

“SIDE OF THE SUN”

the bulls are grand as the side of the sun
and although they kill them for the stale crowds,
it is the bull that burns the fire,
and although there are cowardly bulls as
there are cowardly matadors and cowardly men,
generally the bull stands pure
and dies pure
untouched by symbols or cliques or false loves,
and when they drag him out
nothing has died
something has passed
and the eventual stench
is the world.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

“SHEMA”

You who live secure
In your warm houses
Who return at evening to find
Hot food and friendly faces:

Consider whether this is a man,
Who labours in the mud
Who knows no peace
Who fights for a crust of bread
Who dies at a yes or a no.
Consider whether this is a woman,
Without hair or name
With no more strength to remember
Eyes empty and womb cold
As a frog in winter.

Consider that this has been:
I commend these words to you.
Engrave them on your hearts
When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,
When you go to bed, when you rise.
Repeat them to your children.
Or may your house crumble,
Disease render you powerless,
Your offspring avert their faces from you.

PRIMO LEVI

“CHANGES”

[Verse 1: 2Pac]

I see no changes, wake up in the morning and I ask myself
Is life worth livin'? Should I blast myself?
I'm tired of bein' poor and, even worse, I'm black
My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch
Cops give a damn about a negro
Pull the trigger, kill a n****, he's a hero
"Give the crack to the kids, who the hell cares?
One less hungry mouth on the welfare!"
First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal to brothers
Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other
"It's time to fight back," that's what Huey said
Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead
I got love for my brother
But we can never go nowhere unless we share with each other
We gotta start makin' changes
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers
And that's how it's supposed to be
How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids
But things change... and that's the way it is

[Hook: Talent]

That's just the way it is
Things'll never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww yeah
That's just the way it is
Things'll never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww yeah

[Verse 2: 2Pac]

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
One better place, let's erase the wasted
Take the evil out the people, they'll be actin' right
'Cause both black and white are smokin' crack tonight
And the only time we chill is when we kill each other
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other
And although it seems heaven-sent
We ain't ready to see a black president
It ain't a secret, don't conceal the fact
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks
But some things will never change
Try to show another way, but you stayin' in the dope game
Now tell me, what's a mother to do?
Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you

You gotta operate the easy way
"I made a G today," but you made it in a sleazy way
Sellin' crack to the kids
"I gotta get paid!" — well hey, but that's the way it is

[Hook: Talent]

[Interlude: 2Pac]
We gotta make a change
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes
Let's change the way we eat
Let's change the way we live
And let's change the way we treat each other
You see the old way wasn't workin'
So it's on us to do what we gotta do to survive

[Verse 3: 2Pac]
And still I see no changes; can't a brother get a little peace?
It's war on the streets and a war in the Middle East
Instead of war on poverty
They got a war on drugs so the police can bother me
And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do
But now I'm back with the facts, givin' it back to you
Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up
Crack you up and pimp-smack you up
You gotta learn to hold your own
They get jealous when they see you with your mobile phone
But tell the cops they can't touch this
I don't trust this, when they try to rush I bust this
That's the sound of my tool
You say it ain't cool, my mama didn't raise no fool
And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped
And I never get to lay back
'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the payback
Some buck that I roughed up way back
Comin' back after all these years
"Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat," that's the way it is

[Hook: Talent]

[Outro: 2Pac]
Some things'll never change

TUPAC SHAKUR AND TALENT

Primo Levi was an Italian Jew imprisoned in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. He was liberated from the camp in January, 1945 when the USSR pushed back German troops on the eastern front. Primo Levi's poem, "Shema," was originally written in January 1946 (Yad Vashem video). The poem reflects on his experience in Auschwitz and is presented in conjunction with his novel, *Survival In Auschwitz*, otherwise known as, *If This Is A Man (Italian)*. This is an extremely early Holocaust publication and undoubtedly one of the most far-read and influential pieces of Holocaust literature, alongside Elie Wiesel's, *Night*.

Interestingly, the poem never uses the term "Holocaust," for historical reasons, nor the Hebrew term "Shoah," meaning 'calamity,' which was used by Jews at this time. This invites an interesting discussion with students about when the term "Holocaust" first became associated with the event and why Levi did not use a word to define his experience. Without proper context or understanding of its historical background, one may not gain insight into the allusions Levi is making throughout his piece. Firstly, it is important to understand that the title, "Shema," is a reference to the Jewish religious tradition, and is the name of a prayer recited by Jews in the morning and evenings as a daily declaration of faith. This is important because it highlights two very important themes in Levi's text: what happened to peoples' faith in Auschwitz, and how does the Holocaust fit into Jewish identity moving forward? Levi uses direct address throughout the three stanzas of the poem to address the reader, essentially begging the reader to remember the Holocaust and to "engrave [it] on your hearts," (L18) as though it is as vital to them as the daily prayer of shema is to religious Jews. This reinforces the notion that it is *everyone's* job to engage in Holocaust education and remembrance, not just those who experienced it. In addition, the word "shema" in Hebrew means 'hear.' Levi is calling out to his reader asking them to hear him. This adds a wealth of knowledge to the poem that is absolutely essential.

The second stanza of Levi's work uses allusions to Auschwitz to present Levi's theme that governs the work: the dehumanization of prisoners in Auschwitz. He alludes to slave labour (L6), the shaving of heads and stripping of clothing (L11), starvation (L8), selektion (L9), medical experiments (L13), and the general mistreatment of the prisoners. He also utilizes a simile in the last line of this stanza, "as a frog in winter" (L14) to further emphasize the dehumanization by comparing the women to an animal. This stanza opens with the question, "consider whether this is a man" (L5) to introduce this idea of dehumanization and loss of identity. Focusing on each of these lines separately allows the educator to discuss very important topics regarding the Holocaust and Auschwitz that become central to the reading of the novel.

There is a very clear juxtaposition between the first and third stanzas and the second stanza. Levi addresses the reader directly in the first and last stanzas as though bookending the middle stanza. The stark contrast between the experience of the reader and the prisoners of Auschwitz allow the reader to consider their experience on a more personal level. By utilizing direct address as an opening and closing to the poem, the author does not leave room for the reader to not consider its questions deeply and consider their own personal role in Holocaust remembrance. The last stanza utilizes a series of threats that reveal the urgency with which the author writes: "Or may your house crumble,/ Disease render you powerless,/Your offspring avert their faces from you." (LL21-23). This opens a very interesting discussion for students about why we continue to learn about the Holocaust and genocide in the classroom today.

There are several useful tools and materials to use in conjunction with this poem. First, it is important to show the students images of Auschwitz. It allows them to imagine the unimaginable better. The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum has a very comprehensive visual tour available on their website that I've found to be a very useful tool in the classroom. Secondly, showing the students a photo of Primo Levi from liberation helps the students visualize how badly he was treated (see below for photo). Throughout the poem Levi does not

use names to highlight the loss of identity and humanity, but putting a face to it will help the students understand the horror more clearly. For a deeper reading of the poem a copy of the Shema prayer could be an interesting tool to do comparisons with with the students, as well.



Materials and Resources:

- Yad Vashem informational video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg-d6fk41PU>
- Shema prayer and further information: http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/705353/jewish/The-Shema.htm
- Virtual Tour: <http://panorama.auschwitz.org/>

Proxy Poem:

“להקשיב”

I who am safe
Cozy in my apartment
Who comes home each day to see
everything I could ever need

Ponder that these were men,
Who slaved in rain and snow
Who feared for their lives every day
Who risked life for a sip of soup
Who lived or died at a right or a left
Ponder that these were women,
Without identity or image
Without a will to go on
No ability to reproduce a future
like a single animal ripped of their mate

Refuse to forget that this has happened
These words have been commended to me
I have tattooed them on my soul
When I am home, when I am on the streets
When I'm with friends or students or colleagues
Repeat them to every ear that will listen
Or may I lose my rights
My ability to speak or listen
And the world turn its face on me.