The study guide is designed for middle and high school level. Educators are encouraged to choose activities that are appropriate for their students’ age and maturity. Some content is graphic, please use caution while deciding which activities to use in your classroom.
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THE FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM’S MISSION AND ŁUKASZ BAKSIK’S EXHIBITION

The Florida Holocaust Museum’s mission is to honor the memory of millions of innocent men, women and children who suffered or died in the Holocaust. The Museum is dedicated to teaching members of all backgrounds and cultures the inherent worth and dignity of human life in order to prevent future genocides. We work towards this goal on several levels: through teacher programs, community and student education, exhibitions, and commemorative events. All these platforms have a common denominator, i.e., preserving and honoring the memory of individual human beings who lost their lives at the hands of Nazi perpetrators and their local collaborators. We teach through the lens of individuality of all participants in the historical events: those who were targeted, those who persecuted Jews and chose to perceive them as less than human, those who turned a blind eye, those who tried to help, those who observed. Every human being had a different experience and made different decisions. The choices that the perpetrators, their sympathizers, and bystanders made, remind us that human beings are capable of such decisions and we need to be aware of the consequences. Investigating such behaviors can help us prevent it in the future.

History is a process, with new layers of experiences being added upon one another. We can see old prejudices and perceptions still reflected in present-day behaviors with hate crimes and various forms of intolerance still happening in the U.S. and around the world.¹ At the same time, The Florida Holocaust Museum encourages its visitors to try to change that. Our individual efforts help improve our local and global community. It is our shared responsibility to investigate and remember the past, translate it into today and try to build a better world in the future. Łukasz Baksik’s photographs are one of the best tools to achieve these goals. His work raises some crucial questions about interhuman relationships, memory, respect, and what we consent to. While the images show the ways Jewish gravestones (matzevot) have been misused during and after the Holocaust by the Nazis and local non-Jews, the concepts this exhibition explores make the audience reflect on our own lives and attitudes, regardless of our backgrounds.

Łukasz Baksik’s exhibition Matzevot for Everyday Use features photographs taken in Poland from 2008 to 2012. While working on the project, Baksik traveled over 20 thousand miles, visited and photographed about a hundred locations, and built a database with 300 entries. His photographs document many ways in which Jewish gravestones were stolen and misappropriated. Until today, the matzevot are grindstones, parts of fences and pavements, and other everyday objects. Baksik was not the first or the only photographer of matzevot in Poland. Starting with Monika Krajewska’s groundbreaking photo albums in the 1980s and 1990s, there were several such initiatives. However, Łukasz Baksik provides a different perspective because of the context in which matzevot are photographed: these photographs were not taken at Jewish cemeteries but at various places where the gravestones have been misused as everyday objects.

WHAT IS A MATZEVA?

Matzevot are not the only type of traditional Jewish gravestones, though they are the most common. In Jewish cemeteries one can also find sarcophagi and ohalim (special structures built around graves of prominent community members). A matzeva2 “is a vertical slab usually [...] 30 to 60 in., topped in an arched, rectangular, or triangular line, or sometimes, with a more sophisticated shape. Its surface is covered with an inscription usually flanked by half-columns or pilasters, or framed within an ornamental border. The space above the epitaph and often below is covered with sculpted decoration in either high or low relief, sometimes with multiple registers which visually dominate the epitaph. The slab is fixed immediately into the ground or mounted on a plinth, or supported from the back with an oblong block of stone which in cross-section is a rectangular, trapezoid, or semi-circle. These tombstones were often painted, and traces of their colors can still be seen.”3 Most matzevot are made of stone, some used to be made of wood or iron.

Matzevot tell us a lot about individuals whom they commemorate but are also invaluable chronicles of respective communities and of the time period in which they were created. By studying matzevot, one can see how the sepulchral tradition evolved from just inscriptions through various styles of ornaments reflecting current trends in art and culture of a given country. “The basic set of symbols and ornaments, drawing to a large extent upon Baroque, and later Neo-classical art, developed in the 17th and 18th centuries. They had much in common with other areas of Jewish art, especially the painted and stucco decoration of synagogues. [...] This style remained unchanged in Poland until the beginning of the 20th century, and in traditional shtetl communities, until the Holocaust. In the 19th and 20th centuries, in major cities like Warsaw or Łódź, and even more so in the region that before the war was part of Germany, there appeared monuments which represented a complete departure from Jewish tradition. They were inspired by various architectural styles and by Christian sepulchral imagery, which in turn had borrowed patterns from Antiquity.”4 The matzevot in Poland belong to the Ashkenazic tradition of Jews who settled in Germany and Eastern Europe. In the areas of Western Europe where Sephardic Jews settled, one can find horizontal matzevot. While Hebrew inscriptions are the most common, within the changing social matrix of local Jewish communities the language of Jewish funerary art expanded to incorporate the vernacular, e.g., Polish, German or

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2 There are different ways to spell the word “matzeva.” For consistency, we spell it the way Łukasz Baksik does in his book Matzevot for Everyday Use.
4 Krajewska, A Tribe of Stones, 21.
other languages. Some gravestones had inscriptions in Yiddish. In this study guide we are focusing on stone matzevot with Hebrew inscriptions as these are the type of gravestones Łukasz Baksik found and photographed.

In Łukasz Baksik’s book, *Matzevot for Everyday Use*, Ewa Toniak quotes a description of a matzeva as a “gate, a symbol of crossing from the earthly life to another world.” Unfortunately, in the case of those gravestones that were stolen from Jewish cemeteries, the “other world might be a sidewalk, the casing of a well, a stone pergola, or a flight of stairs. Or another gravestone.” Jewish cemeteries were first established in Poland centuries ago when the first Jewish settlers arrived. The oldest matzeva in Poland can be found in Wrocław and dates back to 1203. Today, there are about 1,200 Jewish cemeteries in Poland in different condition, with only 150 that still have more than 100 matzevot. Four hundred Jewish cemeteries were destroyed during and after the war. Unlike Catholic cemeteries in Poland, Jewish burial sites are not supposed to be disturbed. According to Polish legislation, a Catholic cemetery can be leveled after 40 years since the last burial. Jewish cemeteries, on the other hand, are to stay intact until the resurrection of the dead. While the legislative regulations may be different, the basic concept of respect for the dead is shared by both religions.

Poland had the largest Jewish community in Europe prior to WWII. More than 3 million Jews (about 10 percent of the total population) lived there and constituted a very diverse population socially, economically, politically, religiously, and linguistically. Jews lived in various areas of Poland, mostly in towns and cities (75 percent) but also in rural areas. They shared their country with their non-Jewish neighbors. Based on the data from two censuses conducted in 1921 and 1931, “[t]he Polish population was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic with only a very small Protestant minority. [...] The bulk of Jews-by-religion also regarded themselves as Jews-by-nationality and spoke Yiddish or Hebrew, yet a significant minority indicated Polish as their native tongue and identified correspondingly in national terms. [...] Four-fifths of [Jews] were urban, and in 1931 they furnished 25.2 percent of the inhabitants of the twelve largest cities with populations of over a hundred thousand, though only 9.8 percent of the general population.”

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6 Toniak, 11.
7 Retrieved on October 6, 2016 from [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Poland.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Poland.html). It is impossible to point out the exact time of first Jewish settlements but first mentions of Poland date back to the 11th century CE.
Road. Międzyrzec Podlaski, a town in the Lublin Province. 1939-1945*

* The dates in the photograph captions indicate an estimated time period when the objects were made.
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

One of the notions raised by Łukasz Baksik’s photographs is what it means to share a country, to be neighbors. Jews and non-Jews in interwar Poland were neighbors, although the communities often lived more next to each other than with each other. This was caused by cultural and religious differences but also by more negative attitudes among local non-Jews. The Jewish community in Poland “despite its evident heterogeneity was basically lower middle class and proletarian, and both unassimilated and unacculturated – although, as we shall see, by the 1930s acculturation was making rapid strides forward.”12

Jews living in the diaspora in Western and Eastern Europe had long experienced prejudice and persecution. When Jews were expelled from country after country in Western Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries, Poland welcomed them and offered protection.13 Over the centuries, times of relative peace and coexistence in Poland and other countries where Jews lived, were interrupted by open hatred, distrust, and pogroms. The interwar period saw a rise of nationalistic goals in post-WWII new national entities. Poland was one of them, after over 100 years of non-existence due to partitions that started in 1772. The newly re-established Polish state had several minorities within its new borders. The largest minority were Ukrainians, and then Jews, Belorussians, and Germans.14

The situation got particularly difficult for Polish Jews in the 1930s. As Professor Yehuda Bauer points out: “Antisemitic acts mounted in the mid-thirties. Jewish students, separated from others at Polish universities, were subjected to harassment and attacks by fellow students (1935-37). Boycotts against Jews, with open government approval, spread from early 1935 on. Between 1935 and 1937, 118 Jews were killed and 1,350 were wounded in sixteen pogroms (for example, in Przytyk, March 9, 1936, and in Czestochowa and Brest Litovsk in 1937). A total of 348 separate mass assaults on Jews took place. Nor did the situation improve in 1937-8. There were five severe pogroms in Central Poland in August 1937, followed by anti-Jewish demonstrations in Warsaw. Riots occurred several times in early 1938 in Warsaw. In early 1939 Jews were forced to leave certain frontier towns because they were considered unreliable elements. Pogroms were motivated by hatred of the stranger, and the economic crisis. A hungry and bitter people struck out against the stranger, who was equally poor.”15 The concept of the other, a stranger, someone different than the majority, is one of the key points with regard to Łukasz Baksik’s photographs and the way some of the local non-Jews treated Jewish cemeteries.

In spite of many differences between Jews and non-Jews, a lot of people did interact: very often the interaction would be limited to economic exchanges on the market square or through artisans. But there were also closer interactions, neighborly help, artistic or cultural work, or, rarely, intermarriage, among

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13 See Bauer, A History of the Holocaust, 33-34.
14 See Mendelsohn, “Jewish Life,” 82.
more assimilated Jews. An important factor in deciding whether different religious groups constitute a community is a sense of belonging and a sense of shared responsibility for one another. In the testimonies collected after the Holocaust or diaries from the Holocaust era, one sees different kinds of responses. It is a complex notion that does not easily fit community definitions. Even among Polish Jews before World War II, there were significant differences and divisions as members of the younger generation began walking away from their parents’ and grandparents’ world.

The notion of what constitutes a community can be seen in the ways local non-Jews remember their Jewish neighbors today. In the testimonies of non-Jewish eyewitnesses to the murder of their Jewish neighbors that are being collected by Yahad – In Unum throughout Eastern Europe, we can observe a whole range of perceptions: indifference, hostility, solely economic interactions, but also friendly, neighborly relationships. In those powerful recollections, one often hears the duality between “us” non-Jews and “them” Jews – sometimes indicating religious differences with no direct negative connotations, sometimes hostility or indifference. These are not black-and-white attitudes as every testimony is delivered by an individual with his or her personal perspective. The negative angle of that duality, though, is still visible in the way historic sites and local cemeteries are treated today. Some of the sites of mass shootings of Jews carried out in Poland by the Germans and local collaborators are now parking lots (e.g., in Dynów, Pawłów), playgrounds (e.g., in Kazimiera Wielka), sidewalks (e.g., in Biata Podlaska), apartment buildings (e.g., in Tłuszcz), soccer fields (e.g., in Parysów, Taskarzew, Wolomin), to name but a few examples. Some of these sites are in the same locations where Baksik found misappropriated matzevot.

The situation after World War II was often tragic: the majority of Polish Jews perished in ghettos, camps, mass shootings. From the beginning of the German invasion of Poland, in September 1939, Jews were targeted and persecuted by the Nazis. In one location after another, Jewish communities were destroyed. Jews from smaller locations were sent to bigger towns where ghettos were soon established. Jewish cultural and religious heritage, including synagogues and cemeteries, was often desecrated and destroyed.

After inhumane ghetto conditions, the next step of the German annihilation campaign against Jews, were deportations to the death camps. In spite of admirable individual and organized rescue efforts, many Polish Jews were also betrayed by local non-Jews, often their neighbors. It was not uncommon that those...
who managed to survive, met with open hostility upon returning to their hometowns, some were murdered. The pogrom of Holocaust survivors in the Polish town of Kielce on July 4, 1946 made numerous Holocaust survivors flee to DP camps in Western Europe. Those who decided to stay in Poland, faced a government-supported antisemitic campaign in 1968 which forced about 20,000 Polish Jews to leave the country. After the fall of communism in 1989, there has been a growing interest in Jewish history and culture as well as a revival of community life among Polish Jews. The condition of Jewish cemeteries has also improved.

According to the national census from 2011, Poland has nine major national minorities: Belorussians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germans, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Jews and several ethnic ones. Overall, only between two and three and a half percent (depending on various estimates) of over 38 million residents of Poland declared their nationality as non-Polish. Of that fraction, only about 7,500 individuals declared themselves as Jews. Cemeteries in Poland are places of respect and solemn reflection. The holidays honoring the dead are observed countrywide. The incidents of vandalism of local graves, of various religions, are reprimanded out loud by the local media and community members. With the Jewish community in Poland numbering between 7,500 and 25,000, there are definitely not enough local Jews to care for Jewish cemeteries. There are certainly lots of local initiatives among Polish Jews and non-Jews trying to protect Jewish cemeteries and historic sites. These are both individual efforts of local residents and more organized ones like the initiatives of the Forum for Dialogue Among the Nations, From the Depths Foundation, and others. The focus of this study guide, however, is the misappropriation of the matzevot.

Łukasz Baksik has seen numerous examples of how matzevot were repurposed. For the exhibition he chose those, which had visible Hebrew inscriptions, so there would be no doubt as for their origin. His photographs show shocking examples how individual gravestones were stolen and misused in public view. This process started during World War II when the Nazis invaded Poland and proceeded to murder Polish Jews as well as destroy their cultural and religious heritage. Baksik shows examples of how matzevot were used by the Germans to build yards, curbs, and other objects. But this phenomenon was also adopted by the non-Jewish neighbors after local Jews had been deported, and long after the war. Misappropriated matzevot are often in plain view, when those who had stolen them may be long gone.

26 The latter figure can be found at: http://warszawa.jewish.org.pl

Grindstone
Kazimierz Dolny, a town in Lublin Province
Evangelical gravestone
Gotkowice, a village in Silesia Province
1960s
WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN ŁUKASZ BAKSIK’S PROJECT?

The Matzevot for Everyday Use project has three main components: 1. the gravestones, 2. people who use or have them on their property today, and 3. observers of the matzevot and of the photographs. We continually see in the exhibition the role of the next generation. Those who dwell or work at those sites where matzevot have been misappropriated or use the objects, do not carry the responsibility for what their predecessors did. They do, however, carry the responsibility for their own choices and what they consent to. Sometimes they realize what they are seeing is wrong but need advice how to fix this. Łukasz Baksik’s exhibition can help with that. It can show it is the right thing to ask for guidance, to seek a way to mend what was destroyed.

By seeing the exhibition, we all become participants in this history: the third component of the project. Baksik encourages us to look inside our own mindsets and opinions, to revisit our perceptions of the “other.” How do we respond to members of other cultures? How do we see immigrants? Are we aware of the local history and the condition of historic sites?

Another meaningful lesson we can draw from the exhibition is not to look for easy answers, and to realize how important the questions are. Baksik says, “When I began work on the project I was convinced that I knew all the answers and was capable of evaluating every situation unambiguously. The more photographs I took, the less sure I was of my opinions. Today I definitely have more questions than answers. It’s a bit like photographs themselves: we call them black-and-white, but really it’s the range of grays that is important.”

In our interview, Łukasz Baksik emphasized that he did not believe in easy answers to difficult questions and was very careful not to pass judgment. This cannot be done without respecting another human being. His own attitude evolved, from an initial emotional, angry response, to opening up and being able to build a dialogue. By talking with local residents, discussing his project, he helped them make a connection between the piece of stone they were using and what it represented. Baksik is an atheist but believes in the power of the human mind. While being of non-Jewish background, he seems to recognize that matzevot are part of Poland’s history, and part of humanity. We are all responsible for our responses to what we see and experience. By treating Jewish gravestones with respect that resting sites of all religions deserve, we can learn something important about ourselves. Those individual human beings buried in the Jewish cemeteries did not vanish into oblivion. They lived in the local villages and towns and participated in creating the fabric of local society. The only oblivion they can be pushed into is in the minds of those who choose to ignore that fact. Łukasz Baksik’s work reclaims their place in local communities. Plundering of cemeteries

27 Baksik, Matzevot, 40.
29 See Szczepinska, Matzevot for Everyday Use Exhibition Catalogue, 17.
of various denominations goes back centuries and happened in different countries. Baksik focuses on Poland and, what he calls, “our own matzeva-paved backyard.” But the questions his exhibition raises are more universal. The rejection of one’s neighbors and their culture is also not a new phenomenon. Baksik’s photographs remind us that the questions about how we see our fellow humans are something we should continue to address.

One of the most striking examples illustrating these concepts, is the way some of the Jewish gravestones were misused at Catholic or Protestant cemeteries. One cannot help but ask how it was possible. The Hebrew letters on these Christian gravestones are still visible, so there was no doubt at the time what type of material was being used. It seems hard to understand how in the process of honoring one person who passed away, a grave marker honoring another person was perceived as nothing more than good building material. Almost as if that person no longer mattered, neither did his or her memory. I see this phenomenon as exclusion, as making someone or something invisible and irrelevant. It is another example of the division between “them” and “us.” One of “ours” needed a gravestone so a gravestone of “the other” was used. “Our” needs come first. “They” are no longer here. Jan T. Gross writes in his essay for the Matzevot for Everyday Use book that “[i]n Poland there was no mourning for the murdered Jews. Citizens of the same country, witnesses of a tragedy, they did not grieve their deaths or treat it with due gravitas. And those Poles who in some way had a hand in killing their Jewish neighbors were generally neither convicted nor stigmatized by the local society or cast out of the community.” There was no sense of loss among non-Jews. Łukasz Baksik identifies these behaviors as something much more complicated and disturbing than antisemitism (which he sees as oversimplification) – it “was the process of excluding someone from the community, from humanity. And if people are removed from humanity, they don’t deserve to be remembered, their ghosts don’t haunt us, their gravestones can be used any way we want.”

Through his work, Łukasz Baksik helps re-humanize Polish Jews whose matzevot had been stolen and misappropriated. He helps non-Jews understand that the gravestones represent individual human beings. The same process of translating history into human lives, is what The Florida Holocaust Museum is doing with regard to Holocaust victims. Whereas their perpetrators tried to obliterate their individuality and every trace of their existence, we want visitors to understand these were human beings, not anonymous numbers. To quote Jan T. Gross again, “[w]hat renders studying the Holocaust so frustrating is its facelessness: the unacceptable anonymity of victims unrecognized in their individuality at the moment of death, which every society marks with a solemn ritual, even for the lowliest and poorest.”

Both, Łukasz Baksik in his efforts to help us learn about misappropriated matzevot, as well as those who try to return the gravestones to the cemeteries, work towards retrieving the individuality of the victims. The matzevot photographed by Baksik were not gravestones of Holocaust victims, most of whom did not have individual graves. But the Holocaust was directed not only at Jewish people but also their history and culture. And it is because of the Holocaust and the postwar antisemitic campaign that so few Jews are left today in Poland and there are not enough Jewish communities to care for old Jewish cemeteries. The world where local Jews could care for the resting place of their ancestors is no more. But that does not need to translate into anonymity. On the contrary, the memory should be preserved.

The way the gravestones photographed by Baksik have been misused, reminds us that if we do not respect the dead, we will not be able to respect the living. The trap of the

30 See Baksik, Matzevot, 41.
31 Baksik, Matzevot, 42.
33 Szczepinska, Matzevot for Everyday Use Exhibition Catalogue, 20.
“us vs. them” duality and dehumanization was visible in every genocide and is one of the strongest barriers to post-genocide reconciliation. Through respecting the dead, we can start discerning the humanness of the living, no matter how different our backgrounds may be.

In 2009, another Polish artist, Wojciech Wilczyk, created a photo album *There’s No Such Thing as an Innocent Eye* showing photographs of former synagogues and prayer houses – these buildings are often in ruins or have been adapted for completely different purposes (stores, movie theaters, libraries, and many others). As with Baksik’s photographs – there is no such thing as an innocent eye. Each person contributes towards creating the reality around us and we are responsible for our responses to what we see. If we choose to stay silent when we see a gravestone, of any religion, misused, we give our consent. It is not passive consent, it is consent.

In his photo album of Jewish cemeteries in Galicia, Poland, *Photographing Traces of Memory*, Chris Schwarz recounted his experience of being approached by a local farmer in a village called Wielkie Oczy. The farmer’s father-in-law had stolen matzevot from a local cemetery to pave the path leading to his home. Schwarz remembered the encounter: “The farmer felt this was wrong, and asked if I wanted to see the stones. Half an hour later, using a crowbar from the farmer’s shed, we lifted up the stones to see the Hebrew text on the stones which was also mirrored in the soft earth. He asked what he should do with them. I said there was only one thing to do: take them back to the Jewish cemetery, and when there, say a good Catholic prayer. I hope he did this.”

Stories like this, over and over again, prove to us how crucial it is to ask questions and to work together. They also remind us how essential our own choices are.

Łukasz Baksik’s exhibition has become very relevant in today’s world. It reminds its viewers that our responses matter. It also emphasizes the importance of teaching history and drawing lessons. In the interview for the exhibition catalogue, Baksik expresses serious concern about current political changes in his native Poland and in other countries. But he does not give up on the power of the human mind and the ability to build our own opinions. The questions and concepts his photographs explore, can help reevaluate our perception of other people in order to see the humanness of our fellow humans.

The exhibition raises questions of ethical nature that each of its viewers needs to answer on his or her own. What is a community? Are we responsible for one another? What is the scope of that responsibility? How do we perceive our neighbors? What do we know about our local history? What is memory? He says about his project that: “It’s a mirror for each of us to face our own responses.” His work can help us find some of the answers and to acknowledge that it is sometimes hard or impossible. Łukasz Baksik himself has questions without answers. One of them is why he did not include his hometown Pszczyna in the project. This exhibition will leave us with more questions than before we viewed his photographs. Thanks to the *Matzevot for Everyday Use* project, we may be able to understand that asking questions and exploring our responses can help us grow as human beings.

**Urszula Szczepinska, M.A.**
Curator of Education & Director of Research
The Florida Holocaust Museum

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Sandbox
Szczecin, a city in
West Pomerania Province
1960s/70s
CONSENT

1. **Word cloud:**
   With students, look up and discuss the definitions of:
   consent; passive; gravestone; matzeva; to steal; respect; neighbor

   Write the definitions on the board and discuss how students understand these terms in their own words. Assign students to write a short essay about the meaning of these words and their own perspectives.

   Following their visit to The FHM, discuss the same words again in the context of the exhibition and check if students would like to add something based on their experience with Łukasz Baksik’s photographs.

2. With students, look through the images and captions from Łukasz Baksik’s exhibition and search for specific examples pertaining to consent of local community members to the stealing and misusing of the matzevot. Have students discuss their personal responses to these situations.

3. Ask students to make two drawings about consent and fill them with their own responses. Follow up with a group discussion based on their choices as individuals, and as part of a community/group/nation. What impacted their choices?

ACTIVITIES

What do I consent to?

What don’t I consent to?
Grindstone
Brok, a town in Mazovia Province
2nd half of the 20th century
1. **Word cloud:**
   With students, look up and discuss the definitions of:
   human; humanness; inhumanity; community; neighbor; respect; dehumanization; choice

2. Watch a video clip of Mary Wygodski, a Holocaust survivor and Board member at The FHM (interview conducted by USC Shoah Foundation). Discuss Mary’s message with your students.

   Based on your previous units on the Holocaust and other genocides, discuss with students the roles people play in pre-, during-, and post-genocidal situations.
   a) What attitudes prevail and lead to atrocities?
   b) What examples have students studied of human behavior and choices made during genocide (the Holocaust, genocides in Armenia, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur).
   c) What have students learned about post-genocide interhuman relationships in everyday life? What are the challenges (e.g., victims and perpetrators living near each other)?

3. Discuss with students what constitutes a community. For example, shared history and experiences, choices we make every day towards our neighbors, maintaining cemeteries as a tribute to individuals but also to a shared past.
Top and Left:

Ramp
Sokołów Podlaski, a town in Mazovia Province
1939-1945

Right:

Catholic tombstone
Topczewo, a town in Podlasie Province
1940s
RESPONSIBILITY

1. **Word cloud:**

   With students, look up and discuss the definitions of:
   responsibility; to share; historic site; past; communal; choice

   Revisit these definitions after the tour of the exhibition and see if students would like to add other layers of meaning in the context of what they have learned at the Museum. E.g., the concept of choice can be discussed in reference to the people who stole and misused the matzevot but also in reference to those community members who looked at it and remained silent. The silence can in turn be discussed as silent approval, unvoiced protest, indifference, and followed up with a discussion of the consequences of each of the silent responses.

2. Have a group discussion about communal and individual responsibility. What is our level of responsibility for our neighbors and for the area where we live? How much do we share in the physical and psychological sense?

3. Help students investigate local historic sites in the area where your school is located (e.g., sites pertaining to the history of Native Americans; Civil War; Civil Rights Movement). What condition are they in? Who maintains them (e.g., local authorities, the state, clergy)? How can members of the local community, including students, contribute towards preserving the sites and raising awareness about what happened there?
Cowshed
Przysucha, a town in Mazovia Province
1939-45
LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY

1. **Word cloud:**
   
   With students, look up and discuss the definitions of:
   - landscape; community; memory; complicity; indifference; approval; silence; exclusion; inclusion

   Revisit the definitions after touring the *Matzevot for Everyday Use* exhibition.

2. (The content of the video used in this activity is graphic. Please use caution while deciding whether it is appropriate for your students).

   Divide students into small teams. Together, watch a video testimony of Adolf S. from Poland, who talks about his experiences with Jewish neighbors, their execution, and current condition of historic sites. Discuss the terms from the word cloud in the context of the video.

   This testimony is part of the collection created by Yahad – In Unum, a Paris-based organization dedicated to collecting testimonies of eyewitnesses, and identifying and documenting sites of mass crimes committed against Jews and Roma by the Germans and their collaborators during World War II in Eastern Europe. Since 2004, the organization has conducted over 100 research trips, identified over 1,700 execution sites and interviewed over 5,000 eyewitnesses in eight countries.

   After discussing the video with all students, divide among the small groups the names of locations from *Matzevot for Everyday Use* and ask them to research the history of local Jewish communities. Individual community members may be commemorated through Yad Vashem’s Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project and other online resources that are listed at the end of the study guide. Have each group present their findings. Discuss challenges they encountered in conducting their research.

3. Before touring the *Matzevot for Everyday Use* exhibition, ask students to look for photographs that correspond with the words from the word cloud. After visiting the Museum, discuss the words in the context of the photographs they chose and Adolf’s testimony.
SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


SUGGESTED WEBOGRAPHY

The Florida Holocaust Museum www.thefhm.org
Łukasz Baksik www.lukaszbaksik.com
The Anti-Defamation League www.adl.org
The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations www.dialog.org.pl
The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland www.fodz.pl
From the Depths http://www.fromthedepths.org/
The “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre http://teatrnn.pl/en/
IWitness – USC Shoah Foundation (1,500 testimonies of survivors and witnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides) http://iwitness.usc.edu/
Jewish Cemeteries in Poland http://kirkuty.xip.pl/indexang.htm
Jewish Historical Institute http://www.jhi.pl/en
Southern Poverty Law Center www.splc.org
The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org
Yad Vashem – The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names http://yvng.yadvashem.org/
Yahad – In Unum www.yahadinunum.org
Yahad – In Unum Map (interactive database and map of execution sites investigated by Yahad – In Unum) www.yahadmap.org
ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Łukasz Baksik was born in 1975 in Pszczyna, a small town in Upper Silesia, Poland. He holds a Master’s Degree from the Kraków University of Economics.

While photography is not Baksik’s profession, it is his passion. He owns a consulting firm, working as a management, organization and human resources consultant.

Baksik is primarily interested in documentary and socially conscious photography. He is currently engaged in a new project focused on the misappropriation of Torah scrolls as everyday objects as well as a project on Holocaust killing sites.

His photographs are found in private collections throughout Poland and in the permanent collection of The Florida Holocaust Museum.

FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHER

The photographs were taken from 2008 to 2012. They show the state of the objects at the time they were photographed. Some of the objects were disassembled since then and the gravestones were returned to their respective cemeteries. The dates in the photograph captions indicate an estimated time period when the objects were made. We should assume that the grindstones were made from the matzevot during World War II, though some were also made later.
Thank you for visiting our Museum and using our resources.

We look forward to receiving your feedback!

You can contact us at education@thefhm.org

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