their businesses and property, and forcing them into slums, and later, concentration camps or forced labor camps. His plan did not stop there. He also planned on removing other "undesirables" from Germany. This included Catholics, gypsies, handicapped, homosexuals, and anyone who tried to oppose him.

By the end of 1945, 6 million Jews and 53 million others were dead. People often ask, "Why didn't anyone help?"

The fact is, there were many people who saw what was coming and tried to step in. For example, in 1938 British citizens knew Hitler was persecuting Jews and their family members. Their plan was to save as many Jewish children as they could. To do this, they would find

families willing to take in one or more Jewish children until the war ended. The Kindertransport was created.

Through an application process, over 10,000 children were able to make it to safety before the war broke out in 1939. Lore Sulzbacher was one of the many children saved. She was 14 when she left her parents in Germany to live with a family in England. Although she tried to bring her parents to England as well, after the war broke out, they were unable to leave Germany.

When Lore turned 18, the war was still raging. She joined the British army as a way to pay back her adoptive country and help fight the war that had torn her life apart. She would work as a nurse until the end of the war. Her efforts were honorable, unfortunately, not enough to save the ones she loved. She would never see her parents again. Like many Jewish families, her parents died in a concentration camp.

Warsaw, Poland was a hot spot for Jewish persecution during this time. Jews were being forced into crowded ghettos filled with disease, starvation, unsanitary conditions, and death. One young man who lived during this time, Ben Kamm, would remember seeing bodies piled in the streets. Ben lived in the ghetto with his parents and four little brothers. When food became scarce, he would sneak out of the ghetto to find food. With his blonde hair and blue eyes, he was not targeted as a Jew and could more easily move in the streets.

On one of his journeys to find food, he stopped in the home of his aunt (also a Jew able to keep this silent). She told Ben about a rebel group hiding in the woods around Warsaw. They were attacking the Nazis, destroying shipments, and helping Jews escape. Ben talked about joining with his parents and tried to get them to escape with him. They thought the war would be over soon and refused to leave. Ben went off to fight. Shortly after, he learned the ghetto had been liquidated.

By the end of the war, Ben was 24 years old and had fought against the Nazis for close to six years. He would learn after the war that his parents and four younger brothers had not survived.

One famous hero of WWII did not fight against the Nazis. She did not carry a gun. She did not command forces. Her weapon was words. Anne Frank was a 13-year-old Jewish girl in 1942. Her father, Otto, had decided the family would stay in Amsterdam and wait for the war to end. His plan was to hide Anne, her sister, Margot, and their mother in a secret annex attached to his business when the Nazis arrived in that town. For almost two years the family, along with four others they had taken into hiding with them were able to avoid detection. Then, as the sounds of war grew louder and hopes of the war's end approached, the families were discovered, arrested at gunpoint, and sent to concentration camps. In the rubble left behind, Anne's memories, recorded in her diary, remained.

After the war, Otto Frank returned to Amsterdam hoping to find word of his family. Sadly, he would be the only survivor. Anne and Margot would die within months of liberation from typhus in a concentration camp.

To keep her memory alive, Otto Frank decided to publish Anne's diary. Within a short time, his daughter would obtain the fame she had longed for as her diary was read around the world and translated into over 70 different languages.

Would more lives been lost if heroes like those who formed the Kindertransport, or found ways to fight the Nazis failed? How many did these heroes save? Perhaps as we read the statistics on death and destruction of WWII, it is also important to think about the many lives that were spared by those who stepped up to help, knowing their own lives were in peril.