



The Teddy Bear
The True Story of Michael Gruenbaum, Holocaust Survivor

Produced by Deborah L. Coltin

Animated by Benjamin Gruenbaum

Narrated by Michael Gruenbaum

Release Date: November 1, 2022

Running Time: 11 minutes 48 seconds

Primary Audience: Middle School Students and Older

SYNOPSIS

The Teddy Bear is a true story lived and told by Holocaust survivor Michael Gruenbaum, age 92 at the time of filming. Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1930, Michael was a toddler when Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933. The film opens with Michael introducing Sasha, the teddy bear, which Michael credits for saving his life during the Holocaust. The Teddy Bear tells children the truth about the Holocaust in a way that helps them hear it. Following a brief comment about Michael's great life as a child growing up in Prague, Michael begins his Holocaust story on March 15, 1939, when he was just nine years old, the day when the Nazis invaded Prague. Michael shares specific details of his life under Nazi rule, and takes students on his journey from freedom to imprisonment in the Terezin ghetto-labor camp. Students will learn, through Michael's lived experience, what life was like for many Jews who lived during the Holocaust. The film ends with Michael sharing what lessons he learned from surviving the Holocaust and with a call to action for students to carry forward the memory and lessons of the Holocaust into the future.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

The Teddy Bear is a true story lived and told by Holocaust survivor Michael Gruenbaum. The Holocaust began in 1933 with Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany and ended on May 7, 1945, with Germany's surrender in WWII. The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of more than 6,000,000 Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Other groups targeted during the Holocaust included: Roma (Gypsies), individuals with disabilities, some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others), Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals. The Holocaust was fueled by hatred and intolerance, especially antisemitism—hatred of Jews. Every Holocaust survivor's experience is unique and a miracle. The Teddy Bear is Michael Gruenbaum's unique, miraculous story of his survival.

DEFINITIONS

- **Antisemitism** – hatred of Jews
- **Auschwitz** – Largest death camp where more than one million Jewish people were murdered mostly by being gassed
- **Genocide** - the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group
- **holocaust** (lower case “h”) - destruction or slaughter on a mass scale, especially caused by fire or nuclear war
- **Holocaust** (Upper case “H”) – The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. The Holocaust took place from 1933-1945.
- **Jude** - Jew
- **Nazi Party** – The National Socialist German Workers’ Party-was the far-right racist and antisemitic political party led by Adolf Hitler.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn about Michael's life before the Holocaust?
2. In the film Michael said, "My life's dream was shattered on March 15, 1939, the day the Nazis marched into Prague." How did life change for the Jews after the Nazi invasion?
3. The Jews had to wear a yellow star on their clothes to identify them as Jews. What was this like for Michael?
4. What freedoms did Michael lose under Nazi rule?
5. What symbol did the Nazis use to identify themselves? (swastika)
6. Thinking about Michael's life, what did the swastika represent?
7. What restrictions were imposed on Jews by the Nazis?
8. What was life like for Michael and others in the Terezin ghetto-labor camp?
9. In the fall of 1944, Germany was losing the war, but Hitler had one final mission to accomplish. What was it?
10. Let's talk about Michael's mother's actions to save her family from being deported. What words would you use to describe his mother and her actions?
11. What did you learn about the Holocaust from Michael's experience?
12. What explanation did Michael provide for why the Holocaust happened?
13. What does the Holocaust have to do with you?
14. Michael explained the time has come for the next generation to take on the responsibility to pass on the memory and lessons of the Holocaust. Why do you think it is important to learn about the Holocaust? How can you assume part of the responsibility for passing on the memory and lessons of the Holocaust?
15. How would you react to the appearance of a swastika at your school or in your community? What are some actions you could take if this happens?
16. What are you left wondering about?

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- [Terezin](#)
- [Michael Gruenbaum's Life](#)
- [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#)
- [Swastika: Hate Symbol](#)

BOOKS

Somewhere There is Still a Sun by Michael Gruenbaum (translated into English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Russian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Czech, Greek, Lithuanian, Romanian, Sinhala, Slovenian, Turkish, Ukrainian)

Nesarim: Child Survivors of Terezin by Thelma Gruenbaum

VISIT [Lappin Foundation's Holocaust Education and Commemoration Resource Page](#)

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SHARE your feedback about *The Teddy Bear* by sending an email to dcoltin@lappinfoundation.org.