

#### The Mozart Question - Paolo Levi

'The question I am most often asked is always easy enough to answer. Question: how did you get started as a writer? Answer: funnily enough, by asking someone almost exactly that very same question, which I was only able to ask in the first place by a dose of extraordinarily good fortune.

I had better explain.

My good fortune was, of course, someone else's rotten luck – it is often that way, I find. The phone call sounded distraught. It came on a Sunday evening. I had only been working on the paper for three weeks. I was a cub reporter, this my first paid job.

"Lesley?" It was my boss, chief arts correspondent Meryl Monkton, a lady not to be messed with. She did not waste time with niceties: she never did. "Listen, Lesley, I have a problem. I was due to go to Venice tomorrow to interview Paolo Levi."

"Paolo Levi?" I said. "The violinist?"

"Is there any other Paolo Levi?"

(The Mozart Question, Chapter 1, Pages 7-8)

Imagine you are a reporter. For your first paid job you have the opportunity to interview whoever you want to.

Who would you interview?

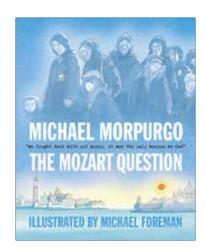
What questions would you ask them?

What do you think their answer to those questions would be?

-			
-			
-			







#### The Mozart Question - Playing for their Lives

"...I'll just tell you their story my own way, about how they lived together, how they nearly died together and how they were saved by music.

"The three of them were brought by train to the concentration camp from all over Europe: Benjamin from Paris, Mama from Warsaw, Papa from here, from Venice; all musicians, all Jewish and all bound for the gas chamber and extermination like so many millions. They survived only because they were able to say yes to one question put to them by an SS officer on arrival at the camp. "Is there anyone amongst you who can play an orchestral instrument, who is a professional musician?" They did not know when they stepped forward that they would at once be separated from their families, would have to watch them being herded off towards those hellish chimneys, never to be seen again.

There were auditions of course, and by now they knew they were playing for their lives...'

(The Mozart Question, Pages 49-52)

"At first they gave concerts only for the SS officers. Papa said you just had to pretend they were not there. You simply lost yourself in the music – it was the only way. Even when they applauded you did not look up..." (The Mozart Question, Page 54)

"One cold morning with snow on the ground, they were made to assemble out in the compound with their instruments and ordered to sit down and play close to the camp gates. The train arrived, the wagons packed with new prisoners. Once they were all out they lined up and then divided. The old and young and the frail were herded past the orchestra on their way, they were told, to the shower block; the able bodied, those fit for work, were taken off towards the huts. And all the while Mama and Papa and Benjamin and the others played their Mozart. They all understood soon enough what it was for – to calm the terror, to beguile each new trainload into a false sense of security. They were part of a deadly sham."

(The Mozart Question - Pages 57 and 60)

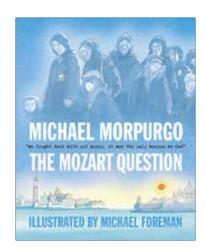
Discuss the role of the orchestra at the concentration camp in further detail. Imagine you step off the train and are greeted by the sound of Mozart. How might that make you feel?

Play a piece of Mozart. As you are listening to it draw a picture of the images and pictures that appear in your head.

Can you describe how the music made you feel?						
-						







### The Mozart Question - Lesley McInley

'The door opened, and there he was in front of me, Paolo Levi, neat, trim, his famous hair long to his shoulders and jet black.

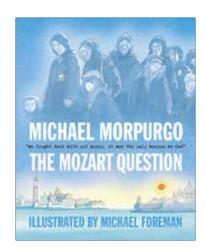
"I'm Lesley McInley," I said. "I've come from London."

"From the newspaper, I suppose." There was no welcoming smile. "You'd better come in..." (The Mozart Question – Page 16)

You've heard the story, now write the newspaper article. Summarise Paolo Levi's story for your newspaper column.







### The Mozart Question - Milan, London, New York

'Benjamin lived up a narrow flight of stairs in one small room with a bed in one corner and a basin in the other. On the wall were lots of concert posters. "Some of the concerts I played," he said. "Milan, London, New York. Wonderful places, wonderful people, wonderful music. It is a wonderful world out there..."

(The Mozart Question - Page 36)

Design a poster advertising one of Benjamin's concerts.



