

## Handout 1.2: Four survivor accounts

### **Elie Wiesel, Jewish student, Romania**

*I was almost thirteen and deeply observant. By day I studied the Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple [...] My father was a cultured man, rather un sentimental. He rarely displayed his feelings, not even with his family, and was more involved with the welfare of others than with that of his own kin. The Jewish community of Sighet held him in the highest of esteem; his advice on public and even private matters was frequently sought. There were four of us children. Hilda, the eldest; then Bea; I was the third and only son; Tzipora was the youngest. My parents ran a store. Hilda and Bea helped with the work. As for me, my place was in the house of study, or so they said.*

(Wiesel, *Night*, pp. 3–4)

### **Steven Frank, Jewish schoolboy, Amsterdam**

*We lived in a lovely part of Amsterdam. Our house was large, and in the loft there was actually a swing so you could play there. Opposite our house there was a school, outside of which was a statue of Erasmus and often we used to climb all over it. It was a free-and-easy neighbourhood, we and our friends played in the street, religion didn't occur to any of us. I learned to skate almost before I could walk: in winter, I can remember being taken onto the ice with skates tied on my shoes and with a little chair with which I pushed myself over the ice – they were lovely happy times. We weren't religious, not one bit. In fact, we had a Christmas tree in our house; I had no conception at all of Judaism, of being Jewish. There were no Jewish festivities or ideology at all in the household or anything really to indicate we were Jewish. My father was a very successful lawyer in Holland, a very humanitarian man involved in many organisations related to mental health.*

(Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p. 19)

### **Janine Ingram, Jewish schoolgirl, Greece**

*I was born in 1923 of Jewish parents of Spanish descent; both my parents' families had emigrated from the Spanish Inquisition 500 years before and established themselves in Greece. We were a tight community, a small town of about 200,000 people then, and 60,000 of these were Jews. I never felt that I was different, that I was Jewish; no, I always felt that I was Greek. I had a French education at the lycée and I met friends at the yachting club and the tennis club and felt that we were one. I was never aware of any antisemitism. I never went to synagogue, except for weddings and my parents were not religious although, oddly enough, they kept the feast of Pesach – the Passover.*

*There was a big difference within the Jewish society of the time; there were people like us who were comfortably off – we had a large rambling house and all we wanted – and then there were the extremely poor Jews who lived on the outskirts of town, and they were totally uneducated and spoke only Spanish.*

(Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p. 19-20)

### **Marsha Segall, Jewish schoolgirl, Lithuania**

*I was born on 16 January 1922 to a well-to-do Jewish family, traditional but not religious, in Siauliai, Lithuania. It was a small Jewish community, in proportion about seven per cent because the whole population of the country was small. I had a very happy childhood, a very happy home. I had two sisters, one two and a half years older than me, and one about five years younger. My father was an industrialist and he also represented American Oil for Lithuania. Mummy was a very happy woman, loved entertaining, loved people, always used to sing and it was a very happy atmosphere – we had everything we wanted.*

(Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p. 17)