

Student Activity

Julia Lentini: Deprivation and Perseverance

Name _____

Julia Lentini was born on April 15, 1926, into a large, close-knit family in Eisern, Germany. In her testimony, Julia described her fond memories of her childhood, followed by the pain and loss that resulted from the Nazi persecution of her family, including the steady, incremental steps of deprivation, which often resulted in the destruction of individuals and families.

Directions: Order the following events from Julia’s testimony to demonstrate how she and her family were systematically deprived of their trust of civic officials, home/possessions, sense of control, order, cleanliness, and modesty, names and health, and finally, of each other. Then in small groups, answer the questions below.

1. _____ “Well, what they were doing, they were putting the numbers on us. ... They wouldn’t put us in any blocks ’til you had all this number business.”
2. _____ “So I think they said twenty-five and I passed out; I don’t know I didn’t count anymore, and seventy-five they had to stop because the blood was splashing through the dress ...”
3. _____ “He said, ‘They surrounded your house, we got some orders. They want to have to bring your family in; they want to take you to Frankfurt. ... Just pack a little something for three days ... that’s all you really need.’”
4. _____ “The Nazi guy said, ‘You’re not leaving; you’re staying here; you’re just going to go into quarantine; that’s No. 1 block and your parents are going into No. 5 block.’ And we didn’t get to see them for six weeks.”
5. _____ “There was nothing left in there. But what are material things? We had our lives.”
6. _____ “The bell rings and everybody has to get off the street into the blocks and the doors, the big gates... closed. Nobody out there on the street, and now all you hear is screaming going on and trucks coming and going and you don’t know if they’re going to stop in front of your place or next door or across the other side, whatever.”
7. _____ “The ladies were telling me I had typhoid. I was already there for three weeks and, of course, everybody in that block was sick. Everybody was dying.”
8. _____ “They had got there at night ... and all those bright lights, lights from everywhere and dust. So, then they put us in those big barracks. Was 800 to 1,000 people in there...”
9. _____ “Here’s my mother, with her big children there, big boys—in the nude ... I think that killed her right [there]—that was the beginning of the end for her.”

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Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did Julia’s mother demonstrate her will to protect her children, even as she herself was humiliated and deprived in Auschwitz?
2. Give examples from Julia’s testimony of how she and her family demonstrated a will to persevere despite deprivation.
3. Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor and author, wrote: “... He who loses all often easily loses himself.” If taken as a whole, do you think Julia’s testimony indicates that she “lost” herself as a result of these events in her life? Why or why not?