

Lesson
Duration:
One 50-minute class period

Learn the History: Anti-Jewish Measures in Moshe Flinker's Diary

Learning Objectives

In this lesson students will compare the implementation of anti-Jewish measures in the two locations Moshe Flinker lived during the Holocaust: the Netherlands and Belgium. By considering the experiences of Jews in both places, students will gain an understanding of how Nazi policy differed in various countries. They will also learn how individuals assessed this information and weighed other factors in order to try to survive.

Educators and students are encouraged to read the introduction to Moshe Flinker's diary in *Salvaged Pages*, pages 90–98. It provides valuable information about the writer's life and a historical context for a reading of the diary.

Overview

Core diary entries from *Salvaged Pages* used in this lesson: Moshe Flinker, November 24, 1942

This lesson was initially drafted by Holocaust educator Bonnie Sussman.

The Nazis used repressive measures against Jews for many purposes. Motivated by antisemitic ideology and the notion that Jews were to blame for the problems befalling Germany and Europe, as a whole, the Nazis gradually excluded Jews from civil and public life. They stripped them of their livelihood, circumscribed their movements, and terrorized them.

Moshe Flinker, born in The Hague, fled with his family to Belgium in 1942. His father hoped that the family would stand a better chance of survival in Belgium than in their native Netherlands. Passing as a non-Jew in Brussels, he recorded in his diary many details about the experiences of his fellow Jews who were experiencing the full brunt of dehumanizing legal policies and discriminatory practices.

Focus Questions

One of the first actions taken by Adolf Hitler when he came to power in 1933 was to begin passing measures restricting all aspects of Jewish life in Germany. As war engulfed Europe, the Nazis imposed these anti-Jewish decrees on the populations of occupied nations, which ultimately set the stage for the implementation of the Holocaust.

- How do a nation's laws reflect its values?

- What is the difference between laws that appropriately regulate civil conduct and restrictions that threaten to put democracy at risk? How should citizens respond when law is used to turn “us” against “them”?

Activities

Opener: Read from the Diary of Moshe Flinker

November 24, 1942 [Kislev 15, 5703]

For some time now I have wanted to note down every evening what I have been doing during the day. But, for various reasons, I have only got round to it tonight. First, let me explain why I am doing this, and I must start by describing why I came here to Brussels.

I was born in The Hague, the Dutch Queen’s city where I passed my early years peacefully. I went to elementary school and then to a commercial school, where I studied for only two years. In [May] 1940, when the Germans entered Holland, I had another two years to go until graduation. They issued a decree forbidding Jewish students to attend schools staffed by gentile (“Aryan”) teachers, and so I was prevented from finishing my course. The exclusion of Jews from public schools is just one of a long list of restrictions: they had been forced to hand over their radios, they were not allowed into the movies, et cetera.

In the big cities, where many Jews lived, special schools for Jews were opened, with only Jewish teachers. One such school was opened in The Hague. . . During the year I attended [1941–1942], the number of restrictions on us rose greatly. Several months before the end of the school year we had to turn in our bicycles to the police. From that time on, I rode to school by streetcar, but a day or two before the vacations started Jews were forbidden to ride on streetcars. . . .

[. . .] I forgot to mention that during that year [May 1942] we had been forced to sew a “Badge of Shame” on the left side of our outer clothing. This “Badge” was a Star of David, on which the word “Jew” was written in Dutch.¹

Ask students to reflect upon what Moshe describes. What was new information? What anti-Jewish measures does he discuss? How did these laws directly affect his daily life? What words would students use to describe the experience that Moshe writes about? What questions do they have from this entry?

If the class has already spent time understanding the laws and policies that were implemented under the Nazi occupation, ask students to reflect upon Moshe’s entry in relationship to their prior knowledge. What was reinforced? What was unexpected?

If students are unfamiliar with anti-Jewish measures implemented by the Nazis, it is important for them to have background on the [Nuremberg Race Laws](#). These laws set the foundation for the anti-Jewish measures implemented in subsequent German-occupied nations including the

Netherlands. Students may also find it helpful to review the [summary on the German occupation and administration in the Netherlands](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Main Activity: Examining Anti-Jewish Measures in the Netherlands and Belgium

Understanding the oppressive laws of the German authority from the experiences of Moshe Flinker offers students a unique opportunity to learn history from a first-person account. It also allows diary entries from young writers during the Holocaust to be understood as valuable primary sources, which offer historical details and perspectives not found in other source material.

Using primary and secondary sources for historical comparisons and conclusions:

The Netherlands and Belgium were both occupied by German forces in May 1940. After receiving a deportation notice in July 1942, Moshe Flinker's father, Noah, made the decision to move his family, his wife, and seven children, from The Hague, Netherlands, to Brussels, Belgium. What can we learn about this experience from Moshe's diary? What outside source material can deepen our understanding of why Moshe's father believed Brussels was safer than The Hague for his family?

1. Have students return to the November 24, 1942, entry on the page above and read the entire entry. Ask students to mark significant details of why Moshe and his family left their home in The Hague. After reading this entry, what role do they believe anti-Jewish measures held in this decision?
2. Create a two-columned table labeling the first column "The Netherlands" and the second, "Belgium." Ask students to write in the appropriate column all the historically significant anti-Jewish measures that Moshe Flinker talks about in his November 24, 1942, diary entry.
3. Give students [Anti-Jewish Measures in The Netherlands and Belgium between 1940 and 1944](#). Discuss the similarities and the differences between the measures taken in the Netherlands and Belgium. What conclusions can students make about the experience of Jews in these two countries? Consider the similarities and differences between implementing and enforcing anti-Jewish laws in both the Netherlands and Belgium? What do students believe the Flinker family weighed in their decision to flee and live under false identities in Belgium?

Citations

1 : Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 98.

Extensions

Deeper Understanding: Responding to Anti-Jewish Measures

Two other entries, Moshe Flinker's Diary Entry on the Fear of Deportation, January 7, 1943, and Moshe Flinker's Diary Entry on Hiding, January 19, 1943 reflect the increasingly hostile climate of the time and Moshe Flinker's perspective on how this affects him. Have students identify direct and inferred references to anti-Jewish measures and how Moshe Flinker responded to these restrictions.