‘Dear Diary’

1. Where were Polish Jews sent to live once the Nazis took over Poland?
   They were sent to live in segregated communities called ghettos around the country.

2. What eventually happened to Miriam Cheszczewascki and her family?
   Miriam and her mother were deported to Treblinka, her father was killed when he refused to board a deportation train and her brother was also killed while in the ghetto.

3. How did Miriam’s diary come to be published?
   Miriam’s old teacher received the book after the war and took it with her to Israel. The notebook was given to Yad Vashem and parts of it were published in various languages.

4. What did Rutka Laskier’s family do when the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933?
   They moved from the northern Polish city of Gdansk to the southern town of Bedzin.

5. How did Rutka’s diary survive the war? Who kept it?
   Rutka arranged with a Catholic friend that the diary would be hidden in the house she was living in. The friend, Stanislawa, kept the diary for 64 years before it was eventually published.

6. List three things you learn about Petr Ginz from the article.
   Students might include the fact that he grew up in Czechoslovakia and knew the language Esperanto. He was something of a child prodigy and had written five novels by the time he was 14. He was of mixed Jewish and Christian ancestry and was transported to Thereisienstadt at 14. He created the Vedem newspaper in the camp but was transported to Auschwitz and killed in the gas chambers there.

7. State two things Yoko Moriwaki wrote about in her diary.
   She wrote about the war, her daily life and school events in her diary.

8. What was the Siege of Leningrad? How many people are estimated to have died in it?
   The siege was when the Germans surrounded Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and prevented food and supplies from being given to the people in the city. 1.5 million people are estimated to have died in the siege.

9. What happened to Tanya Savicheva’s larger diary?
   The family burned it for fuel during the cold weather.

10. Why is Tanya’s short notebook famous today?
    A stone version of the writing from the notebook makes up part of the ‘Flower of Life’ memorial in St. Petersburg.

Extension

Research one of the events of the Second World War mentioned in the article. You might choose to write about the Siege of Leningrad, the Holocaust, the ghettos, or the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Create a fact file about the event you research.

Students might create a more intensive research project or speech about the event.

Use the internet to research Holocaust, Hiroshima, Vietnam War and the Siege of Leningrad memorials. How are memorials to civilians different to those for the military? Choose one you particularly like and explain what you feel is effective about it.

The civilian memorials often have an underlying story or particular person's life that they are attempting to depict. Students might also look at the museum displays created from some gathered materials (for example, at Auschwitz or at the Jewish Museum in Prague).

Since the publication of Anne Frank's diary in the 1950s, a large number of diaries and other writings by those civilians caught up in the war have been published. Do you think the publication or sharing of these writings is important? Why or why not? What possible uses can you see in the collection of this type of material?

Students might look for the prevalence of these diaries and other writings on the internet (on book selling or book review websites). You can find material by searching for 'writings from the Holocaust' or 'writings from the Second World War'.