

## Didactic Notes and Instructions for Printing

### I. The Seminar “The History of the Chotzen Family”

The seminar “The History of the Chotzen Family” shows how a Jewish family in Berlin experienced the Nazi persecution. Using original documents from the Chotzen family estate, students learn about and discuss issues related to the exclusion, disenfranchisement, deportation, murder and survival of Berlin Jews.

Elsa Arndt, who was Protestant, married the Jewish merchant Josef Chotzen in 1914. They lived in Berlin-Wilmersdorf with their four sons. Elsa was defined by the Nazis as “Aryan”; her husband was classified as a Jew and their sons as “half-Jews”. The family was socially ostracised. Josef Chotzen and his sons lost their jobs and had to perform forced labour. Three of the sons and their wives were deported from Berlin to ghettos in Riga and Theresienstadt. They were ultimately murdered in different camps.

After her sons and daughters-in-law were deported, Elsa sent parcels containing food and other practical items to Theresienstadt every other day for almost a year. The deportees were able to send a postcard with a short message confirming receipt of the parcels. Three hundred and seventy of these impressive postcards have been preserved. They document Elsa's tireless efforts on behalf of her family and provide insight into life in Theresienstadt.

Elsa kept hundreds of photographs, documents, letters and objects from the time of the Nazi persecution. Eppi Chotzen, the only son to survive, donated this extensive and historically unique collection to the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site. It provides insights into the history of one family's persecution and exemplifies the fate of many Jewish families.

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The material is suitable for students of grade 10 and higher. Students who participate should have a basic grasp of Nazi history.

Further information on the Chotzen family history can be found in Barbara Schieb: Nachricht von Chotzen. „Wer immer hofft, stirbt singend“, Berlin 2000 and Gorch Pieken: Das Haushaltsbuch der Elsa Chotzen. Schicksal einer jüdischen Familie in Berlin 1937-1946, Berlin 2008. Both publications are available in the memorial's library.



## II. Instructions for Printing

Download and save the three PDFs “Working Groups Portrait”, “Working Groups Landscape” and “Family Tree Exercise”.

For the PDF “Family Tree Exercise”, select the print option “one-sided printing”.

For the PDFs “Working Groups Portrait” and “Working Groups Landscape”, select the option “print on both sides”

If possible, select the format option “fit to margins” for all three PDFs.

After printing, sort the landscape and portrait worksheets into the six working groups. The names of the working groups are written at the top of the worksheets.

Cut apart the worksheets for the family tree exercise along the marked lines.

## III. Conducting the Seminar

The seminar begins with students creating a family tree for the Chotzen family and reconstructing the biographies of each family member. Afterwards, the students break down into six working groups to address different topics:

- “Race law” and its impact
- Exclusion from the economy and forced labour
- Reactions to the persecution and threat of deportation
- Deportation to Riga
- Deportation to Theresienstadt
- Deportation to Auschwitz and the post-war period

They do this by working with documents from the family’s estate and from archives. Students then compile and discuss their findings. This creates an overall picture of the family history during the Nazi persecution.

### a. Didactic Note on the Family Tree Exercise

The family members’ biographies have been summarised in two to four paragraphs. These are distributed to the students. In small groups, they discuss the biography of “their” person. Afterwards, the family member is presented to the class. Through this process a family tree is created that can be visualised on a wall and referred to throughout the seminar.

Working time: approx. 40 minutes

## **b. Didactic Note on the Working Groups**

After the working group topics have been introduced, the students break down into smaller groups of four to six people to focus on different themes. They read the texts and analyse the sources. The educators are available to answer factual and content questions. The small groups prepare their working group topic and present the information to the class. A group discussion follows during which general and thematic questions are addressed regarding possible courses of action, methods of communication, definition by others and self-definition.

Total time: approx. 120 minutes

Topic presentation and break down into working groups: approx. 10 minutes

Work in small groups: approx. 45 minutes

Presentation of findings: approx. 45 minutes

Discussion: 20 minutes

In conclusion, guiding questions are provided to help the students evaluate the seminar in an open discussion.

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