



DAY TWO LESSON PLAN: Introduction to the Holocaust

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and High School

ESTIMATED TIME: 45 Minutes, with a 45 Minute Extension

OVERVIEW

This lesson extends student understanding of the Holocaust in the post-1938 period through liberation. Students examine primary and secondary resources to learn more about events of the Holocaust such as the ghettos, the “Final Solution” and liberation.

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](#)
- Review [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- Optional: watch [“What Is the Holocaust?”](#)

OBJECTIVES

1. The students will be able to define the Holocaust and related terms, including the “Final Solution.”
2. The students will be able to understand the phases that led to the “Final Solution.”
3. The students will be able to analyze visual history testimony related to the Holocaust.
4. The students will be able to recognize the impact of the Holocaust on American liberating forces.

MATERIALS

1. [Leon Bass Clip from the Liberator Toolbox \(3:50 – 4:44\) \(video\)](#)
2. [Leon Bass Clip from the Liberator Toolbox \(14:20- 14:54\) \(video\)](#)
3. [“Key Events to Examining the Holocaust” Cards for Group Activity \(handout\)](#)

Note: the following terms may require definition for students. All of these words can be located in the Echoes & Reflections [Audio Glossary](#): *Allies, antisemitism, collaborator, Einsatzgruppen, “Final Solution,” ghetto, Holocaust, ideology, resistance*

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How does antisemitism throughout Europe play a crucial role in the persecution and annihilation of six million European Jews between 1938 and 1945? What is antisemitism and what role did it play in the Holocaust?
2. What was the “Final Solution” and in what ways did the Nazis implement this plan?

LESSON PROCEDURES

1 Introduction

- The lesson objectives are shared.
- Students review definitions of antisemitism, the connection between antisemitism and Nazi ideology, and the definition of the Holocaust, from the Day 1 lesson.
- Students identify any lingering questions from Day 1 lesson.

2 Liberation by the Allies

- Students learn that Allied forces liberated the Nazi concentration and death camps. The Allied forces who participated in the liberation efforts were primarily from the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom. They had been fighting the Nazis from the East since June 1941 and landed in France in June 1944.
- Students view testimony from [Leon Bass](#) in the Video Toolbox on Liberation (3:50 – 4:44). Leon Bass’ bio available [here](#).
- Students turn to a classmate, and discuss the testimony that they have just seen, using this framework:
 - What questions do you have/what would you like to know more about based on the testimony?
 - Who were the “walking dead?” What happened to them?
 - What was this place, Buchenwald?
 - How did this happen? What transpired in Nazi-occupied Europe? How did the antisemitism of the early 1930s develop into mass genocide in a few short years?
- Students learn and discuss context/facts about the testimony. The American (and the British, Soviet etc.) liberators had been trained in combat. When they came to liberate these camps, they were shocked and unprepared to witness the humanitarian disaster that they encountered there. (Optional: show [Liberation Toolbox](#) from 1:01-3:51, which also makes this point.)

3 Key Events Leading to the “Final Solution”

- Students are introduced to the group activity designed to help them understand that the Holocaust did not happen suddenly, but was a progression/escalation. To explore the various steps in the process leading to genocide, students will engage with “[Key Events](#)” cards that represent a different event in the process that resulted in the “Final Solution.” (Note: The cards combine texts with photographs, as well as optional links to testimonies that students can watch on their devices if the situation allows.)
- Students are divided into groups of six (if possible) and receive a set of six “cards” for each group. Each student receives one card to analyze – first individually, and afterwards, with the entire group. For students in younger grades, it is suggested you remove the Einsatzgruppen card and also consider removing the Death Camps and Labor Camps card.

The topics of the cards are:

- Yellow Star - Humiliation of the Jews
- Ghettoization
- Deportation
- Einsatzgruppen
- Death Camps and Labor Camps
- Displaced Persons (DP) Camps

- Students each take one of the cards and examine it, trying to analyze what event/process it is showing.
- After students have had time to analyze their card, each student then explains his/her analysis of the specific card to the rest of the group. Together, the group tries to place the cards in chronological order. Where relevant, the group discusses any resistance (spiritual/cultural) that is shown or represented in the artifact, photo or testimony.
- Students reconvene as a full class to share and confirm the chronology of events and their implications. As helpful, the class can view the [Timeline of the Holocaust](#) to confirm chronology and events further.

Note: It is important to connect learning from the Day 1 lesson that examined antisemitism and Nazi ideology to this lesson of the progression leading to genocide, as the primary motivation for the Holocaust was the Nazis' antisemitic racist ideology. It is also important to note that while not all the Jews went through all the phases, in all the phases, the Germans received support and assistance from non-Germans (collaborators).

4. Conclusion

- Students view a testimony clip from [Leon Bass](#) in the Video Toolbox on Liberation (14:20- 14:54). Leon Bass' bio available [here](#).
- After viewing the clip, students participate in a whole group discussion in response to some of the following questions:
 - What does Leon Bass mean when he says, "Now I realized that all the pain and suffering was not relegated only to me and those like me; that pain can touch everybody, so many different kinds of people...and that changed me and made me know that we have a connection. That what happens to you can happen to me... And it's all because of bigotry and prejudice and all of that hate and antisemitism that was right there, it had been carried to the ultimate. And I knew that that was something we had to get rid of, because I had experienced it, you see. I had been told I wasn't good enough. And these same people in here were told by Nazi Germany that they weren't good enough, so they couldn't be allowed to live. So yeah, I became a different person. I knew we had to do something about that evil."
 - What does the phrase "Never Again" mean to you?

Note: The teacher may return to the discussion in the Day One lesson about why it is important to study the Holocaust.

5. Extension (For Block Schedule)

- Students complete the [Echoes & Reflections Student Activity: Why Didn't Antisemitism End After the Holocaust?](#)

Note: This activity requires advance set-up by the teacher. Learn more [at this link](#).