

**Holocaust Education for
English Language Learners:**
Say What You Mean

Consider

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Consider the importance of specific language and vocabulary used by the survivors to describe their experiences. Consider how the Nazis used language to misinform their victims. The Germans did not use euphemisms in order to hide the truth about what they were doing to Jews. Instead, they purposely misled the Jews and the world. Their intention was to fool and trick people about their real plans. Because the Germans lied, the Jews did not understand the Nazi plan and in the beginning, were unable to react to what was happening.

A **euphemism** is an expression intended to be less disturbing or troubling to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces. A euphemism is a word or expression that is used when people want to find a polite or less direct way of talking about difficult or embarrassing topics.

For example: Most people would find it difficult to say in plain language that they are planning to euthanize their sick, old dog. They soften the pain by saying: "We had Fido put down" or "We had Fido put to sleep." While it is true that Fido is not "sleeping," the listener understands that Fido is no longer alive. As people learn a language, they also learn to understand the real meaning behind a euphemism.

Here are some examples of lies used by the Nazis to hide the truth about their plans.

Nazi Lie	Real Meaning	Explanation
Enemies of the State	Anyone who disagreed with the Nazis; Jews, Gypsies (Roma and Sintj), Communists, Socialists, Political Opponents, and others	The Germans established concentration camps where they sent people who were considered, "enemies of the state." The Nazis used this phrase because it sounds like they are protecting the country and getting rid of the "enemies."
Re-education	Forced labour in a concentration camp	The Nazis told people that they were being sent to concentration camps to be "re-educated" and to learn how to be good Germans. The Nazis said this because it sounds like a good thing to get an education.
Productive Custody	Imprisonment in Concentration Camps	The Nazis said this because it sounds like they are keeping you from being harmed.

Activity 1: Collect

Using the Shoah Foundation's IWitness platform or the Visual History Archive, choose **four** of the following survivors and search their testimonies for specific themes, or experiences that you are particularly interested in. Pay particular attention to the language used to describe the experiences. Are there particular words or expressions that you want to learn more about or that were used to convey a meaning(s) that you were unfamiliar with? Were there any words used that made a particular impact on you?

We recommend these testimonies because each interviewee describes what it was like starting over in Canada. You might decide to choose other testimonies.

Amek Adler	Vera Schiff	Pinchas Gutter	Nate Leipziger
Moses Kantorowitz	Felicia Carmelly	Judith Rubinstein	Roman Ziegler
Leizer Hoffer	Anita Ekstein	Faye Schulman	Elsa Chandler
Dennis Urstein	Gerda Frieberg	Ernest Weiss	Howard Chandler
Faigie Libman	Lasar Gotz	George Scott	Elizabeth Feldman de Jong
Max Eisen	William Glied	Magda Hilf	Esther Bem

Activity 2: Construct

Construct a **Six-Word Memoir** using survivor testimonies. Choose words/phrases from the testimonies that resonate with you. Combine them into six word expressions. Do not add extra words. **The Six-Word Memoir** should consist exclusively of survivors' words. Construct 6 of these **Six-Word Memoirs**.

Activity 3: Communicate

Answer the following question as you reflect on the **Six-Word Memoirs**, what power do words hold in your life? How can words harm or heal?

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Communicate

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