

## PART 1: NAZI CAMPS WESTERBORK AND BERGEN-BELSEN

TIME: 25 MINUTES

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Form a group of two. Choose one person of your group who writes down the answers.
- Each section consists of information and study documents followed by questions.
- The information section is marked with a reading symbol.
- Please read the information and documents carefully and then answer the following questions.
- The total time for this assignment is 20 minutes.
- Afterwards, the docent will ask you some questions that will help you reflect what you learned. This will take 5 minutes.

## PART 1: NAZI CAMPS WESTERBORK AND BERGEN-BELSEN

**WESTERBORK****READING**

The Westerbork camp was situated in the northeastern part of the Netherlands. The Dutch government established the camp in 1939 to intern Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany who had entered the Netherlands illegally.

From 1942 to 1944, Westerbork served as a transit camp for Dutch, Belgian and German Jews before they were deported to extermination camps in German-occupied Poland such as Auschwitz. Between that time period ninety-seven transports left Westerbork. The transports left weekly on Tuesdays. About 107,000 Jews were on those trains, only 5,000 returned after the war. In addition, there were about 400 Roma in the camp and, at the very end of the war, some 400 women from the resistance movement. The camp was liberated on April 12, 1945, by Canadian forces who found 876 inmates there.

The Westerbork camp had a “double life.” While most inmates stayed in the camp for only short periods of time before being deported. Regular transports left usually on Tuesdays for camps in the east. The road of the train tracks became known as the “Boulevard of Misery” and Monday nights were times of pain. There was also a “permanent” camp population of 2,000 people. The Germans encouraged “normal” activities by this group, including metalwork, health services work, and cultural activities. A Jewish police unit kept order and assisted with the transports. In the end, however, most of the “permanent” inmates were also sent to the concentration camps and death camps. Anne Frank was among the last ones who were transferred by train to Auschwitz and then to Bergen-Belsen where she and her sister Margot died.

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**WESTERBORK****? QUESTIONS**

1. Where was camp Westerbork located and what was its demographic?
2. What kind of camp was Westerbork?
3. What happened to the inmates at Westerbork?

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WESTERBORK: KICKING AT THE DARKNESS COMIC EXCERPT



Kicking at the Darkness by Colin Upton (2016), Page 13

## PART 1: NAZI CAMPS WESTERBORK AND BERGEN-BELSEN

**WESTERBORK: KICKING AT THE DARKNESS COMIC EXCERPT**** QUESTIONS**

1. Can you explain the “double life” of camp Westerbork in terms of the “permanent” inmates and those who were transported by train to German occupied Poland?
2. How do you think it must have felt for the inmates not knowing if they were chosen for the next transport or not?

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**BERGEN-BELSEN****READING**

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was located in northwest Germany, near the German town of Celle. In total, 50,000 people died in the concentration camp, primarily due to disease, starvation and neglect. At the time of its liberation, there were nearly 60,000 prisoners in the camp and another 10,000 unburied dead, including men, women and children. More than half of the inmates were Jews. Over the course of its existence, the Bergen-Belsen camp complex held Jews, Prisoners of War (POWs), political prisoners, Sinti and Roma\*, "asocials"\*\*, criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.

Overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and the lack of adequate food, water, and shelter led to an outbreak of diseases such as typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and dysentery, causing an ever increasing number of deaths. In the first few months of 1945, tens of thousands of prisoners died.

In April 1945 Bergen-Belsen was formally surrendered to the British Army. When Allied medical personnel arrived at Bergen-Belsen they were ill-prepared to handle the tens of thousands of inmates who needed urgent attention. Another 14,000 people died in the camp after liberation. Hundreds of Canadians assisted at Bergen-Belsen and hundreds more visited the camp to bear witness and to offer aid.

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\* The Sinti and Roma are traditionally nomadic ethnic groups, living mostly in Europe and the Americas and originating from the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent. They are also known under the name "Gypsies" which is considered to be a derogative term.

\*\* The Nazis used the terms "asocial" to categorise together a heterodox group of people who failed to conform to their social norms. This group included: vagrants, beggars, alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, nonconformists, and pacifists.

## PART 1: NAZI CAMPS WESTERBORK AND BERGEN-BELSEN

**BERGEN-BELSEN**** QUESTIONS**

1. Where was camp Bergen-Belsen located and what was its demographic?
2. What kind of camp was Bergen-Belsen?
3. What happened to the inmates at Bergen-Belsen?



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BERGEN-BELSEN: KICKING AT THE DARKNESS COMIC EXCERPT



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## PART 1: NAZI CAMPS WESTERBORK AND BERGEN-BELSEN

**BERGEN-BELSEN: KICKING AT THE DARKNESS COMIC EXCERPT**** QUESTIONS**

1. What kind of scene did the Canadians encounter when they first arrived at camp Bergen-Belsen? Describe the scene depicted in the comic.
2. Why did thousands of prisoners die after they were liberated?
3. What do you think was the long-term impact on the Canadian military personnel and Canadian aid workers who witnessed the tragedy when 'liberating' the camps?

## PART 2 HOMEFRONT AND JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

TIME: 20 MINUTES

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Read the information about Jewish immigration to Canada.
- Read the comic excerpt.
- Discuss the following together with your classmates and under guidance of the docents:

### **? QUESTIONS**

1. What did you learn about Canadian immigration policy from 1933-1945?
2. What does the Gallup poll tell you about Canadian attitude towards Jews?
3. What argument does the person in the graphic novel state for letting Jewish refugees from Europe immigrate to Canada?
4. What argument does the person in the graphic novel state against the immigration of Jewish refugees to Canada?
5. What would you have said to the person in the train who is against the immigration of Jews to Canada?
6. Did you come across similar discussions as illustrated in the graphic novel in public? If so, can you elaborate/explain to your classmates?

## PART 2 HOMEFRONT AND JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

**JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO CANADA****READING**

- Canada admitted only 5,000 - 8,000 Jews from 1933 - 1945, the worst record of any large non-European country.
- A Gallup poll\* on immigration was released in October 1946. The results were:
  - » 60% of Canadians ranked the Japanese as the least desirable immigrants;
  - » 49% then indicated that they did not want Jewish immigration;
  - » At that time, Canadians much preferred Germans over Jews as immigrants.
- While images and stories appeared in the mainstream press with the liberation of the “horror camps” such as Bergen-Belsen and Dachau, the media rarely pointed out that the victims were largely Jews.
- Immigration restrictions did not ease up until two years after the war. By then it was clear that Canadian factories needed workers, and that Canada needed to show some sort of humanitarian gesture in response to the images and stories coming out of Europe.
- Between 1947 and 1955, about 35,000 survivors arrived in Canada, plus their dependents. They would have a major impact on the Canadian Jewish community.

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\* An assessment of public opinion by the questioning of a statistically representative sample.

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JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO CANADA



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