

WORLD WAR 2 (PRISONER B-3087)

Big Idea

World War II forced many countries to make moral choices — and not all of them chose to protect Jews

Countries had governments.

Governments made decisions.

Those decisions affected whether Jews could live, escape, or survive.

We are not judging — we are learning what happened and why.

Before we continue reading Prisoner B-3087...

We need to understand something important. Yanek's story is not only about being cruel or being brave. It is also about where he lived, who was in control, and how countries used borders, trains, and rules to control people.

As we read the book, Yanek is moved from place to place. These moves are not accidents. They happen because the Nazis controlled countries, borders, and transportation. This book shows what happens when a person is trapped inside a system that does not see him as a human being.

In other words, Yanek's story is not just about cruelty or courage. It is also about geography and power.

During World War II, government - controlled borders, trains, and movement. Because of this, Yanek is pushed from place to place with no control over his life.

What things does Yanek not control in his life?

Jewish Population: Before and After World War

Jewish Population Before World War II (1939):

About 16–17 million Jews worldwide

About 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe

Jewish Population After World War II (1945):

About 11 million Jews worldwide

About 3.5 million Jews remained in Europe

Before World War II, Europe was home to most of the world's Jewish population.

Jewish communities had existed there for hundreds of years.

By the end of the war, about six million Jews had been murdered.

This means that most European Jewish communities were destroyed.

When we read Prisoner B-3087, we are not reading an unusual story.

Yanek represents millions of lives that were cut short.

Every time Yanek survives another camp, remember: most people did not.

Germany and Occupied Europe During World War II



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How Many Camps Were There During World War II?

Accurate answer:

There were tens of thousands of camps and camp sites created by Nazi Germany during World War II. Historians estimate about 42,000–44,000 different camps and camp locations.

What Do We Mean by “Camps”?

Not all camps were the same. There were different types:

Concentration camps

Extermination (death) camps

Labor camps

Transit camps

Prisoner-of-war camps

How Many Camps Were There During World War II? (cont.)

When people hear the word “camp,” they usually think of Auschwitz. But the Nazi system was much larger. Camps existed across occupied Europe, and many were small, temporary, or part of a larger system.

Concentration camps were places where prisoners were held, abused, starved, and often killed. These camps existed before the war and expanded during it. Many had dozens or hundreds of subcamps attached to them.

Concentration camps: about 20–25 major camps

Examples:

Auschwitz

Dachau

Buchenwald

Sachsenhausen

Mauthausen

Extermination (Death) Camps

These camps were built only for killing. People were transported there and murdered almost immediately. Most were located in occupied Poland, close to rail lines.

Extermination camps: 6 camps

Auschwitz

Birkenau

Treblinka

Sobibor

Belzec

Chelmno

Majdanek

Yanek passes through Auschwitz, which was both a concentration camp and a killing center.

Labor camps and subcamps: thousands

Forced labor for factories

Quarries (a large deep pit, from which stone or other materials were extracted)

Roads and weapons production

Large camps like Auschwitz and Buchenwald controlled many smaller camps.

Prisoners were moved constantly.

This is why Yanek is sent from place to place in the book.

The camps were built and run by Nazi Germany.

Ordered by Nazi leaders

Planned by the SS

Guarded by German forces and collaborators

Camps were not accidents and not chaos.

They were planned by the Nazi government and enforced by the SS.

Local governments in occupied countries were often forced or pressured to cooperate.

When Were the Camps Built?

Timeline

1933 – First concentration camp (Dachau)

1939–1941 – Camp system expands with war

1941–1945 – Death camps built and mass murder begins

Camps existed before World War II, but the war allowed the system to grow quickly.

Once Germany controlled large parts of Europe, it used that control to imprison and murder millions.

CAMP LOCATIONS

Camps were placed where trains could reach them easily and where secrecy was possible. Geography made the system faster and harder to stop.

Camps near railroads

Camps far from Western Europe

Camps inside occupied territory

Connection to Prisoner B-3087

Yanek survives multiple camps because he is moved again and again. Each move reflects how the camp system worked — prisoners were treated as objects, not people.

Major Nazi Camps During World War II



Where Were the Labor Camps?

Labor camps were spread across Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, usually near factories, mines, railroads, quarries, and construction sites.

Extermination camps were built mainly in occupied Poland.

Labor camps were built wherever the Nazis needed labor.

Geographic Pattern of Labor Camps

Inside Nazi Germany

Labor camps were located:

Near factories (weapons, uniforms, machinery)

Near rail yards

Near stone quarries and mines

Geographic Pattern of Labor Camps (cont.)

In Occupied Poland

Labor camps were:

Near extermination camps

Near industrial areas

Along railway lines

Purpose:

Use prisoners before killing them

Repair railroads

Build and maintain camps

This is why Yanek moves between camps in Poland.

Geographic Pattern of Labor Camps (cont.)

In Occupied Eastern and Central Europe

Labor camps existed in:

Occupied Czechoslovakia

Occupied Austria

Occupied Hungary

Occupied France

Occupied Netherlands

They were placed:

Near factories

Near construction projects

Near military supply routes

Geographic Pattern of Labor Camps (cont.)

Why the Nazis Built So Many Labor Camps

Nazi Germany needed workers, but did not want to pay them.

Prisoners were treated as disposable labor.

If someone collapsed or died, another prisoner replaced them. Labor camps were part of the war economy.

Yanek's Constant Movement

Yanek is moved not because of justice or punishment, but because the Nazis needed labor in different places. His body became a resource. When one place no longer needed him, he was sent somewhere else. This is exactly what happens in the book.

Homework

History, Geography, Camps, and Yanek's Survival

Follow the instructions from the printout.

Coming up.....the Quiz
Ten multiple choice questions
and
five open-ended questions

GOOD LUCK!