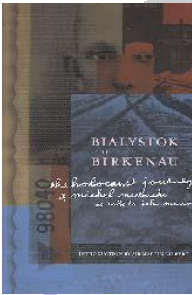




**Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons
Teacher's Book Review**



***Bialystok to Birkenau: the Holocaust journey of Michel Mielnicki,*
Michel Mielnicki
Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, April 9th, 2013.**

Some stories are important as historical testaments of the atrocities committed against groups of people. Stories of the Holocaust fall under this category. Some survivors have accepted the burden of baring witness so that the world will never forget and so that such horrors may never again happen.

Michael Mielnicki tells his story of being deported at the age of fifteen, with his family, to Auschwitz, where his father was murdered and then later how he became a slave labourer at Buna and Mittelbau-Dora until he was liberated at Burgen Belsen, where Anne Frank and so many innocents perished. His memoir captures moments of horror and wonder on the same page. At one moment I found myself in a state of shock over the brutality inflicted by one human on another and in the next moment I found myself in a state of awe over the incredible will to live demonstrated by the young Michel in the face of what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles.

I learned so much history from reading this book. The author creates a world where the reader understands how the stage was set for Hitler to capture the minds and souls of so many German people. The author introduces to the reader the average people who demonstrated extraordinary courage in the face of the ultimate risk – the loss of their own lives – by hiding Jews and even helping them escape. Finally, he asks the hard questions, ones that are difficult to answer over a century later, questions like why didn't the Allied forces bomb the railroad system, the vital artery which fed the death camps of eastern Europe.

This is not an easy book to read but it is an important book to read, one that I would highly recommend to senior students and staff.