
Teaching Resources

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

WHY TEACH HOLOCAUST HISTORY?

The history of the Holocaust provides one of the most effective, and most extensively documented, subjects for a pedagogical examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into Holocaust history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior. A study of the Holocaust also addresses one of the central tenets of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. Through a study of the Holocaust, students can come to realize that

- democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected;
- silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, can—however unintentionally—perpetuate the problems; and
- the Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately, mass murder to occur.

QUESTIONS OF RATIONALE

Because the objective of teaching any subject is to engage the intellectual curiosity of the student in order to inspire critical thought and personal growth, it is helpful to structure your lesson plan on the Holocaust by considering throughout questions of rationale. Before deciding what and how to teach, we recommend that you contemplate the following:

- Why should students learn this history?
- What are the most significant lessons students should learn from a study of the Holocaust?
- Why is a particular reading, image, document, or film an appropriate medium for conveying the lessons about the Holocaust that you wish to teach?

Among the various rationales offered by educators who have incorporated a study of the Holocaust into their various courses and disciplines are

- The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the twentieth century but also in the entire history of humanity.
- Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and encourages tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society.
- The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression.
- Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
- A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
- As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain awareness of the complexity of the subject and a perspective on how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values. Students come to understand that it is the responsibility of citizens in a democracy to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react.

When you, as an educator, take the time to consider the rationale for your lesson on the Holocaust, you will be more likely to select content that speaks to your students' interests and that provides them with a clearer understanding of a complex history. Most students demonstrate a high level of interest in studying the Holocaust precisely because the subject raises questions of fairness, justice, individual identity, peer pressure, conformity, indifference, and obedience—issues that adolescents confront in their daily lives. Students are also affected by and challenged to comprehend the magnitude of the Holocaust; they are particularly struck by the fact that so many people allowed this genocide to occur by failing either to resist or to protest.

AGE APPROPRIATENESS

Students in grades 7 and above demonstrate an ability to empathize with individual eyewitness accounts and to attempt to understand the complexities of this history, including the scope and scale of the events. While elementary students are able to empathize with individual survivor accounts, they often have difficulty placing these personal stories in a larger historical context. Such demonstrable developmental differences have traditionally shaped social studies curricula throughout the country; in most states, students are not introduced to European history and geography—the context for the Holocaust—before grades 7 or 8.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The teaching of Holocaust history demands of educators a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. The recommendations that follow, while reflecting methodological approaches that would be appropriate to effective teaching in general, are particularly relevant in the context of Holocaust education.

1. Define the term “Holocaust.”

The Holocaust refers to a specific genocidal event in twentieth-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—6 million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

2. Avoid comparisons of pain.

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of suffering between those groups. Similarly, one cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as “the victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity.”

3. Avoid simple answers to complex history.

A study of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior, and it often involves complicated answers as to why events occurred. Be wary of oversimplifications. Allow students to contemplate the various factors that contributed to the Holocaust; do not attempt to reduce Holocaust history to one or two catalysts in isolation from the other factors that came into play. For example, the Holocaust was not simply the logical and inevitable consequence of unbridled racism.

Rather, racism combined with centuries-old bigotry and antisemitism; renewed by a nationalistic fervor that emerged in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century; fueled by Germany's defeat in World War I and its national humiliation following the Treaty of Versailles; exacerbated by worldwide economic hard times, the ineffectiveness of the Weimar Republic, and international indifference; and catalyzed by the political charisma and manipulative propaganda of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime contributed to the occurrence of the Holocaust.

4. *Just because it happened does not mean it was inevitable.*

Too often students have the simplistic impression that the Holocaust was inevitable. Just because a historical event took place, and it was documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. By focusing on those decisions, you gain insight into history and human nature and can better help your students to become critical thinkers.

5. *Strive for precision of language.*

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to overgeneralize and thus to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Rather, you must strive to help your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct orders and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

Words that describe human behavior often have multiple meanings. Resistance, for example, usually refers to a physical act of armed revolt. During the Holocaust, it also encompassed partisan activity; the smuggling of messages, food, and weapons; and actual military engagement. But resistance also embraced willful disobedience such as continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules or creating fine art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to remain alive in the face of abject brutality was an act of spiritual resistance.

6. *Make careful distinctions about sources of information.*

Students need practice in distinguishing between fact, opinion, and fiction; between primary and secondary sources; and between types of evidence such as court testimonies, oral histories, and other written documents. Hermeneutics—the science of interpretation—should be called into play to help guide your students in their analysis of sources. Students should be encouraged to consider why a particular text was written, who wrote it, who the intended audience was, whether there were any biases inherent in the information, whether any gaps occurred in discussion, whether omissions in certain passages were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events.

Because scholars often base their research on different bodies of information, varying interpretations of history can emerge. Consequently, all interpretations are subject to analytical evaluation. Only by refining their own “hermeneutic of suspicion” can students mature into readers who discern the difference between legitimate scholars who present competing historical interpretations and those who distort or deny historical fact for personal or political gain.

7. Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions.

Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Simplistic views and stereotyping take place when groups of people are viewed as monolithic in attitudes and actions. How ethnic groups or social clusters are labeled and portrayed in school curricula has a direct impact on how students perceive groups in their daily lives. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them, without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases but not all”) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.

8. Do not romanticize history to engage students’ interest.

People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful, important, and compelling role models for students. However, given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped to rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic tales in a unit on the Holocaust can result in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. Similarly, in exposing students to the worst aspects of human nature as revealed in the history of the Holocaust, you run the risk of fostering cynicism in your students. Accuracy of fact along with a balanced perspective on the history must be priorities for any teacher.

9. Contextualize the history you are teaching.

Events of the Holocaust and, particularly, how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The occurrence of the Holocaust must be studied in the context of European history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that may have contributed to it.

Similarly, study of the Holocaust should be viewed within a contemporaneous context, so students can begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged particular actions or events. Frame your approach to specific events and acts of complicity or defiance by considering when and where an act took place; the immediate consequences to oneself and one’s family of one’s actions; the impact of contemporaneous events; the degree of control the Nazis had on a country or local population; the cultural attitudes of particular native populations historically toward different victim groups; and the availability, effectiveness, and risk of potential hiding places.

Students should be reminded that individuals and groups do not always fit neatly into categories of behavior. The very same people did not always act consistently as “bystanders,” “collaborators,” “perpetrators,” or “rescuers.” Individuals and groups often behaved differently depending upon changing events and circumstances. The same person who in 1933 might have stood by and remained uninvolved while witnessing social discrimination of Jews might later have joined up with the SA and become a collaborator or have been moved to dissent vocally or act in defense of Jewish friends and neighbors.

Encourage your students not to categorize groups of people only on the basis of their experiences during the Holocaust: contextualization is critical so that victims are not perceived only as victims. The fact that Jews were the central victims of the Nazi regime should not obscure the vibrant culture and long history of Jews in Europe prior to the Nazi era. By exposing students to some of the cultural contributions and achievements of 2,000 years of European Jewish life, you help them to balance their perception of Jews as victims and to better appreciate the traumatic disruption in Jewish history caused by the Holocaust.

Similarly, students may know very little about Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) except for the negative images and derogatory descriptions promulgated by the Nazis. Students would benefit from a broader viewpoint, learning something about Gypsy history and culture as well as understanding the diverse ways of life among different Gypsy groups.

10. Translate statistics into people.

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. You need to show that individual people—families of grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and to emphasize that within the larger historical narrative is a diversity of personal experience. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature provide students with a way of making meaning out of collective numbers and give individual voices to a collective experience. Although students should be careful about overgeneralizing from first-person accounts such as those from survivors, journalists, relief workers, bystanders, and liberators, personal accounts help students get beyond statistics and make historical events of the Holocaust more immediate and more personal.

11. Be sensitive to appropriate written and audiovisual content.

One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the objective of the lesson. You should remind yourself that each student and each class is different and that what seems appropriate for one may not be appropriate for all.

Students are essentially a “captive audience.” When you assault them with images of horror for which they are unprepared, you violate a basic trust: the obligation of a teacher to provide a “safe” learning environment. The assumption that all students will seek to understand human behavior after being exposed to horrible images is fallacious. Some students may be so appalled by images of brutality and mass murder that they are discouraged from studying the subject further. Others may become fascinated in a more voyeuristic fashion, subordinating further critical analysis of the history to the superficial titillation of looking at images of starvation, disfigurement, and death. Though they can be powerful tools, shocking images of mass killings and barbarisms should not overwhelm a student’s awareness of the broader scope of events within Holocaust history. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students’ emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful of the victims themselves.

12. Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust.

Often, too great an emphasis is placed on the victims of Nazi aggression rather than on the victimizers who forced people to make impossible choices or simply left them with no choice to make. Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. But it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them and, thus, to place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves.

There is also a tendency among students to glorify power, even when it is used to kill innocent people. Many teachers indicate that their students are intrigued and, in some cases, intellectually seduced by the symbols of power that pervaded Nazi propaganda (e.g., the swastika and/or Nazi flags, regalia, slogans, rituals, and music). Rather than highlight the trappings of Nazi power, you should ask your students to evaluate how such elements are used by governments (including our own) to build, protect, and mobilize a society. Students should also be encouraged to contemplate how such elements can be abused and manipulated by governments to implement and legitimize acts of terror and even genocide.

In any review of the propaganda used to promote Nazi ideology—Nazi stereotypes of targeted victim groups and the Hitler regime’s justifications for persecution and murder—you need to remind your students that just because such policies and beliefs are under discussion in class does not mean they are acceptable. Furthermore, any study of the Holocaust should attempt to portray all individuals, especially the victims and the perpetrators of violence, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making.

13. Select appropriate learning activities.

Word scrambles, crossword puzzles, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialize the history. When the effects of a particular activity, even when popular with you and your students, run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.

Similarly, activities that encourage students to construct models of killing centers should also be reconsidered because any assignment along this line will almost inevitably end up being simplistic, time-consuming, and tangential to the educational objectives for studying the history of the Holocaust.

Thought-provoking learning activities are preferred, but even here, there are pitfalls to avoid. In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students “experience” unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression at the conclusion of the activity that they now know what it was like during the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors and eyewitnesses are among the first to indicate the grave difficulty of finding words to describe their experiences. It is virtually impossible to simulate accurately what it was like to live on a daily basis with fear, hunger, disease, unfathomable loss, and the unrelenting threat of abject brutality and death.

An additional problem with trying to simulate situations from the Holocaust is that complex events and actions are oversimplified, and students are left with a skewed view of history. Because there are numerous primary source accounts, both written and visual, as well as survivors and eyewitnesses who can describe actual choices faced and made by individuals, groups, and nations during this period, you should draw upon these resources and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

Rather than use simulation activities that attempt to re-create situations from the Holocaust, teachers can, through the use of reflective writing assignments or in-class discussion, ask students to empathize with the experiences of those who lived through the Holocaust era. Students can be encouraged to explore varying aspects of human behavior such as fear, scapegoating, conflict resolution, and difficult decision making or to consider various perspectives on a particular event or historical experience.

14. Reinforce the objectives of your lesson plan.

As in all teaching situations, the opening and closing lessons are critically important. A strong opening should serve to dispel misinformation students may have prior to studying the Holocaust. It should set a reflective tone, move students from passive to active learning, indicate to students that their ideas and opinions matter, and establish that this history has multiple ramifications for them as individuals and as members of society as a whole.

Your closing lesson should encourage further examination of Holocaust history, literature, and art. A strong closing should emphasize synthesis by encouraging students to connect this history to other world events and to the world they live in today. Students should be encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to consider what this study means to them personally and as citizens of a democracy.

INCORPORATING A STUDY OF THE HOLOCAUST INTO EXISTING COURSES

The Holocaust can be effectively integrated into various existing courses within the school curriculum. This section presents sample rationale statements and methodological approaches for incorporating a study of the Holocaust in seven different courses. Each course synopsis constitutes a mere fraction of the various rationales and approaches currently used by educators. Often, the rationales and methods listed under one course also can be applied to other courses.

UNITED STATES HISTORY

Although the history of the United States is introduced at various grade levels throughout most school curricula, all states require students to take a course in American history at the high-school level. Incorporating a study of the Holocaust into American history courses can encourage students to

- examine the dilemmas that arise when foreign policy goals are narrowly defined, as solely in terms of the national interest, thus denying the validity of universal moral and human principles;
- recognize the fundamental fragility of democratic institutions and the need for citizens of a democracy to be both well informed and vigilant about the preservation of democratic ideals;
- examine the responses of governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the United States to the plight of Holocaust victims (e.g., the Evian Conference, the debate over the Wagner-Rogers bill to assist refugee children, the ill-fated voyage of the *St. Louis*, the Emergency Rescue Committee, the rallies and efforts of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the decision by the United States not to bomb the railroad lines leading into Auschwitz);
- explore the role of American and Allied soldiers in liberating victims from Nazi concentration camps and killing centers, using, for example, first-person accounts of liberators to ascertain their initial responses to and subsequent reflections about what they witnessed; and
- examine the key role played by the United States in bringing Nazi perpetrators to trial at Nuremberg and other war crimes trials.

Since most history and social studies teachers in the United States rely upon standard textbooks, they can incorporate the Holocaust into regular units of study such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. Questions that introduce Holocaust studies into these subject areas include

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

How were United States electoral politics influenced by the Depression? What were the immediate consequences of the worldwide Depression on the European economic and political system established by the Versailles Treaty of 1919? What was the impact of the Depression upon the electoral strength of the Nazi party in Germany? Was the Depression a contributing factor to the Nazis' rise to power?

WORLD WAR II, ITS PRELUDE AND AFTERMATH

What was the relationship between the United States and Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1939? How did the actions of Nazi Germany influence American foreign policy? What was the response of the United States government and nongovernmental organizations to the unfolding events of the Holocaust? What was the role of the United States in the war crimes trials?

THE COLD WAR

How did the rivalries between the United States and its former World War II ally, the Soviet Union, influence American attitudes toward former Nazis? What was the position of America's European allies toward members of the former Nazi regime?

WORLD HISTORY

Although various aspects of world history are incorporated throughout school curricula, most students are not required to take world history courses. It is in the context of world history courses, however, that the Holocaust is usually taught. Inclusion of the Holocaust in a world history course or unit helps students to

- examine events, deeds, and ideas in European history that contributed to the Holocaust, such as the history of antisemitism, the development of race science in the nineteenth century, the rise of German nationalism, the defeat of Germany in World War I, and the failure of the democratic Weimar Republic;
- reflect upon the commonly held presumption that Western civilization has been progressing in a positive direction since the Enlightenment;

- explore how the various policies of the Nazi regime were interrelated (e.g., the connections between establishing a totalitarian government, carrying out racial policies, and waging war); and
- reflect upon the moral and ethical implications of the genocide against the Jews as a watershed in world history by examining the systematic planning and implementation of a government policy to kill millions of people; the use of technological advances to carry out mass slaughter; the role of Nazi collaborators; and the role of bystanders around the world who chose not to intervene in the persecution and murder of Jews and other victims.

Since most teachers rely upon standard textbooks and a chronological approach to history, teachers may wish to incorporate the Holocaust into the following standardized units of study in European history: The Aftermath of World War I, The Rise of the Dictators, The World at War, 1939–1945, and The Consequences of War. Questions that introduce Holocaust studies into these subject areas include

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I

What role did the Versailles Treaty play in the restructuring of European and world politics? How did the reconfiguration of Europe following World War I influence German national politics in the period 1919–1933?

THE RISE OF THE DICTATORS

What factors led to the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe in the period between the two world wars? How were long-established prejudices, including antisemitism, exploited by the Nazis and other regimes (Hungary, Romania, the Soviet Union) to justify dictatorial measures?

THE WORLD AT WAR, 1939–1945

Why has the Holocaust often been called a “war within the war”? How did the Holocaust affect Nazi military decisions? Why might it be “easier” to commit genocidal acts during wartime than during a period of relative peace?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

What was the connection between World War II and the formation of the State of Israel? Was a new internationally recognized standard of legal accountability introduced with the convening of the Nuremberg Tribunals? How did the Cold War affect the fate of former Nazis?

WORLD CULTURES

A course on world cultures incorporates knowledge from both the humanities and the social sciences into a study of cultural patterns and social institutions of various societies. A study of the Holocaust in a world cultures course helps students

- examine conflicts arising between majority and minority groups in a specific cultural sphere (Europe between 1933–1945);
- further their understanding of how a government can manipulate concepts such as ethnicity, race, diversity, and nationality to justify persecution, murder, and annihilation;
- analyze the extent to which cultures are able to survive and maintain their traditions and institutions (e.g., retaining religious practices, recording eyewitness accounts, and hiding cultural symbols and artifacts) when faced with threats to their very existence; and
- apply insights achieved through an examination of the Holocaust to gain an understanding of other genocides.

GOVERNMENT

Government courses at the high school level usually focus on understanding the U.S. political system, comparative studies of various governments, and the international relationship of nations. The Holocaust can be incorporated into a study of government in order to demonstrate how the development of public policy can be subverted toward destructive, even genocidal, ends when dissent and debate are silenced. Inclusion of Holocaust studies in government courses helps students

- compare governmental systems (e.g., by investigating how the Weimar Constitution in Germany prior to the Nazi seizure of power was similar to, or different from, the Constitution of the United States; by comparing the Nazi system of governance with that of the United States);
- study the process of how a state can degenerate from a (parliamentary) democracy into a totalitarian state (e.g., by examining the processes by which the Nazis gained absolute control of the German government and how the Nazi government then controlled virtually all segments of German society);

- examine how the development of public policy can lead to genocidal ends, especially when people remain silent in the face of discriminatory practices (e.g., the development of Nazi racial and genocide policies beginning with the philosophical platform elaborated in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, continuing through the state-imposed Nuremberg Laws, and culminating with governmental policies of murder and extermination after 1941);
- examine the role of Nazi bureaucracy in implementing policies of murder and annihilation (e.g., the development and maintenance of a system to identify, isolate, deport, enslave, and kill targeted people) and in the exploitation of the victims and their property;
- examine the role of various individuals in the rise and fall of a totalitarian government (e.g., those who supported Nazi Germany, those who were passive, and those who resisted internally such as partisans and others who carried out revolts, and externally, such as the Allies); and
- recognize that among the legacies of the Holocaust have been the creation of the United Nations in 1945 and its ongoing efforts to develop and adopt numerous, significant human rights bills (e.g., the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on Genocide).

CONTEMPORARY WORLD PROBLEMS

Many schools include a contemporary world problems course at the senior high level, which allows students to conduct an in-depth study of a topic such as genocide. The focus is usually on what constitutes genocide, and areas of investigation include various preconditions, patterns, consequences, and methods of intervention and prevention of genocide. A study of the Holocaust in contemporary world problems curricula can help students to

- comprehend the similarities and differences between governmental policies during the Holocaust and contemporary policies that create the potential for “ethnic cleansing” or genocide (e.g., comparing and contrasting the philosophy and policies of the Nazi regime with that of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia); and
- compare and contrast the world response of governments and nongovernmental organizations to the Holocaust with the responses of governments and nongovernmental organizations to mass killings today (e.g., comparing the decisions made at the Evian Conference in 1938 to the U.S. response to the Cambodian genocide between 1974 and 1979, or the response of nongovernmental organizations like the International Red Cross to the Nazi genocide of Jews during the Holocaust with that of Amnesty International to political killings in Argentina, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Cambodia; or the International Military Tribunal’s prosecution of Nazi war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia’s prosecution of individuals who committed war crimes in Bosnia).

LITERATURE

Literature is read in English classes across grade levels and also is used to enhance and strengthen social studies and science courses. The literature curriculum is generally organized thematically or around categories such as American, British, European, and world literature. Literature is capable of providing thought-provoking perspectives on myriad subjects and concerns that can engage students in ways that standard textbooks and essays do not.

Holocaust literature encompasses a variety of literary genres including novels, short stories, drama, poetry, diaries, and memoirs. This broad spectrum gives teachers a wide range of curriculum choices. Because Holocaust literature derives from a true-to-life epic in human history, its stories illuminate human nature and provide adolescent readers with models of dignity and heroism. At the same time, it compels them to confront the reality of the human capacity for evil.

Because so many of the stories are relevant to issues in students' own lives, Holocaust literature can inspire a commitment to reject indifference to human suffering and can teach students about the potential effects of intolerance and elitism. Studying literary responses to the Holocaust helps students

- develop a deeper respect for the necessity of basic human decency by asking them to confront the moral depravity and the extent of Nazi evil (e.g., the cruelty of the Nazi treatment of victims even prior to the roundups and deportations, the event of *Kristallnacht*, the deportations in boxcars, the mass killings, and the so-called medical experiments of Nazi doctors);
- recognize the deeds of heroism in ghettos and concentration camps (e.g., the couriers who smuggled messages, goods, and weapons in and out of the Warsaw ghetto, the partisans who used arms to resist the Nazis, and the uprisings and revolts in various ghettos including Warsaw and in killing centers such as Treblinka);
- explore the idea of spiritual resistance manifest in clandestine writings, diaries, poetry, and plays, which are emblematic of irrepressible human dignity and defiance, even in the face of evil;
- recognize the different roles assumed by, or thrust upon, people during the Holocaust such as victim, oppressor, bystander, and rescuer;
- examine the moral choices, or absence of choices, confronting young and old, victim and perpetrator; and

- analyze the manipulation of terminology used by the Nazis, particularly the euphemisms employed to mask evil intent (e.g., their use of the terms “emigration” for expulsion, “evacuation” for deportation, “deportation” for transportation to concentration camps and killing centers, “police actions” for roundups that typically led to mass murder, and “Final Solution” for the planned annihilation of every Jew in Europe).

ART AND ART HISTORY

One of the goals for studying art history is to enable students to understand the role of art in society. The Holocaust can be incorporated into a study of art and art history to illuminate how the Nazis used art for the purposes of propaganda, and how victims used artistic expression to communicate their protest, despair, and/or hope. A study of art during the Holocaust helps students

- analyze the motivations for and implications of the Nazis’ censorship activities in the fine and literary arts, theater, and music (e.g., the banning of books and certain styles of painting as well as the May 1933 book burnings);
- examine the values and beliefs of the Nazis and how those beliefs were reinforced and inculcated through the use of symbols, propaganda posters, paintings, and drawings deemed by the Nazi regime to be “acceptable” rather than “degenerate”;
- study how people living under Nazi control used art as a form of resistance (e.g., examining the extent to which the victims created art, the dangers they faced in doing so, the various forms of art that were created as well as the settings in which they were created, and the diversity of themes and content in this artistic expression);
- examine art created by Holocaust victims and survivors and explore its capacity to document diverse experiences, including life prior to the Holocaust, life inside the ghettos, the deportations, and the myriad of experiences in the concentration camp system; and
- examine interpretations of the Holocaust as expressed in contemporary art, art exhibitions, and memorials.



These shops in Berlin were among more than 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses that were vandalized in anti-Jewish riots known as Kristallnacht ("The Night of Broken Glass"). (November 10, 1938)

Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

SUGGESTED TOPIC AREAS FOR A COURSE OF STUDY ON THE HOLOCAUST

The Museum has identified topic areas for you to consider while planning a course of study on the Holocaust. We recommend that you introduce your students to these topics even if you have limited time to teach about the Holocaust. An introduction to the topic areas is essential for providing students with a sense of the breadth of the history of the Holocaust. The essay that follows this page provides an overview of these topics.

1933–1939

- Dictatorship under the Third Reich
- Early Stages of Persecution
- The First Concentration Camps

1939–1945

- World War II in Europe
- Murder of the Disabled (“Euthanasia” Program)
- Persecution and Murder of Jews
- Ghettos
- Mobile Killing Squads (Einsatzgruppen)
- Expansion of the Concentration Camp System
- Killing Centers
- Additional Victims of Nazi Persecution
- Resistance
- Rescue
- United States/World Response
- Death Marches
- Liberation

POST 1945

- Postwar Trials
- Displaced Persons Camps and Emigration

In addition to these core topic areas, we recommend that, in your courses, you provide context for the events of the Holocaust by including information about antisemitism, Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust, the aftermath of World War I, and the Nazi rise to power. Consult the annotated bibliography at the end of this publication for recommended readings.



Prisoners stand during a roll call at the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. (ca. 1938–1941)

USHMM

HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST: AN OVERVIEW

On January 20, 1942, an extraordinary 90-minute meeting took place in a lakeside villa in the wealthy Wannsee district of Berlin. Fifteen high-ranking Nazi party and German government leaders gathered to coordinate logistics for carrying out “the final solution of the Jewish question.” Chairing the meeting was SS Lieutenant General Reinhard Heydrich, head of the powerful Reich Security Main Office, a central police agency that included the Secret State Police (the Gestapo). Heydrich convened the meeting on the basis of a memorandum he had received six months earlier from Adolf Hitler’s deputy, Hermann Göring, confirming his authorization to implement the “Final Solution.”

The “Final Solution” was the Nazi regime’s code name for the deliberate, planned mass murder of all European Jews. During the Wannsee meeting German government officials discussed “extermination” without hesitation or qualm. Heydrich calculated that 11 million European Jews from more than 20 countries would be killed under this heinous plan.

During the months before the Wannsee Conference, special units made up of SS, the elite guard of the Nazi state, and police personnel, known as *Einsatzgruppen*, slaughtered Jews in mass shootings on the territory of the Soviet Union that the Germans had occupied. Six weeks before the Wannsee meeting, the Nazis began to murder Jews at Chelmno, an agricultural estate located in that part of Poland annexed to Germany. Here SS and police personnel used sealed vans into which they pumped carbon monoxide gas to suffocate their victims. The Wannsee meeting served to sanction, coordinate, and expand the implementation of the “Final Solution” as state policy.

During 1942, trainload after trainload of Jewish men, women, and children were transported from countries all over Europe to Auschwitz, Treblinka, and four other major killing centers in German-occupied Poland. By year’s end, about 4 million Jews were dead. During World War II (1939–1945), the Germans and their collaborators killed or caused the deaths of up to 6 million Jews. Hundreds of Jewish communities in Europe, some centuries old, disappeared forever. To convey the unimaginable, devastating scale of destruction, postwar writers referred to the murder of the European Jews as the “Holocaust.”

Centuries of religious prejudice against Jews in Christian Europe, reinforced by modern political antisemitism developing from a complex mixture of extreme nationalism, financial insecurity, fear of communism, and so-called race science, provide the backdrop for the Holocaust. Hitler and other Nazi ideologues regarded Jews as a dangerous “race” whose very existence threatened the biological purity and strength of the “superior Aryan race.” To secure the assistance of thousands of individuals to implement the “Final Solution,” the Nazi regime could and did exploit existing prejudice against Jews in Germany and the other countries that were conquered by or allied with Germany during World War II.

“While not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims,” Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel has written. “Jews were destined for annihilation solely because they were born Jewish. They were doomed not because of something they had done or proclaimed or acquired but because of who they were, sons and daughters of Jewish people. As such they were sentenced to death collectively and individually...”

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN TWO MAIN SECTIONS: 1933–1939 AND 1939–1945

1933–1939

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was named chancellor, the most powerful position in the German government, by the aged President Hindenburg, who hoped Hitler could lead the nation out of its grave political and economic crisis. Hitler was the leader of the right-wing National Socialist German Workers Party (called the “Nazi party” for short). It was, by 1933, one of the strongest parties in Germany, even though—reflecting the country’s multiparty system—the Nazis had won only a plurality of 33 percent of the votes in the 1932 elections to the German parliament (Reichstag).

Once in power, Hitler moved quickly to end German democracy. He convinced his cabinet to invoke emergency clauses of the constitution that permitted the suspension of individual freedoms of press, speech, and assembly. Special security forces—the Gestapo, the Storm Troopers (SA), and the SS—murdered or arrested leaders of opposition political parties (Communists, socialists, and liberals). The Enabling Act of March 23, 1933—forced through a Reichstag already purged of many political opponents—gave dictatorial powers to Hitler.

Also in 1933, the Nazis began to put into practice their racial ideology. The Nazis believed that the Germans were “racially superior” and that there was a struggle for survival between them and “inferior races.” They saw Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and the handicapped as a serious biological threat to the purity of the “German (Aryan) Race,” what they called the “master race.”

Jews, who numbered about 525,000 in Germany (less than one percent of the total population in 1933), were the principal target of Nazi hatred. The Nazis identified Jews as a race and defined this race as “inferior.” They also spewed hate-mongering propaganda that unfairly blamed Jews for Germany’s economic depression and the country’s defeat in World War I (1914–18).

1 The term “Aryan” originally referred to peoples speaking Indo-European languages. The Nazis perverted its meaning to support racist ideas by viewing those of Germanic background as prime examples of Aryan stock, which they considered racially superior. For the Nazis, the typical Aryan was blond, blue-eyed, and tall.

In 1933, new German laws forced Jews out of their civil service jobs, university and law court positions, and other areas of public life. In April 1933, a boycott of Jewish businesses was instituted. In 1935, laws proclaimed at Nuremberg made Jews second-class citizens. These Nuremberg Laws defined Jews, not by their religion or by how they wanted to identify themselves, but by the religious affiliation of their grandparents. Between 1937 and 1939, new anti-Jewish regulations segregated Jews further and made daily life very difficult for them: Jews could not attend public schools; go to theaters, cinemas, or vacation resorts; or reside or even walk in certain sections of German cities.

Also between 1937 and 1939, Jews increasingly were forced from Germany's economic life: The Nazis either seized Jewish businesses and properties outright or forced Jews to sell them at bargain prices. In November 1938, the Nazis organized a riot (pogrom), known as *Kristallnacht* (the "Night of Broken Glass"). This attack against German and Austrian Jews included the physical destruction of synagogues and Jewish-owned stores, the arrest of Jewish men, the vandalization of homes, and the murder of individuals.

Although Jews were the main target of Nazi hatred, the Nazis persecuted other groups they viewed as racially or genetically "inferior." Nazi racial ideology was buttressed by scientists who advocated "selective breeding" (eugenics) to "improve" the human race. Laws passed between 1933 and 1935 aimed to reduce the future number of genetic "inferiors" through involuntary sterilization programs: 320,000 to 350,000 individuals judged physically or mentally handicapped were subjected to surgical or radiation procedures so they could not have children. Supporters of sterilization also argued that the handicapped burdened the community with the costs of their care. Many of Germany's 30,000 Roma (Gypsies) were also eventually sterilized and prohibited, along with Blacks, from intermarrying with Germans. About 500 children of mixed African-German backgrounds were also sterilized.² New laws combined traditional prejudices with the racism of the Nazis, which defined Roma, by "race," as "criminal and asocial."

Another consequence of Hitler's ruthless dictatorship in the 1930s was the arrest of political opponents and trade unionists and others the Nazis labeled "undesirables" and "enemies of the state." Some 5,000 to 15,000 homosexuals were imprisoned in concentration camps; under the 1935 Nazi-revised criminal code, the mere denunciation of a man as "homosexual" could result in arrest, trial, and conviction. Jehovah's Witnesses, who numbered at least 25,000 in Germany, were banned as an organization as early as April 1933, because the beliefs of this religious group prohibited them from swearing any oath to the state or serving in the German military. Their literature was confiscated, and they lost jobs, unemployment benefits, pensions, and all social welfare benefits. Many Witnesses were sent to prisons and concentration camps in Nazi Germany, and their children were sent to juvenile detention homes and orphanages.

2 These children, called "the Rhineland bastards" by Germans, were the offspring of German women and African soldiers from French colonies who were stationed in the 1920s in the Rhineland, a demilitarized zone the Allies established after World War I as a buffer between Germany and western Europe.

Between 1933 and 1936, thousands of people, mostly political prisoners, were imprisoned in concentration camps, while several thousand German Roma (Gypsies) were confined in special municipal camps. The first systematic roundups of German and Austrian³ Jews occurred after *Kristallnacht*, when approximately 30,000 Jewish men were deported to Dachau and other concentration camps, and several hundred Jewish women were sent to local jails. The wave of arrests in 1938 also included several thousand German and Austrian Roma (Gypsies).

Between 1933 and 1939, about half the German-Jewish population and more than two-thirds of Austrian Jews (1938–39) fled Nazi persecution. They emigrated mainly to the United States, Palestine, elsewhere in Europe (where many would be later trapped by Nazi conquests during the war), Latin America, and Japanese-occupied Shanghai (which required no visas for entry). Jews who remained under Nazi rule were either unwilling to uproot themselves or unable to obtain visas, sponsors in host countries, or funds for emigration. Most foreign countries, including the United States, Canada, Britain, and France, were unwilling to admit very large numbers of refugees.

1939–1945

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Within weeks, the Polish army was defeated, and the Nazis began their campaign to destroy Polish culture and enslave the Polish people, whom they viewed as “subhuman.” Killing Polish leaders was the first step: German soldiers carried out massacres of university professors, artists, writers, politicians, and many Catholic priests. To create new living space for the “superior Germanic race,” large segments of the Polish population were resettled, and German families moved into the emptied lands. Other Poles, including many Jews, were imprisoned in concentration camps. The Nazis also “kidnapped” as many as 50,000 “Aryan-looking” Polish children from their parents and took them to Germany to be adopted by German families. Many of these children were later rejected as not capable of Germanization and were sent to special children’s camps where some died of starvation, lethal injection, and disease.

As the war began in 1939, Hitler initialed an order to kill institutionalized, handicapped patients deemed “incurable.” Special commissions of physicians reviewed questionnaires filled out by all state hospitals and then decided if a patient should be killed. The doomed were then transferred to six institutions in Germany and Austria where specially constructed gas chambers were used to kill them. After public protests in 1941, the Nazi leadership continued this “euthanasia” program in secret. Babies, small children, and other victims were thereafter killed by lethal injection and pills and by forced starvation.

3 On March 11, 1938, Hitler sent his army into Austria, and on March 13, the incorporation (Anschluss) of Austria with the German empire (Reich) was proclaimed in Vienna. Most of the population welcomed the Anschluss and expressed their fervor in widespread riots and attacks against the Austrian Jews numbering 180,000 (90 percent of whom lived in Vienna).

The “euthanasia” program contained all the elements later required for mass murder of European Jews and Roma (Gypsies): a decision to kill, specially trained personnel, the apparatus for killing by gas, and the use of euphemistic language like “euthanasia” that psychologically distanced the murderers from their victims and hid the criminal character of the killings from the public.

In 1940 German forces continued their conquest of much of Europe, easily defeating Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece. On June 22, 1941, the German army invaded the Soviet Union and by late November was approaching Moscow. In the meantime, Italy, Romania, and Hungary had joined the Axis powers led by Germany and were opposed by the main Allied powers (British Commonwealth, Free France, the United States, and the Soviet Union).

In the months following Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Jews, political leaders, Communists, and many Roma (Gypsies) were killed in mass shootings. Most of those killed were Jews. These murders were carried out at improvised sites throughout the Soviet Union by members of mobile killing squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) who followed in the wake of the invading German army. The most famous of these sites was Babi Yar, near Kiev, where an estimated 33,000 persons, mostly Jews, were murdered over two days. German terror extended to institutionalized handicapped and psychiatric patients in the Soviet Union; it also resulted in the death of more than 3 million Soviet prisoners of war.

World War II brought major changes to the concentration camp system. Large numbers of new prisoners, deported from all German-occupied countries, now flooded the camps. Often entire groups were committed to the camps, such as members of underground resistance organizations who were rounded up in a sweep across western Europe under the 1941 Night and Fog decree. To accommodate the massive increase in the number of prisoners, hundreds of new camps were established in occupied territories of eastern and western Europe.

During the war, ghettos, transit camps, and forced-labor camps, in addition to the concentration camps, were created by the Germans and their collaborators to imprison Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and other victims of racial and ethnic hatred as well as political opponents and resistance fighters. Following the invasion of Poland, 3 million Polish Jews were forced into approximately 400 newly established ghettos where they were segregated from the rest of the population. Large numbers of Jews also were deported from other cities and countries, including Germany, to ghettos and camps in Poland and German-occupied territories further east.

In Polish cities under Nazi occupation, like Warsaw and Lodz, Jews were confined in sealed ghettos where starvation, overcrowding, exposure to cold, and contagious diseases killed tens of thousands of people. In Warsaw and elsewhere, ghettoized Jews made every effort, often at great risk, to maintain their cultural, communal, and religious lives. The ghettos also provided a forced-labor pool for the Germans, and many forced laborers (who worked on road gangs, in construction, or at other hard labor related to the German war effort) died from exhaustion or maltreatment.

Between 1942 and 1944, the Germans moved to eliminate the ghettos in occupied Poland and elsewhere, deporting ghetto residents to “extermination camps”—killing centers equipped with gassing facilities—located in Poland. After the meeting of senior German government officials in late January 1942. After the meeting in late January 1942 at a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee informing senior German government officials of the decision to implement “the final solution of the Jewish question,” Jews from western Europe also were sent to killing centers in the East.

The six killing sites, chosen because of their closeness to rail lines and their location in semirural areas, were at Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno, Majdanek,⁴ and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Chelmno was the first camp in which mass executions were carried out by gas piped into mobile gas vans; at least 152,000 persons were killed there between December 1941 and March 1943, and between June and July 1944. A killing center using gas chambers operated at Belzec, where about 600,000 persons were killed between May 1942 and August 1943. Sobibor opened in May 1942 and closed following a rebellion of the prisoners on October 14, 1943; about 250,000 persons had already been killed by gassing at Sobibor. Treblinka opened in July 1942 and closed in November 1943; a revolt by the prisoners in early August 1943 destroyed much of that facility. At least 750,000 persons were killed at Treblinka, physically the largest of the killing centers. Almost all of the victims at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka were Jews; a few were Roma (Gypsies), Poles, and Soviet POWs. Very few individuals survived these four killing centers where most victims were murdered immediately upon arrival.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, which also served as a concentration camp and slave labor camp, became the killing center where the largest numbers of European Jews and Roma (Gypsies) were killed. After an experimental gassing there in September 1941—of 250 malnourished and ill Polish prisoners and 600 Soviet POWs—mass murder became a daily routine; more than 1 million people were killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, 9 out of 10 of them Jews. In addition, Roma, Soviet POWs, and ill prisoners of all nationalities died in the gas chambers there. Between May 15 and July 9, 1944, nearly 440,000 Jews were deported from Hungary in more than 140 trains, overwhelmingly to Auschwitz. This was probably the largest single mass deportation during the Holocaust. A similar system was implemented at Majdanek, which also doubled as a concentration camp, and where between 170,000 and 235,000 persons were killed in the gas chambers or died from malnutrition, brutality, and disease.

The methods of murder were similar in the killing centers, which were operated by the SS. Jewish victims arrived in railroad freight cars and passenger trains, mostly from ghettos and camps in occupied Poland, but also from almost every other eastern and western European country. On arrival, men were separated from women and children. Prisoners were forced to undress and hand over all valuables. They were then forced naked into the gas chambers, which were disguised as shower rooms, and either carbon monoxide or Zyklon B (a form of crystalline prussic acid, also used as an insecticide in some camps) was used to asphyxiate them. The minority selected for forced labor were,

4 Despite concerns among some historians that, operationally, Majdanek resembled concentration camps more than it did killing centers, most scholars include it among the killing centers because of the large number of prisoners who died there and the use of poison gas in the killing process.

after initial quarantine, vulnerable to malnutrition, exposure, epidemics, medical experiments, and brutality; many perished as a result.

The Germans carried out their systematic murderous activities with the active help of local collaborators in many countries and the acquiescence or indifference of millions of bystanders. However, there were instances of organized resistance. For example, in the fall of 1943, the Danish resistance, with the support of the local population, rescued nearly the entire Jewish community in Denmark by smuggling them via a dramatic boatlift to safety in neutral Sweden. Individuals in many other countries also risked their lives to save Jews and other individuals subject to Nazi persecution. One of the most famous was Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who played a significant role in some of the rescue efforts that saved the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Resistance existed in almost every concentration camp and ghetto of Europe. In addition to the armed revolts at Sobibor and Treblinka, Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto led to a courageous uprising in April and May 1943, despite a predictable doomed outcome because of superior German force. In general, rescue or aid to Holocaust victims was not a priority of resistance organizations, whose principal goal was to fight the war against the Germans. Nonetheless, such groups and Jewish partisans (resistance fighters) sometimes cooperated with each other to save Jews. On April 19, 1943, for instance, members of the National Committee for the Defense of Jews, in cooperation with Christian railroad workers and the general underground in Belgium, attacked a train leaving the Belgian transit camp of Malines headed for Auschwitz and succeeded in assisting Jewish deportees to escape.

The U.S. government did not pursue a policy of rescue for victims of Nazism during World War II. Like their British counterparts, U.S. political and military leaders argued that winning the war was the top priority and would bring an end to Nazi terror. Once the war began, security concerns, reinforced in part by antisemitism, influenced the U.S. State Department (led by Secretary of State Cordell Hull) and the U.S. government to do little to ease restrictions on entry visas. In January 1944, President Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board within the U.S. Treasury Department to facilitate the rescue of imperiled refugees. Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York, began to serve as an ostensibly free port for refugees from the territories liberated by the Allies.

After the war turned against Germany, and the Allied armies approached German soil in late 1944, the SS decided to evacuate outlying concentration camps. The Germans tried to cover up the evidence of genocide and deported prisoners to camps inside Germany to prevent their liberation. Many inmates died during the long journeys on foot known as “death marches.” During the final days, in the spring of 1945, conditions in the remaining concentration camps exacted a terrible toll in human lives. Even concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen, never intended for extermination, became death traps for thousands, including Anne Frank, who died there of typhus in March 1945. In May 1945, Nazi Germany collapsed, the SS guards fled, and the camps ceased to exist.

AFTERMATH OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Allied victors of World War II (Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union) faced two immediate problems following the surrender of Nazi Germany in May 1945: to bring Nazi war criminals to justice and to provide for displaced persons (DPs) and refugees stranded in Allied-occupied Germany and Austria.

Following the war, the best-known war crimes trial was the trial of “major” war criminals, held at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Germany, between November 1945 and August 1946. Under the auspices of the International Military Tribunal (IMT), which consisted of prosecutors and judges from the four occupying powers (Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States), leading officials of the Nazi regime were prosecuted for war crimes. The IMT sentenced 13 of those convicted to death. Seven more defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment or to prison terms ranging from 10 to 20 years. One defendant committed suicide before the trial began. Three of the defendants were acquitted. The judges also found three of six Nazi organizations (the SS, the Gestapo-SD, and the Leadership Corps of the Nazi Party) to be criminal organizations.

In the three years following this major trial, 12 subsequent trials were conducted under the auspices of the IMT but before U.S. military tribunals. The proceedings were directed at the prosecution of second- and third-ranking officials of the Nazi regime. They included concentration camp administrators; commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units); physicians and public health officials; the SS leadership; German army field commanders and staff officers; officials in the justice, interior, and foreign ministries; and senior administrators of industrial concerns that used concentration camp laborers, including I. G. Farben and the Flick concern.

In addition, each occupying power (Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union) conducted trials of Nazi offenders captured in its respective zone of occupation or accused of crimes perpetrated in that zone of occupation. The U.S. military authorities conducted the trials in the American zone at the site of the Nazi concentration camp Dachau. In general, the defendants in these trials were the staff and guard units at concentration camps and other camps located in the zone and people accused of crimes against Allied military and civilian personnel.

Those German officials and collaborators who committed crimes within a specific location or country were generally returned to the nation on whose territory the crimes were committed and were tried by national tribunals. Perhaps the most famous of these cases was the trial in 1947, in Cracow, Poland, of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz. Trials of German war criminals and their collaborators were conducted during the late 1940s and early 1950s in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. After the establishment of West Germany in 1949, many former Nazis received relatively lenient treatment by the courts. Courts in West Germany ruled the offenders were not guilty because they were obeying orders from their superior officers. Some Nazi criminals were acquitted and returned to normal lives in German society, a number of them taking jobs in the business world. Many war criminals, however, were never brought to trial or punished. In 1958, the Federal Republic of Germany established a Central Agency for the

Investigation of National Socialist Violent Crimes to streamline the investigation of Nazi offenders living in West Germany. These efforts, which continue to this day, led to some significant proceedings such as the Frankfurt Trial of Auschwitz camp personnel in the 1960s. The investigation of Nazi offenders residing in the United States began in earnest during the late 1970s and continues to this day.

Even as the Allies moved to bring Nazi offenders to justice, the looming refugee crisis threatened to overwhelm the resources of the Allied powers. During World War II, the Nazis uprooted millions of people. Within months of Germany's surrender in May 1945, the Allies repatriated more than 6 million (DPs) to their home countries.

Some 250,000 Jewish DPs, including most of the Jewish survivors of concentration camps, were unable or unwilling to return to Eastern Europe because of postwar antisemitism and the destruction of their communities during the Holocaust. Many of those who did return feared for their lives. Many Holocaust survivors found themselves in territory liberated by the Anglo-American armies and were housed in DP camps that the Allies established in Germany, Austria, and Italy. They were joined by a flow of refugees, including Holocaust survivors, migrating from points of liberation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet-occupied zones of Germany and Austria.

Most Jewish DPs hoped to leave Europe for Palestine or the United States, but the United States was still governed by severely restrictive immigration legislation, and the British, who administered Palestine under a mandate from the defunct League of Nations, severely restricted Jewish immigration for fear of antagonizing the Arab residents of the Mandate. Other countries had closed their borders to immigration during the Depression and during the war. Despite these obstacles, many Jewish DPs were eager to leave Europe as soon as possible.

The Jewish Brigade Group, formed as a unit within the British army in late 1944, worked with former partisans to help organize the *Beraha* (literally, "escape"), the exodus of Jewish refugees across closed borders from inside Europe to the coast in an attempt to sail for Palestine. However, the British intercepted most of the ships. In 1947, for example, the British stopped the *Exodus 1947* at the port of Haifa. The ship had 4,500 Holocaust survivors on board, who were forcibly returned on British vessels to Germany.

In the following years, the postwar Jewish refugee crisis eased. In 1948, the U.S. Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, which provided up to 400,000 special visas for DPs uprooted by the Nazi or Soviet regimes. Some 63,000 of these visas were issued to Jews under the DP Act. When the DP Act expired in 1952, it was followed by a Refugee Relief Act that remained in force until the end of 1956. Moreover, in May 1948, the State of Israel became an independent nation after the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. Israel quickly moved to legalize the flow of Jewish immigrants into the new state, passing legislation providing for unlimited Jewish immigration to the Jewish homeland. The last DP camp closed in Germany in 1957.

Special thanks to Little, Brown and Company for permission to include excerpts from Tell Them We Remember by Susan Bachrach, 1994.



A Jewish girl from Vienna sits on a staircase after her arrival in England. Nearly 10,000 children found refuge in England in what was called the Kindertransport. (December 12, 1938)

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST

JANUARY 30, 1933

German President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor. At the time, Hitler was leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi party).

FEBRUARY 27–28, 1933

The German parliament (Reichstag) building burned down under mysterious circumstances. The government treated it as an act of terrorism.

FEBRUARY 28, 1933

Hitler convinced President von Hindenburg to invoke an emergency clause in the Weimar Constitution. The German parliament then passed the Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of Nation (Volk) and State, popularly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree. The decree suspended the civil rights provisions in the existing German constitution, including freedom of speech, assembly, and press, and formed the basis for the incarceration of potential opponents of the Nazis without benefit of trial or judicial proceeding.

MARCH 22, 1933

The SS (Schutzstaffel), Hitler's "elite guard," established a concentration camp outside the town of Dachau, Germany, for political opponents of the regime. It was the only concentration camp to remain in operation from 1933 until 1945. By 1934, the SS had taken over administration of the entire Nazi concentration camp system.

MARCH 23, 1933

The German parliament passed the Enabling Act, which empowered Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.

APRIL 1, 1933

The Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many local boycotts continued throughout much of the 1930s.

APRIL 7, 1933

The Nazi government passed the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which excluded Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affected Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors, and teachers.

MAY 10, 1933

Nazi party members, students, teachers, and others burned books written by Jews, political opponents of Nazis, and the intellectual avant-garde during public rallies across Germany.

JULY 14, 1933

The Nazi government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless Jews as well as Roma (Gypsies) of German citizenship.

The Nazi government enacted the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which mandated the forced sterilization of certain physically or mentally impaired individuals. The law institutionalized the eugenic concept of “life undeserving of life” and provided the basis for the involuntary sterilization of the disabled, Roma (Gypsies), “social misfits,” and black people residing in Germany.

JUNE 30–JULY 1, 1934

In what came to be called “the Night of the Long Knives,” on Hitler’s orders members of the Nazi party and police murdered members of the Nazi leadership, army, and others. Hitler declared the killings legal and necessary to achieve the Nazi party’s aims. The murders were reported throughout Germany and in other countries.

AUGUST 2, 1934

German President von Hindenburg died. Hitler became Führer in addition to his position as chancellor. Because there was no legal or constitutional limit to Hitler’s power as Führer, he became absolute dictator of Germany.

OCTOBER 7, 1934

In standardized letters sent to the government, Jehovah’s Witness congregations from all over Germany declared their political neutrality but also affirmed defiance of Nazi restrictions on the practice of their religion.

APRIL 1, 1935

The Nazi government banned the Jehovah’s Witness organization. The Nazis persecuted Jehovah’s Witnesses because of their religious refusal to swear allegiance to the state.

JUNE 28, 1935

The German Ministry of Justice revised Paragraphs 175 and 175a of the criminal code to criminalize all homosexual acts between men. The revision provided the police broader means for prosecuting homosexual men.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1935

The Nazi government decreed the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of the German Blood and Honor. These Nuremberg “racial laws” made Jews second-class citizens. They prohibited sexual relations and intermarriage between Jews and “persons of German or related blood.” The Nazi government later applied the laws to Roma (Gypsies) and to black people residing in Germany.

JULY 12, 1936

Prisoners and civilian workers began construction of the concentration camp Sachsenhausen at Oranienburg near Berlin. By September, German authorities had imprisoned about 1,000 people in the camp.

AUGUST 1–16, 1936

Athletes and spectators from countries around the world attended the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. The Olympic Games were a propaganda success for the Nazi state. The Nazis made every effort to portray Germany as a respectable member of the international community and soft-pedaled their persecution of the Jews. They removed anti-Jewish signs from public display and restrained anti-Jewish activities. In response to pressure from foreign Olympic delegations, Germany also included Jews or part-Jews on its Olympic team.

MARCH 12–13, 1938

German troops invaded Austria, and Germany incorporated Austria into the German Reich in what was called the Anschluss.

JULY 6–15, 1938

Delegates from 32 countries and representatives from refugee aid organizations attended the Evian Conference at Evian, France, to discuss immigration quotas for refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. However, the United States and most other countries were unwilling to ease their immigration restrictions.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1938

Britain, France, Italy, and Germany signed the Munich Pact, forcing Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas to the German Reich.

OCTOBER 1–10, 1938

German troops occupied the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia under the stipulations of the Munich Pact.

NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938

In a nationwide pogrom called *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”), the Nazis and their collaborators burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, and killed at least 91 Jews. The Gestapo, supported by local uniformed police, arrested approximately 30,000 Jewish men and imprisoned them in the Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen concentration camps. Several hundred Jewish women also were imprisoned in local jails.

MARCH 14, 1939

Slovakia declared itself an independent state under protection of Nazi Germany.

MARCH 15, 1939

German troops occupied the Czech lands and established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

MAY 13–JUNE 17, 1939

Cuba and the United States refused to accept more than 900 refugees—almost all of whom were Jewish—aboard the ocean liner *St. Louis*, forcing its return to Europe.

AUGUST 23, 1939

The Soviet and German governments signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact in which they agreed to divide up eastern Europe, including Poland; the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia; and parts of Romania.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

German troops invaded Poland, marking the beginning of World War II.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

Britain and France fulfilled their promise to protect Poland’s border and declared war on Germany.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1939

In a secret amendment to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the German and Soviet governments outlined their plans to partition Poland.

OCTOBER 1939

Hitler initialed an order to kill those Germans whom the Nazis deemed “incurable” and hence “unworthy of life.” Health care professionals sent tens of thousands of institutionalized mentally and physically disabled people to central “euthanasia” killing centers where they killed them by lethal injection or in gas chambers.

OCTOBER 26, 1939

Germany annexed the former Polish regions of Upper Silesia, Pomerania, West Prussia, Poznan, and the independent city of Danzig. Those areas of occupied Poland not annexed by Germany or the Soviet Union were placed under a German civilian administration and were called the General Government (Generalgouvernement).

NOVEMBER 12, 1939

German authorities began the forced deportation of Jews from West Prussia, Poznan, Danzig, and Lodz (also in annexed Poland) to locations in the General Government.

NOVEMBER 23, 1939

German authorities required that, by December 1, 1939, all Jews residing in the General Government wear white badges with a blue Star of David.

APRIL 9–JUNE 10, 1940

German troops invaded, defeated, and occupied Denmark and Norway.

JUNE 30, 1940

German authorities ordered the first major Jewish ghetto, in Lodz, to be sealed off, confining at least 160,000 people in the ghetto. Henceforth, all Jews living in Lodz had to reside in the ghetto and could not leave without German authorization.

MAY 10, 1940

German troops invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. By June 22, Germany occupied all of these regions except for southern (Vichy) France.

MAY 20, 1940

SS authorities established the Auschwitz concentration camp (Auschwitz I) outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.

NOVEMBER 15, 1940

German authorities ordered the Warsaw ghetto in the General Government sealed off. It was the largest ghetto in both area and population. The Germans confined more than 350,000 Jews—about 30 percent of the city’s population—in about 2.4 percent of the city’s total area.

APRIL 6, 1941

German and other Axis forces (Italy, Bulgaria, and Hungary) invaded Yugoslavia and Greece.

JUNE 22, 1941

Germany and its Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. German mobile killing squads called *Einsatzgruppen* were assigned to identify, concentrate, and kill Jews behind the front lines. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed more than a million Jews and an undetermined number of partisans, Roma (Gypsies), and officials of the Soviet state and the Soviet Communist party. In 1941–42, some 70,000–80,000 Jews fled eastward, evading the first wave of murder perpetrated by the German invaders.

JULY 20, 1941

German authorities established a ghetto in Minsk in the German-occupied Soviet territories and, by July 25, concentrated all Jews from the area in the ghetto.

JULY 31, 1941

Reich Marshal Hermann Göring charged SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service), to take measures for the implementation of the “final solution of the Jewish question.” The “Final Solution” was a euphemism for the mass murder of the Jewish population of Europe.

AUGUST 15, 1941

By order of German authorities, the Kovno ghetto, with approximately 30,000 Jewish inhabitants, was sealed off.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1941

At the Auschwitz concentration camp, SS functionaries performed their first gassing experiments using Zyklon B. The victims were Soviet prisoners of war and non-Jewish Polish inmates.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1941

German authorities established two ghettos in Vilna in German-occupied Lithuania. German and Lithuanian units killed tens of thousands of Jews in the nearby Ponary woods.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1941

The Nazi government decreed that Jews over the age of six who resided in Germany had to wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.

SEPTEMBER 29–30, 1941

German SS, police, and military units shot an estimated 33,000 persons, mostly Jews, at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev (in Ukraine). In the following months, German units shot thousands of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and Soviet prisoners of war at Babi Yar.

OCTOBER 15, 1941

German authorities began the deportation of Jews from the German Reich to the ghettos of Lodz, Riga, and Minsk.

OCTOBER 28, 1941

After requiring all Kovno ghetto inhabitants to assemble at Demokratu Square, German and Lithuanian units took more than one-third of the ghetto's population—some 9,200 people—to Fort IX and shot them in what was called the “Great Action.”

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1941

SS functionaries began preparations for Einsatz Reinhard (Operation Reinhard; often referred to as Aktion Reinhard), with the goal of murdering the Jews in the General Government. Preparations included construction of the killing centers Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka in the territory of the General Government.

NOVEMBER 24, 1941

German authorities established the Theresienstadt (also known as Terezin) ghetto, in the German-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

NOVEMBER 26, 1941

SS authorities established a second camp at Auschwitz, called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II. The camp was originally designated for the incarceration of large numbers of Soviet prisoners of war but later was used as a killing center.

DECEMBER 1, 1941

Einsatzkommando 3, a subunit of Einsatzgruppe A that operated in Lithuania, reported that its members had killed 136,442 Jews since June 1941.

DECEMBER 7, 1941

Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declared war on Japan.

DECEMBER 8, 1941

Gassing operations began at Chelmno, one of six Nazi killing centers. Situated in the Polish territory annexed by Germany, Chelmno closed in March 1943 and resumed its killing operations during two months in the early summer of 1944. SS and German civilian officials killed at least 152,000 Jews and an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies) and Poles at Chelmno using special mobile gas vans.

DECEMBER 11, 1941

Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

JANUARY 16, 1942

German authorities began the deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmno.

JANUARY 20, 1942

Senior Nazi officials met at a villa in the outskirts of Berlin at the Wannsee Conference to discuss and coordinate implementation of the “Final Solution.”

MARCH 17, 1942

At the Belzec killing center, an SS special detachment began using gas chambers to kill people. Between March 17 and December 1942, approximately 600,000 people, mostly Jews but also an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies), were killed at Belzec.

MARCH 27, 1942

German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from France. By the end of August 1944, the Germans had deported more than 75,000 Jews from France to camps in the East, above all, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in occupied Poland, where most of them perished.

MARCH–APRIL 1942

German SS and police units deported Jews from Lublin, in the General Government, to Belzec, where they were killed. The Lublin deportations were the first major deportations carried out under Operation Reinhard, the code name for the German plan to kill more than 2 million Jews living in the General Government of occupied Poland.

MAY 1942

After trial gassings in April, an SS special detachment began gassing operations at the Sobibor killing center in early May. By November 1943, the special detachment had killed approximately 250,000 Jews at Sobibor.

MAY 4, 1942

SS officials performed the first selection of victims for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. Weak, sick, and “unfit” prisoners were selected and housed in an isolation ward prior to being killed in the gas chambers. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people were killed or died at the Auschwitz camp complex. Close to 865,000 were never registered and most likely were selected for gassing immediately upon arrival. Nine out of ten of those who died at the Auschwitz complex were Jewish.

MAY 31, 1942

German authorities opened the I.G. Farben labor camp at Auschwitz III (also known as Monowitz or Buna), situated near the main camp complex at Auschwitz.

JULY 15, 1942

German authorities began deportations of Dutch Jews from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz. By September 13, 1944, over 100 trains had carried more than 100,000 people to killing centers and concentration camps in the German Reich and the General Government.

JULY 22, 1942

Between July 22 and September 12, German SS and police authorities, assisted by auxiliaries, deported approximately 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to killing centers and concentration camps. Of that number, about 265,000 Jews were sent to the Treblinka killing center where they were murdered.

JULY 23, 1942

Gassing operations began at the Treblinka killing center. Between July 1942 and November 1943, SS special detachments at Treblinka murdered an estimated 750,000 Jews and at least 2,000 Roma (Gypsies).

AUGUST 4, 1942

German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from Belgium. The deportations continued until the end of July 1944. The Germans deported more than 25,000 Jews, about half of Belgium's Jewish population, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in occupied Poland, where most of them perished.

JANUARY 18–22, 1943

SS and police units deported more than 5,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center. Members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, or ŻOB) fought against the Germans in armed revolt as Jews were rounded up for deportation.

MARCH 15, 1943

German SS, police, and military units began the deportation of Jews from Salonika, Greece, to Auschwitz. Between March 20 and August 18, more than 50,000 Greek Jews arrived at the Auschwitz camp complex. SS staff killed most of the deportees in the gas chambers at Birkenau.

APRIL 19–MAY 16, 1943

In what is called the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish fighters resisted the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. German SS and police units deported many of those who survived the armed revolt to Treblinka, and sent others to Majdanek and forced labor camps at Trawniki and Poniatowa in the General Government. Some resistance fighters escaped from the ghetto and joined partisan groups in the forests around Warsaw. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first mass revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.

JUNE 21, 1943

Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS, ordered the liquidation of all ghettos in the Baltic states and Belorussia (Reich Commissariat Ostland) and the deportation of all Jews to concentration camps.

AUGUST 2, 1943

Jewish prisoners revolted at the Treblinka killing center. Although more than 300 prisoners escaped, most were caught and killed by German SS and police units assisted by army troops. The SS special detachment forced surviving prisoners to remove all remaining traces of the camp's existence. After the killing center was dismantled in November 1943, the special detachment shot the remaining prisoners.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

SS authorities converted the Kovno ghetto into a concentration camp (Concentration Camp Kauen) under the direction of SS Captain Wilhelm Goecke.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1943

SS authorities ordered the final deportation of Jews from the Vilna ghetto. SS and police units in Vilna deported 4,000 Jews to the Sobibor killing center and evacuated approximately 3,700 to labor camps in German-occupied Estonia.

OCTOBER 14, 1943

Jewish prisoners at the Sobibor killing center began an armed revolt. Approximately 300 escaped. German SS and police units, with assistance from German military units, recaptured more than 100 and killed them. After the revolt, SS special detachments closed and dismantled the killing center.

OCTOBER 21, 1943

German authorities declared the Minsk ghetto officially liquidated after they murdered the remaining 2,000 Jews.

NOVEMBER 3–4, 1943

German SS and police units implemented Operation Harvest Festival. The purpose of Harvest Festival was to liquidate several labor camps in the Lublin area. During Harvest Festival, German SS and police units killed at least 42,000 Jews at Majdanek, Trawniki, and Poniatowa.

MARCH 19, 1944

German military units occupied Hungary.

MAY 15–JULY 9, 1944

Hungarian gendarmerie (rural police units), under the guidance of German SS officials, deported nearly 430,000 Jews from Hungary. Most were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where SS staff immediately killed about half of them in gas chambers.

JUNE 6, 1944

D Day. British and American troops launched an invasion of France.

JUNE 22, 1944

A massive Soviet offensive destroyed the German front in Belorussia.

JULY 8–12, 1944

As the Soviet army neared, SS authorities liquidated the Kauen concentration camp, transferring 6,000 Jews to the Stutthof and Dachau concentration camps in the German Reich.

JULY 22, 1944

SS authorities evacuated most of the remaining prisoners from Majdanek westward to evade the advancing Soviet army.

JULY 23, 1944

Soviet troops liberated Majdanek. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.

AUGUST 7–30, 1944

SS and police officials liquidated the Lodz ghetto and deported approximately 60,000 Jews and an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies) to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

AUGUST 28/29–OCTOBER 27, 1944

Members of the Slovak resistance revolted against the German-supported Slovakian government. Between September and October, German SS and police officials, assisted by German military units and Slovak fascist paramilitary units, deported approximately 10,000 Slovak Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

OCTOBER 6, 1944

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Sonderkommando (special detachment of Jewish prisoners deployed to remove corpses from the gas chambers and burn them) blew up Crematorium IV and killed the guards. About 250 participants of the revolt died in battle with SS and police units. The SS and police units shot 200 more members of the Sonderkommando after the battle was over.

OCTOBER 30, 1944

The last transport of Jews from Theresienstadt (Terezin) arrived at Auschwitz. During October, SS officials deported approximately 18,000 Jews to the Auschwitz camp complex. Most of them were killed in the gas chambers at Birkenau.

NOVEMBER 25, 1944

The SS began to demolish the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

JANUARY 17, 1945

As Soviet troops approached, SS units evacuated prisoners in the Auschwitz camp complex, marching them on foot toward the interior of the German Reich. The forced evacuations came to be called “death marches.”

JANUARY 27, 1945

Soviet troops liberated about 8,000 prisoners left behind at the Auschwitz camp complex.

APRIL 11, 1945

U.S. troops liberated more than 20,000 prisoners at Buchenwald.

APRIL 29, 1945

U.S. troops liberated approximately 32,000 prisoners at Dachau.

APRIL 30, 1945

Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

MAY 2, 1945

German units in Berlin surrendered to Soviet forces.

MAY 5, 1945

U.S. troops liberated more than 17,000 prisoners at Mauthausen concentration camp and more than 20,000 prisoners at the Gusen concentration camps in the annexed Austrian territory of the German Reich.

MAY 7–9, 1945

German armed forces surrendered unconditionally in the West on May 7 and in the East on May 9. Allied and Soviet forces proclaimed May 8, 1945, to be Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).

AUGUST 3, 1945

United States special envoy Earl Harrison made public a report to President Truman on the treatment of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Germany. Following World War II, several hundred thousand Jewish survivors were unable or unwilling to return to their home countries. Harrison's report contained a strong indictment of Allied military policies, underscored the plight of Jewish DPs, and led eventually to improved conditions for them in the American zone of occupied Germany.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

Japan surrendered. World War II officially ended.

NOVEMBER 20, 1945

The International Military Tribunal (IMT), made up of United States, British, French, and Soviet judges, began a trial of 21 major Nazi leaders at Nuremberg, Germany.

DECEMBER 22, 1945

President Truman issued a directive giving DPs preference in receiving visas under the existing quota restrictions on immigration to the United States.

JULY 4, 1946

Mob attack against Jewish survivors in Kielce, Poland. Following a ritual murder accusation, a Polish mob killed more than 40 Jews and wounded dozens of others. This attack sparked a second mass migration of Jews from Poland and Eastern Europe to DP camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy.

AUGUST 1, 1946

The IMT passed judgment on the major Nazi war criminals on trial in Nuremberg, Germany. Eighteen were convicted, and three were acquitted. Eleven of the defendants were sentenced to death.

OCTOBER 16, 1946

In accordance with the sentences handed down after the convictions, ten defendants were executed by hanging. One defendant, Hermann Göring, escaped the hangman by committing suicide in his cell.

JULY 11, 1947

The *Exodus 1947* ship carrying 4,500 Jewish refugees sailed for British-administered Palestine from southern France, despite British restrictions on Jewish immigration. The British intercepted the ship and forced it to proceed to Haifa in Palestine and then to the French port of Port-de-Bouc, where it lay at anchor from more than a month.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1947

Ultimately, the British took the Jewish refugees from the *Exodus 1947* to Hamburg, Germany, and forcibly returned them to DP camps. The fate of the *Exodus 1947* dramatized the plight of Holocaust survivors in the DP camps and increased international pressure on Great Britain to allow free Jewish immigration to Palestine.

NOVEMBER 29, 1947

As the postwar Jewish refugee crisis escalated and relations between Jews and Arabs deteriorated, the British government decided to submit the status of Palestine to the United Nations. In a special session on this date, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two new states, one Jewish and the other Arab. The decision was accepted by the Jewish and rejected by the Arab leadership.

MAY 14, 1948

David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Jews of Palestine, announced the establishment of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv and declared that Jewish immigration into the new state would be unrestricted. Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DPs in Europe.

JUNE 1948

Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, authorizing 200,000 DPs to enter the United States in 1949 and 1950. Though at first the law's stipulations made it unfavorable to Jewish DPs, Congress amended the bill, and by 1952, thousands of Jewish DPs entered the United States. An estimated 80,000 Jewish DPs immigrated to the United States with the aid of American Jewish agencies between 1945 and 1952.



Jews cross a pedestrian bridge from one section of the Lodz ghetto (in Poland) to another. German guards control access to the ghetto from the street below—a main thoroughfare that is not part of the ghetto. (1941)

USHMM

MUSEUM ONLINE • WWW.USHMM.ORG

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website offers online versions of many of the Museum's exhibitions and educational materials as well as information about other educational programs and resources. Educators and students may find the following sections of the Museum's website to be of particular interest. Unless otherwise noted, all of the sections can be accessed through the Museum's homepage at www.ushmm.org.

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

The "Education" section of the Museum's website displays information about the Museum's educational programs and resources for teachers and students. Included are announcements of professional development opportunities such as conferences, workshops, and fellowships; teaching resources, including the contents of this book and educational activities based on the Museum's collections; and historical essays and primary sources.

THE HOLOCAUST: A LEARNING SITE FOR STUDENTS

The learning site, which can be accessed through the Education section of the website, is organized by theme, using text, historical photographs, maps, images of artifacts, and audio clips to provide an overview of the Holocaust. The content of the learning site reflects the history as it is presented in the Museum's Permanent Exhibition *The Holocaust*. Information in the learning site is organized under five main thematic headings with corresponding text-based articles: Nazi Rule, Jews in Prewar Germany, Nazi Camp System, The "Final Solution," and Rescue and Resistance. Each main thematic heading includes subheadings for related articles. The articles are linked to a variety of additional information and media: key dates, images of artifacts, eyewitness audio testimonies, biographies, and a glossary of terms. Photographs and maps include captions and source information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ONLINE EXHIBITIONS

As the Museum creates new special and traveling exhibitions, online versions are also produced to complement them, providing easy access to multimedia explorations of Holocaust history. They include

Voyage of the St. Louis (with student activities and teacher resources)

Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto

Kristallnacht, The November 1938 Pogroms (with student activities)

The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936

COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives' on-line catalog enables users to search and retrieve information about the Museum's current holdings. Researchers can search the catalog by keyword, personal name, Library of Congress subject heading, and geographic place name. Help information is provided for search strategies and printing of catalog information. In addition to documents, personal papers, and manuscripts, the Museum's collection includes photographs, oral history interviews, film footage, musical and nonmusical sound recordings, and small works of art.

LIBRARY

The Library section of the Museum's website includes an on-line catalog, research assistance, and selected new acquisitions and videos of the month. The on-line catalog provides the means for searching and retrieving bibliographic information for items in the library's collection. The system allows the user to search the catalog by author, title, keyword, or Library of Congress subject heading. Help is available to provide further information about conducting a search, interpreting search results, or saving retrieved information.

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF ORGANIZATIONS IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION, REMEMBRANCE, AND RESEARCH

The International Directory of Organizations in Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research section of the Museum's website provides contact information for Holocaust-related resources around the world.

MUSEUM SHOP

The Museum Shop offers students and teachers age-appropriate historical text, memoirs, literature, and poetry in the section titled "Young Readers." The Shop has a "Teacher Resource" section and a diverse selection of titles appropriate for adult or advanced student reading. Videos, compact discs, posters, keepsakes, and postcards are also available for purchase. A selection of these materials is available on-line at www.holocaustbooks.org.





Under SS guard, prisoners perform forced labor in the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. (1942)

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

THE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

The Education Resource Center (ERC), located on the Concourse level of the Museum, is a place for educators, students, and parents to learn about the Museum's Division of Education and its programs, services, and materials.

The ERC offers educational and informational materials developed by the Museum. Examples of such materials include this book, a pamphlet about Jewish and non-Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, and a series of brochures about non-Jewish victims.

In addition, the ERC collects curricula, lesson plans, books, and audiovisual materials from around the world on the topic of the Holocaust. This noncirculating collection of materials is organized thematically. ERC staff representatives are available to advise educators in identifying materials that would be appropriate to include in their units of study on the Holocaust.

With respect to primary sources from the Holocaust time period, the ERC provides access to reproductions of various historic photographs, documents, and other artifacts held in the Museum's archives. These primary sources may be photocopied on-site.

While in the ERC, visitors may wish to explore the Wexner Learning Center multimedia computer system or use other computers to access the Museum's website as well as other Holocaust-related sites.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Education Resource Center is open to the public daily.

10 a.m.–noon

1–5 p.m.

(Closed noon–1 p.m.)

TO REACH THE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

Phone: (202) 488-6140

Resource Request Hotline: (202) 488-2661

Fax: (202) 314-7888