

Secret Messages Exchanged Between Holocaust Prisoners

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Group Website

Student-Composed Words: 1,182

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Process Paper Words: 441

In the book, "Hiding Place," the author Corrie ten Boom describes how she sent a secret code back to her family while in a concentration camp. After reading her captivating story, we were inspired to dig deeper into other instances of an exchange of secret messages during the Holocaust and discovered the story of Krystyna Czyż, sisters Janine and Krystyna Iwańska, and Wanda Wójtasik. Their story, similar to Boom's, concerns messages exchanged between prisoners inside a camp and their loved ones. Evidently, it is very relevant to the topic of communication as it involves the exchange of information.

Once we had read our first book regarding the subject, expanding the horizons of our research was much easier. We began by learning more about the Holocaust in general, and this investigation comprised the majority of our secondary sources. Through the use of many primary sources, we were able to identify photographs taken of mailed letters between individuals being held captive at the concentration camps to their loved ones outside. With the addition of other documents - such as the testimony given by a select few prisoners - we had amassed a profound amount of knowledge.

The creation of our project had begun once we had conducted the initial research, so after building a strong foundation of understanding, we proceeded to organize our sources and brainstorm the layout of our webpage. We spent much time discussing what we would include on the site, whether it was the color scheme or preferred implementation of images. Turning our vision into a reality was the most challenging task, and as a result, it was the one we spent the most time on. We tested out various layouts, picked our favorite, and continued from there. The finishing touches - transferring information, choosing media clips, cropping pictures - were completed relatively quickly, which left us with time to make edits if necessary.

Although most information relating to what was occurring inside of the concentration camps during the time was kept hidden, these letters exchanged allowed for this knowledge to be understood by the general public. Additionally, without these disguised lines of communication, many women being held captive - including Krystyna Czyż, sisters Janine and Krystyna Iwańska, and Wanda Wójtasik - would never have been released from camp Ravensbrück.

The letters allowed for the news of their capture to be publicly known before the war ended and for the justice system to dole out punishments to the perpetrators. 20 doctors from several camps were tried as war criminals by a United States military court in the first of the postwar Nuremberg trials. Seven of them received death sentences and seven others got long prison sentences.