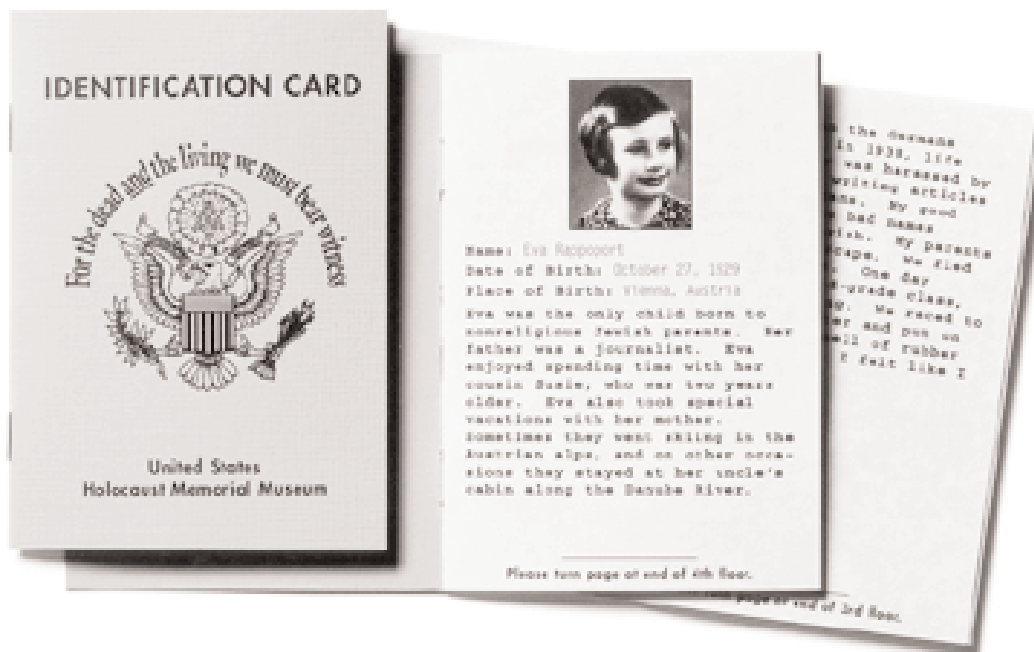


ACTIVITIES USING THE IDENTIFICATION CARDS



Identification cards created by Museum staff relate the experiences of individuals during the Holocaust. Photo by Edward Owen, reproduced with permission of Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.

Identification cards, given to students just before they enter the Permanent Exhibition, help to personalize the historical events described in the exhibition. Each card describes the experiences of a single person who was living during the Holocaust and was persecuted by the Nazis or their collaborators. The card is designed as a small booklet to be carried through the exhibition.

Within each identification card booklet, a person's experiences are presented in four parts. The first provides a biographical sketch of the person. The other three parts correspond to the three exhibition floors: "Nazi Assault 1933–1939," "Final Solution' 1940–1945," and "Last Chapter." A collection of hundreds of different cards offers a wide range of experiences of people from all over Europe. About half of the cards represent the stories of Holocaust survivors—describing the experiences of those who survived internment in ghettos and camps, were able to remain in hiding, or were rescued by others. The other half of the identification cards represents the experiences of people who died.

To create the identification cards, a team of five Museum staff members interviewed 130 survivors of the Holocaust. The survivors not only shared their own experiences, but also conveyed the experiences of relatives who had died during the Holocaust. From these interviews as well as other oral histories and written memoirs, nearly 600 different identification cards were created.

The photograph on the identification card is a copy of an original taken before, during, or shortly after the Holocaust. Photographs, along with many other personal possessions, often were lost, confiscated, or destroyed during the Holocaust. Those photographs that survived the war were usually secretly hidden or carried by individuals as they moved from place to place and thus often the photographs were subjected to wear and tear. As a result, some of the photographic images shown on the identification cards are faded, blurry, or appear torn.

NAME The name on the identification card is that of an individual who was persecuted during the Holocaust. In many instances, a person's name reflects his or her nationality and ethnic background. During the Holocaust, people often changed their names in order to hide their identity and escape arrest or deportation.

DATE OF BIRTH The events that make up the 12-year period of the Holocaust affected people of all ages. The age of an individual often was a significant factor. Those considered healthy and physically fit by the Nazis were often selected to do work for the Nazi war effort, whereas many of those who were considered too young or too old to work were immediately killed.

PLACE OF BIRTH As indicated by the birthplaces on the different identification cards, the Holocaust had a widespread impact throughout Europe. In the 21 countries occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II, people's lives were drastically affected by the many restrictive policies put into place by the Nazis.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY Through a brief biography, the identification card portrays an individual's family life, socioeconomic background, ethnic heritage, and religion.

1933–1939 This section of the identification card describes an individual's experiences from 1933 to the start of World War II in 1939, and corresponds with the beginning floor of the Permanent Exhibition entitled "Nazi Assault 1933– 1939." In Germany, as early as 1933, the Nazis carried out discriminatory acts against people they deemed "enemies of the state." In other countries, people were subjected to restrictive laws soon after their territory fell under German occupation.

1940s This section of the identification card describes an individual's experiences during the war years and corresponds with the second floor of the Permanent Exhibition entitled " 'Final Solution' 1940–1945." During World War II, the Nazis and their collaborators conquered new territories and targeted millions of civilians for death. Some were killed immediately and others were taken from their homes and sent to ghettos, camps, and killing centers. Each person experienced these years differently depending on his or her circumstances. Although most Jews in Europe were killed, some resisted, hid, escaped, or were rescued.


CONCLUSION The last section of the identification card describes the fate of the individual, explaining the circumstances—to the extent that they are known—in which the individual either died or survived. This section corresponds with the final floor of the Permanent Exhibition entitled "Last Chapter." Many of those who survived spent years rebuilding their lives, often living in displaced persons camps after being liberated in 1945. Some were able to reunite with surviving family members. Some returned to what was left of their homes. Most had to find new places to live.

Thirty of the identification cards used at the Museum have been reproduced as part of the Educator's Resource Packet for teachers to use in the classroom. The following two activities may be used to familiarize students with the cards and the way in which they can be used to learn about the history of the Holocaust.

(1) Prior to a visit to the Museum, teachers may wish to explain to students that connections can be found between the experiences of these individuals and the larger history of the Holocaust as presented in the Museum's Permanent Exhibition. Having students carefully compare the identification cards allows them to learn the history through the lives and experiences of actual people. Additionally, the diversity of those persecuted by the Nazis becomes apparent when the identification cards are analyzed and compared. Pass out reproductions of the Museum's identification cards, one to each student. Have students study the cards carefully. Generate a class list of countries where each of the victims was born. Teachers may also wish to have students find these countries on a map of western and eastern Europe. Continue to generate a list using categories such as religion, family background, occupation, and age. The end result is a list filled with many differences but yet containing many similarities. Depending on the level of knowledge the students possess with regard to the Holocaust, have them search for common reasons why these individuals became the subjects of Nazi persecution. Other teachers may wish to use the list as a basis for a discussion about the diversity of Nazi persecution policies and how the Nazi reach, at one time, stretched across eastern and western Europe.

IDENTIFICATION CARDS

(2) Using the identification cards as a starting point, have each student investigate further a theme, topic, or place mentioned in his or her card. For example, students may wish to find out more information about daily existence in the death camps, resistance to the Nazis, life in hiding or under false



identities, the difficulties of emigrating, or living in the ghettos, to name just a few. Direct students to the Museum's Web site where these topics—and many more—may be explored through photographs, video clips, music, maps, online exhibitions, and text. The students' final projects should link the individual on their identification card with the information they have found.