



JUSTICE, LIFE, AND MEMORY AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

“There is a profound difference between history and memory...history is information. Memory, by contrast, is part of identity.”

– RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

PREPARING TO TEACH THIS UNIT

Below is information to keep in mind when teaching the content in this unit. This material is intended to help teachers consider the legacy of the Holocaust, the pursuit of justice, and how memory and memorialization impact our understanding of history.

- 1** Following the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany on May 8, 1945, the leaders of the Allies met at what became known as the Potsdam Conference to discuss postwar peace in Europe from July 17 to August 2, 1945. Part of the agreement reached between the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union was to conduct postwar trials for Nazi aggression and war crimes. This laid the foundation for the International Military Tribunal, also known as the Nuremberg Trials. Legal precedent, new laws, the codification of the crime of genocide, and hundreds of trials followed, some of which are still occurring today.
- 2** This unit seeks to ask difficult questions about the concepts of justice, the impact of trauma, memory, and memorialization. Students should come into this unit with considerable knowledge of the history of the Holocaust and be willing and encouraged to explore these abstract concepts. Challenge students to delve into these important topics and cultivate their curiosity and critical thinking skills.
- 3** The Holocaust and the lessons that were learned and not learned from it have impacted nearly every aspect of life. Psychological and sociological studies were inspired by the actions of human perpetrators during the Holocaust and those studies into human behavior continue today. Motivate students to ponder the actions of individuals, their role in the Holocaust, what it teaches us about human behavior, and inspire them to make connections to understanding how people act in today’s society.
- 4** Actions of memory and memorialization affect how we understand history, its place in our current world, and the impact it can have on our future. Help students recognize that memory and memorialization of the Holocaust also teaches us about the society in which memorials are created and in the communities in which this memory exists.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is for students to explore the concepts of justice, trauma, memory, memorialization, and human behavior. With a firm understanding of the events of the Holocaust, students are now tasked to understand the lasting effects the Holocaust has had on our understanding of human actions and how the way we remember the Holocaust impacts how we

comprehend its meaning. This unit challenges students to find value in the study of the Holocaust and empower them to contribute to its memory today and in the future.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is Justice? Is punishment necessary to achieve justice? How does the pursuit of justice build or rebuild important values in society?
- Is there a difference between justice and accountability? Is it possible to achieve justice when much of society has been damaged, particularly when crimes against humanity are committed?
- How did the trauma of the Holocaust impact the lives of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, the whole Jewish community, and the world?
- How did the Holocaust shape our understanding of humanity, including its influence on many academic subjects such as psychology, sociology, authority, medical ethics, and others?
- How have the creation of memorials and museums impacted our understanding of the Holocaust and what can these sites of memory teach us about the communities in which they were created?

OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Investigate the concept of justice through the lens of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and the effects of subsequent trials in the codification of crimes against humanity and genocide
- Analyze the response to justice by Nazi perpetrators through the transcript and memoir of Nazi perpetrator Rudolf Hoess
- Acknowledge the effect that trials had on motivating survivors to share their experiences of the Holocaust
- Examine the effect of trauma through the artistic expressions of survivors in artwork and poetry
- Interpret visual history testimony and other primary sources to foster empathy and gain understanding of these victims of trauma
- Recognize the tremendous impact of the Holocaust on all facets of human life, from academic studies in psychology and sociology to culture and our understanding of human nature
- Encounter various ways in which the Holocaust is remembered and how that memory shapes how we understand this catastrophic event