

Reading Images

European Jewish life from 1900-1945

The Assignment

From 2000-10, Centropa interviewed 1,200 Jewish Holocaust survivors living in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Balkans. Using ten images plucked from our database of 22,000 photos, this assignment has been designed to help you learn how to analyze primary historical sources.

It is split into three steps. Ask your teacher for assistance when you need it. Here are the instructions:

A. Match

Each photo comes from one of these ten countries (according to current borders): Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. There are two images per era: pre-World War I, World War I, interwar 1919-29, interwar 1920-39, and World War II.

Match the photo to the corresponding country and era. Your teacher will provide you with the date and location of the photo after you are finished.

B. Research and Analysis

Write a double-spaced, one-page hypothesis on one of the photos. Conduct research on the historical context of that time and place so as to know what would be a possible explanation for the photo's contents. Also study the image's details carefully. Based on your research and your analysis of the image, what do you think is going on in the photo? Who are the people and what are their relations to each other? What are they doing? What are their occupations? What is their socio-economic status? Etc.

When you are finished, you will receive the interviewee's caption for the photo.

C. Reflection

Compare your hypothesis to the caption in a double-spaced, half-page reflection. After each step, you were provided with information that confirmed or denied what you thought you saw in the photo. Consider how the new information changed your perception of the photo. What details did you see or miss? Why did you interpret them how you did?