



Description of a mysterious character

The garden was wild and overgrown, with tangled clumps of bushes everywhere. The grass was knee-high and weedy. At the bottom of the garden there were huge trees looming above the rows of pavements like green cathedrals. Unlike the rest of the garden, there was no grass. There were clumps of clover and bedraggled daisies and dandelions. There were also two upturned wheelbarrows and dirty red brick and mud-covered spades that looked as if they'd been there for years. All around the garden, there were broken pieces of moss-covered fence and broken flowerpots.

The broken flowerpots seemed to be leading to the motionless figure of a young girl lying in the bottom of the garden. She was lying very, very still amongst the ancient spades and brick and she was covered in dust and dirt and pollen, so it looked as if she might be dead. But there was something very strange about the way she was lying.

Her eyes were wide open and she was staring straight up at the sky. The expression on her face was as if she'd been expecting something lovely but had been horribly disappointed.

Saskia Sullivan, Year 7



During times of war, respect for humanity is the first casualty...

The Imperial War Museum

Our Year 9 girls show compassion, concern and care following their visit earlier this year.

In the Atrium, we saw planes, tanks, weaponry, etc and we each sat close to the objects we had chosen to sketch. If you looked upwards, you saw many different planes and the tips of rockets. Seeing real artefacts just broadens your mind to think about the situations in which they were used and just how big they really are, and how much destruction and loss of life they caused.

Evie Pattenden

At the end of the exhibition, we sat down and watched some video clips of survivors telling us their thoughts. As I watched I thought to myself that this was the first time I had felt emotional about the Holocaust, and had finally realised that words cannot describe the terror of this event.

Rosie Moss

The shoes and the belongings of the victims stood out most in my opinion. Looking at the number of shoes and belongings built up mixed emotions inside me. I could see each pair of shoes, piled up behind a glass cabinet, and even though they were bundled together, big shoes and small shoes, I still knew each pair belonged to an individual person and that these people had been led to their deaths.

Chloe Shipley

There was a cart, which was used by workers to transport the dead from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Jewish cemetery. There was a photograph showing the emaciated forms piled high on the same wooden cart that stood before me and this object, I thought, brought to life to the fact that during times of war, respect for humanity is the first casualty.

Aishu Anam

One thing that stood out for me was a small cello, hand-carved by a Jewish girl for her sister. Even with everything going on at the time, the girl still managed to make her sister a birthday present, which must have meant a lot to her sister.

Josie Stephens

I think that most of us were touched by the personal letters and drawings exchanged by Dusia, a Jewish girl in the ghetto and her Christian best friend, Mariska. Mariska risked her own life by visiting Dusia every day in the ghetto. When the deportation came, Mariska was in the ghetto but was spared when the Nazis found them together. The poem that Mariska wrote for Dusia was a poem of memory and hope, and it is very sad that Dusia and her family did not survive to see what an impact that had on us.

Madison Brown & Vicci Cowlett

Germany was quite poor and not many people could dress well. In addition, this uniform was black and looked very powerful. Anyone who wore it would gain automatic respect and would be seen as a role model, or someone to be careful of! This is what the Nazis wanted. Seeing it right in front of me showed me how others must have felt. It was scary-looking and powerful. The uniform showed no mercy, it showed only the strength and power.

Sarah Russo

A particular artefact stood out for me, which was a white table where doctors would "treat" children with disabilities. Parents would send their disabled child to a hospital where they believed their child would receive medical treatment, when in fact the doctors would starve them; not take proper care of the children, and leave them to die. When I saw this examining table, it really struck me to think about the reality of the war and what some people went through

Safia Khan

On visiting Auschwitz

After the Easter holidays last year, Harriet and I went to Poland with a large group of other Sixth Formers from different schools, to visit Auschwitz, the largest of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Having studied Nazi Germany and the Holocaust in History lessons at school at both GCSE and AS Level, I had learnt that the camps were a major element in the execution of the Holocaust; more than 1.1 million people were killed there, of whom over 90% were Jewish.

With the academic background knowledge that I had, I thought I was quite prepared for the trip. I had also seen photos of it in textbooks, but I was wrong. Nothing, not any photo or any amount of knowledge prepared me for that day, and my thoughts and feelings in the days following the trip.

Several of them had a big impact on me. What first hit me was the sheer scale of the place. We first visited Auschwitz I, the original concentration camp that was the site of the deaths of roughly 70,000 people. There was building after building where the prisoners were based, as far as the eye could see. However, this was considerably smaller than Auschwitz II (Birkenau), the extermination camp, where at least 1.1 million Jews, 75,000 Poles, and some 19,000 Gypsies were killed.

We were taken into a building in Auschwitz I and behind panelled glass was a huge mass of human hair taken from the prisoners. This heap of hair, along with piles of mangled glasses and prisoners' belongings, showed how the Nazis used everything from the bodies in order to make a profit. When I was looking at the hair mass, my attention was captured by a neat plait with a red ribbon, probably that of a young girl, and I imagined what she looked like, and wondered what had happened to her.

In Auschwitz II what shocked me the most were the living conditions of the prisoners. They slept in huts full of air gaps, in freezing temperatures, with little clothing, and were starving to death. When it rained, the floor became soaked, as well as the sleeping surfaces, making everything cold and damp. I thought how unbearable life must have been.

During the day, I found there was so much to take in that it was a day of shock and realisation of the vast scale of the destruction of humanity. Reflections on my experience came in the days following the trip.

It took me a few days to realise the profundity of it all. As I came to reflect on my experience more and more, about two days after the trip, it hit me. The stark realisation of it: these were real people, leading real lives, just like you and me, with friends, with family, with hobbies and jobs and pets, suddenly uprooted and transported in disgusting conditions, to these camps, where they were dehumanised - given a number instead of a name, and the perpetual fear they must have felt - fear of the unknown, fear of death, fear of whether they would see their loved ones again, fear of what would happen to them.

Auschwitz was an experience we shall always remember, and what we have tried to describe is how it felt, standing in a place where these atrocious things actually happened, where these people lived and died. Today was about something that happened in the past, but it's something that cannot and must not be forgotten. Our simple duty to this dreadful past is never to forget.

Lily Vernon-Hunt and Harriett Butterworth

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth

Our AS Art student, Claire MacNeill, examined patriotism and the poetry of John Gillespie Magee in her recent art studies. Here are two of her prints showing an RAF pilot's story in response to his writing.

