



LESSON PLAN: Liberators of the Nazi Camps

1 To prepare students for this lesson, share general background on the liberation of the camps outlined in the corresponding **Note**.

2 Introduce students to **Howard Cwick (bio)**, **Anton Mason (bio)**, and **Paul Parks (bio)**; show their clips of testimony; and discuss some or all of the questions below.

- What does Howard Cwick remember seeing during the liberation of Buchenwald?
- How does Howard describe the survivors? Why does he believe the survivors were initially afraid of the soldiers?
- Years after liberation, Howard continues to be moved by his experience. What do his emotions tell you about the impact this experience has had on his life?
- What food does Anton Mason remember the American soldier giving him? What does Anton say about the value of food in the camp?
- How does Anton explain so many survivors dying after being fed by the soldiers?
- What does Anton say was the “greatest thing” the soldiers did for the survivors?
- How does Anton say he answered Elie Wiesel when Elie said, “We are free”?
- Anton states that he remembers his “exact words” to Elie; he also states the exact moment of liberation, 3:30 in the afternoon— are you surprised that details such as these are seared in Anton’s memory? Why or why not?
- In his testimony, Anton says, “We were happy, we were sad, we were happy that we were free, that we were alive and the Germans had lost. As long as one of us was alive, the Germans lost because they wanted to kill us all, and they couldn’t kill us all.” What are your feelings listening to Anton explain the feelings Jews had regarding liberation? How does what Anton says fit into what you already know about the “Final Solution”?
- Paul Parks tells about speaking to a young girl in Dachau who many years later sees and remembers him “by his eyes.” Do you find it surprising that this woman remembered her liberator after so many years? Why or why not?
- What do you imagine were some of the thoughts and feelings liberators had after their experiences liberating the camps? What kinds of things do you think they thought about in light of what they had witnessed?

- What is the effect of hearing both survivors and liberators talk about liberation? What kind of information do you learn from each?
- What kind of information does the survivor provide that would be impossible to learn any other way?

3 Distribute or display the **A Liberator's Thoughts** handout. Tell students that the author of this written testimony is Harry Herder, Jr., who was nineteen at the time he and other US soldiers liberated Buchenwald, in April 1945. Discuss the selection using the following questions:

- What kinds of questions is Harry Herder asking himself following his experience at Buchenwald?
- Why does Harry reflect on his German heritage?
- What choices would Harry have had if in fact he had been a German citizen and in the German army during World War II?
- What role does Harry like to believe his upbringing would have played in his choices?
- What questions does reading this testimony raise for you?

4 To learn more about the liberators introduced in this lesson, have students, working individually or in pairs, prepare a list of 3–5 questions that they would like to ask Howard Cwick, Anton Mason, or Paul Parks. Students should then be encouraged to use the Biographical Profile and/or IWitness testimony (iwitness.usc.edu) to find the answers to their questions.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 60-90 MINUTES