



ONE DAY LESSON PLAN: Introduction to the Holocaust

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and High School

ESTIMATED TIME: 45 Minutes, with a 45 Minute Extension

OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to the topic of the Holocaust with an emphasis on the role of antisemitism in creating the conditions that led to the Holocaust. Students define the Holocaust and antisemitism, and will be able to explain how antisemitism helped to create an environment that led to a genocide against the Jews of Europe.

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Review [Echoes & Reflections Pedagogical Principles \(handout\)](#)
- Preview the clips of testimony and [video toolbox](#) used in this lesson
- Preview the handouts used in this lesson
- Review [Students Toughest Questions](#)
- Optional: watch [“What Is the Holocaust?”](#)

OBJECTIVES

1. The students will be able to define the Holocaust and related terms, including “antisemitism.”
2. The students will be able to analyze visual history testimony related to the Holocaust.
3. The students will be able to understand how antisemitism helped to create an environment conducive to genocide.

MATERIALS

1. [Henry Oertelt Clip \(video\)](#)
2. [Holocaust Definitions \(handout\)](#)
3. [Holocaust Definitions: Sorting It Out \(handout\)](#)
4. [Video Toolbox on Antisemitism \(video\)](#)
5. [Definition of Antisemitism \(handout\)](#)
6. [Testimony Reflections \(handout\)](#)
7. [Margaret Lambert Clip #1 & Margaret Lambert Clip #2 \(video\)](#)
8. [Map of Jewish Communities Before the Nazi Rise to Power \(handout\)](#)
9. [Post-War Jewish Population Map \(asset link\)](#)

Note: the following terms may require definition for students. All of these words can be located in the Echoes & Reflections [Audio Glossary](#): *antisemitism, collaborator, European Jewry, genocide, Holocaust, ideology, Jehovah’s Witness, Nazi, prejudice, and stereotype.*

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the Holocaust?
2. What is antisemitism and what role did it play in the Holocaust?

LESSON PROCEDURES

1 The lesson objectives are shared.

2 Opening Activity

- Students review the bio and watch testimony from Holocaust survivor, [Henry Oertelt \(bio\)](#).
- After viewing the clip, the class discusses the following questions:
 - To what event is Henry referring? (Inform students that he is discussing the Holocaust and that this is the topic of this lesson.)
 - Henry says he learned “it is time for the people to recognize that the world is made out of many many different people; different colors, different sizes, and all kinds of differences. That is about time that we recognize that. It’s about time that we learn to live with it.” What do you think he means by this? Do you think this is a reason for us to learn about the Holocaust?
 - What was the Holocaust? What do you know about this historical event? What more would you like to know?

3 How do we define the Holocaust?

- In pairs or small groups, students review and discuss the definitions in the handout, [Holocaust Definitions](#), which includes overviews from three different organizations.
- Students will take notes and answer questions on the handout, [Holocaust Definitions: Sorting It Out](#).
- As a class, students discuss their observations and responses in order to discover common threads among the definitions and better understand the language used to define the Holocaust.

4 What is antisemitism?

- Students learn through teacher sharing that the Holocaust occurred because of Nazi ideology that was based on extreme racism, against Jews in particular. Hatred of Jews is called antisemitism. Students are asked what they currently know about antisemitism.
- Emphasize one/all of the following components of the definitions to illustrate the role antisemitism played in the Holocaust.
 - *“Between 1933 and 1945, Jews were targeted for discrimination, segregation and extermination. On coming to power in 1933, the Nazis began to actively persecute the Jews of Germany with the introduction of discriminatory legislation accompanied by vicious antisemitic propaganda.” (Imperial War Museum)*
 - *“The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were “racially superior” and that the Jews, deemed “inferior”, were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.” (USHMM)*
 - *“The primary motivation was the Nazis’ antisemitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and their property, followed by the branding and concentration of the Jewish population.” (Yad Vashem)*
- Students view the [Video Toolbox on Antisemitism](#) – time clip: 2:00 – 4:54

- Students receive and review the [Definition of Antisemitism](#) handout:
 - Students “turn and talk” with a classmate:
 - Discuss whether you have ever witnessed an incident of antisemitism? What happened?
 - What effect did this incident have on the victim? On you? On other bystanders?
 - How did the people present react, if at all?
 - If you haven’t witnessed such an incident, are you aware of any antisemitic abuse/attacks that have happened in the United States?

5 How did antisemitism affect the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust?

- Students discuss the effect antisemitism had on the Jews of Europe after the Nazis came to power.
- Students view testimony from [Margaret Lambert \(bio\) Clip #1](#) & [Margaret Lambert \(bio\) Clip #2](#). While viewing, students should take notes on the [Testimony Reflections](#) handout as they watch.
- After viewing the two clips of testimony, students discuss the following questions:
 - What does Margaret say motivated people to shun Jews after 1933? What role did the forces of social and peer pressure play during this period?
 - What did you notice about Margaret’s emotional response when she described the antisemitism she faced? What personal toll do you think persecution and isolation took on young people like Margaret?
- The handout of [Map of Jewish Communities Before the Nazi Rise to Power](#) is distributed.
 - Students should consider how many Jews were living in Europe just prior to Hitler’s rise to power.
 - Students interpret the map with guidance, including the fact that based on the very small percentage of Jewish people in the national populations; many Europeans had never met a Jew. (Note: the map also includes countries outside of Europe so this can be extended to those areas as well).
 - Students view the [second map](#) with guidance that depicts the estimated number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust. Upon review, class discusses the following questions:
 - What do you notice?
 - Choose a few countries where the numbers are dramatic (Poland, the Netherlands, Latvia). Were you aware that in some places over 90% of the Jewish population was eliminated? Are you surprised to hear this?
 - Students discuss the numerical impact of the Holocaust, with a focus on Europe.

6 Conclusion

- Students discuss as a whole class or complete an exit ticket on the following questions:
 - What was the effect of the Holocaust on the Jewish population of Europe?
 - In addition to the mass loss of human life during these years, what else do you think was lost as a result? (Communities, culture, Jewish life, education, growth, innovation etc. etc.)

7 Extension (For Block Schedule)

- Students visit the [Timeline of the Holocaust](#).
- In groups or individually, students examine a specific year between 1933 and 1938 to identify specific events that served to persecute and isolate Jews within society.
- After time for research, students share their findings (group presentations or gallery work format).
- Following the discussion/exploration, students discuss the following as a whole class:
 - Why was this time period key in escalating events that today we know as the Holocaust?
 - What could individuals/communities/nations have possibly done during this time to interrupt this escalation of hate?