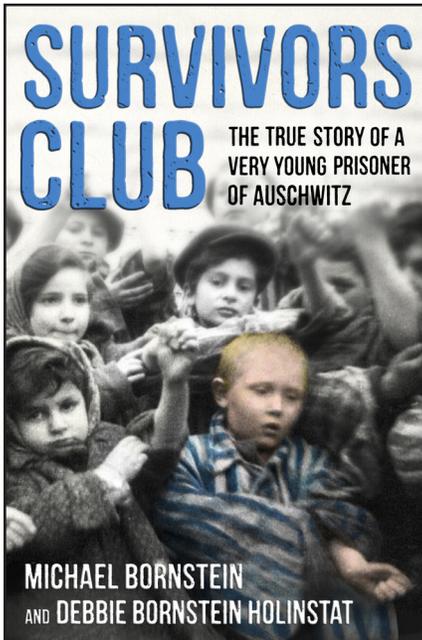


A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR SURVIVORS CLUB



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ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1945, in a now-famous piece of archival footage, four-year-old Michael Bornstein was filmed by Soviet soldiers as he was carried out of Auschwitz in his grandmother's arms. *Survivors Club* tells the unforgettable story of how a father's courageous wit, a mother's fierce love, and one perfectly timed illness saved his life, and how others in his family from Żarki, Poland, dodged death at the hands of the Nazis time and again with incredible deftness. Working from his own recollections as well as extensive interviews with relatives and survivors who knew the family, Michael relates his inspirational story with the help of his daughter Debbie Bornstein Holinstat. Shocking, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting, this narrative nonfiction offers an indelible depiction of what happened to one Polish village in the wake of the German invasion in 1939.

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



MICHAEL BORNSTEIN survived for seven months inside Auschwitz, where the average lifespan of a child was just two weeks. Six years after his liberation, he immigrated to the United States. Michael graduated from Fordham University, earned his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, and worked in pharmaceutical research and development for more than forty years. Now retired, Michael lives with his wife in New York City and speaks frequently to schools and other groups about his experiences in the Holocaust.



DEBBIE BORNSTEIN HOLINSTAT is the third of Michael's four children. A producer for NBC and MSNBC News, she lives in North Caldwell, New Jersey. She also visits schools with her father, and has been working with him for two years, helping him research and write his memoir, although she has grown up hearing many of these stories her entire life.

This guide is aligned with Common Core Standards for 6th grade but can be applied to grades 4–8. To attain specific Common Core Standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

BEFORE READING:

1. Describe the event captured in the image on the front cover of the book. What inferences can you make about the children included in the image? What inferences can you make about the event itself?

CCSS.RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as what can be inferred from the text.

2. On page xiv the author explains that Holocaust deniers forced him to finally tell his story. “If we survivors remain silent—if we don’t gather the resolve to share our stories—then the only voices left to hear will be those of the liars and the bigots.” Using the resources provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>, have students create a presentation supporting the need for stories like Michael’s.

CCSS.W.6.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.W.6.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the impact on the Jewish population of Żarki when the Nazis invaded and then took control?
2. What events transpired on September 4, 1939, in Żarki to earn the nickname “Bloody Monday”?
3. Mamishu often reminded her family to “always look forward.” Why was this piece of advice so important as they struggled to survive in Żarki?
4. At the end of Chapter 8 Officer Schmitt whispers something into Michael’s father’s ear, and he reacts with “a loud, primal, thunderous shout [that Mamishu] could hear through the windowpanes—and he broke down in tears” (76). What could have made him react in such a way? Predict what will happen next.
5. When selecting whom to save, Michael’s father paid careful attention to his own family. As an adult, Michael reflected on this and wondered if his father had made the wrong choice. The survivor he was discussing this with responded: “You choose your family first. Your father did what he had to do. He was human” (101). Do you agree with the survivor?
6. Describe how events unfolded when the family arrived in Auschwitz.
7. On January 18, 1945, Auschwitz was cleared out as the Soviet army approached. How did Michael and Bobeshi survive?
8. Why did the Auschwitz survivors need to put their uniforms back on days after the Soviet liberation of the camp?
9. Upon their return to Żarki, Michael and Bobeshi were greeted by an unwelcome guest in their former home: “You are a Jew? How did you escape the ovens, you slippery woman? You should have cooked with your friends!” (198). What does this woman’s remark tell us about the anti-Semitism in the area?
10. While at the Shabbat table, Michael focused his prayers on only one thing. What was he praying for?
11. What atrocities did Aunt Hilda witness during her time at various concentration camps?
12. “Hitler’s army had killed millions of Jews, but it was abundantly clear on that night: you can kill people, but you can’t destroy faith” (266). What prompted this reflection by Mamishu?
13. Michael was given a gold timepiece with the inscription “This too shall pass” written in Hebrew. Why was this the perfect gift for him to receive at his bar mitzvah?

AFTER READING

1. Using the poem below, summarize Pastor Martin Niemöller's purpose and explain the text-to-text connections to Michael Bornstein's *Survivors Club*.

First They Came

Pastor Martin Niemöller

*First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.*

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

RI.6.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

2. Create a book trailer that introduces the viewer to the major themes of *Survivors Club* and showcases evidence from the book about why it is an important read.

CCSS.SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.SL.6.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Nicole Woulfe has a bachelor of arts in history and a master of arts in teaching secondary education from the University of New Hampshire. She is currently teaching at Sanborn Regional Middle School.