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“My Blondie is sick, because I did something wrong...”  
Once more on the phenomenon of Shoah in the teaching  
of creative writing at the university

„MOJA BLONDIE JEST CHORA, BO ZROBIŁEM COŚ NIE TAK...”

JESZCZE RAZ O FENOMENIE SHOAH W NAUCZANIU KREATYWNEGO PISANIA W UNIWERSYTECIE

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł dotyczy możliwości kreatywnego pisania na temat II wojny światowej i Holokaustu. Nacisk kładziony jest na krótkie ćwiczenie zwane lodolamaczem (*icebreaker*), mające na celu uwrażliwienie uczniów na te zagadnienia, jak również nauczenie ich współpracy w grupie. Tematem icebreakera jest los psa Hitlera, Blondie. Uczniowie są proszeni o wyobrażenie sobie, że pewnego dnia budzą się w jej postaci. W artykule przeanalizowano prace pisemne zarówno czeskich, jak i zagranicznych (południowokoreańskich) studentów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** lodolamacz, twórcze pisanie, dyskusja, Shoah

«МОЯ БЛОНДИ ЗАБОЛЕЛА, ПОТОМУ ЧТО Я СДЕЛАЛ ЧТО-ТО НЕ ТАК...»

ЕЩЕ РАЗ О ФЕНОМЕНЕ ШОАХ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ТВОРЧЕСКОГО ПИСЬМА В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ

**Резюме:** Исследование затрагивает возможности творческого письма на тему Второй мировой войны и Холокоста. Основное внимание уделяется «ледоколу» — короткому упражнению, призванному настроить студентов на изучение самой темы, а также на групповую работу. Тема ледокола — судьба гитлеровской собаки Blondie. Студентов просят представить, что однажды они проснутся на ее месте. В этой статье мы анализируем письменные работы чешских и иностранных (южнокорейских) студентов. xxx

**Ключевые слова:** ледокол, творческое письмо, обсуждение, Шоа

Motto:

*And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* (Matthew 15:27)

## Introduction

*Do we really need to know about every Auschwitz prisoner?* A Czech blogger, Tereza, asks in her blog (*Terka od kafe, knih a koláčku*). And she then goes on:

*After the success of *Tatér z Osvětimi* (The Tater from Auschwitz), the last few years have seen the emergence of many books with the Polish extermination camp in the title or dealing with the Holocaust. Looking at the plans for upcoming books, this year will be no different. And only some of the books published or planned are based on real events and describe the fate of real prisoners. Some of the stories are fictional from A to Z. And the reader can't help but wonder what was possible in the concentration camps, how many loves were formed between guards and prisoners, or what friendships were born. Don't get me wrong, I think that books like this are definitely meant to be written so that humanity doesn't forget the suffering of the prisoners, but the current boom in all such literature seems disrespectful to the victims of terror. It is as if the possibility of making a profit outweighs everything else here too. Would it not be better, then, to publish one or two good publications, so as not to dilute the subject? Wouldn't the contemporary reader then get more out of it? In this case, respect for the victims should prevail over economic interests.<sup>1</sup>*

The blogger's short essay on the fictionalization of the Auschwitz experience poses the question whether to attempt to describe all the possible stories of the concentration camp inmates (a task, seemingly, without end) and by doing so possibly overwhelm the uninvolved generations – especially those readers whose families were not personally affected by the Holocaust.

In the present time, anyone dealing with the topic of the Holocaust finds themselves in a strange predicament. The resurgence of the *Shoah*<sup>2</sup> narrative around the Israeli war and the looming possibility of resurgent anti-Semitism on one hand, and on the other, in the educational sphere, the long-standing petrification of the subject of the Holocaust. This petrification is related to the

<sup>1</sup> <https://medium.seznam.cz/clanek/terka-od-kafe-knihy-a-kolacku-opravdu-musime-vedet-o-kazdem-vezni-z-osvetimi-40980> [15. 1. 2024].

<sup>2</sup> The terms "Holocaust" and "Shoah" are used in this study interchangeably, cf. E. M. Hrdinová/I. Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew – What Would I Talk to Him/Her About?" The Possibilities of Creative Writing and Post Shoah Literature in the Czech Language. In: *Judaica Russica*, 2023, 1 (10), pp. 1-14, cf. P. Carrier et al., *The international status of education about the holocaust*. Braunschweig: UNESCO, 2015; J. Holý, *Obráz šoa v české literatuře*, 2010, pp. 100-108 [online], [https://service.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/images/data/sborniky/kongres/Ceska%20literatura%20-%20Orozhrani%20a%20okraje/009\\_jiri\\_holy.pdf](https://service.ucl.cas.cz/edicee/images/data/sborniky/kongres/Ceska%20literatura%20-%20Orozhrani%20a%20okraje/009_jiri_holy.pdf) [15. 1. 2024].

desire to thematize the Holocaust as much as possible (pedagogical intention), e.g. also in literature classes.<sup>3</sup>

*The historical axis deals with teaching about the Holocaust itself, meaning the circumstances that led to the events and the development of the anti-Jewish policy. This axis, which deals with the "what" and "how" questions, includes several main themes such as: Nazi ideology; the stages of development of the anti-Jewish policies both inside and outside of Germany; the response of the Jewish population to this policy; the establishment of ghettos; the "Final Solution" – the extermination of the Jews; the rescue; the world's reaction to the Holocaust, and the return to ordinary life by the survivors.*<sup>4</sup>

The aim of our paper is to present another possibility for Creative Writing<sup>5</sup>, which is thematically related to our previous paper (2023), where the conception of the phenomenon of the *Shoah* in literature was presented on the example of text interpretation and different textual patterns. Now, in the sequel, we look at other options, namely working with the so-called icebreaker and, marginally, also the artistic possibilities that are associated with Creative Writing (Kerri Smith<sup>6</sup>), too. In relation to the blog post cited above, our paper asks:

Our crucial question is: What does the Shoah say to young people today (even without a pretextual underpinning, as was the case in our previous article)? Updated as of today, (taking into consideration the topicality of the resurgent anti-Semitism and various other cross-cultural developments) and in terms of our research questions below, it is possible to establish differences in reception (perception) with regard to two groups of learners, Czech and Korean.

Our study is structured as follows: after establishing the textual type of an icebreaker, which is further explored in the present

<sup>3</sup> Our personal stance on this question is as follows: we believe that the topic of the *Shoah* must be dealt with regardless of current circumstances, but in the sense of updating it for the current generations.

<sup>4</sup> Sh. Imber, The pedagogical approach to teaching the Holocaust. In: *Teaching History* 2013 [online], [https://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/4/122437058/the\\_pedagogical\\_approach\\_to\\_teaching\\_the\\_holocaust1\\_1.pdf](https://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/uploads/1/2/2/4/122437058/the_pedagogical_approach_to_teaching_the_holocaust1_1.pdf) [8. 1. 2024].

<sup>5</sup> Our methodological base is represented by A. J. Palmer, *Writing and Imagery – How to Deepen Your Creativity and Improve Your Writing*. Abergele: Aber Books 2010, republished (with Graham E. Larler) as *Writing and Imagery – How to Avoid Writer's Block (How to Become an Author)*. Abergele: Aber Books. 2013; M. Dočekalová, *Tvářič psaní pro každého: Jak psát pro noviny a časopisy, jak vymyslet dobrý příběh, praktická cvičení*. Praha: Grada. 2006; M. Dočekalová, *Tvářič psaní pro každého 2: Naučte se vyprávět příběhy! Jak se píše povídka, novela a román?; Praktická cvičení*. 1. Praha: Grada 2009; A. Bublanová, A. Stelzerová, *Cvičebnice tvůrčího psaní*. Praha: Grada 2021; D. Brande, *Schriftsteller werden*. Berlin: Autorenhaus (*Becoming a Writer*), 2006; J. Gardner, *On Becoming a Novelist*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co 1983; F. Gesing, *Kreativschreiben. Handwerk und Techniken des Erzählens*. Köln: DuMont 2004.

<sup>6</sup> K. Smithová, *Destrukční deník*, Praha: CoBo 2022 and other works by this author. We use Czech translations.

analysis, we turn to the topic of the icebreaker – namely Hitler's German shepherd Blondie, to whom the icebreaker is dedicated. This is followed by the research questions and a description of the analysis of the presented student papers on the topic, and then a summary with a verification of the established research questions follows.

### Icebreaker as a text type

An *icebreaker* is a metaphor used to label any activity or exercise meant to make the atmosphere in the classroom more pleasant and the students more willing to engage. The icebreaker exercise appears in several contexts, especially in foreign language teaching. It is an exercise to attract the attention of the pupil (in fact, the classic didactician, John Amos Comenius, already assumed that the teacher should engage the pupil<sup>7</sup>). The exercise is short, it can take place at the start of a Creative Writing lesson in high school or, being aware of all the constraints and challenges of integrating Creative Writing into regular language lessons, in primary school. We base our definition of icebreaker on the following:<sup>8</sup>

*Icebreakers are fun activities to help people get to know one another. Instructors can use them to help acquaint students with course content and expectations. Icebreakers can also be designed to help warm up online learning spaces and orient students to the online environment. Icebreakers may involve students:*

- playing a game with their classmates*
- responding to a funny and/or “getting to know you” prompt*
- explaining why they are taking the course*
- sharing something meaningful related to the course or discipline, such as a recent headline, article, or other media content related to the course*
- creating something (e.g., drawings, video, songs, poems, etc.).*

An icebreaker is traditionally included in the context of warm-up exercises.<sup>9</sup> They create a relaxed environment in the classroom where students are not shy to speak their minds around the classroom, discuss with others, and feel encouraged to work in groups. In our case, an icebreaker is implemented orally or in writing in the classroom. The oral form of an icebreaker is more common. In addition to the above, for our purposes, it is also used to practice grammatical phenomena, e.g., in foreign language teaching

<sup>7</sup> This idea permeates all of his work.

<sup>8</sup> <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/building-inclusive-classrooms/icebreakers> [8. 1. 2024].

<sup>9</sup> S. Fischer, Dramapädagogische Aufwärmübungen und ihr Einfluss auf die Sprechanst und Sprechbereitschaft von Schüler:innen im L2-Englischunterricht. Eine quantitative Untersuchung. In: *Scenario: A Journal for performative teaching, learning, research* (2023): n. pag.

## Blondi (Blondie)... Or about storytelling

*Blondi (Blondie)*, Hitler's Alsatian, is said to have come from Silesia. He died with Hitler, perhaps one of the few beings for whom the Führer could have compassion. *If I woke up as Hitler's Alsatian...* This is the assignment for our icebreaker, which is intended to be short, to follow a brief preparation, and is of an intertextual nature. For example, the reference to Franz Kafka and his *The Metamorphosis* (a Jewish author par excellence) is evident. Waking up in a situation other than the usual or comfortable one is a frequent type of icebreakers in our class – waking up as someone else, in the woods, with only a cell phone (whom would I call?), in a stranger's apartment, in a field in North Korea, in another century, etc. Like Kafka's beetle, Gregor Samsa, Hitler's Alsatian in the task at hand possesses the ability to think and speak. The exercise is either oral or written (in a Creative Writing class), depending on the situation (could be adapted, for example, for grammar lessons, where, for instance, present tenses or conditionals could be practiced).

### Analysis of the creative outputs

#### Method and sample description

The method we use with regard to the research questions is based on Chráska 2007.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, due to the low number of papers represented, we do not choose the quantitative approach described there, but opt for a mere percentage calculation. We alternate between two languages, German and English, with respect to the courses taught. In the task, we monitored not only the development of Creative Writing competences, but also grammatical resources (present tense for the English-speaking group and conditionals for the German-speaking group). The number of seven and eight learners in the two groups gives an impression of evenness, whereas, considering the gender criteria, there were three males in the English-speaking Korean group of nine learners (one did not show up for the writing task part of the class), one male in the German-speaking Czech group, while the rest of the group were female.

In the case of the English-speaking group, it was a group of foreign South Korean students (participants of a summer school at the Palacký University<sup>11</sup>) and then a group of Czech students

<sup>10</sup> M. Chráska, *Metody pedagogického výzkumu: základy kvantitativního výzkumu*. Praha: Grada, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.upol.cz/short-programmes/thinking-and-teaching-in-a-changing-world-summer-school/> [8. 1. 2024].

of German (i.e. of the subject German language in the school curriculum). The low numbers are due to the number of students enrolled in the course. The teaching (in both cases subjects taught by Eva Maria Hrdinová) at the summer school focused on the phenomenon of the *Shoah* in Czech-language literature, with a focus on the fictional work of Karol Sidon and an overlap with the students' own creative outputs. The English speaking group also explicitly worked with the graphic novel by Art Spiegelman, *Maus* beforehand.

This graphic novel was also known known in the Czech group, which, however, during the course primarily focused on the consolidation of selected grammatical phenomena, specifically focusing on conditionals. Supporting grammatical instruction or consolidation of grammatical knowledge was also primarily envisaged in the preparation for the Korean group, where B1 level learners were expected (as is also the case in the German-speaking group, where B2 level appeared twice among the learners and C2 level among one learner); however, the actual situation in the Korean group reflected English proficiency at A1 level and A2 level for two of the learners. This also indicated the use of shorter texts. In the other group, there was a prior discussion over a photograph (Hitler and Eva Braun together with Blondie on the Berghof).

As a kind of preparation for the work with an icebreaker, the Korean group worked in more detail with Art Spiegelman's comic book, *Maus*.<sup>12</sup>

One significant page was analyzed and students were asked what they would do in the place of the Jewish protagonist and in the place of the non-Jewish characters. Similarly, the mask of the pig as a signifier for the non-Jewish population and the symbol of the pig as an unclean animal for Jewish religious practice were thematized. As a side note (referring to the previous text), with the beginning of any Judaically oriented subject,<sup>13</sup> we always ask students (both Czech and foreign) about their personal experience with Jews. Students from these demographic groups usually do not report having such experience. When asked how they imagine a person of a Jewish origin, they largely repeat historical, literary or pop culture comments or stereotypes (e.g. of Orthodox persons from Mea Sharim). Also, more often mentioned is the information (especially from Czech students) that the person is sad, unhappy (because of the Shoah), or old in age. Paradoxically, the modern existence of the State of Israel and its inhabitants is not always

<sup>12</sup> <https://theteacherscrate.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/maus-1-art-spiegelman1.pdf> [18. 1. 2024].

<sup>13</sup> These are the classes of Eva Maria Hrdinová.

associated with Jewishness, although many of the students have had their personal experience with Israelis (e.g., while traveling, on internships, etc.). The presupposition of the Jew as an old and unhappy person disappears in the course of the work in the classroom. There were also associations of intelligence, wealth, mysticism, Judaism or mystery. Since the lessons we analyze took place in the summer semester of 2023, in the case of the German-speaking group from February to May 2023 and in the case of the English-speaking group in July and August 2023, the discussion did not concern the ongoing war in the State of Israel.

### **The story, as it was told**

We were interested in tracing how the retelling of the story changes between the Czech and Korean groups. In the same way, we were trying to follow up on the study by Milan Mašát<sup>14</sup>, who, in the context of growing anti-Semitism, asks the Czech a question on what the opinion of Czech language and literature teachers at the second level of primary schools on the implementation of the Shoah theme in the teaching of literature education is. In his article, Mašát asks two questions:

1) to find out what the opinion of literature teachers at the second level of primary school on the integration of the *Shoah* themes into literature classes is and

2) to find possible reasons for the (non-)implementation of *Shoah*-lessons into literature reading books for the second level of primary schools.

*The implementation of the phenomenon is qualitatively and quantitatively dependent mainly on the passages presented in the readers. Therefore, if we want to improve the situation - given the growing level of intolerance in all layers of Czech society, we should - it should start with primary school pupils. In the field of literary education, we should update the samples in the literary readers, both in terms of the works included, but also in terms of the extent to which Shoah texts are represented of primary school teachers in the Vysočina Region (eight persons)..*<sup>15</sup>

We are interested in how the phenomenon of the *Shoah* appeals to students, and not only with regard to the pretextual influence

<sup>14</sup> M. Mašát, K implementaci tematiky šoa do výuky literární výchovy z pohledu učitelů. In: *Paidagogos*, 2019 [online], <https://www.paidagogos.net/issues/2019/1/article.php?id=3> [10. 01. 2024], cf. M. Mašát, J. Sladová, Representations of Shoah and Holocaust Terms in Selected Curriculum Documents: A Teacher's Perspective. In: *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2019 [online], <http://www.hrpub.org/download/20190130/UJER18-19512592.pdf> [10. 01. 2024].

<sup>15</sup> M. Mašát, K implementaci, 2019.

that Mašát mentions.

We worked with the following thesis: Historical interconnectedness and territorial distance influence the reception of history and story. The thesis leads to two basic questions: why and how, which in a specified form lead to three further research questions:

Is greater historical interdependence evident in the Czech group? Does the historical proximity of the Czech lands to Germany offset the desiderata of historical mediation of the Holocaust mentioned by Mašát?

Is there a more explicit mention of the *SHOAH* or not?

Both courses were sensitized with regard to *SHOAH*, the summer school focused explicitly on this topic and in its context the students were asked to produce multiple outcomes. Students first prepared a written assignment. Then followed an oral discussion.

### Selection of students' works

From the fifteen texts analysed, we select four key texts, three from the Korean group and one from the Czech group. The unevenness in the presentation is due to the repetition of one piece of information in multiple papers in the Czech group and, thus, the relative monotony.

#### Text 1

The text comes from a group of Korean students and is written in very simple English: *I would kill Hitler. I would escape and either be caught by Hitler's men or escape...*

I'll kill Hitler and run away. but killing Hitler will not  
eliminate the aversion to other races created by instigating  
so I should run away or I will be caught by Hitler's men  
I run away to Korea.






The text is accompanied by a drawing of a dog's head. In the discussion afterwards, the student elaborates that after the war he would become famous for his memories of Nazism and appear on television or give (this is already accepted in the group discussion with laughter) interviews to the press as a talking dog.

## Text 2

A Korean student states that they would accidentally attack Hitler and injure him. Then they would tell the whole world about him. In the ensuing discussion, it is communicated that the student would have contributed to the defeat of Hitler in this way. A drawing of a dog's head is also attached to the text.

First I will attack ~~the~~ Hitler accidentally to make him injured (not severe)  
Then I'll act ~~as a dog~~ as a cute dog and steal information  
to stop the WWII. I will send information to several countries <sup>from Nazi army</sup>  
<Die Verwandlung? >



## Text 3

A Czech student writes in German in a list of items of more information about the life of a dog at Berghof: If I had been a Blondie, I would have lived with Hitler in Germany, I would have been famous, I would have ridden with Hitler all over the country... No further development of the story follows. In the discussion, the author of the text stated that she could not have done anything else, because she would not have been able to resist Hitler as a dog. The following discussion touched on the issue of guilt in the context of the so-called "Mitläufer," i.e., people who lived their ordinary lives against the background of the *Shoah*. Similarly, one can also discuss people who joined the Nazi ideology, whether of their own volition or forced by circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

*For example, we can find in the biographies of and interviews with the Nazi criminals various explanations as to the reasons they joined the Nazi movement. There*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. E. Hrdinová, I. Dömischová, *If I Met a Jew*, 2023.

are those who will say that they joined because of ideology, because they were drawn by Hitler's demagogical speeches, and because they believed in racist antisemitism. Others will say that they were exposed to propaganda. Still others will explain that "everyone was doing it" or that there was group pressure. The teacher should emphasize that the perpetrators always had a choice and that refusing to murder civilians was never punished.<sup>17</sup>

Übung 7. Was würde ich machen, wenn ich Blondie wäre (10 Sätze und mehr)...



wäre ich Blondie, hätte ich Hitler gern.

- 11- , hätte ich <sup>hätte</sup> ~~wäre~~ ich in Deutschland gelebt.
- 11- , hätte ich mit anderen Hunden <sup>zusammen</sup> gelebt.
- 11- , hätte ich den 2. Weltkrieg erlebt.
- 11- , wäre ich mit Hitler bis Ende seines Lebens geblieben.
- 11- , wäre ich berührt geworden.
- 11- , hätte ich auch in einem Haus mit seiner Frau gelebt
- ~~-11- hätte ich gedacht, dass er kein so <sup>schlechter</sup> Mensch war~~
- 11- , wäre ich durch Deutschland mit Hitler mitgefahren

<sup>17</sup> Sh. Imber, The pedagogical approach to teaching the Holocaust, 2013.

## Text 4

Orally, in the reflection of the picture, it was added that Hitler would liberate all the Jews.

The extract is accompanied by a comic illustration of a sad Blondie and a sad crying Hitler.

19. 07. 2023

Damir (Yedam Choi)

If I became a bondi (dog),  
everyday running training. Because fast running may  
be necessary in an emergency.



I'll cry pathetic every day.

Hitler will worry me because I don't  
even eat.

It's going to bother Hitler's.

I'll make you feel a little guilty.



My Blondie is  
sick because I did  
something wrong.

## Evaluation of students' works

We come to the evaluation of student work. We have eight Korean papers in front of us: escape is repeated twice (once explicitly mentioning Korea, meaning South Korea), this makes 25 %. One of the two papers postulates that freedom is better than good dog food, which the dog would have enjoyed under Hitler. Four times (4 works from 8 make 50 %) it is repeated that Blondie would have bitten Hitler, in one case to prevent another new *SHOAH* and in the other case to subsequently carry out espionage. The instance where Blondie (text 4) would feign illness to improve Hitler's moral character is unique (1 work from 8 makes 12,5 %). Here we see the imaginative expression of the possibility of correcting

the bully, the possibility of changing the mind just out of love for the pet. The improvement of Hitler's character was discussed afterwards. The opinion of the student remained unique in the group

In the Czech sample of seven works, escape occurs twice (2 works from 7 make 28,57 %). Once to the mountains, presumably the Alps. The dog would have been sad before, despite the good life, but not because of the general situation, but because he would have eaten meat (thus betraying the student's vegetarian beliefs).

In the latter case, emigration would lead to Australia, far away in search of a new life. The remaining five works (5 works from 7 make 71,42 %) thematize the reconciliation with the situation and the materially secure life of a dog: walks, food, nature, playing with the family of the masters (i.e. Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun, see picture). In one single case (1 work from 7 make 14,28 %), the student in the form of Blondie would debate Hitler and hope that in the discussion the dictator would realize the wrongness of his actions. The *Shoah* was not thematized, only in the case of the aforementioned discussion was it added that Hitler might revise his bad attitude towards the Jews. The four students who wrote that they would accept the situation wrote that, like the dogs, they would have no option and could do nothing. There was a subsequent discussion about the possibility of biting Hitler; however, this possibility did not appear in the writing of our sample. In the case of the refusal to kill, it was not so much a matter of respect for life (murder of a tyrant was accepted as a legitimate option in the discussion and in the Czech group),<sup>18</sup> but there were concerns that the dog would not be able to bite through the throat, that it would only injure Hitler and he would take revenge, etc.

## Conclusions

We return to the thesis and the research questions. The thesis was confirmed in the analysis of the student papers, but not in the way we would expect. On the contrary, the result is almost the opposite, with *SHOAH* explicitly appearing in the papers of Korean students, i.e. in the papers of students living in a territorially distant country. The influence of the desiderata mentioned by Milan Mašát<sup>19</sup> for the Czech teaching of the topic of *SHOAH* is therefore

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Hrdinová, I. Dömischová, "If I Met a Jew", 2023.

<sup>19</sup> M. Mašát, K implementaci, 2019.

possible. However, it has not been discussed in subsequent discussions.

It is true, however, that the topic of the Holocaust is not as notoriously familiar to them, for example, from school lessons or projects, as it is to Czech students. It represents a certain novelty, and when working with the group, they had already experienced an emotional engagement with the thematization of the graphic novel that was not observed to this extent in the Czech group. In the Korean group, one student also thematized her emotional engagement by explicitly comparing the situation of the Shoah with that of the North Koreans. The topic was not developed further in the discussion, but this is partly due to the language and communication level of the group. It should be noted, however, that the groups we studied are small and thus it is not possible to comprehensively infer anything about the perception of the *SHOAH* in specific countries. The topic of *SHOAH* is a topic that needs to be discussed. The quoted words of a participant in an internet discussion about the fact that it is not enough to describe the life of everyone who died in Auschwitz in order to highlight the monstrosity of the *Shoah* are more than true. On the other hand, the question arises as to how to do this adequately didactically. Let us return to the aforementioned stereotype of a Jew as old, unhappy, essentially hidden, and to a certain extent petrification of the subject of the *Shoah* itself.

*Discussing everyday life during the Holocaust is not an evasion of discussing death. Undoubtedly, death was ever-present in the life of the Jews. The questions that relate to the educational process of teaching the subject of the Holocaust must therefore be: How did people live in the shadow of death - what choices did they make in a world that was fraught with "choiceless choices"? This expression was coined by Lawrence Langer, a foremost scholar of Holocaust literature, to describe a situation where every action had a consequence that was often life and death; where decisions had to be made between one abnormal result and another in the crushing reality of life in the Holocaust.<sup>20</sup>*

In the case of us, didactically active in the Czech Republic, we need to ask ourselves a self-critical question – how do we talk about the *Shoah*? What causes that perhaps there has been a petrification or a certain fatigue with the topic? Is it, for example, the repetitive narrative of literary works that are too tied to the time of their creation, or a kind of “inflation” of the often described suffering, as described by Karel Čapek in his *War with the Newts*, which instead of sensitization achieves the opposite. Based on his partial

<sup>20</sup> Sh. Imber, *The pedagogical approach to teaching the Holocaust*, 2013.

study, Milan Mašát also sees the desideratum in the fragmentation of the *Shoah* texts in Czech language textbooks:

*In our opinion, the most prominent problem of the current state of implementation of Shoah texts in literary education, which emerged from the first phase of the research, is the considerable dispersion of Shoah-themed texts in each year of the second grade of primary school. This state of affairs leads to a situation where pupils are presented with a text with a defined phenomenon, but pupils do not yet have the necessary knowledge about the Second World War; the fragmentary inclusion of these texts does not lead to the presentation of the issue as a distinct literary theme with a definition of the development of its depiction, etc.<sup>21</sup>*

Alternatively, one can also think of a possible communication barrier between, for example, older survivors and children from primary schools at the level of specific learners, which should be bridged by the teacher. It is not the task of this study to answer the above question. Similarly, it is not possible, based on our research, to unreservedly idealise foreign teaching about the *SHOAH* vis-à-vis the Czech one, insofar as, for example, a research into the South Korean narrative in particular would certainly be inspiring and enriching for us, given the awareness and interest of the students.

The questions are only a stimulus to think about how to improve communication about the *SHOAH*. How to make the topic alive again so that it appeals and above all warns, so that book bloggers write not about topic fatigue, but about a book that (in the intent of Franz Kafka's quote) breaks the frozen sea within us and leads to reflection? We do not offer our practice of incorporating *SHOAH* theming into Creative Writing as a prescription that will cure all ills<sup>22</sup>, but we do believe we offer one way to sensitize learners (students). As a result, the Creative Writing procedures can also complement the possible

<sup>21</sup> M. Mašát, *K implementaci*, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Due to the complex nature of the topic, it is not possible to include all sources on it. The following international (Anglo-Saxon and US-oriented) studies on creative writing (and the Holocaust topic) also deserve attention: Moisan S., Hirsch S., Audetá G., *Holocaust Education in Quebec: Teacher's Positioning and Practices*. *McGill Journal of Education* 50(2–3), 2015, s. 247 – 268. Tinberg H., *Taking (and Teaching) the Shoah Personally*. *College English* 68(1), 2005, 72 – 89. Tinberg H., Weisberger R.: *Teaching, Learning and the Holocaust. An Integrative Approach*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2014. Milan Mašát's systematic research on the topic should also be mentioned, cf. *Implementace tematiky šoa do výuky literární výchovy na druhém stupni základních škol: hlavní závěry výzkumného šetření*. In *Bohemistika* 23(3), 2023, s. 477 – 492. Similarly, it is necessary to remind of the branch specificity of the given topic in the language didactics focused on Creative Writing: we can thus recall for example, several works by Zbyněk Fišer in the field of Czech studies, or by Hana Andrášová, who is a specialist in German studies. With regard to the Czech language area, in the reality of which we are rooted, since 2019, *Rukopis plus: časopis o psaní*, a magazine focused exclusively on creative writing and presenting the work of Czech beginner authors has also been published. However, the primary intention of the magazine is not didactic, it is the integration of new authors into the artistic community.

thematically oriented literary aids proposed by Milan Mašát as a suitable solution for approaching the Holocaust, which would cross-sectionally present excerpts from works in which the phenomenon occurs for all years of the second grade of primary school. Teachers could use this collection of texts in literature classes as needed (project lessons, thematic weeks, etc.).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> M. Mašát, K implementaci, 2019.