Witnesses and Evidence

How different eyewitness accounts reveal the effects of the Shoah

MWH.C.6.6.C "Examine the effects of the Shoah through eyewitness accounts from victims, survivors, liberators, and perpetrators."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one effect of the Shoah described by each witness. Circle a detail that shows what each witness could, or could not, observe firsthand.

Four Views of the Shoah

1. In 1942, Anne Frank and her family went into hiding in Amsterdam to escape Nazi persecution of Jews. Her diary, written while she lived in a concealed annex, records the strain of staying quiet, the fear of discovery, and the loss of ordinary freedoms. She could not attend school or walk outside. Anne was arrested in 1944 and died at Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Her writing is a victim's eyewitness account of life under persecution, not an account of conditions inside a killing center. It shows how the Shoah disrupted daily life even before deportation.

2. Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish survivor, later wrote about his imprisonment at Auschwitz. In his account, guards took prisoners' belongings, assigned numbers, and forced them to labor while hunger weakened them. His memories describe how the camp attacked both bodies and personal identity. In April 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower visited the liberated Ohrdruf camp in Germany. He saw bodies and other evidence of Nazi crimes, then pressed for others to see and document the site. Unlike Levi, Eisenhower did not describe living as a prisoner. His account shows the shock of confronting the aftermath and the urgency of preserving evidence.

3. A perpetrator's account reveals a different side of the same system. Rudolf Höss, former commandant of Auschwitz, testified after the war about organizing mass murder there. His statements describe killing as an operation run through orders, transports, and staff. They help show that the destruction of Jewish lives was planned, not an accident of war. Yet Höss spoke after his arrest and could try to shift blame or reduce his own responsibility. Read beside Anne's diary, Levi's memoir, and Eisenhower's observations, his account helps explain how deliberate decisions produced the suffering others experienced or witnessed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What two effects of Nazi persecution on Anne's daily life does her diary record?

2. How did camp practices harm prisoners' bodies and affect their identity in Levi's account?

3. How did what Eisenhower saw at Ohrdruf affect his response to Nazi crimes?

4. How does Höss's account help explain the suffering Levi describes, and why should you read Höss's account cautiously?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 95 word museum label comparing one victim or survivor account with one liberator or perpetrator account. Explain how the viewpoints together reveal an effect of the Shoah, and identify one limit of either account.

ANSWER KEY

Witnesses and Evidence

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.6.6.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one effect of the Shoah described by each witness. Circle a detail that shows what each witness could, or could not, observe firsthand. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two effects of Nazi persecution on Anne's daily life does her diary record?	**Hiding kept Anne from attending school or going outside, and she lived with the fear of discovery.**
2	How did camp practices harm prisoners' bodies and affect their identity in Levi's account?	**Forced labor and hunger weakened prisoners' bodies. Taking their belongings and assigning numbers attacked their personal identity.**
3	How did what Eisenhower saw at Ohrdruf affect his response to Nazi crimes?	**After seeing bodies and other evidence, he pressed for others to see and document the camp.**
4	How does Höss's account help explain the suffering Levi describes, and why should you read Höss's account cautiously?	**Höss described an organized system of mass murder, showing that the harm Levi experienced resulted from deliberate decisions. Because Höss testified after his arrest, he might have tried to reduce his own responsibility.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Anne Frank's diary records how hiding took away ordinary freedoms and made discovery a constant fear. Rudolf Höss's postwar testimony describes the organized killing system behind the danger faced by Jewish families. Together, the accounts show both the human cost of Nazi persecution and the deliberate choices that caused it. Anne did not witness the operation of a killing center, so her diary cannot describe that part of the Shoah. Höss's account also needs careful reading because he could have minimized his responsibility.

Accept other passage-supported effects and limits. In Part 3, look for a comparison of two different witness positions, an explained effect, and a specific limit of one account.