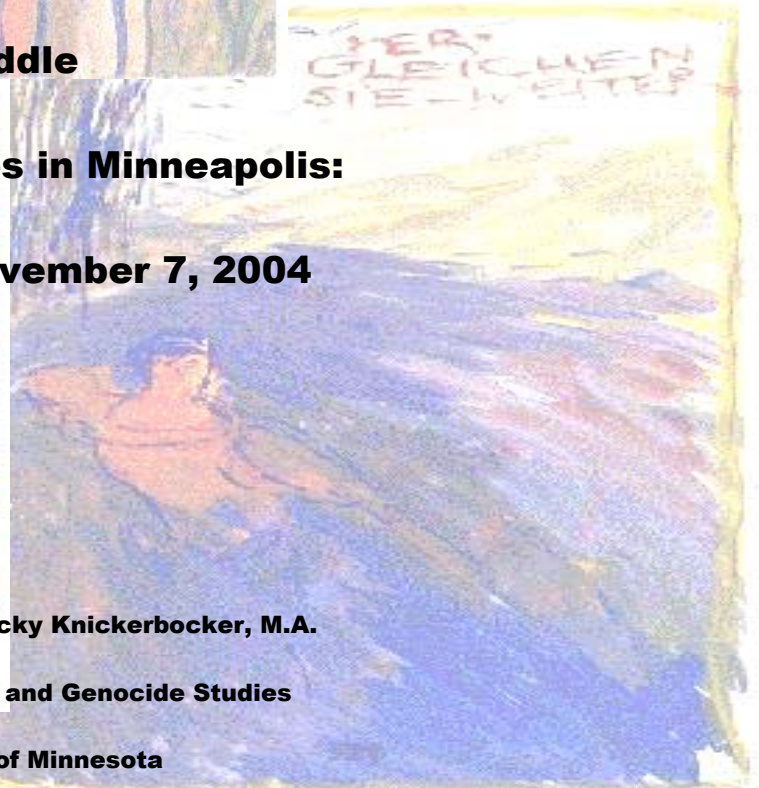
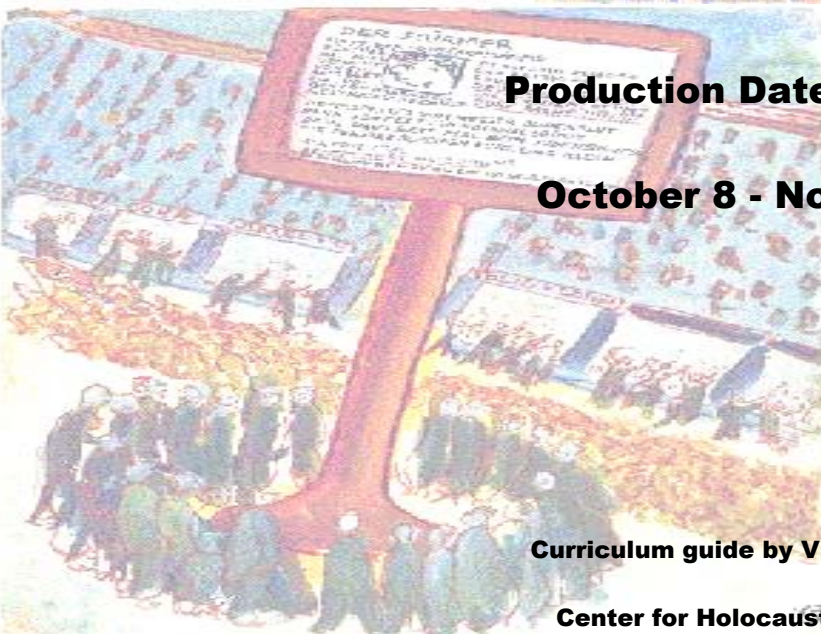


**CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR**  
**“A COMPANY OF ANGELS: THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE SALOMON”**  
**A PRODUCTION OF IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST PUPPET AND**  
**MASK THEATRE, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**  
**A Horse + Bamboo Production (UK) By Bob Frith and Alison**

**Duddle**

**Production Dates in Minneapolis:**

**October 8 - November 7, 2004**



**Curriculum guide by Vicky Knickerbocker, M.A.**

**Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

**University of Minnesota**

## **Introduction: Charlotte Salomon in the Context of Promoting Holocaust Education**

Perhaps, one of the greatest challenges facing Holocaust educators is how to make the lessons they teach educationally stimulating and thought-provoking. Two of the most important teaching strategies recommended by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for achieving this educational objective are: (1) to contextualize and (2) to personalize the history of the Holocaust. According to experts, teaching only about the facts or statistics alone is very short-sighted as it marginalizes the significance of human involvement. Educators contend the events of the Holocaust were not inevitable but occurred because individuals or groups of individuals made personal decisions to act or not to act. Providing students with first hand accounts and testimonies of what occurred during the Holocaust is highly recommended as these types of teaching strategies humanize and personalize what happen during these tragic times. Many Holocaust scholars contend it is important for students of all ages to learn what happened during this time frame and why, so they will be less inclined to act so cruelly or inhumanely in the future. The Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jews and half a million Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), was not carried out by barbarians, but by ordinary people who decided to follow a leader whose ideas, based on hate and prejudice, were very clear from the outset.

It is not surprising that *The Diary of Anne Frank* continues to be one of the most widely used Holocaust memoirs in middle and high school settings in the United States and around the world. Even the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, quotes Anne Frank, whose *Diary* he read while in prison. Most adolescent students who read this book can quickly relate to the coming of age struggles Anne experiences during the two years her family spent in hiding from the Nazis. Anne's *Diary* also fosters students' empathy and compassion for Holocaust victims as she personally recounts how Nazi ideology based on racism, bigotry, and prejudice negatively influenced the quality of her life as well as that of many other innocent victims. Indeed, Anne's *Diary* shows students the crucial role writing can play in promoting greater truth about historical events, like the Holocaust. Although Anne should be greatly admired and respected for her courageous act of defiance, it is important to remember that she was not alone in dramatizing the plight of the victim. Several other artists and writers including Freidl Dicker-Brandeis, Helga Weisssova-Hoskova, Felix Nussbaum, Emanuel Ringelblum, Mina Pachter, Abraham Lewin, Bedrich Fritta and Charlotte Salomon did so as well.

The University of Minnesota's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies is proud to be part of a local theater production in Minneapolis during Fall 2004 when *In the Heart of the Beast a Puppet and Mask Theatre* presents the Horse-Bamboo Theatre's production of a "Company of Angels: The Story of Charlotte Salomon."

## **WHO WAS CHARLOTTE SALOMON?**

Charlotte Salomon was a young Jewish woman living in Germany whose life, like those of other German and European Jews, intersected with the rise of National Socialism (NAZIS). She became an extremely gifted artist who created one of the most remarkable and compelling visual memoirs of her own life and the times in which she lived. Exiled to the south of France in 1939, she spent the last years of her life producing over 1,000 gouache paintings with extensive texts that dramatically chronicle the events of her life. Charlotte organized these visual images into an autobiographic play, which she titled "LIFE OR THEATRE?" Creating this personal memoir strengthened Charlotte's will and passion for living in a time when mass murder and suicide were common everyday occurrences in Nazi-occupied Europe. Just before she was deported to the Auschwitz death camp in October 1943, she wrapped these

images in a brown bag and left them with a Dr. Moridis, the village doctor of Villefranche. She asked him to take care of them as they were her life's work. Like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Charlotte's vision diary was a hidden document that surfaced after the end of the war to reveal an intimate memoir of this terrible period of twentieth century history—what it was, why it happened, and what its tragic outcomes were.

Based on her paintings, *Company of Angels* focuses on Charlotte's childhood, her struggle against a family history of suicides and secrets, and how she later turned to art for survival. Using Horse + Bamboo's uniquely vivid style, which combines masks, puppetry, movement and specially composed music - and no dialogue - *Company of Angels* animates the life story and artistic vision of a passionate young woman caught up in the tragedy of the Holocaust. This study guide has been developed by local Holocaust educators to prepare students for attending and learning from this unique theatrical tribute.

This study guide is based on information obtained from several educational resources. These are:

1. Mary Lowenthal Felstiner's biography, *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era* (New York, Harper Collins, 1994). The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies has a few copies that may be borrowed short-term. The book is also available on line from Amazon.com in paperback edition.
2. *Charlotte: Life or Theatre?: An Autobiographical Play* by Charlotte Salomon translated by Leila Vennewitz. This is a comprehensive view of all of Charlotte's paintings.
3. An international journal article, "Company of Angels" authored by Lesley Ferris published in the *Theatre Forum* (Issue 25, Fall-Summer 2004))
4. A teaching guide, *Teaching about the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators* published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum available on line at: <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/>
5. The Jewish Historical Museum's website, [www.jhm.nl](http://www.jhm.nl)
6. The University of Minnesota's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies's Website, [www.chgs.umn.edu](http://www.chgs.umn.edu)

### **Significant Dates in the life of Charlotte Salomon**

<b>1913</b>	Her aunt, Charlotte Grunwald commits suicide by drowning.
<b>1916</b>	Charlotte's parents, Albert and Franziska, are married.
<b>April 16, 1917</b>	Charlotte is born and named in memory of her deceased aunt.
<b>February 1926</b>	Her mother, Franziska, commits suicide
<b>1927-1933</b>	Charlotte attends school in Berlin. Her father Albert Salomon marries the singer Paula Lindberg, a singer identified as Paulinka Bimbam in Charlotte's text.

**1933** Hitler comes to power.  
Charlotte leaves school: she begins to receive private art lessons.  
Her grandparents, the Grunwalds leave Germany for Rome and in 1934 settle in Villefranche on the French Riviera.

Charlotte secures admission to the Art Academy in Berlin despite her Jewish “racial” background. She attends this school for about three years before she is excluded and expelled as a Jew.

**Nov. 9, 1938** Kristallnacht (“Night of Broken Glass” in Germany and Austria), following the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a despondent Jewish refugee there. Charlotte later paints this event with the words “Perish Judea.” Some regard this as the beginning of the Holocaust.

**Nov. 10, 1938** Albert Salomon is arrested and brought to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, about 40 miles North of Berlin. With help of the resistance, his wife Paula is able to secure his release.

**January, 1939** Charlotte leaves for the South of France to live with her grandparents. In the spring of this year, her father and stepmother, Albert and Paula, flee to Amsterdam.

**Early, 1940** Charlotte leaves Villefranche with her grandparents. They move to Nice.

**March 20, 1940** Grandmother Grunwald commits suicide. German Jews during the 1920s and 1930s had the highest suicide rate in the world. The diagnosis of this in Charlotte’s family is probably linked in modern terms to depression and chemical imbalances.

**June-July, 1940** Charlotte and her grandfather are interned in the French detention camp at Gurs. The camp, about 50 miles from the Spanish border, was situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains northwest of Oloron-Sainte-Marie. All the non-French Jews in the district were detained there. For a sense of what the French camps were like, see the image by Felix Nussbaum, who was also detained in Gurs and St. Cyprien. <http://www.legacy-project.org/arts/display.html?ID=614>

The prisoners in this camp were forced into labor brigades where many died of hunger, exposure, and disease. Charlotte’s grandfather was released because of his age and she was allowed to accompany him as his attendant. They return to Nice. Shortly thereafter, she begins work on *Life or Theatre?*

**February, 1943** Grandfather Grunwald dies and Charlotte returns to Villefranche.

**June 17, 1943** Charlotte marries Alexander Nagler, a Jewish refugee from Austria who also fled to Nice.

**Sept. 21 or 24, 1943** Mr. and Mrs. Nagler are picked up and interrogated by the Gestapo in Nice. Within a few days, they are transported to Drancy. The Drancy camp, named after the northeastern suburb of Paris in which it was located, was established by the Germans in August 1941 as an internment camp for foreign Jews in France; it later became the major transit camp for the deportations of Jews from France to Auschwitz.

**Oct. 7, 1943** Charlotte and Alexander are transported to Auschwitz.

**Oct. 10, 1943** Charlotte Salomon and Alexander Nagler arrive in Auschwitz. Charlotte, four months pregnant, is murdered on arrival. Alexander survives until January 1, 1944 when he dies in the gas chambers.

Ottile Moore, an American expatriate who had been living in France and who had befriended Charlotte, returns to Villefranche. Dr. Moridis gives Moore Charlotte's precious packages of art, as Charlotte had dedicated this life project to her.

**1947** Charlotte's parents travel to Villefranche. Ottile Moore presents Charlotte's artwork to them.

**1961** First exhibition of *Life or Theatre?* at the Fodor Museum in Amsterdam.

**1963** Publication of the first book about Charlotte Salomon.

**1971** All of the art works, *Life or Theatre?* are donated by Albert and Paula Salomon to the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam where they remain housed today. All of the works can be seen on the web site: [http://www.jhm.nl/e\\_col-inf/e\\_charlotte/frame\\_charlotte.htm](http://www.jhm.nl/e_col-inf/e_charlotte/frame_charlotte.htm)

**1971-2004.** The paintings and texts from *Life or Theatre?* are shown infrequently at major museums in Europe and the United States owing to the fragile nature of the original works.

### **DRAMATIC ACTION IN THE STORY LINE:**

The major characters of this story are given pseudonyms by Charlotte.

### **CHARLOTTE SALOMON**



Charlotte Salomon's Self-Portrait from *Life or Theatre?* as Charlotte Kann and a photo at right of Charlotte Salomon.

Charlotte is the only child born to Dr. Albert and Franze (Franziska) Knarre Kann) Salomon. Called "Lotte" by her friends and family members, she is a shy and sensitive child whose mother dies unexpectedly when she is 8. Some of her favorite childhood pastimes were reading books, attending musical concerts, and drawing. After she quits high school at age 16, her father hires a private tutor to strengthen Charlotte's ambition to become an artist. This specialized training helps her secure admission

to the Art Academy in Berlin as its only Jewish student. Initially, Charlotte is treated with respect by her instructors and other classmates, but over time they treat her less kindly by ridiculing her artwork, reducing the amount of art instruction she receives, segregating her from her classmates and eventually expelling her from the art academy for being a "degenerate" artist. "Degenerate Art," anything based on imagination and modernist techniques, was the opposite of what was supposed to be ideal German art, based on realistic and heroic military and labor themes. A few months later, she is sent to live with her grandparents in Nice, France to escape further Nazi persecution. Living as a refugee in France proved to be a very difficult and traumatizing experience for Charlotte and her grandparents. Charlotte turns to her love of music, art, and drama to help her cope. Ultimately, she will produce a very creative and extensive visual memoir.

### **Dr. Albert Salomon**



### **In Life or Theatre? Charlotte's parents Dr. Kann and his wife, Franziska**

Dr. Albert Salomon married Franziska Grunwald in 1915. Their only child, Charlotte, was born in 1917. Eight years later Franziska, a depressed and lonely women committed suicide. When Franziska died, Charlotte was told her mother's death was not self-inflicted, but resulted from influenza. This family secret was kept well guarded by Charlotte's father and several other family members. Shortly after his wife's death, Albert became a professor and taught at the University medical college until 1933 when he lost his teaching position because of the exclusion of all Jewish medical doctors. He then worked as a surgeon at the Berlin Jewish hospital. He had remarried in 1930. His new wife was Paula Lindberg, a rising musical star. After the Nazis (NSDAP) came to power in January 1933, Paula finds her singing career severely limited because of racial issues. Following Kristallnacht (November 9 -10, 1938), Albert was arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. With the help of the resistance, Paula managed to gain his release. In January 1939 Charlotte escaped Germany for what she thought would be a safe haven in France Albert and Paula flee to Holland. Tragically, Charlotte never saw them again. World War II began on September 1, 1939. France and the Low Countries were attacked by the German army on May 10, 1940 and defeated by June 22 when the armistice was signed. France was divided into the German Occupied Zone in the North which included the northern coasts and Paris, while the other two-fifths of the country became known as Vichy France under the leadership of

84-year old General Petain. The Vichy Government collaborated with the Germans in the deportation of French Jews to Poland, most of whom died in the death camps. German forces took control of Southern France in November 1942. Germany allowed Italian forces to occupy this area, as it had been part of Northern Italy before 1860. The Italians ignored the German race laws. As a result, between 20,000 and 40,000 Jews from all parts of Europe had fled to the area as a refuge. It was only on September 15, 1943 that policy changed with the arrival the German SS under Alois Brunner, who began to assemble lists and organize the deportation of the Jews. One of the other Jews who was deported from Nice was Simone Veil, who survived Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen camps to become the first president of the European Parliament in 1984.

## **GRANDPARENTS: THE GRUNWALDS**



In *Life or Theatre?* (left) Ludwig and Marianne Grunwald became Dr. and Mrs. Knarre

Charlotte's grandparents played a very protective role in Charlotte's life. On several occasions, she was sent to live with them when there was a family crisis, such as the death of her mother and the remarriage of her father. In 1939, she was sent to live with her grandparents in France to evade Nazi race laws and persecution. Although Charlotte felt safer and more relaxed in France, this security came at a great price. The Grunwalds were humbled and ashamed to be so dependent on others for sheltering them. They also depleted their financial assets to pay for their safe havens. In 1939, Charlotte's despairing and panic-stricken grandmother committed suicide. This tragic event prompted Charlotte's grandfather to make an abrupt disclosure--he finally told Charlotte the truth about how her mother had died. Thereafter, Charlotte and her grandfather share a very strained and difficult relationship.

As time passed, Charlotte perceived her grandfather as a needy, self-centered man who did not appreciate who she was or her painting. Given this jarring relationship, Charlotte used the pseudonym Knarre (a word which means a rattling sound, with hints of the German *narren*, "to fool") to identify his character.

## PAULA LINDBERG-SALOMON



In *Life or Theatre?* Paula Lindberg-Salomon (photo on right) becomes Paulinka Bimbam

In 1929, Charlotte's father married the popular singer Paula Lindberg who played a very active and supportive role in raising Charlotte. Like many teens, Charlotte shared an intense but ambivalent relationship with her step-mother. Even though Charlotte adored her stepmother, there were times when she deliberately acted out her emotions, simply to annoy Paula. In 1933, Paula was no longer able to sing in public because she was a Jew. To compensate for the Nazi-imposed restrictions, she began working with the Jewish Cultural Association (*Kulturbund*), an organization run by and for Jews that was permitted by the German government. This organization was established to provide a safe space for Jewish artists to perform for an exclusively Jewish public in community centers, in synagogues, and sometimes in private homes. Alfred Wolfsohn arrived on the scene around this time as a fan of Paula and a voice teacher. He developed a complex relationship with the Salomon family, having strong sentiments for Paula Salomon and later he became Charlotte's first love. He survived the Holocaust by fleeing to England. In Charlotte's paintings he is referred to as "Amadeus Daberlohn, prophet of song."

## Alfred Wolfsohn



In *Life or Theatre?* Alfred Wolfsohn (left) becomes "Amadeus Daberlohn"

Charlotte met Alfred in 1937 when he was sent to the Salomon residence to become Paula's singing instructor. As a young woman, Charlotte was deeply infatuated with Alfred because she admired his determination, his idealism and his philosophies for living. Charlotte was particularly impressed by the

fact that Alfred was able to become a very talented musician and voice instructor even after being seriously wounded in World War I. They shared a brief romantic encounter that meant much more to Charlotte than it did to Alfred. During this relationship, Alfred became Charlotte's art mentor. He greatly encouraged her passion for art by telling her that she had great potential, but she must reach into the inner depths of her being to discover her most hidden talents. Charlotte adopted this idea and made it the cornerstone of her autobiographical visual memoir. Charlotte gave Alfred his pseudonym because it associates him with the famous Baroque composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. "Daber(n)Lohn" in German references the fact that he has no income, much like Mozart who died a pauper.

### **Integrating story, painting, history and the theatrical production.**

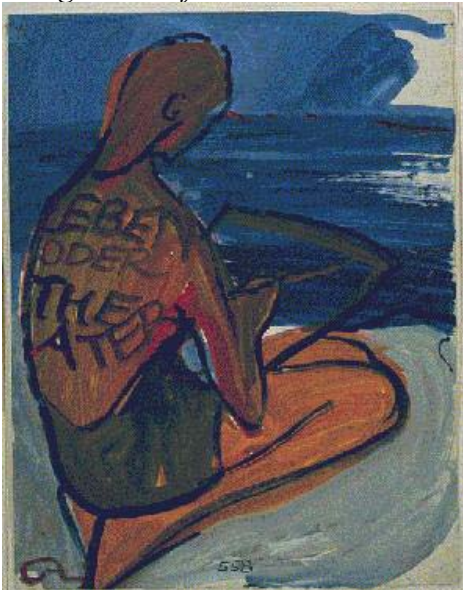
*Taking a closer look at Charlotte's art – what do you see?*

*It is recommended that teachers show the following three images to their students before they attend the play. Teachers could use image #1 to introduce the story of Charlotte Salomon to their students by asking them questions about this picture? What do you think this is a picture of? Who do you think created this image? And why?*

*Ask them to write a short summary about what they see in this picture. Compare these summaries.*

*After having this group discussion, teachers could tell their students who the real artist is and why she painted this picture. The enclosed time line and brief descriptions of the main characters will help students become more familiar with Charlotte's story. Use images #2 and #3 to prompt greater discussion about what Charlotte's art tells us about this young artist, her family members, her life experiences, and the world she grew up in.*

*Image #1-- Life or Theatre?*



*"The war waged on and I sat by the sea and saw deep into the heart of humankind." Charlotte Salomon, 1942*

*Strategy: Inform your students that Charlotte spent the last few years of her life creating an autobiographic play consisting of more than 1000 painted images overlaid by written text, stage directions, and theatrical captions. This artistic project was undertaken shortly after Charlotte's grandmother committed suicide in 1940 and Charlotte was told that her mother and aunt had also committed suicide. At this point in her life, she asked herself, "Should I take my own life or undertake something wildly unusual?" She chose to dig deeper, in the hope of finding out whether her life had meaning and was worth living.*

*Charlotte described her life's work as a singspiel, a combination of music, words, and visuals for dramatic presentation. Life or Theatre? is divided into acts and scenes, somewhat taking the form of a musical work, sometimes a comedy and always bordering on the tragic. This artistic endeavor is structured like a play or opera having a prologue, a main section, and an epilogue.*

*Charlotte used three primary colors to distinguish parts of this play: blue was for the prologue, red for the main section, and yellow for the epilogue. The prologue covers Charlotte's early years in Berlin, until 1939. The main section focuses primarily on her great love, the voice teacher Alfred Wolfsohn, and his relationship with both Charlotte and her step-mother, the opera singer Paula Salomon-Lindberg. The epilogue describes her life experiences living in France from 1939 to 1942. Charlotte related this story as a third person narrative. Therefore, she never uses the word "I" to refer to herself.*

*Charlotte also used some film techniques in creating this artistic memoir. For example, there are several shots in one picture, with sudden close-ups and the camera zooming in and out in succession. She drew other images where several "talking hands" were painted with words beside them. It has been noted that this imagery is similar to that used in animated films where characters converse in lengthy monologues with ever changing faces.*

*Music is another artistic element Charlotte used to heighten the mood and emphasize the emotion of the painted images she created. Sometimes, the music she selected was complimentary, while at other times it was quite the opposite. Thus, she was able to give particular images quite an ironic twist.*

*The last image she painted is the one of herself holding a paintbrush in her hand, facing out to the sea. She filled her back with a blaze of color and added the German words "Leben or Theatre?" in bold print. Charlotte also added a taped-on caption to this image that read, "Out of this, arose Life or Theatre???"*

*Ask your students if they feel this is a fitting conclusion. Why or why not? Would it be better as the first image, rather than the last one?*

*All of these artistic images can found on a website produced by the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. This website's address is:*

*[http://www.jhm.nl/collectie/museumvervaardiger.asp?al\\_muvvbriefstartfrom=1&al\\_muvvdisplay=brief&al\\_muvvFLD0=W1&al\\_muvvVAL0=Salomon%2C%20Charlotte](http://www.jhm.nl/collectie/museumvervaardiger.asp?al_muvvbriefstartfrom=1&al_muvvdisplay=brief&al_muvvFLD0=W1&al_muvvVAL0=Salomon%2C%20Charlotte)*

*Another unique observation teachers can point out about Charlotte's visual memoir is that it addresses a taboo subject—suicide. Suicide, not often mentioned by other Holocaust survivors can be verified statistically. Charlotte informs us that although at least three of her family members had*

*committed suicide, no one wanted to talk about it or admit the truth about how these deaths had taken place.*

*In her own words, Charlotte tells us what type of obituary appeared in the Berlin paper after her mother died in 1926:*

*“After a short period of suffering, our beloved daughter, wife, and mother, Franziska Knarre Kann, passed away. We ask that you abstain from condolence visits.” (Felstiner, p. 12)*

*When her grandmother commits suicide in 1940, the death certificate reads:*

*20 March 1940, Marianne Benda died in her home, Villa, “Eugenie,” Avenue Neuscheller: born in Berlin, Germany, on 24 July 1867, daughter of George Benda and of a mother whose names are not known, wife of Grunwald whose first name is not known. No other information. (Felstiner, p. 112)*

*This death notice, like the obituary above it, concealed some important pieces of information, such as how the individual actually died, who they were related to, and contact information about surviving family members. However, this begets a more interesting question even in the world of the year 2004. Do obituaries written today indicate suicide if that is the cause of death?*

*Teachers may want to discuss with students why such great measures were taken to conceal the truth about these suicides and what the consequences of maintaining this type of secrecy were.*

*Asking students to do further research about suicide rates in this historical time frame will increase their awareness of who was most likely to commit suicide. According to author Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, “Franze Salomon’s suicide took place in a nation with one of the highest suicide rates in the world, in a province and capital with the highest rate in the nation, in a city with the highest ratio of female suicides, in a class with the highest rate among classes, in a faith with the highest proportion among faiths.” Felstiner contends that Franze’s death was not anomalous, it was exemplary. (Felstiner, p. 14)*

*One of the most serious consequences of maintaining this secrecy is that nothing is ever done to find out more why suicide is so prevalent among certain groups. In this historical time frame, it was far easier to blame the Jews for these epidemic suicides. Charlotte suggested a common explanation for “the relatively high rate among Jewish women stems from their inability to adapt to a difficult situation” or from “physiological processes in the female organism.” (Felstiner, p. 16) In the world of the 1920’s Berlin, those who committed suicide were viewed as “social misfits” and represented a great threat to how Jewish families were perceived by others. Therefore, Charlotte’s family took great efforts not to let others know so that they would not be judged in a negative light or as inferior.*

*To further increase students’ awareness of how suicide has been viewed and dealt with historically, teachers could invite a local mental health professional to their classroom. This guest lecturer would also help students gain new insights about how suicide continues to affect the lives of many Americans, including their friends, neighbors, and family members.*

Image #2: "The chair, shoes, fruit, and sunflower make this picture an homage to Van Gogh".



**Strategy:** This is an image that gives us broader knowledge about Charlotte's life ambitions and struggle to become a respected artist. It is one she painted while recalling the patronizing and sarcastic comments one of her former art instructors had made about her artistic abilities. She remembered a frustrating experience when a tutor engaged by her parents asks her to count the leaves on a cactus plant as an exercise.

Many years later, Charlotte created this image in which "flouts, the courteous 'nice gift' with a wild assemblage—sunflower, shoes, chair, fruit, vase, sky—an homage to Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh who was also told he did not have any talent. (Feinstiner, p. 37 and image #193 in *Charlotte* (New York, The Viking Press, 1981))

This painting shows us that Charlotte could rebel and take pride in the fact that she could paint many things, not just cactus leaves. It shows us a woman who was willing to think and act differently. In the classroom, this image could be used to prompt additional discussion about how Charlotte was able to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to express herself in such an independent way. As mentioned earlier in this curriculum, it was not easy for Charlotte to secure and maintain enrollment in Berlin's prestigious Art Academy because she was a Jew. Initially, she was barred from mixing with the other students because she won an art competition which publicly embarrassed her art teachers. Charlotte's best friend, Barbara recalled how this incident took place:

"One day Bartning said: now you all draw a picture to exhibit—it should be a still life. Our products will be hung, the door will be closed, and the professors began the selection. There were no names on the pictures, and I guess they chose Lotte's. But when the name became known, they told her

*casually that I had received the prize. I believe they did not award Lotte because if her name had appeared in the press, a lot of things would have come out. . .”*

*After she is forbidden to come during the day, she came at night. Finally, in the summer of 1938, just after Hitler’s Degenerate Art Show was exhibited in Berlin, Charlotte’s enrollment at the Art Academy was terminated. (Feinstiner, p. 65)*

*Even after she was expelled, Charlotte continued to study art books and attend art exhibits sponsored by the Jewish Cultural Association headed by Kurt Singer. At this time, Charlotte’s father may have shown her the artwork of Marc Chagall, which is later reflected in her visual autobiography.*

*Image #3: The following image also focuses on the theme of anti-Semitism and the rise of National Socialism.*



*“The Swastika—a symbol of hope—  
The day for freedom and for bread now dawns”*

### **Strategy: Rise of National Socialism to Power (NAZIS):**

*Charlotte painted as a memory of the day when the Nazis come to power. The date January 30, 1933 is in the image (Europeans write the day first, followed by month and then year). The backward swastika reflects perhaps her disillusionment with Hitler’s promise of restoring national pride and unity to Germany. It also shows group conformity and “Brown-Shirt” mentality as the Nazi approach was to create a uniform image of power and support. Not only does everyone in the parade of Brown-Shirts look the same, but the painting has no border, suggesting an endless and frightening sight to the young artist.*

*The Brown Shirts (Sturmabteilung) were the private army of the Nazis, founded in 1921. They were made of unemployed and disgruntled veterans from World War I, convicts, and especially men who had thought that Germany had not been defeated in the World War I but had been “stabbed in the back” by “Jews and Bolsheviks.”*

*This image is followed by another in which Charlotte depicts a mob of people gathered around a poster produced by Der Sturmer, a popular Nazi anti-Semitic publication, produced by Julius Streicher. This propaganda poster with the face of an ugly and evil looking Jew on it declares, “The Jew had just made money from your blood! The Jewish bosses financed the World War.”*



Images like this one were used to promote violence against the Jews as they depicted Jews in a very negative and demeaning ways. They insinuated that Jews were “enemies of the state” to be feared, despised, and annihilated.

## **Questions:**

- \*\*Reflect on how negative statements and propaganda are used today to demonize groups, even in a democratic society.
- \*\*Is there a difference between propaganda and advertising?
- \*\*If one supports the doctrine of free speech, should those who hate be allowed to express their hatred openly?
- \*\*Julius Streicher, editor of *Der Sturmer*, was executed as a war criminal at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial in 1945. Did he deserve this fate for exercising free speech?
- \*\*How does the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution read? How does it compare with the Weimar Republic, Germany’s government at this time? How does American doctrine on free speech compare with other countries around the world today?

The American Bill of Rights was ratified on December 15, 1791. The First Amendment reads as follows:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

*Propaganda also played a leading role in stripping Jewish people of their human rights. Paula Salmon-Lindberg was one of the first in Charlotte’s family to experience this abrupt reality when she was forced to leave the stage when a Nazi in the audience rose and demanded that she leave the stage when he shouted “Raus!” (“Away!”) because she was a Jewish singer.*

*Recalling this degrading experience, Charlotte painted a scene where Paula is attacked on stage, when the audience shrieks “RAUS” (“OUT!”) at the crescendo of an aria she is singing.*



### **QUESTIONS:**

\*\*Reflecting on this image, what would you do if someone stopped a performance because he or she did not like the race of the person singing, or their political views.

\*\*How would you define “bystander?”

\*\*By doing nothing do other individuals in the audience support the perpetrator and humiliate the victim?

\*\*Edmund Burke, a member of the British Parliament and author of Reflections on the Revolution in France (1791) once remarked that “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.” Does this painting reflect such an evil moment?

*Another disruptive scene she painted shows her father being ruthlessly crossed out in the middle of a surgery. Indeed, he was stripped of his professorship in 1933.*

## **QUESTIONS:**

- \*\*When a well-trained surgical medical doctor is asked to leave a hospital because of the race law and go on forced labor (later, in this case he finds employment in a Jewish hospital), who loses the most?
- \*\*If you had the misfortune of having to be a patient in the hospital, would you prefer treatment from people picked because of their racial background or because of their medical qualifications?
- \*\*If you needed a blood transfusion, would you care if the person who donated the blood was of a different race or ethnic group?

*Sharing this artwork could lead to a group discussion of why ordinary citizens acted in such a discriminatory and biased fashion. At this point, teachers should provide some historical background about the social, economic, and political climate that led to the rise of the Nazi party in the 1930's. A well constructed timeline of the Nazi rise to power is provided by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology at: [www.fcit.usf.edu/holocaust](http://www.fcit.usf.edu/holocaust)*

### **Other important educational lessons and questions Charlotte's story reflect upon are:**

1. *Personal memoirs are a valuable source of knowledge about what occurred during the Holocaust.*
2. *Creative expression was a legitimate means of Jewish resistance.*
3. *Men's and women's Holocaust experiences were very different. Examine how "Life or Theatre?" deals with this theme? Recall that "Life or Theatre?" is a woman's diary? How might some of the other characters have written the story if they would have had the opportunity to do so?*
4. *A great deal of human suffering occurred during the Holocaust from telling lies, keeping secrets, and perpetuating false images at all levels of society.*

These insights can be explored in greater detail by:

1. prompting a group discussion about the purpose of keeping a diary. This discussion could begin with some of the following questions:
  - a. What is a diary?
  - b. Who keeps a diary?
  - c. What type of information is kept in a diary?
  - d. How are diaries constructed?
  - e. Which is more effective—a diary that is written or one based on images?
2. encouraging individual students or groups of students to read three or four different Holocaust dairies, or diaries from other experiences that involve trauma and displacement and then compare/contrast how these authors' experiences are similar and different.

**Suggested diaries from the Holocaust era are:**

*The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank

*The Girl with Two Landscapes* by Lena Jebwab

*To Paint her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era* by Mary Lowenthal Flestiner

*The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* by Dawid Sierakowiak et al

*A Cup of Tears* by Abraham Lewin

*Ghetto Diary* by Janusz Korczak

These books feature a wealth of information about many different types of Holocaust events experienced by a wide range of individuals in several parts of Nazi-occupied Europe.

3. Showing students other ways that artistic expression was used to resist Nazi tyranny. This could be done by:

a. Reading the poem "The Last Butterfly" which was written by one of the children who lived in Terezin. (Copy this poem on a transparency so the students can read along with the instructor.)

After reading this poem to your students, ask them the following questions:

1. who do you think wrote this poem?
2. what types of life experiences do you think generated this poem?
3. to what is the poem referring?
4. how does this poem make you feel?

Then, introduce your students to the book *The Last Butterfly* which is a compilation of poems and drawings created by children who were deported to the Terezin (Theresienstadt) Concentration Camp between 1942 and 1944. These artistic images exist today because they were hidden so that these children's memories could be honored and preserved. They serve as a lasting reminder of the type of human destruction that occurred during the Holocaust and inspire all of us to prevent these types of human atrocities from ever happening again.

b. Showing students a photo of a Ringelblum milk can. Displaying this photo can prompt some additional discussion about what this artifact is, who might own one of these items, and what they are commonly used for. Then, introduce them to the story of Jewish Resistance led by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum and other members of a secret organization named, *Oneg Shabbat*. This group of writers, teachers, and historians kept diaries, wrote papers, and collected documents. They stored this archival information in three milk cans and buried them in the cellars of several Warsaw buildings. To learn more about this clandestine operation, teachers could have students read excerpts from *The Cup of Tears* by Abraham Lewin or *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* by Emmanuel Ringelblum.

c. Showing students a photo of Yad Vashem's (Israel's National Holocaust Memorial and Museum) memorial sculpture that honors the great Polish-Jewish educator Dr. Korczak. This outstanding sculpture shows Dr. Korczak standing in the center of a group of children sheltering them with his body and his outstretched, embracing arms. This image can be used to introduce your students to Dr. Korczak and the orphaned children who lived in the Warsaw ghetto. They can learn more about who these children were and what their lives were like living in this Nazi-imposed Polish

ghetto by reading the book *Ghetto Diary* by Janusz Korczak. This diary, describes some of the resourceful, innovative and creative ways Dr. Korczak used to take care of these children and to nurture their development, despite the pessimistic environment of a ghetto, which Charlotte Salomon did not experience herself. His diary, like "*Life or Theatre?*" survived even though he did not. When the mass deportation of children in the Warsaw Ghetto began in early August, 1942, Janusz Korczak was deported with his charges to the *Umshlagplatz*. Here, he was given a second chance to return to the ghetto, but refused and went with the children to the trains and to the gas chambers of Treblinka. Today, Janusz Korczak is commemorated as a Holocaust hero because of his unwavering commitment to serving his children at a time when they needed him the most.

## **PROJECTS:**

1. Students may be asked to write or paint about important events in their lives. Would their work look like that of Charlotte Salomon?
2. Ask students if they have interviewed relatives, especially grandparents, about stories of life in the USA or other places, about childhood, oppression, traumas and positive life experiences. As many people were born outside the United States, this provides a welcome opportunity for story telling.
3. Have students do audio or video interviews of family members or neighbors and friends about past events.

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From: Serge Klasfeld, Memorial to the Jews Deported from Europe, 1942-1944/ New York. Beate Klasfeld Foundation, 515 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022. 1983. LC: 83-70278, pp. 455-461

Related document: [Full list of Convoy Number 60 from France to Auschwitz, which carried Charlotte Salomon Nagler and her husband to their deaths.](#)