VERIFICATION OF THE CONTENT COMPOSITION OF A MONOTHEMATIC SET OF TEXTS WITH THE THEME OF SHOAH

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1. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the contribution is to present the verification procedure of a monothematic set of texts with the theme of the Shoah intended for teaching at the first grade of primary schools. In this article, we present the results of verification or falsification among first year pupils.

The motivation for compiling the anthology was the fact that the Shoah phenomenon represents certain warnings for contemporary society. With appropriately chosen methods and procedures, it is advisable to familiarize even the youngest pupils with these warnings.

The Shoah, or Holocaust, remains deeply relevant to contemporary society and influences various aspects of cultural, theological and social discourse. The impact of the Shoah on modern Jewish theology is significant because it prompted a rethinking of theodicy, the vindication of God´s goodness in the face of evil. This rethinking led to a shift from traditional theodicy to anti-theodicy, as explored by Zachary Braiterman, who advocates a critical reading of Jewish texts and traditions to get beyond the trauma of the Holocaust and transform Jewish cultural identity from marginal to central (Rahayu, 2024). The Shoah also serves as a critical lens through which contemporary anti-Semitism is understood. Anti-Semitism today takes many forms, including Holocaust relativization, which distorts the nature of the Holocaust without denying

it outright. This phenomenon underscores the ongoing challenge of anti-Semitism, which adapts to contemporary issues and remains a global problem. The legacy of the Shoah thus informs efforts to combat anti-Semitism, as evidenced by ongoing debates about the adequacy of the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*'s definition of anti-Semitism (Cohen, 2022). The psychological consequences of the Shoah are examined through the lens of psychoanalysis, where it is seen as a manifestation of the death instinct, questioning the structures of genealogy and social order. This perspective emphasizes the role of the Shoah in understanding the dynamics of power and evil, as expressed by Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil (Perelberg, 2022). In literature, the Shoah continues to inspire stories that explore Jewish identity and resilience. Der Nister's works, for example, mix Jewish mysticism, modernism and Soviet history and reflect the Jewish experience during and after the Holocaust. His narrative imagines a future where Jewish wandering ceases, symbolizing hope and continuity despite past tragedies (Grelka, 2022).

1.1. TERMINOLOGICAL DEFINITION

The terms *Shoah* and *Holocaust* are often used interchangeably to describe the systematic genocide of Jews and other groups by the Nazis during World War II, but they carry different connotations and implications. The term ***Holocaust*** is widely recognized and used in historical and educational contexts to describe the entire process of persecution, exclusion and extermination directed by the Nazi regime. It included the social, economic, and physical extermination of approximately two-thirds of Europe's Jews, as well as the deaths of millions more, including Roma, disabled individuals, and political dissidents (Narcizo, Ehrlich, & Gherman, 2022). On the other hand, ***Shoah***, a Hebrew word meaning *catastrophe* or *destruction*, is often preferred in the Jewish context, emphasizing the unique and incomprehensible nature of genocide. It highlights the philosophical and theological challenges this event poses, questioning the presence of evil and the existence of God in the face of such atrocities (Akrap, 2024 or Bensussan, 2023). The Shoah is seen as a deep rift in modern rationality and civilization that

challenges historical representation and understanding (Narcizo, 2022). Philosophical discourse around the Shoah delves into the *banality of evil*, a concept introduced by Hannah Arendt that suggests that ordinary individuals can commit atrocities under certain conditions, thereby questioning the nature of human morality and action (Akrap, 2024). This discourse also explores the limits of historical representation and the challenges of capturing the enormity of the Shoah and its impact on human consciousness (Narcizo, 2022). In short, while both terms refer to the same historical event, *Holocaust* is a broader term used in general historical contexts, while *Shoah* is more specific to Jewish discourse and emphasizes the event´s unique theological and philosophical implications. Both terms underscore the need for ongoing reflection and study to understand and remember this catastrophic period of human history (Lane, 2024).

For the purposes of the contribution, we perceive these terms (i.e. the Shoah and the Holocaust) as synonyms.

By **primary school** we mean 1.-9. year of Czech schools. The term **firs grade of primary** school means 1.-5. grade of primary schools attended by pupils aged 6 to 11-12 in the Czech Republic.

2. METHODS OF GETTING TO KNOW THE SUBJECT OF THE SHOAH

The question of understanding the subject of the Shoah, or Holocaust, involves the examination of different methodologies across different disciplines. While the abstracts provided do not directly address the Shoah, they offer insight into methods of understanding complex topics that can be extrapolated to Holocaust studies. First, the **philosophical approach** as described by Samarin (2024) emphasizes the method of intellectual experiment pioneered by Galileo. This method involves creating models of experience that bridge the gap between subject and object and enable a deeper understanding of complex phenomena through intellectual experimentation and comparative analysis. This approach can be applied to Holocaust studies by developing theoretical

models that examine the relationships between historical events, individual experiences, and collective memory. In a legal context, Pavlov´s (2024) analysis of the subject of law emphasizes the importance of **anthropological** and **legal approaches** to understanding human behavior within legal frameworks. This includes recognizing the human element as central to legal reality, suggesting that a similar focus on individual stories and human experiences is crucial in Holocaust studies. This approach can help to understand the legal and moral implications of the Holocaust, as well as the personal stories of those affected. The educational methods discussed by Marlina, Rahmi, & Antoni (2021). In an operational research context such as blended learning can be adapted for Holocaust education. The use of digital platforms such as YouTube and Zoom can facilitate wider access to educational resources and survivors´ testimonies and improve understanding through various media.

2.1. TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AT THE FIRST GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Teaching first graders about the Holocaust requires careful consideration of age-appropriate methods and content. The research highlights several approaches and challenges in Holocaust education that can be adapted for young students. One of the methods is the use of literature intended for young readers, for example "Letters in a bottle", which can introduce the topic sensitively. This approach is supported by innovative learning tools such as critical thinking routines, collage techniques, and emotion diagrams that help students engage with the material in a reflective and empathetic way (Krawczyk, 2023). These methods aim to fill gaps in the curriculum and make the subject accessible to young minds. Another approach emphasizes the importance of moral education through Holocaust studies. By focusing on personal and community narratives, educators can help students understand and empathize with victims, foster moral virtues, and develop character. This method involves using "journalistic questions" to explore moral dilemmas and encourage students to think critically about historical events and their consequences (Curtean, 2023). The broader context of Holocaust edu-

cation shows a trend towards incorporating different pedagogical methods to improve understanding and awareness among students. This includes adapting teaching strategies to the cultural and political context, as seen in different countries´ approaches to Holocaust education (Schurster & Ramos, 2024).

Introducing first graders to the Holocaust requires a sensitive and age-appropriate approach that balances historical accuracy with the developmental needs of young children. Research suggests that using children´s literature and storytelling can be an effective method. Béatrice Finet´s work highlights the potential of historical fiction to engage young readers with complex historical events such as the Holocaust. Her approach advocates for nuanced understanding through literary narratives that can help children critically engage with material and understand its implications for adult mediation (Bélanger, 2024). André Schwarz-Bart´s attempts to convey the Holocaust to children through stories and fairy tales highlight the importance of storytelling in making such a difficult subject accessible. This work suggests that integrating elements familiar to children, such as fairy tales, can help them process and understand the historical context of the Holocaust (Gyssels, 2023). The teaching of the Holocaust in primary schools has evolved to include new pedagogical methods that emphasize understanding the dangers of hatred and intolerance. This includes using personal narratives and stories that resonate with young learners, making historical events more relatable and understandable (Schurster & Ramos, 2024). Overall, first graders´ introduction to the Holocaust should include carefully selected stories that are age-appropriate and supported by adult guidance. This approach helps not only in conveying historical facts, but also in fostering empathy and understanding of the broader themes of tolerance and human rights. Educators should be mindful of the cultural and political contexts that may influence teaching materials and strive to present a balanced and comprehensive view of the Holocaust (Stec, Sadlik, & Kucia, 2023).

3. METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research was carried out by means of questionnaires, which were distributed in printed form to pupils of the first grade of primary schools - of course, after prior agreement with the headmaster of the respective school.

The first phase of the research was the selection of suitable intentional texts with the theme of the Shoah. Based on a detailed analysis of these narratives with a defined phenomenon, samples were extracted from them. Closed questions were created for individual excerpts, which determined the level of understanding of the text by the respondents, and the degree of popularity[1] of the selected publications by the relevant pupils was also monitored. Before starting to fill in the anonymous questionnaire, work was done with selected literary examples or pictures. The methods of working with the text were chosen based on the research, which was concerned with finding out the opinions of lower-secondary school teachers on the implementation of the Shoah theme in the teaching of literary education (one part of this questionnaire was focused on the methods that the tested teachers use in the framework of literary education (see e.g. Mašát, 2019). By applying the methods of work with the example that the teachers mentioned, we would like to achieve that we do not deviate too much from the educational reality. Based on the students´ answers, the content of the anthology was verified or falsified.

The selection of schools was made by random stratified selection. We focused on data from the *Annual Report on the State and Development of the Education System in the Olomouc Region* (2023). As it follows from the data, the research was carried out for practical reasons in this area of the Czech Republic. In Table 1, we list the required number of pupils who, according to the established criteria, should have partici-

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[1] We perceive popularity as a two-component aspect of evaluation. The primary component contributing to popularity is the understanding of the text, the second component, which depends on the first, is the process of evaluating the narrative by the recipient (if the recipient´s attitude towards the text in the first stage is negative, the second stage does not even begin).

pated in the research investigation. Based on Katriak (1975), we determined the total number of tested pupils to be 1.5% (with a base sample size of up to 100,000).

As already indicated, quota stratified sampling was used (see Table 1). We chose this methodological procedure because we are convinced that it is adequate to fulfill the research objective. This argument is confirmed by Yang et al. (2016) when they claim that quota stratified selection offers several benefits across various domains, primarily by enhancing diversity and optimizing resource allocation. In the context of feature selection for machine learning, quota stratified methods promote diversity among selected features, which helps mitigate overfitting and improves model performance by ensuring that features come from different categories. Shaughnessy et al. (2017) adds that this approach is particularly beneficial in applications like advertisement recommendation and privacy image classification, where diverse representation is crucial. In organizational settings, quota-based selection policies can help counteract biases, although they may also negatively impact perceptions of procedural justice and organizational attractiveness. However, when implemented thoughtfully, these policies can enhance job pursuit intentions by fostering a more inclusive environment. Additionally, in economic contexts, quota selection mechanisms can stimulate bidding prices and farmer incomes by allowing developers to choose land locations strategically, thereby optimizing resource use and enhancing overall economic outcomes (Deng et al., 2022).

A total of 457 pupils of the first grade of elementary school were tested (of which 91 are from the first class of this level of institutional education).

TABLE 1. *Number of pupils and classes in primary school by years - regular classes in the 2021/2022 school year. Annual report on the state and development of the educational system in the Olomouc region, p. 17 (edited).*

district	1st year/sample size	2nd year/sample size	3rd year/sample size	4th year/sample size	5th year/sample size	total/sample size
Jeseník	306/5	317/6	313/6	313/6	343/5	1592/28

Olomouc	2401/36	2483/37	2433/36	2336/35	2594/39	12147/183
Prostějov	1071/16	1026/15	1019/15	1028/15	1088/16	5232/77
Přerov	1112/17	1134/17	1076/16	1135/17	1165/17	5622/84
Šumperk	1104/17	1072/16	1143/17	1036/16	1096/16	5451/82
Total/sample	5994/**91**	6032/91	5984/90	5848/89	6286/96	30144/457

4. RESULTS

In this part of the contribution, we present the results of the verification of the intended content composition of the anthology, specifically its part for 1st year, from which a total of 104 children, 54 girls and 50 boys, participated in the research. As part of the general part of the questionnaire, we found out not only the gender of the respondents, but also whether they read in their free time, whether adults read to them or whether they look at books. A total of 96 children (i.e. 92.31% of respondents from the first year) answered this question positively. It is interesting that the percentage of positive answers to this question decreases with the grades (at least in the free time of the 5th year pupils).
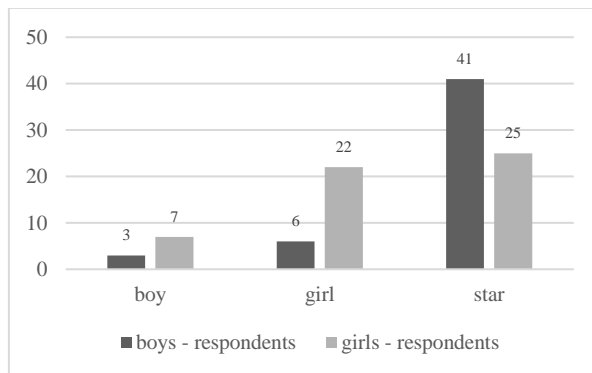
The first image the respondents worked with was the following.

Three questions were postulated. On the first of these, *What caught your eye the most in the picture?* a) girl b) boy c) star.
We present the answers in Graph 1, according to the gender of the respondents.

GRAPH 1. *What caught your eye the most in the picture?*

As can be seen from the graphic representation, the answer "star" received the most answers from both boys and girls. It is interesting that statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$) can be traced in the answers of the respondents to this question in the answers of boys and girls. This discrepancy is because a total of 82% of boys (41 out of 50) answered "star", while only 46.30% of girls (25 out of 54) chose this option. On the contrary, a total of 40.74% of girls (22 out of 54) chose the option "girl", boys chose this option only in 12% (6 of them). It can therefore be concluded that boys and girls focused on a different fact shown in the picture.

In Graph 2, we demonstrate the respondents´ answers to the question who could have drawn the picture.

**GRAPH 2**. *Who could possibly have drawn the picture?*
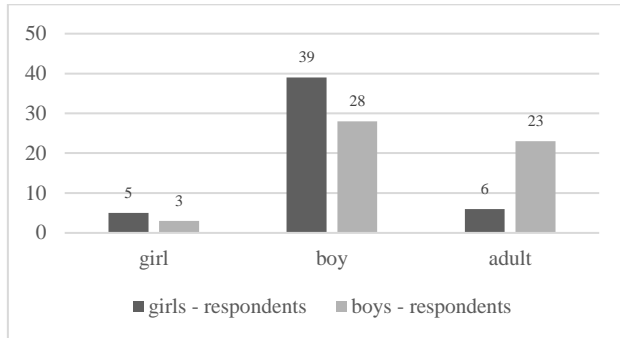
As can be seen from the graphic representation, most respondents believe that the picture was drawn by a boy. At the same time, it can be stated that no statistically significant differences can be detected in the statements of girls and boys.

The third related question asked how the respondents liked the corresponding image. Respondents had the opportunity to smile at one of the listed smileys (see Graph 3). For the purposes of statistical evaluation, these options - i.e. laughing smiley face to frowning smiley face - were scored (5 points - 1 point). The respective image received 4.18 points from boys, 4.50 points from girls. It can therefore be concluded that the picture is very popular with the respondents. It is also interesting that the lowest score for boys was 1 point, for girls 3 points.

GRAPH 3. *Popularity rating scale.*

The second image the respondents worked with was the following:
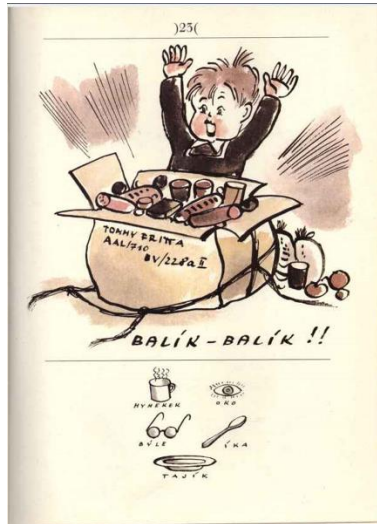
Respondents answered three questions again. In terms of the popularity of this image - again rated through scored smileys - boys rated this image 4.06, girls 4.28. The minimum number of points for boys was 1, for girls 2 points.

The next question respondents answered was whether the boy in the picture was sad or happy.

A total of 6 respondents (2 boys and 4 girls), i.e. 5.77%, chose the option "sad". The remaining respondents, i.e. 98 (48 boys and 50 girls), i.e. 94.23%, chose the option "happy". There are no statistically significant differences in the answers of the respondents according to their gender.

In Graph 4, we show the results of the second question, namely *What did you notice most in the picture?* Respondents chose from the options - a) food b) toys c) clothes.

GRAPH 4. *What did you notice most in the picture?*

GRAPH 4. *What did you notice most in the picture?*
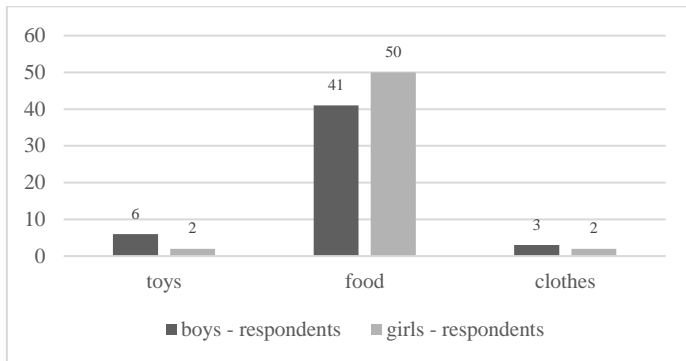
As can be seen from the graphic representation, most respondents (91) noticed the food in the picture the most. It can be assumed that this distinctive aspect of the picture was associated by the pupils with the expression of the boy - that is, that he is cheerful. It must be noted that there are no statistically significant differences in the answers of girls and boys.

The third questionnaire item was the following poem:

TO CHILDREN

We are all children, little ones

I play with a spotted ball

We immediately cry with reddened faces

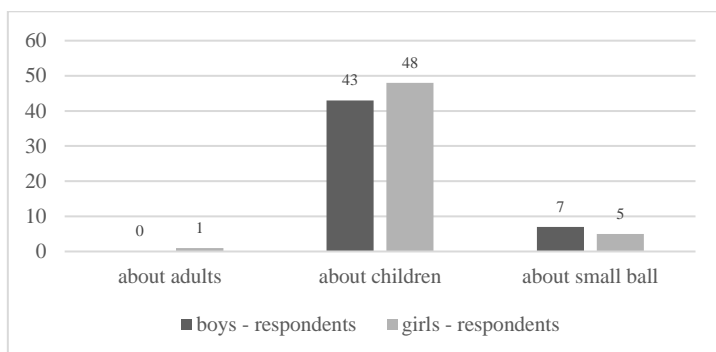*immediately with a developed cheek*

to the silver world

on the green side

for life, forward.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9duohPgɪkvk.

The respondents´ answers to the first question, what the poem is about, are shown in Graph 5. Respondents chose from three options - a) about children b) about adults c) about the ball

GRAPH 5. *What the poem is about?*

As the graphic shows, most respondents (43 boys out of 50 and 48 girls out of 54) correctly understood the text of the poem. Of course, most of them could orient themselves in the offered options based on the title of the poem. There were no statistically significant differences between the responses of girls and boys.

The second item for the poem was the question of whether the poem is happy or sad. A total of 23.08% (9 boys and 15 girls) consider the mentioned poem to be sad. The remaining 76.92% (41 boys and 39 girls) said that this poem is cheerful. There are no statistically significant differences in their answers.

The third question was again directed to how the respondents liked the poem. The statistical evaluation methodology was identical to the same questions postulated for images. Boys scored the poem a total of 4.22 points, girls 4.56 points. Boys gave the least 1 point to the poem, girls 3 points.

If we compare the overall results within the framework of the so called popularity of the two mentioned pictures and one poem, then it can be stated that in general the respondents liked the poem the most (see Table 2), while statistically significant differences were found (*Independent Sapmles T-Test*; p<0.05), in connection with the comparison of statistical results within this question, which was given under both the pictures and the poem. We remind you that the maximum number of points that the respondents could give to the pictures and the poem using smileys was 5.

TABLE 2. *Comparing the popularity of pictures and poems.*

	mean (points)		Independent Samples T-Test (p)
	boys (N = 50)	girls (N = 54)	
1st picture	4.18	4.50	0.142
2nd picture	4.06	4.28	0.420
poem	4.22	4.56	0.038

5. DISCUSSION

As can be seen from the presented results, it is quite surprising to find that the respondents liked the poem more than the pictures, and by a relatively significant margin. A total of 61.54% of respondents (54% of boys and 80.52% of girls) preferred the poem. We call this finding surprising in a positive sense, since this poem is tragicomic, even sad, in its tone. In addition, research confirms that reading poetry is not a favorite activity among primary school children. Research into the popularity of poetry among elementary school children reveals a mixed landscape.

Hacking (2023) states that while poetry can improve language skills and creativity, its involvement in schools is limited. A survey found that 93% of primary schools read poetry aloud less than once a week, with almost 20% of schools not reading poetry at all, indicating a lack of expression. Studies show that innovative teaching methods, such as the use of cartoon videos and musical models, significantly improve students´ poetry writing and reading skills, suggesting that when poetry is presented in an engaging way, students respond positively (Hidayatika et al., 2024). Amilia, Prihanta, & Kurniasih (2023) underline that project teaching effectively supports creative thinking when writing poetry and further increases students´ interest and independence in this literary form. On the other hand, this poem, with its tune and theme, appealed to the respondents to a greater extent than the pictures, which require

the active receptive participation of the students. Lopes Fernandes (2021) states that the poems of children from the Terezín concentration camp serve as a moving expression of their experiences during the Holocaust. These poems reveal the deep consciousness and sensitivity of the young authors despite their harrowing circumstances. They encapsulate various aspects of life in the camp and reflect both the horror and resilience of childhood in such dire conditions and Levin & Baratz (2021) add that the broader context of children´s literature about the Holocaust emphasizes themes of mystery and trauma, suggesting that these poems are part of a larger narrative that seeks to process and commemorate the past.

We believe that the presented results demonstrate the current findings in the field of the use of images and poetry in the presentation of the events of the Shoah. The use of poetry and imagery in presenting the Holocaust serves as a profound means of expressing the complexity of the human experience during this atrocity. Holocaust poetry often uses vivid metaphors, such as the representation of the Earth, to illustrate the destroyed world and the intimate connection between the environment and human suffering (Major, 2024). Poets created works that went beyond mere documentation, acting as emotional artifacts that encapsulated their lived experiences and served as urgent messages to the world (Hacohen, 2024). Conversely, the role of images in Holocaust education is multifaceted but full of challenges. While photographs can enhance understanding, their use can also lead to misinterpretations due to reliance on problematic images and inadequate context (Umbach & Mills, 2023). The tension between the absence of a direct visual representation of the Holocaust and the necessity of artistic expression highlights the ongoing struggle to convey its unimaginable horror (Jankowska, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

In the contribution, we presented the results of a research investigation, the goal of which was to verify or falsify the content composition of a monothematic set of texts with the theme of the Shoah intended for first

grade of primary school pupils. The main research tool was a questionnaire, which for respondents from the first year of primary school contained a total of three items: two pictures and one poem. All these monuments to the Shoah era were created behind the walls of the Terezín concentration camp.

A total of 104 pupils (50 boys and 54 girls) participated in the research from the first year. The key conclusion after the statistical evaluation of the questionnaires is the fact that all the potential monuments that were part of the relevant questionnaire were verified - they therefore appear to be suitable for implementation in the given anthology.

An interesting fact is the finding that the most popular (students´ most preferred) memory was a poem. We explain this finding by the authenticity of the poem in question, its simplicity and to a certain extent the positive tuning.

With the contribution, we wanted, among other things, to point out the fact that, to a certain extent, the abstract and for the elusive Shoah issue can be included in the first grade of primary schools, even in the first year, with appropriately chosen examples and methods for working with them. This belief of ours, the materialization of which will be realized by the publication of an anthology of texts with the theme of the Shoah, was confirmed by the results of the verification research conducted among 104 pupils of the first years of primary schools.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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