

Introduction

Photo of Women and Children Arriving at Birkenau



Auschwitz Album Photo 19

In this activity, you will be introduced to the Auschwitz Album and its historical context as you learn to analyze primary sources such as photographs.

To demonstrate your learning, you will be asked to analyze the photo on the left from the Auschwitz Album later in this activity.

Take a minute now to write your first impressions of the photograph. Write in the box below.

More Info: Photo courtesy of Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Auschwitz Album (Photo 19). http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_19.asp

Primary Sources

Able Bodied for Work



Auschwitz Album Photo 51

Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later.

Primary sources include:

- Original documents: diaries, birth certificates, maps, memoirs
- Artifacts: furniture, clothing, jewelry
- Visual material (with or without sound): original art, music, oral history, photographs

A secondary source analyzes, interprets or comments on primary sources. Examples include encyclopedias and history textbooks.

(Collections Collaborative, Yale University, 2014).

Photographs as Primary Sources

Selection at Auschwitz-Birkenau



Auschwitz Album Photo 12

To begin to analyze a photograph and to understand the contents of one, such as the image on the left showing the selection process at Auschwitz-Birkenau, questions you could ask include the following:

- What do you notice about the people, objects, physical setting and activities shown in the photograph?
- What do you already know about the time period, people, objects, physical setting and activities shown?
- What can you infer from the photograph?
- What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
- Where could you find answers to these questions?

*Questions adapted from NARA's Analysis Worksheets at <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/index.html>.

More Info: Photos 51 and 12 courtesy of Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.

Auschwitz Album, Photo 51: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_51.asp

Auschwitz Album, Photo 12: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_12.asp

Testimony as a Primary Source - Leo Bach



Leo Bach, on Arriving at Auschwitz

In addition to photographs, testimony - also a primary source - can provide us with another perspective on a historical event or period in time. It can provide a first person perspective.

For example, Holocaust survivor testimony can provide us with information about what it was like to go through the process of selection at Auschwitz-Birkenau during the Holocaust.

Read Leo Bach's biography located in the **Interviewee Biographies** handout, then watch his testimony clip.

- As you watch, write what you think Leo is describing and his point of view. How do his voice, tone, body gestures and other qualities of the testimony help you understand Leo's story?
- How does the testimony help you understand the contents of the photograph you saw in the previous page?

What do you need to know?

The Auschwitz Album



To help you prepare to analyze the last photograph in this activity, you will now collect additional information, including information about:

- The origin of the photograph
- The historical context of the photograph
- What it was like to experience the arrival at Auschwitz

Read the article from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum about Auschwitz before moving on: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005189>

More Info: The Auschwitz Album. Available at http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/

Lily Meier on the Origins of the Auschwitz Album



Lili Meier

The Auschwitz Album is the only known collection of photographs taken by the Nazi SS at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The photographs were taken during May or June in 1944. It is powerful visual evidence of the process leading to the mass murder of Jewish men, women and children.

Lili Meier found the photo album, which has become known as the Auschwitz Album, in a deserted SS barracks on the day she was liberated from the Dora concentration camp.

First, read Lili Meier's biography located in the **Interviewee Biographies** handout. Then, watch the testimony clip, in which Lili talks about the origins of the Auschwitz Album. Collect any information from the testimony that helps you understand:

- The origin of the photograph
- The historical context of the photograph
- What it was like to experience the arrival at Auschwitz

Write in the box below.

Renée Firestone Testimony



Renée Firestone, on Arriving at Auschwitz

Now, you will watch the testimony of Renée Firestone, a Holocaust survivor who was deported by train to Auschwitz-Birkenau in March of 1944, about two months before the photos in the Auschwitz Album were taken.

Read Renee’s biography located in the **Interviewee Biographies** handout, and watch her clip.

- How does Renée’s testimony help you understand what it was like to arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau?
- How does Renée’s testimony help you understand the previous photo you analyzed of men, women and children arriving at Auschwitz-Birkenau?
- How does her testimony help you analyze the photos from the album?
- As you watch, think about what Renée is describing and her point of view. How does her voice, tone, body gestures and other qualities of the testimony help you understand Renée’s story?

Photo Analysis

Women and Children on the Birkenau Arrival Platform



Auschwitz Album Photo 19

Using what you learned in this activity, construct an analysis of the photo you first saw at the beginning of this activity (on the left). Use the information you gathered about the origins of the photograph, the historical period and survivor testimony to help you further understand the photograph this second time around.

- What more can you now infer about the photograph?
- What questions do you still have about this photograph?
- Where could you find more information to help you answer these questions?

Construct your analysis. It should be at least 8 sentences in length.

Discuss Your Analysis

Women and Children on the Birkenau Arrival Platform



Auschwitz Album Photo 19

Now, work with a partner or table group and share your new understanding about the photograph on the left.

Include at least 3 points of evidence from the sources in this activity that will support your response.

As a reminder, your evidence can come from the following:

- photographs
- testimony
- historical literature
- your own personal experience

How was your analysis of the photograph different from and similar to your partner's or table group's analysis?

More Info: Photo courtesy of Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Auschwitz Album (Photo 19). http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_19.asp

Interviewee Biographies



Leo Bach was born in Krakow, Poland on May 22, 1927. He practiced Orthodox Judaism prewar. He and his family were placed in the Krakow Ghetto in March 1941. Beginning in July 1943 he was deported and moved to several concentration camps: Krakow-Plaszow Concentration Camp in July of 1943 and then in November was transferred via to Strarachowice Concentration Camp. In May 1944, Leo was deported once again by cattle car to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Nazis moved Leo again in May 1945 to Buchenwald, where he was liberated by the US armed forces. Leo immigrated to the USA in 1948 and has practiced Conservative Judaism since the war. Leo was interviewed in Cerritos, CA on June 8, 1997.



Lili Meier was born in Bilky, Czechoslovakia on January 16, 1926. Lili's family practiced Orthodox Judaism before the war and she continued to be observant after the war. Lili and her family were held in the Berehovo Ghetto prior to being deported via cattle car to Auschwitz-Birkenau in December 1944. Her family did not survive the selections. Later she was transferred to Stuttgart and then Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp. She was liberated by US Armed forces in April 1945. She immigrated to the United States with her husband 1948. Lili was interviewed in Florida on September 4, 1996.



Renée Firestone was born in Uzhorod, Czechoslovakia on April 13, 1924. Renée's family were observant Jews. She and her family were held in the Uzhorod Ghetto and in March 1944 were deported by a train made up of cattle cars to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She was forced on a death march towards Liebau Concentration Camp. Renée was liberated by the Soviet armed forces in May 1945 and in 1948 she immigrated to the United States with her husband and children. Renée was interviewed in California on October 11, 1994.

Auschwitz Album Photo 19 - Women and Children



Photo 19 - Women and Children on the Birkenau arrival platform known as “the ramp.”

Source: Auschwitz Album. Digital image. Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Web. 20 July 2014. http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_19.asp

Auschwitz Album Photo 51 - Able Bodied for Work



Photo 51 - Able Bodied for Work

Source: Auschwitz Album. Digital image. Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Web. 20 July 2014.
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_51.asp

Auschwitz Album Photo 12 - Selection at Auschwitz-Birkenau



Photo 12 - Selection at Auschwitz

Source: Auschwitz Album. Digital image. Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Web. 20 July 2014.
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/photo_12.asp