

# 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Holocaust Art and Writing Contest

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## *Witnesses to the Holocaust* **Identities Shattered—Identities Shaped**

*We invite you to participate in the 10th Annual Holocaust Art and Writing Contest, presented by Chapman University and The “1939” Club, one of the largest and most active Holocaust survivor organizations in the United States. This contest is supported by a grant from the Samueli Foundation and a gift from Yossie and Dana Hollander. Please examine the contest information that follows to learn more about this significant student learning experience. We hope you will involve as many of your students as possible.*

Each school is invited to submit the work of three students, a total of three entries, consisting of either prose, poetry, works of art or a combination thereof. These school representatives will be eligible to win the first prize of \$500 and the second prize of \$250 in each category in the middle and high school competitions.

School representatives in attendance at the awards ceremony will receive certificates and a copy of *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures*, a unique one-volume history of the Holocaust. First and second prize winners will receive their cash prizes at the ceremony. Additional prizes will be awarded to schools and school representatives in attendance at the awards ceremony.

The three student representatives from each school, with their teacher and/or principal (depending on seat availability), are invited to the awards ceremony on **Friday, March 6, 2009 at 11 a.m. in Chapman Auditorium, Memorial Hall at Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866**. The highlights of the event will include:

- the announcement of the winners of the prose contest and the reading of the two winning prose entries (one middle school and one high school)
- the announcement of the winners of the poetry contest and the reading of the two winning poems (one middle school and one high school)
- the announcement of the winning works of art and their display during the reception
- a reception to honor our guests
- the opportunity to meet and talk with Holocaust survivors, many of whose video testimonies are posted on The “1939” Club Web site

### ***Background for Art and Writing Prompt***

In January 1933, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, was appointed the chancellor of Germany. Once in power, Hitler and his fellow Nazis moved quickly to replace democracy with dictatorship. Those whose religious or political beliefs were at odds with Nazism or who dared to speak out and write against Nazi ideology were identified as enemies of the new Germany. Those who were disabled, those whose sexuality did not conform to Nazi expectations, those who were

Roma and Sinti (the so-called Gypsies) and those who were Jews or were defined as Jews because of their heritage were subjected to discrimination and persecution. The Nazis saw these individuals as unworthy or unfit to share in their community and rejected what they contributed to society through the expression of their identities.

The Nazis went to extraordinary lengths to construct a shared sense of identity around their “Aryan” ideal. Those with other identities were marginalized and separated, steps that later culminated in mass murder. Already in 1935, Jews in Germany were legally stripped of their identity as citizens. Propaganda films such as *The Eternal Jew* dehumanized Jews, comparing them to plague-carrying rats. Nazi scientists and physicians identified some adults and children with mental and physical disabilities as “life unworthy of life” and under the cover of war began secretly to murder them.

In many instances, the Nazis translated identity into a single symbol—for example, pink triangles for gays; yellow stars for Jews; black triangles for Roma and Sinti. People with these identities were sent to ghettos or concentration, labor, or death camps. Beginning in 1941, many Auschwitz prisoners were tattooed with a number on their forearm as their official identity.

To retain one’s identity in the face of such acts of discrimination and dehumanization posed an extraordinary challenge. People responded to this challenge in very different ways depending on their age, geographical location, and many other factors.

Sometimes a person retained his or her identity by taking on the protective camouflage of a false identity although to do so was very dangerous. In 1943, Curt Lowens, a 17-year-old German Jew in Holland, was taken into hiding by the Dutch student resistance. Under the identity of “Ben Joosten,” Curt became a rescuer and an active member of the resistance, carrying false documents, helping to hide Jewish children, and even saving two downed American pilots from capture.

Anne Frank was thirteen when she went into hiding in Amsterdam with her parents and sister. She was just starting to think through all the identities that might one day be hers. During two years in hiding, before the Franks were betrayed and deported, Anne confided in her diary—“Dear Kitty”—her innermost thoughts and feelings, creating for herself a new identity as a writer.

For those caught within the Holocaust, whether in hiding, fighting as partisans or with the resistance, or struggling to survive in ghettos or camps, memories played a vital role in maintaining identity. One had to remember who one *really* was. Memory gave hope that one could survive to reclaim one’s identity—as parent or child, brother or sister, friend or neighbor. But many of those who survived to be liberated learned only then how much of their identity had been lost. Family, home, friends—an entire way of life—were gone. Identity could not simply go forward from what had been. Identity had been shattered, but now, as witnesses, these survivors refused to allow identity to be destroyed.

## Art and Writing Prompt

The “1939” Club is one of the largest and most active Holocaust survivor organizations in the United States. It takes its name from the year that Germany invaded Poland changing forever the lives of those who would later join together in Los Angeles to form the Club in 1952.

The “1939” Club has available on its website nearly 100 full-length oral testimonies. Some of these oral histories were recorded in the early 1980s at the University of California, Los Angeles; others were recorded in the mid-1990s in Orange County by the Anti-Defamation League.

The USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education has an archive of nearly 52,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses. The Shoah Foundation Institute is part of the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at the University of Southern California.

- **View and listen** to at least one full-length video testimony of a **survivor** from The “1939” Club Web site (<http://www.1939club.com>) or the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education (<http://tc.usc.edu/vhiechoes>).
- **Think** about the experiences and events that are central to this survivor’s identity. In what ways did this individual experience the “shattering” of identity during the Holocaust? How did this very “shattering” create identity?
- **Share** in prose, poetry, or art your understanding of this survivor’s identity and **explore** how what you have learned from this testimony will influence you as you create your own identity.

If an internet connection is not available, students may view these interviews in the Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library at Chapman University from Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please contact Jessica Cioffi, Holocaust Education Coordinator, at (714) 628-7377 regarding access to video testimony and scheduling a visit.

**We encourage teachers to consult:**  
<http://www.chapman.edu/holocausteducation>  
**for lesson plans and other information.**

## Art and Writing Contest Criteria:

### Prose/Poetry

Must be submitted with cover sheet (available at <http://www.chapman.edu/holocausteducation>).

Must be typed or word processed and **cannot** include reference to student or school name.

Prose entries must be no more than **500** words in length. Word count **must** be noted.

Poems must be no more than **30 lines**. Line count **must** be included.

Must reflect genuine engagement with the survivor’s testimony in its historical context and constitute a thoughtful and creative response.

### Art

Must be submitted with cover sheet (available at <http://www.chapman.edu/holocausteducation/>).

Must not be matted or framed.

May only be two-dimensional and must not exceed 12” by 18”.

Must include fixatives so that works will not smudge or be altered by handling.

Must include an artist’s statement with: title of the work and a statement of no more than 100 words including the name of the survivor to whose testimony this work is a response and stating how this work addresses the prompt. Statement must **not** include student or school name.

May include photography, computer generated images, or may be in charcoal, pencil, watercolors, acrylics or oils. Please note that all images whether computer, artist or photo generated, are considered property of the original artist. Renderings of other works will be disqualified.

Must reflect genuine engagement with the survivor’s testimony in its historical context and constitute a thoughtful and creative response.

All entries become the property of the Sala and Aron Samuelli Library at Chapman University. All artists are encouraged to retain a color copy of their work since the original may not be returned. The Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library shall own all the rights to all the entries, including copyrights and may display and publish the entries, in whole, or in part.

Your school’s three entries may be submitted beginning December 7, 2008, and **must be postmarked by February 4, 2009**. Prose and poetry entries may be mailed or **submitted electronically** to [cioffi@chapman.edu](mailto:cioffi@chapman.edu). Art work must be mailed to:

Ms. Jessica Cioffi  
Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education  
Chapman University  
One University Drive  
Orange, CA 92866

Each participating school will receive:

- 5 seats (availability permitting) at the awards ceremony on Friday, March 6, 2009 at Chapman University
- an opportunity for each entry in essay, poetry and art to win the first prize of \$500 and the second prize of \$250
- a copy of *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures* for every student representative in attendance
- certificates for the three student representatives from each school
- the opportunity to meet and talk with members of The “1939” Club, a Holocaust survivor organization
- additional prizes to schools, school representatives and finalists in attendance at awards ceremony