



Holocaust Memorial Video Streaming Collection Film Guide

Movie Samuel Bak: Painter of Questions

Time: 48 minutes

Theme: Childhood impact on adult life

Summary: After a lifetime of never wanting to return to his hometown of Vilna, Lithuania, at the age of 68 he finally returns to his town at the opening of an exhibit of his paintings. He brings his daughters with him and walks through the town showing them where he lived and where his grandparents and father were murdered. His life comes full circle as the documentary explores Bak's work and life through the lens of his art. He shares how his family was captured, taken, killed and how it impacted his artistic vision. The miracle of his father saving his life is still a recurring theme in his art.

Summary Questions:

1. What was Samuel Bak's greatest love as early as three years old?
2. What did Bak observe during a snow storm in Massachusetts?
3. What metaphor does Bak use to represent broken people?
4. What does the uprooted trees represent in his work?
5. At what age did his childhood end?
6. What role did his mother play in his artistic development?
7. Where did he and his family hide for eight months from the Germans?
8. What happened to his grandparents in the forest?
9. What do the birds in his art symbolize for Bak?
10. What comes out of the two pillars in most of his art?
11. What was his favorite fruit?

Reflective Questions:

1. How does the film explain that Bak looks at his art as questions rather than answers?
2. How does he explain what broken trees mean to him?
3. What made Bak end up going to his home town of Vilnius?
4. What is Bak's explanation for his art piece that has keys in the courtyard?
5. His still-life piece of pitcher, cup, dish speaks of what aspect of post Holocaust life?
6. What is Bak saying in his art when he explains that everything has been repaired but not restored?
7. Describe how Bak speaks of his portrait that he calls "Family."
8. What is Bak's sense of "Tikkun Olam" (fixing the world) through his art?
9. How does Bak explain the symbolism of the two towers with smoke in his art?
10. How does he use the pear in his art?



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STANDARDS:

Middle School

Subject: Social Studies

Strand: *SS.6.W: World History*

Standard 1: *SS.6.W.1 – Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical processes.*

Benchmark: *SS.6.W.1.6 Describe how history transmits culture and heritage and provides models of human character.*

High School

Subject: Social Studies

Strand: *SS.012.G: Geography*

Standard 2: *SS.912.G.2 Understand physical and cultural characteristics of places.*

Benchmark: *SS.912.G.2.1 Identify the physical characteristics and the human characteristics that define and differentiate regions.*

Strand: *SS.912.W: World History*

Standard 7: *SS.912.W.7 Recognize significant causes, events, figures, and consequences of the Great War period and the impact on worldwide balance of power.*

Benchmark: *SS.912.W.7.5 Describe the rise of authoritarian governments in the Soviet Union, Italy, German and Spain, and analyze the policies and main ideas of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler and Francisco Franco.*

Strand: *SS.912.H: Humanities*

Standard 2: *SS.912.H.2 Respond critically and aesthetically to various works in the arts.*

Strand: *SS.912.S: Sociology*

Standard 4: *SS.912.S.4 Social Groups/Explore the impacts of social groups on individual and group behavior.*

Benchmark: *SS.912.S.4.11 Discuss how humans interact in a variety of social settings.*

Standard 6: *SS.912.S.6: Social Change/Examine the changing nature of society.*

Benchmark: *SS.912.S.6.2 Examine various social influences that can lead to immediate and long-term changes.*

Strand: *SS.912.P: Psychology*

Standard 11: *SS.912.P.11: Cognition Domain/Memory*

Benchmark: *SS.912.P.11.10 Discuss the factors influencing how memories are retrieved.*

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