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How do you Tell Children about the Holocaust? - The Representation of the Holocaust in
Illustration and Text of Israeli and German Children's Literature

In my Ph.D thesis I deal with the question: how the story of the Holocaust is presented in
children's Picture books (Bilderbücher) of German and Israeli literature for young children, and
what we can learn from it.

The main focus of my thesis: the relationship between the illustrations and the texts. My
dissertation focuses on the special role of the illustrations and their relationship with the text.
To my knowledge, until now no conclusive research was written concerning the story of the
Holocaust to young children as viewed in German and Israeli Children's Literature (Picture
books) which were published between 1980-2011. My dissertation expends upon 25 German
books and over 40 Israeli books.

The purpose of this research is to follow different aspects of representing Second World War
themes, to examine the literal and visual messages. In Holocaust stories written for children
there are usually three main groups: the Jews, the Nazis and "the Ordinary Germans". The
research analyzes different aspects of the visual representation of these three groups, as they
appear in the illustrations.

Every society needs its past in order to constitute its present identity, and even more so when
the past is a problematic one. Based on this assumption, it is important to ask: what the writers
and illustrators chose to tell and describe in the illustrations. Naturally, the presence or the
absence of certain events in the illustration is meaningful.

Many researches were written and are still being written concerning the remembrance of the
Holocaust and its presentation by writers and readers. No doubt, when we try to pass to our
children the story of the Holocaust, we wish to endow them the legacy of tolerance and anti-
racism and the connection between the past, the present and the future. In all the Picture books
there is an obvious effort to convince the readers that the holocaust is not a distant historic
event, but an experience that is very relevant for them nowadays.

It is important to check in Cultures, Israeli and German, the use of historic knowledge and the manipulations made to pass this complicated story to the young readers. After more than sixty years, there is so much information on the Holocaust; the main issue is not "how not to forget" but "how to remember".