

Amsterdam During WW2

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The Premise to Our Project.

The Holocaust has always been a subject that fascinated us. We all studied Nazi Rule in our GCSE history course, including a brief look at the enumeration of the Holocaust. Inspired by this, we wanted to learn more about the impacts of this mass genocide on the people, gaining better insight into their personal experiences. We thought that visiting the Anne Frank House would be the best way to try and comprehend what families went through.

To try and widen our understanding of this time, we looked at the experiences of more people in Amsterdam during WW2 in the National Holocaust museum. In the Rijksmuseum, we investigated the artwork produced during the time, or following, that could tell us more about life in the Holocaust.

The Anne Frank House

The story of Anne Frank and her family was devastating, but touching, and we were inspired by the words of this young girl who showed so much strength and optimism even in the worst of situations.

“One day we’re laughing at the comical side of life in hiding, and the next day (and there are many such days) we’re frightened, and the fear, tension and despair can be read on our faces.”

The Frank family went into hiding in early July 1942 to avoid the Nazi persecution of Jews. They were originally from Frankfurt, Germany and they immigrated to Amsterdam in 1934. They were amongst the 140,000 Dutch Jews living in the Netherlands at the time of Nazi occupation.

This quote was very powerful in helping us to understand the individual experiences from Jews in hiding during the Holocaust. We felt that it is easy to consume information about the Holocaust through facts and figures. However, by hearing about the day to day “fear” and “despair” through Anne Frank’s writing, we could explore the impact of Holocaust through the perspective of the people who were victimized.

“Jews were forbidden to go to theatres, cinemas or any other forms of entertainment; Jews were forbidden to use swimming pools or athletic fields; Jews were forbidden to sit in their gardens after 8:00 p.m.; Jews were forbidden to visit Christians in their homes; Jews were required to attend Jewish schools.”

The anti-Jewish decrees passed by the Nazi party from 1933-1945 restricted the rights of Jewish people. Anne Frank wrote a list of some of the many things that Jews were restricted from doing such as view “forms of entertainment” and “visit Christians in their home”.

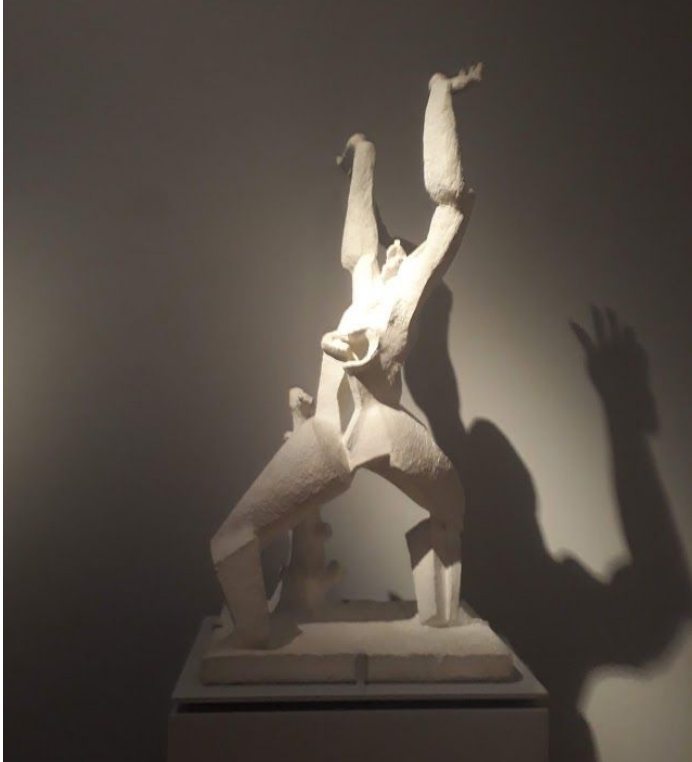
Learning about the legislation which segregated Jews from society was fundamental in broadening our understanding of life under Nazi occupation. For most of Anne’s life, she was forced to comply to prejudiced laws which helped us recognise the horrors of the Nazi regime leading up to the Holocaust.

“It’s difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It’s a wonder I haven’t abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.”

The most important thing that we took away from the Anne Frank House was that despite her families’ exclusion from society, she often remained optimistic. We believe that Anne Frank’s diary continues to be relevant and poignant in today’s society due to her optimistic perspective on humanity. We felt inspired by her belief that “people are truly good at heart” even though her hopes and dreams are compromised due to prejudice against her faith. Our visit provided us with a multi-faceted understanding of Anne Frank’s experience as a Jew in hiding, a time where she continued to hope whilst having an extreme lack of freedom.

The Rijksmuseum

This art-history museum provided us more context of the local experience in Amsterdam and how citizens expressed this within art and design. We found this fascinating and thought provoking and found it was a great addition to our project.



The Destroyed City

On 14 May 1940, the German air force bombed Rotterdam city centre. This is the original plaster model for a six-metre-high bronze statue commemorating the devastation. "I have sculpted tears", Zadkine stated.

Nazi Chess Set

This chess set glorifies Nazi Germany's territorial ambitions during WW2. The pieces are shaped like weapons. The text in the border lists the countries that Germany had attacked in 1939 and 1940. This set may have been presented in 1941 by SS commander Heinrich Himmler to Anton Messert, leader of the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging, the National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands.



In 1956, brown red and, black still immediately evoked associations with the uniforms of the German nazi party of the Second World War. The ugly head with an angry eye and smirking mouth, which are hidden in the crusty paint layer, contribute to the gruesome atmosphere. With his 'criminal' paintings the artist (Armando) gave expression to the war experiences of his youth, which led to a lifelong fascination with the 'Beauty of Evil'



Another one of Armando's 'Beauty of evil' inspired works



The Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden was a German-language newspaper published during the occupation in the Netherlands. It was a propaganda tool of the German occupying forces there. Along with a German readership, they were keen to reach a dutch audience.



As the text of this advertisement states, the paper wanted to 'mediate' between Dutch and german economic life.



The consciousness of the wound

Anton Heyboer created these etchings in 1954, 10 years after his traumatic experience in a Berlin labour camp during the war. He suffered both physically and mentally and concluded that he could never lead a normal life. In 1951 he admitted himself to a Provincial hospital in Satpoort where he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.



Holy is the Heart of a Woman

After his experiences in the war, Heyboer aimed to rebel against society. This etching depicts a person whose environment is completely empty. He believed that warmth and a bed along with another human were the fundamental things that human beings needed. He desired simplicity and transparency, both of which he had difficulty achieving due to his mental trauma from the war.



Isabel Wachenheimer wore this prison coat whilst at the Lenzing-Pettighofen concentration camp in Austria. She had been transferred to this labour camp from Auschwitz with 500 other Jewish women in October 1944. After the war, Isabel sewed her surname on the coat.



The photo album underneath was the last one that Isabel's mother, Elsa, compiled before the family fled from Germany to the Netherlands. Isabel survived the war however her parents were killed in Auschwitz in 1944.



The National Holocaust Museum

As the final destination of our project, the National Holocaust Museum showed devastating and brutal statistics and multiple artifacts from real families who experience the Holocaust and its effects first hand.

This list was shown on an 87 cm strip of wall and recorded statistics of dates, number of deportees, where the deportees originally came from and what camp they then arrived at. This particularly shocked us and put the mass genocide into perspective and proved on a statistical basis how horrific this was for the people of Amsterdam with over 70% of the Jewish population being deported.

ORIGINE DATE day/month/year	AANTAL GEDEPORTEERDEN NUMBER OF DEPORTEES	WAAR VANDAAN PLACE OF ORIGIN and more information	KAMP CAMP
22/23 - 02 - 1941	389	Amsterdam/School/Buchenwald	Mauthausen
11 - 06 - 1941	280	Amsterdam/School	Mauthausen
13/14 - 09 - 1941	105	Enschede e.a. plaatsen	Mauthausen
7/8 - 10 - 1941	173	Doetinchem, Arnhem, Apeldoorn, Zwolle	Mauthausen
15 - 07 - 1942	1137	Westerbork	Auschwitz
16 - 07 - 1942	586	Amersfoort, via Westerbork	Auschwitz
16 - 07 - 1942	309	Westerbork	Auschwitz
21 - 07 - 1942	1002	Westerbork	Auschwitz
24 - 07 - 1942	1000	Westerbork	Auschwitz
27 - 07 - 1942	1010	Westerbork	Auschwitz
31 - 07 - 1942	1007	Westerbork	Auschwitz
03 - 08 - 1942	1013	Westerbork	Auschwitz
07 - 08 - 1942	989	Westerbork	Auschwitz
10 - 08 - 1942	547	Westerbork	Auschwitz
14 - 08 - 1942	505	Westerbork	Auschwitz
17 - 08 - 1942	510	Westerbork	Auschwitz
21 - 08 - 1942	1003	Westerbork	Auschwitz
24 - 08 - 1942	551	Westerbork	Auschwitz
28 - 08 - 1942	608	Westerbork	Auschwitz
31 - 08 - 1942	560	Westerbork	Auschwitz
04 - 09 - 1942	714	Westerbork	Auschwitz
07 - 09 - 1942	930	Westerbork	Auschwitz
11 - 09 - 1942	874	Westerbork	Auschwitz
14 - 09 - 1942	902	Westerbork	Auschwitz
18 - 09 - 1942	1004	Westerbork	Auschwitz
21 - 09 - 1942	713	Westerbork	Auschwitz
25 - 09 - 1942	928	Westerbork	Auschwitz
28 - 09 - 1942	610	Westerbork	Auschwitz
02 - 10 - 1942	1014	Westerbork	Auschwitz
05 - 10 - 1942	2012	Westerbork	Auschwitz
09 - 10 - 1942	1703	Westerbork	Auschwitz
12 - 10 - 1942	1711	Westerbork	Auschwitz
16 - 10 - 1942	1710	Westerbork	Auschwitz
19 - 10 - 1942	1327	Westerbork	Auschwitz
23 - 10 - 1942	988	Westerbork	Auschwitz
26 - 10 - 1942	841	Westerbork	Auschwitz
30 - 10 - 1942	659	Westerbork	Auschwitz
02 - 11 - 1942	954	Westerbork	Auschwitz
06 - 11 - 1942	465	Westerbork	Auschwitz



This features words of congratulations on a nineteenth birthday and commemorative album with photographs and messages from the staff and children at an orphanage in Leiden. The wooden board was a wedding present to the owners of the orphanage in Leiden. The owners were killed on arrival at Auschwitz in 1943.



At the museum we discovered personal stories from families who endured the Holocaust. The Van Straten family were to go to Westbrooke kto report to 'Loods 24', the warehouse used as a collection centre for Jewish people. Members of the family gave away pieces of jewellery and children's books to friends for safekeeping. (These were later donated after being stored away or attached too a chain to be worn.) The family were sent to Auschwitz on 21 September 1942 and were all killed on arrival.

Whilst we were visiting the Holocaust museum they had a memorial showing Jewish children from Amsterdam who had died during the Holocaust. Each box represented a person and it was engraved with the name and age of the child along with the concentration camp they had died at. We found the exhibition particularly impactful as it helped us to visualise the huge number of Dutch Jews in Amsterdam who were victims of the Holocaust.



This had been a collaborative project with a school in central Amsterdam from which the children shown on the boxes had gone to. The idea behind the exhibition was to invite a new generation of children to learn about the history of Dutch Jews in their city.



One of the war
memorials in a park
near Amsterdam RAI.

Walraven van Hall, also called "the Banker of the Resistance", was one of the greatest Dutch resistance fighters during World War II. With inventiveness, cleverness and help from others he managed to create a financial construction with which he provided a great contribution to the Dutch resistance. The Nationaal Steunfonds (National Support Fund) he founded, was during the war occupied with the support of thousands persons who were victim of the German occupation, the fund also supported numerous other resistance activities.

Walraven van Hall was arrested by the German and executed on 12th February 1945. On September 3rd 2010 in honor of Walraven van Hall a monument was revealed on the Frederiksplein in Amsterdam. It is situated next to the Dutch Central Bank where Walraven van Hall, in favor of the resistance, organized the largest bank fraud in Dutch history. The monument is a fallen tree of bronze. It symbolizes Walraven van Hall as a "fallen giant". The artist is Fernando Sánchez Castillo from Spain.

Overall, our project gave us factual and eye-opening information about The Netherlands and we feel it has benefitted us for History A-level and a wider knowledge of world struggle and experience. We thoroughly enjoyed our trip and would love to return in the future to explore more of the beautiful and historical city of Amsterdam.



Thank You

Overall, we have thoroughly enjoyed our experience planning our own trip, spending our time in Amsterdam and creating a summary of everything we have learnt. It was an amazing opportunity to learn about people's experiences in Amsterdam from museums in the city itself. It gave us a better understanding of what the city may have been like and gave us a better insight than we ever could have got from just researching in England. We would like to thank the Henry Morris Memorial Trust for such a generous donation that enabled us to do this great project. It could not have happened otherwise.

Thank you for your support,

Amelia, Natalie and Bea