

Module C - Representation and Text

Elective 1

Introduction to History and Memory

Representation and Text

The NSW Board of Studies Syllabus (page 22) for this module states:

This module requires you to **explore** various representations of events, personalities or situations. You will **evaluate** how medium of production, textual form, perspective and choice of language influence meaning. The study **develops** your understanding of the relationships between representation and meaning.

Representation and Text

Each elective in this module requires the study of one prescribed text offering a **representation** of an event, personality or situation.

You are also required to supplement this study with texts of your own choosing which provide a **variety of representations** of that event, personality or situation.

These texts are to be drawn from a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media.

Representation and Text

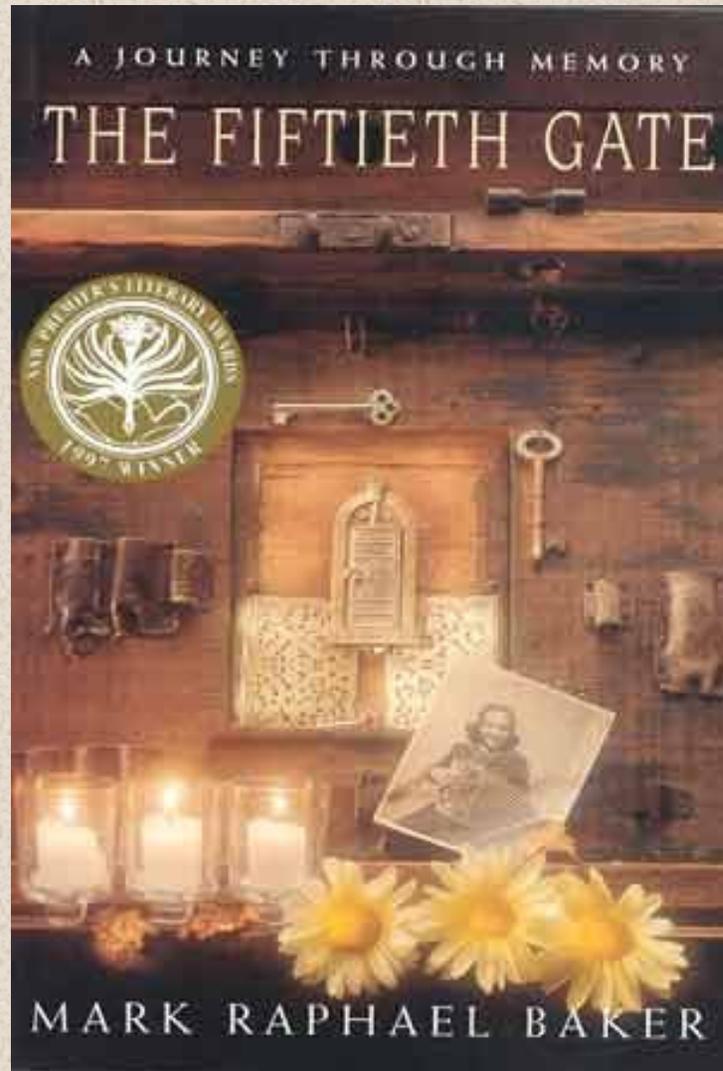
You will **explore** the ways in which different media present information and ideas to understand how various textual forms and their media of production offer **different versions and perspectives** for a range of audiences and purposes.

History and Memory

In your responding and composing, you must consider *The Fiftieth Gate* (prescribed text) and other texts which explore the **relationships between individual memory and documented events**.

You will **analyse** and **evaluate** the interplay of personal experience, memory and documented evidence to broaden your understanding of how **history** and **personal history** are shaped and represented.

The prescribed text



The author: Mark Raphael Baker

- Born in 1959 in Melbourne
- Lectures in Modern Jewish History at the University of Melbourne.
- Doctorate from Oxford University
- Editor of *Generation: A Journal of Australian Jewish Life and Thought*
- Son of Holocaust survivors
- lives in Victoria with his wife and three children



The Fiftieth Gate

- Explores some of the historical events surrounding the Holocaust and the post-war experiences of the Baker family
- Uses a range of styles to create Baker's version of this event
- Is subtitled 'A JOURNEY THROUGH MEMORY'

What was the Holocaust?



What was 'The Holocaust'

The Holocaust was the murder by Nazi Germany of six million Jews. While the Nazi persecution of the Jews began in 1933, the mass murder was committed during World War II. It took the Germans and their accomplices four and a half years to murder six million Jews. They were at their most efficient from April to November 1942 – 250 days in which they murdered some two and a half million Jews. They never showed any restraint, they slowed down only when they began to run out of Jews to kill, and they only stopped when the Allies defeated them.

(Yad Vashem www.yadvashem.org.il)

Where did some the historical events of The Holocaust occur?

This animated map showing major periods of the Holocaust and is a useful overview to the events of the Holocaust

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=3372 Animated map

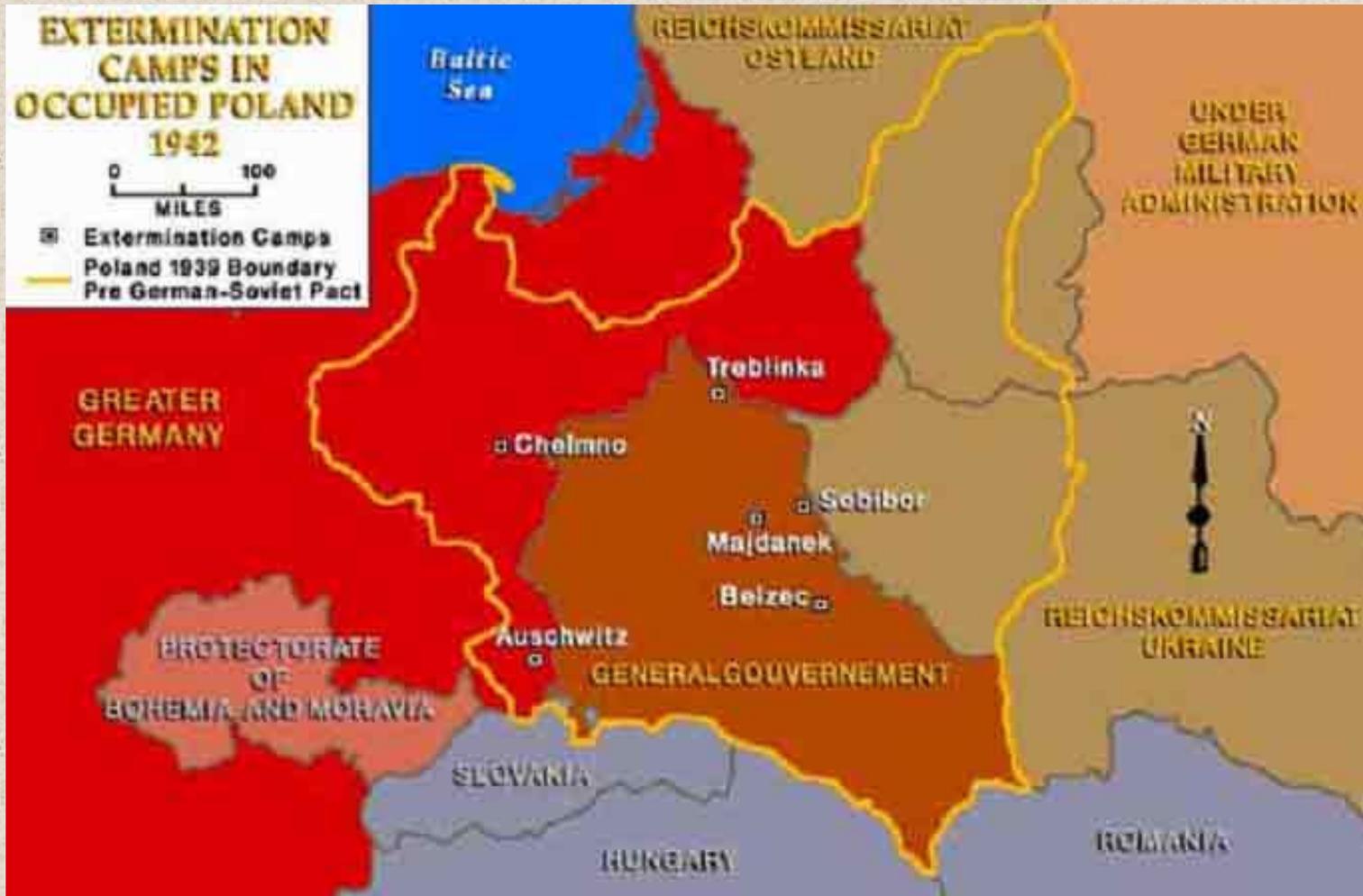
(Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org)

Extermination camps

Extermination camps were killing centers designed to carry out genocide. Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis established six extermination camps in former Polish territory--Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau (part of the Auschwitz complex), and Majdanek. Chelmno and Auschwitz were established in areas annexed to Germany in 1939. The other camps (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Majdanek) were established in the Generalgouvernement (General Government) of Poland. Both Auschwitz and Majdanek functioned as concentration and forced-labor camps as well as killing centers. The overwhelming majority of the victims of the extermination camps were Jews. An estimated 3.5 million Jews were killed in these six extermination camps as part of the Final Solution. Other victims included Roma (Gypsies) and Soviet prisoners of war.

(Source: Jewish Virtual Library www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

Extermination Camps



What is *'The Fiftieth Gate'*?

In Jewish mysticism, it is believed that there are forty-nine gates that separate good from evil. They are gates in our hearts.

Beyond them, lies a fiftieth gate, the point at which we stop moving but become aware of who we are.

It is the gate we pass through when we say 'I am'.

– *The Fiftieth Gate*

The Fiftieth Gate is about...

- Mark Raphael Baker's **personal** story of his reactions to learning about the experiences of his parents during the Holocaust.
- The historical events he **researched** surrounding the persecution of the Jews in the areas of Poland in which his parents grew up during WWII
- The **testimony** of his father: Yossl, who was imprisoned in some of the most notorious concentration camps
- The **testimony** of his mother, Genia, who was forced to hide for several years once the Jews of her village had been murdered.
- Baker's efforts to verify his parents' testimonies
- The relationship between Baker and his parents as he probes their past.
- The experiences of Baker and his parents when they (re) visit the villages and death camps familiar to his parents

Issues raised in *The Fiftieth Gate*

- The power of traumatic experience in shaping a person's life
- The experiences of Jewish refugees in Australia after the Second World War
- The struggle of the children of Holocaust survivors to understand, respect and move on from their parents' experiences
- The cultural life of Jewish Australians
- The effect of the Holocaust on Jewish thought, culture and community
- The role of memory and remembrance

(From Harper Collins Reading Guide: *The Fiftieth Gate*)

Structure and Style

- essentially a **biography** of Baker's parents
- **narrated** by its author, Mark Baker
- Subtitled, 'A Journey through Memory' which suggests, the book is comprised of **reminiscences** from his parents about their lives and experiences during the 1930s and 1940s
- Baker, a Melbourne academic, **supplements** their stories with material from his **own research**
- **heavy accents** of his parents conveyed in his spelling
- **no authorial distance** between Baker and the material he records
- **includes documents** from his research in the book
- **Includes reconstructions** of events
- **Includes records** of his parents speaking about their memories on tape and records of his conversations with them

(From Harper Collins Reading Guide: The Fiftieth Gate

www.harpercollins.com.au)

'Valley of Communities' Yad Vashem



Mark Baker conducts some of his research at Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, Israel. He also travels with his parents and other Holocaust survivors to Yad Vashem. The Valley of Communities, commemorates the destroyed Jewish communities of Europe. 'The Valley' is designed to replicate the layout and location of many of the European Jewish communities which existed before the Holocaust. It is a

Possible Related Texts

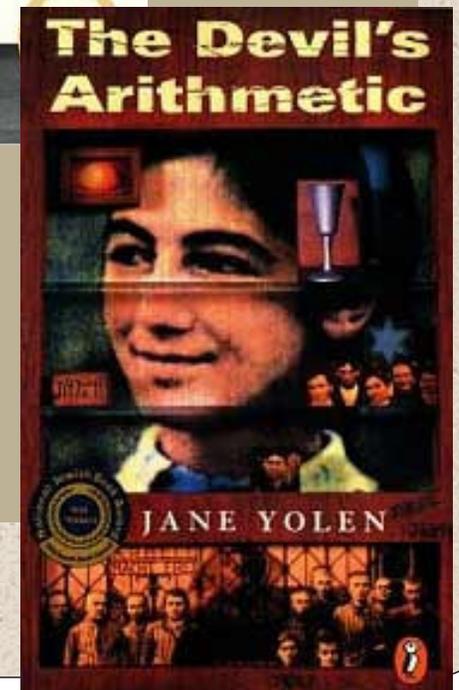
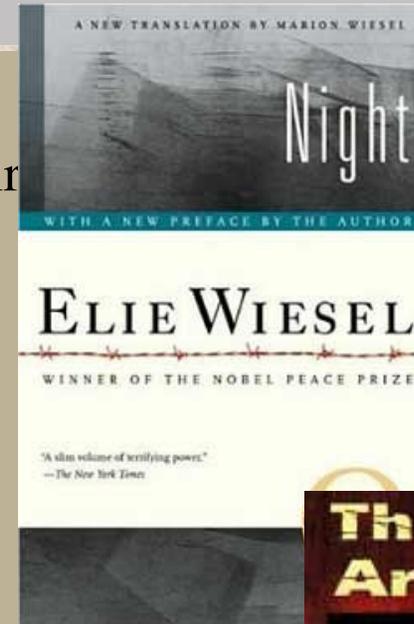
- Remember, the texts do not have to be about The Holocaust, but about the relationship between History and Memory
- Focus on how the texts influence the response of responder who has no connection to the event
- Aim for a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media

Examples could include –

- Memoir/autobiography
- Fiction
- Film
- Poetry
- Magazine article
- Documentary
- Websites
- Interviews
- TV series

Some Written texts

- *Night* by Eli Wiesel. (a memoir)
- *If this is a man* by Primo Levi (a memoir)
- *The Diary of Anne Frank* (a diary)
- *Fateless* Imre Kertesz (a memoir)
- *Klata's Diary* by Zlata Filipovic
- *Davita's Harp* by Chaim Potok
- *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen
- Authors - Araon Appelfeld, Ida Fink



Poets

- **Dan Pagis** (whose poem *‘Written in Pencil in the Sealed Freightcar’* is in *‘The Fiftieth Gate’*)

“I attempted not only to portray the horror but also to confront it and somehow remain alive”



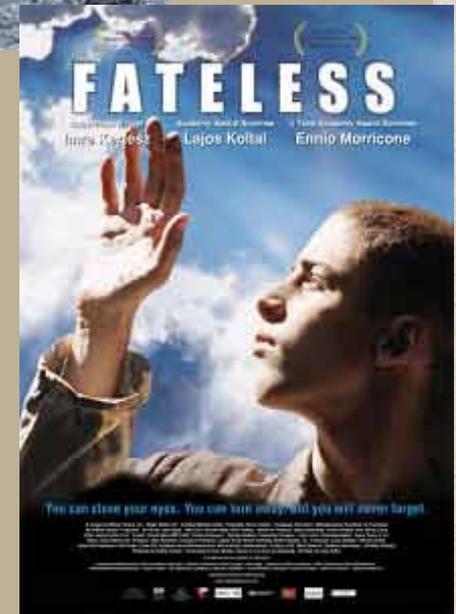
Cattle car used to transport victims to the camps, now at Yad

Vashem, Jerusalem

- **Arye Palgi**
- **Primo Levi**
- **Paul Celan** “When I read my poems, they grant me, momentarily, the possibility to exist, to stand”

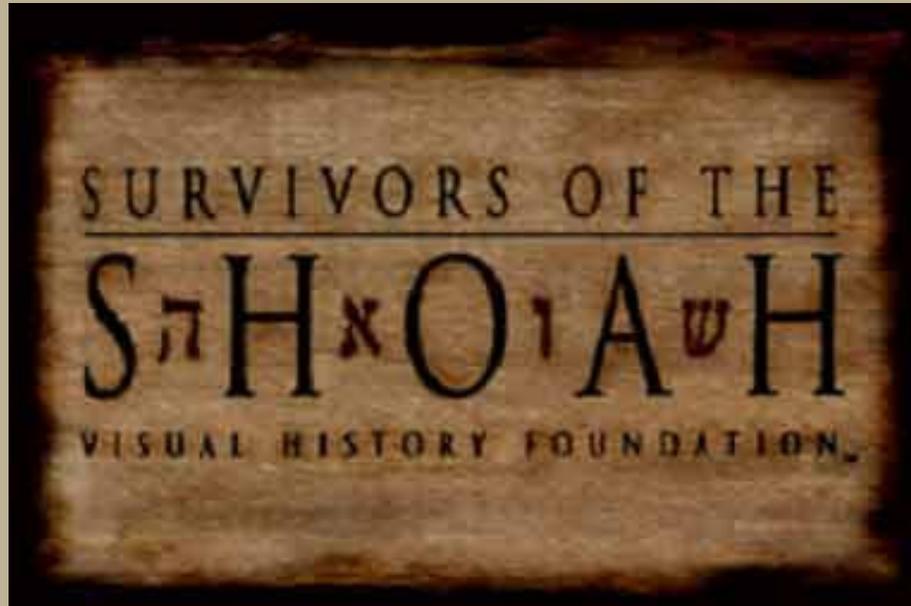
Film

- *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg (1993)
- *The Pianist* by Roman Polanski (2002)
- *Fateless* by Laos Koltai (2005)
- *Everything is Illuminated* by Live Schreiber (2005)
- *Europa, Europa* by Agnieszka Holland (1990)
- *The Killing Fields* by Roland Joffe (1984)
(about the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia)
- *Rabbit Proof Fence* by Phillip Noyce
(about the Stolen Generation)



Documentary and TV

- *Shoah* (developed from filmed interviews with survivors), can be found on Youtube



- *Band of Brothers*

Websites

- Yad Vashem: The Israeli Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority www.yadvashem.org.il
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org
- The Simon Wiesenthal Centre www.wiesenthal.com/index.html
- The Anne Frank House Memorial and Museum in Amsterdam www.annefrank.nl

Yad Vashem Museum



The Yad Vashem website contains a variety of representations of the museum. This site is well worth investigating for the wealth of materials available for student investigation and analysis.

Art

Henri Pieck (1895-1972)



Hellmut Bachrach-Baré (1898-1969)



Related Materials in this Resource Guide

- Magazine article: 'I, Too had a Face' by Avner Shalev in Yad Vashem Magazine
http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/magazine/magazine_new/mag_31/index_museum_31.html (Appendix 1)
- Poem: 'To Forget' Ayre Palgi (Appendix 2)
- Museum: Sydney Jewish Museum
<http://www.sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/>
(Appendix 3)
- Webpage 'The Hall of Names' www.yadvashem.org.il (Appendix 4)
- Speech by Elie Wiesel, 'The Perils of Indifference' found at 'The History Place – Great Speeches'
<http://historyplace.com/speeches/wiesel.htm>
(Appendix 5)

Sample Extended Response Questions

- *How does individual memory play a role in our attempts to improve our understanding of the past? In your answer refer to the understanding of History and Memory you have gained from your prescribed text and at least TWO related texts of your own choosing.*
- *Discuss the representation of a personality, event or situation in your prescribed text and TWO related texts of your own choosing.*

Sample introductions are attached to this unit

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