

HSE22

Prompt 3

Essay

What do you think it was like to be a Jewish child during the Holocaust in Europe?

To try to think what a Jewish child's life was like during the Holocaust is almost offensive. I can't begin to imagine the type of suffering they endured. Although I have sympathy for them, my empathies only extend so far because I do not have the ability to wholly understand them. My culture has never been blamed, my skin not discriminated against, my life has never felt threatened, and *I* have never been hated. I do not know what such a period would really do to a child, but they do, and they wrote books, they produced movies, and they are inspiration for other books and movies. They are the ones who can tell their stories and I am the one who learns from it.

The Holocaust, considering European literature, is a popular topic for books and movies since it was a time with lots of emotional context. To this day, there are still those dealing with the inner consequences from it. Those who were children at the time. I assume that most of them live their lives routinely and go to the grocery store like normal civilians or watch their grandkids grow up, but I don't assume they feel normal. Many Holocaust survivors today are older, and many are passing. Some adults still alive might have post-traumatic stress disorder and deal with the lasting effects. For what they suffered through, a "survivor" is an accurate label.

Hide and seek was my favorite game to play as a child, but for Jewish children it became a reality. Most Jews were threatened into hiding to save their lives, although it wasn't a game anymore. In books like *Number the Stars* and *The Hiding Place*, I read two different points of view of the people in hiding and the people who were helping. The children had to leave their homes, which must have caused

heartbreak and fear. Not knowing where your next destination will be and relying on friends and family to hide you creates a lifestyle of stress. Children left their homes, but they also left schools and friends.

For some of the children, family became all they had. The movie “A Bag of Marbles”, based off the novel, tells the story of two brothers who were separated from their parents during German invasions and had to travel on their own. This movie was a big realization for me of how strong these kids were. What they endured is something many adults today couldn’t handle. During the Holocaust, internet and modern technology didn’t exist, but I can’t decide whether that made it harder or easier for the brothers. They could have found their parents easier, but also could have been found by Nazis faster if they tracked a digital footprint. Without parents to depend on, the boys became all the other one had... and a bag of marbles.

In my life and looking at my situation, I cannot relate to what a child during the Holocaust went through. I enjoy learning about the history to gain a new perspective and understanding of them and their struggles. There are still threats today towards peoples’ beliefs and cultures, but no one deserves to experience a genocide like the Holocaust again.