

Grade 7: Holocaust Curriculum

Text: The History of the Holocaust (Torah Aura)

This course will begin with an overview of the history of anti-Semitism and the events leading up to Hitler's rise to power. Students will learn about the Holocaust experiences of Jews living in Germany, Poland, and other parts of Europe, in concentration camps and in ghettos. The course also covers important historical figures of the Holocaust, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Finally, students will explore their own personal and theological reactions to the material, and will discuss ways of remembering the Holocaust. Age-appropriate films will be used to supplement the text, as well as activities, group work, and art projects.

Unit 1: Historical Background of the Holocaust—4 sessions, 45 minutes each

History of Anti-Semitism (2 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will gain an understanding of the history of prejudice, persecution, and violence against Jews that led up to the Holocaust
2. Students will trace anti-Semitism back to the Bible.
3. Students will understand the roots of Christian anti-Semitism.
4. Students will gain an understanding of the anti-Semitic conditions that European Jews lived under during the Middle Ages.
5. Students will gain an understanding of how fears about Jews were transformed into myths about Jewish conspiracy that were later used by Hitler as a political tool to gain power.
6. Students will analyze anti-Semitic and stereotypic images in art work, posters and propaganda.

History of Anti-Semitism Discussion Topics:

- Anti-Semitism in the Bible
- Christian Anti-Semitism
- The Middle Ages
- Modern Anti-Semitism

Key Concepts:

- Anti-Semitism
- Propaganda
- Stereotype

Key Personalities:

- Alfred Dreyfus

Key Terms:

- Crusades
- Blood Libels
- Black Death
- Inquisition
- Conversos
- Moneylenders

Rise of Hitler (2 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will discuss the series of historical events in Germany that led to Hitler's successful rise to power.
2. Students will learn about the impact of Germany's defeat in World War II and the Treaty of Versailles.
3. Students will learn about how the Nazi party started.
4. Students will explore how Hitler's life experiences led to his writing the book Mein Kampf.
5. Students will learn how Hitler scapegoated Jews in order to gain power.
6. Students will explore the impact of the Nuremberg laws on the lives of German Jews during the 1930's.

Rise of Hitler Discussion Topics:

- World War I
- Adolph Hitler and the Rise of the Nazis
- Nazi Germany 1933-1938

Key Personalities:

- Adolph Hitler

Key Terms:

- Treaty of Versailles
- National Socialist German Worker's (Nazi) Party
- Swastika
- Mein Kampf
- Nuremberg Laws

Assessments:

- **Classroom discussions**

Unit 2: Holocaust Events and Experiences—8 sessions, 45 minutes each

Kristallnacht (2 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will explore how Kristallnacht triggered the beginning of the Holocaust.
2. Students will be introduced to the events that led up to Kristallnacht.
3. Students will discuss how the Nazis used these events as an excuse to stage a huge pogrom against the Jews of Germany.
4. Students will examine what occurred on the night itself, and will understand why it is called “the night of broken glass”.
5. Students will discuss the aftermath of Kristallnacht, and the fears and reactions of German Jews.
6. Students will understand why some Jews attempted to escape Germany and others stayed.

Kristallnacht Discussion Topics:

- Germany in the 1930’s
- Kristallnacht
- Jewish reactions

Key Concepts:

- Pogrom

Key Personalities:

- Herschel Grynszpan

Key Terms:

- Yellow Star
- Concentration Camp
- St. Louis

Assessments:

- Oral quizzes
- Class discussions

Special Activities and Projects:

Art project: Each student is given a scrap of paper cut to resemble a piece of broken glass. On the paper the student writes his/her reaction to Kristallnacht. The reactions are displayed on a sheet of black poster board.

Activity in back of booklet: Students are given biographical information about individuals who survived Kristallnacht. Students imagine that they are each of these individuals and based on the information provided must decide whether they would leave Germany or stay behind. They are asked to give the reasons behind their decision, and to discuss how their life would have changed if they chose to stay in Germany. Students can role play if they want.

Auschwitz (3 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will gain an understanding of concentration and death camp experiences.
2. Students will learn about the journey to the camps in cattle cars.
3. Students will discuss the selection process.
4. Students will learn about experiences Jews had when arriving at the camps: shaven heads, tattoos, uniforms, removal of all personal belongings.
5. Students will learn about daily life in the camps: labor, starvation, sleeping conditions, medical experiments.
6. Students will learn about death via firing squads, in gas chambers, and in death marches.
7. Students will learn about the disposal of bodies via mass graves and burning in crematoria.

Auschwitz Discussion Topics:

- Arrival at Auschwitz
- Living in Auschwitz
- Dying in Auschwitz

Key Concepts:

- Concentration Camp
- Death Camp

Key Personalities:

- Dr. Josef Mengele

Key Terms:

- Cattle Car
- “Arbeit Macht Frei”
- Selection
- Zyklon B
- Gas Chamber
- Crematorium
- Death March

Special Activity: Film “The Devil’s Arithmetic”

Assessments:

- Successful completion of arts and crafts project

Warsaw Ghetto (3 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will gain an understanding of the Holocaust experiences of Polish Jews and Jews living in ghettos.
2. Students will realize that there was Jewish resistance to the Nazis.
3. Students will explore the history of Jewish ghettos.
4. Students will learn about daily life in the ghettos, and will discuss both the extreme challenges and the survival skills.
5. Students will learn about the Nazi liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto.
6. Students will learn about the Jewish resistance, the uprising, and the destruction of the ghetto—and will explore how the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, though unsuccessful, became a symbol of Jewish courage.

Warsaw Ghetto Discussion Topics:

- Invasion of Poland
- Life in the Ghetto
- Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Key Concepts:

- Ghetto
- Resistance

Key Personalities:

- Bielski Family

Key Terms:

- Jewish Council
- Partisans

Special Activities:

- Students and their parents view and discuss the film “Defiance”
- Jewish Council activity in booklet: Students role-play that they are members of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw Ghetto. They must think about specific dilemmas faced by the council regarding whether or not to cooperate with Nazi orders. In groups, they discuss the dilemma assigned to them and vote on a decision, then present their decision to the class.

Assessments:

- Oral quizzes
- Class discussions

Unit 3: Holocaust Personalities, Remembrance, and Reactions—9 sessions, 45 minutes each

Rescue and the Righteous (3 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will gain understanding of how Jews were protected and saved by non-Jews during the Holocaust, and will become familiar with some of the well-known righteous gentiles.
2. Students will learn about the efforts of the Swedish government to save the Jews of Hungary, and will become familiar with the story of Raoul Wallenberg.
3. Students will learn about the life of Oskar Schindler, and will become familiar with the story behind the film “Schindler’s List”.
4. Students will learn about King Christian’s rescue of the Jews of Denmark.
5. Students will learn about the memorial to righteous gentiles at Yad Vashem.
6. Students will be able to discuss the acts of righteous gentiles—their motivations, their character, and the risks they took—and will debate whether their behavior should be considered heroic.

Righteous Gentiles Discussion Topics:

- Who is a righteous gentile?
- Raoul Wallenberg (1912-?)
- Oskar Schindler (1908-1974)
- The Denmark Story
- Other Rescuers

Key Personalities:

- Raoul Wallenberg
- Oskar Schindler
- King Christian of Denmark

Key Terms:

- Righteous Gentile
- Yad Vashem

Special Activity:

- Family viewing and discussion of the Film: "The Boy in Striped Pajamas"
- Family interviews with Holocaust Survivors

Assessments:

- Exit cards
- Short written student responses

Profiles of Holocaust Figures (2 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will be introduced to famous Jewish figures associated with the Holocaust, with an emphasis on understanding how each one of them responded to their Holocaust experiences.
 - Students will learn about the experiences of Hannah Senesh, Elie Wiesel, and Anne Frank.
 - Students will be able to discuss their reactions to these stories, and what they might have done in response to the same experiences.

Profiles Discussion Topics:

- Elie Wiesel (1928-)
- Anne Frank (1929-1945)

Key Personalities:

- Hannah Senesh
- Elie Wiesel
- Anne Frank

Key Terms:

- Human Rights
- Nobel Peace Prize
- annex

Assessments:

- Oral quizzes
- Class discussions

Zachor: Remembrance (2 sessions)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will learn about different ways that we remember and commemorate the Holocaust today.
2. Students will learn about Yad Vashem, and will explore the meaning and significance of the different memorials there.
3. Students will learn about how the Holocaust is memorialized at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.—students who have been there will share what they saw, their impressions, and their reactions.
4. Students will learn about different ways that the Holocaust is commemorated on Yom Ha-Shoah—in Israel and in the U.S.
5. Students will learn about Steven Spielberg’s project documenting the experiences of Holocaust survivors through the Shoah Foundation and Oral Histories—and will discuss importance of this project.

Remembrance Discussion Topics:

- Yad Vashem
- U.S. Holocaust Museum
- Yom Ha-Shoah
- The Shoah Foundation and Oral History Libraries

Key Concepts:

- Remembrance

Key Personalities:

- Steven Spielberg
- Adolph Eichmann

Key Terms:

- Shoah
- Yom Ha-Shoah
- Survivor
- Oral History

Special Activity:

Family viewing and discussion of the “Paper Clips” film

Assessments:

- Students write down 3 things that I learned

The Holocaust and Religious Belief (1 session)

Goals and Objectives:

1. Students will debate theological questions about God that arise after learning about the Holocaust.
2. Students will explore the theological positions of four known Jewish thinkers in response to the Holocaust.
3. Students will be able to express their reactions to each of the four positions.
4. Students will be able to express their reactions to questions about what Jews can believe about God after the Holocaust—why did God allow the Holocaust to happen and could God have stopped the Holocaust?

The Holocaust and Religious Belief Discussion Topics:

- Historical Case Involving Prayer in a Concentration Camp
- Theological Reactions of Four Known Jewish Thinkers to this Case
- Student Reactions to this Case

Key Personalities:

- Richard Rubenstein
- Eliezer Berkovits
- Emil Fackenheim
- Elie Wiesel

Key Terms:

- Theology

Activities:

- Session with a Holocaust survivor or the child of a survivor

Assessments:

- Student art work demonstrating their reactions to the Holocaust

