

Introduction to the Holocaust

Overview

Students will receive an overview of the Holocaust via a Power Point presentation, class discussion, readings, and creative activities. Students will begin by exploring prewar Jewish life, helping them understand that individual lives are behind Holocaust statistics. Throughout the lesson, students will work to relate to Holocaust victims via survivor testimonies and discussion, without assuming that we can completely understand the tragedy experienced by the victims. Students will illustrate their understanding of this period of history by creating a “blended poem” of their own words and the words of a Holocaust survivor. *Teachers are encouraged to review the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s “Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust” before approaching this material in class: <https://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/education/foreducators/guideline/>

Grade

7

North Carolina Essential Standards for 7th Grade

- 7.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues over time.
- 7.H.1.2 - Summarize the literal meaning of historical documents in order to establish context.
- 7.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 7.H.2.1 - Analyze the effects of social, economic, military and political conflict among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. war, genocide, imperialism and colonization).

Essential Questions

- In what ways was Germany unstable before the onset of the Holocaust and how did this contribute to the Holocaust?
- How were the Great Depression’s effects on America and Europe similar? How were they different?
- Who was Adolph Hitler? How and when did he come to power in Germany?
- What promises did Hitler initially make to the German people?
- What is propaganda, and how was it used by the German government?
- How did life in Germany change after Hitler came into power?
- What types of laws and restrictions did Nazis enforce upon Jews, Gypsies, Poles, African-Germans, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Communists, the disabled, and homosexuals?
- For what reasons did Germans join the Nazi party?
- What was Kristallnacht?
- When and why did World War II begin?
- What was the purpose of ghettos and concentration camps? What were living conditions like in these places?
- What was the effect of the Holocaust on humanity?
- In what ways can society work to heal itself from the travesty of the Holocaust and insure history does not repeat itself?
- What can we learn from the words of Holocaust survivors?

Materials

- You are There, reading attached
- Introduction to the Holocaust Power Point accompaniment, available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)

- To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
- To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- The Holocaust Notes, worksheet attached
- Fact Not Fantasy: Walter in Germany, reading attached
- Testimony excerpts, attached
- The End of the Holocaust, excerpt from *The Holocaust: Years of Terror*, attached

Duration

2 class periods

Preparation

Teachers may want to assign an introductory reading on World War II and the Holocaust from student textbooks prior to teaching this lesson.

Procedure

Day 1

Warm-Up: You Are There

1. As a warm-up, distribute the attached handout *You Are There*, from *The Holocaust: A North Carolina’s Teacher’s Resource* (<http://www.unctv.org/content/sites/default/files/HolocaustGuide.pdf>). Instruct students to read the handout and then discuss:
 - How would you feel if these events actually happened in your community?
 - Is there anywhere something like this could happen today? Explain. Do you think the events described in this story could happen in your own community? Why or why not?
 - What would prevent such events from happening? (*public opinion and public protest, laws, police, government leaders*)
 - What rights do private citizens have in the United States that protect them from being evicted from their homes or arrested? (*Bill of Rights, habeas corpus, due process, etc.*)

Introduction to the Holocaust

2. Explain to students that while they are only imagining this happening in their community, such a situation actually happened in Europe...it became known as the **Holocaust**. Ask students:
 - What do you already know about the Holocaust?
 - What comes to mind when you hear this word?
 - What is the definition of the word Holocaust?
3. Once students have explored their own definition, project the definition on Slide 2 of the accompanying PPT:
 - **Holocaust:** the mass slaughter or reckless destruction of life; Holocaust most often refers to the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.
4. Continue with the PPT as a way to offer background information on the Holocaust, as well as to encourage active class discussion. Teachers may choose to hand out the attached *Holocaust Notes* or encourage students to take notes in a desired format, such as Cornell Notes. Tell students that they will learn about and discuss the history of the Holocaust as you take them through the Power Point. (It is imperative that teachers use the attached Power Point to facilitate a discussion of the Holocaust rather than using it for straight lecture.) Explain to students that a lot of what they learn will probably be disturbing and that it may bring up various emotions such as anger or sadness. Ensure students understand that they are welcome to ask questions or share how they are feeling at any point.

Prewar Jewish Life

5. Use the remainder of Slide 2 of the Power Point to share a few facts about the Holocaust then stop on Slide 3, "Prewar Jewish Life." Explain to students that before they delve further into learning about the Holocaust, it is important to understand that the victims of the Holocaust each had individual identities and lives before they became "victims." Tell students to look to their classmates on either side of them. While students glance around the room, reiterate that as they learn about the Holocaust, you want them to remember that the people discussed were just that - people, *human beings*, with hopes and dreams and fears just like every person sitting in the class.
6. Tell students you want them to examine some pictures of Jewish life before the Holocaust in Germany. Go through each image on Slides 3-6 and have students discuss what they see in each picture:
 - What do you see in this image? (encourage students to simply point out the physical details that they notice, such as people, objects, setting, environment, etc.)
 - What do you think was happening on this day? When, where and why might this photo have been taken? (encourage students to infer what the people in the photo were doing, how they were feeling, etc.)
 - What evidence in this picture suggests "normal" or "ordinary" life for the Jews pictured?
 - Why do you think people often remember Jews only in terms of the tragedy of the Holocaust?
7. While discussing the various images on Slides 3-6, have 3 volunteers read the #1, #2, and #3 excerpts on the attached "Testimony Excerpts" handout intermittently throughout the discussion for effect and further discussion.
 - **Optional:** Teachers may also choose to show students video of survivor testimonies where every day life is recounted to further encourage students to understand the humanity within the story of the Holocaust. Videos in which survivors discuss prewar life are available at:
<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/search/index.php?query=life+before&langcode=en&group=&gfilter=Testimonies>
8. Project Slide 7 of the Power Point and discuss:
 - What is represented in this map? (European Jewish Population Distribution in Europe as of 1933).
 - How many Jews lived in Europe as of 1933? (9,500,000)
 - Which region of Europe contained the highest population of Jews? (Eastern Europe)
 - What impact do you predict the Holocaust had on the population of Jews?
9. Explain the following to students:
 - "Jews have lived in Europe for more than two thousand years. The American Jewish Yearbook placed the total Jewish population of Europe at about 9.5 million in 1933. This number represented more than 60 percent of the world's Jewish population, which was estimated at 15.3 million. Most European Jews resided in eastern Europe, with about 5 1/2 million Jews living in Poland and the Soviet Union. Before the Nazi takeover of power in 1933, Europe had a dynamic and highly developed Jewish culture. In little more than a decade, most of Europe would be conquered, occupied, or annexed by Nazi Germany and most European Jews--two out of every three--would be dead."
 - (Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/jewpop.html>)

1933-1938: The Nazis Rise to Power

10. Continue on with Slides 8-20 of the Power Point giving an overview of the years when the Nazis and Hitler rose to power. After you have discussed Slide 20, stop and allow students some time to debrief by asking:

- What is most shocking to you thus far and why?
- Going back to one of the questions we originally discussed, could this happen here in our own country and/or community? Has your opinion changed from before? Explain.
- Based on what you know thus far, are there other events in history that you can connect to the Holocaust? Are there any current events you can connect to the Holocaust?

Kristallnacht

11. Hand out the attached *Fact Not Fantasy: Walter in Germany* and explain to students that while the situation they considered in the beginning of class was imaginary, Walter's account is fact, not fiction. Explain that the handout is part of the testimony of a survivor of the Holocaust who eventually came to live in North Carolina after escaping Germany.
 12. Explain that in 1935, when the Nazis took over in Germany, Walter was eleven years old. His mother was a widow. His father, a veteran who had fought in the German army in World War I, had died some years earlier. He and his mother lived in an apartment in the town of Karlsruhe, near Berlin. Tell students to read Walter's account and then discuss:
 - What was the first change Walter noticed in his school?
 - Why do you think Walter was not permitted to say "Heil Hitler" or to wear a uniform?
 - How were the other students and teachers told to act towards Walter and other Jewish students?
 - What was the effect of these restrictions on Walter and other students? (*Students should recognize that such rules were a deliberate attempt to isolate and humiliate these students, to make them feel like outsiders from their classmates, and to encourage their classmates to think of them as both different and inferior.*)
 13. Encourage students to think about how they might feel if they were not permitted to dress like others in their school or if they learned that they would be sent to another school in the middle of the year. What might they or their parents do about these rules if they were unhappy about them? Why couldn't Walter's mother do anything? Emphasize that these rules were government policy, not just school rules. Discuss:
 - What changes did Walter notice after Kristallnacht?
 - What happened to the teacher and the principal at Walter's school? Why do you think they were taken away?
 - How did the "good Nazi" help Walter and his family?
 - Why do you think Walter says the man was a good Nazi, "if there is such a thing"?
 - In your opinion, what was the most difficult experience Walter had to endure?
 - Why do you think the grandmother's neighbor wanted to help Walter's family, even though he belonged to a political party that actively preached hatred of Jews? (*Although the neighbor was prejudiced against Jews, the grandmother did not fit his negative stereotype of a Jew. Because he knew and liked her, he saw her as different from other Jews that he had only heard or read about.*)
 - In your opinion, is a person who helps others whom he knows personally, while carrying out actions that violate the rights of those he does not know, a "good" person? Explain.
- This activity was taken from Lesson 1 of *The Holocaust: A North Carolina's Teacher's Resource*: <http://www.unctv.org/content/sites/default/files/HolocaustGuide.pdf>

Homework: Pack Your 20 Pound Bag

14. Stop the Power Point on Slide 21. For homework, instruct students to imagine that they will be leaving home without any idea of when (or if) they might return. Tell students that they are allowed to bring only one bag of personal items with them (approximately the size of a back-pack, no larger); the bag cannot weigh more than 20 pounds. Remind students that they do not necessarily know where they are going, how long they will be gone, or whether they will return to their homes at all. Given this, what would be most important to pack? Promote student thought by asking:

- What personal items are most important to you?
- Which items in your home have the greatest sentimental value?
- Which items bring you comfort?
- What do you need or use the most?

15. Tell students that they should consider these questions then pack a bag with their choices of items and bring it to school tomorrow. (If a particular item that a student would pack is very valuable, students may want to consider packing a substitute item –something similar in size and shape- to convey reality but keep valuables safe at home.)

➤ **Variation:** Rather than have students actually pack a bag and bring it to school, students can pack the bag, list all of the items they packed on notebook paper then write a narrative describing why they packed these particular items. While students won't actually bring their bag to school, it is still important that they actually pack it at home in order to get a realistic sense of just how little they would be able to bring with them.

Day 2

16. At the beginning of class, allow students to share what they packed and discuss their process of deciding what to pack. (Teachers may choose to have students consider these questions in a written reflection as well.)

- Was it hard deciding what to pack? Why or why not?
- How did you make the choices you made? What was more important to you when choosing, monetary value or sentimental value and why?
- What were you forced to leave behind?
- How do you think you would feel knowing that what is in this bag is all you may ever see of your home again?
- We know that Jews and other “non-Aryans” targeted by the Nazis were forced to do just this – Nazis would show up at their door and force them from their homes, only allowing them to take a small bag. While we try to imagine what this would feel like in reality, to have soldiers at your door telling you to pack a bag and get ready to leave for no reason, is it possible to *really* understand the emotions one would go through? Explain.

17. Next, as a review of the previous lesson, project Slide 22 of the Power Point and discuss:

- What do you see? (students should point out visual pieces of the cartoon such as symbols, text, objects, etc.)
- What is the political cartoon intended to illustrate?
- What message is the artist attempting to convey?
- What evidence is there that Hitler and the Nazis were extinguishing German civilization?
- Who might have drawn such a cartoon/held such an opinion as represented here?

18. Explain to students that they will continue learning about the Holocaust and will be focusing on the final actions Hitler and the Nazis took in an attempt to completely exterminate all they viewed as “different.” Again, explain to students that much of what they see and hear may be upsetting and remind them that they are free to ask questions and express opinions throughout the remainder of the Power Point. At three various times throughout the discussion of these slides, have three different volunteers read the attached #4, #5, & #6 testimony excerpts. This will offer further insight into the experience of Jews, as well as remind students that they are learning about the experiences of human beings, not just lifeless statistics.

19. Have students return to their notes and discuss the remainder of the slide (Slides 23-36) in the Power Point. Once finished, debrief:

- What are you left thinking or feeling after this overview of the Holocaust? What questions do you still have?
 - What do you find most surprising about the Holocaust?
 - Why do you think the Holocaust occurred? What was lacking in societies across the world to allow such a travesty to take place?
 - As we learn about the Holocaust, it is normal to be angered and saddened by such a travesty taking place. Yet, if we let our anger and resentment get the best of us, or if we are so overcome by sadness that we are frozen in place, hatred exhibited by people like Hitler wins. What can we do, as individual citizens, to honor the victims of the Holocaust?
20. Give students the attached *End of the Holocaust* handout to read individually or in partners. (This can also be done as homework.)

Culminating Activity – Blended Poetry

21. Provide students with printouts of Holocaust survivor testimonies, or allow students to review survivor testimonies online (if this option is used, it is recommended to preselect the sites students are allowed to search; otherwise, searching the Holocaust broadly on the Internet can expose students to many disturbing and inappropriate images.) As students read through various testimonies and learn more regarding the Holocaust through the first-hand accounts, instruct them to select one that they are most moved by or drawn to. Students should then highlight phrases of the testimony that they find most meaningful (explain to students that there is not right or wrong; they should just follow their intuition and underline words and parts of sentences that strike them in some way.) Students will then take the phrases they have highlighted and blend them with their own words to make a “blended poem.” Student words may be responses to the survivor words or may be creative phrases that they feel will add to the creativity or impact of their poem. The final “blended poem” should be in the following format:

Title

By <<Student Name>> and <<Survivor Name>>

Survivor phrase

Student phrase

Survivor phrase

Student phrase...

22. Teachers may want to impose a minimum number of lines for completed poems as well as teach students poetic writing strategies, such as refrains, rhythm, alliteration, etc. Allow students to share in small groups and then display their blended poems in class once complete.

Resources

- North Carolina Council on the Holocaust: http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/holocaust_council/
- For additional activities for the Holocaust, including North Carolinian survivor testimonies, go to <http://www.unctv.org/content/sites/default/files/HolocaustGuide.pdf>
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org>
- Tennessee Commission on Holocaust Education: <http://www.tennesseeholocaustcommission.org>
- Auschwitz, Inside the Nazi State, The North Carolina Connection: <http://www.unctv.org/content/auschwitz>
- Literature of the Holocaust: <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/holhome.html>

YOU ARE THERE

It's late in the afternoon on a weekday. You are home after school watching television. You hear people making loud noises outside on the street, so you get up and look out the window. You see people being marched down your street, at gunpoint by men in uniforms. The people are your neighbors. You also recognize some of the men in uniform. One of them works at the grocery store where your family shops. One of the people being marched down the street is the lady from the corner house with her two kids. "What's going on?" you call out to people walking quickly by on the street.

"Never mind," says one.

"Don't ask," says someone else.

"It doesn't concern you," says a third person. Then the street is deserted again.

The next day at school you notice several empty seats in your English class. By the end of the week more kids are missing. None of your friends seem to know where any of them have gone. Then one of your teachers disappears, replaced by a substitute. No one knows why. "Never mind," they say. "A new teacher will come. Maybe she'll give less homework."

Then one Saturday you call a friend to see about going to a movie. The phone rings and rings. Finally a recorded message comes over the line: "Sorry—this number is no longer in service." You hurry over to your friend's house. The door is open. Strangers are carrying away furniture that belongs to your friend's family. Your friend is nowhere around. You step into the house, but a police officer stops you. "Sorry," he says. "This house is off limits. It now belongs to the government."

"But why?" you say.

"The people who lived here have been taken away," he says.

"What did they do wrong?" you ask.

"People like them, they didn't have to do anything wrong to get in trouble. Now if I were you, I'd move along and not ask any more questions."

Taken from Lesson 1 of *The Holocaust: A North Carolina's Teacher's Resource* by Linda Scher
(<http://www.unctv.org/content/sites/default/files/HolocaustGuide.pdf>)

Name: _____

Holocaust Notes

1. The **Holocaust** happened in Europe from _____ to _____. This was only _____ years ago!
2. Germany was very unstable before 1933 (after WW I). In what ways was Germany unstable?
 - a. The German people were upset about losing _____,
 - b. They felt _____ and _____ were hard to find,
 - c. They hoped the _____ would solve their problems,
 - d. And they were suspicious of people who they thought were _____.
3. How did the Versailles Treaty affect the Germans?
4. How did the Great Depression affect Germany?
5. The German unemployment rate went as high as _____% in the 1930s. People were unable to pay their bills. It took a lot of money to buy food, so most families were hungry.
6. In 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. Why did the German people support him?
7. From 1933-1938, Hitler and the Nazi's declared a "_____." This allowed them to do things such as

_____.
8. Adolf Hitler took control of Germany. He called himself the _____.
9. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis wanted to create a _____. They called the master race the _____. What characteristics did a "perfect Aryan" have?
10. What types of people did the Nazis deem inferior? Why do you think they targeted these groups?

11. In what ways were these people mistreated?

12. Why did Germans join the Nazi party?

13. How were people your age, German and Jewish, affected by Nazis?

14. The Nazis used a lot of _____ to gain support from the German people. What are some examples of this?

15. What happened on "Kristallnacht," translated as _____?

16. To gain power, in 1939 Germany invaded _____. By 1941, they had also over taken _____, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, _____, and Norway.

17. What was the "Final Solution," decided upon in 1942?

18. What were death camps? The largest death camp was _____.

19. The Allies won World War II in _____. How many people had been killed in the Holocaust by that point? _____

Reflect

As we learn about the Holocaust, it is normal to be angered and saddened by such a travesty taking place. Yet, if we let our anger and resentment get the best of us, or if we are so overcome by sadness that we are frozen in place, hatred exhibited by people like Hitler wins. What can we do, as individual citizens, do to honor the victims of the Holocaust?

FACT—NOT FANTASY: WALTER IN GERMANY

At first I went to public school like everyone else in my town, but I was not permitted to say “Heil Hitler” or wear a uniform. This set me apart from the rest of my classmates. I had to attend school parades and listen to propaganda speeches.

The attitude towards Jewish people became worse as time went on. The other students were told not to socialize with Jews. The teachers were not supposed to speak to our parents. In 1937 we were separated from other German children and placed in a school with children who were mentally handicapped.

On the day after Kristallnacht began, the first thing I noticed as I went to school that morning was that the Jewish shoe store downstairs had all the windows smashed. Glass and shoes were all over the street.

I went off to school and the first thing we were told in school was that the teacher would be late because the synagogue was burning and he had gone there. The next hour was uneventful. The teacher returned. Then some plainclothes men, I guess they were from the Gestapo, came and they took the teacher and the headmaster [principal] away and I went home.

Getting home, I found my mother in tears because two men had been up to our apartment and searched it. They had torn the curtains and a few pictures off the wall. I suppose they were looking for valuables. My mother was very upset.

My mother said, “Let’s go to Grandma’s” and that’s what we did. We went to the railroad station and took the train. My Grandma lived about an hour and a half away in a small village. Everything was calm there. There was a Nazi in uniform standing in front of Grandma’s house. He happened to be the next door neighbor. This man put on his Nazi uniform and stood in front of the house so that no one would do anything to Grandma. He looked out for us. So he was a good Nazi, if there is such a thing.

THEN AND NOW

After Kristallnacht, Walter applied for a visa to leave Germany. In 1939 he was able to go to England where a family friend lived. His mother also applied for an exit visa, which she received a few days before the war started. She was not allowed to use it. Walter never saw his mother or grandmother again. Both died in concentration camps. Walter immigrated to the United States when the war ended. He and his wife have lived in Greensboro, North Carolina since 1960.

Taken from Lesson 1 of *The Holocaust: A North Carolina’s Teacher’s Resource* by Linda Scher
<http://www.unctv.org/content/sites/default/files/HolocaustGuide.pdf>

Testimony Excerpts

(Teachers should copy, cut apart, and provide to various students for reading out loud intermittently through the lesson)

1. In the wintertime we were out sledding a lot, you know, and we would, since... they were those big sleds, you know, pulled by horses, you know, and we would hang on in the back to go sledding like this. We used to come in, our toes... because the winters were severe in Poland, you know. We used to come in the toes almost frozen off and the nose, the nostrils were like glued together from the frost, you know, but we came in and went out again. And then we were going skating a lot but of course we didn't have indoor skating arenas like here, the ice is nice and smooth. We usually were skating on frozen lakes or over the water. The ice was rough, you know. And I remember... that's what I remember.

Manya Friedman, born in Poland - 1925

Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum



2. Well I tell you, I was always a goodie-goodie girl. I'm not so nice now sometimes, but I always wanted to please my parents, always wanted to please my teachers and I enjoyed everything. I was glad to... always wanted to know, always anxious to learn. When my oldest brother went to the university to be an engineer, electrical engineer, and I thought, "Oh, he's going to build planes, that's what I want to do." And I, I really was dreaming to be engineer as a child. So there was really not a thing that I didn't enjoy. I loved to sing, I loved to dance, I loved to belong to the Zionist organization, to Maccabi, to do sports, to play the piano, to do many things. And I enjoyed to study, I really did.

Nesse Godin, Lithuania 1928



3. I remember all the beautiful holidays. Holidays were very special, very special. The Holy Holidays, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur...we children could hardly wait the day should be over. You know, it's long services here, but can you imagine in Europe? You went in the morning, you stayed till night. We children, it was made arranged that we could go somewhere and eat lunch on Yom Kippur.

Nesse Godin, Lithuania 1928

Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum



4. On September 1 [1939], there was a bombing raid. It was a Saturday. They bombed City Hall, bombed the PKO (the central Polish bank) [...] and on September 18 the Germans entered. [I remember] many victims. A queue had formed to receive bread, and the Germans entered and killed everyone in the line. Jews, everyone - anyone standing in line. That was the first step made by the Germans in the city. Then the *aktionen* (deportations) started. They would grab people walking in the street and put them in a camp. There was a military base there. They would gather thousands and then demand ransom from the Jewish community.

Chava Goldmintz, describing the beginning of German occupation

Source: Yad Vashem Archives 0.3/11397

Testimony Excerpts (cont.)

5. Every day, we would receive several victims of harsh physical abuse by the Germans. People would often arrive with broken limbs, heads and faces smashed, so that it was hard to recognize them [...] On the streets, Jews were ordered to bow to the Germans. Every violation of this was severely punished. We had, in the hospital, a doctor named Tenenbaum, a man of 70 who was shortsighted. He was beaten on several occasions, because he did not see a passing German and so did not bow. He was once even pulled off a carriage and slapped. Searches, evictions and embezzlement were daily occurrences. They did not even respect the hospital, and would periodically break in and take anything they wanted – sheets, blankets etc.

**Francisca Mandelbaum , employed in a local
Jewish hospital in Nov. 1939**

Source: ZIH Archives M.49.E, #1295



6. The Jews lived in horrid conditions, under siege, with no heating: it was difficult just to get a loaf of bread. People in the ghetto lived life by the hour. Groups of Germans would come, stand on a corner street and watch these poor decrepit people, and all the while take photographs. Mobs crowded the streets, children would trade sweets and cigarettes. Jewish policemen, with their colorful hats would direct the traffic. Occasionally, a notorious German sentry would come with his attack dogs and everyone would flee.

[...] Trading foodstuffs was strictly forbidden, but smuggling thrived. All in the ghetto who had any money would buy smuggled food.

[...] People would not take off their clothing for months at a time, sleeping in their garments, since nighttime raids were frequent. Every house had a secret hiding place, and many of them were kept secret with ingenious contraptions: fake hollowed-out heaters, double walls, hidden clothes closets etc. Every house had someone on the lookout, to announce when danger was near. Still, the Germans knew how to get the victims out of their hiding places. Every day the women would come to Germans, begging for the release of their husbands, children, brothers, parents.

**Ida Rappaport-Glikstein describing a 1941
Lublin ghetto**

Source: I. Rappaport-Glikstein, "The Ghettos of Lublin and Majdan Tatarski," in Blumenthal, N. & Kozhan, M. (eds.), The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora. (Jerusalem-Tel-Aviv, The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora Publications, 1957) pp. 691-692. [Hebrew]



Name: _____

The End of the Holocaust

From 1944 to 1945: The Last Days

In the spring of 1945, the Allies won the war in Europe. Camps that were still being used were **liberated**. Their prisoners were now free. The soldiers who found the camps were shocked. Dead and dying people were everywhere. Many soldiers took photographs so other people would believe them later.

At some camps, the **local townspeople** were forced to visit the camps, so they would know what happened in their own community. Sometimes the soldiers even made the townspeople help bury the dead people. The soldiers wanted to make sure that no one could ever **deny** knowing about the murders.

What happened to the **perpetrators**—the people who participated in the killing? As the Allied troops approached, the Nazis and other people who helped them, called **collaborators**, tried to destroy **evidence** of their crimes. When time ran out, they fled or hid. Some even put on prisoner uniforms and pretended to be prisoners, but they looked too healthy! Some of the perpetrators were caught by the troops. Some committed suicide. Some were tortured by their victims in revenge, but many went back to their “normal lives” and denied what they did during the war. Some escaped to other countries. They began new lives with new names and a made-up story about their past.

From 1946 to 1948: The Aftermath of the Destruction

The exact number of innocent people killed in the Holocaust will never be known. When people worry about how many million people died, they sometimes forget that every single person who died had someone who loved her or him. Think about how much it hurts when a friend or family member dies. *Now think about how you would feel if all of your friends and family died.* For many people, the Holocaust means the time when all of their friends and family were killed. For most of us, that is impossible to imagine.

People who lived through the Nazi efforts against them are called “Holocaust survivors.” At the end of the war, they could not just return to their lives before this period. Most had lost everything—their family members, their homes, their furniture, their money. Some children were so young that they did not remember their own names! Places called “Displaced Persons Camps”—or DP camps—were set up to help family members find each other, and to provide a temporary place for people to live. Trying to rebuild a “normal” life was difficult for the Holocaust survivors.

Life after the war was different for the perpetrators. The ones who fled the country often created a new life for themselves. Many moved to the United States and Canada. Others returned to their homes and did not talk about their actions during the war.

A few Nazi leaders were tried for the crimes in the “Nuremberg Trials.” They were charged with “crimes against humanity.” Several, including Adolf Hitler, killed themselves at the end of the war before the trials began. Twenty-one men were tried in the first set of trials. Most of them, when asked, said they

were “just following orders.” Of this group, 14 were sentenced to death by hanging. Later, another series of trials were held for 185 more people who were involved in these crimes. Of the thousands of people required to kill millions, very few were ever charged with a crime.

From 1945 to Now: Remembering the Past to Protect the Future

Each person who **witnessed** the Holocaust had a different experience. Some people were **victims**. Other people were **bystanders**. Some bystanders looked away and pretended they did not see such horrible things. Other bystanders were afraid for their own safety. Some people tried to help the victims. These people are called **rescuers**. They risked their lives to save others. Finally, the Nazis and their collaborators committed the millions of crimes that are known as the Holocaust.

To understand the Holocaust more, read about different people’s experiences. Think about the decisions each person made. Think about decisions you hope you would make in similar situations. The Holocaust was not **inevitable**. People decided to act or not act in ways that allowed this tragedy to happen. Many people believe that times like the Holocaust will happen again unless we learn from this horrible part of history. We need to treat each other with respect, and help each other through hard times. By remembering what happened in the past, we can help protect the future.

Source: Center for Literary Studies’ *Lessons from the Holocaust*: <http://www.cls.utk.edu/pdf/holocaust/sectionb.pdf>

Edmund Burke, a British statesman, said: “All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win is for good men to do nothing.”

Based on this quote and what you read above, in what ways can we ensure such a tragedy does not plague our own community? Answer in a paragraph or more: