

# YOUNG PEOPLE REMEMBER SHOAH

## A national competition for the schools



INTERNATIONAL  
**HOLOCAUST  
REMEMBRANCE**  
ALLIANCE

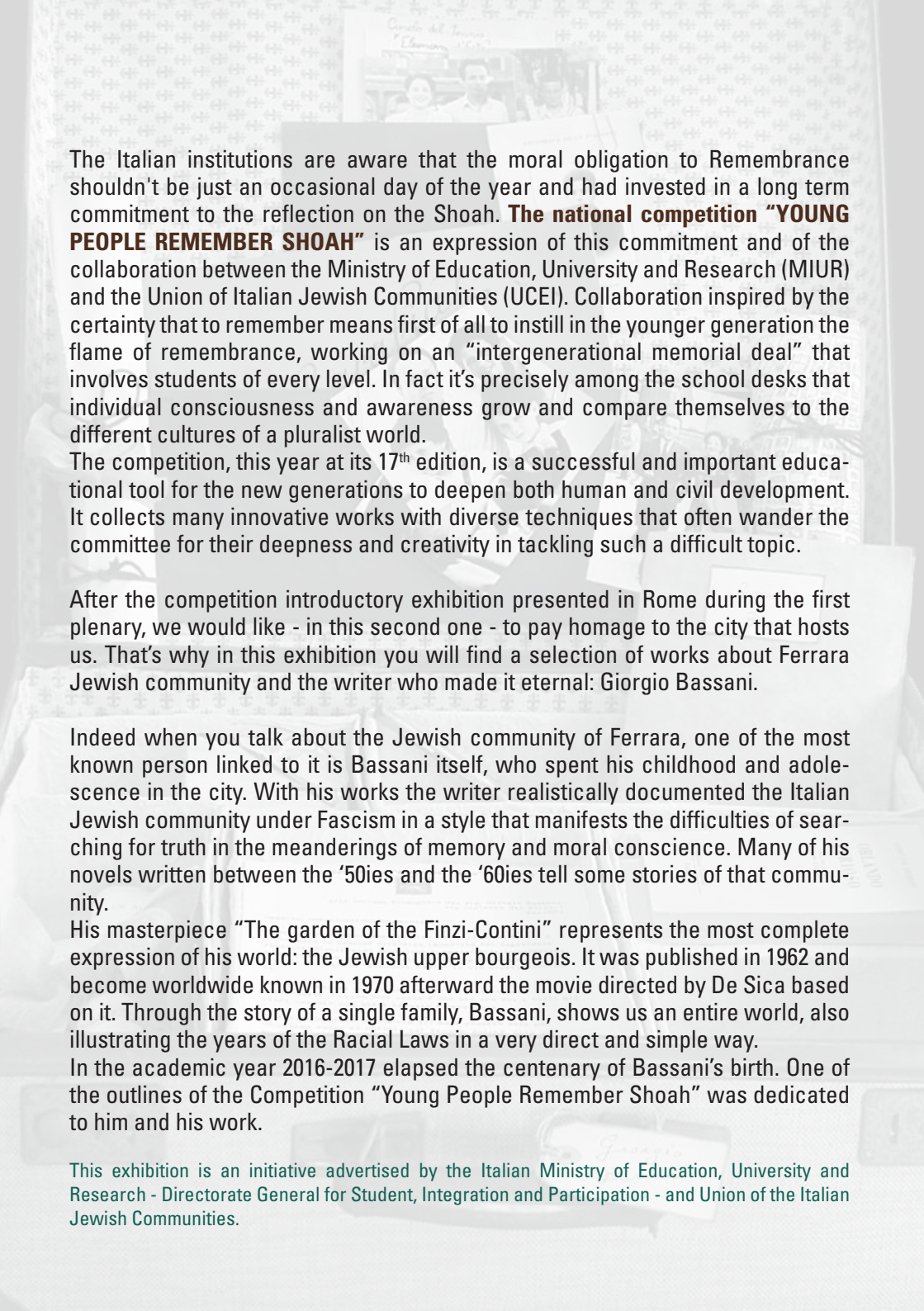


**2018** ITALIAN CHAIRMANSHIP



Direzione Generale per lo Studente  
l'integrazione e la Partecipazione





The Italian institutions are aware that the moral obligation to Remembrance shouldn't be just an occasional day of the year and had invested in a long term commitment to the reflection on the Shoah. **The national competition "YOUNG PEOPLE REMEMBER SHOAH"** is an expression of this commitment and of the collaboration between the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI). Collaboration inspired by the certainty that to remember means first of all to instill in the younger generation the flame of remembrance, working on an "intergenerational memorial deal" that involves students of every level. In fact it's precisely among the school desks that individual consciousness and awareness grow and compare themselves to the different cultures of a pluralist world.

The competition, this year at its 17<sup>th</sup> edition, is a successful and important educational tool for the new generations to deepen both human and civil development. It collects many innovative works with diverse techniques that often wander the committee for their deepness and creativity in tackling such a difficult topic.

After the competition introductory exhibition presented in Rome during the first plenary, we would like - in this second one - to pay homage to the city that hosts us. That's why in this exhibition you will find a selection of works about Ferrara Jewish community and the writer who made it eternal: Giorgio Bassani.

Indeed when you talk about the Jewish community of Ferrara, one of the most known person linked to it is Bassani itself, who spent his childhood and adolescence in the city. With his works the writer realistically documented the Italian Jewish community under Fascism in a style that manifests the difficulties of searching for truth in the meanderings of memory and moral conscience. Many of his novels written between the '50ies and the '60ies tell some stories of that community.

His masterpiece "The garden of the Finzi-Contini" represents the most complete expression of his world: the Jewish upper bourgeois. It was published in 1962 and become worldwide known in 1970 afterward the movie directed by De Sica based on it. Through the story of a single family, Bassani, shows us an entire world, also illustrating the years of the Racial Laws in a very direct and simple way.

In the academic year 2016-2017 elapsed the centenary of Bassani's birth. One of the outlines of the Competition "Young People Remember Shoah" was dedicated to him and his work.

This exhibition is an initiative advertised by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research - Directorate General for Student, Integration and Participation - and Union of the Italian Jewish Communities.



## **FERRARA**

### **A Jewish city**

Ferrara - as many other Italian cities - has a long history of Jewish presence. The oldest document that mentions the Jewish population in the city goes, indeed, back to the Middle Age in the XIII Century; even though the community only flourished between the XV and XVI centuries - when the height of the Duchy of Ferrara - as the Estensi family, through a number of concessions, encouraged the settlement of foreign Jews in the Duchy and therefore even in Ferrara. This policy enriched the local Jewish community firstly with Spanish Jews (expelled in 1492) and then with Bohemian and Central European ones.

When, for succession issues, the Estensi had to abandon the city leaving the area under the clerical jurisdiction, things changed and Ferrara stopped to be a welcoming city for the Jews. The ones who didn't left the city with the last duke were accepted only if they agreed to submit to many restriction until they were obliged to be restricted in a ghetto where the community lived until the Jewish emancipation of the 1861.

All over Italy many Jews joined the Risorgimento movement to unify the peninsula and 3 Jews from Ferrara combatted directly with Garibaldi.

In the XIX century the urbanisation brought to the city - which still had an economic relevance - Jews from smaller close communities. With the Italian Unification started the long process of integration: economic, cultural and political.

A portion of the Jewish community became part of the upper bourgeois and shared with enthusiasm the values of that period as the positivism and its celebration of Science.

During the First World War many Jews enlisted as volunteer; they strongly felt the responsibility to fight for the country that granted them equal rights. Subsequently, the Racial Laws and the following deportations affected the Jewish Ferrara community, as the other Italian Jewish communities.

Because of the deportations and later of the migration to bigger cities of the new generations, nowadays the community is very small. Its history represents the history of many medium-small sized Italian Jewish communities that are now disappearing. This is one of the reasons that wanted the MEIS (Museum of the Italian Judaism and of the Shoah) to be opened and based in Ferrara.

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# **“BASSANOPOLI. Inside and outside the walls”**

**Middle School “Druento”**

**Druento - Torino**

**2016-2017**



**Board game - wooden box with clue cards, pieces and board**

After deepening Bassani's work, the class decided to gather in a board game ten of his characters from different novels that share a strong connection with the city of Ferrara.

The name of the game reminds of the popular Monopoly and plays with the idea of a city of Bassani which is nothing but Ferrara.

The goal of the game is to recognize - based on what is known after reading Giorgio Bassani novels - one of these 10 characters. Each of them is linked to a variety of places around the city - represented also on the board game - that are the clues needed to identify them.

The choice of using Hebrew letters and Jewish symbols underlines the Jewish heritage of the city and of all the characters.



# "A THIN FIL-ROUGE"

**Middle School of Ronco Scrivia**

**Ronco Scrivia - Genova**

**2016-2017**



**Artistic work - Cardboard**

A thin fil-rouge is what connects the characters born from Bassani's pen: Micol Finzi-Contini, Athos Fadigati and Geo Josz, protagonists respectively of "The garden of the Finzi Contini", "The golden glasses" and "A gravestone in Mazzini street". The three characters seem very different but they all share the same experience of exclusion and marginalization from the society for reasons at the same time different and equal: Micol because of her jewish origin, Athos because of his homosexuality, and Geo (the only Holocaust survivor of Ferrara according to Bassani's story) because of what he reminds to the people. Furthermore, in all the three stories the image of a train is central: Micol is deported, Athos meets on a train the young student he falls in love with and probably Geo leaves Ferrara for the second and last time again by train.

# "GIORGIO'S WORLD"

**Middle School "Don Milani"**

**Ticineto - Alessandria**

**2016-2017**



**Suitcase**

After reading two of Bassani's novels "The garden of the Finzi-Contini" and "Long night in 1943" the class wanted to learn more about the family, the passions and the life of the author.

The work wants to hold in the old suitcase - owned by a grandfather of one of the students - the world of the writer through:

- postcards, maps, pictures and quotes about his city - Ferrara
- Bassani's degree certificate and a book to disclose his love for Literature
- a manuscript of one of its novel, ink and a pen showing his need to write
- a score that underlines his passion for music
- a pair of glasses that reminds one his novel
- the letter that expelled him to the tennis club after the enactment of the Racial Laws that tells his love for that sport.

The suitcase tries to contain everything meaningful for Bassani and - at the same time - wants to be representative for all the suitcases with which Jews were allowed to leave when deported. The life of a great author in a suitcase, a suitcase of a jew with all his world.

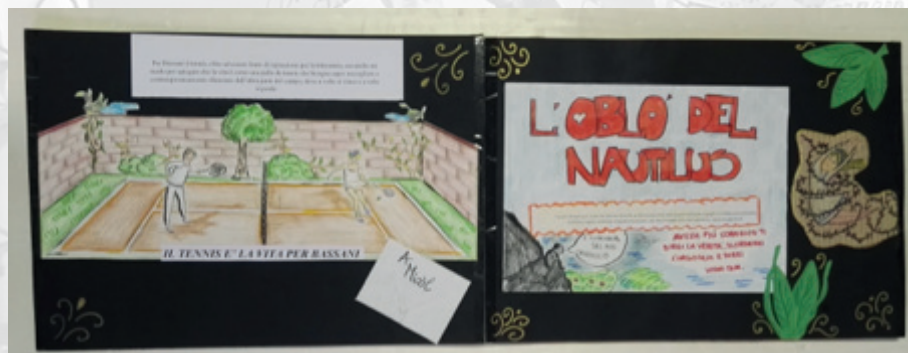


# "NAUTILUS PORTHOLE"

Middle School "Ferrajolo-Siani"

Acerra - Napoli

2016-2017



Album with collage

The work is part of a larger project called "Nautilus" that was realized during the school year 201-17 and that was focused on issues such as legality and the preservation of the historical-artistic-literary heritage.

Based on Bassani's novel "The garden of the Finzi-Contini", the album collects students' thoughts on the thematics of the book more relevant to them.

Through quotes, reflections and drawings the students tackle issues like Remembrance, violence of history, friendship, family, beauty, failed love and human loneliness.

The journey of the Nautilus is therefore a journey of a man looking for his true essence.

According to the project goal, the memory of the past make young people more aware of the reality of today and able to build a better future.

Interesting is the comparison of the relationship between Giorgio Bassani - main character of the novel - and Micol Finzi-Contini with the one between Dante Alighieri and Beatrice in the "Inferno".

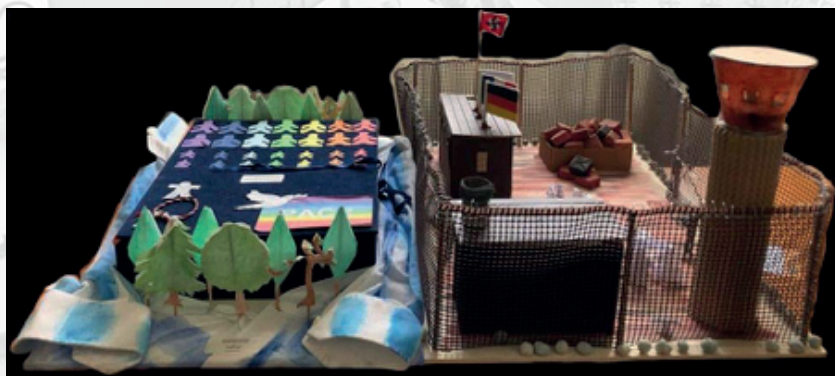
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# "GIORGIO BASSANI FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE"

Middle School "I. Montanelli"

Roma

2016-2017



Scale model - various materials

"My fear is that the young people would forget what happen" G. Bassani. The goal of the work is to demonstrate - instead - the wish of the young people to still remember. That's the reason why the class, following an educational path on the Shoah, decided both to reproduce through a scale-model the concentration camp seen in the movie "The boy in the striped pyjamas" and to shield in a box a symbolic synthesis of "The garden of the Finzi-Contini" as an act of Remembrance.

Giorgio  
Bassani



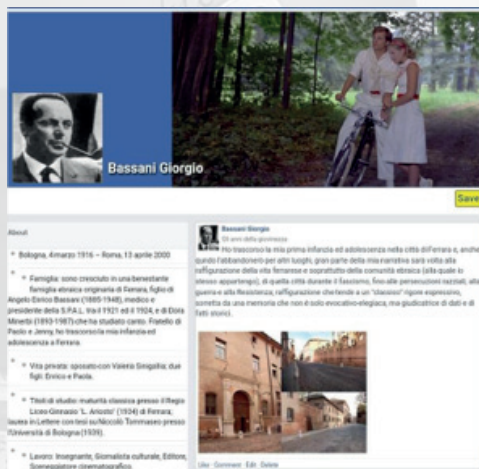
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# "A JEW FROM FERRARA"

Middle School "G. A. Rocco"

Afragola - Napoli

2016-2017



## Web page

The work consists in a fake Facebook profile that the class opened pretending to be Giorgio Bassani. Imaging the existence of the well-known social network back in the years of his activity, the students built the profile page of the author recalling his life and career most important steps through posts and comments about his publications, achievements and also arguments.

Between the "friends" are identifiable both relatives and representatives of the Italian intellectual elite at the time. Bassani interacts on his profile with poets, writers and film directors such as Italo Calvino, Natalia Ginzburg, Eugenio Montale and Vittorio De Sica who directed the movie from "The garden of the Finzi-Contini". Bassani found the script-screenplay not fair to his book and disowned it but the movie won the Oscar as the Best Foreign Language film. The profile reports the quarrel between the writer and the director.

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# "FRANCO'S STORY"

Primary School "Mazzini-Modugno"

Bari

2010-2011



## Album with drawings and animated video

The animated video made by the children tells the story of Franco Shonheit and his parents.

The Shonheit Family was living in Ferrara and Franco was 14 years old when they were deported before together to Fossili and then divided: Franco and his father to Buchenwald and his mother to Ravensbruck. They were the only European family entirely survived to the deportation.

The video and the album with drawings have the declared aim to spread: "in a special way this story founded by chance, hoping that it will reach the heart of everyone who will get to know it".

Franco Shonheit, informed of this work, wanted to meet the children.



# “REMEMBERING... THROUGH BASSANI’S EYES”

**Middle School n 3 di Renazzo**

**Renazzo - Ferrara**

**2016-2017**



## Video

With this work the students introduce the audience to a short summary of the Ferrara Jewish community history and walk them through its places around the city; last stop is the Ariosto High School where 25 olive trees in the schoolyard were planted to remember the 24 students and the principal expelled because they were Jewish during the Racial Laws.

Through two works of Giorgio Bassani - “Long night in 1943” and “Garden of the Finzi-Contini” - the video wants also to show the city as an immobile spectator in front of the terrible events of those days and of the end of its Jewish community that was an essential part of it. Ferrara and its inhabitants decide not to report what’s happening but rather to look the other way.

“Remember means to never forget” and, even now that Bassani is dead and rests in the Jewish Museum of Ferrara, the students can and want to still remember through his words and his novels.

# "US IN THE LONG NIGHT IN 1943"

**Middle School "G. Mazzini"**

**Minervino Murge - Barletta Andria Trani**

**2016-2017**



♪ Franco sceglie ... di non sapere ♪

## Video

The work is based on the story narrated by Bassani in his "Long night in 1943" about the massacre of the 15th of November 1943 when 11 opponents to the fascism were executed in a street in front of the Castle.

The song written, composed and sung by the students is about the choice of ignoring the oppression and - in opposition with this - it wants to convey the message of not to turn a blind eye but to fight the injustices. From Bassani's story to nowadays prejudices, hate and violence, the students choose to "set an example and tell the truth".

The transition from black and white to colors at the end of the video underlines the changeover from silence to face the reality and not hide it anymore.



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## "GEO"

**Middle School of Mandas**  
**Mandas - Cagliari**  
**2016-2017**



### Video

After reading Bassani's novels the students decided to focus on the thematic of the return of the survivors that the author tackled in "A gravestone in Mazzini street"; one of the "Five Ferrara stories".

In the video they play the story of Geo - survived to the Death Camps - and of his return to his city, Ferrara, the day that a gravestone is fixed just outside the synagogue to commemorate the Ferrara jews perished in the Shoah. That's the maximum that the city wish to do; Geo realizes that no one wants to listen what he has to share and that the people prefer to ignore him than to deal with the sense of collective responsibility.

The class emphasize the debate between the few who feel closer to Geo and his tragedy and the most of the town that - after the war - wishes just to leave behind everything that can make them uncomfortable.

# "BETWEEN THE WALLS... NOT TO FORGET"

**Middle School "Pianciani - Manzoni"**  
**Spoletto - Perugia**  
**2016-2017**



**Animated video**

The short video, made with the stop-motion technique, uses plasticine puppets to tell a story that shows one aspect of the exclusion of the Jews from the Italian society due to the Racial Laws. An old man, sitting in front of a popular square in Ferrara, shares his memories with his nephew and remembers a group of jewish children who - back at the time - couldn't enter in the a shop to buy food.

This work focus is especially on the nonexistent reaction of the other inhabitants to this injustice as "the road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference".







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