



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?



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](#).