The Holocaust and the poetry

Kristina Jug
OŠ “Petar Zrinski” Jalžabet
MOTIVATION:

• Why do people make art?
• Why did people write poetry during the Holocaust?
• What do you think which Subjects of the works of art were obsessions for people who made art during the Holocaust?

• ANSWERS: daily life, landscape, deportations, portraits...

• What was the meaning of art for people in camps?
• ANSWERS: Art as escape from reality
  Art as a means of connection with the outside world
DISCUSSION WHIT PUPILS:

• I drew and drew, this is my life. I know very little about anything else except painting. I love it.

• I never rationally thought that I was going to die, but there was an unbelievable urge to create. I was in the same position as all the people around me, and I realized that they were close to death. But I never thought of myself like that. I was floating. I was outside the reality of existence. My task was simply to portray what was happening. I was a spectator. (Halina Olomucki)
Halina Olomucki (1919- )
Figures in the Ghetto Warsaw after 1945
DISCUSSION WITH PUPILS ABOUT PAINTING

• What kind of feeling do you read in this painting?
• Where are these people?
• What do you feel when you watch this painting?
Introduction for work:

• Pupils work in small groups (4 groups)
• Teacher talks about biography of Primo Levi.
• Every group analyze one poem from Primo Levi
• They analyze those elements of poems: topic of poem, feelings, motives, form of poems, rhythm, and after every poems get specific questions
• **Primo Levi:** a Jewish-Italian poet and writer, was born in Turin in 1919. Before the Second World War he was an industrial chemist. In 1943 he was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where he survived due to his “usefulness” to the Nazis as a chemist. His most famous prose work is “*If This is a Man*” in which he wrote about his experiences in Auschwitz. Haunted by his Holocaust experiences, he committed suicide in 1987.
1. GROUP

- **Reveille**
- In the brutal nights we used to dream
  Dense violent dreams,
  Dreamed with soul and body:
  To return; to eat; to tell the story.
  Until the dawn command
  Sounded brief, low
  'Wstawac'
  And the heart cracked in the breast.

Now we have found our homes again,
Our bellies are full,
We're through telling the story.
It's time. Soon we'll hear again
The strange command:
'Wstawac'
Questions after reading poem

• Which topic preoccupate poet in this poem?
• What does he think about people during the holocaust and what after?
• What do you think about people who could help but didn't?
• Do you think that it was difficult to decide to help? (Why?)
2. GROUP

- **Shema**
  - You who live secure
    In your warm houses
    Who return at evening to find
    Hot food and friendly faces:

  Consider whether this is a man,
  Who labours in the mud
  Who knows no peace
  Who fights for a crust of bread
  Who dies at a yes or a no.
  Consider whether this is a woman,
  Without hair or name
  With no more strength to remember
  Eyes empty and womb cold
  As a frog in winter.

  Consider that this has been:
  I commend these words to you.
  Engrave them on your hearts
  When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,
  When you go to bed, when you rise.
  Repeat them to your children.
  Or may your house crumble,
  Disease render you powerless,
  Your offspring avert their faces from you.
Questions after reeding poem

• What do you feel after reeding?
• What heepend to man and women?
• Why do we need to remember what happened?
• What is the meaning of poem?
3. GROUP

- **The Survivor**
- Once more he sees his companions' faces
  Livid in the first faint light,
  Gray with cement dust,
  Nebulous in the mist,
  Tinged with death in their uneasy sleep.
  At night, under the heavy burden
  Of their dreams, their jaws move,
  Chewing a non-existant turnip.
  'Stand back, leave me alone, submerged people,
  Go away. I haven't dispossessed anyone,
  Haven't usurped anyone's bread.
  No one died in my place. No one.
  Go back into your mist.
  It's not my fault if I live and breathe,
  Eat, drink, sleep and put on clothes
Questions after reeding poem

• How feels the Survivor?
• How do you understand his position?
• Does he wont to talk about his experiance? (Why?)
4. GROUP

- **To My Friends**
  Dear friends, and here I say friends
  the broad sense of the word:
  Wife, sister, associates, relatives,
  Schoolmates of both sexes,
  People seen only once
  Or frequented all my life;
  Provided that between us, for at least
  a moment,
  A line has been stretched,
  A well-defined bond.
  I speak for you, companions of a
  crowded
  Road, not without its difficulties,
  And for you too, who have lost
  Soul, courage, the desire to live;
  Or no one, or someone, or perhaps
  only one person, or you
  Who are reading me: remember the
  time
  Before the wax hardened,
  When everyone was like a seal.
  Each of us bears the imprint
  Of a friend met along the way;
  In each the trace of each.
  For good or evil
  In wisdom or in folly
  Everyone stamped by everyone.
  Now that the time crowds in
  And the undertakings are finished,
  To all of you the humble wish
  That autumn will be long and mild.
Questions after reading poem

• To whom the song is dedicated?
• Why survivors fascinate him?
• How the poet sees time after the Holocaust?
• How the Holocaust changed the view of the poet to friendship?
CONCLUSION

- Artists warn to future generations to educate their children about Holocaust.
- Art she brought meaning to the chaos and absurdity of everyday life in camps.
- Art is an urge that is not afraid of death.
HOME WORK

• Write a letter to one person who was artist during the holocaust.

• Search information on internet about this person and write what happened with his/her art work.