# JEWISH AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH 2014

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Superintendent of Schools

# INTRODUCTORY PACKET FOR# TEACHERS

TABLE OF CONTENTS




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## Background Information

In 1654, 23 Jews arrived on the shores of New Amsterdam (today New York City), marking the arrival of the first Jewish immigrants who came to settle in North America. In 2004, the 350th anniversary of Jewish history in North America was celebrated. Following this historic celebration, efforts to commemorate a national month in honor of Jewish history was envisioned by U.S. Representatives Deborah Wasserman Schultz (D, FL) and Henry Hyde (R-IL). They introduced a resolution to the United States House of Representatives calling for creation of Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM). This resolution won strong support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and President George W. Bush issued a Proclamation on April 20, 2006 calling on the nation to commemorate JAHM. In May 2007, the second annual Jewish American Heritage Month was proclaimed by President Bush. The 2007 presidential proclamation stated":

> "The faith and hard work of Jewish Americans have played an integral role in shaping the cultural fabric of America. During Jewish American Heritage Month, we celebrate the vital contributions of Jewish Americans to our Nation.
>
> Throughout our history, Jewish Americans have contributed to the strength of our country and the preservation of our values. The talent and imagination of these citizens have helped our Nation prosper, and their efforts continue to remind us of America's gift of religious freedom and the blessings of God's steadfast love. Jewish Americans have worked to promote civil rights and build bridges of mutual understanding among the world's religions. Their deep commitment to faith and strong ties to family enrich our country and set a positive example for others.
>
> This month is also a time to recognize the sacrifices of Jewish Americans who serve our Nation in the Armed Forces. These brave men and women are dedicated to freedom's cause, and all those who live in freedom live in their debt.
>
> Jewish American Heritage Month is an opportunity to honor the accomplishments of Jewish-American citizens and to remember that our Nation is a melting pot of cultures. I join all Americans in celebrating the rich Jewish heritage and the many ways Jewish Americans contribute to a bright future for our country.
>
> NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2007 as Jewish American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities to honor Jewish Americans across the country."

# AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY MONTH 2014

## RESEARCH

**Using the Internet and other resources in your classroom and media center, research and respond to the following:**

1. Jewish people immigrated to what is now North America from as early as 1654. Research Jewish immigration in the following periods of time: 1654-1776; 1777-1829; 1830-1900; 1901-1919; 1920-1939; 1940-1948; 1949-1967; 1968-current times. What countries did the Jewish people emigrate from and what significant events caused immigration during each of the time periods? In what cities in the United States did a majority of the Jewish people settle? Why were these areas selected, and what was life like for a majority of these immigrants?

2. If we are to recognize the accomplishments of a group of people, it is first important to know who they are, as a group. Research and discuss the following: What is Judaism? Who were the first Jews? What beliefs separated them from other groups of the times?

3. Visit the website for the American Jewish Historical Society, www.ajhs.org. The site is broken down into various time periods and includes information in terms of American Jewry. The past comes alive through a gallery of pictures and documents as well as through video connections. Select specific time periods. What did you discover concerning the way in which America's Jewish population assimilated, contributed, and lived? As a group, what values did they have?

4. Research America's policy towards immigration of Jews from Europe who were trying to flee the genocide that ultimately claimed the lives of over 6 million Jewish men, women, and children during the Holocaust. Debate the policy and its implications.

5. Throughout the history of Jewish immigration to The United States, a large percentage of immigrants were processed at Ellis Island. Often, immigrants coming through Ellis Island had their names changed by those in charge of processing the new Americans, and this change affected many of the Jewish immigrants who came to America. Research to discover how Jewish Americans began new lives with new identities and how that affected their experiences in making a new life for themselves and their families? Using your research of this famous landmark and its relevance to the Jewish American experience and identity, write a short essay paper outlining what you have learned.

6. Research the topic of anti-Semitism. To what does it refer? What are the root causes of anti-Semitism? How does anti-Semitism in this country reveal itself and to what degree?

7. The Holocaust had a tremendous effect on the Jewish population living in the U.S. during the early 1940's. That effect has been long lasting until today.

Research how modern American Jewish life has changed from that of the early 20th century in light of the events of the Holocaust. How has American Jewish life transformed since the Holocaust? Present your findings to the class.

8. Jewish Americans have been heavily involved in the arts, literature, and sports. Research all three of these areas of interest and gather as much information as you can on how Jewish Americans have made their mark in these areas.

9. The statistical facts are that less than 2% of the population in the United States are comprised of Jewish people. Research the number of Jewish Americans who have won:

    a. The Nobel Peace Prize

    b. The Pulitzer Prize

    c. The Academy Award(s)

    Prepare a paper on these facts to present to the class on the topic, "Great Jewish Achievements."

**REFLECT, WRITE, CREATE**

**The following activities are based on the research completed concerning the contributions of the Jewish people in America.**

1. Consider the various contributions of the American Jews. What one contribution do you feel is most vital to you personally? Write a persuasive paper to express your beliefs about the importance of this individual's work. Create a class "Hall of Fame."

2. Bring in newspapers and magazines. Search the ads and headlines for references to products/companies that were founded by American Jews e.g. Liz Claiborne clothing, Levi Jeans, Estee Lauder cosmetics, MGM, Macy's, Steven Speilberg movies, etc. Create a scrapbook to reflect the contributions of these individuals.

3. During the Civil Rights movements of the 20th century, Jewish Americans represented a large portion of those who fought for the rights of others, specifically for African- Americans and for women. In small groups, research some well-known American Jews who have been leaders of Civil Rights and Human Rights movements. Each group will present to the rest of the class the life of one Jewish American who has helped shape the civil liberties of this country and how his or her contributions have made an impact on American society.

4. Jewish Americans have in the sciences, and during the 20th century a number of our Jewish citizens won the Nobel Prize for their contributions to science and medicine. American Jewish scientists continue to make breakthroughs and innovations in all areas of science. Discover as much as you can regarding notable Jewish scientists such as Jonas Salk, for his work in immunization vaccine to cure

polio. Divide into groups and choose one scientist and create a multimedia presentation of that scientist's discoveries and contributions to his field. After each presentation, have an open discussion with the entire class about these important Jewish scientists.

5. America's Jewry has been active in the political arena for well over a century. Now, more than ever, Jewish Americans play a part in the American political process. American Jews span the spectrum of political opinions, both liberal and conservative. Research two influential American Jewish politicians; one conservative, one liberal, and write a paper which highlights and contrasts their political beliefs.

6. The last several decades has granted opportunities to Jewish women in their religious practice that were unheard of at the turn of the 20th century. Just as women now have the right to vote, Jewish women, along with women of other faiths, have begun to take on more responsibilities in the practice of their faith. There are several hundred ordained female rabbis now among Conservative and Reform congregations. Research and discover if there is a female rabbi in your area. Invite her to your class to discuss the idea of women and their role today in Jewish American culture and history leadership. Have a question and answer session after, and be certain that your questions are well thought-out.

7. With the events of the Holocaust still fresh in the minds of its survivors, Jewish Americans, Holocaust survivors particularly, have often worked tirelessly to ensure that other genocides do not go unchallenged. The recent genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan has garnered an enormous amount of attention, much of which is due to the efforts of Jewish American Holocaust victims and their families. Research and make connections between the Holocaust and more recent genocides, such as Darfur or the Bosnian genocide. Are there commonalities among genocides? See the USHMM website www.ushmm.org for interesting topics on this issue. As a class, research and choose a group of people who are even now being oppressed or murdered simply because of their ethnicity or religious beliefs. Organize a class or even school-wide event to benefit the victims of this injustice. Contact your local press and media to cover the event and bring awareness to the events and the victims.

8. Plan a "Reader's Theatre" on American Jewish History Month. After researching the history of the Jewish community in America, choose five events that you feel had an impact on the American Jewish community; then write a dramatic script describing each event. Choose five students to then each read one of the scripts aloud to the class in a dramatization.

9. The term "mitzvah" in Yiddish (a language made-up of primarily German and Hebrew words which was predominant among European Jews and still flourishes here today) means, "a good deed," and in the Hebrew it means "a commandment" – so in Judaism, basically one is commanded to perform good deeds or acts of kindness. Many American synagogues, temples and Jewish organizations have started a "Mitzvah Day" where they perform acts of kindness within their

communities: serving the elderly, the homeless, and others in need. Have your class create a school-wide “Mitzvah Day” where each of your classmates and schoolmates performs one good deed within the school and one in the larger community outside of the school. Then report on and discuss your act and why you feel it was important.

10. The Jews who immigrated to America became strong supporters of their new homeland. Some of the most popular American songs were written by Jewish immigrants. “God Bless America,” for example, was written by Irving Berlin in 1893. Introduce this fact to your school’s music teacher and when planning an assembly for commemoration of American Jewish History Month, include this song. Also include one or two others by American Jewish composers that you research.

## Websites

www.ajhs.org: American Jewish Historical Society. Includes a variety of resource items including American Jewish History in images, and portraits of American Jews.

www.amuseum.org/jahf: Jewish-American Hall of Fame. Includes short biographies and video clips of many prominent American Jewish people such as those Jews who helped Columbus, a Revolutionary War patriot, and Houdini. A quiz and virtual tour introduce visitors to American Jews in areas ranging from science to sports, from medicine to music.

www.350th.org: This website celebrates 350 years of Jewish Life in America. It includes a timeline of American Jewish History and "This Month in Jewish History" where visitors can select a month and see what happened in that month in years past. Also included are special exhibits and documents.

www.americanjewisharchives: The history of American Jewry through illustrations and documents.

http://www.jewsinamerica.org: The American Jewish experience as seen through photographs, documents and other artifacts. Visitors can view these materials by selecting various periods of time.

www.jewishheritage.us: Includes timelines from 1585 as well as chapters in American Jewish history.

www.jwa.org: Jewish Women's Archives. Includes exhibits based upon American Jewish women who have made significant contributions to this country.

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org: Includes information about Jewish life, including the American Jewish winners of the Nobel Prizes.

www.science.co.il/Nobel.asp: Lists Nobel Prize winners and has various ways of sorting names, including nationality.

http://www.jewsinsports.org/: Outlines the history of Jews in sports history.

# Resources for Teaching the Holocaust

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**:
A *living* memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

- Lesson Plans: http://www.ushmm.org/educators/lesson---plans
- Teaching Materials: http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching---materials
- Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust: http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/general-teaching-guidelines

## University of South Florida:

A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust: An overview of the people and events of the Holocaust through photographs, documents, art, music, movies, and literature.
http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/

## The Holocaust Explained:

This site supports 11---16 year old students learn about the Holocaust. This site is designed to help you with your school and homework on the Holocaust. Learn about the development of Adolf Hitler's anti---Semitic ideas from their beginning through to the Final Solution. Find out how and why the Nazi dictatorship built ghettos, concentration camps and eventually extermination camps like Auschwitz.
http://www.theholocaustexplained.org

## Introductory Packet for Teachers:

This is a cohesive, comprehensive and "user---friendly" curriculum unit on the Holocaust. This is a vehicle for meeting the Social Studies and English New York Standard. It also provides the opportunity for students to explore their roles as educated and responsible human beings in a global society. See pages 3-87.

## Teaching the Holocaust to Middle School Students:

There are several objectives and particular challenges when teaching the event of the Holocaust to middle school students, some of them are unique to this age group. One such challenge can actually become a foundation for a meaningful and powerful experience, if addressed properly. This is a variety of dynamic, interactive, and meaningful activities, which use the interests and the developmental stage of the students to achieve these objectives and to overcome the challenges. See pages 88-99.

## Holocaust Documentation Center:

The State of Florida Department of Education commissioned the Center to write the first statewide resource manuals on Holocaust studies for grades 9-12, K-3, and 4-6. These manuals, plus the manuals for grades 7-8, have been distributed to all private, public, and parochial schools in the state of Florida. These manuals may be downloaded at this site: http://hdec.org/hdec/resource-manuals/

Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education:
The Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education (CHHRE) at Florida Atlantic University presents cutting-edge training and resources to teachers involved in Holocaust and genocide education.
http://www.coe.fau.edu/CentersAndPrograms/CHHRE/events.aspx

***Lessons From the Holocaust*:**
This Teaching Channel video illustrates how one teacher approaches instruction about the Holocaust.
https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/holocaust-history-lesson-plan

***One Survivor Remembers:***
This educational film and teachers' guide deepen students' understanding of the Holocaust and draw connections to students' lives by asking enduring questions such as:

- How can individuals and societies remember and commemorate difficult histories?
- What is the purpose of remembering? What are the consequences of forgetting?
- During the Holocaust, what strategies were used to create distinctions between "us" and "them"? What were the consequences of these distinctions?
- What are the costs of injustice, hatred and bigotry?
- What choices do people make in the face of injustice? What obstacles keep individuals from getting involved in their communities and larger world? What factors encourage participation?

http://www.tolerance.org/kit/one-survivor-remembers

***Remember the Children: Daniel's Story:*** *This film presents the history of the Holocaust in ways that children can understand.*
*http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum- exhibitions/remember-the-children-daniels-story/video*

***Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive:***
*View featured videos on a variety of topics.*

# Introductory Packet for Teachers

## RATIONALE

As experienced Social Studies and English teachers and members of the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, we are committed to the teaching of the Holocaust as part of our curriculum. We certainly understand the constraints of time and the amount of material we all have to cover in any given year. Given these realities, we have developed what we believe is a cohesive, comprehensive and "user-friendly" curriculum unit on the Holocaust. This is a vehicle for meeting the Social Studies and English New York Standard. It also provides the opportunity for students to explore their roles as educated and responsible human beings in a global society.


Helene Alalouf
*Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center*

Andy Cahn
*Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center*

Helen Evans
*Carmel High School* (retired)

Maggie Fontenalla
*Educational Consultant*

Steven Goldberg
*New Rochelle Public Schools*

Ronnie Hirschhorn
*Somers High School* (retired)

Harvey-Ann Ross
*Mamaroneck High School* (retired)

Fran Salaun
*Blue Mountain Middle School* (retired)

Julie Scallero
*North Salem High School*

Edee Tenser
*Briarcliff Middle School* (retired)

ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM:

**Who developed the curriculum?**

This curriculum guide was developed by a group of master teachers who have studied and taught the Holocaust in the context of history and the language arts. The New York State Core Curriculum and Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Social Studies have guided our selection of activities, historical documents and assessment tools. All materials and activities have been field-tested; they are challenging, age-appropriate and well suited to the needs of a diverse student population.

**How will this guide help teachers and students understand the Holocaust?**

Given, the breadth of scholarship that is related to the Holocaust is daunting and still in process, it is sometimes difficult for the novice as well as the veteran teacher to keep abreast of all the information available on this pivotal historical event.

This curriculum provides important and historically significant background information to prepare teachers and students for a study of the Holocaust.

Certainly, the guiding principles behind this curriculum guide extend beyond standards and assessments. By using this curriculum it will help students integrate an understanding of history with civic responsibility and a willingness to serve as guardians of democracy and protectors of human rights.

**How should you use this guide?**

The guide provides materials and activities that may be used in depth or selectively. Some teachers use the material in a short unit of one to two weeks. Others choose a more extensive interdisciplinary approach. It is possible to use the guide in the development of a semester course in Holocaust Studies.

We have selected the best and most effective materials from our programs in public and private schools. You may choose to use all of the materials or only those that are in keeping with your school needs.

In this increasingly complex and confrontational world, it is imperative to have students raise questions about the world they live in, study and analyze the past- with the Holocaust being the quintessential example of human horror and altruism during adversity, and envision what they want their world to be.

The overwhelming amount of available material about the Holocaust made the decision of what to include very difficult. The guide is divided into seven lessons arranged chronologically, from the origins of anti-Judaism in the Middle Ages to the Holocaust and its aftermath. Each lesson consists of:

- An overview
- Teaching objectives
- Essential question(s)
- Key terms
- Resources
- An instructional plan-activities with concluding questions and contemporary connections
- Extended activities
- Student assessment and evaluation
- Homework
- Connections to New York State standards
-

Depending on the nature of his/her course, the teacher may choose to use all of the materials as presented sequentially or may focus on one or several of the units. Activities are carefully delineated and are intended to provide students with a wide variety of responses to the documents in each lesson. The teacher may choose to follow rigorously the classroom activities or may adapt the lessons to his or her individual teaching style, the nature of the students, and the requirements of the course.

While the final product reflects documents which give a chronological picture of the Holocaust, each teacher will need to make decisions about what to include and how to best present this material to students based on his/her relationship with students, student interests and abilities, course focus and time constraints. Before beginning the material with students, teachers should read the entire guide to familiarize themselves with the Holocaust as presented through the selected documents.

Included in this guide are several suggested strategies for presenting the material to students:

**Time management:** Each unit may take two or three days or one extended period. Teachers will determine lesson length depending on the choice and quantity of documents and teaching strategies.

**Selection of material:** Each unit contains many documents, both primary and secondary. While we believe all the documents are valuable in creating a full vision of each time period, you may use all or some of the material.

**Presentation of material:** In the initial lesson, you may demonstrate the process of reading and analyzing a document and describing the various ways of responding to them. Thus, the teacher will serve as a model for subsequent student-led responses either in groups or as individuals.

Various strategies include:

- **Full-class discussions**—All students read and discuss the same documents.
- **Group discussions**—Each group reads and discusses two-three documents.
  - One group member serves as recorder.
  - One group member reports to entire class.
- **Individual assignments**—Each student is assigned one or more documents to read and analyze.
- Student reports to class and/or leads class discussion on content of document.

**Journals:** Throughout this course of study, teachers and students may find it meaningful to keep an on-going journal. Teachers decide how and when to assign journal entries although students may choose to write additional entries. Entries may be written on a daily basis in class or at home, after each unit, or at any time the teacher and/or student feels appropriate. Journals may be used as a means of assessment

Suggestions for journal entries:

- **Personal reactions**—
  - I did not know that…
  - I couldn't believe that…
  - If I were _____, I think I…
  - If I were _____, I wish I…
  - This incident reminds me of a time when…
  - of a book in which…
  - of an experience that…
  - When I read_____, I…
  - I think that…
  - This person,_____, is similar to_____because…
  - This event is_____, is similar to because…
- Response to a quotation

- Analytical response
  - Discuss a key passage in the document
  - Write a fully developed response to the end question in the lesson
  - That goes beyond the class discussion or the entry written in class.
- Contemporary or historical comparison
- Literary comparison
  - Compare and contrast literature in the lesson with another work of literature.
- Creative writing-Creative writing may be part of the journals or may constitute a separate assignment. Write a creative piece inspired by the document or class discussion or activities.
  - Poetry
  - Short short story
  - One-act play or scene
  - Dramatic monologue that reflects the thoughts of character in the document.
  - Newspaper page or article

Vocabulary: Teachers may choose to include formal vocabulary study or include the key terms as part of their lessons. Some strategies for teaching vocabulary include:

- Present literal/dictionary definitions
- Determine meaning from context in the document.
- Determine meaning from other context examples.

Projects: Students enjoy creative projects and may wish to work as individuals, in pairs, or in groups on these activities. Teachers may assign these projects to be shared on project days throughout the unit or to be presented as a culminating activity.

- Art-drawing, painting, sculpture, collage
- Quilt
- Photography
- Drama
- Dance
- Poetry
- Short Fiction
- Informative Poster
- Video or film
- Interview with survivor, rescuer, liberator, soldier who fought in WWII, person who lived during WWII.

- Interview with soldier who fought in Korea, in the Gulf War or in Iraq
- PowerPoint presentation

Assessment: An assessment or evaluation demonstrates the student's understanding of the material studied. Teachers may use assessments at any time during the course of study. This evaluation may take one or more of the following formats:

- Participation in final class discussion
- Journal entries
- Quiz(es)
- Formal test- objective or essay
- Composition
- Creative projects
- Essential questions
- Utilization of current media

Teachers should ask themselves, as we who have created this guide have asked ourselves, what is it they want their students to come away with after studying the Holocaust. We certainly want them to make personal and contemporary connection with the ideas and values we have stressed throughout the unit. We want them to understand the evolution from prejudice to genocide-prejudice, discrimination…genocide and the roles that people play in controversial and confrontational situations- victim, perpetrator, bystander, resister, and rescuer. We want them to raise question about themselves and the world they live in and to examine their own behaviors. We want them to realize that they have the ability to decide what role they will play when they see an act of bigotry or intolerance or hear a racial slur, a derogatory religious remark, or an ethnic joke. We want them to become human beings capable of making responsible choices and moral decisions.

## OVERALL OBJECTIVES FOR HOLOCAUST UNIT

1. Students will raise and consider key questions regarding the Holocaust.
2. Students will realize that man's inhumanity to man can surface in a variety of historical circumstances.
3. Students will recognize that racial slurs and ethnic jokes are stepping-stones on a long road, which in the end may lead to genocide.
4. Students will recognize that genocide is a threat to all humanity, and the loss of one group is a loss to all.
5. Students will recognize that a bystander makes an active choice that may result in escalating harm to others.
6. Students will understand that prejudice has had a long history and is still alive today.
7. Students will understand the dangers of blind obedience to authority.
8. Students will understand that when tyranny prevails, individuals can make a difference by acts of moral courage.
9. Students will carry the message so that acts of genocide cannot happen again.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR HOLOCAUST UNIT

These are questions one may wish to raise and reflect on throughout the teaching of this unit.

1. How was it possible for a modern society to carry out the systematic murder of a people for no reason other than that they were Jews?
2. How was it possible for a people to almost be destroyed?
3. What makes some people resist and others obey authority?
4. How was it possible for the whole world to stand by without halting this destruction?
5. Could such a thing happen again?
6. What would I have done under similar circumstances?
7. What can such a catastrophe tell us about human nature?
8. What comparable examples are there of people's inhumanity to others?
9. Where does one draw the line between obeying the law or obeying one's conscience?
10. What is the role and responsibility of the individual in society?
11. Why is the study of the Holocaust relevant today?

## NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

**Standard 1:** History of the United States and New York Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

**Standard 2:** World History

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

**Standard 3:** Geography

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.

**Standard 4:** Economics

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

**Standard 5:** Civics, Citizenship and Government.

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments, the governmental system of the United States and other nations, the United States Constitution, the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy, and the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

## NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

**Standard 1:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

**Standard 2:** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

**Standard 3:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

**Standard 4:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

# 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 problem; 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 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 and 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 other's oppression.
- Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure in implementing 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. It also creates a heightened awareness of genocide potential in world today.
- 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 lesion 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.

### 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 collaborator 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.

### 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."

**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 at attempt to reduce Holocaust history to one or two catalysts in isolation form 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 anti-Semitism; 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.

**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.

**Strive for precision of language.**
Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to over generalize 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.

**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—he 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.

**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 a 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 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.

**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, and 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.

**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 and act took place; the immediate consequences to oneself and one's family of one's actions; he 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 [the informed members of the Nazi party] 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 description 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.

**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 over generalizing 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.

**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 could not be construed as disrespectful of the victims themselves.

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

Often, too great in 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 in appropriate 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 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.

**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 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 emphasize 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.

**Reinforce the objective 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 less should encourage further examination of the 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.

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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Teaching About the Holocaust; A Resource Book for Educators*, 1-8 (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001)

# LESSON PLAN: WHY STUDY THE HOLOCAUST?

NOTE:

The objective of this unit is to raise questions for consideration. It is important to acknowledge students' responses, but at this point it is not possible or necessary to answer all questions raised.

Many teachers find it useful to identify questions and concerns on a visual that students can reference during the unit. This can be done on a large overhead screen, easel chart or in student notebooks. Keeping the questions visible throughout the unit may serve as a helpful reference point from time to time.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will raise and consider key questions regarding the Holocaust and genocide:
- What are some reasons for studying the Holocaust?
- What questions does the Holocaust raise about human behavior?
- What distinguishes the Holocaust from previous mass persecutions and murders?
- Students will investigate the significant moral and ethical challenges presented by this study.
- Students will gain insights into their attitudes and the attitudes of others about the Holocaust.
- Students will empathize with those caught up in the plight of the Nazi Holocaust.
- Students will draw preliminary conclusions regarding the many questions concerning people and nations raised by the Holocaust.

## OVERVIEW

This section provides a rationale for studying the Holocaust and genocide. Students need to understand why they should study and reflect upon the events of the past. It is important to place the Holocaust in a proper historic perspective and make valid connections between the past and the present.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN AND ACTIVITIES:

**Lesson/Activity**

Read "Is It Necessary to Remember," an excerpt from Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust, by Milton Meltzer. This selection explores the importance of remembering the past and the need to study the Holocaust. You may read the material to the class, break into groups to read, or assign the material for reading at home.

Ask students to highlight lines in the text that they would like to bring up for discussion in class. Extended activity: Ask the students to write down one or two questions or a brief reflection on the text. Encourage students to share the lines they have highlighted and/or raise the question they have about the text.

In the final discussion or assessment, be sure to consider the following points:

- Some people feel that "it is better to bury the bitter past." This article stresses the necessity to remember.
- What reasons are given for the need to study the Holocaust?
- Are some reasons more important to you than others?
- Why do events that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century affect us today? (Also, how???)
- What questions does the Holocaust raise about the human condition?

**Lesson/Activity**

Study: "A Horror Erased From Memory" by Roger Simon. This newspaper article, about the selection of a jury panel in Milwaukee in 1976, shows that 30 years later many adults were unaware of the events and ideology of the Nazi era.

Begin by asking students to answer the questions posed to the prospective jurors (questions by Bruce O'Neill…lawyers for the two Nazis):

- Who were the Nazis?
- What did they stand for?

RESOURCES

**"Is it Necessary to Remember?"**
Excerpt from Never to Forget:
The Jews of the Holocaust
by Milton Meltzer.

This selection explores the importance of remembering the past and the need to study the Holocaust.

**"A Horror Erased From Memory"**
Chicago Sun-Times newspaper article by Roger Simon

This newspaper article, about the selection of a jury panel in Milwaukee in 1976, shows that 30 years later many adults were unaware of the events and ideology of the Nazi era.

- When did they take control in Germany?
- Who was Adolph Hitler?
- Who was responsible for the destruction of millions of Jews, Poles, Gypsies and other groups during World War II?

Next, ask small groups of students to compare their responses to these questions to those made by perspective jurors interviewed in the article.

Ask them to speculate on how people in their community or neighborhood might respond.

**Extended Activities:**

- Read Letter from Teacher and Child by Haim Ginott

ASSESSMENT

Ask students to tell/write about why it is important that people not forget this tragic event.

Identify in writing (in notes, on an overhead chart, or in journals, on index cards, etc.) two or three questions related to the study of the Holocaust that have been raised by reading these two articles and /or class discussions.

**Other:**

**Standards Connection:**
ELA 1,2,3,4,
SOCIAL 1, 2,3,4,5

# STUDYING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE: A RATIONALE

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

This section provides a rationale for studying about the Holocaust and genocide. Students need to understand why they should study and reflect upon the events of the past. They need to place the Holocaust in historic perspective and make valid connections between the past and the present.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Students will raise and consider key questions regarding the Holocaust and genocide;
- Students will draw preliminary conclusions regarding the many questions concerning people and nations raised by he Nazi Holocaust;
- Students will investigate the significant moral and ethical challenges presented by this study;
- Students will gain insights into their own attitudes and the attitudes of others regarding the Holocaust;
- Students will empathize with those caught up in the plight of the Nazi Holocaust.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT MATERIALS:

Have students read Is It *Necessary to Remember?* Taken from: Milton Meltzer, *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust* (Harper and Row, 1976). In a full class discussion, make the following points,

- Some people feel that it is better to bury the bitter past. This article stresses the necessity to remember. What reasons are given for the study of the Holocaust in this article?
- Are some of the reasons more important to you than others? Why?
- Why do events that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century affect us? Today?
- What questions does the Holocaust raise about the human condition?

# Reading: Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport

*Milton Meltzer*

The Holocaust was one of the innumerable crimes committed by the Nazis. Then why single out the extermination of the Jews? Is it necessary to remember? Is it good? Can it even be understood by those who have come after?

No one would claim that the Nazi extermination of the Jews was greater or more tragic than what has been done to other persecuted peoples. Such comparisons are unfeeling and fruitless.

What is historically significant is its uniqueness. There is no precedent for it in Jewish history. Nor in the history of other people.

Civilians in the past have been massacred for what men called "reasonable" goals, utilitarian goals to extend power, to acquire wealth, to increase territory, to stamp out opposition, to force conversion. What some power conceived to be in its self-interest was the reason behind the persecution.

But Hitler and the Nazis wanted to murder all Jews because they were Jews. Not because of their faith, not despite their faith. But because of what Hitler called their 'race." He did not believe this "inferior" people had any right to share the earth with their "superiors," the Germans.

So Jews, religious and unreligious, were exterminated. They were killed even when their deaths proved harmful, militarily or economically, to the Nazis. It was a crime against all humanity, committed upon the body of the Jewish people. That the Jews were the victims this time derives from the long history of anti-Semitism. How could it have happened?

It did not occur in a vacuum. It was the logical outcome of certain conditions of life. Given the antihuman nature of Nazi beliefs, the crime of the Holocaust could be expected. We see that now. That it happened once, unbelievable, as it seems, means it could happen again. Hitler made it a possibility for anyone. Neither the Jews nor any other group on earth can feel safe from that crime in the future.

I do not believe that the world of Hitler was totally alien to the world we know. Still, before we can compare Hitler's Germany to anything else, we need to find out what it was like and how it came to be. And just as important, we need to expand our knowledge of our own human nature to understand why people were infected by Nazism, how the poison spread, and what its effects were. The question has to do with good and evil, with our inner being, with our power to make moral choices.

## Have students read:
## A Horror Erased From Memory, Chicago Sun-Times, April 11, 1976.

This newspaper article, about the selection of a jury panel in Milwaukee in 1976, shows that 30 years later many adults were unaware of the events and ideology of the Nazi era.

Before asking students to study this article, have them respond to the same kind of questions posted by the judge:

- Who were the Nazis? What did they stand for?
- When did they take control in Germany?
- Who was Adolf Hitler?
- Who was responsible for the destruction of millions of Jews, Poles, Gypsies and other groups during World War II?

Have small groups of students compare their responses to those made by people interviewed in the article. Ask them to speculate on how people in their community or neighborhood might respond to these questions. Students might design a questionnaire for use in the school to determine student and teacher awareness of the Nazi Holocaust. Ask students to tell why it is important that people not forget this tragic event.

# A HORROR ERASED FROM MEMORY

*Roger Simon*
Chicago Sun-Times, April 11, 1976

MILWAUKEE—Some months ago, two members of the Milwaukee chapter of the Nazi party (the National Socialist White People's Party) smashed the windows of an auto while the owner—a Jew —sat inside.

They were arrested and a short while ago went on trial. Everyone connected with the trial thought that choosing a jury of 12 men and women who were not disgusted by the term Nazi would be very difficult.

Bruce C. O'Neill, the lawyer for the two Nazis, felt that it would be almost impossible to find a jury that wasn't prejudiced. After all, World War II had ended less than a generation ago.

"I thought that people would associate the word Nazi with concentration camps and the killing of Jews," O'Neill said on the phone. "I was very surprised. No, I was shocked."

O'Neill was shocked because after questioning 23 randomly-selected, average citizens, all middle-aged and alive during World War II, this is what he found:

- Virtually none of the prospective jurors knew anything about Nazism.
- They did not associate Nazism with World War II.
- They did not associate Nazism with racial hatred, concentration camps, or the killing of 6 million Jews.

David B. Offer, a reporter for the Milwaukee newspaper, quoted the following comments by some of the prospective jurors:

One woman said she knew that Nazism was a dictatorship, but that she "really couldn't say more about it."

"Nazi means communist," another said.

"I have heard of Nazis but I don't listen to the news that much," said another.

O'Neill and the judge, Patrick J. Madden, were stunned. "It just didn't mean anything to them," Judge Madden told me. "The word Nazi and what Nazism stood for was virtually unknown to them."

Oddly enough, a Nazi had just run a primary election for mayor of Milwaukee. The newspapers were full of stories about him. He lost the primary, but he got nearly 5,000 votes.

The man who brought the charges against the two Nazis, Milton Kleinberg, was not all surprised that the jury knew nothing about Nazis.

"A Jewish organization had a booth at the state fair last year," he said. "They had a questionnaire about Nazism. Among young people, 95 percent had never heard of it. Among older people, many of whom were veterans of World War II, 60 percent did not associate Nazism with concentration camps or the killing of Jews."

Even though O'Neill was defending the two Nazis, he does not defend or support Nazism. "I was so amazed at the answers by the jurors that I finally just asked a woman if she had ever heard of Adolf Hitler," O'Neill said. "She said that the name sounded familiar, but she couldn't say for sure who he was."

The prospective jurors were not lying in order to sneak on the jury and let the two Nazis go. After a two- day trial, the Nazis were found guilty.

"I consider the ignorance about Nazism to be very serious," O'Neill said. "All I can say is God help us all. God help us all."

"It was very frightening to hear those replies," Judge Madden said. "Very frightening. I don't know who said it, but if you don't know history, you are doomed to repeat it."

It was a little more than 30 years ago that World War II ended. In it, 6 million Jews were incinerated by the Nazis. Nearly, 300,000 Americans of all religions, of all races, from all states died in battle.

Does anyone remember what they died for? Does anyone remember what they fought?

To dwell in the past is foolish. To forget the past is a disgrace.

# LETTER from TEACHER and CHILD

*by Haim Ginott.*

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: Gas chambers built by *learned* engineers.

Children poisoned by *educated* physicians.

Infants killed by *trained* nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by *high school* and *college* graduates. So,

I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skill psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.

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Memo written to teachers by a private school principal on the first day of school quoted in *Teacher and Child* by Haim Ginott

## HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST: AN OVERVIEW

KEY QUESTIONS: These are the essential questions to consider with this reading assignment throughout your study of the Holocaust.

- How was it possible for a modern nation to carry out the systematic murder of a people simply because they were Jews?
- How was it possible for a people to almost be destroyed?
- How was it possible for the world to stand by without halting this destruction?

QUESTIONS FOR THE READING:

1. How is the Holocaust defined in the reading?
2. Who were the victims? What, if anything, did you find surprising about the victims?
3. What hopes did the Germans have when Hitler took power? How were these the same or different from the hopes of the American people when FDR took office?
4. What steps did Hitler take once he took office in order to prevent opposition?
5. What was the racial ideology of the Nazi party?
6. How did the Nazis enforce their racial and political ideology?
7. List the actions taken by the Nazis to enforce their racial and political ideology from 1933–1945.

## 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, Herman Goring, 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, trainloads 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 anti-Semitism 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 not 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 sys- tem—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 the "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 targets

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).

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 targets 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 individual 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. 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 other the Nazis labeled "undesirable" 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.

Between 1933 and 1936, thousands or 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 Austrian 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 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 com- missions 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.

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 through- out 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 under- ground 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 thou- sands 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 semi rural areas, were Belzec, Sobibor, Trebinka, Chelmno, Majdanek, and Auschwitz-Berlin. 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 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, Sorbibor, 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, 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 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. Individual 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 live 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 was the top priority and would bring an end to Nazi terror. Once the war began, security concerns, reinforced in part by anti-Semitism, 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 of 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 crime 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 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 [part of Nazi Security Service], and the Leadership Corps of the Nazi Party) to be criminal organizations.

In the three years following the 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 com- mitted and were tried by national tribunals. Perhaps the most famous of these cases was the trial in 1947, in Cracow, Poland, of Rudolf Hoss, 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 mil- lions of people. Within months of Germany's surrender in May 1945, the Allies repatriated more than 6 million (DP) 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 Easter Europe because of postwar anti-Semitism and the destruction of the 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 Beriha (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 crises 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 and 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.

# WORLD WAR II/HOLOCAUST TIMELINE

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST<br>PREJUDICE and DISCRIMINATION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1933** | | | |
| January 30 | Adolph Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany. | March 23 | First concentration camp opened at Dachau. |
| | | March 27 | Enabling Acts suspending civil liberties. |
| | | April 1–20 | Jewish shops and businesses boycotted nationwide. |
| | | | Jewish professionals excluded from government jobs, including teaching. |
| | | | Jewish dietary laws prohibited. |
| | | Spring–Summer | Public burning of books by Jews and other anti-Nazis. |
| | | | Jewish professors expelled from universities. |
| | | | Jewish writers and artists prohibited from practicing their professions. |
| October 7 | Germany withdraws from League of Nations. | July | Laws passed permitting forced sterilization of those considered "inferior" |
| | | | Protests by American organizations of Nazi persecution Of Jews. |
| **1934** | | | |
| August 2 | Hitler names himself "Fuhrer" over both Government and party. | October | First major arrests of homosexuals throughout Germany. |
| **1935** | | | |
| March | Germany enacts draft law violating Treaty Of Versailles | April | Jehovah's Witnesses barred from civil service jobs and many arrested. |
| | | May–November | Jews barred from serving in the German armed forces. |
| | | | Nuremberg Laws enacted. |
| | | | Jews could not be German citizens. |
| | | | Jews could not marry Aryans. |
| | | | Jews could not fly the German flag. |
| | | | Jew defined as one with two or more Jewish grandparents. |

## WORLD WAR II/HOLOCAUST TIMELINE (Continued)

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST<br>INDOCTRINATION and DISCRIMINATION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1936** | | | |
| March 7 | Nazi army marches into Rhineland. | March 3 | Jewish doctors barred from practicing in government institutions. |
| May 5 | Ethiopia occupied by Italy. | July | First Gypsies arrested and sent to Dachau. |
| October | Rome-Berlin Axis agreement signed | | |
| **1937** | | | |
| | | July 16 | Buchenwald concentration camp opened. |
| **1938** | | | |
| | | March 13 | Austria annexed by Germany. |
| | | | All German anti-Semitic laws immediately apply In Austria |
| July | Evian Conference to discuss refugee policies. | April | Jews in Reich must register all property with the Authorities. |
| | | August | All Jewish men required to add "Israel" to their name and Jewish women "Sarah". |
| September | Munich Pact signed. Britain and France agree to Turn over Sudetenland. | October | First Polish Jews deported from Germany. |
| | | | At Swiss request, Germans order all Jewish passports stamped with a "J". |
| | | Nov. 9 | Kristallnacht following assassination of von Rath. |
| | | | Anti-Jewish program in Germany and Austria |
| | | | 200 synagogues destroyed. |
| | | | 7500 Jewish shops looted. |
| | | | 30000 Jewish men arrested; many sent to concentration camps. |
| | | Nov. 12 | Decree forcing all Jews to transfer Jewish businesses to Aryan hands. |
| | | | Jewish pupils expelled from German Schools. |
| | | December | Gypsies in Germany required to register with the Police. |

## WORLD WAR II/HOLOCAUST TIMELINE (Continued)

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST<br>INDOCTRINATION and DISCRIMINATION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1939** | | | |
| March | Germany invades Czechoslovakia. | Jan. | Hitler states that if war erupts it will mean the extermination of European Jews. |
| | | May | Ravensbruck concentration camp for women established. |
| | | June | Jewish refugees aboard SS St. Louis denied entry to Cuba and US. |

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST<br>PERSECUTION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1939** | | | |
| August | Germany and USSR sign Non-aggression pact. | | |
| | Russia invades Eastern Poland. | | |
| September 1 | Beginning of World War II. Germany invades Poland. | | |
| September | France and Britain declare war on Germany. | | |
| | | Sept. | Ghettoization of Polish Jews ordered. Judenrat established. |
| | | Oct. | Hitler authorizes "euthanasia program" (T-4). |
| | | Nov. | Jews in occupied Poland forced to wear distinguishing badge. |
| **1940** | | | |
| | | Feb. | Lodz Ghetto established, sealed in April. |
| | | April | Concentration camp established in Auschwitz. |
| May | Nazis conquer Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxemborg, Holland and France. | | |
| August | Battle of Britain begins. | | |
| Sept. | Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis formed. | | |
| | 500,000 people. | Oct. | Warsaw Ghetto established, sealed in Nov. with 500,000 people. |
| Nov. | Hungary, Romania and Slovakia join Axis. | | |

## WORLD WAR II/HOLOCAUST TIMELINE (Continued)

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST PERSECUTION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1941** | | | |
| | | Jan. | Anti Jewish riots in Romania. |
| | | Jan. | Dutch Jews required to register. |
| | | March | Himmler orders construction of camp at Birkenau. |
| May | Nazis invade North Africa and occupied Yugoslavia and Greece. | Spring | Ghettoes established at Lublin, Minsk, Krakow, Vilna and others. |
| June | Nazis invade the USSR. | June | Einsatzgruppen begin mass murder of Jews and Gypsies. |
| | | July | Authority given to prepare a "total solution" to Jewish problem. |
| | | Sept. | First experiment gassing at Auschwitz. |
| | | Sept. | Jews in the Third Reich must wear the Star of David. |
| | | Sept. | 33,000 Jews massacred at Babi Yar. |
| | | Sept. | First deportation of German and Austrian Jews to ghettos in East. |
| | | Oct. | Construction of extermination camps at Majdanek, Belzec and Birkenau. |
| Dec. 7 | Japan attacks Peal Harbor | | |
| Dec. 11 | Germany and Italy declare war on U.S. | | |
| Dec. | Gassing operations begin at Chelmno. | | |
| **1944** | | | |
| March | Nazis occupy Hungary. | | |
| June | Allied invasion of Normandy. Nazis in retreat on the Russian front. | May | Deportation of Hungarian Jews begins. 437,000 sent to Auschwitz. |
| | | July | Soviets liberate Majdanek extermination camp. |
| | | Aug. | Gypsy Camp at Auschwitz destroyed. 3,000 Gypsies gassed. |
| | | Oct. | Revolt by Auschwitz inmates; one crematorium blown up. |
| | | Nov. | Last Jews deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. |

## WORLD WAR II/HOLOCAUST TIMELINE (Continued)

| ROAD TO WAR | | ROAD TO HOLOCAUST PERSECUTION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1945** | | | |
| January | Soviets liberate Auschwitz | January | Nazis evacuate Auschwitz; "death marches" of inmates begin. |
| April | Mussolini executed by Italian partisans. | Spring | Liberation of camps.<br>British liberate Bergen-Belsen.<br>Americans liberate Dachau.<br>Ravensbruck liberated. |
| April | Hitler commits suicide. | | |
| May 2 | Soviet army captures Berlin. | | |
| May 8 | Nazi Germany surrenders; end of WWII in Europe. | | |
| | | November | First major Nuremberg war Crimes Trial begins. |

Andy Cahn
Bronxville Middle School

**1. When speaking about the "Holocaust," what time period are we referring to?**

Answer: The "Holocaust" refers to the period from January 30, 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, to May 8, 1945 (V-E Day), the end of the war in Europe.

**2. How many Jews were murdered during the Holocaust?**

Answer: While it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Jewish victims, statistics indicate that the total was over 5,860,000. Six million is the round figure accepted by most authorities.

**3. How many non-Jewish civilians were murdered during World War II?**

Answer: While it is impossible to ascertain the exact number, the recognized figure is approximately 5,000,000. Among the groups which the Nazis and their collaborators murdered and persecuted were: Gypsies, Serbs, Polish intelligentsia and priests, resistance fighters from all the nations, German opponents of Nazism, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, habitual criminals, and the "anti-social," e.g. beggars, vagrants, and hawkers.

**4. Which Jewish communities suffered losses during the Holocaust?**

Answer: Every Jewish community in occupied Europe suffered losses during the Holocaust. The Jewish communities in North Africa were persecuted, but were not subjected to the same large-scale deportations and mass murder. Some individuals, however, were deported to German death camps where they perished.

**5. How many Jews were murdered in each country and what percentage of the prewar Jewish population did they constitute?**

Answer:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 50,000 | 27.0% | Italy | 7,680 | 17.3% |
| Belgium | 28,900 | 44.0% | Latvia | 71,500 | 78.1% |
| Bohemia/ Moravia | 78,150 | 66.1% | Lithuania | 143,000 | 85.1% |
| Bulgaria | 0 | 0.0% | Luxembourg | 1,950 | 55.7% |
| Denmark | 60 | 0.7% | Netherlands | 100,000 | 71.4% |
| Estonia | 2,000 | 44.4% | Norway | 762 | 44.8% |
| Finland | 7 | 0.3% | Poland | 3,000,000 | 90.9% |
| France | 77,320 | 22.1% | Romania | 287,000 | 47.1% |
| Germany | 141,500 | 25.0% | Slovakia | 71,000 | 79.8% |
| Greece | 67,000 | 86.6% | Soviet Union | 1,100,000 | 36.4% |
| Hungary | 569,000 | 69.0% | Yugoslavia | 63,300 | 81.2% |

(Source: Encyclopedia of the Holocaust; Country names as of 1945)

6. **What is a death camp? How many were there? Where were they located?**

   Answer: A death (or mass murder) camp is a concentration camp with special apparatus specifically designed for systematic murder. Six such camps existed: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. All were located in Poland.

7. **What does the term "Final Solution" mean and what is its origin?**

   Answer: The term "Final Solution" (Endlosung) refers to Germany's plan to murder all the Jews of Europe. The term was used at the Wannsee Conference (Berlin; January 20, 1942) where German officials discussed its implementation.

8. **When did the "Final Solution" actually begin?**

   Answer: While thousands of Jews were murdered by the Nazis or died as a direct result of discriminatory measures instituted against Jews during the initial years of the Third Reich, the systematic murder of Jews did not begin until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

9. **How did the Germans define who was Jewish?**

   Answer: On November 14, 1935, the Nazis issued the following definition of a Jew: Anyone with three Jewish grandparents; someone with two Jewish grandparents who belonged to the Jewish community on September 15, 1935, or joined thereafter; was married to a Jew or Jewess on September 15, 1935, or married one thereafter; was the offspring of a marriage or extramarital liaison with a Jew on or after September 15, 1935.

10. **How did the Germans threat those who had some Jewish blood but were not classified as Jews?**

    Answer: Those who were not classified as Jews but who had some Jewish blood were categorized as *Mischlinge* (hybrids) and were divided into two groups:

    *Mischlinge* of the first degree-those with two Jewish grandparents;

    *Mischlinge* of the second degree-those with one Jewish grandparent:

    The *Mischlinge* were officially excluded from membership in the Nazi Party and All Party organizations (e.g: SA, SS, etc.). Although they were drafted into the Germany Army, they could not attain the rank of officers. They were also barred from the civil service and from certain professions.

(Individual *Mischlinge* were, however, granted exemptions under certain circumstances.) Nazi officials considered plans to sterilize *Mischlinge*, but this was never done. During the World War II, first-degree *Mischlinge*, incarcerated in concentration camps, were deported to death camps.

**11. What were the first measures taken by the Nazis against the Jews?**

Answer: The first measures against the Jews included:

*April 1, 1933:*
A boycott of Jewish shops and businesses by the Nazis.

*April 7, 1933:*
The law for the Re-establishment of the Civil Service expelled all non-Aryans (defined on April 11, 1933 as anyone with a Jewish parent or grandparent) from the civil service. Initially, exceptions were made for those working since August 1914; German veterans of World War I; and, those who had lost a father or son fighting for Germany or her allies in World War I.

*April 7, 1933:*
The law regarding admission to the legal profession prohibited the admission of lawyers of non-Aryan descent to the Bar. It also denied non-Aryan members of the Bar the right to practice law. (Exceptions were made in the cases noted above in the law regarding the civil service.) Similar laws were passed regarding Jewish law assessors, jurors, and commercial judges.

*April 22, 1933:*
The decree regarding physician's services with the national health plan denied reimbursement of expenses to those patients who consulted non-Aryan doctors. Jewish doctors who were war veterans or had suffered from the war were excluded.

*April 25, 1933:*
The law against the overcrowding of German schools restricted Jewish enrollment in German high schools to 1.5% of the student body. In communities where they constituted more than 5% of the population, Jews were allowed to constitute up to 5% of the student body. Initially, exceptions were made in the case of children of Jewish war veterans, who were not considered part of the quota. In the framework of this law, a Jewish student was a child with two non-Aryan parents.

**12. Did the Nazis plan to murder the Jews from the beginning of their regime?**

Answer: This question is one of the most difficult to answer. While Hitler made several references to killing Jews, both in

his early writings (Mein Kampf) and in various speeches during the 1930s, it is fairly certain that the Nazis had no operative plan for the systematic annihilation of the Jews before 1941. The decision on the systematic murder of the Jews was apparently made in the late winter or the early spring of 1941 in conjunction with the decision to invade the Soviet Union.

**13. When was the first concentration camp established and who were the first inmates?**

Answer: The first concentration camp, Dachau, opened on March 22, 1933. The camp's first inmates were primarily political prisoners (e.g. Communists or Social Democrats); habitual criminals; homosexuals; Jehovah's Witnesses; and "anti- socials" (beggars, vagrants, hawkers). Others considered problematic by the Nazis (e.g. Jewish writers and journalists, lawyers, unpopular industrialists, and political officials) were also included.

**14. Which groups of people in Germany were considered enemies of the state by the Nazis and were, therefore, persecuted?**

Answer: The following groups of individuals were considered enemies of the Third Reich and were, therefore, persecuted by the Nazi authorities: Jews, Gypsies, Social Democrats, other opposing politicians, opponents of Nazism, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, habitual criminals, and "anti-socials" (e.g. beggars, vagrants, hawkers), and the mentally ill. Any individual who was considered a threat to the Nazis was in danger of being persecuted.

**15. What was the difference between the persecution of the Jews and the persecution of other groups classified by the Nazis as enemies of the Third Reich?**

Answer: The Jews were the only group singled out for total systematic annihilation by the Nazis. To escape the death sentence imposed by the Nazis, the Jews could only leave Nazi-controlled Europe. Every single Jew was to be killed according to the Nazis' plan. In the case of other criminals or enemies of the Third Reich, their families were usually not held accountable. Thus, if a person was executed or sent to a concentration camp, it did not mean that each member of his family would meet the same fate. Moreover, in most situations, the Nazis enemies were classified as such because of their actions or political affiliation. In the case of the Jews, it was because of their racial origin, which could never be changed.

**16. Why were the Jews singled out for extermination?**

Answer: The explanation of the Nazis' implacable hatred of the Jews rests on their distorted worldview, which saw history as a racial struggle. They considered the Jews a race whose goal was world domination and who, therefore, were an obstruction to Aryan dominance. They believed that all of history was a fight between races, which should culminate in the triumph of the superior Aryan race. Therefore, they considered it their duty to eliminate the Jews, whom they regarded as a threat. Moreover, in their eyes, the Jews' racial origin made them habitual criminals who could never be rehabilitated and were, therefore, hopelessly corrupt and inferior.

There is no doubt that other factors contributed toward Nazi hatred of the Jews and their distorted image of the Jewish people. These include the centuries-old tradition of Christian anti-Semitism, which propagated a negative stereotype of the Jew as a Christ-killer, agent of the devil, and practitioner of witchcraft. Also, significant was the political anti-Semitism of the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, which singled out the Jew as a threat to the established order of society. These combined to point to the Jew as a target for persecution and ultimate destruction by the Nazis.

**17. What did people in Germany know about the persecution of Jews and other enemies of Nazism?**

Answer: Certain initial aspects of Nazi persecution of Jews and other opponents were common knowledge in Germany. Thus, for example, everyone knew about the Boycott of April 1, 1933, the Laws of April, and the Nuremberg Laws, because they were fully publicized. Moreover, offenders were often publicly punished and shamed. The same holds true for subsequent anti-Jewish measures. Kristallnacht (The Night of the Broken Glass) was a public pogrom, carried out in full view of the entire population. While information on the concentration camps was not publicized, a great deal of information was available to the German public, and the treatment of the inmates was generally known, although exact details were not easily obtained.

As for the implementation of the "Final Solution" and the murder of the other undesirable elements, the situation was different. The Nazis attempted to keep the murders a secret and, therefore, took precautionary measures to ensure that they would not be publicized. Their efforts, however, were

only partially successful. Thus, for example, public protests by various clergymen led to the halt of their euthanasia program in August of 1941. These protest were obviously the result of the fact that many persons were aware that the Nazis were killing the mentally ill in special institutions.

As far as the Jews were concerned, it was the common knowledge in Germany that they had disappeared after having been sent to the East. It was not exactly clear to large segments of the German population what had happened to them. On the other hand, there were thousands upon thousands of Germans who participated in and/or witnessed the implementation of the "Final Solution" either as members of the SS, the Einsatzgruppen, death camp or concentration camp guards, police in occupied Europe, or with the Wehrmacht.

**18. Did all Germans support Hitler's plan for the persecution of the Jews?**

Answer: Although the entire German population was not in agreement with Hitler's persecution of the Jews, there is no evidence of any large-scale protest regarding their treatment. There were Germans who defied the April 1, 1933, boycott and purposely bought in Jewish stores, and there were those who aided Jews to escape and to hide, but their number was very small.

Even some of those who opposed Hitler were in agreement with his anti-Jewish policies. Among the clergy, Dompropst Bernhard Lichtenberg of Berlin publicly prayed for the Jews daily and was, therefore, sent to a concentration camp by the Nazis. Other priests were deported for their failure to cooperate with Nazi anti-Semitic policies, but the majority of the clergy complied with the directives against German Jewry and did not openly protest.

**19. Did the people of occupied Europe know about Nazi plans for the Jews? What was their attitude? Did they cooperate with the Nazis against the Jews?**

Answer: The attitude of the local population vis-à-vis the persecution and destruction of the Jews varied from zealous collaboration with the Nazis to active assistance to Jews. Thus, it is difficult to make generalizations. The situation also varied from country to country. In Eastern Europe and especially in Poland, Russia, and the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), there was much more knowledge of the "Final Solution" because it was implemented in those areas. Elsewhere, the local population had less information on the details of the "Final Solution."

In every country they occupied, with the exception of Denmark and Bulgaria, the Nazis found many locals who were willing to cooperate fully in the murder of the Jews. This was particularly true in Eastern Europe, where there was a long-standing tradition of virulent anti-Semitism, and where various national groups, which had been under Soviet domination (Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians), fostered hopes that the Germans would restore their independence. In several countries in Europe, there were local fascist movements, which allied themselves with the Nazis and participated in anti-Jewish actions; for example, the Iron Guard in Romania and the Arrow Guard in Slovakia. On the other hand, in every country in Europe, there were courageous individuals who risked their lives to save Jews. In several countries, there were groups, which aided Jews, e.g. Joop Westerweel's group in the Netherlands, Zegota in Poland, and the Assisi underground in Italy.

**20. Did the Allies and the people in the Free World know about the events going on in Europe?**

Answer: The various steps taken by the Nazis prior to the "Final Solution" were all taken publicly and were, therefore, reported in the press. Foreign correspondents commented on all the major anti-Jewish actions taken by the Nazis in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia prior to World War II. Once the war began, obtaining information became more difficult, but reports, nonetheless, were published regarding the fate of the Jews. Thus, although the Nazis did not publicize the "Final Solution," less than one year after the systematic murder of the Jews was initiated, details began to filter out to the West. The first report which spoke of a plan for the mass murder of Jews as smuggled out of Poland by the Bund (a Jewish socialist political organization) and reached England in the spring of 1942.

The details of this report reached the Allies from Vatican sources as well as from informants in Switzerland and the Polish underground. (Jan Karski, and emissary of the Polish underground, personally met with Franklin Roosevelt and British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden). Eventually, the American Government confirmed the reports to Jewish leaders in late November 1942. They were publicized immediately thereafter. While the details were neither complete nor wholly accurate, the Allies were aware of most of what the Germans had done to the Jews at a relatively early date.

**21. What was the response of the Allies to the persecution of the Jews? Could they have done anything to help?**

Answer: The response of the Allies to the persecution and destruction of European Jewry was inadequate. Only in January 1944 was an agency, the War Refugee Board, established for the express purpose of saving victims of Nazi persecution. Prior to that date, little action was taken. On December 17, 1942, the Allies issued a condemnation of Nazi atrocities against the Jews, but this was the only such declaration made prior to 1944.

Moreover, no attempt was made to call upon the local population in Europe to refrain from assisting the Nazis in their systematic murder of the Jews. Even following establishment of the War Refugee Board and the initiation of various rescue efforts, the Allies refused to bomb the death camp of Auschwitz and/or the railway lines leading to that camp, despite the fact that Allied bombers were at that time engaged in bombing factories very close to the camp and were well aware of its existence and function.

Other practical measures, which were not taken, concerned the refugee problem. Tens of thousands of Jews sought to enter the United States, but they were barred from doing so by the stringent American immigration policy. Even the relatively small quotas of visas, which existed, were often not filled, although the number of applicants was usually many times the number of available places. Conferences held in Evian, France (1938) and Bermuda (1943) to solve the refugee problem did not contribute to a solution. At the former, the countries invited by the United States and Great Britain were told that no country would be asked to change its immigration laws. Moreover, the British agreed to participate only if Palestine were not considered. At Bermuda, the delegates did not deal with the fate of those still in Nazi hands, but rather with those who had already escaped to neutral lands. Practical measures, which could have aided in the rescue of Jews, included the following:

- Permission for temporary admission of refugees
- Relaxation of stringent entry requirements
- Frequent and unequivocal warnings to Germany and local populations all over Europe that those participating in annihilation of Jews would be held strictly accountable
- Bombing the death camp at Auschwitz.

**22. Who are the "Righteous Among the Nations"?**

Answer: "Righteous Among the Nations," or "Righteous Gentiles," refers to those non-Jews who aided Jews during the Holocaust. There were "Righteous Among the Nations" in every country overrun or allied with the Nazis, and their deeds often led to the rescue of Jewish lives. Yad Vashem, the Israeli national remembrance authority for the Holocaust, bestows special honors upon these individual. To date, after carefully evaluating each case, Yad Vashem has recognized approximately 10,000 "Righteous Gentiles" in three different categories of recognition. The country with the most "Righteous Gentiles" is Poland. The country with the highest proportion (per capita) is the Netherlands. The figure of 10,000 is far from complete, as many cases were never reported, frequently because those who were helped have died. Moreover, this figure only includes those who actually risked their lives to save Jews, and not those who merely extended aid.

**23. Were Jews in the Free World aware of the persecution and destruction of European Jewry and, if so, what was their response?**

Answer: The news of the persecution and destruction of European Jewry must be divided into two periods. The measures taken by the Nazis prior to the "Final Solution" were all taken publicly and were, therefore, in all newspapers. Foreign correspondents reported on all major anti-Jewish actions taken by the Nazism Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia prior to World War II. Once the war began, obtaining information became more difficult, but, nonetheless, reports were published regarding the fate of the Jews.

The "Final Solution" was not openly publicized by the Nazis, and thus, it took longer for information to reach the "Free World." Nevertheless, by December 1942, news of the mass murders and the plan to annihilate European Jewry was publicized in the Jewish press.

The response of the Jews in the "Free World" must also be divided into two periods, before and after the publication of information on the "Final Solution." Efforts during the early years of the Nazi regime concentrated on facilitating emigration from Germany (although there were those who initially opposed emigration as a solution) and combating German anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, the views on how to best achieve these goals differed and effective action was often

hampered by the lack of internal unity. Moreover, very few Jewish leaders actually realized the scope of the danger.

Following the publication of the news of the "Final Solution," attempts were made to launch rescue attempts via neutral states and to send aid to Jews under Nazi rule. These attempts, which were far from adequate, were further hampered by the lack of assistance and obstruction from government channels. Additional attempts to achieve internal unity during this period failed.

**24. Did the Jews in Europe realize what was going to happen to them?**

Answer: Regarding the knowledge of the "Final Solution" by its potential victims, several key points must be kept in mind. First of all, the Nazis did not publicize the "Final Solution," nor did they ever openly speak about it.

Every attempt was made to fool the victims and, thereby, prevent or minimize resistance. Thus, deportees were always told that they were going to be "resettled." They were led to believe that conditions "in the East" (where they were being sent) would be better than those in ghettos. Following arrival in certain concentration camps, the inmates were forced to write home about the wonderful conditions in their new place of residence. The Germans made every effort to ensure secrecy. In addition, the notion that human beings-let alone the civilized Germans-could build camps with special apparatus for mass murder seemed unbelievable in those days. Since German troops liberated the Jews from the Czar in World War I, Germans were regarded by many Jews as a liberal, civilized people. Escapees who did return to the ghetto frequently encountered disbelief when they related their experiences.

Even Jews who had heard of the camps had difficulty believing reports of what the Germans were doing there. In as much as each of the Jewish communities in Europe was almost completely isolated, there was a limited number of places with available information. Thus, there is no doubt that many European Jews were not aware of the "Final Solution," a fact that has been corroborated by German documents and the testimonies of survivors.

**25. How many Jews were able to escape from Europe prior to the Holocaust?**

Answer: It is difficult to arrive at an exact figure for the number of Jews who were able to escape from Europe prior to World War II, since the available statistics are incomplete.

From 1933-1939, 355,278 German and Austrian Jews left their homes. (Some immigrated to countries later overrun by the Nazis.) In the same period, 80,860 Polish Jews immigrated to Palestine and 51,747 European Jews arrived in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. During the years 1938-1939, approximately 35,000 emigrated from Bohemia and Moravia (Czechoslovakia). Shanghai, the only place in the world for which one did not need and entry visa, received 20,000 European Jews (mostly of German origin) who fled their homelands. Immigration figures for countries of refuge during this period are not available. In addition, many countries did not provide a breakdown of immigration statistics according to ethnic groups. It is impossible, therefore, to ascertain the exact number of Jewish refugees.

**26. What efforts were made to save the Jews fleeing from Germany before World War II began?**

Answer: Various organizations attempted to facilitate the emigration of the Jews (and non-Jews persecuted as Jews) from Germany.

Among the most active were the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, HICEM, the Central British Fund for German Jewry, the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jews), which represented German Jewry, and other non-Jewish groups such as the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees (Jewish and other) coming from Germany, and the American Friends Service Committee.

Among the programs launched were the "Transfer Agreement" between the Jewish Agency and the German government whereby immigrants to Palestine were allowed to transfer their funds to that country in conjunction with the import of German goods to Palestine. Other efforts focused on retraining prospective emigrants in order to increase the number of those eligible for visas, since some countries barred the entry of members of certain professions. Other groups attempted to help in various phases of refugee work: selection of candidates for emigration, transportation of refugees, aid in immigrant absorption, etc. Some groups attempted to facilitate increased emigration by enlisting the aid of governments and international organizations in seeking refugees' havens.

The League of Nations established an agency to aid refugees but is success was extremely limited due to a lack of political power and adequate funding.

The United States and Great Britain convened a conference in 1938 at Evian, France, seeking a solution to the refugee problem. With the exception of the Dominican Republic, the nations assembled refused to change their stringent immigration regulations, which were instrumental in preventing large- scale immigration. In fact, Australia remarked, "as we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one."

In 1939, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, which had been established at the Evian Conference, initiated negotiations with leading German officials in an attempt to arrange for the relocation of a significant portion of German Jewry. However, these talks failed. Efforts were made for the illegal entry of Jewish immigrants to Palestine as early as July 1934, but were later halted until July 1938. Large-scale efforts were resumed under the Mosad l-Aliya Bet, Revisionist Zionists, and private parties. Attempts were also made, with some success, to facilitate the illegal entry of refugees to various countries in Latin America.

**27. Why were so few refugees able to flee Europe prior to the outbreak of World War II?**

Answer: The key reason for the relatively low number of refugees leaving Europe prior to World War II was the stringent immigration policies adopted by the prospective host countries. In the United States, for example, the number of immigrants was limited to 153,744 per year, divided by country of origin. Moreover, the entry requirements were so stringent that available quotas were often not filled.

Schemes to facilitate immigration outside the quotas never materialized as the majority of the American public consistently opposed the entry of additional refugees. Other countries, particularly those in Latin America, adopted immigration policies that were similar or even more restrictive, thus closing the doors to prospective immigrants from the Third Reich.

Great Britain, while somewhat more liberal than the United States on the entry of immigrants, took measures to severely limit Jewish immigration to Palestine. In May 1939, the British issued a "White Paper" stipulating that only 75,000 Jewish immigrants would be allowed to enter Palestine over the course of the next five years (10,000 a year, plus an additional 25,000). This decision prevented hundreds of thou- sands of Jews from escaping Europe.

The countries most able to accept large numbers of refugees consistently refused to open their gates. Although a

solution to the refugee problem was the agenda of the Evian Conference, only the Dominican Republic was willing to approve large-scale immigration. The United States and Great Britain proposed resettlement havens in under-developed areas (e.g., Guyana, formerly British Guyana, and the Philippines), but these were not suitable alternatives.

Two important factors should be noted. During the period prior to the outbreak of World War II, the Germans were in favor of Jewish emigration. At that time, there were no operative plans to kill the Jews. The goal was to induce them to leave, if necessary, by the use of force. It is also important to recognize the attitude of German Jewry. While many German Jews were initially reluctant to emigrate, the majority sought to do so following Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass), November 9-10, 1938. Had havens been available, more people would certainly have emigrated.

**28. What was Hitler's ultimate goal in launching World War II?**

Answer: Hitler's ultimate goal in launching World War II was the establishment of an Aryan empire from Germany to the Urals. He considered this area the natural territory of the German people, an area to which they were entitled by right, the Lebensraum (living space) that Germany needed so badly for its farmers to have enough soil. Hitler maintained that these areas were needed for the Aryan race to preserve itself and assure its dominance.

There is no question that Hitler knew that, by launching the war in the East, the Nazis would be forced to deal with serious racial problems in view of the composition of the population in the Eastern areas. Thus, the Nazis had detailed plans for the subjugation of the Slavs, who would be reduced to serfdom status and whose primary function would be to serve as a source of cheap labor for Aryan farmers. Those elements of the local population, who were of higher racial stock, would be taken to Germany where they would be raised as Aryans.

In Hitler's mind, the solution of the Jewish problem was also linked to the conquest of the eastern territories. These areas had large Jewish populations and they would have to be dealt with accordingly. While at this point there was still no operative plan for mass annihilation, it was clear to Hitler that some sort of comprehensive solution would have to be found. There was also talk of establishing a Jewish reservation either in Madagascar or near Lublin, Poland. When he made the decisive decision to invade the Soviet Union, Hitler also gave

instructions to embark upon the "Final Solution," the systematic murder of European Jewry.

**29. Was there any opposition to the Nazis within Germany?**

Answer: Throughout the course of the Third Reich, there were different groups who opposed the Nazi regime and certain Nazi policies. They engaged in resistance at different times and with various methods, aims, and scope.

From the beginning, leftist political groups and a number of disappointed conservatives were in opposition; at a later date, church groups, government officials, students and businessmen also joined. After the tide of the war was reversed, elements within the military played an active role in opposing Hitler. At no point, however, was there a unified resistance movement within Germany.

**30. Did the Jews try to fight against the Nazis? To what extent were such efforts successful?**

Answer: Despite the difficult conditions to which Jews were subjected in Nazi-occupied Europe, many engaged in armed resistance against the Nazis. This resistance can be divided into three basic types of armed activities: ghetto revolts, resistance in concentration and death camps, and partisan warfare.

The Warsaw Ghetto revolt, which lasted for about five weeks beginning on April 19, 1943, is probably the best-known example of armed Jewish resistance, but there were many ghetto revolts in which Jews fought against the Nazis.

Despite the terrible conditions in the death, concentration, and labor camps, Jewish inmates fought against the Nazis at the following sites: Treblinka (August 2, 1943); Babi Yar (September 29, 1943); Sobibor (October 14, 1943); Janowska (November 19, 1943); and Auschwitz (October 7, 1944).

Jewish partisan units were active in many areas, including Baranovichi, Minsk, Naliboki, Forest, and Vilna. While the sum total of armed resistance efforts by Jews was not militarily overwhelming and did not play a significant role in the defeat of Nazi Germany, these acts of resistance did lead to the rescue of an undetermined number of Jews, Nazi casualties, and untold damage to German property and self-esteem.

**31. What was the Judenrat?**

Answer: The Judenrat was the council of Jews, appointed by the Nazis in each Jewish community or ghetto. According to the directive from Reinhard Heydrich of the SS on September 21, 1939, a Judenrat was to be established in every

concentration of Jews in the occupied areas of Poland. They were led by noted community leaders. Enforcement of Nazi decrees affecting Jews and administration of the affairs of the Jewish com- munity were the responsibilities of the Judenrat. These functions placed the Judenrat in a highly responsible, but controversial position, and many of their actions continue to be the subject of debate among historians. While the intentions of the heads of councils were rarely challenged, their tactics and methods have been questioned. Among the most controversial were Mordechai Rumkowski in Lodz and Jacob Gens in Vilna, both of who justified the sacrifice of some Jews in order to save others. Leaders and members of the Judenrat were guided, for the most part, by a sense of communal responsibility, but lacked the power and the means to successfully thwart Nazi plans for annihilation of all Jews.

**32. Did international organizations, such as the Red Cross, aid victims of Nazi persecution?**

Answer: During the course of World War II, the International Red Cross (IRC) did very little to aid the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Its activities can basically be divided into three periods:

*September, 1939–June 22, 1941:*

The IRC confined its activities to sending food packages to those in distress in Nazi-occupied Europe. Packages were distributed in accordance with the directives of the German Red Cross. Throughout this time, the IRC complied with the German contention that those in ghettos and camps constituted a threat to the security of the Reich and, therefore, were not allowed to receive aid from the IRC.

*June 22, 1941–Summer 1944:*

Despite numerous requests by Jewish organizations, the IRC refused to publicly protest the mass annihilation of Jews and non-Jews in the camps, or to intervene on their behalf. It maintained that any public action on behalf of those under Nazi rule would ultimately prove detrimental to their welfare. At the same time, the IRC attempted to send food parcels to those individuals whose addresses it possessed.

*Summer 1944–May 1945:*

Following intervention by such prominent figures as President Franklin Roosevelt and the King of Sweden, the IRC appealed to Miklos Horthy, Regent of Hungary, to stop the deportation of Hungarian Jews.

The IRC did insist that it be allowed to visit concentration camps, and a delegation did visit the "model ghetto" of Terezin (Theresienstadt). The IRC request came following the receipt of information about the harsh living conditions in the camp.

The IRC requested permission to investigate the situation, but the Germans only agreed to allow the visit nine months after submission of the request. This delay provided time for the Nazis to complete a "beautification" program, designed to fool the delegation into thinking that conditions at Terezin were quite good and that inmates were allowed to live out their lives in relative tranquility.

The visit, which took place on July 23, 1944, was followed by a favorable report on Terezin to the members of the IRC which Jewish organizations protested vigorously, demanding that another delegation visit the camp. Such a visit was not permitted until shortly before the end of the war. In reality, the majority of the inmates were subsequently deported to Auschwitz where they were murdered.

**33. How did Germany's allies, the Japanese and the Italians, treat the Jews in the lands they occupied?**

Answer: Neither the Italians nor the Japanese, both of whom were Germany's allies during the World War II, cooperated regarding the "Final Solution." Although the Italians did, upon German urging, institute discriminatory legislation against Italian Jews, Mussolini's government refused to participate in the "Final Solution" and consistently refused to deport its Jewish residents. Moreover, in their occupied areas of France, Greece, and Yugoslavia, the Italians protected the Jews and did not allow them to be deported. However, when the Germans overthrew the Badoglio government in 1943, the Jews of Italy, as well as those under Italian protection in occupied areas, were subject to the "Final Solution."

The Japanese were also relatively tolerant toward the Jews in their country as well as in the areas, which they occupied. Despite pressure by their German allies urging them to take stringent measures against Jews, the Japanese refused to do so. Refugees were allowed to enter Japan until the spring of 1941, and Jews in Japanese-occupied China were treated well. In the summer and fall of 1941, refugees in Japan were transferred to shanghai but no measures were taken against them until early 1943, when they were forced to move into the Hongkew Ghetto. While conditions were hardly satisfactory, they were far superior to those in the ghettos under German control.

**34. What was the attitude of the churches vis-à-vis the persecution of the Jews? Did the Pope ever speak out against the Nazis?**

Answer: The head of the Catholic Church at the time of the Nazi rise to power was Pope Pius XI. Although he stated that the myths of "race" and "blood" were contrary to Christian teaching (in a papal encyclical, March 1937), he neither mentioned nor criticized anti-Semitism.

His successor, Pius XII (Cardinal Pacelli) was a Germanophile who maintained his strict neutrality throughout the course of World War II. Although, as early as 1942, the Vatican received detailed information on the murder of Jews in concentration camps, the Pope confined his public statements to broad expression of sympathy for the victims of injustice and to calls for a more humane conduct of war.

Despite the lack of response by Pope Pius XII, several papal nuncios played and important role in rescue efforts, particularly the nuncios in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey. It is not clear to what, if any, extent they operated upon instructions from the Vatican. In Germany, the Catholic Church did not oppose the Nazis' anti-Semitic campaign.
Church records were supplied to state authorities, which assisted in the detection of people of Jewish origin, and efforts to aid the persecuted were confined to Catholic, non-Aryans. While Catholic clergymen protested the Nazi euthanasia program, few, with the exception of Bernhard Lichtenberg, spoke out against the murder of the Jews.

In Western Europe, Catholic clergy spoke out publicly against the persecution of the Jews and actively helped in the rescue of Jews. In Eastern Europe, however, the Catholic clergy was generally more reluctant to help. Dr. Jozef Tiso, the head of state of Slovakia and a Catholic priest, actively cooperated with the Germans, as did many other Catholic priests.

The response of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches varied. In Germany, for example, Nazi supporters within Protestant churches complied with the anti-Jewish legislation and even excluded Christians of Jewish origin from membership. Pastor Martin Niemoller's Confessing Church defended the rights of Christian of Jewish origin within the church, but did not publicly protest their persecution, nor did it condemn the measures taken against the Jews, with the exception of a memorandum sent to Hitler in May of 1936.

In occupied Europe, the position of the Protestant churches varied. In several countries (Denmark, France, the Netherlands,

and Norway) local churches and/or leading clergymen issued public protests when the Nazis began deporting Jews. In other countries (Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia), some Orthodox Church leaders intervened on behalf of the Jews and took steps, which, in certain cases, led to the rescue of many Jews.

**35. How many Nazi criminals were there? How many were brought to justice?**

Answer: We do not know the exact number of Nazi criminals since the available documentation is incomplete. The Nazis themselves destroyed many incriminating documents and there are still many criminals who are unidentified and/or unindicted.

Those who committed war crimes include those individuals who initiated, planned and directed the killing operations, as well as, those with whose knowledge, agreement, and passive participation the murder of European Jewry was carried out.

Those who actually implemented the "Final Solution" include the leaders of Nazi Germany, the heads of the Nazi Party, and the Reich Security Main Office. Also included are hundreds of thousands of members of the Gestapo, the SS, the Einsatzgruppen, the police and the armed forces, as well as, those bureaucrats who were involved in the persecution and destruction of European Jewry. In addition, there were thousands of individuals throughout occupied Europe who cooperated with the Nazis in killing Jews and other innocent civilians.

We do not have complete statistics on the number of criminals brought to justice, but the number is certainly far less than the total of those who were involved in the "Final Solution." The leaders of the Third Reich, who were caught by the Allies, were tried by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg from November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946.

Afterwards, the Allied occupation authorities continued to try Nazis, with the most significant trials held in the American zone (the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings). In total, 5,025 Nazi criminals were convicted between 1945-1949 in the American, British and French zone. In addition, the United Nations War Crimes Commission prepared lists of war criminals who were later tried by the judicial authorities of Allied countries and those countries under Nazi rule during the war. The latter countries have conducted a large number of trials regarding crimes committed in their lands. The Polish tribunals, for example, tried approximately 40,000 persons, and large numbers of criminals were tried in other countries. In all, about 80,000 Germans have been convicted for committing

crimes against humanity, while the number of local collaborators is in the tens of thousands. Special mention should be made of Simon Wiesenthal, whose activities led to the capture of over one thousand Nazi criminals.

Courts in Germany began, in some cases, to function as early as 1945. By 1969, almost 80,000 Germans had been investigated and over 6,000 had been convicted. In 1958, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG; West Germany), established a special agency in Ludwigsburg to aid in the investigation of crimes committed by Germans outside Germany, an agency which, since its establishment, has been involved in hundreds of major investigations. One of the major problems regarding the trial of war criminals in the FRG (as well as in Austria) has been the fact that the sentences have been disproportionately lenient for the crimes committed. Some trials were also conducted in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR; East Germany), yet no statistics exist as to the number of those convicted or the extent of their sentences.

**36. What were the Nuremberg Trials?**

Answer: The term "Nuremberg Trials" refers to two sets of trials of Nazi war criminals conducted after the war. The first trials were held November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946, before the International Military Tribunal (IMT), which was made up of representatives of France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. It consisted of the trials of the political, military and economic leaders of the Third Reich captured by the Allies.

Among the defendants were: Goring, Rosenberg, Streicher, Kaltenbrunner; Seyss-Inquart, Speer, Ribbentrop and Hess (many of the most prominent Nazis—Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels—committed suicide and were not brought to trial). The second set of trials, known as the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings, was conducted before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals (NMT), established by the Office of the United States Government for Germany (OMGUS). While the judges on the NMT were American citizens, the tribunal considered itself international. Twelve high-ranking officials were tried, among whom were cabinet ministers, diplomats, doctors involved in medical experiments, and SS officers involved in crimes in concentration camps or in genocide in Nazi-occu- pied areas. Publications of the trial proceedings are available.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS, PLACES AND PERSONALITIES

**aktion (German)** Operation involving the mass assembly, deportation, and murder of Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

**allies** The nations fighting Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan during World War II; primarily the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.

**Anielewicz**, Mordecai Major leader of the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto; killed May 8, 1943.

**anschluss** (German) Austria acquiesces to its annexation by Germany on March 13, 1938.

**antisemitism** Prejudice or discrimination towards Jews.

**Aryan race** "Aryan" was originally applied to people who spoke any Indo-European language. The Nazis, however, primarily applied the term to people of Northern European racial background. Their aim was to avoid what they considered the "bastardization of the German race" and to preserve the purity of European blood. (See NUREMBERG LAWS.)

**Auschwitz** Concentration and extermination camp in Upper Silesia, Poland, 37 miles west of Krakow. Established in 1940 as a concentration camp, it became an extermination camp in early 1942. Originally established for Poles, it became the largest center for Jewish extermination. Eventually, it consisted of three sections: Auschwitz I, the main camp; Auschwitz II (Birkenau), an extermination camp; Auschwitz III (Monowitz), the I.G. Farben labor camp, also known as Buna. In addition, Auschwitz had numerous sub camps. Originally established for Poles, Auschwitz became the largest center for Jewish extermination.

Axis The Axis powers originally included Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan who signed a pact in Berlin on September 27, 1940. They were later joined by Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia.

**Babi Yar** A ravine in Kiev, where tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews were systematically massacred.

Beer Hall Putsch On November 8, 1923, Hitler, with the help of SA troops and German World War I hero General Erich Ludendorff, launched a failed coup attempt in Bavaria at a meeting of Bavarian officials in a beer hall.

**Belzec** One of the six extermination camps in Poland. Originally established in 1940 as a camp for Jewish forced labor, the Germans began construction of an extermination camp at Belzec on November 1, 1941, as part of Aktion Reinhard. By the time the camp ceased operations in January 1943, more than 600,000 per- sons had been murdered there.

**Bergen-Belsen** Nazi concentration camp in northwestern Germany. Erected in 1943. Thousands of Jews, political prisoners, and POWs were killed there. Liberated by British troops in April 1945, although many of the remaining prisoners died of typhus after liberation.

**Blitzkrieg** Meaning "lightening war," Hitler's offensive tactic using a combination of armored attack and air assault.

British White Paper British policy of restricting immigration of Jews of 1939 to Palestine.

**Buchenwald** Concentration camp in North Central Germany.

**Bystander** One who is present at some event without participating in it.

**Cattlecar** Railroad car in which Jews were transported to concentration or death camps.

**Chamberlain, Neville (1869-1940)** British Prime Minister, 1937-1940. He concluded the Munich Agreement in 1938 with Adolf Hitler,which he mistakenly believed would bring peace in our time."

**Chelmno** An extermination camp established in late 1941 in the Warthegau region of Western Poland, 47 miles west of Lodz. It was the first camp where mass executions were carried out by means of gas. A total of 320,000 people were exterminated at Chelmno.

Churchill, Winston (1875-1965) British Prime Minister, 1940–1945. He succeeded Chamberlain on May 10, 1940, at the height of Hitler's conquest of Western Europe. Churchill was one of the very few Western politicians who recognized the threat that Hitler posed to Europe. He strongly opposed Chamberlain's appeasement policies.

**concentration camp** Immediately upon their assumption of power on January 30, 1933, the Nazi established concentration camps for the imprisonment of all "enemies" of their regime: actual and potential political opponents (e.g. communists, socialists, monarchists), Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies, homosexuals, and other "asocials." The first three concentration camps established were Dachau (near Munich), Buchenwald (near Weimar) and Sachsenhausen (near Berlin).

**cremetorium** A furnace used to burn bodies in the death camps

Dachau First concentration camp established in March 1933, ten miles northwest of Munich. The camp held, at first, political prisoners. But, as time went on, the number of Jews rose steadily to about ⅓ of the total. Although no mass murder

program existed there, tens of thousands died through starvation, disease, torture, or in cruel medical experiments.

**death camps** See Extermination camps.

**death marches** Forced marches of prisoners over long distances and under intolerable conditions was another way victims of the Third Reich were killed. The prisoners, guarded heavily, were treated brutally and many died from mistreatment or were shot. Prisoners were transferred from one ghetto or concentration camp to another ghetto or concentration camp or to a death camp.

**Deportation** Expulsion, as of an undesirable alien, from a country.

**Dictator** A person who has absolute power or control of a government.

**DP/ displaced person** The upheavals of war left millions of soldiers and civilians far from home. Millions of DP's had been eastern European slave laborers for the Nazis. The tens of thousands of Jewish survivors of Nazi camps either could not or did not want to return to their former home in Germany or Eastern Europe, and many lived in special DP camps while awaiting migration to America or Palestine.

**Displaced Persons Act of 1948** Law passed by U.S. Congress limiting the number of Jewish displaced persons who could emigrate to the United States. The Law contained anti-Semitic elements, eventually eliminated in 1950.

**Eichmann, Adolf (1906–1962)** SS Lieutenant-colonel and head of the "Jewish Section" of the Gestapo. Eichmann participated in the Wannsee Conference (January 20, 1942). He was instrumental in implementing the "Final Solution" by organizing the transporting of Jews to death camps from all over Europe. He was arrested at the end of World War II in the American zone, but escaped, went underground, and disappeared. On May 11, 1960, members of the Israeli Secret Service uncovered his whereabouts and smuggled him from Argentina to Israel. Eichmann was tried in Jerusalem (April-December 1961), convicted, and sentenced to death. He was executed on May 31, 1962.

**Eisenhower, Dwight D.** As Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces, General Eisenhower commanded all Allied forces in Europe beginning in 1942.

**Einsatzgruppen (German)** Battalion-sized, mobile killing units of the Security Police and SS Security Service that followed the German armies into the Soviet Union in June 1941. These units were supported by units of the uniformed German Order Police

and auxiliaries of volunteers (Estonian, Latian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian). Their victims, primarily Jews, were executed by shooting and were buried in mass graves from which they were later exhumed and burned. At least a million Jews were killed in this manner. There were four Einsatzgruppen (A, B, C, D) which were subdivided into company-sized Einsatzkommandos.

**eugenics** A movement devoted to improving the human species by controlling heredity.

**euthanasia** The original meaning of this term was an easy and painless death for the terminally ill. However, the Nazi euthanasia program took on quite a different meaning: the taking of eugenic measures to improve the quality of the German "race." This program culminated in enforced "mercy" deaths for the incurably insane, permanently disabled, deformed and "superfluous." Three major classifications were developed: 1) euthanasia for incurables; 2) direct extermination by "special treatment"; and 3) experiments in mass sterilization.

**Evian Conference (July 6, 1938)** Conference convened by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1938 to discuss the problem of refugees. Representatives of thirty-two countries met at Evian-les-Bains, France. However, not much was accomplished, since most western countries were reluctant to accept Jewish refugees.

**extermination camps** Nazi camps for the mass killing of Jews and others (e.g. Gypsies, Russian prisoners-of-war, ill prisoners). Known as "death camps," these included: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. All were located in occupied Poland.

**Final Solution** The cover name for the plan to destroy the Jews of Europe- the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." Beginning in December 1941, Jews were rounded up and sent to extermination camps in the East. The program was deceptively disguised as "resettlement in the East."

**fascism** A social and political ideology with the primary guiding principle that the state or nation is the highest priority, rather than personal or individual freedoms.

**Frank, Hans (1900–1946)** Governor-General of occupied Poland from 1939 to 1945. A member of the Nazi Party from its earliest days and Hitler's personal lawyer, he announced, "Poland will be treated like a colony; the Poles will become slaves of the Greater German Reich." By 1942, more than 85% of the Jews in Poland

had been transported to extermination camps. Frank was tried at Nuremberg, convicted, and executed in 1946.

**Fürher** Leader. Adolph Hitler's title in Nazi Germany.

**gas chambers** Large chambers in which people were executed by poison gas. These were built and used in Nazi death camps.

**genocide** The deliberate and systematic destruction of a religious, racial, national, or cultural group.

**gentile** A non-Jewish person

**Gestapo** Acronym of *Geheime Staatspolizei;* Secret State Police. The Prussian and, later the Third Reich's, secret state police and the Nazis' main tool of oppression and destruction, led by Hermann Goring.

**ghetto** The Nazis revived the medieval ghetto in creating their compulsory "Jewish Quarter" *(Wohnbezirk)*. The ghetto was a section of a city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to reside. Surrounded by barbed wire or walls, the ghettos were often sealed so that people were prevented from leaving or entering. Established mostly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Lodz, Warsaw, Vilna, Riga, Minsk), the ghettos were characterized by overcrowding, starvation and forced labor. All were eventually destroyed as the Jews were deported to death camps.

**Goebbels, Joseph (1897–1945)** Hitler's Minister of propaganda and public information. It was at his prompting that all "un-German" books were burned on May 10, 1933. He was also one of the creators of the *"Fuhrer"* myth, an important element in the Nazis' successful plan for support by the masses. He saw the Jews as the enemy of the people, and instigated the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938. As Nazi Germany collapsed in 1945, he and his family committed suicide.

**Goring, Hermann (1893–1946)** An early member of the Nazi party, Goring participated in Hitler's "Beer Hall Putsch" in Munich in 1923 (see HITLER, ADOLF). After its failure, he went to Sweden, where he lived (for a time in a mental institution) until 1927. In 1928, he was elected to the Reichstag and became its president in 1932. When Hitler came into power in 1933, he made Goring Air Minister of Germany and Prime Minister of Prussia. He was responsible for the rearmament program and especially for the creation of the German Air Force. In 1939, Hitler designated him his successor. During World War II, he was virtual dictator of the German economy and was responsible for the total air war waged by Germany. Convicted at Nuremberg in 1946, Goring

committed suicide by taking poison just two hours before his scheduled execution.

**great depression** A deep, worldwide, economic contraction beginning in 1929 which caused particular hardship in Germany which was already reeling from huge reparation payments following World War I and hyperinflation.

**Greater German Reich** Designation of an expanded Germany that was intended to include all German speaking peoples. It was one of Hitler's most important aims. After the conquest of most of Western Europe during World War II, it became a reality for a short time.

**Grynszpan, Herschel (1921–1943?)** A Polish Jewish youth who had emigrated to Paris. He agonized over the fate of his parents who, in the course of a pre-war roundup of Polish Jews living in Germany, were trapped between Germany and Poland and not permitted entry into either country. On November 7, 1938, he went to the German Embassy where he shot and mortally wounded Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath. The Nazis used this incident as an excuse for the *KRISTALLNACHT* (Night of the Broken Glass) pogrom.

**Gypsies *(Roma and Szenti)*** A nomadic people, believed to have come originally from northwest India, from where they immigrated to Persia by the fourteenth century. Gypsies first appeared in Western Europe in the 15th century. By the 16th century, they had spread throughout Europe, where they were persecuted almost as relentlessly as the Jews. The gypsies occupied a special place in Nazi racist theories. It is believed that approximately 500,000 perished during the Holocaust.

**Hess, Rudolf (1894–1987)** Deputy and close associate of Hitler from the earliest days of the Nazi movement. On May 10, 1941, he flew alone from Augsburg and parachuted, landing in Scotland where he was promptly arrested. The purpose of his flight has never become clear. He probably wanted to persuade the British to make peace with Hitler as soon as he attacked the Soviet Union.
Hitler promptly declared him insane. Hess was tried at Nuremberg, found guilty, and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was the only prisoner in Spandau Prison until he apparently com- mitted suicide in 1987.

**Heydrich, Reinhard (1904–1942)** Former naval officer who joined the SS in 1932, after his dismissal from the Navy. He organized the *Einsatzgruppen,* which systematically murdered Jews in occupied Russia during 1941–1942. In 1941, he was asked by Goring to implement a "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." During the

same year he was appointed protector of Bohemia and Moravia. In January 1942, he presided over the *Wannsee* Conference, a meeting to coordinate the "Final Solution." On May 29, 1942, he was assassinated by Czech partisans who parachuted in from England. (For consequences of this assassination, see **LIDICE**).

**Himmler, Heinrich (1900–1945)** Reich leader of the *SS,* head of the *Gestapo* and the *Waffen SS,* minister of the interior, and next to Adolf Hitler, the most powerful man in Nazi Germany. His obsession with "racial purity" led to the idea of killing the Jews. He committed suicide on May 23, 1945, before he could be brought to trial.

**Hindenburg, Paul Von** General Field Marshal who became a German national hero during World War I and was Reich president from 1925–1934.

**Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945)** *Fuhrer und Reichskanzler* (Leader and Reich Chancellor). Although born in Austria, he settled in Germany in 1913. At the outbreak of World War I, Hitler enlisted in the Bavarian Army, became a corporal and received the Iron Cross First Class for bravery. Returning to Munich after the war, he joined the newly formed German Workers Party, which was soon reorganized, under his leadership, as the Nationalist Socialist German Workers Party *(NSDAP).* In November 1923, he unsuccessfully attempted to forcibly bring Germany under nationalist control. When his coup, known as the "Beer-Hall Putsch," failed, Hitler was arrested and sentenced to 5 years in prison. It was during this time that he wrote *Mein Kampf.* Serving only 9 months of his sentence, Hitler quickly reentered German politics and soon outpolled his political rivals in national elections. By this time the western democracies realized that no agreement with Hitler could be honored and World War II had begun. Although initially victorious on all fronts, Hitler's armies began suffering setbacks shortly after the United States joined the war in December 1941. Although the war was obviously lost by early 1945, Hitler insisted that Germany fight to the death.

**Hitler Youth/Hitler Jugend** Was a Nazi youth auxiliary group established in 1926. It expanded during the Third Reich. Membership was compulsory after 1939.

**Holocaust** The destruction of some 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their followers in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Other individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered grievously during this period, but only the Jews were marked for complete and utter annihilation. The term "Holocaust"—literally meaning "a completely burned sacrifice"—tends to suggest a

sacrificial connotation to what occurred. The word *Shoah,* originally in Biblical term meaning widespread disaster, is the modern Hebrew equivalent.

**homophobia** Fear of homosexuals

International Military Tribunal The United States, Great Britain, France, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics charted this Court to prosecute Nazi war criminals.

**Jehovah's Witnesses** A religious sect, originating in the United States, organized by Charles Taze Russell. The Witnesses base their beliefs on the Bible and have no official ministers. Recognizing only the kingdom of God, the Witnesses refuse to salute the flag, to bear arms in war, and to participate in the affairs of government. This doctrine brought them into conflict with National Socialism. They were considered enemies of the state and were relentlessly persecuted.

**Jewish Badge** A distinctive sign which Jews were compelled to wear in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied countries. It often took the form of a yellow Star of David.

Jude "Jew" in German –put on the yellow star of David during the Holocaust

**judenrat** Council of Jewish representatives in communities and ghettos set up by the Nazis to carry out their instructions.

**judenrein** "Cleansed of Jews," denoting areas where all Jews had been either murdered or deported.

**Kapo** Prisoner in charge of a group of inmates in Nazi concentration camps.

**Korczak, Dr. Janusz (1878-1942)** Educator, author, physician, and director of a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. Despite the possibility of personal freedom, he refused to abandon his orphans and went with them to the gas chamber in Treblinka.

**kindertransport** The Kindertransport was set up on the eve of World War II just after Kristallnacht (November 9 and 10, 1938) by the British Cabinet allowing for approximately 10,000 refugee Jewish children to be rescued from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia with the aid of Jewish, British and Quaker relief organizations. The children were permitted entrance into Great Britain between December 1938 and September 1939. Some of the children were sent to foster homes and hostels and others were sent to live on training farms run by the Youth Aliya in Great Britain. Most of the children never saw their parents again. Of the 10,000, it is believed that 20–25% eventually made their way to the U.S. or Canada.

**Kristallnacht (German)** Night of the Broken Glass: pogrom unleashed by the Nazis on November 9–10, 1938. Throughout Germany and Austria, synagogues and other Jewish institutions were burned, Jewish stores were destroyed, and their contents looted. At the same time, approximately 35,000 Jewish men were sent to concentration camps. The "excuse" for this action was the assassination of Ernst vom Rath in Paris by a Jewish teenager whose parents had been rounded up by the Nazis. (see **GRYNSZPAN, HERSCHEL**).

**League of German Girls *(Bund Deutscher Mädel)*** Female counter- part of the Hitler Youth formed in 1927 but not formerly integrated by Hitler until 1932.

**Lebensraum** Meaning "living space," it was a basic principle of Nazi foreign policy. Hitler believed that Eastern Europe wad to be conquered to create a vast German empire for more physical space, a greater population, and new territory to supply food and raw materials.

**Lidice Czech** mining village (pop.700). In reprisal for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazis "liquated" the village in 1942. They shot the men, deported the women and children to concentration camps, razed the village to the ground, and struck its name from the maps. After World War II, a new village was built near the site of the old Lidice, which is now a national park and memorial. (see **HEYDRICH, REINHARD**).

**Lodz City** in western Poland (renamed Litzmannstadt by the Nazis), where the first major ghetto was created in April 1940. By September 1941, the population of the ghetto was 144,000 in an area of 1.6 square miles (statistically, 5.8 people per room). In October 1941, 20,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were sent to the Lodz Ghetto. Those deported from Lodz during 1942 and June-July 1944 were sent to the Chelmno extermination camp. In August-September 1944, the ghetto was liquidated and the remaining 60,000 Jews were sent to Auschwitz.

**Madagascar Plan** A Nazi policy that was seriously considered during the late 1930s and 1940s which would have sent Jews to Madagascar, an island off the southeast coast of Africa. At that time Madagascar was a French colony. Ultimately, it was considered impractical and the plan was abandoned.

**Majdanek** Mass murder camp in eastern Poland. At first, a labor camp for Poles and a POW camp for Russians, it was turned into a gassing center for Jews. Majdanek was liberated by the Red Army

[army of the Soviet Union] in July 1944, but not before 250,000 men, women, and children had lost their lives there.

**master race** Those people called Aryans by the Nazis who would rule for a thousand years; those people of "pure blood."

**Mauthausen 1938** A camp primarily for men, opened in August near Linz in northern Austria, Mauthausen was classified by the SS as a camp of utmost severity. Conditions there were brutal, even by concentration camp standards. Nearly, 125,000 prisoners of various nationalities were either worked or tortured to death at the camp before liberation by American troops who arrived in May 1945.

**Mein Kampf (German)** This autobiographical book (**My Struggle**) by Hitler was written while he was imprisoned in the Landsberg fortress after the "Beer-Hall Putsch" in 1923. In this book, Hitler propounds his ideas, beliefs, and plans for the future of Germany. Everything, including his foreign policy, is permeated by his "racial ideology." The Germans, belonging to the "superior" Aryan race, have a right to "living space" *(Lebensraum)* in the East, which is inhabited by the "inferior" Slavs. Throughout, he accuses Jews of being the source of all evil, equating them with Bolshevism and, at the same time, with international capitalism.
Unfortunately, those people who read the book (except for his admirers) did not take it seriously but considered it the ravings of a maniac. (see **Hitler, Adolf**).

**Mengele, Josef** *SS* physician at Auschwitz, notorious for pseudo-medical experiments, especially on twins and Gypsies. He "selected" new arrivals by simply pointing to the right or the left, thus separating those considered able to work from those who were not. Those too weak or too old to work were sent straight to the gas chambers, after all their possessions, including their clothes, were taken for resale in Germany. After the war, he spent some time in a British internment hospital but disappeared, went underground, escaped to Argentina, and later to Paraguay, where he became a citizen in 1959. He was hunted by Interpol, Israeli agents, and Simon Wiesenthal. In 1986, his body was found in Embu, Brazil.

**musselmann (German)** Concentration camp slang word for a prisoner who had given up fighting for life.

**Nazi Party** Short Term for *Nationalsozialistiche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP), the National Socialist German Workers Party, a right-wing, authoritarian, nationalistic and anti-Semitic political party formed on January 5, 1919 and headed by Adolf Hitler as its leaders from 1921 to 1945.

**Niemoeller, Martin (1892–1984)** German Protestant Pastor who headed the Confessing Church during the Nazi regime. During World War I Niemoeller distinguished himself in the German Navy. He was ordained as a minister in 1924, and in 1931, became pastor of Dahlem parish in Berlin, where his naval fame and his preaching drew large crowds. In 1937, he assumed leadership of the Confessing Church. Subsequently, he was arrested for "malicious attacks on the state," given a token sentence and made to pay a small fine. After he was released, he was re-arrested on direct orders from Adolf Hitler. He spent the next seven years in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps, usually in soli- tary confinement. Despite this, at the beginning of World War II, the patriotic Niemoeller offered his services to the German Navy, but was refused. In 1945, he was released by the Allies, and became an avowed pacifist who supported a neutral, disarmed and unified Germany. The following statement is attributed (but never recorded officially) to Martin Niemoeller and authenticated by Niemoeller's second wife and widow, Sibylle Niemoeller. Taken from the *The Christian Century*, Dec. 14, 1994, v. 111, n. 36, p. 1207(1).

**Night and Fog Decree 1941** Secret order issued by Hitler on December 7, to seize "persons endangering German security" who were to vanish without a trace into night and fog.

Nuremberg Laws 1935 Two anti-Jewish statutes enacted September during the Nazi party's national convention in Nuremberg. The first, the *Reich* Citizenship Law, deprived German Jews of their citizenship and all pertinent, related rights. The second, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, out- lawed marriages of Jews and non-Jews, forbade Jews from employing German females of childbearing age, and prohibited Jews from displaying the German flag. Many additional regulations were attached to the two main statutes, which provided the basis for removing Jews from all spheres of German political, social, and economic life. The Nuremberg Laws carefully established definitions of Jewishness based on bloodlines. Thus, many Germans of mixed ancestry, called *"Mischlinge,"* faced anti-Semitic discrimination if they had a Jewish grandparent.

**Nuremberg Trials** Trials of twenty-two major Nazi figures in Nuremberg, Germany in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

**partisans** Irregular troops engaged in guerilla warfare, often behind enemy lines. During World War II, this term was applied to resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied countries.

**perpetrators** Those who do something that is morally wrong or criminal.

**Plaszow** Concentration camp near Cracow, Poland opened in 1942.

**pogrom** An organized and often officially encouraged massacre of or attack on Jews. The word is derived from two Russian words that mean "thunder."

**prejudice** A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known. In most cases, these opinions are founded on suspicion, intolerance, and the irrational hatred of other races, religions, creeds, or nationalities.

**propaganda** False or partly false information used by a government or political party intended to sway the opinions of the populations

**Protocols of the Elders of Zion** A major piece of anti-Semitic propaganda, compiled at the turn of the century members of the Russian Secret Police. Essentially adapted from a nineteenth century French polemical satire directed against Emperor Napoleon III, substituting Jewish leaders, the Protocols maintained that Jews were plotting world dominion by setting Christian against Christian, corrupting Christian morals and attempting to destroy the economic and political viability of the West. It gained great popularity after World War I and was translated into many languages, encouraging anti-Semitism in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. Long repudiated as an absurd and hateful lie, the book currently has been reprinted and is widely distributed by Neo-Nazis and others.

Rath, Ernst Vom (1909–1938) Third secretary at the German Embassy in Paris who was assassinated on November 7, 1938 by Herschel Grynszpan (see **Grynszpan, Herschel**).

**Ravensbruck** Concentration camp opened for women in 1939.

**Reich** German word for "empire."

**Reichstag** The German Parliament. On February 27, 1933, a staged fire burned the Reichstag building. A month later, on March 23, 1933, the Reichstag approved the Enabling Act which gave Hitler unlimited dictatorial power.

**resistance** The act of resisting, opposing, withstanding rebellion, and attempts to escape.

**resettlement** German euphemism for the deportation of prisoners to killing centers in Poland.

**revisionists** Those who deny that the Holocaust ever happened.

**Righteous Among the Nations** Term applied to those non-Jews who, at the risk of their own lives, saved Jews from their Nazi persecutors.

**Robota, Rosa** Jewish woman who actions culminated in the demolition by contraband explosives of Crematorium IV at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, an action for which she gave up her life. She was apprehended and executed.

**Roosevelt, Franklin Delano** Thirty-second president of the U.S., serving from 1933-1945.

***SA*** (abbreviation: *Sturmabteilung*): the storm troops of the early Nazi party; organized in 1921.

**scapegoat** Person or group of people blamed for crimes committed by others.

**selection** Euphemism for the process of choosing victims for the gas chambers in the Nazi camps by separating them from those considered fit to work (see Mengele, Josef).

**Sennesh, Hannah** A Palestinian Jew of Hungarian descent who fought as a partisan against the Nazis. She was captured at the close of the war and assassinated in Budapest by the Nazis.

**Shoah** The Hebrew word meaning "catastrophe," denoting the catastrophic destruction of European Jewry during World War II. The term is used in Israel, and the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) has designated an official day, called Yom ha-Shoah, as a day of commemorating the Shoah, or Holocaust.

**shtetl** Yiddish term for a small Eastern European Jewish town or village.

**Sobibor** Extermination camp in the Lublin district in Eastern Poland (see **Belzec; Extermination camp**). Sobibor opened in May 1942 and closed one day after a rebellion of the Jewish prisoners on October 14, 1943. At least, 250,000 Jews were killed there.

**Sonderkommando** The term refers to the Jewish slave labor units in extermination camps that removed the bodies of those gassed for cremation or burial.

Star of David A six-pointed star which is a symbol of Judaism. During the Holocaust, Jews throughout Europe were required to wear Stars of David on their sleeves or fronts and backs of their shirts and jackets.

**stereotype** Biased generalizations about a group based on hearsay, opinions, and distorted, preconceived ideas.

**SS** Abbreviations usually written with two lightning symbols for *Schutzstaffel* (Defense Protective Units). Originally organized as

Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a giant organization by Heinrich Himmler. Although various *SS* units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.

**Stalin, Joseph (1922–1953)** Secretary General of the Communist party and Premier of the USSR from 1941–1953 during the Second World War. Life under Stalin's brutally oppressive regime was hard and often dangerous.

**St. Louis** The steamship St. Louis was a refugee ship that left Hamburg in the spring of 1939, bound for Cuba. When the ship arrived, only 22 of the 1128 refugees were allowed to disembark. Initially, no country, including the United States was willing to accept the others. The ship finally returned to Europe where most of the refugees were finally granted entry into England, Holland, France and Belgium.

**Streicher, Julius** Nazi politician who, among other positions was the founder and editor of *Der Sturmer*. Streicher specialized in anti-Semitism and was one of the chief proponents of the Nuremberg Laws. He was one of the major Nazi figures to be tried by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. He was sentenced and executed on October 16, 1946.

Struma Name of a boat carrying 769 Jewish refugees which left Romania late in 1941. It was refused entry to Palestine or Turkey, and was tugged out to the Black Sea where it sank in February 1942, with the loss of all on board except one.

**Der Sturmer** (The Attacker) An anti-Semitic German weekly, founded and edited by Julius Streicher, which was published in Nuremberg between 1923 and 1945.

**Sudetenland** Formerly Austrian German-speaking territories in Bohemia which were incorporated into Czechoslovakia after World War I.

**survivors** Persons who survived persecution at the hands of the Nazis from 1933–1945.

**swastika** An ancient symbol appropriated by the Nazis as their emblem.

**Terezin (Czech)** Established in early 1942 outside Prague as a "model" ghetto, Terezin was not a sealed section of town, but rather an eighteenth-century Austrian garrison. It became a Jewish town, governed and guarded by the *SS*. When the deportations from central Europe to the extermination camps began in the spring of 1942, certain groups were initially excluded: invalids; partners in a mixed marriage, and their children; and prominent

Jews with special connections. These were sent to the ghetto in Terezin. They were joined by old and young Jews from the Protectorate, [area of Bohemia and Moravia occupied by the Germans] and, later, by small numbers of prominent Jews from Denmark and Holland. Its large barracks served as dormitories for communal living; they also contained offices, workshops, infirmaries, and communal kitchens. The Nazis used Terezin to deceived public opinion. They tolerated a lively cultural life of theatre, music, library, lectures, art and sports. Thus, it could be shown to officials of the International Red Cross. In reality, however, Terezin was only a station on the road to the extermination camps; about 88,000 were deported to their deaths in the East. In April 1945, only 17,000 Jews remained in Terezin, where they were joined by 14,000 Jewish concentration camp prisoners, evacuated from camps threatened by the Allied armies. On May 8, 1945, Terezin was liberated by the Red Army. (see **BAECK, LEO**).

**Third Reich** Meaning "third regime or empire," the Nazi designation of Germany and its regime from 1933-45. Historically, the First Reich was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806. The Second Reich included the German Empire from 1871–1918.

**Treaty of Versailles** Germany and the Allies signed a peace treaty at the end of World War I. The United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy negotiated the treaty at the Peace Conference held in Versailles beginning on January 18, 1919. The German Republic government which replaced the imperial administration was excluded from the deliberations. The treaty created the Covenant of the League of Nations, outlines Germany's disarmament, exacted massive reparation payments from Germany, and forced Germany to cede large tracts of territory to various European nation-states.

**Treblinka** Extermination camp in Northeast Poland (see **EXTERMINATION CAMP**). Established in May 1942, along the Warsaw-Bialystok railway line, 870,000 people were murdered there. The camp operated until the fall of 1943 when the Nazis destroyed the entire camp in an attempt to conceal all traces of their crimes.

**typhus** An acute infections disease transmitted by lice or fleas. Anne Frank died of typhus.

**Umschlagplatz (German)** Collection point. It was a square in the Warsaw Ghetto where Jews were rounded up for deportation to Treblinka.

**underground** Organized group acting in secrecy to oppose government, or, during war, to resist occupying enemy forces.

Volk The concept of Volk (people, nation, or race) has been an underlying idea in German history since the early nineteenth century. Inherent in the name was a feeling of superiority of German culture and the idea of a universal mission for the German people.

**Wannsee** Lake near Berlin where the Wannsee Conference was held to discuss and coordinate the "Final Solution." It was attended by many high-ranking Nazis, including Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann.

**Wallenberg, Raoul (1912–19??)** Swedish diplomat who, in 1944, went to Hungary on a mission to save as many Jews as possible by handing out Swedish papers, passports and visas. He is credited with saving the lives of a least 30,000 people. After the liberation of Budapest, he was mysteriously taken into custody by the Russians and his fate remains unknown.

**Warsaw Ghetto** Established in November 1940, the ghetto, surrounded by a wall, confined nearly 500,000 Jews. Almost 45,000 Jews died there in 1941 alone, due to overcrowding, forced labor, lack of sanitation, starvation, and disease. From April 19 to May 16, 1943, a revolt took place in the ghetto when the Germans, commanded by General Jurgen Stroop, attempted to raise the ghetto and deport the remaining inhabitants to Treblinka. The uprising, led by Mordecai Anielewicz, was the first instance in occupied Europe of an uprising by an urban population. (See **Anielewicz, Mordecai**).

**Wehrmacht** The combined armed forces of Germany from 1935–1945.

**Weimar Republic** The German republic, and experiment in democracy (1919–1933), was established after the end of World War I.

**Wiesenthal, Simon (1908-2005)** Famed Holocaust survivor who has dedicated his life since the war to gathering evidence for the prosecution of Nazi war criminals. (see p.49).

Zionism Political and cultural movement calling for the return of the Jewish people to their Biblical home in Israel (Palestine).

**Zy-Klon B** (Hydrogen cyanide) Pesticide used in some of the gas chambers at the death camps.

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## ANNOTATED HOLOCAUST BOOKLIST

**Bachrach, Susan. Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust**

The story of the Holocaust as presented at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington using themes and artifacts along with sidebar stories of twenty young people who suffered or died during the Holocaust.

**Borowski, Tadeusz. This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen**

A collection of short stories describing the author's experiences at Dachau and Auschwitz focusing on the atmosphere and its effect on people.

**Drucker, Malka and Michael Halperin. Jacob's Rescue: A Holocaust Story**

Based on a true story. Two brothers who were rescued from Warsaw Ghetto and hidden by a non-Jewish family. It portrays the fear of Jacob and his brother and the risks and sacrifices of their rescuers.

**Holliday, Laurel. Children in the Holocaust and in World War II: Their Diaries**

An anthology of diaries written by children all across Europe. Some survived and others did not. Twenty-three young people, ages 10 to 18, recount their stories.

**Koehn, Ilse. Mischling, Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany**

When Ilse discovers that, as a result of the Nuremberg Laws, she is a Mischling, second degree, or a person with one Jewish grandparent, her life is turned upside down.

**Levi, Primo. Survival in Auschwitz**

The author was an Italian who spent almost two years in Auschwitz and chronicles the daily activities and his inner reactions to them, showing how both can destroy one completely.

**Lowry, Lois. Number the Stars**

Story which takes place in Denmark where Ellen Rosen, a young Jewish girl, is to be relocated to Sweden along with all other Jews. Her best friend, who is not Jewish, shows the courage to assist the family to safety in neutral Sweden.

**Marks, Jane. The Hidden Children**

The author tells the stories of a number of people who survived the war because they were hidden. Each story is different and uplifting in its own way.

**Matas, Carol. Lisa's War**

After the invasion of Denmark by the Nazis in 1940, 12 year old Lisa joins the resistance with her brother. This is a story of how difficult life became for Lisa and her family.

**Matas, Carol. Chris' War**

Sequel to Lisa's War. Lisa and her family have escaped and now Chris who is in love with Lisa is left behind as a part of the resistance. This story tells how he manages to escape and evade the Nazis.

**Meltzer, Milton. Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust**

Through eyewitness accounts including letters, diaries, journals, etc., this book deals with the history of anti-Semitism, the progress of Nazi persecution, the resistance of Jews and "why remember."

**Meltzer, Milton. Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews**

This is the story of non-Jews who had the courage to resist. The stories are thrilling and terrifying, but they show that human decency did still exist.

**Fersen-Osten, Renee. Don't They Know the World Stopped Breathing**

This is the autobiographical story of a French child who was hidden in a monastery, separated from her parents, during the war. It is told in both prose and poetry as it describes the young girl's anger and sadness.

**The Devil in Vienna by Doriz Orgel**

Based on the author's own experience in Vienna in 1937-38. Story of a young Jewish girl, Inge, and her best friend who is a member of Hitler's Youth and how they try to maintain their friendship during this period.

**The Shawl by Cynthia Ozick**

Brief but unforgettable. Two stories—the first tells the story of a mother witnessing the death of her baby at the hands of Nazi guards. The second, describes the same mother 30 years later still haunted by the event.

**The Upstairs Room by Johanna Reiss**

It is the true story of the survival of two Dutch Jewish girls hidden in a farmhouse throughout the years of Nazi occupation.

**Friedrich by Hans Peter Richter**

The tragic story of a young Jewish boy in Germany in the 1930s, seen through the eyes of a friend. It tells of the destruction of an

entire Jewish family while tracing the history of anti-Jewish laws and regulations from 1933–1945.

**The Cage by Ruth Sender**

The story of the author's experiences in Poland before the Nazi invasion to the Lodz ghetto and finally to Auschwitz—a graphic and dramatic tale.

**To Life by Ruth Sender**

Sequel to The Cage, which continues her story from liberation to the displaced persons camps and finally to the United States.

**Upon the Head of a Goat: A Childhood in Hungary by Aranka Siegel**

The author tells the story of her childhood—the story of Hungarian Jews and the changes in their lives with the rise of anti- Semitism. The book deals with the five-year period leading up to her deportation to Auschwitz.

**Grace in the Wilderness by Aranka Siegel**

The sequel to Upon the Head of a Goat in which the author tells of her experiences with her sister during the years after the liberation. She includes flashbacks of their time in the camps.

**Journey to the Golden Door by Jay Sommer**

The story of a poor Polish boy and his survival during the war and his coming to America after the war.

**Night by Elie Wiesel**

The classic account of a boy's experiences during the Holocaust from the terror in his hometown to his arrival and subsequent survival in Auschwitz.

## HOLOCAUST WEB SITE DIRECTORY

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
*http://www.ushmm.org*

A Learning Site for Students
*ushmm.org/outreach*

Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto
*ushmm.org/kovno/index.htm/*

Voyage of the St. Louis
*ushmm.org/stlouis/index.htm/*

Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons 1945–1951
*ushmm.org/dp/*

Cybrary of the Holocaust
*http://www.remember.org/*

Simon Wiesenthal Center's Multimedia Learning Center
*http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/*

Ghetto Fighters House
*http://www.gth,org.il/*

YadVashem
*http://yad-vashem.org.il/*

A Teachers Guide to the Holocaust
*http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/default.htm*

Anti Defamation League
*http://www.adl.org*

Yale Avalon Project
*http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm*

**CD–ROMS**

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust (USHMM)

Survivors: Testimonies of the Holocaust (Shoah Foundation)

## REFERENCES
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# Teaching the Holocaust to Middle-School Students
## A Suitcase Full of Dynamic and Interactive Ideas for Unforgettable Lessons

Rachel Raz

Israel

**Abstract**

There are several objectives and particular challenges when teaching the event of the Holocaust to middle-school students, some of them are unique to this age group. One such challenge can actually become a foundation for a meaningful and powerful experience, if addressed properly. I present here a variety of dynamic, interactive, and meaningful activities, which use the interests and the developmental stage of the students to achieve these objectives and to overcome the challenges.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 1 discusses the objectives, the challenges and the general approach to teaching the Holocaust to middle-school students. Section 2 describes an example of interactive activities for dynamic lessons. In Section 3 many more ideas for interactive activities are briefly described. Finally, a summary is given in Section 4.

# 1. Introduction

### *The Objectives*

Teaching the event of the Holocaust to middle-school students has three main objectives to be achieved. First, students should learn the **history** of the event. Second, they should **remember** the victims (ZACHOR). A third, objective (unique to this age group) is to examine how the events of the Holocaust relate to the students **personally,** in their lives and their communities today.

### *The Challenges and General Solutions*

There are many challenges involved in teaching middle-school students. Two challenges are of particular relevance when teaching the Holocaust. On the one hand, students have short attention spans; and on the other hand, they are focused on finding and developing their own identities. These two characteristics and challenges can be turned into part of the solution, if addressed correctly. Furthermore, they help with effective learning and internalization of the material.

To handle the first challenge, a lesson should contain a wide range of dynamic activities. The second challenge can be address by personalizing the events; by studying the decisions and acts of other people, by learning about their own family history, and by self-experience in class.

Examples of this are given in the following sections.

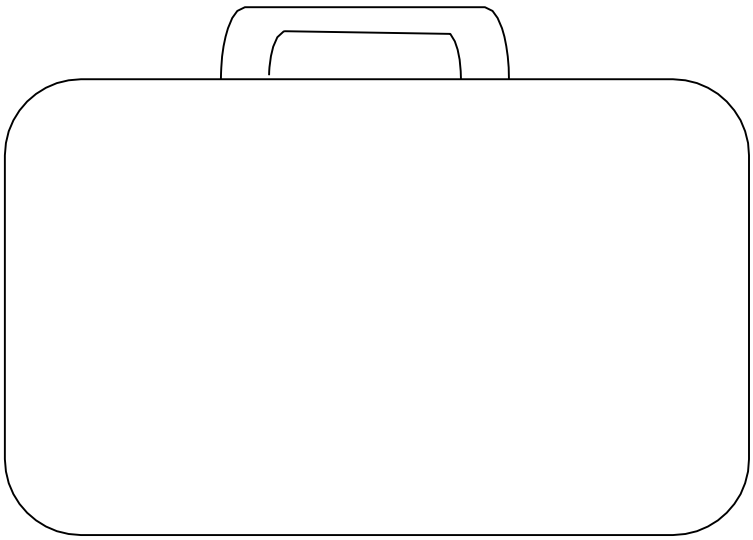
## 2. Interactive Activities for Dynamic Lessons

### *Example Lesson: Introduction to Life in the Ghettos.*

#### The Suitcase

Here we discuss a specific example of an interactive activity for one particular dynamic lesson.

An actual empty suitcase is brought to the classroom to make this activity more realistic. Students receive a worksheet with a picture of an empty suitcase and are asked to write or draw the objects they choose to take with them to an unknown place; without any idea of where they are going and for how long. Then a timer is set for 10 minutes.



After the time is up, a class discussion is held.

**Some Lead Questions for Discussion:**

What will you take with you, and why?

How does it feel to be under such a time limit and such pressure?

What did you feel when you were asked to pack those items?

What do you think that people felt when they had to leave their home?

**Reading Diaries of Teenagers Who Lived in the Ghetto**

To get a sense of how people felt in the ghettos, use the following activities (one or both can be used), following the suitcase activity.

Read together, out loud, from diaries, written by teenagers, about their life in the ghettos, and their physical and emotional conditions there. The story of Yitskhok Rudashevski from Vilna Ghetto is one of many that can be found in the book *Salvaged Pages, Young writers' diaries of the Holocaust*, by Alexandra Zapruder. Other fascinating diaries can be used in this lesson. Yitskhok began writing his diary when he approached his fifteenth birthday. He wrote about his academic pursuits and of how he sees himself contributing to the intellectual and literary life of the Ghetto. On September 1943, the liquidation of the ghetto began. He and his family went into hiding; later on, the family was found and taken to Ponar, where they were shot to death. His friend, who survived, returned to the hiding place where she discovered the diary.

* In class selected parts can be read, for example:

*Monday the 5th [October 1942]*

Finally I have lived to see the day. Today we go to school. The day passed quite differently. Lessons, subjects. Both sixth classes were combined. There is a happy spirit in school. Finally the club too was opened. My own life is shaping up in quite different way! We waste less time, the day divided and flies by very quickly…Yes, that is how it should be in the ghetto, the day should fly by and we should not waste time.

*Saturday the 17th [October 1942]*

I go out into the street-there is a disturbance near a bakery. A woman has snatched a pot from the bakery and has run away. She was pursued and beaten. It aroused a feeling of disgust in me. How terribly sad! People are grabbing morsels from each other's mouths. I am overcome with pity for the hungry woman, how she is being insulted with the dirtiest words, how they beat her. I think: what peculiarly ugly things occur in the ghetto! On one hand, the ugliness of stealing a pot of food, and on the other to strike a woman crudely in the face because she is probably hungry.

*Sunday the 18th [October 1942]*

A historic day in the ghetto. People are moving to added "districts," Oshmene Alley. People can walk freely in the new courtyards.[…]I go over the new "districts."[…] I have a pleasant feeling crawling over the few new courtyards, seeing new places, the large ghetto brick walls that have just been built, what a pleasure! A simple emotion of a prisoner, who has found another new corner in his cell. He examines it and is pleased for the moment: to discover something new lying in his cell.[…]

…I make the first round in the ghetto, a second, a third, and I soon feel the same prison, only a little larger as if someone were teasing us […]

*While reading, the class can discuss the atmosphere, events and feelings on different days.

**From the book …*I never saw another butterfly*… read the poem *Homesick***

*I've lived in the ghetto here for more than a year,*
*In Terezin, in the black town now,*
*And when I remember my old home so dear, I*
*can love it more than I did, somehow.*

*Ah, home, home,*
*Why did they tear me away? Here*
*the weak die easy as feather*
*And when they die, they die forever.*

*I'd like to go back home again,*
*It makes me think of sweet spring flowers.*
*Before, when I used to live at home,*
*It never seemed so dear and fair.*

*I remember now those golden days…*
*But maybe I'll be going there soon again.*

*People walk along the street,*
*You see at once on each you meet*
*That there's ghetto here,*
*A place of evil and of fear.*
*There's little to eat and much to want,*
*Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.*
*But no one must give up!*
*The world turns and times change.*

*Yet we all hope the time will come*
*When we'll go home again.*
*Now I know how dear it is*
*And often I remember it.*

**Discussion**

Discuss the poem with the students. How do they feel about their homes? Do they sometime feel like they want to go as far as they can? How do they feel after reading this poem? Do they see their home in a different way? How so?

### *How Objectives Were Met and Challenges Overcome in this Lesson*

In this lesson the three main objectives can be achieved. The students learn about the history and the life in the Ghetto. From the diaries they remember the victims, and by the "suitcase packing" they experience (albeit mildly) for themselves some of the feelings and the pressures that were involved at this terrible time. Likewise, in this lesson the students are involved in three activities. This helps deal with the short attention span problem. Finally, from this experience they learn about their own lives, and how such events relate to themselves.

## 3. More Ideas for Interactive Activities:

1. **Picture books.** A story can be read as an opening to a new topic or discussion. For example, the following books: *Terrible Things* (An allegory of the Holocaust) by Eve Bunting; and *The Yellow Star, The legend of King Christian X of Denmark*, by Carmen Agra Deedy.
2. **Video tapes.** Videos are a wonderful resource. A large variety of genres are available, and in class they can be used either in full length or by selecting parts. For example: Documentary movies about Kristalnacht, Adolph Hitler's biography, the life in ghettos, Ghetto Warsaw uprising; or fiction movies like The *devils arithmetic, Life is beautiful, The writing on the wall; or* Art movies like *Der Hzter Lubliner* (the last Jew in Loblin) and testimonies of survivals or witness such as *The courage to care*, to name just a few.
3. **Individual projects.** Students can do research about one individual or one group who lived at the time of the Holocaust. Next, they design a poster with the information, followed by a presentation to the entire class. Example for such project subjects include: Mordechai anielewicz, Janusz Korczak, Anne Frank, the Kinder Transport,

the Danish Rescue, and Partisans. In these types of projects students deepen their learning and are responsible to relay their knowledge to their peers.

4. **Group projects.** Similar to the Individual projects but done in a group.
5. **Reading from diaries.** The Diary of Anne Frank is a famous one and it can be used for this activity. There are many others, as I mentioned before the book *Salvaged Pages, Young writers' diaries of the Holocaust*, by Alexandra Zapruder, is a collection of diaries. By reading from diaries two main objectives can be accomplished; first, students learn about the life and thoughts of the individuals, and second, they learn about the situation during this time period in general.
6. **Discussions.** Discussion should play a major role in teaching the Holocaust for middle-school students. Students like to be challenged, to think, and to express their own point of view. For example, while teaching the Nuremberg laws, students can be asked to make their own laws before starting to learn about the actual laws that where passed in 1935. Then, while learning about the actual laws, ask the students what can they learn from each law. Examples include: the forbidding of mixed marriages indicate that mixed marriages were common between Jews and Arians; forbidding of employing maids under the age 45 shows that Jews were well heeled and it was common to have maids in their houses.
7. **Old photos.** Photos can be brought from books or by students (if they have a family that lived in Europe before and during the Holocaust). These can be used in several ways. For example, From some photos students can learn about the life before the Holocaust. From others about life in the ghettos, concentration camps, and more. (Photos can be downloaded from the websites of Yad-Vashem and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.)
8. **Poems written by victims.** The book *I never saw another butterfly,* which contains children's drawings and poems from Terezin Concentration Camp (1942-1944) is an exceptional collection that can be used to read out loud in class or to be illustrated by students, or as a reflection of the life and thoughts that occupied the writers' minds.
9. **Art-work of victims.** For example: The book, *David Olère--The Eyes of a Witness,* published by The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation in Paris in 1989. Olère's pencil sketches and color paintings capture the everyday events in the concentration camps during the Holocaust. There are also portraits of some Nazi soldiers and layouts of the crematoriums. The work of David Olère has exceptional documentary value. No

photographs were taken at Auschwitz of what went on in the gas chambers and crematoria. Only the memories of Olère, reproduced as art in his drawings and paintings, give an account of the horrible reality. He was the first to draw the plans and cross-sections of the crematories in order to explain exactly how the Nazis ran their death factory. He did not sketch for pleasure while at Auschwitz; there he was forced to work as an illustrator and to write and decorate letters for the SS.


10. **Art about the Holocaust.** Samual Bak is one of many artists that choose to express in their art work their feelings and thoughts about the Holocaust. Samuel Bak is a survivor of the Holocaust and for many years he painted subject surrounding the Holocaust. The following painting *The ghetto*, as Samuel Bak explains it is "An inclined surface with no horizon and no possibility of escape. Indeed, when we were thrown into the ghetto like human garbage, it felt like being in a deep hole. This hole is in the shape of the Star of David, the emblem of the ghetto. Near it lies our badge of identification."

A painting such as the above or others can be used as part of a class about the life in the ghetto or as part of a class about art. Students can also try to make their own art after being inspired by other artists.

11. **Create art work about the holocaust.** This activity can follow a class about art from or about the Holocaust, or after a lesson about the life in the ghetto. Students can make art from the point of view of people in the ghettos or as outsiders. A large variety of material can be used, paint, water colors, pencils, crayon and so on. By using this activity students can express their understanding in a unique way.
12. **Make a memorial for the Holocaust.** This activity can follow a visit to a Holocaust memorial, after looking at photos or slides of Holocaust memorial around the world, or before doing one of the above. The students can design and build their own memorials, and exhibit them at the school. This exhibit, for example, can add to Yom Ha'Shoah ceremonies.
13. **Class library.** A lending library helps to expend the learning out of the class. There are many books. Here is a short list of books that can be the beginning of such a class library: *The cage* by Ruth Minsky Sender; *Of Heroes, Hooks, and heirlooms*, by Faye Silton; *Number the stars*, by Lois Lowry; *Stones in Water*, by Donna Jo Napoli; The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen; *Friedrich* by Hans Peter Richter; *Until we meet again* by Michael Korenblit and Kathleen Janger*; Escape from the Holocaust* by Kenneth Roseman.
14. **Maps.** Maps of Europe before and during World War II, Maps of concentration camps, ghettos, death camp and more. By using maps students can identify the places which

they are learning about and they can attain a deeper understanding of the development of the war and the Holocaust.

15. **Timelines.** Timelines helps put the mass of information in order and enables individuals to have a better understanding and fuller perspective of the matter being learned**.** Timelines can be made by the students about various topics. For example, timelines of the milestone events of the Holocaust, resistance in Europe, the development of the war in Europe (to learn about the effect on the Jews in these countries). Students can also receive timelines from the teacher and then will be asked to choose from it the events relevant for their work. The timeline can be displayed on a poster or on a worksheet and used for a presentation in front of the class. (Timelines of the Holocaust can be found in many books and on the websites of Yad-Vashem and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C)
16. **A visit to a Holocaust memorial in your area.** Find out where is the nearest Holocaust memorial in your area and visit there with the class. A memorial service can be held at the memorial. Many times guided tours are available.
17. **A visit to a Holocaust museum.**
18. **Memorial service for Yom Hashoah**. A proposal for a service can be found at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C or at your local Consulate General of Israel. You can also make your own ceremony. For example: Light a memorial candle, read El Male Rahamim (for the martyrs of the Holocaust), Yizkor, Kadish, poems, songs, etc.
19. **Invite a guest survivor to speak in class**. This can be the most powerful activity. Meeting a real person who was witness to the Holocaust can be stronger than any other lesson.

**These are only a few of many activities that can enrich any lesson about the History of the Holocaust.** A list of web sites and other useful resources is given at the end of this paper.

# 4. Summary

By teaching the event of the Holocaust to middle-school students, three main objectives are met and some challenges are overcome. At this developmental stage of the students' lives a unique objective can be achieved. Students can personalize and internalize the events. Moreover, this experience can take part in the modeling of their personality and identity. All of this can be achieved only by using interactive and dynamic activities such as those presented in this work.

I hope that you will find this material beneficial in your future work.

**Resources**

Two of the finest, most complete bibliographies of books and videos are available through:

**U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum**

100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW

Washington, D.C. 20004

www.ushmm.org

**Yad Vashem**

Jerusalem

Israel

www.yadvashem.org

**More information can be found on the following websites:**

1. www.ushmm.org United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
2. www.facinghistory.org Facing History and ourselves
3. www.yadvashem.org Yad Vashem Jerusalem Israel
4. www.auschwitz.org
5. www.chgs.umn.edu The center for the Holocaust, University of Minnesota
6. www.mjhnyc.org Museum of Jewish heritage, NY
7. www.gfh.org.il The Ghetto fighter house
8. www.annefrank.com Anne Frank center U.S.A