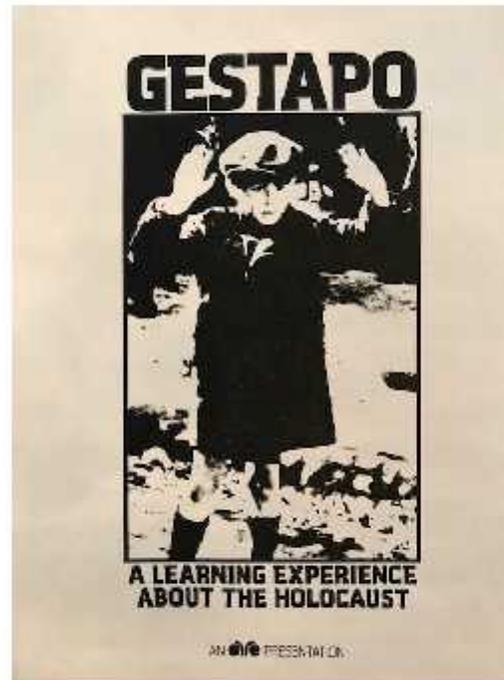


Playing Holocaust: The Origins of the Controversial *Gestapo* Simulation Game



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- Holocaust Uniqueness Activity
- Origins and controversy around the game
- Play the game

Controversy about Holocaust simulations

- Max Nadel of the American Association for Jewish Education, “turning classrooms into concentration camps was excessive,” *New York Times*, article “New Debate on the Holocaust,” 1980
- “The proliferation of sensitized books and popularized television programs and films has dishonored the victims and rendered the public insensitive to the tragedy...we need to regain our sense of sacredness,” Elie Wiesel, 1980
- “Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such activities, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound.”— *USHMM Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust*, 1993
- Simulations were “a drastic oversimplification of Holocaust history.”— Sam Totten, 2000

Controversy about Holocaust simulations

- “When I first entered Ms. Bess’s classroom with elaborate biases against simulations, I was unaware of just how morally complicated simulations necessarily are. Although I did not leave Ms. Bess’s simulation unwary of their potential pitfalls, my admiration for the successes of this simulation in particular overwhelmed my prejudices...while simulations do not *necessarily* trivialize Holocaust history, nor *necessarily* lead students to learn about the Holocaust as a trivialized event, this does not mean that simulations cannot or do not often do so.” — Simone Schweber, *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice*



What was he thinking?

- In 1969, at the annual meeting of General Assembly of Jewish Federations in Boston, protest of young students demanding that Jewish educational materials be updated to be more relevant to their lives. Zwerin, Reform Rabbi from Denver, co-founded Alternatives in Religious Education (A.R.E) Publishing Company in 1973.
- “Until the late 1960s, religious texts had the look of the late 1940s...history textbooks consisted of black and white stuff, written for their grandparents, by a generation of assimilationists.” Zwerin
- Citing “values clarification,” he designs *Holocaust: A Study in Values* and *Gestapo: A Learning Experience about the Holocaust*, published in 1976.

What was he thinking?

- Zwerin played the game survivors, and “survivors are the poorest at surviving it.” This was logical, he explained, “it was sheer dumb luck in most cases that people survived... a time out place every once in a while, a piece of bread that wasn’t expected...that sort of thing that kept people alive another day.”
- “They think this game turns the Holocaust into something banal, but it’s the facts of the Holocaust turned into an experience that people can use to understand what the Holocaust is all about.”

▶ Gestapo: A Learning Experience about the Holocaust

- Uniqueness: Definitional, Historical, Metaphysical
- My own experiences
- Lets Play