Nate Leipciger is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada after the war and settled in Toronto. You can learn about his experiences by reading his memoir, *The Weight of Freedom*, or on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Below is some background that will help you understand Nate's story.

**BIOGRAPHY:**

Nate was born in 1928 in Chorzów, Poland. He lived with his parents, Jacob and Leah, and his older sister, Linka. His family was poor and they lived in a working-class neighbourhood. Nate attended a Jewish school and had lots of freedom to explore the city. When Germany occupied Poland, a large section of Polish territory along the border was incorporated into Germany. Jews in those areas had to move to make room for Germans to settle. Nate's father was sent away to do forced labour, and the rest of his family moved to a city called Sosnowiec. Later, Nate's family was forced to move into a ghetto in the nearby town of Środula, where life became more difficult. Deportations of Jews from this area to Nazi camps and killing centres began in 1942, and in August 1943, Nate's family was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nate and his father were separated from Nate's mother and sister and endured the brutal conditions there for several weeks before being sent to other Nazi camps. After liberation in May 1945, Nate and his father searched for surviving relatives and lived in Germany until they immigrated to Toronto in 1948.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

**Poland** is a country in Central Europe, located between Germany and Russia, that had a large Jewish population before World War II. Jews faced **antisemitism** and discrimination in Poland, but many also participated in Polish culture and society. **World War II** began with the **German invasion and occupation of Poland** in September **1939**. The Germans began persecuting Jews by forcing them to leave their homes, perform forced labour and move into ghettos. **Ghettos** were small, crowded areas with poor living conditions that were guarded by Germans. The Nazis started deporting Polish Jews to camps and killing centres in Poland in **1942**. One of these killing centres was called **Auschwitz-Birkenau**; Jews sent there were either killed with gas upon arrival, or were imprisoned and used for labour under conditions of extreme deprivation and brutality. Approximately **3,000,000** Polish Jews were killed in the Holocaust, including Nate's mother and sister.

"I was alive, free to go anywhere, but where would I go? To whom? Would anyone in my family be waiting for me? I should have been happy, but I was not. But I remembered a time when I was happy. It had only been a few years earlier, but to me it seemed like a lifetime."
**—NATE LEIPCIGER**

THE WEIGHT OF FREEDOM

NATE LEIPCIGER