

Long Shadows

Stories from a Jewish Home

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This touching and challenging documentary examines the implications of caring for aging Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who now live at the Montefiore Home in St Kilda, an inner city suburb of Melbourne. This is significant because Melbourne is home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors outside Israel. Evelyne, at sixty, is one of the youngest, because she was born and spent her early years in a Concentration Camp.

The issues of aging and dementia are explored through the lives of several residents, all needing various levels of care from independent-living Harold to Evelyne, with various nervous disorders, to Dora whose onset of dementia was sudden. What they have in common is the fact that they are Jewish and they have survived the Holocaust. Their sto-

ries are also universal in the triumph of the human spirit and in the daily struggle of those who love them to come to terms with the grief, guilt and loneliness that resulted from having to place their loved ones in a nursing home.

KEY WORDS

Survivors, Holocaust, Shoah, Concentration Camp, Nazism, genocide, gas chambers, refugee, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, aging, nursing homes, dementia, bi-polar disorder, carer, Judaism, Shabbat/Sabbath, yarmulke, kippah, Rabbi, love.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Suitable for Year 10 and upwards, particularly in Studies of Society and the Environment. Issues in this video include the issues of caring for the aged and those with special needs, the democratic process in terms of the right of equal access to the best care for aged people, and social justice issues relating to discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, belief, race and other characteristics.

Multicultural studies, Human Services and those studying the care of the aged and their carers would find this video stimulating at a number of levels, including professional development.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Robert and Evelyne Westheimer.





FILM-MAKING

TITLE

- Before watching the video ask students to think about the title. What might the *long shadows* refer to? Are the shadows real, metaphorical, or both?
- Revisit this discussion after the video to compare thoughts before and after viewing.

NARRATION

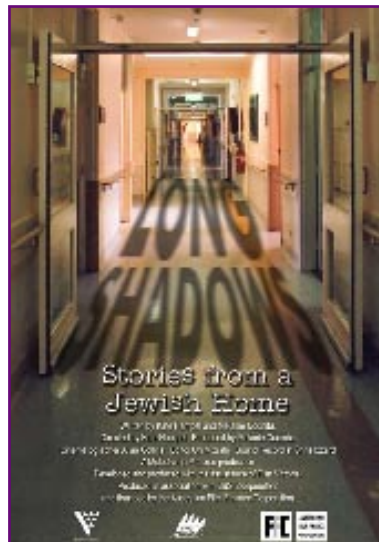
The first voice we hear is that of Harold, one of the home's most active residents, who does not need support and spends much of his time serving other residents and contributing to a happy atmosphere.

DISCUSSION

1. Identify alternative narration choices the film-maker could have made.
2. What are the dramatic implications of each choice?
3. What effect does this choice of narrator have?

ACTIVITIES

- Pause the video. Judging from his voice alone, ask students to suggest a profile of Harold. How accurate are their descriptions?



- Ask students to tape the voice of someone they know well. Play a minute of this to a partner and see how close a profile they can create. Aspects could include age, occupation, education, ethnicity, religion, physical description.
- How do we stereotype people? What effects can this have on their daily lives?

FILM TECHNIQUES

One technique the film-maker uses in this film is time-lapse photography so that we see the activities of a day in the Dementia Unit condensed into a few moments.

DISCUSSION

- Why did the film-maker choose this technique and how does it create atmosphere or a dramatic effect in this documentary?

The scenes in the nursing home could be any nursing home except for one thing. Harold says, 'The one thing we have in common is our religious beliefs. Because of them we became refugees'. All of the residents featured in this video are survivors of the Nazi persecution and genocide known as the Holocaust or *Shoah*. This introduces the context within which this documentary needs to be studied.

THEMES

1. THE HOLOCAUST

Why were the Jews made scapegoats and sent to Nazi death camps in their millions? What other groups suffered the same fate and why? To really understand the background of *Long Shadows* you need to know how Hitler and the Nazis took complete power in Germany. For most students, the Second World War seems like ancient history. However, its survivors live with it every day. This video raises questions about the impact of the past on the present. In teaching about issues as distressing as genocide, teachers have a special responsibility. There

are some very useful sites to guide you. For example, <http://www.museumoftolerance.com/mot/about/index.cfm>

This Museum of Tolerance site offers a Teacher's guide with advice and links to relevant pages. It includes 'helping students to personalise history by connecting faces and stories to the statistics' and 'thirty-six questions and answers' about the Holocaust to help teachers and students know precisely when and what terms such as *Holocaust*, *Death Camp*, *Final Solution* mean. It also has a section on 'Facilitating discussion' in class rooms.

It may be heartening to visit the section of this site devoted to 'the Righteous among the Nations'. This celebrates the 8000 known people from many backgrounds, in many countries who risked their own lives to help Jews to survive. For example, in Greece, the Head of the Athens Police ordered that false identity cards be issued to all Jews who asked for them, while the Bishop of the Island of Zakynthos refused to give the Nazis the names of the Jews on that island and instead, helped them to flee to the hills. All these Jews were saved. It may help students to realize that individuals can make a difference.

DISCUSSION

- What lessons can we learn in the twenty-first century from the actions of these heroic men and women?
- Who do students regard as today's heroes? Is it sportsmen and women or *Medecins sans Frontieres*?

ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to research and report on someone whom they believe has acted heroically, at the risk of their own life, for something they believed in.
- What ethical issues arise in such topics in the case of suicide bombers and other terrorists, who believe they are acting for the right motives but whose actions kill others?
- Ask different groups of students to read a chapter from various autobiographies of holocaust survivors. A more powerful example for students in an Internet age may be

<http://www.sresearch.com/search/shoah.html> This web site is a memorial to the hundreds of thousands of child victims of the Holocaust. It shows their names, photos, family details and their fate, where it is known. This personalizes and challenges the numbing effect of thinking of murder in millions.

<http://www.holocaust.com.au/jn/teachers/lessonideas.htm> contains curriculum links for all Australian states' curricula as well as lesson ideas. The lesson plan for use with testimonies is a particularly useful and well-planned complete activity. [Note that the site also includes the 'Blue Eyes Brown Eyes' experiment based on the work of Jan Elliott. This kind of activity should only be used with meticulous preparation and with guidance.]

- Watch films such as *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse 1972), based on Christopher Isherwood's book of his experiences, *Goodbye Berlin*. The director of this film has crafted an increasingly sinister visual and musical portrait of German society as it slides towards Nazi control. *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1999) is another well known movie that may help students to a better understanding of the plan behind what Hitler called the *Final Solution*.
- Watch the short film *The Illustrated Auschwitz*, written and directed by Jackie Farkas 1992 AFTRS (contact Ruth Saunders at the AFTRS on 02 9805 6611 for copies). This extraordinarily moving film uses the filmmakers' Grandmother's voice as she tells us small stories from her 'survival story'. The film uses images that illustrate that story in a non-literal way - including the most wonderful use of sequences of THE WIZARD OF OZ. By choosing to focus on small moments, the filmmaker allow us to begin to open ourselves to the enormity of the tragedy of the Holocaust. Highly recommended by the makers of LONG SHADOWS.
- Investigate instances of genocide since the Second World War. Where have these occurred and how does this still happen in today's globalized world in which information travels

quickly?

- For insights into the perspectives of second and third generation Survivors (ie. the children and grandchildren of Survivors) students might want to look at the novels *Too Many Men* by Lily Brett, a Second generation survivor, and *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer, a third generation survivor.
- To gain an understanding into some of the ways in which the Holocaust has been read historically and culturally, we recommend *Reading the Holocaust* by Inga Clendinnen

2. REFUGEES

Refugees are an increasing global and national issue. Films such as *Long Shadows* provide a basis for students to discuss and gain an understanding of the complexities of the issue. In turn, understanding aids students to develop of empathy for others. The issue of treatment of refugees in Australia is controversial and relevant.

DISCUSSION

What will it be like for today's refugees when they are entering Aged Care facilities in 50 years time?

- Read <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/agmAfghan.htm> This is a paper called 'Australia's new Afghan refugees: context and challenges' by Dr Robert Maley, School of Politics, University of New South Wales and Australian Defence Force Academy, in which he compares world and Australian responses to with current rejection of Afghan refugees in particular. He begins with the response of the then Minister for Trade and Customs T.W. White at a July, 1938 conference at Evian in France on Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany and seeking refuge in other countries including Australia. White's response to the refugees' plight was '...as we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one'.
- Maley's paper is highly critical of the present Federal government's response to Afghan refugees, in particular those of the Hazara ethnic group, which has been persecuted under successive regimes



in Afghanistan. It offers a good historical explanation of why Afghan refugees have fled their country in recent years.

ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to find an article *about* refugees and an article written *by* refugees. *New Internationalist* magazine is an easily accessible and reliable source of information about refugees around the world, including Australia. You can search topics of interest through the online Index <http://www.newint.org/index4.html>.
- There are refugee groups in all cities who students could contact for information and possibly speakers who would come and discuss this important issue with them.
- There are 22 million refugees in the world today. Compare the way Australia treats refugees with Sweden's approach. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/alternativeSwedish.htm>

3. AGING AND DISEASE

DEMENTIA

Dementia is the term used to describe the symptoms of a large group of illnesses, which cause a progressive decline in a person's mental function-

ing. It is a broad term which describes a loss of memory, intellect, social skills and normal emotional reaction.

From <http://www.alzvic.asn.au/index.htm>

WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Bipolar Disorder (sometimes called manic-depression) is an illness, a medical condition. It affects the normal functioning of the brain, so that the person experiences extreme moods very high and over-excited or very low and depressed. The person may be affected so much that he or she experiences the symptoms of psychosis, and is unable to distinguish what is real The symptoms generally react well to treatment and most people with bipolar disorder recover well from episodes of illness.

From <http://www.sane.org/factsheetbipolar.html> SANE is a national charity devoted to helping people with mental illness.

DISCUSSION

These are the defini-

tions. Ask students to consider the daily reality of living with these disorders or caring for a loved one who suffers from them.

- How might these symptoms affect the sufferer's daily life?
- What evidence is available in the video about the effects of these various disorders on Dora and Evelyne and their husbands?

There are many sites offering information. One offers access to information in seven community languages apart



RIGHT TOP-BOTTOM: Robert and Evelyne Westheimer.; Harold de Marigney

from English.

<http://www.cota.org.au/facts.htm> . This useful web site of the Council of the Aging (COTA) has links to a variety of services and information on aging in Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa. These include the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Alzheimer's Association NSW www.alznsw.asn.au . This offers thirty-five practical **Help Notes** on dementia and its management, as well as notes in Italian, Chinese, Greek, Spanish and Polish. The Multicultural Health Communication Service, NSW

http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/publications/Older_People.html also offers multilingual advice which can be downloaded and printed.

4. NURSING HOMES

The Montefiore Home (now known as Jewishcare) is regarded as one of the best.

Today's modern buildings replace the original Jewish Almshouses, erected on the same site in 1870-1. The expansion and development of the 'Monte Homes' reflects the growth of Melbourne's Jewish community, and its determination that the Homes should offer care and assistance to the elderly in an environment of the Jewish faith. The Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society, the organisation behind the Homes, began in 1848, is the oldest continuously running philanthropic group in Melbourne. (Buckrich, 1998).

DISCUSSION

- Ask students to consider what makes a 'good' nursing home? What would they look for in choosing a home for an aged person they loved and who could no longer be cared for at home?

There are special issues involved in caring for victims of trauma or war as in this home.

- One staff member says that the survivors still have nightmares and need to talk. There are other special issues for the survivors.
- Some fear the showers because the Nazis disguised the gas chambers

as showers, others fear noises because they survived by hiding underground.

- The home must be careful not to have dogs because dogs were used to hunt Jews and also to attack them within the camps.
- What special qualities might nursing staff need to work with survivors of trauma such as these? What evidence do we see of these qualities (or lack of them) in the staff we see in the video?

5. THE PEOPLE

The people who courageously chose to share their stories with others in this video include:

HAROLD DE MARIGNY

- Harold chose to enter the home even though he is not disabled in any way. What reasons does he give for his choice? What do you think he gains from this choice?
- Ask students to prepare a time-line of significant events in Harold's life as he describes it. Harold escaped the Nazis only to be deported from Britain to Australia as an 'enemy alien' because he was born in Austria. Many of these deportees arrived on a ship called the *Dunera*. Their story has been told in

http://www.holocaust.com.au/mm/i_allies.htm This is part of an excellent Australian site that includes poems, stories and historical background to the Holocaust.

DISCUSSION

- How would students describe Harold's present approach to life? What could others learn from his example of dealing with life's blows?

ACTIVITY

- Ask students to summarize their individual philosophy of life. How do these differ? How are they similar?

ROBERT AND EVELYNE WESTHEIMER

- Evelyne's aunt warned Robert not to marry Evelyne. What reasons might she have had for saying this?

- Robert says to the nursing staff, 'Evelyne is my darling. Please, please, please, she's been through a lot'. What is Robert trying to say to the staff? What are his real worries about leaving Evelyne in the home?
- We see Robert at home after Evelyne has been in the home for some time. What are the main effects on someone like Robert, who has to face the fact that the wife he loves may live for another 20 years in a home, while he lives a lonely life without her?
- Write a one page diary entry about Evelyne's admission to the home, from any of the following points of view:
 - *A member of the nursing staff who cares for Evelyne*
 - *Robert*
 - *Evelyne*
 - *One of their children*

HARRY AND DORA GRADZANOWSKI

Harry met Dora in a Displaced Persons (DP) Camp in Milan but he didn't want to marry her in the camp. He went to Australia, earned the money to bring her out and married her here.

DISCUSSION

- What reasons might he have had for not wanting to marry in a camp?

Harry's family are all dead, all murdered by the Nazis. He says, 'it is like they never existed ... like a big, dark hole'.

- He says, 'You have a wife, you don't have a wife'. What do you think he means?
- He says 'being alone is not a stranger to me. So I made it somehow. It's bad, it's sad, it's not fair, but what can you do? It's your destiny. You have to live it the best way you can.'. Do students agree?
- What effect does the music have on Dora?

6. LOVE

There are many different kinds of love and manifestations of love in every day life.

DISCUSSION

- Ask students to reflect on how love is

important for psychological survival as illustrated in the relationships between the three couples in *Long Shadows*.

- Ask students to identify and discuss the significance of some of the small acts of kindness and tenderness we see throughout this video, whether between husband and wife, resident and resident or staff and residents.

ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to look for small acts of kindness in a day of their own lives at home, on route to school, at work or in the media. They can prepare a verbal report on their best 'act of kindness'.
- Watch the film, *Pay it Forward* (Mimi Leder, 2000). Write a review on this film or a film with a similar message.
- Make the classroom a 'no putdown' zone for a week and report on its effects.
- Invite some senior citizens to discuss what students could do to make a positive difference in their daily lives in your suburb or area.
- Think about the concept of a '200 year present'. 100 years forward and 100 years backward. What do you have that might be a direct link to the past, for example to a grandparent or great grand parent? What could you do to link with your great grandchild?

7. RELIGIOUS OR SECULAR?

Ella, one of the independent residents, criticises the 'shocking way of celebrating the Sabbath' in the home.

DISCUSSION

- In this film, we see a residents' meeting at which the issue of observing religious rituals is a topic. The meeting organizer, speaking for the home, was not in favour of forcing religious observance on the residents. Arguments over this topic have led to one Montefiore home asking a Rabbi to leave for being too strict in his expectations of residents.
- What are Ella's expectations and why might these be unrealistic in this nursing home? Research the rituals and the meanings associated with celebration of the Sabbath in a

Jewish home. For example, *Challa* is a special Sabbath and festival bread which is plaited for the Sabbath and made in a round pyramid shape for the Jewish New Year, *Rosh Hashono*. Most cultures have special recipes for bread.

- What eating-related rituals can students identify within your group or class, for example, blessing food before eating?

ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to bring and share their favourite bread and any stories associated with it. Some may be able to arrange a demonstration of how to make this in cooperation with Home Economics teachers.
- Ask students to investigate the dietary needs of a diverse group. They could use themselves as a trial group. What would one class need in terms of food for 1 day at a residential camp, for example? What issues emerge about their individual preferences, restrictions or allergies?
- Ask them to design a balanced diet menu for a week for a group of elderly residents in an aged people's home. What issues would they have to take into account in preparing food for elderly people, people with Alzheimer's and other conditions affecting their memory or ability to coordinate their movements?
- Compare their suggested menus with one from a real nursing home or hospital. Ask students to request a menu from a nearby home or hospital that may be prepared to share this information with them.

8. CAREERS IN CARE

Many different occupations, at a variety of levels, are needed to keep a home like Montefiore going. Students may one day work in one of these occupations.

DISCUSSION

- Identify and discuss these under headings such as:
 - Administration
 - Catering
 - Cleaning
 - Gardening
 - Nursing
 - Ancillary staff

- Counselling
- Pastoral care/religious needs
- Publicity
- Activities Officer
- Physiotherapist
- Speech Pathologist

ACTIVITIES

- Use a web search engine or the daily papers to identify specific jobs in the aged care sector. Ask students to prepare an application letter suited to one of these jobs.
- Organize mock interviews for these jobs, with panels that must meet to decide what qualities they are seeking in the applicants, and decide what questions to ask. Debrief and decide which candidate would get the job and why.
- Use Bureau of Statistics sites to show why working in aged care will be a growth industry and a source of employment for many students now at school.

8. HEALTH AND OLD AGE

- What can a young person do now to invest in a healthy old age? Invite a health promotions worker to discuss preventative health issues with students.

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