

1

What was the Holocaust?

Objectives: Explain what the Holocaust was, where it took place, who was involved, and what happened during it.

Introduction

Directions: In the chart below, write in what you think is true about the Holocaust in the left-hand column and what you would like to know about the Holocaust in the middle column. Leave the final column blank for now.

What have you heard about the Holocaust that you think is true?	What would you like to know about the Holocaust?	What have you learned about the Holocaust that you did not know before?

Vocabulary

Directions: Read about the vocabulary words below, the answer the questions in the right hand column.

atrocious- an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving physical violence or injury.

1. Identify an event have you studied in history that could be called an **atrocious**? Why does this event qualify as an atrocious?

Genocide is a fairly new word. It was created by Raphael Lemkin who believed that the atrocities of the Holocaust needed a new name to describe them so he combined the prefix *geno-* meaning "race or tribe" with the suffix *-cide* which denotes killing.

After the Holocaust, an organization called the United Nations defined the term in the following way:

[G]enocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007043>

2. Why was the word **genocide** created?

anti-semitism- hostility to or prejudice against Jews



Poster for *The Eternal Jew* (1940), an anti-semitic German Nazi propaganda film

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3. Based on what you have already learned about Nazi Germany, give an example of an **anti-semitic** action taken by the regime.

What was the Holocaust?

After reading the text below and the rest of the article from the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's "Introduction to the Holocaust"](#), answer the questions below.

The **Holocaust** was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jewish people by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. *Holocaust* is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." 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.

1. Based on the article, what was the Holocaust?	4. What methods did the Nazis use to separate Jewish people and other targeted groups from the rest of the population?
2. How many Jewish people were killed during the Holocaust?	5. What methods did the Nazis use to carry out the extermination of Jewish people and other targeted groups?
3. What other groups were targeted during the Holocaust? Why did the German target the Jewish people and these groups?	6. What ended the Holocaust?

2

What happened during the Holocaust?

Objectives: Describe the events that led up to and took place during the Holocaust.



Watch the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's video The Path to Nazi Genocide \(16:09-end\)](#) and answer the questions below.

1. What were the goals of the Nuremberg Laws?	2. According to Nazism, what was the “driving force in history?”	3. Based on the video, which groups were identified as “racially inferior” and “unworthy of life” by the Nazis?
4. How did life in Germany change for Jewish people after 1933?	5. Give three examples of actions taken by the Nazis from 1933 to 1939 that were anti-semitic.	6. What was the goal of Nazi propaganda that targeted Jews?
7. What was <i>Kristallnacht</i> (“the night of broken glass”)?	8. What actions taken by the Nazis prevented Jewish people from leaving Germany?	9. After declaring war on Russia and invading Eastern Europe, the Germans segregated Jewish people into <i>ghettos</i>. In this context, what were ghettos?

In the video, the narrator reads the following statement from Heinrich Himmler, the Chief of the SS, a military group responsible for surveillance and terror in German occupied territory:

“This invasion is an ideological battle and a struggle of races. Here in this struggle stands National Socialism [Nazism]—an ideology based on the value of our Germanic, Nordic blood... On the other side stands a population of 180 million, a mixture of races whose very names are unpronounceable, and whose physique is such that one can shoot them down without pity and compassion...”

10. Based on this quote, what were Nazis taught about other races? How do you think this affected the way that they interacted with people that were different than them?

11. What was the job of the mobile killing squads in Eastern Europe?

12. Why were Jewish people in areas of Europe occupied by German “resettled” to Eastern Europe?

13. Describe what happened when Jewish people arrived at a concentration camp?

14. What was the purposes of “killing centers”?

15. How did people outside of Germany react to reports from allied forces who liberated the camps?

3

Who was responsible for the Holocaust?

Objectives: Discuss who was responsible for the Holocaust.

Introduction

Directions: Read the poem below, then answer the questions that follow.

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
 Because I was not a Socialist.
 Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
 Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
 Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
 Because I was not a Jew.
 Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

Poem by [Martin Niemöller](#) (1892–1984), a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps.

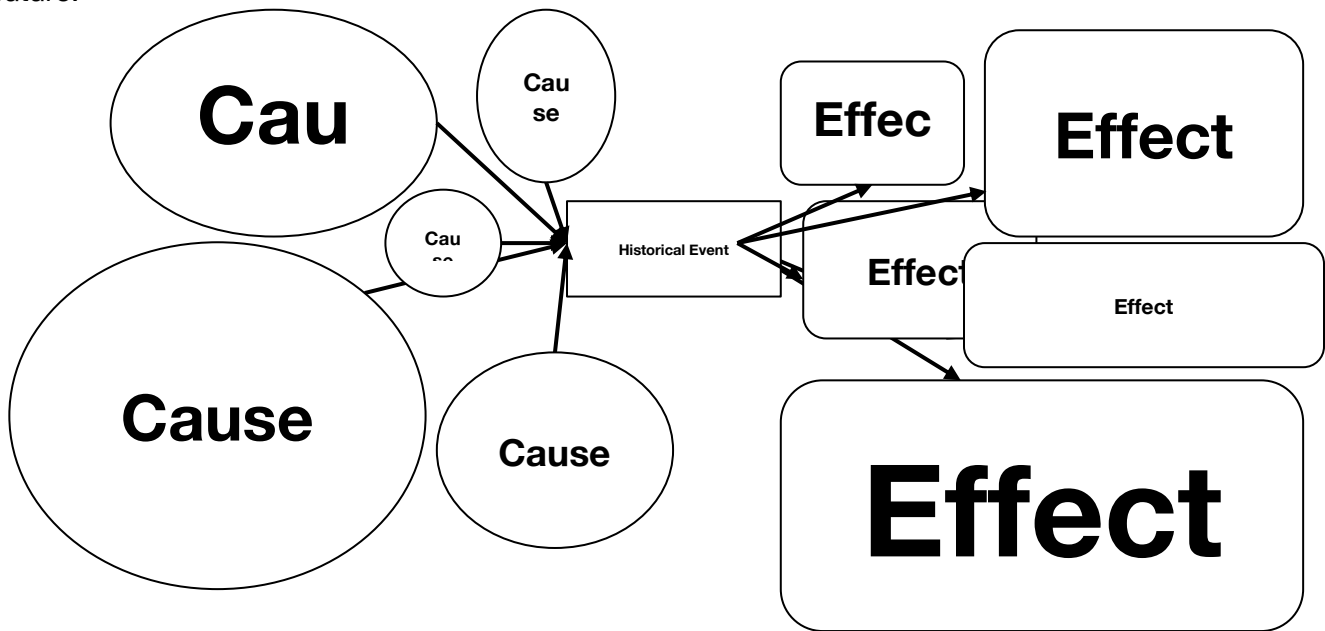
Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007392>

1. Which historical event is referenced in the poem above? Why do you think that?	2. Who do you think <i>they</i> are in the poem above? Why do you think that?	3. According the author this poem, who is responsible for the historical event that is referenced?

A Note about Multiple Causes and “The Blame Game”

History is complex. There is never just one cause or effect for any event, but much discussion in the field of history is devoted to investigating why things happened the way they did. In this lesson, you will investigate how complicated it can be to investigate who is responsible for an atrocity like the Holocaust.

Keep in mind that the Holocaust, like most events in history, was not inevitable. It occurred because of decisions made by millions of people before and during the event. Some of them had more power than others and a greater control over the course of events, but all contributed in some way to what happened. We investigate who is responsible, not to lay blame on one person or one group of people, but to show how an event like the Holocaust can take place, and to figure out how we might be able to prevent a similar event in the future.



External Activity:

[Some Were Neighbors: Deconstructing the Familiar Photo Activity from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.](#)

Please use the activity described on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website that is linked above to prompt students to think about the complexities of collaboration and complicity during the Holocaust.

The Nuremberg Trials



Watch this [excerpt from PBS Legacy of War: The Nuremberg Trials](#) and answer the questions below.

The **Nuremberg Trials** were a series of trials most notable for the prosecution of prominent members of the political, military and economic leadership of Nazi Germany. The trials were held in the city of Nuremberg, Germany, from 1945 to 1946, at the Nuremberg Palace of Justice. The first and best known of these trials was the Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal (IMT), which tried 24 of the most important captured leaders of Nazi Germany. It was held from November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946. The Nuremberg Trials were an attempt to bring to justice those leaders of Nazi Germany who were not only responsible for World War II, but also the Holocaust which was perpetrated against millions of people of Central and Eastern Europe.

Some 200 German war crimes defendants were tried at Nuremberg, and 1,600 others were tried under the traditional channels of military justice. Political authority for Germany had been transferred to the Allied Control Council, which having sovereign power over Germany, could choose to punish violations of international law and the laws of war. Because the court was limited to violations of the laws of war, it did not have jurisdiction over crimes that took place before the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.

Representatives from four Allied countries, Great Britain, the United States of America, France, and Russia served as prosecutors and judges.

The indictments were for:

1. Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of crime against peace
2. Planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace
3. War crimes
4. Crimes against humanity

Death sentences were carried out on Oct 16th 1946, and the prisoners sentenced to incarceration were transferred to Spandau Prison in 1947.

The Nuremberg trials initiated a movement for the establishment of a permanent international criminal court, eventually leading over fifty years later to the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

- The Conclusions of the Nuremberg trials served to help draft:
 - The Genocide Convention, 1948.
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
 - The Convention on the Abolition of the Statute of Limitations on War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, 1968.
 - The Geneva Convention on the Laws and Customs of War, 1949; its supplementary protocols, 1977.



German Commander of the Luftwaffe (German Air Force), Hermann Goering (1893 - 1946) during cross examination

Source: "Nuremberg Trials." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nuremberg_Trials

1. What was the purpose of the Nuremberg Trials?	2. What were the defendants on trial for?
3. What evidence was brought forth during the trial to support the indictments?	4. What were the effects of the Nuremberg Trials?



Regents Multiple Choice Check for Understanding

1. The Nuremberg laws are best described as
(1) efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to punish heresy
(2) major articles in the Declaration of the Rights of Man
(3) specific laws contained in Justinian's Code
(4) anti-Semitic laws of 20th-century Germany

3. A major result of the Nuremberg trials after World War II was that
(1) Germany was divided into four zones of occupation
(2) the United Nations was formed to prevent future acts of genocide
(3) the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established to stop the spread of communism
(4) Nazi political and military leaders were held accountable for their actions

2. Which important principle was established as a result of the Nuremberg trials?
(1) Defeated nations have no rights in international courts of law.
(2) Individuals can be held accountable for "crimes against humanity."
(3) Soldiers must follow the orders of their superiors.
(4) Aggressor nations must pay war reparations for damages caused during wars.

4. Which action illustrates the concept of genocide?
(1) the British negotiating peace with Adolf Hitler during the 1938 Munich Conference
(2) Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin signing a nonaggression pact in 1939
(3) the Nazi armies eliminating the Jews and other groups as part of Adolf Hitler's Final Solution
(4) German generals plotting against Adolf Hitler

5. Which situation was a direct result of the Holocaust and other atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II?
(1) development of the Cold War
(2) war crimes trials in Nuremberg
(3) formation of the League of Nations
(4) separation of Germany into Eastern and Western zones

6. Which is one major reason the Holocaust is considered a unique event in modern European history?
(1) Jews of Europe have seldom been victims of persecution.
(2) Civilians rarely were killed during air raids on Great Britain.
(3) Adolf Hitler concealed his anti-Jewish feelings until after he came to power.
(4) The genocide was planned in great detail and required the cooperation of many people.

Base your answers to questions 7 and 8 on the passage below and on your knowledge of social studies.

"The important lesson wasn't so much the Nazis' extraordinary evil but that it could happen with the participation of so many, the indifference of many more, that humanity has no guarantees against its vicious streaks except its own conscience, for which each individual is responsible . . . the effort for decency and justice must go on every day, everywhere."

—Flora Lewis, the New York Times, July 7, 1987

7. What is the main idea of the passage?
(1) A nation's wartime policies should not be subjected to moral standards.
(2) Individuals who follow the orders of their superiors should not be prosecuted for their actions.
(3) In time of war, the end justifies the means.
(4) Individuals have an obligation to oppose immoral policies.

8. In the passage, the term "extraordinary evil" refers to the
(1) Berlin blockade
(2) Cold War Era
(3) Marshall Plan
(4) Holocaust