

Archaeology, the classroom and the Holocaust: Telling human stories

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Introduction

Archaeology is a forensic discipline, straddling sciences and humanities, in which the material remains of the past are used to infer what happened. These otherwise mute objects tell stories that were never written down.

Educators are fortunate when teaching the history of the Holocaust to have a documentary record that includes direct testimony, official orders, photographs, and film. But the documents reveal only a part of what happened and only a part of how the past was experienced. As archaeologists, we know that material remains from the past have the power to illuminate where words might otherwise fail. As teachers we know that material evidence is accessible to all students. To date, only a few Holocaust sites have been excavated – Majdanek, Chelmo, and Belzec are the most notable. The reports of these projects are the basis for classroom use of Holocaust archaeology. At many of the Holocaust's most important sites there is little to be seen today that testifies to the story of the Shoah. What is buried archaeology can uncover, and begin to recount the story. In some cases, very little is known about these places except for what archaeologists have been able to learn. Details of Belzec are immeasurably enhanced by excavations in the 1990s. Each artifact tells of the survival of the human spirit in unspeakable circumstances. Among the discarded objects and artifacts of the past, archaeology finds both individual and collective stories. Often, the everydayness of these things makes those stories more interesting for students than a dry text. "In small things forgotten" we find lost worlds.

We believe that this approach can be adapted for classroom use.

The activities, *What does a Shoah artifact tell us?*, introduce students to the possibility of extracting potent and meaningful information from everyday objects. One of the most compelling finds from the excavations at Majdanek consists of small objects that victims buried before being murdered. These artifacts, a child's ring, reading glasses etc are among the last material traces of their former owners' existence. What do they tell us? Quite a lot! An archaeological approach to these finds asks questions as to where, when, and how the thing was made, used and discarded, and then proceeds to infer the individual or individuals behind it.

Undertaking a forensic Investigation suggests ways that a forensic approach to collection and analysis of data can enlighten and enliven Holocaust studies. In particular it demonstrates how historical archaeology can contribute to the education of students about the Shoah. As the Holocaust recedes further into the past, archaeology can provide a new source of information and inspiration for students of this and future generations.

In these presentations we seek to show how we can use the archaeology of the Holocaust to more effectively teach the subject and how an archaeological sensibility can deepen our understanding of the subject. There is a very real opportunity to use archaeology as a powerful means of disarming the doubters and deniers whose opinions are prominent in the media. There is also an opportunity to enlighten those who are ignorant of the human dimension behind the statistics.

Teaching the Holocaust

How do you teach children about the Shoah when your classroom is on another continent and your students are two generations or more removed from that most horrible of episodes in human history? As high school history teachers, this is one of the problems we face every year. In this paper we propose that teaching the *archaeology* of the Holocaust can be a very effective tactic in getting students to come to grips with the multi-dimensional *history* of the Shoah. As archaeologists who also happen to teach high school history and social studies, we have found that by treating the Holocaust as an archaeological problem we can pique student interest, stimulate animated discussion, and foster critical thinking in our classes. It turns out that the otherwise mute objects of the past can become eloquent voices of and for the dead. Here, we argue that archaeology can be a powerful supplementary approach to the teaching of Holocaust history. As examples, we outline several activities developed for classroom use in which archaeological concepts are linked to published data from excavations of Holocaust sites and to the artifacts recovered from those sites. We have made the activities as simple as possible so that they require no special archaeological background on the part of the instructor. The activities encourage students to solve problems and apply their knowledge so as to understand the artifacts and the society that produced them.

Now, using archaeology to teach the Holocaust may be a surprising notion to some. After all, there is an exceptionally good documentary record associated with the Holocaust – indeed, the extent to which the crimes of the Shoah are documented is often cited as one of the things that makes this genocide unique. With such a good documentary record at hand, why would you need any other resource to teach this particular history? The answer begins with an understanding of what archaeology is and it ends with an understanding of what is likely to become of the places that are most directly connected to the Holocaust.

As an approach to the past, archaeology is a materialistic and forensic discipline that is both science and humanity. Its practitioners analyze the fragmentary material traces of the past so that they can reconstruct past human behavior. These traces can be small objects or large sites; equally, they can be residues or by-products, the intentionally discarded or the casually forgotten. What they all have in common is that they tell parts of a human story.

Archaeology can either supplement history or it can act as a substitute. No matter what the past, archaeology can play a role in broadening or deepening our understanding of the long ago and the not so long ago. In the case of documented pasts, the historical past, archaeology can provide clues to stories that were never written down. Indeed, much of the focus of modern historical archaeology is,

effectively, to give a voice to lives about which nothing was ever written. In some cases, this lack of documentation was because the erstwhile subjects were considered to be socially marginal and therefore not worth the effort. In other cases, concerns for secrecy suppressed the production of a documentary testament. But while a paper trail may not exist, a material one usually does – hence there is a role for archaeologists. Among the discarded objects of the past, archaeologists are able to tease out both individual stories and collective narratives. Often, the everydayness of these objects makes the stories they generate strangely far more compelling than a dry text.

Consider a single piece of wire, found at Chelmno. Someone twisted it to spell out a name, Sonia. Then, sometime later, the wire was buried in a shallow pit (Golden, 2003, p. 51). Who was Sonia? Was she a victim at the camp? A loved one left behind? Or perhaps the story is less romantic? Objects like this provoke our interest even when they raise questions that cannot now be answered. Thinking about archaeology, the poet W.H. Auden once wrote that imagining is sometimes better than knowing.

If, by prompting imagination as well as knowledge, an archaeological take on the past encourages students to populate the past with real people and real stories instead of brute numbers, implacable forces and mysterious influences, then the cause of modern Shoah education will have been advanced. For what educators have come to realize is that telling the Holocaust story only in terms of statistics makes it difficult for students to comprehend the human side of this tragedy.

Another reason for building an archaeological component into the teaching of Holocaust history has to do with the very strong likelihood that, in the future, more and more Holocaust sites will be excavated. Undoubtedly, some of these excavations will be research projects led by scientifically trained archaeologists (e.g., Kola's work at Belzec (2000)), while others will be haphazard digs run by enthusiastic amateurs (e.g., the film producer Mazer's work at Majdanek (Lucas, 2005)). The motivation for this work has been, in part, the recognition that many of the important sites of the Holocaust have already subsided into the archaeological record and need to be accorded the same kind of heritage protection effort that other significant sites receive. As well, it is recognized today that at the end of the Second World War, the Nazis and their accomplices attempted to destroy traces of what they had done. Consequently, today archaeology is one of the few means we have to discover what was once hidden.

And just as the original perpetrators' attempts to burn, bury, and hide their acts can be confounded by archaeologists (who, after all, seek out things that are burned, buried, and hidden), so too can modern deniers of the Holocaust be stymied by archaeology. Excavations of former Holocaust camps and other facilities can produce either concrete corroboration of the testimony of witnesses, archived documents, and other sources, when these exist, or archaeological research can uncover undocumented and hitherto unknown details of the Shoah.

However, this paper is not the place to make a case for a coordinated, systematic campaign of what archaeologists call "cultural resource management" directed at the sites of the Shoah. We are confident that, left to their own devices, historical

archaeologists in Eastern and Central Europe will be joined by their colleagues from abroad and will undertake exactly this kind of program. Instead, our point here has to do with teaching the Holocaust. As accounts of death camp archaeology begin to mount up, teachers will need to know how to assess the work being done, the claims being made, etc., in order to address student concerns. It is therefore a good idea to understand what qualifies as good Holocaust archaeology, and what does not.

To date, only a few Holocaust sites have been excavated – Chelmno, Belzec and Majdanek are the most notable. The reports of these projects are the basis for classroom use of Holocaust archaeology (Golden, 2003; Kola, 2000; Lucas, 2005). At these sites, as with many of the Holocaust's most important sites, there is little to be seen on the surface today that betrays what transpired there sixty-plus years ago. But what is buried archaeology can uncover, and, putting broken pieces together again, begin to recount the story. Indeed, in some cases, very little was known about a particular Holocaust site until archaeologists began to probe. For example, Kola's excavations at Belzec in the 1990s increased immensely our fund of knowledge about this infamous but relatively undocumented camp.

Chelmno: A case study

Chelmno was the first place at which gas was used in mass executions. Between 1941 and 1945 it is believed that 300,000 Jews, mostly Polish, were executed and cremated at Chelmno. It was here that Nazi experimentation sought to develop increasingly efficient methods of killing in the service of their "final solution." In early 1945, before fleeing the advancing Red Army, the Nazis at Chelmno tried to destroy and bury as much evidence of what went on at this country estate and its environs as possible. Thus, when archaeologists led by Lucja Nowak, of the Konin Regional Museum, began working in 1986 at the site there was little on the surface to attest to the mass exterminations that had taken place. That would not be the case once the excavations commenced. As reported in the journal *Archaeology*, not only were traces of the site's facilities uncovered but also large quantities of personal effects belonging to Chelmno's victims were retrieved (Golden, 2003). The Chelmno excavations are important because apart from a handful of eyewitness accounts little was known of the place, despite its obvious significance. The digs there will not only add to Holocaust history but also the artifacts uncovered in the course of excavation will give a voice to those who died there.

Chelmno is an interesting because it was not a concentration camp; rather it served exclusively as an extermination center during two separate phases at two sites. The primary site, a country estate referred to in Polish as a "palace", is several kilometers away from the secondary site, a church at which the Germans burned looted goods. The excavations resulted in not only locating the barracks and three crematories but also the pits where the victims' personal effects were buried. In one section of the crematory wall, archaeologists discovered the metal parts belonging to a baby carriage that had been used to reinforce the concrete structure.

The Nazis had evacuated the majority of the villagers from Chelmno with the exception of a few families who lived farther away along the river. Chelmno is an ideal example of how archaeology can be used to add to the historical story. As

Nowak's team conducted the excavations surviving villagers not only spoke to the team but produced photographs that belong to Chelmno's victims that were found on the ground of the palace after the war. One woman had even volunteered at the excavation and shared her memories of what went on at the site.

The excavations carried out on the grounds of the "palace" were limited but nevertheless provided interesting results. Confirming the use of this estate as an extermination center, a small hallway was discovered where the victims were actually led from the basement into the trucks. Why was this important? Up to this point the only source of information regarding the role of the palace in the exterminations were survivor and camp staff testimonies. No physical, forensic evidence existed.

The discoveries at the palace added an even more interesting dimension through the large quantities of confiscated property that had been uncovered there. What was striking ("haunting" in the words of one archaeologist) was how the artifacts were discarded in separate piles that were layers thick— medicine bottles, eating utensils, combs, dental bridges and false teeth devoid of any precious metals once used in dental work.

Although the majority of the artifacts do not reveal much about the victims and the lives they led before their death, there are some that do tell of individuals and even in some cases reveal a name. We have already mentioned Sonia. In a pit of goods looted from victims brought in from the Lodz ghetto, two brooches that were crudely made from wire bore the names of Bela and Irka. Other artifacts tell of the place of origin for many of the victims. From the hundreds of medicine bottles we can tell that some originated in Germany, others in Luxembourg and still others in Czechoslovakia. One artifact in particular, a charm bearing the image of a tombstone, provided a family name and the burial location in a Jewish cemetery in the former German city of Breslau. Another artifact tells of individual hobbies and passions: a cigarette case won by Josef Jakubowski in a 1936 motorcycle race.

Along with the artifacts that connect with individual lives and stories are heartbreaking finds like the remains of a three-month-old baby that had been buried on the palace grounds with a knife engraved with the words "Keep the Sabbath". Once again eyewitness testimonies help in the understanding of such a find. A brothel was known to have operated inside the palace and Jewish women were forced to work in it. The infant had probably been kept alive until it could no longer survive.

Chelmno provides an excellent example of the role archaeology has in discovering more historical information and how it can be a useful tool in conjunction with documents and testimonies to come to a deeper understanding of these sites.

Teaching the Shoah through archaeology

There are many ways of comprehending the past and many ways to teach it, but narrative history remains the first recourse for most of us. There are so many narrative styles to choose from, after all. Treating historical episodes as if they were mysteries of the procedural genre is one kind of narrative style, and it is one that resonates with our students. Who among them has not read or watched a detective

story? Television shows starring police forensic specialists are, as we write this, the most popular on the planet (!). This is surely what makes the kind of reasoning and the kind of story telling employed by archaeologists so congenial to our students. Like forensic detectives, archaeologists are puzzle-solvers, except that they put their jigsaw puzzles together knowing that an unknown number of pieces are missing and without a box top to guide them.

It is perhaps not surprising then that archaeology is normally a hit in the classroom. Consider the following:

Why use archaeology in the classroom?

What is archaeology?

- Archaeology is a multicultural discipline that promotes respect for present and past human populations.
- Archaeology is a way of preserving our shared human heritage by providing individuals with perspectives on their own time and place in human history.
- Archaeology, as the study of nonrenewable and fragile remains, also helps instill awareness for the need to preserve and protect sites.
- Archaeology allows for the sharing about what has been learned about people in the past.
- Archaeology increases appreciation and respect for all people and cultures
- Archaeology increases awareness of methods and issues used in archaeology and promote stewardship of shared human history.

How do teachers benefit?

- Teachers who include archaeology in their curricula offer a holistic and interdisciplinary way to teach critical thinking skills (it can incorporate social science, English, the arts).
- Archaeology is also conducive to small groups and cooperative learning; it encourages awareness of culturally sensitive topics and serves as a basis for understanding multicultural perspectives. It also is a helpful tool for studying the consequences of human behaviour and decision-making. (The intentional destruction and hiding of these sites acts as one illustration)

How do students benefit?

- Archaeology provides an opportunity for learning in all areas that requires imagination, creativity and logic.

- Archaeology also provides a means of understanding our common heritage, who we are as human beings, and how we came to be the way we are today. (How can the evidence be denied?)

Four examples of classroom Holocaust archaeology activities

Activity 1: What is An Artifact?

Estimated Time Required: 45-55 minutes

Objective:

Students will understand that an artifact is defined as any object made or utilized by people. They will understand that the exact function of many artifacts found cannot be known. The students will be able to attempt to identify the possible use of unknown artifacts, utilizing the same interpretative processes archaeologists' use. Artifacts can indicate an individual's wealth, status, heritage, and personal preferences. Artifacts can reveal patterns indicating a group's activities, wealth, technology, beliefs, and values. In the case of artifacts found at camps the artifacts might be easily recognizable but others may not, these objects have little intrinsic financial value, however their human story is immeasurable.

Getting Ready:

Prepare images (cards or PowerPoint) of artifacts found at various camps.

Teaching/Learning Strategy:

Discuss with the students the fact that the basis of archaeological research is the ability to describe their observations. They should try to describe the artifact as best they can from the image—the size (if measurement is possible), shape, colour (again if possible), the type of construction material (glass, metal, wood, or stone) and the method of manufacture (hand or machine made).

Activity:

1. This activity can be done as a large group or with students divided into smaller groups of three or four students.
2. Have students create an index card or sheet of paper for each object on which they can record their descriptions.
3. They should record as much information as can be inferred from what they see.
4. The students should assign a "descriptive name" and if possible they should also suggest a possible use (personal adornment, different kinds of raw materials).
5. Students are to go through the same process for each artifact.
6. The students are then to come up with names based on the descriptions (in the case of historic artifacts the use may be quite obvious).
7. Students may also discuss how the artifact might have been used based on its attributes, why might this have been important. They might want to consider why one such item might be worth holding on to or what it reveals about life in the camps. Ask students what things are missing or misrepresented?

At this stage in the activity, the instructor may decide to discuss each artifact as a class. This will allow for input as to the familiarity of the object, how this object might have come to be hidden or kept by the individual, why the artifact might have been important to that individual, what does it say about the culture of the camp?

Other discussion questions might include:

- What might some groups of artifacts indicate?
- With what other items were they found?
- Were they found in or near a structure? or feature?
- What other uses might be possible beyond the “obvious”?
- Could an artifact have served an alternative purpose, like cutting or for storage or as a toy?

- What did students learn about how archaeologists draw conclusions?

This exercise can work well as part of the archaeological Inquiry Method—

By addressing:

Behavioural Questions—what does it say about the owner

Hypothesis—Depending upon where it was found -what does the artifact(s) say about the owner?

Classification Categories—item is required for _____ (eating, hygiene, other?)

Accept or Reject the Hypothesis—

Make a Behavioural Inference—try and say something about the owner

Formative Assessment Check:

At the end of this activity the instructor may choose to have students record all artifacts and notes for use in a later assignment.

Or students could write a story reflecting upon their relationship with one of the artifacts. This will allow students to create a narrative and draw a connection between the historical objects and why an individual might choose to hold on to a particular object.

[For this kind of writing assignment students should have had some historical information to work with in addition to an understanding of language associated with the Shoah (i.e. exterminate, holocaust, camp, and so on)]

Activity 2: Symbolic versus Practical Objects

Estimated Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Objective:

Due to the unique situation under which these artifacts are being discovered it will be important for students to understand the difference between those artifacts that may be viewed as practical and those that are “symbolic”. In the case of the Holocaust this will differ not only from person to person but from religious person to non-religious person, especially since many artifacts found at camp sites might have religious significance.

Getting Ready:

Depending on how much prior knowledge students have regarding religious customs and symbols a brief lesson may precede this activity.

Prepare several images (cards or PowerPoint) of artifacts found at various camps. Photos from alternative sources might also be used if needed.

[Alternatively if appropriate objects can be found that might have symbolic importance they may also be used.]

Teaching/Learning Strategy:

Discuss with the students why some religious or symbolic artifacts may be found. An artifact may be symbolic—representing something else, or have a particular meaning. A discussion may also focus on how the symbolism (use of symbols to represent things may be used in this particular historic setting) The Star of David in Judaism is an important symbol that is dominant on many artifacts, likewise a crucifix is an symbol that might indicate a Christian.

The instructor might want to include a lesson on Judaism and research what kinds of religious objects might be found in the camps, what might a religious individual want to hold on to or what alternative might the internees have made to substitute for some religious objects (i.e. a hand made menorah or dreidel)

How students are able to recognize the symbols will help to give meaning to the artifacts found.

[A pre-activity to this exercise could involve students looking for symbolic items in their school or room. There could be a discussion surrounding the universality of some symbols—why are some more easily recognizable than other, are they locally or globally recognized symbols, how is that some symbols are more recognizable than others. For a class focusing on the Holocaust – the Swastika and the Star of David are two very powerful examples.]

Activity:

1. This activity can be done as a large group or with students divided into smaller groups of three or four students.
2. Each student is to look through the collection of images and categorize whether the artifact is symbolic or practical.
3. Ask students to think of events which might have meaning in the internee's culture but which might have different meaning or no meaning in local or Nazi culture.

The study of symbolic artifacts should emphasize the humanity and connection with other people. The instructor should challenge students to think about the how the owner's of these artifacts might feel.

- How were these people the same as I am?
- How were they different?
- What might have concerned, frightened them?
- Why would they hold this object in special regard?

Once again the artifacts tell a cultural story and can reveal a particularly individual story.

Further discussion can focus on –How can the meaning of these symbols change over time and have a different meaning from one culture to the next and one time period to the next.

[An extension exercise could look into the origin and meaning of the Swastika and how the association of this symbol was once positive turned negative because of how it was manipulated]

Activity 3: Material Culture and the Interpretation of the Past

Estimated Time Required: 45-55 minutes

Objective:

Students will acquire a deep understanding for the importance of artifacts and this activity will provide students with the opportunity to examine culture through artifacts as well as to develop their skills as they analyze the artifact. It will also encourage students to develop their writing and analytical skills.

Getting Ready:

Prepare groups of images of artifacts.

Teaching/Learning Strategy:

In this activity, you will introduce students to the idea that as one artifact tells a story, multiple sets of artifacts can then begin to tell an even different story. How people used these artifacts can be carefully reconstructed from this primary data.

To introduce students to dating techniques used in historic archaeology there are the possibilities of obtaining many date clues from the artifacts found

Artifacts at an archaeological site are often items that were discarded when they were broken or no longer needed. In the camps situations many artifacts were purposefully buried by the Nazis or the internees. Archaeologists can determine where and when these were made and they can get a good idea about when the site was used. When several artifacts are found together during site excavation and there is no indication of disturbance, the archaeologist can conclude that these were probably left there at the same time. Therefore, the archaeologist uses all the artifacts found together to give an indication of when the site was used. In this situation they can also tell where many of the internees originated from.

Activity:

1. This activity should be done with one set of five artifacts for each five students, this way each student can examine and describe an artifact, then exchange with another student.
2. Each group is given several artifacts (some should be utilitarian and others decorative) and they are to answer the following questions:
 - How many activities do the artifacts in this assemblage represent?
 - How many individuals do the artifacts in this assemblage represent?
 - You are to choose one artifact and write an imaginary life history around this object.
 - “Artifacts give voice to the past”—comment.

Formative Assessment Check:

Students are submit a two part written component that addresses the inquiry questions on the artifact's history. The second part focuses on the commentary

Activity 4: Problems of Association

Estimated Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Objective:

Students will further their understanding for the importance of artifacts in this activity as students have the opportunity to examine that the association of groups of artifacts is as important to helping piece together yet more of the historical story. This activity will continue to encourage students to develop their analytical skills.

Getting Ready:

Prepare several images (cards or PowerPoint) of a variety of artifacts found at various camps. Photos from alternative sources might also be used if needed.

Teaching/Learning Strategy:

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to interpret the remains at an archaeological site by observing what other activities occurred at the camp site. What might groupings of other artifacts tell about the use of the site.

Activity:

For this activity each group is given several artifacts some that are connected and others that are not. Students are to answer the following questions:

1. Which artifact(s) do not "belong" in this assemblage?
2. Why not?

Formative Assessment Check:

Students should be encouraged to discuss their observations and conclusions. What does this alternative information tell you about the artifact assemblage? What does it say about usage?

This may allow for further discussion about the types of artifacts that archaeologists study.

Undertaking a forensic Investigation**Senior Studies in History in New South Wales Secondary Schools**

For the first time in 2005 the number of students presenting Ancient History for their end of schooling credential in Year 12, the Higher School Certificate, HSC, in New South Wales was higher than for Modern History. This has been repeated in 2006. Unlike Modern History which has lost numbers relative to other subjects presented for HSC, Ancient History has actually increased its share of the increasingly crowded senior curriculum.

There are a number of different explanations for this increasing popularity. The chief reason may be the unpopularity of the mandatory Australian History Course that students must present at Year 10. Many students report that they choose Ancient History because it is different, more interesting, nothing like the compulsory course they have studied before entering the senior stage of their schooling. Many students report very strong recollections of the history that they studied in the first years of secondary school. This was ancient history. There is an extra attraction in senior Ancient History; the opportunity to study Archaeology. In both years of the senior Ancient History course the core study is archaeological. In the preliminary year the students study the discipline of Archaeology itself. In the HSC year they study *Cities of Vesuvius: Pompeii and Herculaneum*. In both years archaeology is applied to case studies and used as a theme for the study of societies, personalities and historical periods.

The most popular option in Modern History until 2004 was *Twentieth Century Germany*. More than 68% of students studied *Germany 1919 – 1945*; this included Nazism and racial policy, including the ‘Holocaust’. A recent syllabus revision has divided this topic into two smaller topics; *Germany 1918 – 1939*, and *Conflict in Europe 1935 – 1945*. The ‘Holocaust’ is included in the study of World War 2 in Europe. The number of students studying Germany has not been affected by the revision, but first evidence from HSC 2006 suggests that fewer than expected students are studying World War 2. A consequence of this is that fewer students are studying the ‘Holocaust’ in senior years.

How might the drift away from Modern History, and the unfortunate decrease in the number of students being exposed to a study of the ‘Holocaust’ resulting from syllabus revision be addressed? If Archaeology attracts students to Ancient History then it is likely that it would attract students to Modern History as well. The use of historical archaeology as the basis of an evidential approach to teaching topics and case studies could enliven the study of the more recent past.

There are a number of topics that would lend themselves to this evidential and archaeological approach. The *Mystery of the Romanovs and Anastasia* would be a popular study in which recent archaeological research has a crucial application. The *Holocaust* would be an ideal case study of how historical archaeology can contribute to an understanding of the historiography of even the best documented study. It has the added advantage of being controversial and current. The opportunity to engage in the evidence based study of the events of the Shoah would be an ideal preparation for the evidence based study of World War 1 that is the core of the HSC course in Modern History.

The New South Wales model of pedagogy

The present orthodoxy of pedagogy in New South Wales, one of the world’s largest education systems, is titled *Quality Teaching* (NSW Department of Education, 2003). This hybrid of local and overseas research into *Productive Pedagogy* has evolved by amalgamating a number of recent studies both in other states of Australia and in regions of New South Wales. It is not a theoretical framework that suggests what should happen in a classroom; in fact this is a criticism levelled at it by academics. It is a description of what can be seen and shown to be happening in classrooms that

have produced successful students and high academic standards; this is the real strength that classroom practitioners see in this 'model'.

The model has three related and over-lapping dimensions, *Intellectual Quality*, *Significance* and *Quality Learning Environment* that have been linked to improved student outcomes.

Promoting high levels of *Intellectual Quality* requires students to have the opportunity to acquire

- *Deep knowledge* focused on a small number of key concepts and ideas within topics and on the relationships between and among concepts.
- *Deep understanding* of central ideas and the relationships between and among those central ideas.
- multiple perspectives and/or solutions, to recognise that knowledge has been constructed and therefore is *problematic*, open to question.

Lessons should provide the opportunity for students to

- practice *Higher-order thinking* by organising, re-organising, applying, analysing, synthesising and evaluating knowledge and information.
- analyse knowledge as a specialist *metalanguage*, and comment on language use and the various contexts of language use
- engage in sustained conversations, *substantive communication*, in oral, written or artistic forms about the concepts and ideas encountered

Creating a *Quality learning Environment* includes

- *engaging* students in the lesson rather than going through the motions.
- *High expectations* of all students, conceptual risk taking is encouraged
- *Student direction* of activities related to their learning and the means and manner by which these activities will be done.

Developing and making explicit to students the *Significance* of their work requires lessons that

- demonstrate *knowledge integration*, the links between and within subjects
- demonstrate the *connectedness* of school knowledge to real-life contexts or problems
- employ *narrative* accounts as a process, or as content of lessons

How does this translate into practice? What does it look like in the History classroom?

Students

- should be challenged by the work they are expected to do
- should be challenged by the materials they work with
- should work with sources and evidence
- should be aware of the multiperspectivity of historical materials
- should learn and use the insider language of History
- should have opportunities to interact with and transform historical materials
- should have some choice in activities and scheduling
- should draw on knowledge from other disciplines
- should deal with 'big' issues and real problems

The late John Fines wrote when discussing how History might “survive in schools” that reading historical documents must be “purpose-filled”,
...it should require some useful change or development in the student’s mind or heart, changed ways of thinking and acting...(should require) something meaningful out of the experience...will require us to think, and think hard, about important issues (Fines, 1994, pp. 15-20)

Significantly the first issue Fines discusses is Racism. His first example is Nazi attitudes to Jews.

With this in mind a study of the evidence for the events of the Shoah would make an exemplary ‘quality’ learning experience for students.

Evidential History

In the recently compiled *Making History: A Guide for the Teaching and Learning of History in Australian Schools* (2003) Professor Tony Taylor of Monash University reminded History teachers that research suggests that their real job should be to teach students about the use and abuse of historical evidence. This research demonstrated that an evidence-based and concept-led approach to teaching historical methodology is likely to produce students who are aware of the problematic nature of historical evidence and who are able to work with high-order concepts (Boddington, 1980; Booth, 1971, 1980; Shawyer et al. 1988; Shemilt 1980, 1982; McIntosh, 1987)

This makes a lot of sense to me as an educator; it has always been a premise of my personal pedagogy that if I want students to be able to do something, then I have to teach them how to do it, or, when I am in constructivist mode, provide the opportunity for them to learn to do it themselves.

Do we want students to be able to ask questions about the past? Then students need experience in working with sources, with interrogating evidence and confronting problems and issues.

During the 1970s and again in the 1990s much of my time as a teacher of archaeology, ancient societies and culture was spent teaching against the misanthropy inherent in the popular thesis expressed in books and films such as *Chariots of the*

Gods. The misuse of sources and abuse of evidence was my focus. Students needed to be allowed to work with the information, and misinformation, to allow them to learn the twists and turns of the false claims and flawed logic, and sometimes direct misrepresentation. It was potent to facilitate their construction of a critical awareness of the sources and evidence.

There are some critics of this approach. They claim this is ‘pseudo-history’ because as the designer of the exercise I have a predetermined ‘answer’. This is to some extent true, but it is also appropriate and pedagogically sound when we consider the age and experience of our students. Few doubt the value of having students conduct Science experiments for which the procedure and result are well documented, actually predictable. In fact this practical component is central to the legitimacy of Science as a secondary school subject; the predictability is central to Science as a discipline.

As students become older and more experienced in their use of sources and evidence the exercises can be more open-ended and less subject to teacher control and direction.

Holocaust deniers and the use of evidence

The historiography of the Shoah needs to include the work of the Holocaust deniers, particularly those who claim a sort of respectability in a post-modern world in the self-appointed role of ‘revisionists’. These ‘historians’ and ‘scientists’ investigate and interrogate sources to assemble evidence to test the reliability and, ultimately, the credibility of the historical events of the Shoah. The methods that they use should be scrutinised carefully and clearly by students to allow them to experience the misuse of evidence and the illogical conclusions that characterise the ‘revisionists’ attempts to prove the conspiracy that they claim has generated the ‘holohoax’.

Students who are experienced in the analysis and appraisal of evidence should be encouraged to deconstruct the evidence that is used by the ‘revisionists’. They should have experience of discussing and analysing the evidence and arguments used and abused to represent the Shoah as a conspiracy.

There is a very real danger that students who do not have this experience, who are not equipped with these essential ‘forensic’ skills, may not recognise the fraudulent misrepresentation of evidence that the ‘revisionists’ present. They may not recognise that it is the ‘revisionists’ that are involved in a conspiracy to misrepresent the past.

Forensic investigation.

Unlike the usual perception that derives from the currently popular television genre of scientific detection and investigation, forensic investigation has little to do with science. Forensic investigation is about providing legal proof of happenings or events; this may involve science and scientific procedures, but is more directly about the correct collection and analysis of evidence.

A forensic investigation requires that all available evidence be tabled and evaluated. This means that all sources of evidence need to be visited. Put the evidence on the table; confront the arguments.

Students will need experience and skills in decoding, interrogating and analysing sources to extract evidence.

Deconstruction of sources requires students to know and use a plan of attack.

First, **read** and **decode** what the document is 'saying'.
Underline, circle, highlight anything that you think is likely to be 'useful'.

Second, **interrogate** the source. What **evidence** does it contain?

To help you establish **reliability**, **validity** and **usefulness** consider the following:

Context... when was it written?
where was it written?
who wrote it?
perspective of the writer?
circumstances of the writing?

Purpose.... why was it written?
Implications?

Audience... for whom was it written?
Implications?

Relevance... for whom?
for what?
for when?

Useful... How?
In this circumstances?
In other circumstances?

Provenance... primary source?
secondary source?
Implications?

Primary / secondary do not reflect a hierarchy of usefulness or importance!
This only means you ask different questions of the sources.

Primary sources should provide evidence for propositions about the past. The following are some questions that students should direct specifically to a primary source: Why was this source created? Who created it? Did that person have access to accurate information? Is the person identified with a cause or group which may make the source biased?

Secondary sources are more likely to provide evidence of how the past has been interpreted. The evaluation of secondary sources should include consideration of issues like: Has the author cited relevant sources and evidence? Will the evidence cited support the interpretation the author is putting on it?

Once each source has been decoded students need to analyse the evidence from the sources. Evidence should be collected carefully and appropriately. There will be convergence, difference and divergence between the sources. These need to be addressed and analysed before synthesis and adduction can occur. It is this adductive process that sets historical research apart from other forms of research. Historians are not looking for right answers but for answers that through synthesis allow consideration and accommodation of all available evidence.

A note of caution needs to be added here. The criticisms that can be used to discredit the 'revisionist' investigations may be levelled at other investigations as well. The possible contamination of these sites by 'cowboy' archaeologists and documentary film crews not only affects the ability to ensure correct provenance and therefore correct analysis, but affects the credibility of all archaeological evidence that comes to light. Deniers are quick to label any investigation and evidence as fraudulent. Any "wildcat" and amateur archaeological research, regardless of its intentions, provides the opportunity for such claims to be made against all archaeological research.

There is a need for official co-ordinated professional archaeological investigation of Shoah sites.

The 'Leuchter Report'

In recent 'revisions' of the Shoah the deniers have relied heavily upon the so-called 'Leuchter Report' (Faurisson, 1988). This document was the product of clandestine 'research' by Fred A. Leuchter Jnr, and a 'team' that he describes as 'professionals', at Auschwitz and Majdanek in the late 1980s. The research was aimed at gathering evidence to determine whether the buildings at Auschwitz, described as 'gas chambers' and 'crematoria', were in fact described correctly.

Leuchter and his colleagues were involved in an investigation that could be described as historical archaeology. They were intending to collect material evidence and artifactual evidence to complement and supplement a well documented historical event.

Leuchter's findings became the basis for 'revisionists' to question the credibility of the 'homicidal' intentions of the Nazi regime. At first glance the evidence that was collected and the conclusions drawn had seeming logical power and a ring of 'credibility'. The so-called 'findings' were swooped upon by Holocaust deniers. If it could be proven that Auschwitz was not an 'extermination' camp then the whole 'extermination' policy would be in question.

Subsequent to his investigations and publishing of his findings, as the 'Leuchter Report', Leuchter was discredited by testimony that he gave in a Canadian court. Under cross-examination he was made to admit that he had no academic qualifications relevant to this investigation, that he had no background experience and

no established reputation as an expert in gas chamber and crematorium technology or operation and, that he had no experience or expertise to undertake the various archaeological and scientific investigations that he claims to have performed in Poland. His credibility as an expert was destroyed.

Nonetheless the 'report' still has currency with 'revisionists' and is still cited regularly as evidence of the conspiracy to distort the recent past.

A cursory examination of Leuchter's collection processes raises doubts about the value of the evidence he claims to have uncovered. The sources of Leuchter's samples are suspect. The description of the 'archaeology' that was conducted while someone kept guard to avoid detection is hardly reassuring or inspiring of confidence in the process by which evidence was collected. The provenance of the samples is critical for any findings based upon them.

The analysis of the samples and the conclusions that Leuchter drew are also deserving of discussion. There is a range of bio-chemical and engineering issues that Leuchter claims to have answers to as well. His conclusions are categorical and scathing in their dismissal of the 'exterminist' position. A measure of common-sense and some basic research suggests that Leuchter has chosen to configure his evidence to fit already known conclusions. This, or complete incompetence, can be the only explanation for his failure to fully interrogate the sources.

Some of Leuchter's conclusions

“...chemical analysis supports the fact that these facilities were never utilized as gas execution facilities.”

Leuchter claims that

- i. The levels of Hydrocyanic acid (cyanide 'gas') residue in the so-called gas chambers were not consistent with 'homicidal' use. There was less evidence of cyanide residue than in the well-documented fumigation facilities in the Birkenau 'Sauna'.

The concentration needed to delouse is as high as 16,000 parts per million and exposure time can be up to 72 hours. However 110-300 ppm will kill humans in fifteen minutes or so (Merck, 2006). Therefore if samples were collected from a gas chamber and the Sauna fumigation chamber it would be quite likely that the latter would show more evidence of cyanide residue.

The wonder is that there is any residue present in those gas chambers that have been exposed to the elements for more than half a century.

- ii. The location of the gas chambers close to the naked flames of the crematoria would be too dangerous to be contemplated because cyanide is highly inflammable.

The minimum concentration of cyanide that can result in an explosion is 56,000 ppm (Hydrogen cyanide, n.d.). The concentration necessary to cause death is nearly 200 times lower than that which causes explosion. Although the SS did use a concentration higher than the lethal one, it was far below that causing explosion.

- iii. Dropping cyanide ‘gas’ from the roof into the execution chambers would cause the executioners to be gassed as well.

This is obvious non-sense. Consider the testimony of SS private Hoeblinger (McVay, n.d.): (*Langbein*)

Then we drove to the gas chambers. The medical orderlies climbed a ladder, they had gas masks up there, and emptied the cans.

Effective gas masks have been available for military use since 1915?

How do we deal with this in the classroom?

For younger students, pose questions, problems that need an answer, such as: How do we know that the buildings identified at Auschwitz were used for homicidal gassing?

Present the pseudo-archaeology as ‘evidence’ with other evidence as part of the panoply of evidence available. Allow it to be decoded, deconstructed, interrogated and analysed along with other evidence. Present it along with sources from victims, survivors, bystanders and perpetrators that will allow students to construct a more evidence based conclusion. The fraudulent evidence and conclusions will be submerged and easily dismissed by the power of the documentary, pictorial and archaeological evidence that can be assembled.

This has been my experience with the various conspiracy theories of *pyramidiots* like Piazzini Smith, Cayce, Von Daniken and Hancock. Students have little problem recognising bogus evidence and conclusions when it is presented in the presence of ‘real’ evidence.

Older students could be involved directly with this material as an exercise in analysis. The provision of contrary explanations and logical argument based on sound analysis of the evidence will soon show how easily these arguments are able to be debunked.

They may be experienced and old enough to do the research and analysis themselves; to be directed to various internet sites and allowed to design their own investigations, sharing the research and then synthesising their results to present a joint report. This construction of a report directly from the evidence would be a powerful historical exercise.

Belzec and Treblinka.

The well documented (Kola, 2000) recent archaeological work at Belzec can serve as an example of the ‘revisionist’ interpretation of evidence.

The work at Belzec is often questioned (Moran, 2003) and belittled on revisionist 'chat rooms' because there are not many published accounts and images of the work. The dismissal of its results elicited a response from Robin O'Neil (1998), a retired CID detective, and academic, who was one of the members of the team involved in the archaeological work carried out by a university from Warsaw in 1997-9.

As well as evidence of 33 mass graves O'Neil (1998) also gave details of the discovery of a cigarette case bearing the name Max Monk, a Jew born in Vienna in 1882, who was taken from Prague to Theresienstadt on December 17, 1941, on transport "N" and later transported to Piaski on transport "Ag" on April 1, 1942. He adds that the records show that transports left Piaski for Sobibor and Belzec on November 11, 1942. It seems that archaeology at Belzec has given us at least one human story.

Most historians would be likely to see this evidence from Belzec as requiring accommodation with the existing knowledge of the events of the Shoah. The archaeological evidence gives physical and artifactual context and thus credence to the previously problematic and disputed documentary and 'survivor' records. Thus the historical record is positively complemented by the evidence of archaeological research.

How do the deniers, the 'revisionists', explain the congruence of archaeological and historical evidence? To put it simply they don't. Instead, in an amazing display of perverse logic, they claim that what has been found at Belzec is in fact evidence that the 'Holocaust' is a hoax. This is accomplished by refocusing the burden of 'proof' of the Shoah on the site of Treblinka. The recent failure by 'archaeologists' to find mass graves at Treblinka (The Holocaust Reviewed, 1999) it is argued, proves that there are no mass graves there, that proves no-one died at "Death Factory Treblinka", that proves there was no extermination camp (JREF, 2005), that there was no policy of extermination and so on; therefore the 'Holocaust' did not happen.

The GPR 'scans' from Treblinka are yet to be reported but a preliminary glance would suggest that the same fraudulent reporting of processes and results will prevail. (See Appendix)

Examination of the 'Leuchter Report' and this example, and others, of the abuse of evidence will provide ideal opportunities for students to experience and explore the evidence of the Shoah. The increasing availability of archaeological evidence will enhance this experience and opportunity for students to construct a view of the events of the Shoah.

Appendix

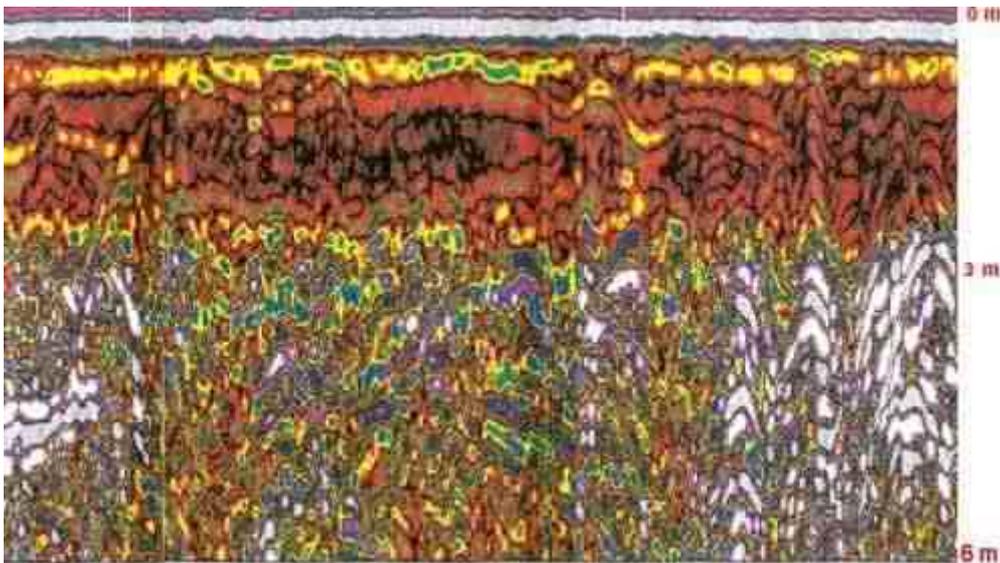
The latest Controversy...GPR scan of Treblinka

For six days in October 1999, an Australian team headed by Richard Krege, a qualified electronics engineer, carried out an examination of the soil at the site of the Treblinka camp in Poland, where, Holocaust historians say, more than half a million Jews were put to death in gas chambers and then buried in mass graves.(Bay, 2004)

The team carefully examined the entire Treblinka II site, especially the alleged "mass graves" portion, and carried out control examinations of the surrounding area. They found no soil disturbance consistent with the burial of hundreds of thousands of bodies, or even evidence that the ground had ever been disturbed. In addition, Krege and his team found no evidence of individual graves, bone remains, human ashes, or wood ashes.

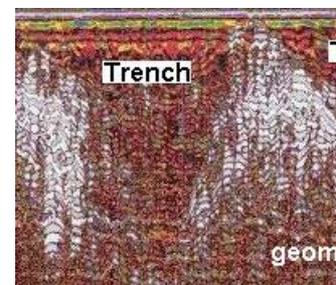
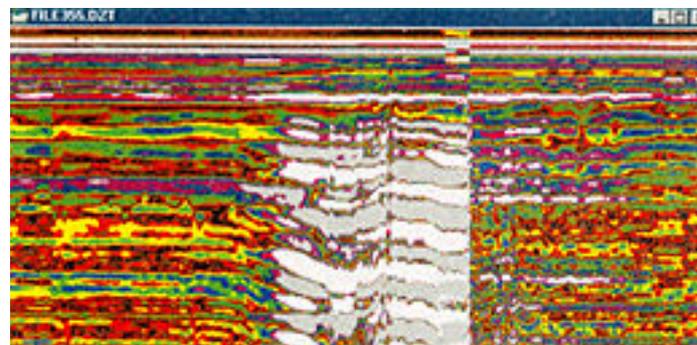
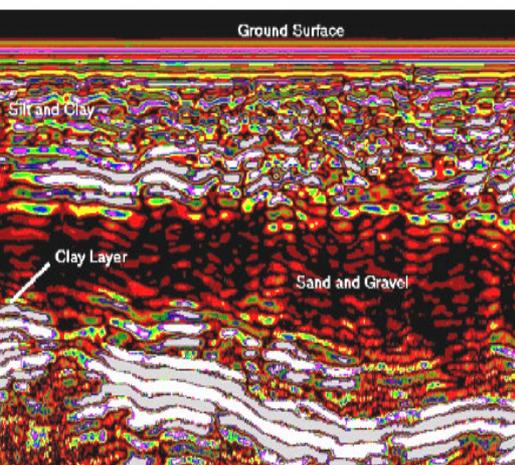
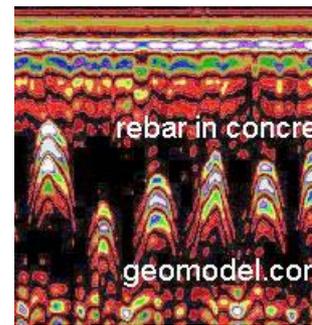
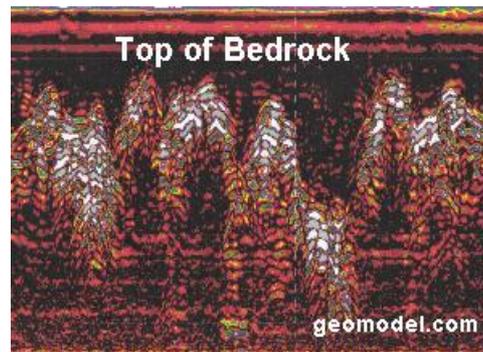
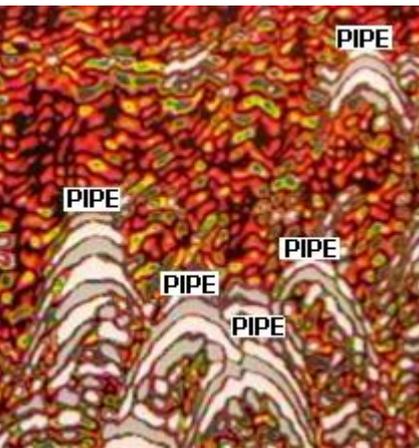
"From these scans we could clearly identify the largely undisturbed horizontal stratigraphic layering, better known as horizons, of the soil under the camp site," says the 30-year old Krege, who lives in Canberra. "We know from scans of grave sites, and other sites with known soil disturbances, such as quarries, when this natural layering is massively disrupted or missing altogether." Because normal geological processes are very slow acting, disruption of the soil structure would have been detectable even after 60 years, Krege noted.

This is the GPR scan published as evidence of "undisturbed" sub-soil strata (Irving, 2000)



Compare this scan to those that follow. These have clearly labelled sub-soil anomalies.

Notice anything? Below the 3 metre level?



Conclusion

Archaeology can and undoubtedly will play a much larger role in the future of Holocaust studies. As survivors pass away, taking their stories with them, the burden of discovering new aspects of the history of the Holocaust will surely be taken up by archaeologists and others who will search the physical, material record for data not contained in archives. The archaeological data can then supplement information contained in written records, fill in blanks, and/or reveal what was previously unknown, forgotten or overlooked. As this trend develops, we believe that educators can make extremely effective use of both what archaeologists come to learn about the Shoah and how they learned it.

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