

Essential Questions:

- What was the Holocaust?
- How can unfair treatment of people grow into something very dangerous?
- What can we learn from the choices people made during this time?
- Why is it important to learn about people who were affected by the Holocaust?

Subjects

Multidisciplinary

Grades

5-8

Lesson Objectives:

- Define the Holocaust and related terms
- Identify basic causes and events that led to the Holocaust.
- Understand that Jewish people and other groups were unfairly targeted.
- Learn about the Holocaust through the stories of real people.
- Discuss how people responded to unfairness and danger.
- Reflect on how we can stand up for others and treat people fairly today.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

This lesson provides a gentle introduction to the Holocaust through storytelling and visual timelines. Designed to build empathy and historical understanding without overwhelming students, it emphasizes the human impact over graphic content. Teachers are encouraged to create a safe and respectful space and prepare students for emotionally sensitive material. This version avoids graphic descriptions and focuses on courage, dignity, and humanity during tragic times. Teaching strategies are suggested in the lesson sequence; however please use other options if they support the learning needs of your students.

Note for Teachers: Before beginning any unit or lesson on the Holocaust, we highly recommend closely reviewing the USHMM [Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust](#). We also highly encourage creating a safe and respectful learning environment by engaging your

students in the activities provided by Facing History's guide "[Fostering Civil Discourse: Difficult Classroom Conversations in a Diverse Democracy](#)".

EXTERNAL LINKS

- [Essential Topics to Teach About the Holocaust](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about the Holocaust for Educators](#)
- [Students' Toughest Questions](#)
- [Resource Evaluation Rubric](#)
- [Echoes and Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- [USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [Holocaust Definitions](#)
- [Years: 1933-1945](#)
- [Individual Profiles](#)
- [Historical Events](#)

LESSON SEQUENCE

WARM-UP & DISCUSSION

Note to Teachers: Prior to beginning the lesson with students, place the [1933-1945](#) timeline cards around the classroom.

Ask students what they already know about the Holocaust.

Distribute [Holocaust Definitions](#) worksheet to students. Have students compare the definitions and discuss:

- What words or ideas are new or confusing?
- What is similar in the definitions? What differences do you notice?
- Who are the victims? Who are the perpetrators?

INDIVIDUAL PROFILES

Give each student (or pair) an [Individual Profile Card](#).

- What is the name of the person on your card?

- How old was this person during the time of the Holocaust?
- Why was this person targeted by the Nazis? What happened to them?
- What part of this person's story stands out to you most?
- Why is it important to learn individual stories, not just facts and dates?
- How do personal stories help us care more deeply?

Have students find the year mentioned on their card and place the person on the timeline posted on the walls.

ANALYZING

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Distribute a [Historical Events card](#) to each student

After reading and sharing about their event in pairs or groups, have students explain the significance of this event in relation to the Holocaust.

- What happened during this event, and who was affected by it?
- Why do you think this event was important in the story of the Holocaust?
- If you had lived during this time, how do you think this event would have changed your life?

Ask students to place their event card on the timeline and explain its importance to the class.

GALLERY WALK

Have students walk along the timeline to see how people's lives were changed by laws and events.

Discuss with students:

- Can you trace the person from your profile card through the timeline?
- What laws and events shaped their experience?
- What does their story teach us about life during the Holocaust?
- What do these stories and events teach you about how hatred can grow over time?
- Which events on the timeline seem like turning points? Why? What changed after this event?
- How do these events help you understand the bigger picture of what was happening across Europe?
- What early warning signs can we look for today?

CROSS CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

- **ELA:** Write a historical fiction diary entry or short story inspired by one of the profile cards or historical events.
- **Geography:** Map activity showing the spread of Nazi control across Europe and how Jews were impacted differently by region.
- **Propaganda Analysis:** Explore Nazi propaganda and connect it to the Pyramid of Hate.
- **Visual Arts:** Create symbolic artwork inspired by survivor testimonies, Kristallnacht images, or the idea of "resistance through remembrance."
- **Music:** Introduce songs written in ghettos or camps and discuss music as resistance or memory.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Reflective circle or journaling. "How does learning this history make you feel?" "What kind of person do I want to be when I see injustice?"

STANDARDS

Insert State Standards Here

