

## Three Day Unit Plan

### Essential Questions:

- How can studying the Holocaust help us recognize early warning signs of genocide and mass atrocity?
- What conditions, ideologies, and ideas made the Holocaust possible?
- How did the Nazi regime manipulate laws and social systems to implement genocide?
- What factors determine whether someone becomes a bystander, perpetrator, rescuer, or resistor in times of injustice?
- How do personal narratives and survivor testimonies shape our understanding of historical events?
- What lessons can be learned from the Holocaust to combat contemporary forms of discrimination and hate?

### Subjects

Multidisciplinary

### Grades

9-12

### Lesson Objectives:

- Understand the historical causes and progression of the Holocaust.
- Analyze how individuals and communities responded to oppression during the Holocaust.
- Explain how the experiences of Holocaust victims varied based on time, place, and circumstances.
- Analyze the role of propaganda, laws, and social norms in shaping public opinion and policy during the Holocaust.
- Evaluate primary sources, including survivor testimonies, to understand the human impact of Nazi policies.
- Apply lessons from the Holocaust to analyze modern instances of prejudice, hate, discrimination, and genocide.

## BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

Teachers often have limited time to teach about the Holocaust. This presents challenges to ensuring the content, context, and complexity are adequately addressed. It's important for the students to know that this unit is not a comprehensive study of the Holocaust. Instead, these lessons are intended to give students a window into the history and the choices made that contributed to genocide. This unit is intentionally flexible to allow for modifications. Teaching strategies are suggested in the unit sequence, however please use other strategies if they better support the learning needs of your students.

Note to Teachers: Before beginning any lessons 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

- [Pyramid of Hate](#)
- ["Step By Step: Phases of the Holocaust"](#)
- [Individual Profiles Timeline Cards](#)
- [Photograph of the Boemestrasse Synagogue](#)
- [The Kristallnacht Pogrom Reading](#)
- [Diary Entry from the Lodz Ghetto](#)
- [How Should We Study the Final Solution?](#)
- [Holocaust Survivors' Reflections and Hopes for the Future](#)

**UNIT SEQUENCE****DAY ONE**

Introduce students to the [Pyramid of Hate](#), discussing examples that illustrate the progression through each part of the pyramid.

Break students into small groups, and provide each with a sheet of chart paper on which they can replicate the Pyramid of Hate. Have the groups work to identify two to three examples for each section of the pyramid, writing them in the corresponding section of the Pyramid.

Post each groups' poster around the room as part of a [Big Paper activity](#). As students view their peers' posters, have them add sticky notes with their own reactions or questions they may have onto that groups' poster. Have students look at:

- Which sections of the pyramid are mainly actions taken by individuals?
- Which sections focus on acts by a government or groups working for a government?
- Do events always follow an upward progression or are they nonsequential (ie: do acts of discrimination always precede violence or can the order vary)?
- Do all event on the Pyramid occur in every genocide?  
Can a genocide take place if some steps do not occur?

Show students the video "[Step By Step: Phases of the Holocaust](#)" (6:45) with the accompanying comprehension and reflection questions:

- According to the video, what are the different phases of the Holocaust?
  - What role did laws, propaganda, and social exclusion play in preparing the ground for mass violence? What are some examples from the video that illustrate these tactics?
  - What choices did individuals and groups have at different points in the Holocaust's progression? What factors influenced their decisions?
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- Why is it important to study the Holocaust in phases rather than as a single event? How does this connect with what we studied about the Pyramid of Hate?
- How does this video challenge or deepen your understanding of the Holocaust?

Extension Activity: [How Does Hate Escalate? An Examination of the Past & Present](#) (iWitness)

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## DAY TWO

Assign an [Individual Profile](#) card to each student, having them underline or highlight the major events that impacted that person's experience during the Holocaust. As a class, discuss what can be learned by looking at a single person's experiences and what they reveal about the Holocaust.

Project the [photograph](#) of the burning of the Boemestrasse Synagogue in Frankfurt, Germany in November 1938 without providing any contextual information. In pairs, have students discuss:

- What do you notice in this image? (Focus on details like the smoke, flames, people's reactions, uniforms, and setting.)
- What emotions or messages do you think this image conveys? (Who took the photo, who is in it, and what they might be feeling?)
- What might have led to this event, and what do you think could happen next? (Hypothesize about historical context and consequences based on what they observe.)

After discussing students' responses, explain the context of the photograph and the events of Kristallnacht. This can be done through [lecture](#), [video](#), or a [reading on Kristallnacht](#). Use this information as part of a class discussion.

- Where on the Pyramid of Hate would you place the events of Kristallnacht? Explain.
  - What was the significance of the destruction of cultural institutions, such as synagogues?
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- What message did this communicate to Jewish people?  
To German society as a whole?

**Teacher Note:** It is helpful to define the term *pogrom* to students as “an organized massacre of helpless people; in this case a massacre of Jews”.

Extension Activity: [Democracy Crumbled? Why was German society vulnerable to the rise of Nazism?](#) (iWitness)

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### DAY THREE

Distribute the handout [How Should We Study the Final Solution?](#) Have students, individually or in pairs, explain how they interpreted the poem in light of the statistics on the Final Solution. Discuss the importance of recognizing “the one” rather than just statistics of the masses, making connections back to their individual profiles they analyzed last class.

Have students read the [Diary Entry from the Lodz Ghetto](#), written by Josef Zelkowicz, a journalist who documented ghetto life and who perished in Auschwitz in 1944. As a class, discuss the following:

- How would you respond to Zelkowicz’s question - *do you have any children at all in the ghetto?*
- What phrase in the diary stood out to you the most? Explain..
- How would you contrast what childhood is “supposed to be” with the reality for children in the ghetto? How do you think ghetto existence changed children?

**Teacher Note:** Students may benefit from a [reading on the ghettos](#)

Listen to the 15-minute podcast episode, [Holocaust Survivors’ Reflections and Hopes for the Future](#). Have students select the survivor whose comments resonated the most with them. Using these comments, as well as the information learned in the last three classes, have students explain why they think it is important to study how and why the Holocaust happened.

Extension Activity: [Yitskhok Rudashevski: A Teenager’s Account of Life and Death in the Vilna Ghetto](#) (Yivo)

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**CROSS CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS****English/Language Arts**

- **Literature as Resistance:** Read excerpts from *Night*, *Maus*, or *Salvaged Pages*. Compare these to the Diary Entry from the Lodz Ghetto already in the lesson plan. Have students reflect on the emotions and realities these texts convey and why it is important to hear these voices.
- **Rhetorical Analysis:** Study Nazi propaganda versus resistance writings. Analyze persuasive techniques and compare them to modern media influence.

**Social Studies/Civics**

- **How Democracies Collapse:** Analyze how the democratic Weimar Republic weakened, allowing for Nazi control, and reflect on the warning signs for democratic erosion today.
- **Geography:** Use maps to track the expansion of Nazi-occupied Europe and deportation routes, connecting geography to historical events.
- **Legal Studies:** Explore the Nuremberg Trials, the concept of crimes against humanity, and modern international laws addressing genocide.
- **Comparative Genocide Studies:** Connect the Holocaust to other genocides (e.g., Armenian Genocide, Rwandan Genocide, Cambodian Genocide) to examine patterns of discrimination, dehumanization, and global responses.
- **Civic Responsibility:** Investigate contemporary hate movements and discuss how democratic institutions can prevent history from repeating itself.

**Psychology & Sociology**

- **Propaganda and Group Think:** Examine the psychological techniques behind Nazi propaganda and the role of conformity, obedience, and groupthink in shaping public attitudes.
  - **Eugenics:** Examine the pseudoscience of eugenics and its influence on Nazi racial policies. Discuss how the
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Nazis used eugenics to justify forced sterilizations, euthanasia programs, and the persecution of targeted groups.

### Science & Mathematics

- **Medical Ethics:** Discuss Nazi medical experiments, the Nuremberg Code, and ethical standards in human experimentation today.
- **Technology:** Investigate the role of IBM's punch card technology in Nazi record-keeping and modern issues of data ethics and surveillance.
- **Statistics & Data Interpretation:** Analyze numbers related to deportation, camp populations, and survival rates. Compare Holocaust statistics with other mass atrocities.
- **Genetics:** Research contemporary debates in genetics and bioethics, such as CRISPR technology and designer babies, to discuss how societies balance scientific advancement with ethical considerations.

### Art & Music

- **Art as Resistance:** Study artwork created in ghettos and concentration camps, such as children's drawings from Terezín, and discuss how art serves as a form of defiance and documentation.
- **Music of the Holocaust:** Explore compositions created by Jewish musicians in camps and ghettos and analyze lyrics for themes of resistance and hope.

## STANDARDS

- **6.2.12.CivicsHR.4.a:** Analyze the motivations, causes, and consequences of the genocides of Armenians, Ukrainians, Jews in the Holocaust and assess the responses by individuals, groups, and governments and analyze large-scale atrocities including 20th century massacres in China.
- **6.2.12.CivicsPI.4.b:** Assess government responses to incidents of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

- **6.2.12.HistoryUP.4.c:** Compare and contrast the actions of individuals as perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers during events of persecution or genocide, and describe the long-term consequences of genocide for all involved.
  - **6.2.12.HistoryCC.4.g:** Use a variety of resources from different perspectives to analyze the role of racial bias, nationalism, and propaganda in mobilizing civilian populations in support of “total war.”
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