

13 at War

13 at War was produced by Netherlands Public Broadcasting / NPS Broadcasting Organisation. *13 at War* is a 13-episode history series for children about World War II, hosted by Lisa Wade, known from the NPS youth programme *Het Klokhuis*. She hosts the series from historic locations, illustrated by authentic archive footage and moving dramatised scenes.

13 at War was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 7–11 Non-fiction category.

International experts' opinions

There was an intense discussion among the international experts about this program. They discussed the form, hostess and categorization of the program. Almost all of them liked the program and they offered their suggestions to improve it further.

There was overall praise for the program. "It was very clear and easy to follow and to have an understanding of this particular topic. I have a daughter at that age group 9 to 11, this is a perfect program for her. It leaves room for discussion for us. I am hoping that children won't feel hopeless, because parents will be there to discuss afterwards and answer questions. It does give you a lot of room for that. I thought it was well done. It has relatable characters in the similar age group, close enough, so, I didn't feel that it was too horrific and that they couldn't deal with the subject matter. From my particular experience, there is a bit of a matter-of-fact way when children deal with something, especially if it is something that they know about on some level and they want more information about it. It was very informational as far as I was concerned (female expert, Jamaica). "It was beautifully done. I have a seven-year-old kid. I am not going to allow her to see this show. I have a fifteen-year-old kid, which I was happy to show this to" (female expert, Israel). Some liked the fresh perspective of the program. "We have some memories, sorrow, and sadness. It is a fresh start, even though at the end it means: forget about the past – start fresh" (male expert, Qatar).

The program had three different types of elements. There was the historical footage; there was the drama, and then there was the hostess. This juxtaposition of three genres was appreciated by the experts. "I think they always complete each other; it is one chain of information. There are different facts, factors, and scenery. That mix was very healthy. I think it would attract the kids more than a straightforward documentary with all the pictures. They don't like the straightforward news. But, in this one, I think the drama part of let's them feel the fact that some harm happened in a certain part of



Figure 1: *13 at War* is about the lives of Jews during the Nazi period.

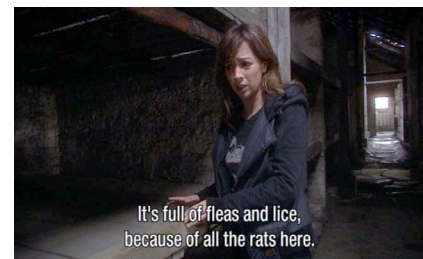


Figure 2: The hostess of the program attracted a lot of debate amongst the experts.



Figure 3: Information about Jews was recorded in detail.



Figure 4: Archival footage was incorporated in the program.



Figure 5: They were forced to do all sorts of work.

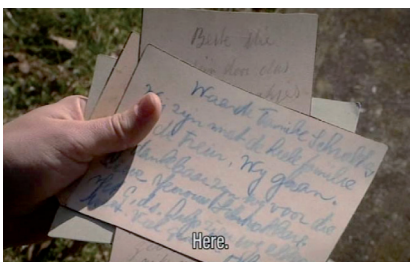


Figure 6: Prisoners threw handwritten postcards from the moving trains.

history” (male expert, Qatar). “I liked the mixture of fiction report and the archive, especially the way that they linked it together. I really liked that one” (female expert, Germany). “I think that the mixture of the documentation and the fiction part is good to have about this special topic, which children, I think, are not able to understand properly by themselves. The thing about the girl is that she was very strong. She was stronger than her parents, and I think in this situation for a 13-year-old girl, it was really hard to believe. She was smiling all the time – even when her parents are very worried, and in the train especially” (male expert, Germany).

“I really liked the fiction part. Technically speaking, it was beautiful; it was well done. It is a hard subject” (female expert, Brazil). In fact the program had two directors to deal with different issues. “We talked with her: she had two directors. One was for the documentary part and one for the drama part.” (female expert, Germany). They also thought that this helped the program convey its message more effectively. “They transported the feelings very well. That is why we had a free ... because there is a presenter, the girl, after we have the fiction part. We also have old, old pictures from the Second World War” (female expert, Germany). “I think it was very well done. It is a very hard topic, very awful topic, and I think they did it in a very good way. On one hand she was very straightforward, just to the facts, but on the other hand you were touched – not only because of the facts, which are very touching and powerful. But, I think the fictional part of it – they had this drama part – I am not a fan of these drama parts, but I think these were well done” (female expert, Germany).

There was additional elaboration in the discussion about the narration of the program. “There are two here: one is commenting, and she is commenting from the general view – the historical pieces and commenting what was going on in a general view. Then it was a feature – it was a drama, even from the point of view of the girl. I thought that they were the same age. It was very strong and very touching. Maybe it was enabling to understand the history. We do know that it is shaking and horrifying, but is there another way? It was also emotional, it was a way out. I thought it was absolutely professionally well done, providing these points of views.” (female expert, Slovakia).

There were discussions about the hostess of the program. Some were under the impression that the hostess was a child, “and the host being the child. That is very important” (male expert, Qatar). “She is 30-years-old? She felt like she was 15 or 16. It was a very good presenter, I think. She balanced very well between emotions and facts without being too overwhelming for me, a good narrator.

That explains why! I thought she looked so experienced and yet so young” (female expert, Sweden). The female expert from the Netherlands provided more input about the hostess of the program. “She is not really famous. There is a game show, and she won to present this game show for kids.”

Many experts were not convinced that the program belonged to the category of 7 to 11. “Again, I think it was too tough for this 7 to 11 group. It really was well done; it was beautifully done. But, the subject – I am an Israeli, for us, of course, it is very emotional. But, I didn’t feel that it belonged to this age group” (female expert, Israel). Others agreed with this point of view. “I totally agree with that: it is not that age group. I think at school you start much later in history lessons, dealing with this issue. Just watching this film, I think not having enough background information, it is too heavy. I think it is just later – I think so too” (female expert, Germany). “I also think that it would be likewise in Norway when it comes to showing this for this target group 7-11. I think it is more within the 12-15 group” (female expert, Norway). However, a female expert from Germany clarified, “I want to say that this 7 to 11 age is not a problem of this program, but the problem of the category. An eight-year-old girl or boy is completely another world than 10 – or 11-year-old child. On the other hand, I think it is exactly the age in which children start to think about war, and they want to deal with it. I think for children who want to deal with the theme it was a great program.”

Some international experts gave some suggestions on how to make the program more effective. “I think like when you have grandparents or somebody that lived through that and it’s a personal connection, then you will understand a little bit more. I think when you see other children that were in there, I think that is really the biggest thing: Anne Frank – someone that you relate too, someone that is your age, and they actually lived through it. That is going to have an impact on you, as opposed to something that happened in history to adults and is very removed. I think you need to personalise it in that way” (female expert, USA). There were some more suggestions. “In Israel, when we are doing the Holocaust things, we put like children, 12, 13, go to the survivors and help them and hear the stories. You find something that the children now can do about it, as if they can be active about something belonging to this thing – and not leaving them helpless. Then it was the Jews, and tomorrow I don’t know who. It is horrifying for seven and eight year old children” (female expert, Israel).

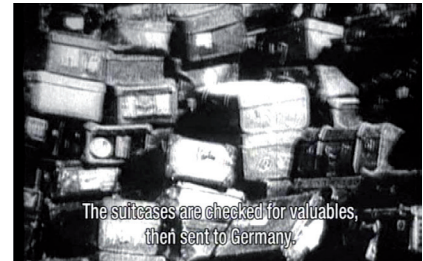


Figure 7: The belongings of Jews taken away from them.



Figure 8: Memorial candles to the people who have been exterminated.

screenshots from 13 at War © NPS

Target Audience 6,2	Idea 7,4	Script 7,3	Realization 7,8
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010			