



# THE YOUNG COLLECTOR

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Before my first year of university, I spent the month of August touring Italy, Hungary, Austria, and Germany with my family.

As an amateur history buff, it was fascinating to see each country proudly displaying its past in their galleries, monuments, cathedrals, fortresses and palaces.



From the Coliseum in Rome, Italy, to Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna, Austria, I saw some of Europe's finest landmarks.

In Budapest, however, along with Buda Castle and St. Stephen's Cathedral, there is a special site: Memento Park. It is filled with Communist-era statues and other reminders of Hungary's brutal oppression. I visited the outdoor museum and saw the country's strong dedication to remembering its past; the bad along with the good.

The architect of the park, Ákos Eleőd, said about his work, "This park is about dictatorship. And at the same time, because it can be talked about, described, and built up, this park is about democracy. After all, only democracy is able to give the opportunity to let us think freely about dictatorship."

Displaying an evil symbol as an act of defiance is terrible; however, reminders of the ugly truth are important.

Sadly, in Germany, it is difficult to display items relating to the war due to its ban on Nazi symbols. I think that without history displayed for everyone to see, it becomes easy for future generations to forget.

It is for this very reason that stamps from an evil era should not be purposefully excluded from a collection. I treasure the lessons that my stamps teach me, and I find them an easy way of sharing history with others because the hobby is such a visual one.

The image of a stamp often portrays some characteristic of the political sentiment of the time they were made. The Nazis certainly realized the potential for printing propaganda stamps.

For instance, shortly before the 51st birthday of the dictator Adolf Hitler, the



German post office issued a semi-postal stamp showing Hitler greeting a little girl. They used images like these to manipulate the minds of their people.



In 1941, Germany issued another semi-postal featuring both Hitler and Benito Mussolini, Italy's fascist leader. This was clever propaganda promoting the "Pact of Steel," which was the political and military agreement between Germany and Italy.



The Russians also issued stamps during the Second World War. Many of them commemorate military victories. Even when times were desperate, the Russians kept encouraging their people with images on postage.

I think collecting topical stamps of that era would make an amazing school project relating to modern history.

The best reminders I own of the horrors of war, and the sacrifices of those who have gone before me, are in the pages of my stamp collection. When I flip through it, I can see small images, scenes of war, and the pictures of wartime leaders and the heroes who fought under them.

In addition to stamps, my personal collection of war artifacts that serve as reminders include compasses, logbooks from a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) pilot, ammunition boxes, insignia, badges, and even an RCAF bomber's cap.

I also own a pair of Luftwaffe (German Airforce) binoculars which were the prized possession of a friend's father, an RCAF



officer who obtained them from a German officer at the surrender on Juno Beach, at Normandy. This was on France's northwestern coast

facing the English Channel, where allied invasion soldiers landed in mid-1944. It was common for the officers to take something useful from the confiscated supplies of the enemy.

During my first year in university, I hope to be able to put together some simple exhibits to go along with my history courses. I especially look forward to learning more about World War II in a university environment and I hope to enrich the class with stamps correlating to what we are learning. Not only will this help me to retain key facts from the lessons, it will also give me an amazing way to continue with my hobby!

I may be able to interest other students in the philately, and they may also start collecting for the sake of knowledge!

As I have found, this hobby can be a real aid to learning. An important part of information-gathering is having fun, and I can't see a better way of incorporating it! ☒