



# Geraldine Shenkin on Marianne Grant



## Questions & Answers with Timestamps

### 1. In what ways did antisemitism affect Marianne's life?

01:45 German occupation forced her family to move to a flat in a poorer area.

01:49 Wearing a yellow star.

02:33 Sent to the ghetto Theresienstadt in 1942 with her mother. She was allowed to bring only a few belongings.

### 2. What do we learn about Theresienstadt? What were the conditions and what kind of activities went on?

02:53 The camp is about 30 miles from Prague. People lived in very overcrowded conditions there. Marianne worked with agriculture and became the leader of the youth garden. She did painting and drawing in her spare time and also made story books for the children

04:07 Theresienstadt was an army barracks before it was a ghetto. Old people were tricked into thinking it was a retirement settlement.

05:59 Marianne's mother, Anna, was selected for transport to the east (to Auschwitz concentration camp) three times but Marianne was able to get her off the list. The last time she was unable to, so Marianne joined the train to get to Auschwitz

### 3. What do we learn about Marianne's experience at Auschwitz?

06:59 She went to the family camp Auschwitz-Birkenau with her mother. There she looked after children and secretly taught them painting and nature studies. When her artistic skills were spotted by a Slovak member of the SS, he got her to do artwork for his family. When Marianne was ill, he brought her food to help her recover, and saved her life.

08:05 Dr Josef Mengele heard of her artistic talent and asked to see her so that she could draw his experiments to record them.

09:07 Marianne was given permission to draw cartoon characters on the wall of the children's block. She later recreated this at Yad Vashem.

10:15 After months in Auschwitz, Marianne and her mother were sent to Germany as slave labourers, to various work camps and then to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, just 10 days before liberation.

17:00 Marianne was given a number that was tattooed on her arm

#### **4. What has Marianne's legacy been?**

13:54 Education – a teaching pack for secondary schools was created and sent to schools across Scotland. It has more recently been digitised by Vision Schools Scotland.

17:26 Sharing her art and her story of courage and resilience

#### **5. What was the impact of Marianne's experience on Geraldine? How did it affect her life when growing up or as an adult?**

15:39 She was used to hearing foreign accents, hoarding things and reusing them – when everything is taken away, what you have is precious. No food could be wasted. She still hates gas cookers and burners because of her misunderstanding as a child that this was what was used to kill people, instead of poisonous gas. She also dislikes tattoos because of their association with the tattoo that her mum was given in Auschwitz.

## **Glossary**

### **Theresienstadt**

Theresienstadt was presented in propaganda to Jewish people as a model Jewish settlement but in reality, was a ghetto run by the SS which served as a transit camp for Jews on route to extermination camps. The camp operated during November 24 1941 and May 9 1945 in northern Czechoslovakia, where 35,440 Jews died in the ghetto and 88,000 were deported.

### **Mock Café**

Pretend cafes were set up in the ghetto when a Red Cross visit was taking place, to give the impression that people living there were being treated well.

## **Transport to the East**

The train journey to Auschwitz concentration camp

## **Auschwitz**

Complex of concentration and extermination camps in Poland, of which Auschwitz-Birkenau was the camp with gas chambers. There were 1.1 million people murdered on this site, Jewish and non-Jewish.

## **Bergen-Belsen**

A concentration camp in northern Germany. Originally a prisoner of war camp, it became a concentration camp in 1943. Over 70,000 people were murdered on this site.

## **Slovak Collaborator**

The Slovak republic was created in 1939 when the state accepted a demand from Hitler to split from Czechoslovakia. In return for this independence, the Slovak military fought alongside Germany in the War.

## **SS**

The SS, short for *Schutzstaffel* (German for “Protection Squadron”), was originally formed as Adolf Hitler’s personal bodyguard unit. Over time, it grew into one of the most powerful and feared organizations in Nazi Germany. The SS was in charge of protecting Hitler, enforcing Nazi policies, and controlling German secret police and concentration camps. They played a central role in carrying out the Holocaust and other crimes during World War II. The SS acted above the law and was responsible for many acts of violence, discrimination, and terror in the Nazi state.

## **Pleurisy**

An inflammation of the lining of the lungs and chest cavity which causes sharp chest pain. This was one of many illnesses experienced by people in the camps during the holocaust as a result of the harsh conditions.

## **Typhoid**

An infection spread through unclean water or contaminated food. Most common in areas with poor sanitation, it would have spread easily amongst people in camps.