

# Voices from the Walls: Unlocking the History of Concentration Camps

## Materials Needed

- Large roll of paper or poster board (for a "Humanity Timeline")
- Markers and colored pencils
- Internet-enabled device (for virtual museum access)
- Printed or digital copies of the "Artifact Analysis Worksheet"
- A small suitcase or box (for the "Mystery Suitcase" activity)
- Access to the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum \(USHMM\)](https://www.ushmm.org) website

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Ivy Kate will be able to:

- **Distinguish** between the three primary types of camps: Transit, Labor, and Extermination.
- **Analyze** the chronological evolution of the camp system from 1933 to 1945.
- **Evaluate** the significance of "Spiritual Resistance" through primary sources like diaries and art.
- **Communicate** historical facts using the "Curator Method" by designing a mini-exhibit.

## 1. Introduction: The Mystery Suitcase (The Hook)

**Scenario:** Place a small suitcase on the table. Inside, place three items (or drawings of them): a crust of bread, a small piece of pencil/paper, and a yellow star.

**Discussion:** "Ivy Kate, imagine you are told you have ten minutes to pack one small bag before leaving your home forever. You don't know where you are going. Look at these three items. Why would someone choose a pencil over an extra pair of socks? Why is this crust of bread more valuable than a piece of jewelry? Today, we aren't just looking at dates and maps; we are going to be historical detectives looking at the lives behind the barbed wire."

## 2. "I Do": The Evolution of the System (Teacher Instruction)

**The "Not-All-At-Once" Concept:** Explain that concentration camps didn't start as the death camps we see in movies. They evolved in stages.

- **Stage 1 (1933-1939):** Primarily for political opponents. They were meant to "concentrate" people the government didn't like. *Key Camp: Dachau.*
- **Stage 2 (1939-1942):** Forced Labor. As the war started, camps became factories. People were used as "tools" for the war effort.
- **Stage 3 (1942-1945):** The "Final Solution." The creation of Extermination camps designed

specifically for mass murder. *Key Camp: Auschwitz-Birkenau.*

**Talking Point:** "It's like a ladder that kept going down into a darker basement. It started with taking away rights, then taking away freedom, then taking away lives."

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### 3. "We Do": Virtual Exploration & Artifact Analysis (Guided Practice)

**Activity:** Navigate to the USHMM "Collections" page together. Pick one artifact (e.g., a child's shoe, a smuggled letter, or a hand-drawn map).

**Guided Questions:** 1. *What do we see?* (Just the facts: material, size, color). 2. *What does it tell us about the owner?* (Were they hopeful? Scared? Creative?) 3. *How did it survive?* (Many items were hidden in walls or buried in the ground to be found later).

**The "Spiritual Resistance" Concept:** Discuss how writing a poem or sharing a story was a way of fighting back without a weapon. "If the guards tried to turn you into a number, keeping your story alive was a way of remaining a person."

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### 4. "You Do": The Mini-Museum Curator (Independent Application)

**Task:** Ivy Kate will design a "Mini-Museum Exhibit" on a poster board or a digital slide.

**The Requirements:** 1. **The Map:** Identify one specific camp (like Theresienstadt or Buchenwald) and locate it on a map. 2. **The Artifact:** Choose one primary source (a diary entry or an object) to "display." 3. **The Story:** Write a 3-sentence "Curator's Note" explaining why this specific story must never be forgotten. 4. **The Symbol:** Create a symbol that represents "Resilience" to include in the exhibit.

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### 5. Conclusion: The "Echo" Check (Recap & Closure)

**Summary:** "History isn't just about what happened; it's about the echoes that those events leave behind for us to hear today."

**Final Reflection:** Ask Ivy Kate to answer these three questions aloud: 1. What is one thing that surprised you about how the camps started? 2. Why is a diary just as important as a tank in the history of WWII? 3. What is one lesson from this history that we can use to make the world better today?

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### Success Criteria

- **Exceeding:** Ivy Kate can explain the difference between a Labor camp and an Extermination
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camp and connects the artifact to a specific human emotion.

- **Meeting:** Ivy Kate completes the mini-museum exhibit with all four required elements and identifies the three stages of camp evolution.
  - **Developing:** Ivy Kate can identify that there were different types of camps but needs assistance connecting artifacts to the timeline.
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## Differentiation Options

**For a Deep Dive (Advanced):** Research the "White Rose" movement or the "Sonderkommando Revolt" to see how people inside and outside the camps tried to stop the system.

**For Creative Support (Scaffolded):** Use a pre-printed timeline where Ivy Kate only has to fill in the "Stage" names and draw a small icon for each stage.