

DEATH MARCH iSEARCH PAPER

Before the project and even before this class I was obsessed with learning about the holocaust! I've always had an interest in the Holocaust. I just can't grasp the scale of it. The number of innocent people that were murder and tortured just doesn't add up in my head. I can't even begin to imagine the pain these people endured. They were locked up away from their family most of the time. Everywhere death. The taste of death in the soup. The sight of death everywhere you looked. Bodies. The smell of death from crematorium always lingering. The sounds of death cries while someone is taking their last weak breath laying right next to you in your bunk. And the feeling of death always creeping up behind you. I just can't even imagine. I didn't really know a lot about death marches. So when my partner and I picked this I was really excited for something new and something that was still super interesting to me. I knew that some prisoners during the holocaust had to march from camp to camp under the instructions of the ss men, but I never knew how far and the conditions these people went through in their travels. So because our theme was death, we decided to research the many ways people died on the death marches. We wanted to know how many people started the trip and how many people died, the ways how and the numbers of people that survived the whole way, So my partner and I hopped online to do some major research, and everything was very broad. We didn't want to do death marches in general, we wanted to know exact numbers, directions and conditions of a specific death march had. So we browsed through and narrowed it down. We found a death march on the date of January 18, 1945.

The first few days of research were just trying to find a specific date. We wanted a pick a date that had a large amount of people that participated in the march. The reason for that was because we thought that the bigger the numbers at the beginning of the march, we thought there would be a big chance for more survivors and maybe we could narrow down to one persons story and through that we could conjure up some answers we had due to the conditions and the persons emotions throughout the whole thing. At first, we found that we really couldn't find one persons story about that specific death march. So we were just happy we found a date. So we broadened our questions up, we made it more about the whole group of people and numbers instead of one persons story throughout the whole thing. We continued our search online. We spent the next couple of days really looking into the different ways people did die during the march. We tried to figure out where the prisoners went next after the death march, I was personally saddened by the number of people that didn't survive and how many people didn't have a "next after the death march" chapter. After reading about where they were headed, we were fascinated to find about the exact path they took, the exact roads or trails they marched and died on. It wasn't very easy to find that out. We ended up just giving up on that idea. After we found of some answer to some other major questions we had about numbers of people and how many miles and such, we focused our attention to the actual conditions of the whether, and emotional slash physical conditions these people went through. Due to the fact that it was January, we could just assume it was going to be really cold. But we found out it was snowing really hard in the days that this marched took place. At the end of the first week or so, all of our research was completely narrowed down to the four things we wanted the

answers to. The conditions, how many survivors and lost ones, point A to point B of this specific march, and how many ways did they die just besides hunger and being shot.

Our first big question was how many people were in the Death march taking place during January 1945. So after reading some sights we found out after catching word that the Americans were closing in on some of the death camps Nazis rounded up about 60,000 death camp prisoners in Auschwitz III, and transported them to other neighboring labor slash death camps. By transporting them, I mean forcing them to run 42 miles in the dead of winter. An estimated number of 15,000 human beings died on their march to death. Thousands of prisoners died the few nights before the march took place. Many died during the march itself, while others died in the town of Wodzislaw as they were crammed into cattle cars like animals and then shipped off to other death camps. The numbers did not look good. As we thought more about the story of this death march, the more it reminded us of Elie Wesiels story in the book "Night". After rereading the passage about the death march Elie was in, and gogging to make sure we weren't just crazy, we found out that Elie Wesiel actually was in that exact death march we picked to research. So our first question was answered. The numbers of survivors and the number of people that died. But then we wanted to look more into the conditions that Elie Wesiel wrote about in his famous book "Night." And that is just what we did/

We hit the jackpot, we remembered that the death march date that we had chosen was the same one Eli Wesiel was when he was a prisoner in the Holocaust at Buna/ Asutuwishts. It was an incredible find. That gave us a little more insight to the real conditions from a real survivor which is was my partner and I were looking for in the first place! Eli was there, he knew how people were shot for lagging behind. He saw a young

boy get trapped on because he had dysentery preventing him to march any longer. He saw boys leaving behind their fathers to let go of the weight they had on them emotionally and physically. So not only did we have some really rock solid research through the computer, we had the chance to put into perspective a book we got to read of a real mans survival and how he beat so many odds of a death march.

"Pitch darkness. Every now and then, an explosion in the night. They had orders to fire on any who could not keep up. Their fingers on the triggers, they did not deprive themselves of this pleasure. If one of us had stopped for a second, a sharp shot finished off another filthy son of a bitch. Near me, men were collapsing in the dirty snow. Shots"

These few passages really helped us determine the conditions these people were in emotionally and how far they were pushed physically. Could you imagine running for your life with a group of strangers, and you were all running to the same place; death. No matter where you were going to end up, you were around death. It was blizzard outside. They made you run. Men; scary men with guns dangling your own life in front of you and you just had to keep running. No matter how tired your were. No matter how hungry you were. It didn't matter how cold or numb you felt, if you wanted to live you had to run, and run and run. Emotionally the conditions were rough. Physically, could you even fathom being literally skin and bones with thin fabric barely keeping you warm, no shoes, you're running on no food, no sleep and no hope? Could you even imagine that? They had to march about 42 miles. And that wasn't even close to being over. They slept in snow. They went to the bathroom as they were running. What did they eat? They weren't giving much, maybe some bread here and there, but they did eat the snow to try and keep

hydrated. Over all the conditions these prisoners endured emotions and physically were insane.

Our first few questions were answered with sparring information. We learn the conditions, we figured out all the estimated numbers of people that had died. We just need to figure out the route these prisoners took on the death march and while we were researching we found out after marching 42 miles, from Auschwitz they marched through a city called Wodzislaw. Technically, the death march itself was considered to be over at this point because they were done marching. But I like to think that the death march was really over when they arrived to the camps. Because they were still being transported in harsh conditions, no matter if they were running or sitting on a cattle car, they were still surrounded by death. They arrived to a town in Poland by the name of Wodzislawin in the western part of Upper Silesia . This town is located about 35 miles away from Auschwitz. At this point, the prisoners were thrown onto cattle cars filled with other men and sent off to various Nazi death camps around the region like, Flossenbuerg, Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Mauthausen. So that was that. We didn't find the names of the exact streets they march on, which was kind of what we were looking forward to finding out. But at least we found out where they started the death march and were the possible place they were shipped off to.

So that last question we had that we wanted the answers to was, how exactly did they die. We know that they had to be starving and tired, but that couldn't be enough to kill 15,000 Jewish prisoners, could it? And as we did our research we figured out that was a major factor to how they died. The conditions of this march was horrendous. It was freezing. We found out a good amount of them past away in their sleep on the cattle cars

from Wodzislawin while they were being transported. Hunger is obviously a big factor of how they could of passed away. As we looked more into, and what shocked me a lot was that guards were watching them, and running with them. If someone slowed down or tried to stop for a second to take a rest, or go to the bathroom, they were shot. No hesitation at all. A lot prisoners were sick even before the march, a lot of them had lice and dysentery or other types of flues and illness. So to be physically pushing yourself to the max while you are sick as a dog and don't forget too malnourished to be marching 42 miles in the dead of winter in the first place, really pushes your faith and your hope to the next level. Personal, I think losing hope and just wanted to be dead was one of the biggest factors to why these people died on the marches. I don't think these poor people wanted to live anymore. I developed this thought after reading about Elies story. He had lost faith so many times and just wanted to give up and die. I am sure he was the only one.

After doing all this research on the death march of January 1945 I have found all the answers to all my questions.

1. The numbers of people that were in the march: 60,000 to start with and found out that more than 15,000 of them were killed.
2. The Conditions of the March: They were awful. It was winter and they had to run in the snow without much clothing, food or sleep for 42 miles.
3. Where this marched took place: They were marched from Aushiwitz to Wodzislawin then were put on cattle car and shipped to any surrounding camps such as Flossenbuerg, Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Mauthausen.
4. Who did most of them actually end up dying: Mistreatment, sleep deprivation, the conditions of the weather and of their health and losing hope in living.

My partner and I really wanted to put together a really cool 3D project. So we just thought of making a birds eye view of the death march itself with clay people looking like they are running and SS officers patrolling after them. It would be winter and snowing and with lots of trees. With all the information we had from the research I think it made it really easy to put our project together. We knew that the clay people would have to be super skinny and look really sad. We bought cotton balls for the snow and sparkles to make it look more realistic. The clay people took the most time. Going into it, we were going to make 60 clay people, 60 clay people because every clay person represents 1,000 Jewish prisoners on the death march. but we didn't have enough time to do all that due to all the snow days and our stuff was locked in the school. So we made it 30 clay people and 5 clay guards. They clay people alone took about 13 hours with us both working hard! I can't imagine doing all the work by myself! We are using branches from real trees outside for the trees on our model to represent them walking through the forest. I turned out very nice!

Like I said before I have always been really big on learning more stuff about the Holocaust. The only reason I am taking English 12 instead of AP English is to learn more about the Holocaust. I just don't understand how a few men could have a whole "race" or people just vanish and not have anyone jump in and say something. So outside of school on my own time ive read some books, including "Night" and I even took a special trip down to Washington DC to go and pay my respects at the Holocaust museum. But this project has made me think. When I am learning about some from the Holocaust, i've never had to write a paper about it. Writing this paper to me has made me really think more in depth about the scale of the holocaust and humanity. How could so many people

just be treated like this, and still have so many by-standards do nothing but sit and praise the leaders who killed millions of people. Or how could they be so cowardly to have just sat there and done nothing about it, no matter if they liked the leaders or not. Little was done. When I read night, I started to see how this whole thing started rolling. I learned that the Nazis were taking the Jewish peoples rights away. But slowly and surely they put them to death without them ever seeing it coming. That scared me. How could everyone be so blind to this? History repeats itself, and it is still happening all around the world today. It's just really sad. This project has made me see how hateful people can be, and how easily one man can influence people with his charisma and leave everyone so blind.

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007734>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wodzis%C5%82aw_%C5%9A%C4%85ski

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_(book))

<http://history1900s.about.com/od/holocaust/a/deathmarches.htm>