

Lesson

Duration:

One 50-minute class period

Read and Reflect: Deportation, Separation, and Loss in Eva Ginzová's Diary

Learning Objectives

In this lesson students will consider the complexities of separation from loved ones, which was a central aspect of the Holocaust experience. By closely reading Eva's diary entries about her brother's deportation from the ghetto, students will grapple with the mixture of fear, denial, anxiety, sadness, and grief that accompanied these moments of separation.

Encourage educators and students to read the introduction to Eva Ginzová's diary in *Salvaged Pages*, pages 160–67. It provides valuable information about the writer's life and a historical context for a reading of the diary.

Overview

Core diary entries from *Salvaged Pages* used in this lesson: Eva Ginzová, [September 27-28, 1944](#); [May 14, 1945](#); [April 14, 1947](#)

During the Holocaust, the Germans used anti-Jewish measures to mark, separate, displace, and ultimately murder Europe's Jews. The destruction of Jewish families and communities remains one of Germany's most tragic and enduring legacies.

Eva Ginzová was separated from her parents and community when she was deported from Prague to Theresienstadt in 1944. In the ghetto, however, she found her adored older brother, as well as her uncle and cousins. As the Germans continued deporting Jews from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of the so-called Final Solution, she endured wrenching separation again as her brother was sent away. In her diary, Eva describes her final separation from her brother and illuminates the range of thoughts and feelings that this moment brought about.

Focus Questions

- Is this form of separation (deportation) different from other forms of loss that we experience in peacetime? How? What are the particular characteristics of separation by deportation that make it different from death or other forms of leave-taking?
- Why do you think Eva would record such a painful and difficult moment in her diary? Do you think it requires courage to do this? Do you think it could be comforting? How do you understand her decision to write these entries about her brother's deportation from the ghetto?

Activities

This lesson was initially drafted by Holocaust educator Colleen Tambuscio.

Opening: Read a Diary Entry from Eva Ginzová

View the [image below](#) with students.

What do students see? What details stand out? What is the purpose/audience for this image? What was its significance?

After discussing the photograph, read the following entry:

September 27 [1944]

So Petr and Pavel are on the transport. They got their notice the day before yesterday. They said that they were leaving the next day, but for the moment they are still there because the train hasn't yet arrived. They are living in the attic of the Hamburg barracks, but they are here in Uncle's attic room the whole time. It's not as strict here as in Prague. There, you wouldn't be able to get away with someone leaving the šlojska [collection point for deportees] to go for a walk around town. We're hoping that the transport will stay here. The word is that there's a strike throughout the Protectorate, so the train won't even arrive.

When I found out that Petr was in the transport, it made me feel ill. I ran from here to the toilet where I cried my eyes out. I try to keep calm in front of Petr—I don't want to make him feel worse. They are supposed to go somewhere near Dresden. I'm really worried that there will be bombing there and that something may happen to the boys....1

What, if any, connections can you make between the photograph viewed and the diary entry read?

Discuss the following questions:

- Is this form of separation (deportation) different from other forms of loss that we experience in peacetime? How?
- What are the particular characteristics of separation by deportation that make it different from death or other forms of leave-taking?

It is very important in this activity for students to have some familiarity with the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto and the deportations out of the ghetto. Read together a [summary of the history of Theresienstadt](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This [map of deportations from Theresienstadt](#) may also be helpful.

Main Activity: Close Reading—Reflecting on Deportation, Separation, and Loss

Doing a close reading is one way to help students of all abilities engage with diary entries. This helps them understand the complexity of the content and its emotional weight. As the term is used in many state standards, *close reading* allows students to purposefully and slowly reread text to deepen their comprehension. They can focus their attention on the meaning of the individual words and sentences.

They can also pay attention to the overall development of events and ideas.

Close reading usually includes text-dependent questions that call on students to analyze the text to draw meaningful conclusions and to find real evidence. This sort of careful attention to the text allows students to synthesize their learning. They also gain important content knowledge. Then they can communicate their understanding to their peers or an outside audience.

The [Close Reading Protocol](#) can be used (and adapted) to facilitate the close reading of the diary entries.

The diary selections chosen for the close reading will be organized into two distinct segments. The first, Eva Ginzová's diary entries on [Petr's Deportation from Theresienstadt, September 27–28, 1944](#), focuses on Eva's record of the deportation and separation from her brother, Petr. The entries are emotionally difficult and particularly intimate and deserve a great deal of care when reading with students.

The second entries, Eva Ginzová's Diary Entry on the [Liberation of Theresienstadt, May 14, 1945](#) and Eva Ginzová's Diary Entry on [Her Brother Petr, April 14, 1947](#) are grouped together as a way to reflect upon the profound loss of family members during the Holocaust. While presented in this lesson in two distinct readings, the experience of deportation and separation within families is indelibly linked with the loss that followed.

Begin by completing a first read of Eva Ginzová's Diary Entries on [Petr's Deportation from Theresienstadt, September 27–28, 1944](#) in its entirety.

Have students complete their individual read and share with the class the selections they chose. Discuss the following text-dependent questions:

- Notice the details of Eva's description of her brother's leaving. What, if anything, surprised you about her account?
- Do you think Eva knew or suspected that her brother was going to be deported to a camp where he might be killed? What in the entry suggests that she suspects this, and what suggests that she cannot or does not want to believe it?
- According to Eva, why did she write about her brother's deportation?
- Eva expresses a sentiment in the September 29, 1944, entry that is more complicated than it may appear. She says, "But what can be done?" Discuss the context and meaning of this statement using both your prior knowledge of what occurred in the Holocaust as well as what you know about Theresienstadt.

Move to a first read of Eva Ginzová's Diary Entry on the [Liberation of Theresienstadt, May 14, 1945](#). What questions arose from this entry? What information do students feel they need to know more in order to understand the events recorded?

Have students complete their individual read and share the selections they chose with the class. Discuss the following text-dependent questions:

- Where in the text does Eva convey the emotional turmoil she is experiencing?

- How does this diary help us understand what it meant to witness the arrival of prisoners from surrounding death camps? Where in the text does Eva specifically address her thoughts, feelings, and reactions to their arrival?

Last, read aloud [Eva Ginzová's Diary Entry on Her Brother Petr, April 14, 1947](#). Invite students to share their thoughts, feelings, or questions about Eva's choice to write these final words.

Citations

1 Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 179.

Assessment

Have students again view the photograph [Petr Ginz and Eva Ginzová with their parents](#). After reading of the fate of Petr Ginz, has the significance of this photograph changed for them? Have students write a short essay explaining how their thoughts or feelings about this image have changed.