

WebQuest

Four Perfect Pebbles

A Holocaust Story

By

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Marion Blumenthal Lazan

Introduction:

Over the next several weeks, we will be studying World War II through the eyes of two very special ladies, Marion Blumenthal Lazan, and Anne Frank. We will be reading their books, Four Perfect Pebbles, and the play version of The Diary of Anne Frank.

Through this WebQuest you will be researching World War II to provide some necessary background that will support your reading; you will be maintaining a "Four Perfect Pebbles Journal" as you analyze and respond to the text of Four Perfect Pebbles; and you will be preparing for Marion Blumenthal Lazan's visit to our school.

Process:

1. Prior to reading the book, do the following pre-reading activities:
 - Predict what the book may be about based on the title and the cover artwork.
 - What do you think the title means?

- Scan the Table of Contents; from the nine chapter titles, predict the author's overall experience in a brief story map.
- What do you know about World War II? Construct a K-W-L chart and jot down information in the first two columns based on what you already Know and What you'd like to learn.
- Working in groups of 2 or 3, use the following resource from the Internet to find some information about World War II. Have your topic approved by your teacher. Find at least 5 fascinating facts in your topic and predict how that information would impact a young Jewish family living in Germany in 1933. Be prepared to discuss what you have learned with the class.

<http://motlc.learningcenter.wiesenthal.org>

Your topic choices will be one from the following chart:

Places/People/Organization/General Topics

- *The Jews
- *The Nazis
- *Antisemitism &
the Final Solution
- *Resistance & Rescue
- *The World Response
- *Righteous Among
the Nations
- *After the War

2. Read Chapter 1 "Four Perfect Pebbles"
 - Use the following Internet site to get some background information on Bergen-Belsen and write a paragraph about what you've learned.
<http://scrapbookpages.com/BergenBelsen/ConcentrationCamp.html>
 - Reflect on the horrors of Bergen-Belsen in a one to two page journal entry.
 - Make a Venn diagram in which you compare and contrast your morning routine to that of Marion and her fellow prisoners of the concentration camp, Bergen-Belsen.
 - What is the significance of the four perfect pebbles? What did they symbolize to Marion? Have you ever had something powerfully special like that? Explain.

3. Read Chapter 2 "A Small Town in Germany"
 - Use the following Internet site to view a map of Germany and the surrounding countries around the time of World War II.
<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Germany.html>
(click on "Map of Germany")
Find the Weser River in NW Germany, and the cities of Hanover and Bremen. The "small town" of Hoya, where Marion lived for her first 4 years, was located between those two

cities on the Weser River. Draw a small replica of the map in your journal, highlighting these points on your map.

- While living in this small town, Marion's family witnessed their world crumbling all around them. What were some of the devastating events that occurred during this time? Why did they endure the hardships for so long? Do you think they were wise to wait? What would you have done in this precarious situation? Write your reflections in a one to two page journal entry.

4. Read Chapter 3 "Get Dressed and Come With Us"

- The dangerous situation in Germany continued to escalate; the Jewish people were being discriminated against more and more. List at least 5 things that were mentioned in this chapter that showed how serious the situation was.
- What happened on the infamous night of November 9 - 10, 1938, that caused this date to be remembered forever? What happened on this same night to Marion's family personally?
- Use the following internet site to get some background information on "Kristallnacht".

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/Kmap.htm>

Sketch your interpretation of what that night must have looked like.

5. Study the 17 photographs that are included on pages 37 - 44. Select 5 of them to describe and on which to write your personal reflection/commentary.

6. Read Chapter 4 "Escape to Holland"

- One might say that the Blumenthal's escape to Holland was a *bittersweet* event. Explain why. What were some of the things that made it *bitter*? What was *sweet*?
- What key historical events did Hitler accomplish?
- The Blumenthal family was one of the first families to go live in Westerbork, a permanent refugee camp set up in Holland. Use the following internet site to get more background information on Westerbork and write a paragraph (or draw a sketch) about what you learn.

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Forgottencamps/Camps/WestEng.html>

- In February, 1944, the Blumenthals departed Westerbork to be transported to Celle, Germany, where they would wait their turn to be allowed to board a ship that would take

them to Palestine as "Exchange Jews". What were "Exchange Jews"?

Journal a page or two about this desperate move - traveling back to Germany, during the height of World War II, to await their turn for a better life in Palestine.

7. Read Chapter 5 "The Greatest Disappointment"

* Bergen-Belsen was the next destination for the Blumenthal family. This was supposed to be a short stop, before their exchange to Palestine would be accepted. But as the chapter heading suggests, that never came true. List some of the horrific things about Bergen-Belsen. What was the cause of their "greatest disappointment"?

* One of their biggest fears was that, even though Bergen-Belsen was not supposed to have gas chambers, every time Marion took a shower, she panicked, not knowing if water or killing fumes would come out of the nozzles. Use the following internet site to learn more about Zyklon B; write a paragraph about this chemical.

- <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Zyklon.html>

* Early in April of 1945, when Marion was only 10 years old, she experienced a very painful accident.

Pretend to be Marion, or her mother (or Albert) and write a diary entry about the accident. Be sure to write with feeling.

8. Read Chapter 6 "On the Death Train"

In late April of 1945, three groups were evacuated from Bergen-Belsen, all eventually to be liberated when the war was over. The Blumenthals, unfortunately, were in the last of the three; the one that suffered the longest. Why was their train coined the "Death Train"? Research typhus, pleurisy, tuberculosis, and lice; give a brief summary of each. What do you think was the biggest threat at this stage of the war? Explain your answer.

9. Study the 19 photographs that are included on pages 85 - 92. Select 5 of them to describe and on which to write your personal reflection/commentary.

10. Read Chapter 7 "Freedom and Sorrow"

Just as the title suggests, this chapter is filled with "good news/bad news", contrasting situations. Make a chart on which you compare and contrast some of these poignant events.

11. Read Chapter 8 "Holland Again"

Six-and-one-half years passed between the times when Marion and her family lived in Holland. They returned as very changed people. What physical,

family, and emotional differences had occurred in those six-and-one-half years?

Life seemed to be coming together for Marion, her brother, and her mother; yet they decided to change plans once again and head for America. What caused that change?

12. Read Chapter 9 "America At Last"

What was significant about the date (4/28/48) when the Blumenthals landed in Hoboken, New Jersey?

Imagine being aboard the *Veendam*, seeing the Statue of Liberty for the very first time. Journal a page or two about your reaction.

Marion is quoted as saying that she was in a state of bewilderment and awe from the moment she left the ship. What was New York City like in 1948? Research the time period, highlighting one of the following aspects of the American culture of that time. Prepare a brief presentation based on your findings. Have your method of presentation approved by Mrs. Brennan.

1. movies
2. music
3. books
4. cost of living
5. automobiles and other inventions
6. sports
7. famous people
8. politics/government

9. population
10. food
11. art
12. New York City

13. The Blumenthal's hard working ethic paid off and after many years of hardship and heartache beyond belief, they found happiness and peace. After reading this poignant autobiography, what questions might you have for Mrs. Marion Blumenthal Lazan when you meet her?

Evaluation:

You will be evaluated according to this rubric. The maximum points possible, at the culmination of this unit, is .