

Graduate Spotlight

Every year, the International School for Holocaust Studies holds hundreds of educational activities, in a dozen languages, for over 300,000 students and educators in Israel and around the world. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what he has achieved since:



Horațiu Suci

Romania



James Joseph McIntosh



■ Graduate Horațiu Suci

■ Horațiu Suci is a teacher at the Iulia Hasdeu National College, a high school in the western Romanian city of Lugoj, near the Hungarian border. Since attending a teacher-training seminar for Romanian educators at Yad Vashem in 2008,

Suci has devoted his energies to teaching his students about the Holocaust. His work also inspired his father, who is an educator as well, to follow in his footsteps and study at Yad Vashem.

Although Suci has limited time and resources for teaching history, he has made educating about the Holocaust a priority in his school. One especially creative project was with students aged 15-18: the children researched the history of Eva Deutsch, a Holocaust survivor from Romania, and recounted her life's story before, during and after the Holocaust in the form of a graphic novel.

The novel begins with an introduction to Deutsch's early life, and describes a fairly typical childhood: going to school, dancing at balls, celebrating holidays and visiting toy stores. In 1940, Romania was forced to cede to Hungary the territory in which Deutsch's family lived. As her father was a WWI veteran, her family remained safe at first. However, the situation quickly deteriorated as the Hungarian

government instituted anti-Jewish policies, barring Jews from universities and taking them away for forced labor. In March 1944, Hungarian gendarmes deported the family to Auschwitz, where the Germans murdered her parents.

Prisoners at the extermination camp's armaments factory eventually managed to sabotage the plant and cause an explosion, prompting the Germans to deport Deutsch and others to Theresienstadt. The Red Army liberated the camp on 8 May 1945, but Deutsch could not return home. A stranger had taken over her house, and she lived wherever she could until 1948, when she met her future husband, Gyula.

"The testimonies of Holocaust survivors are relatively long and difficult to read," explains Suci. "That is why I came up with the idea of making and printing graphic novels, in the hope that they could be easily read and understood. The big surprise came when I began to use this material in class as a teaching aid. The students became totally committed to completing their tasks."

One central problem with this kind of material is the relationship between fiction and reality, and Suci ensures that his students clearly understand that the book is not fiction by integrating resources into the novel: fragments of genuine testimonies, original photos, historical maps, links to online information and more. In the hope that other teachers would also find this material useful, at the end of each story are suggestions for several possible class activities.



■ Suci's students prepared graphic novels based on the story of a Holocaust survivor.

Suci received a modest subsidy from the International School's European Department, supported by the ICHEIC Humanitarian Fund, to publish the novel in Romanian and English. As detailed in Yad Vashem's educational philosophy and age-appropriate approach, the artwork of the stories portrays the everyday lives and challenges faced by Jewish people during the Holocaust, without the use of disturbing imagery.

Some of Suci's former students who had worked on this project under his guidance have since returned to work with their history teacher and younger pupils. Together with Centropa, the Central Europe Center for Research and Documentation, Suci also coordinated a successful seminar on Holocaust education for educators from across Romania in June. "It's vital that we look at the Holocaust from the point of view of the children," concludes Suci. "That's a perspective in which we must invest."

The author works in the European Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.