

GETTING STARTED GUIDE: **TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST**



UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM



INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR A GETTING STARTED GUIDE

A First Book survey distributed to educators serving children in need nationwide revealed significant findings about Holocaust awareness and education:

40 PERCENT
of educators reported their students are not familiar with the Holocaust.

86 PERCENT
of educators have not received any professional development related to Holocaust education.

67 PERCENT
of educators currently teach about the Holocaust or would like to, but only

42 PERCENT
feel adequately prepared to do so.

Source: Holocaust Education in Low-Income Classrooms, December 2021

THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IS PRESERVED IN PRIMARY SOURCES AND COMPELLING

SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES that add depth to our understanding of these terrible events. In First Book's network survey, educators shared that barriers to teaching about the Holocaust range from having the time to find and evaluate lessons and other educational resources to handling the graphic nature and emotional weight of the topic.

Despite these challenges, educators emphasized the importance of teaching about the Holocaust with historical accuracy so that students understand what led to the Holocaust and what types of political and civic actions may be required of countries and individuals to prevent future atrocities.

Cover photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



As the most extensively documented crime the world has ever seen, the Holocaust offers an unmatched case study in how societies fall apart, in the immutability of human nature, in the dangers of unchecked state power. It is more than European or Jewish history. It is human history.

Edna Friedberg, Ph.D.,
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

In response to this interest, First Book worked with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) to create a getting started guide designed to support Holocaust education.

Many resources educators need to start teaching about the Holocaust—or to enhance existing Holocaust education—are provided in the following pages. These resources come directly from the wide breadth of available materials offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the nation’s memorial and institution dedicated to education about the Holocaust.

This resource is intended primarily for educators teaching students in grades 7–12. Students in middle school and above are developmentally prepared to empathize with the individuals who experienced the Holocaust as well as understand the complex history and scope of events. Younger students may not be able to grasp how individual experiences relate to the larger historical context.

In this guide, you will find:

A DEFINITION OF THE HOLOCAUST

**RATIONALES FOR STUDYING
THE HOLOCAUST**

A CURATED SELECTION OF LESSON PLANS

**TIPS ON HOW TO ADDRESS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**ADVICE ON MAKING HISTORICAL
CONNECTIONS TO CURRENT EVENTS**

**AN APPENDIX THAT INCLUDES
GUIDELINES, DEFINITIONS, AND
ADDITIONAL EDUCATOR RESOURCES**

*United States Holocaust
Memorial Museum*

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust. The Museum works to keep Holocaust memory alive while inspiring citizens and leaders to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

DEFINING THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma, people with disabilities, Poles, and others were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including gay men, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny. Learn more about the victims of the Holocaust [here](#).

For a more detailed chronology of this time period, refer to the Museum's [visual timeline overview](#) and this [seven-minute video](#) that describes the course of both World War II and the Holocaust.

TIMELINE

1933

The Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany.

1935

German Jews were stripped of their German citizenship.

1938

The Nazis launched a wave of violent attacks on Jewish synagogues, homes, and businesses, known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass.

1939

Germany invaded Poland and World War II began.

1941

The Nazis began to systematically murder Jews, including men, women, and children, as part of the "Final Solution."

1945

Nazi Germany was defeated, and World War II ended. By this date, the Nazis and their collaborators had murdered approximately six million Jews.

WHY STUDY THE HOLOCAUST

“The Holocaust was not inevitable. Learning about this history encourages critical thinking about the dangers of unchecked antisemitism and hate, the consequences of indifference, and the fragility of societies.”

Statement from the United States
Holocaust Museum

The Holocaust was a watershed event in human history, and there are multiple valid rationales for studying this complex period in our collective past. First Book educators reported that their main goals around Holocaust education include developing students’ social-emotional skills (e.g., respect for people from different cultures, a sense of responsibility to take action against injustice, and empathy toward others); ensuring that students understand that the Holocaust was a real event; helping students reflect on the danger of “othering”; and encouraging students to contemplate the difference between standing by and taking action.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests that students study the Holocaust to learn about how and why it happened; to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and nations when confronting the abuse of power, civil and human rights violations, and genocidal acts; and to provide context for students to explore the fears, pressures, and motivations that influenced the decisions and behaviors of individuals during



Action is the only remedy to indifference: the most insidious danger of all.

Elie Wiesel (Excerpt from Wiesel’s
Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech)

Educating myself about the Holocaust has been a priority in my life. I emphasize to my students that knowing and learning about the Holocaust will empower them to help prevent anything like this from happening again.

First Book Educator (Holocaust Education in Low-Income Classrooms Survey, December 2021)



the Holocaust. In addition, the Museum highlights that a study of the Holocaust can increase students’ understanding of important concepts such as:

- **Democratic institutions are fragile.** Maintaining democratic values requires that citizens understand, appreciate, nurture, and protect them.
- **The Holocaust was not inevitable, and it was not an accident.** Individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that allowed prejudice, hatred, legalized discrimination, and genocide to occur.
- **Inaction and silence played a significant role in allowing the Holocaust to happen.** Ignoring the suffering of others and the violation of their civil rights can cause prejudice and hatred to go unchecked and lead to legalized discrimination and genocide.

After studying the Holocaust, students should understand how and why the Holocaust happened and the human and institutional vulnerabilities it exposed. Reflecting on these enduring lessons will encourage students to contemplate their own roles and responsibilities as well as those of other individuals, groups, and governments.

HOW TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES

The Holocaust is an immense topic—in its horror, scale, and significance for future generations.

Despite this complexity, the resources provided here can prepare you to design your lesson and choose the topics and approaches responsibly.

However, to honor the legacies of survivors and their families and share the stories of individuals and communities with accuracy and sensitivity, educators should review these important guidelines and best practices.

Step 1.

Read or review the Museum's Introduction to the Holocaust.

Step 2.

Read or review the Museum's Guidelines, which are listed below and explained with examples in the Appendix. It may also be helpful to listen to Holocaust educators discuss the guidelines, and the reasons behind them.

These guidelines were developed to help you individualize instruction to meet classroom and student needs:

- Define the term “Holocaust.”
- The Holocaust was not inevitable.
- Avoid simple answers to complex questions.
- Strive for precision of language.
- Strive to balance the perspectives that inform your study of the Holocaust.
- Avoid comparisons of pain.
- Avoid romanticizing history.
- Contextualize the history.
- Translate statistics into people.
- Make responsible methodological choices.

“

Holocaust education reveals that debates we are having today are not new — that there are enduring questions that all societies must grapple with — and that it matters more than ever that people understand the past and what decisions were made so that we can think about our own choices and responsibilities today.

Gretchen Skidmore,
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Step 3.

Develop or review your rationale for teaching the Holocaust.

A strong rationale will help you focus on the key facts and concepts you would like to share with your students and will also help with curricular decisions.

The Museum recommends these questions as a starting point for developing your rationale:

- What are the most fundamental topics/aspects of the Holocaust? Why do you consider them important?
- Why is the topic relevant to your students?
- There are many other genocides. Why are you focusing on the Holocaust?

Your rationale may change from year to year based on the course(s) you teach and/or the specific needs and interests of your students. Use the following sample rationales provided by the Museum as a starting point or to refine your existing rationale. Keep in mind that there are many valid ways and reasons to teach about the Holocaust, and these are some suggestions.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO STUDYING THE HOLOCAUST

Just as there are many rationales for teaching about the Holocaust, there may be a range of emotional responses from students. Everyone processes this history differently, and educators can be sensitive to different levels of awareness, interest, and emotions among students. Although students may express a range of emotions, lessons can emphasize the universal dangers of hate and indifference.

I teach my students about the Holocaust because I want my students to...

- Know that the Holocaust was a watershed event—not only in the twentieth century but in the entire history of humanity.
- Understand the *how* and *why* of the Holocaust, including the key historical, philosophical, social, political, and military trends and events that led up to the Holocaust.
- Reflect on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and nations and how they relate to civil and human rights violations and genocide.
- Consider the fears, pressures, and motivations that caused individuals to act—or not act—in certain ways.
- Understand the role of silence and indifference in allowing incremental increases in suffering, discrimination, and persecution to culminate in genocide.
- Explore the historical connections between World War II and the Holocaust.
- Understand the importance of antisemitism and racism in Nazi ideology and their impact on the events of the Holocaust.

Learn more about developing your rationale for teaching about the Holocaust on the [USHMM website](#).

Step 4.

Select your teaching materials.

The [USHMM website](#) offers introductory lessons about the Holocaust as well as thematic lessons and resources that explore key topics like propaganda, the role of individuals, and racism and antisemitism. These lessons were developed by Museum educators and historians and may be used as is or modified to suit curricular and classroom needs. In the following section, First Book provides a curated selection of the Museum's resources to help you get started.

LESSONS & OTHER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The Museum offers many lessons and activities as well as a wealth of videos, photos, survivor testimonies, encyclopedia articles, and more. This section is intended as a starting point to help educators find the most appropriate resources based on their curricular goals and the needs of their students.

Educators in the First Book Network reported uncertainty around how to prioritize the many facets of Holocaust education given the topic's scope and complexity. In response, First Book worked with the Museum's educators to select foundational lessons that can be used in many contexts and classes as well as specialized lessons about topics educators cited as relevant to the interests and needs of their students. These topics include Nazi racism, collaboration and complicity, antisemitism, and the concept of "othering." In the Additional Resources section, the Museum prioritized formats that students will find accessible and engaging, such as interactive exhibits, survivor testimony, photos, and video.

The following categories are included in this section:

[New to Teaching the Holocaust](#)

[In-Depth Exploration](#)

[Lessons & Resources for English Teachers](#)

[Lessons & Resources for History Teachers](#)

[Additional Resources:](#)

[Media Resources](#)

[Online Exhibitions](#)

[Survivor Testimony](#)

[Resources in Spanish & Other Languages](#)

MODIFICATIONS & ACCOMMODATIONS

First Book educators reported a need for lessons that can be modified to suit a range of abilities. To provide a starting point for teachers of various disciplines and grade levels, and for students with differing abilities, Museum resources include features to promote accessibility and differentiation:

Modifications & Accommodations

- A section before the instructional sequence in most lessons reviews options for modifications and accommodations, including graphic organizers, student interactives, and handouts that can be printed or viewed online. Key terms are provided for most lessons.
- Flexibility is built into lessons so educators can assign lessons as individual or group work and adapt the content for think-pair-share, jigsaw, and other strategies that enhance engagement.

Accessible Design

- The [Holocaust Narrative through Historical Photos](#), as well as other lessons, relies on interaction between images and text.
- These thirty student-facing [online lessons](#), including accompanying PDF handouts and interactives, are compatible with screen readers. Alternative text is also included for images.

This section includes a selection of lessons offered on the USHMM website, tailored to the needs and interests of the educators in the First Book Network. See a complete list of the Museum's lesson plans [here](#). To request information about a topic or type of resource not found on the USHMM website, complete the museum's [request form](#) for personalized assistance.

NEW TO TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST

Below are lessons for teachers who are new to teaching about the Holocaust or are seeking lessons that can be implemented without existing foundational historical knowledge. Unless noted, the following content is appropriate for students in grades 7 through 12.

| Title | Description | Format | Length | Features |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| <u>Introduction to the Holocaust</u> | This one-day lesson provides an introduction by defining the term Holocaust and highlighting the story of Holocaust survivor Gerda Weissmann. | Lesson plan | 45 minutes | Survivor testimony or personal stories Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Available in Spanish Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>Timeline Activity</u> | A lesson structured around a multi-layered wall timeline that encourages critical thinking about the relationship between Nazi policy, World War II, historical events, and individual experiences during the Holocaust. | Interactive lesson plan and activity | 60 minutes / Flexible | Survivor testimony or personal stories Timeline cards (free, printed copies available upon request) Interactive activity Online, interactive version for students Connects the Holocaust to World War II <u>Extension for non-Jewish victim groups</u> Available in Spanish |
| <u>The Path to Nazi Genocide Documentary</u> | A concise summary of relevant events between 1918 and 1945 that describes the Nazis' rise to power, Nazi ideology, Nazi propaganda, and the Nazis' persecution and murder of Jews and other victims. This film contains difficult imagery and is appropriate for grades 9–12. | Video | 39 minutes | Historical Film Clips Option to divide into four 10-minute segments <u>Worksheet</u> Subtitled in 10 languages <u>Extension for connecting <i>The Path to Nazi Genocide</i> to the Timeline Activity</u> Available for streaming online; DVD available upon request |



The Timeline Activity, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

| Title | Description | Format | Length | Features |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <u>Pre-World War II Jewish Life</u> | To better understand what Jewish life was like in Europe before World War II, students select photos from the Museum's digital archive collections to analyze and research and relate them to photos they may have. Students participate in researching the Museum's collections and photo analysis. | Lesson plan | 120 minutes | Historical film clips Photos Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>First Person Program</u> | A series of live and recorded hour-long conversations with individual survivors. The conversations are facilitated by a journalist and include questions from the audience. | Interviews with survivors with an accompanying teaching guide | 60 minutes | Photos Survivor testimony or personal stories Live streamed or recorded programs Student interactive "Plug and play" – little educator preparation required |
| <u>Holocaust Literature Guide</u> | This guide is designed to provide historical context that complements the reading of Holocaust literature in English/Language Arts classes and can work alongside existing Holocaust literature lesson plans. The guide encourages students to understand how and why the Holocaust happened. | Lesson Plan/Literature Guide | 60 minutes for pre-reading activity; flexible for the rest | Historical film clips Interactive timeline activity Holocaust Encyclopedia articles |

THE MUSEUM'S HOLOCAUST ENCYCLOPEDIA

The [online encyclopedia](#) provides hundreds of accessible articles and other resources. A good place to begin is [A Learning Site for Students](#), a subsection that highlights foundational articles. Some articles are grouped into series for an in-depth look at various topics, and many include discussion questions at the end. Use the dropdown menu to select from a variety of formats, including animated maps, artifacts, discussion questions, oral history, and photos. The Holocaust Encyclopedia offers many articles in translation, including in Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. To see the translation options for a specific article, click on the globe icon on the left-hand side.



The screenshot shows the 'Introduction to the Holocaust' page. It features a large background image of a crowd of people. Below the title, there is a brief definition of the Holocaust. A 'KEY FACTS' section follows, with three numbered points: 1. Antisemitism was at the foundation of the Holocaust. 2. Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews evolved and became increasingly more radical between 1933 and 1945. 3. During World War II, Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews, using deadly living conditions, brutal mistreatment, mass shootings and gas chambers, and specially designed killing centers.

Below the article preview is a search bar titled 'Search the Holocaust Encyclopedia'. It includes a text input field for search terms, dropdown menus for 'All categories' and 'Language', and a 'SEARCH' button. A 'Trending keywords' section lists terms like 'Documenting the Holocaust', 'Reichstag Fire', 'Kristallnacht', 'Armenian genocide', 'concentration camps', 'Auschwitz', 'Nuremberg Laws', 'Charles E. Couplins', and 'Josef Mengele'.

IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION

The following chart offers a selection of lessons for teachers who have several class periods to teach about the Holocaust. Unless noted, the following content is appropriate for students in grades 7 through 12.

| Title | Description | Length | Features |
|---|--|---------------|---|
| <u>Overview of the Holocaust 2-Day Lesson</u> | This lesson is for grades 9–12 and can be completed in either two or 4 days. In both versions, students analyze how and why the Nazis and their collaborators persecuted and murdered Jews as well as others targeted during the era of the Holocaust. | 90 minutes | Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Video Interactive timeline activity Audio Clips Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>Challenges of Escape</u> | This lesson explains the complex factors that made it difficult for German Jews to emigrate from Nazi Germany. The lesson addresses a frequently asked question by students: “Why didn’t Jews just leave?” | 90 minutes | Historical film clips Primary source documents Video Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Online, interactive version for students <i>Why Didn’t They Just Leave: Challenges of Escape</i> , a video that describes the challenges faced by many Jewish refugees who tried to escape Europe in the 1930s. |
| <u>History of Antisemitism and the Holocaust</u> | This lesson focuses on the history of antisemitism and its role in the Holocaust and encourages reflection about how prejudice and hate speech can contribute to violence, mass atrocity, and genocide. | 60 minutes | Survivor testimony or personal stories Video Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Audio clips Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>Nazi Racism</u> | Racism fueled Nazi ideology and politics. This lesson explores racism in general and Nazi racial antisemitism in particular, so students have the background information needed to critically analyze the actions taken by Nazi Germany. | 120 minutes | Historical film clips Video Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Audio clips Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>Understanding Nazi Symbols</u> | This lesson focuses on the history and meaning of the swastika and provides an approach for educators and students to examine the origins of symbols, terms, and ideology from the Holocaust era that students may observe in contemporary American culture. | 60-75 minutes | Historical film clips Holocaust Encyclopedia articles Survivor Testimony or personal stories Audio clips Online, interactive version for students |

LESSONS AND RESOURCES FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

Below are the Museum’s featured lessons for English and Language Arts teachers. Unless noted, the following content is appropriate for students in grades 7 through 12.



Members of the Wijnberg family sit on the roof of their apartment house during the period in which they were prohibited by Nazi decree from going out into the garden. Selma is pictured second from right.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



We are living with a farmer in a hayloft above his horses and there is a small corner for the both of us. [illegible] through which some sunlight comes in, just enough to see each other. In these difficult circumstances we are nevertheless intensely grateful that we are alive...”

Selma Wijnberg, German-occupied Poland, October 24, 1943

| Title | Description | Length | Features |
|--|---|------------------------|--|
| <u>Exploring <i>Night</i> as Literature</u> | This lesson, appropriate for grades 9–12, can be used alongside other curricula, provides key questions for analyzing the text as well as historical context for the experiences Elie Wiesel describes in his memoir, <i>Night</i> . | Multiple class periods | <p>Timeline cards (free, printed copies available upon request)</p> <p>A short video that puts Wiesel’s experiences described in <i>Night</i> within the wider historical context of the Holocaust.</p> <p>Interactive timeline activity providing historical context for Elie Wiesel’s life</p> <p>Three sections: Setting Historical Context, Engaging with the Text, Elie Wiesel’s Legacy</p> <p>Online, interactive version for students</p> |
| <u>Exploring <i>Diary of a Young Girl</i></u> | Students will examine Anne Frank’s diary as both a historical and literary text and understand how the Holocaust and WWII affected the lives of Anne and her family. Can be used alongside other curricula for <i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i> . | Multiple class periods | <p>Timeline cards (free, printed copies available upon request)</p> <p>Video</p> <p>Interactive timeline activity providing historical context for Anne Frank’s life</p> <p>Four sections: Before Reading, During Reading, the Legacy of Anne Frank, and Conclusion</p> <p>Online, interactive version for students</p> |

| Title | Description | Length | Features |
|--|---|--|---|
| Exploring Holocaust-era Diaries | Students will analyze excerpts from Holocaust-era diaries as both historical and literary texts to better understand how the Holocaust affected the lives of individuals. | Flexible; The introduction takes about 40 minutes. Approximately 30–40 minutes are needed for the activities, which can be completed in class or as assessments. | Free diary anthology from the Museum's collections Activities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing diary entries • Using the Holocaust Encyclopedia • Researching Museum collections • Creating art or a “found poem” • Using maps • Analyzing oral histories and diaries Online, interactive version for students |
| Holocaust Literature Guide | This guide is designed to complement the reading of Holocaust literature in English/Language Arts classes and can work alongside existing Holocaust literature lesson plans. The guide provides historical context and encourages students to understand how and why the Holocaust happened while engaging in Holocaust literature. | 60 minutes for pre-reading activity; flexible for the rest | Historical film clips Interactive timeline activity Holocaust Encyclopedia articles |

BIBLIOGRAPHY/RUBRIC

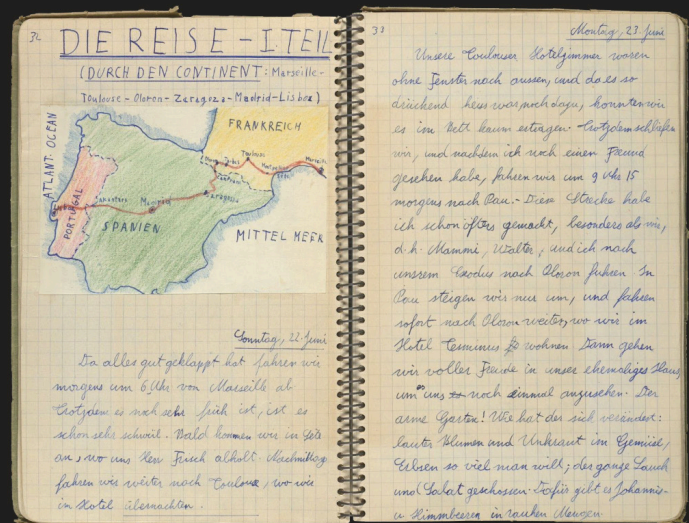
The Museum provides a sample list of books to use with secondary students, and a rubric to use when evaluating titles not included in this [Bibliography and Videography](#).

Rubric for Evaluating Resources

INSTRUCTIONS: This rubric is for assessing resources you are considering or are assigned to use in your classroom. The questions align with the [Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust](#), helping you determine if the resource is appropriate and supports your students' understanding of the Holocaust.

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Title of Resource: | Intended Audience for this Resource: |
| Reason you are considering this resource? | |
| Type of Resource: (check all that apply) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memoir <input type="checkbox"/> Diary <input type="checkbox"/> Fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary <input type="checkbox"/> Film <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Source <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| How did you assess the credibility of the source? | |
| Whose particular experiences are highlighted? How does this fit into greater understanding of the Holocaust? | |

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



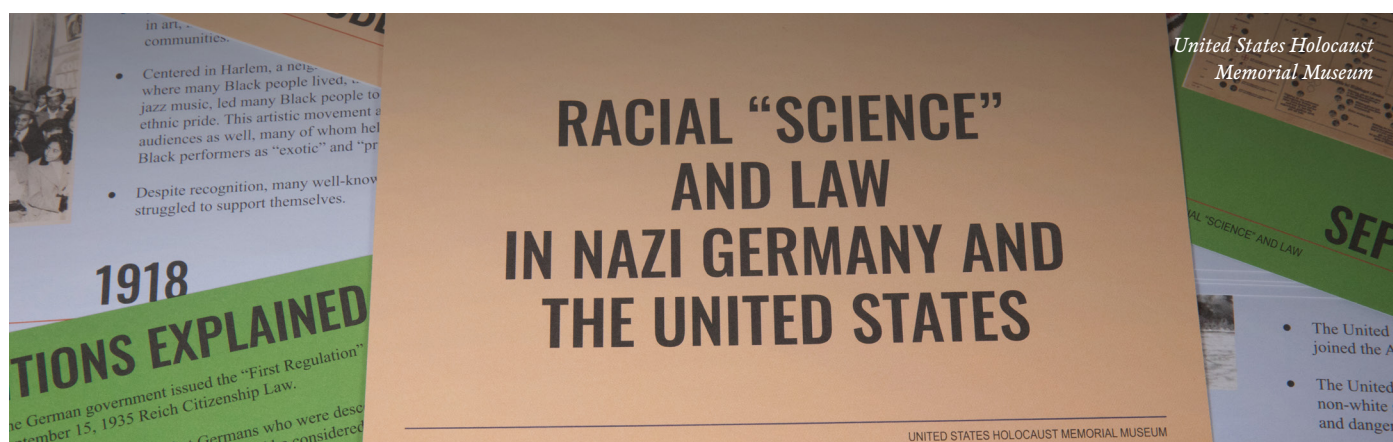
Hans Vogel's diary, used in the Exploring Holocaust-era Diaries Lesson Plan, includes this hand-drawn map of the family's travels. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of Eva Vogel. A digitized version of the diary is available in the [Museum's collections](#).

LESSONS AND RESOURCES FOR HISTORY TEACHERS

Many of the Museum’s lessons provide students with opportunities to learn about the history of the Holocaust and develop core historical thinking skills such as deconstructing arguments and identifying evidence. In addition, many of the issues addressed in lessons about the Holocaust are enduring themes: America’s role in the world, responsibility regarding refugees and immigrants, what it means to be American, the impact of racism in policy and law, and the roles of individuals and civic action in shaping the country’s responses to world events. Learn more about how Holocaust education may fulfill curriculum requirements in this [Training Video for Educators](#).

Below is a selection of the Museum’s featured lessons for history teachers. Unless noted, the following content is appropriate for students in grades 7 through 12.

| Title | Description | Length | Features |
|---|---|-------------|--|
| <u>Introduction to the Holocaust</u> | This one-day lesson provides an introduction to the Holocaust by defining the term and highlighting the story of Holocaust survivor Gerda Weissmann. | 45 minutes | Survivor testimony or personal stories Holocaust encyclopedia articles Available in Spanish Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>Racial Science in Nazi Germany and the United States</u> | This lesson, appropriate for grades 9–12, is a case study of racism and eugenics in Nazi Germany and the U.S. during the 1930s. Students will examine the context and history around how racism, eugenics, and the concept of “racial purity” became enshrined in the laws of both nations. | 200 minutes | Extension of the foundational Timeline Activity Timeline cards (free, printed copies available upon request) Photos Survivor testimony or personal stories Primary Source Documents Holocaust Encyclopedia article Online, interactive version for students |



| Title | Description | Length | Features |
|---|---|---------------------|---|
| <u>Black Americans and the Nazi Olympics</u> | This lesson looks at how antisemitism in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and anti-Black racism in Jim Crow America affected communities in these countries, with a focus on critical questions about the impact of antisemitism and racism on individuals and groups, past and present. | 60 minutes | Historical film clips Video Audio clip Holocaust Encyclopedia article Online, interactive version for students |
| <u>History Unfolded</u> | This lesson examines what was possible for Americans to have known about the Holocaust as it was happening and how they responded. Students look in local newspapers for news and opinion—or lack thereof—about 46 different Holocaust-era events. Students can submit articles they find to a national database. | 60 minutes | Use the Getting Started lesson to encourage students to research what local newspapers reported about during the Holocaust or check out lesson plans on specific topics below: Spanish Language Newspaper Coverage of the Holocaust Lesson Black Press Newspaper Coverage of the Holocaust Lesson Youth Responses to News of the Holocaust Lesson Online, interactive versions for students |
| <u>Americans and the Holocaust Tour</u> | A 39-minute tour with the curator of the <i>Americans and the Holocaust</i> exhibition that examines the motives, pressures, and fears that shaped Americans' responses to Nazism, war, and genocide. Includes a Viewing Guide . | At least 45 minutes | Viewing Guide |



On-site Exhibition, Americans and the Holocaust, also available online, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Below is a selection of additional resources to complement the lessons highlighted above or to use as stand-alone content as part of your own lessons about the Holocaust and World War II.

Media Resources

Including multimedia components in your Holocaust instruction has many benefits, including facilitating comprehension for English language learners and students with learning differences. Audiovisual testimony is also an effective way to highlight the experiences of survivors for all students.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

| Title | Description |
|---|---|
| <u>Behind Every Name</u> | Short, animated video series with survivor testimony and personal stories; videos are around five minutes, and the lesson is 20 minutes with optional artifact analysis extension. Includes discussion questions. |
| <u>One Survivor Remembers</u> | A 39-minute film based on the testimony of survivor Gerda Weissmann Klein. Gerda's experience is also featured in the one-day <u>Introduction to the Holocaust</u> lesson, <u>Timeline Activity</u> , and the <u>Holocaust Encyclopedia ID cards</u> , as well as in her memoir <i>All But My Life</i> . |
| <u>Voices on Antisemitism</u> | A podcast featuring guest speakers such as <u>Ruth Bader Ginsberg</u> , <u>Frank Meeink</u> , and <u>Elie Wiesel</u> . Educators can use podcast episodes in many ways, and clips are used in several Museum lessons, including <u>Nazi Racism</u> . |
| <u>Animated Maps</u> | The Holocaust Encyclopedia provides a variety of <u>animated maps</u> . Animated maps that also provide a good summary of historical events include the <u>Holocaust Map</u> and the <u>World War II Map</u> . |
| <u>Curators Corner</u> | A hub for extraordinary stories behind objects in the Museum's collections, including <u>Secrets Inside: How a Boy's Bear Helped a Family Escape Nazi Persecution</u> —a moving story about the significance of a cherished stuffed animal. |
| <u>Artifacts Unpacked</u> | A video series that provides a behind the scenes look at artifacts in the Museum's collection. The artifacts help keep alive the memory and experiences of victims and witnesses of the Holocaust. The <u>Olympic Torch Holder</u> , a short video about the torch relay for the 1936 Olympics, connects to lessons such as <u>Black Americans and the Nazi Olympics</u> and <u>Behind Every Name: Stories from the Holocaust</u> . |
| <u>History and Memory Virtual Tour</u> | Virtual field trip and lesson plan that allows students to explore the physical spaces of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in one or two class periods. |



Online Exhibitions

Interactive, online exhibitions are an effective way to engage students in various topics related to the Holocaust.

| Title | Description |
|--|--|
| <u>Some Were Neighbors</u> | An exhibition that explores the choices of individuals as they responded to the Nazis' persecution and murder of European Jews and examines how the actions of ordinary people made the Holocaust possible. Includes a photo activity, "Deconstructing the Familiar," which has students examine photos from the exhibition, as well as <u>teacher resources</u> to explore the online exhibition. |
| <u>State of Deception</u> | An interactive exploration of propaganda, including timelines, themes, and a gallery. Can be used with stand-alone lessons, such as <u>Analyzing Memes</u> , and teacher resources for the online exhibition, such as <u>Exploring Nazi Propaganda</u> . |
| <u>Americans and the Holocaust</u> | An online exhibition that examines the motives, pressures, and fears that shaped Americans' responses to Nazism, war, and genocide. The <u>Teacher Guide and Student Materials</u> are appropriate for use in U.S. history classrooms. |
| <u>Burma's Path to Genocide</u> | An online exhibition that explores how the Rohingya went from citizens to outsiders and became the target of a sustained campaign of genocide. Includes <u>teacher resources</u> . |

Survivor Testimony

Survivor testimony is an essential aspect of Holocaust education because sharing lived memories and experiences is a critical tool in understanding the consequences of hate and indifference and preventing future violence and genocide. Using primary sources and survivor testimony in your Holocaust curriculum gives students the opportunity to:

- Learn about those who survived in their own words
- Explore the time period through oral history, which often offers a more nuanced and relatable portrayal of lived experience than written records
- Place a human face on a complex and far-removed piece of history
- Empathize with survivors by learning about their connection to friends and family and the pain of separation, exclusion, and loss
- Learn about aspects of the Holocaust for which there are few or no images or artifacts—the crematoria, train cars, death marches, and life inside the ghettos or in hiding
- Honor victims and survivors and bear witness to their memories
- Understand the need to be vigilant and stop injustice, prejudice, and hatred wherever and whenever they occur.



| Title | Description and Features | Examples of Compelling Survivor Testimony |
|--|---|--|
| <u>Teaching with Holocaust Survivor Testimony</u> | Students will examine Holocaust survivor testimonies as both personal memories and as deliberately created historical records, evaluate how the Holocaust affected the lives of individuals, and reflect on the role of memory in our understanding of history. | Educators may select from the varied formats and lengths of survivor testimony listed below to use with the Teaching with the Holocaust Survivor Testimony lesson. The lesson also includes <u>Guidelines for Teaching with Holocaust Survivor Testimony</u> . |
| <u>First Person Program</u> | This program is a series of live, hour-long conversations with individual survivors facilitated by a journalist and enhanced by questions from the audience. Includes a teaching guide. | <u>Steven Fenves</u> discusses being forced into a ghetto immediately following the German occupation of his hometown of Subotica, Yugoslavia, in March 1944. As his family was forced out of their home, they encountered a range of responses from their non-Jewish neighbors. |
| <u>First Person Podcast</u> | This podcast series features excerpts from 48 interviews with Holocaust survivors. | Listen to <u>Estelle Laughlin</u> share her experience during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising—how she hid in a bunker and was later captured and deported to Auschwitz. |
| <u>Short Testimony Clips</u> | These short video clips (most are two minutes or less) include survivor and other relevant testimonies that demonstrate the range of individual experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. | <u>Blanka Rothschild</u> describes the violence she experienced working in an airplane factory and how she survived until liberation. |
| <u>Museum Oral History Collections</u> | This collection of oral history includes both audio and video testimony. Use the search feature to narrow the selection by format (audio or video), key events, cities, camps, and ghettos. | <u>John Woodruff</u> , winner of the 800-meter run at the 1936 Olympic Games, talks about his childhood in Pennsylvania and his experience at the 1936 Olympics, including his recollections of the opening and closing ceremonies and the treatment of Jewish athletes. |
| <u>ID cards</u> | This collection of ID photos of survivors includes accompanying brief biographies. Many are available in various languages. | <u>Miru Alcana's ID card</u> describes her idyllic childhood on the Greek island of Rhodes (under Italian rule since 1912) and the fate of this community's Jewish population. |

INVITING A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR TO SPEAK AT YOUR SCHOOL OR PROGRAM

If you would like to learn more about inviting a Holocaust survivor to speak with your students, contact a [local Holocaust education organization](#). If you invite a speaker to share their story, take time to prepare your students to ask questions that will promote learning and understanding. The Museum offers [detailed guidelines](#).

“

I believe firmly and profoundly that whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness, so those who hear us, those who read us must continue to bear witness for us. Until now, they're doing it with us. At a certain point in time, they will do it for all of us.

Elie Wiesel

SURVIVOR TESTIMONY AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Using survivor testimony, as well as Holocaust-era diaries, enhances students' comprehension of the Holocaust and also satisfies standards around using primary sources.

Common Core

English Language Arts/History Social Studies

Grades 6-8

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Grades 9 and 10

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Grades 11 and 12

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.
- Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Holocaust Education Requirements by State

Holocaust education requirements vary by state. See the [USHMM website](#) for a list of states that have provided the Museum with their Holocaust education requirements.

MATERIALS IN SPANISH AND OTHER LANGUAGES

First Book educators requested teaching materials in other languages, particularly Spanish. The Museum offers several resources in Spanish and additional translations are planned.

Introducción al Holocausto

Introduction to the Holocaust, one-day lesson plan, accompanying materials, and student-facing online lesson

Actividad de la línea de tiempo

Timeline Activity

Las tarjetas de identificación

Identification Cards

History Unfolded: cobertura del Holocausto en periódicos en español

Spanish-language newspaper coverage of the Holocaust. This lesson focuses on how Spanish-language newspapers in Texas, California, and Puerto Rico reported on the voyage of the *St. Louis*, giving students the opportunity to connect Holocaust history to American history and develop primary and secondary source reading and analysis skills in Spanish.

El camino hacia el genocidio nazi

The Path to Nazi Genocide video with Spanish subtitles

La enciclopedia del Holocausto

Holocaust Encyclopedia

Main Spanish language resources page

Includes links to La enciclopedia del Holocausto as well as a selection of articles, reference materials, survivor testimonies, and online exhibitions in Spanish.

The Holocaust Encyclopedia offers many articles in translation, including in Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. To see the translation options for a specific article, click on the globe icon on the left-hand side.



ADDRESSING STUDENT QUESTIONS

For many reasons—including the complexity of the Holocaust and continuing antisemitism—it may be useful to review common questions and misconceptions before teaching about the Holocaust.

| Questions | Relevant Information on the Museum's Website |
|--|---|
| Did the Holocaust actually happen? | There is a large amount of evidence documenting the history of the Holocaust. There are diaries, videos, the Nazis' own records, thousands of eyewitness accounts, and survivor testimonies. Holocaust denial is a form of antisemitism and continues to occur, often on social media platforms students use regularly. Learn more here and here . |
| Is antisemitism still a problem? | Antisemitism continues to be a serious problem in the U.S. and the world, and rates of anti-Jewish hate crimes and anti-Jewish propaganda have increased in recent years. Learn more here . |
| Why is it important to learn about this event? | The Holocaust raises opportunities to think critically about human nature, to consider that progress is not inevitable and that individuals have more power than they realize. It is critically important to understand what happened—and how and why—so we can prevent similar horrors from happening in the future. See Making Historical Connections to Current Events for more information. |
| How did Hitler come to power? | Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany under a legal political process. After President Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler proclaimed himself Führer of Germany and became a dictator. Learn more here . |
| Did Jewish people fight back? | Despite insurmountable odds, there were many instances of Jewish resistance, including the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Learn more about Jewish resistance here . |
| Why didn't Jewish people just leave Germany/Europe? | It was difficult for Jews to leave Germany and German-controlled territories for many reasons, including immigration laws and the seizure of their assets. Read more about these reasons and others here . Watch a video about this topic here . |
| Why didn't more ordinary people help Jews and stand up to the Nazi regime? | Ordinary people behaved in a variety of ways during the Holocaust. Some gave in to the pressure to conform, and others were motivated by greed or hatred while others chose to help. Learn more about the role of ordinary people in Germany and occupied territories here . |
| Are there real biological differences between different ethnicities, as the Nazis proclaimed? | Humans of all ethnicities are 99.9% similar in their genetic makeup, and race is a social construct. The concept of racial inferiority was used to persecute certain groups of people in Germany and in the U.S. as well. Read more about racism and eugenics here . |

Additional questions and answers can be found on the [Museum's Frequently Asked Questions for Educators](#) page and [Discussion Questions](#) page.

MAKING HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS TO CURRENT EVENTS

First Book Educators identified several themes that make the Holocaust relevant to the lived experiences and interests of their students:

- How Hitler and the Nazi party came to power
- The danger of “othering” groups of people
- The significance of being a bystander versus taking action against discrimination

Thinking about historical events, such as the Holocaust, in terms of their connection to modern-day issues and experiences is what makes history relevant to our lives. It is natural to reflect on the legacy of the Holocaust as we confront today’s decisions and challenges.

Educators should note that simplistic comparisons between the Holocaust and current events disrespects survivors and detracts from the Holocaust’s important and enduring lessons.

The terms *Holocaust* and *Nazi* are often used as synonyms for evil. Politicians, activists, and ordinary people use these terms to shame or silence their opponents. Students should be encouraged to be cautious about simple comparisons that can spread quickly on social media and that can include misinformation. Instead, encourage them to ask questions that explore the similarities and differences between distinct events and time periods, focusing on historical facts. This video, [Historical Connections in the Classroom](#), offers suggestions about how educators can support students in making appropriate connections to the past.

The Holocaust is a complex topic that helps students think about the choices people have in responding to the persecution of others. By examining the history, we realize that what every one of us does matters.

Bethany Nagle,
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Best Practices and Critical Thinking Questions

When discussing current events that seem relevant or related to the Holocaust, avoid simple comparisons, which can distort the truth and detract from the Holocaust's important lessons. Instead, use open ended questions to spark discussions and engage students in critical thinking:

- Based on what you read or saw, what is similar or different about these moments in history?
- Based on what you are feeling, what feels similar? Why might there be similar feelings for different events?
- What do we know about these two events by themselves? What other information is needed to fully understand the comparison?
- What led up to each of these events? What alternate actions could have been taken? How did people make decisions?
- What led so many ordinary people to play a role in the Holocaust? What makes people comply or resist?
- How can examining human vulnerabilities inform our understanding of other historic periods and events?

Lessons and Exhibits Related to Current Events

Analyzing Memes

Using memes linking current events to history, this lesson offers a starting point for deeper conversations about context and comparisons.

Critically Analyzing Propaganda

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to discuss and reflect on the role of propaganda during the Holocaust and how it continues to affect people today.

Burma's Path to Genocide

This online exhibition explains how the Rohingya, an ethnic minority in Burma, went from citizens to unwelcome outsiders, subject to ongoing discrimination, violent attacks, and ultimately genocide.



APPENDIX

USHMM Guidelines

Definitions

Educator Resources

USHMM GUIDELINES

The Museum’s Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust are listed below, with accompanying explanations and relevant examples.

| Museum Guideline | Examples |
|---|---|
| <p>Define the term “Holocaust.”</p> <p>A historically accurate and precise definition of the Holocaust is essential as part of a successful lesson or unit. Defining the Holocaust at the beginning of a unit provides students with a foundation from which they can further explore the history and its lasting influence, identifying who was involved and placing the history into geographical and temporal context. It provides students with sound footing as they confront the question, “What was the Holocaust?”</p> | <p>The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma, people with disabilities, Poles, and others were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including gay men, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny. By the end of World War II in 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews.</p> |
| <p>Teach that the Holocaust was not inevitable.</p> <p>The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. Focusing on those decisions leads to insights into history and human nature and fosters critical thinking. Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nazi regime enacted legislation, including the <u>Nuremberg Race Laws</u>, that restricted the rights of Jewish citizens. <u>Most German lawyers obeyed new laws and decrees</u> and helped to remove Jewish colleagues from the courts, professional associations, and law firms. Others made different choices in this context. • In every country under Nazi control, <u>locals participated in a variety of ways</u>—as office workers, confiscators of property, overseers of mass deportations, informants, and sometimes as perpetrators of violence, such as during <u>pogroms</u> and <u>Kristallnacht</u>. |

| Museum Guideline | Examples |
|--|--|
| <p>Avoid simple answers to complex questions.</p> <p>The history of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior and the context within which individual decisions are made. Be wary of simplification. Seek instead to convey the nuances of this history. Allow students to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust and that often made decision-making difficult and uncertain.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Timeline Activity encourages critical thinking about the relationship between Nazi policy, historical events, and individual experiences. • Some Were Neighbors is an online exhibition that explores the choices of individuals as they responded to the Nazis' persecution and murder of European Jews and examines how the actions and inaction of ordinary people made the Holocaust possible. • This First Person Podcast interview with Steven Fenves demonstrates the role of ordinary individuals by highlighting the range of reactions among neighbors when he and his family were forced to leave their home and move to the ghetto. • The story of survival shared by Alfred Münzer demonstrates the impact of individual actions and decisions—and also shows how the fear of punishment from the Nazi regime could cause a rescuer to become a collaborator. |
| <p>Strive for precision of language.</p> <p>Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to generalize and, thus, to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Avoid this by helping your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish, for example, the differences between prejudice and discrimination, armed and spiritual resistance, direct and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.</p> | <p>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; sabotage; and actual military engagement. Resistance may also be thought of as willful disobedience, such as continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules or creating art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to live in the face of abject brutality was an act of spiritual resistance.</p> <p>Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions. Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases but not all”) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis, nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.</p> <p>There is a Glossary available in the Holocaust Encyclopedia for students to reinforce understanding of terms.</p> |

| Museum Guideline | Examples |
|--|---|
| <p>Strive to balance the perspectives that inform your study of the Holocaust.</p> <p>Make careful distinctions about sources of information. Encourage students to consider why a source was created, who created it, who the intended audience was, whether any biases were inherent in the information, whether any gaps occurred in discussion, whether omissions were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events.</p> <p>Most documentation about the Holocaust comes from the perspective of the perpetrators. In contrast, survivor testimonies and collections humanize individuals in the richness and fullness of their lives.</p> <p>Strongly encourage your students to investigate carefully the origin and authorship of all material, particularly anything found on the internet.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance perspectives by sharing survivor testimony and personal stories. The Museum provides a varied collection of primary sources and survivor testimony. A selection of these resources is provided in the Survivor Testimony section. • There were a range of behaviors among ordinary people during the Holocaust, but very few actively resisted the Nazis or attempted to protect Jews. This short video provides some examples of individual choices, motives, and experiences. |
| <p>Avoid comparisons of pain.</p> <p>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 the level of suffering between those groups during the Holocaust. 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 otherwise.</p> <p>Similarly, students may gravitate toward comparisons between aspects of the Holocaust and other historical or contemporary events. Historical events, policies, and human behaviors can and should be carefully analyzed for areas where there may be similarities and differences, but this should be done always with careful consideration of evidence and contextual factors, differentiating between fact, opinion, and belief.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people targeted during the Holocaust lived in hiding, some went into the ghettos, some made it to other countries, and some were sent to camps—all these different experiences affected the families and individuals in unique ways. • While Jews were the primary targets for systematic persecution and mass murder by the Nazis and their collaborators, Nazi policies also led to the brutalization and persecution of millions of others. Nazi policies toward all victims were brutal, but not identical. The Museum's Non-Jewish Victim Group Timeline Extension highlights individual stories of non-Jewish victims and provides context for why and how the Nazis and their collaborators targeted various groups of people. |

| Museum Guideline | Examples |
|---|---|
| <p>Avoid romanticizing history.</p> <p>Portray all individuals, including victims and perpetrators, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making. People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide compelling role models for students. But given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic actions 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, together with a balanced perspective on the history, is necessary.</p> | <p>A small number of people actively helped Jewish victims, and it misrepresents the history to spend a large percentage of instructional time looking at those who helped instead of exploring how and why the Holocaust happened.</p> <p>To learn more about about Rescue and Resistance, read the articles available in this Holocaust Encyclopedia series.</p> |
| <p>Contextualize the history.</p> <p>Events of the Holocaust, and particularly how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The Holocaust should 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.</p> <p>Similarly, the Holocaust should be studied within its contemporaneous context so students can begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged particular actions or events. For example, when thinking about resistance, consider when and where an act took place; the immediate consequences of one's actions to self and family; the degree of control the Nazis had on a country or local population; the cultural attitudes of particular native populations toward different victim groups historically; and the availability and risk of potential hiding places.</p> <p>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. By exposing students to some of the cultural contributions and achievements of 2,000 years of European Jewish life, for example, you help them to balance their perception of Jews as victims and to appreciate more fully the traumatic disruption in Jewish history caused by the Holocaust.</p> | <p>Examples of important historical context include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews had lived in Germany since the Middle Ages and were well integrated and assimilated into German society while still maintaining their own identity and culture. • Germany was humiliated after its defeat in World War I. After the Treaty of Versailles, the country was deprived of any significant military power, lost 13 percent of its territory, and faced the financial burden of heavy reparations. Learn more about how World War I affected Germany and the German people here. |

| Museum Guideline | Examples |
|---|---|
| <p>Translate statistics into people.</p> <p>In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges comprehension. Show that individual people—grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-person accounts illustrate the diversity of people’s experiences during the Holocaust and the innumerable ways in which so many lives were disrupted and shattered. Read individual stories of victims of the Holocaust in the Museum’s ID cards. • When sharing survivor perspectives, consider exploring their lives both before and after the Holocaust to place their experiences in context and appreciate the fullness of their lives. Some of the lesson plans in this resource include this type of survivor testimony, including Pre-World War II Jewish Life. |
| <p>Make responsible methodological choices.</p> <p>Educators who teach about the Holocaust seek to honestly and accurately investigate a history in which millions of people were dehumanized, brutalized and killed while ensuring a safe classroom environment in which their students can engage in learning and critical thinking. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the lesson objective. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students’ emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful to the victims themselves. Instead of avoiding important topics because the visual images are graphic, use other approaches to address the material.</p> | <p>In studying complex human behavior, some 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 that they now know what it was like to suffer or even to participate during the Holocaust. It is best to draw upon a variety of primary sources, provide survivor testimony, and refrain from simulations or games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.</p> <p>Art projects featuring Nazi imagery, word scrambles, crossword puzzles, counting objects, model building, and other similar types of exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialization of the history. If the effects of a particular activity run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.</p> <p>Refer back to your rationale for teaching the Holocaust as you make choices about the resources you use in your classroom.</p> |

DEFINITIONS

See additional definitions on the [USHMM website](#).

Adolf Hitler (1889–1945):

Führer (leader) of the National Socialist (Nazi) movement (1921–1945); Reich Chancellor of Germany (1933–1945); and *Führer* of the German Nation (1934–1945). As leader of the Nazi party, Hitler called for German territorial expansion, the consolidation of a racially pure state, and the elimination of the European Jews and other perceived enemies of Germany. After he was appointed chancellor of Germany (leader of the government) in 1933, Hitler and the Nazi Party turned the country into a one-party dictatorship.

Antisemitism:

Hostility toward or hatred of Jews as a religious or ethnic group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination. The Nazi Party in Germany took antisemitism to an unprecedented level of violence and murdered six million European Jews during the Holocaust. Antisemitism did not end with the Holocaust and is a global problem today. Learn more [here](#).

Collaborators:

People who work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something. During the Holocaust, the German authorities required the assistance of collaborators, often local people in the regions they occupied, to implement the “Final Solution.” Learn more [here](#).

Crematorium:

A facility containing a furnace for reducing dead bodies to ashes by burning.

Eugenics:

The false belief, based in discredited science, that the human population can “improve” with selective breeding. This belief led to laws legalizing the forced sterilization of people deemed racially and genetically “inferior” so they could not have children. In Germany, eugenics was also called “racial hygiene.”

“Final Solution”:

The Nazi plan to annihilate the European Jews. Between 1941–1945, the Nazis deliberately planned and carried out the mass murder of European Jews and referred to this plan as the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” (“Endlösung der Judenfrage”). Learn more [here](#).

Ghettos:

A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group are compelled to live. During the Holocaust, the creation of ghettos was a key step in the Nazi process of brutally separating, persecuting, and ultimately destroying Europe’s Jews. Many Jews were forced to move into the ghettos, where living conditions were miserable. Learn more [here](#).

Holocaust:

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Roma, people with disabilities, Poles, and others were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including gay men, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

Jews:

Members of the group and cultural community whose traditional religion is Judaism and who trace their origins through the ancient Hebrew people of Israel to Abraham. Prior to the Holocaust, European Jews could be found in all walks of life, as farmers, tailors, seamstresses, factory hands, accountants, doctors, teachers, and small-business owners. Some families were wealthy; many more were poor. A total of roughly nine million Jews lived in the countries that would be occupied by Germany during World War II. By the end of the war, two out of every three of these Jews were dead, and European Jewish life would be changed forever.

Killing Centers:

The Nazis established killing centers in German-occupied Europe during World War II. They built these killing centers (sometimes also called “extermination camps” or “death camps”) exclusively or primarily for the mass murder of human beings. Nazi officials employed assembly-line methods of murder in these facilities.

Kristallnacht:

“Kristallnacht,” or the “Night of Broken Glass” refers to the wave of violent anti-Jewish pogroms that took place on November 9–10, 1938, throughout Germany, German-annexed Austria, and the German-occupied areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Learn more [here](#).

Nazi Racism:

The Nazis viewed the world as being divided into competing inferior and superior races, each struggling for survival and dominance. They believed Jews were not a religious domination, but a dangerous inferior “race.” This antisemitic racism fueled Nazi ideology and policies.

Nazi Regime:

The National Socialist German Workers’ Party—also known as the Nazi Party—was the far-right racist and antisemitic political party led by Adolf Hitler. The Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933 and turned Germany into a dictatorship. It controlled all aspects of German life and persecuted Jews—first in Germany and then in countries Germany conquered. By 1941, the Nazi regime began to carry out a plan to murder all European Jews. The Nazi Party’s control ended when Germany lost World War II.

Nuremberg Race Laws:

These laws, enacted by the Nazi government in Germany on September 15, 1935, took rights away from German Jews, making them legally different from their non-Jewish neighbors. The laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship and outlawed intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. Learn more [here](#).

Persecution:

Harassing or punishing with the intent to injure or take away an individual’s or group’s rights.

Pogrom:

A violent attack by local non-Jewish populations on Jews. Learn more [here](#).

Propaganda:

Biased information spread to shape public opinion and behavior. The Nazi Party used symbols, slogans, and new technology like radio and film to spread their antisemitic ideology to the German people. Learn more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Rabbi:

A spiritual leader or religious teacher in Judaism.

Resistance:

The ways in which individuals and communities fight back against oppression. During the Holocaust, resistance meant armed revolt as well as the smuggling of messages, food, and weapons; sabotage; and military action. Resistance could also be non-violent, including hiding; forging identity documents; continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions; attending unauthorized schools; or creating art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. Learn more [here](#).

State-Sponsored:

Actions organized by the civil government of a country.

Swastika:

The symbol of the Nazi Party and the most recognizable symbol of Nazi propaganda. Although the swastika was an ancient symbol that was in use in many different cultures for at least 5,000 years before the Nazi Party adopted it, the present-day use of the swastika by extremist groups promotes hate.

Systemic:

Done or acting according to a fixed plan or system; methodical

Warsaw Ghetto:

The Warsaw Ghetto, located in Poland's capital city of Warsaw, was created in October 1940 by German occupying forces. The ghetto imprisoned approximately 400,000 people in a confined area of the city surrounded by a ten-foot wall. Extreme overcrowding, minimal rations, and unsanitary conditions led to disease, starvation, and the death of thousands of Jews each month. In the summer of 1942, 265,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw to the Treblinka killing center, where they were murdered. In April 1943, many of the remaining Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto rose up against the Germans in what was called the "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising."

It took the Germans more than a month to violently stop the uprising, destroy the ghetto, and deport the survivors to concentration camps and killing centers. Read about the Warsaw ghetto uprising [here](#).

Weimar Germany:

The name given to the period between 1918-1933 in Germany. During this period, the German government was referred to as the Weimar Republic, named after the German city of Weimar where the constitutional assembly met. The Weimar Republic was a weak constitutional democracy, with many political parties fighting, often violently, for power. The Weimar Republic ended in 1933, when Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor and immediately began instituting a one-party dictatorship. Learn more [here](#).

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

In addition to the lesson plans and other educational content listed above, the Museum and local Holocaust centers offer professional development resources and opportunities for educators.

USHMM Educator Network

Register to join the Museum's educator network. Complete this form to receive educator information and classroom-ready resources.

Museum Educator Community (Facebook Group)

Instructional best practices, timely resources, inspiring ideas, and opportunities to connect with other educators.

Professional Development Training Videos for Educators

A selection of USHMM videos offering guidance about where to find and how to use the classroom-ready lessons and digital learning tools on the Museum's website. The videos also cover guidelines, appropriate pedagogy, and classroom strategies.

Belfer National Conference for Educators

Each year, the Museum hosts a national virtual conference for secondary school teachers across the country. Participants learn the latest research and instructional best practices and get the opportunity to interact with Museum educators and historians. All participants are sent free resources.

Virtual Events for Educators (YouTube)

Virtual events designed for educators that explore survivor experiences, thought leader perspectives, and helpful classroom resources.

Museum Teacher Fellowship Program

Developed in 1996, the Museum's fellowship program offers educators the opportunity to become leaders in Holocaust education. Most years, the Museum selects up to 15 educators (grade 7 through community college) as new Museum Teacher fellows. Note: Before seeking a fellowship, educators must attend the Belfer National Conference and demonstrate knowledge of Holocaust history. The USHMM website provides additional application requirements and deadlines.

Community of Holocaust Education Centers (CHEC)

CHEC is a network of Holocaust centers and foundations throughout the U.S. See the list of Holocaust centers with education programming on the Museum's website to find one in your state.

Association of Holocaust Organizations

The AHO is an international network of organizations and individuals for the advancement of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

This resource was created using content available on the USHMM website in winter 2022-2023. The Museum's historians and educators regularly update and add to existing resources. Refer to the Teach section on the Museum's website for the most up-to-date lessons and educational resources.

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UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

