

Teacher's Guide

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WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?

The Holocaust was the destruction of some six million Jews by the Nazis and their followers in Europe between the years 1933-1945.

On January 30, 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany, and with him, he brought a governmental policy of racial Anti-Semitism that shaped the fate of Jews throughout Europe for the next twelve years.

If Anti-Semitism is defined as prejudice against and fear of Jews, either religiously or racially -or both - then the doctrine of the National Socialist Party can be defined as its logical extension. Anti. Judaism existed throughout Europe long before Hitler. The “genius” of Hitler was to take and refine existing folk thought, distorted portraits of the Jews, even anti-Jewish measures that had been worked out by the Church and by secular governments for thousands of years, and combine them with modern pseudo-scientific Anti-Semitism. As Professor Raul Hilberg states.

"From the fourth to the sixth century the missionaries of Christianity had said, in effect, to the Jews 'You may not live among us as Jews.' The secular rulers who followed them from the late Middle Ages then decided: 'You may not live among us.' And the Nazis finally decreed, 'You may not live.'"

The Final Solution was Hitler’s invention . . . his “contribution” to what had gone before. And it resulted in the Holocaust.

Even though the Holocaust took place within the confines of Hitler’s term in office and World War II, it was a separate event with its own dynamics, its own objectives. In reality, the Nazis waged two wars - one against Europe and one against the Jews. Therefore, although millions of other people were persecuted by the Nazis and died during World War II, the Holocaust itself remains a uniquely Jewish experience because only the Jews were singled out for total destruction. Only with the Jews did the Nazis attempt to remove an entire people from the face of the earth. As Elie Wiesel states, “Not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims.”

The Holocaust comprises the entire twelve years of the Nazi regime - from the anti-Jewish economic and racial measures that were first adopted, to the first deportations of Jews to other countries, to the rounding up and gathering of entire Jewish populations into Ghettos, to the final “invention” - the concentration and extermination camps. And throughout this time, average people helped the Nazis carry out their plan. The Final Solution could not have been implemented without the acceptance and active involvement of officials, bureaucrats, police departments, even citizens in the streets and peasants in the countryside who, if not actual traitors, simply turned their heads. For the majority, the concept of individual responsibility did not exist during these years. And the minority - those who actively resisted, who hid Jews or helped them escape, who tried to convince governments of the truth of what was happening - took grave chances with their lives and those of their families.

It also required industrialization, the very hallmark of modernity, to allow the Holocaust to happen. For the Holocaust was systemized killing, assembly line production facilities called extermination camps where the end product was ashes. The machinery of the Holocaust was the best that science and technology had to offer humankind.

Nazi doctrine maintained that the German people were the highest example of the Nordic-Aryan race. Jews were subhuman - evil beings who threatened world affairs. The Final Solution was Germany’s destiny. The Jews had to be destroyed in order for the Aryan race to live. If one begins to understand this perverted thinking, then one can begin to approach an understanding of the Holocaust.

EVENTS IN GERMANY AND HOLLAND DURING ANNE'S LIFETIME

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| 12 June 1929 | Anne Frank born in Frankfurt, Germany |
| 1929-1932 | Great industrial depression. 70,000 people unemployed in Frankfurt. The National Socialist Party, or "Nazis", gain support. |
| January 1933 | Hitler, as leader of the National Socialists, becomes Chancellor of Germany. Large-scale boycott of all Jewish business in Germany begins as part of Nazi anti-Jewish measures. Jews start to leave Germany to escape the growing persecutions. Those that stay are later forced to wear yellow stars. They are gradually barred from all professions. Jewish books are burned. The first concentration camps are set up to contain political opponents to Nazism, and Jews, homosexuals and Gypsies. The Frank family goes to live in Amsterdam, Holland. |
| 1934 | Anne begins school in Amsterdam. Nuremberg Laws —race laws forbidding Germans to have <i>any</i> contact with Jews. Jews are declared second class citizens and are driven out of public life. Germany begins military expansion and prepares for military takeover of surrounding countries. |
| 1936 | German troops occupy the Rhineland, an area on the German/French border which had been demilitarized after World War I. |
| March 1938 | Germany occupies Austria. |
| 9 November 1938 | "Night of the Broken Glass" { Kristallnacht). Jews in Germany are attacked, homes destroyed and synagogues burned as the Nazis' anti-Jewish campaign is heightened 20,000 Jews are arrested and many killed. |
| March 1939 | Germany invades Czechoslovakia. |
| September 1939 | Germany invades Poland. Britain and France declare war on Germany. World War II begins. |
| 1940 | Germany invades Holland and Nazi rule begins there, also. |
| 1941 | Anne and Margot Frank start at Jewish secondary school. Gradual removal from public life of Dutch Jews by Nazi authorities. |
| February 1941 | Mass arrests of Jews, in Holland, who had been defending themselves against raids on their property. General strike takes place in protest against the arrests. |
| 1941 | Young Jewish people are excluded from schools and colleges. |
| April 1941 | All Dutch Jews must wear the yellow star. |
| 1942 | Jews begin to be rounded up for deportation to Germany and Poland. Margot Frank, Anne's sister, is ordered to report to the Nazi authorities. |
| 6 July 1942 | The Frank family pack up their belongings and move into their hiding place, "The Secret Annex." |
| 13 July 1942 | The Frank family is joined by the Van Daan family. |
| 17 July 1942 | Mr. Dussel arrives to go in to hiding with them. Life under Nazi rule in Holland is hard. Food is rationed, fuel is scarce and transport difficult. |
| 1942 - 1944 | Thorough searches of homes by the Nazis looking for Jews in hiding. Thousands of Jews are taken away by trains across Europe to Nazi concentration camps and murdered as part of what the Nazis called their "Final Solution" to rid Europe of all Jews. |
| 4 August 1944 | The inhabitants of the "Secret Annex" are betrayed and taken to Auschwitz death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. |
| January 1945 | Mrs. Frank is killed by the hardships of Auschwitz. Mr. Van Daan dies in the gas chamber. Peter Van Daan is taken by the SS when the concentration camp is abandoned because of the approach of the Russian army. He dies in Mauthausen Camp. Mr. Dussel dies in the Neuengamme concentration camp. Margot and Anne are taken to Bergen Belsen concentration camp. |
| March 1945 | Margot and Anne die of typhus. Mrs. Van Daan dies at Bergen Belsen. Mr. Otto Frank is liberated by the Russian troops at Auschwitz and survives. |
| 8 May 1945 | The German Army surrenders unconditionally. |

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Frank Family - Holland. 1933-1940

In 1933, after Hitler comes to power and after the anti-Jewish boycott, Otto Frank leaves Frankfurt for Amsterdam. He starts a branch of the German Opekta Co. there, and soon Edith, Margot and Anne join him.

The Frank family moves in to a house on Merwedeplein in the southern part of the city. Anne and Margot attend the Montessori School nearby. They have lots of friends, and photographs are proof of the many excursions they took. The Franks become good friends with some other Jewish emigrants who settle in the same neighborhood. The Opekta Co. is doing rather well.

However, this relatively carefree life is suddenly interrupted by the Germany invasion in May 1940.

May 1940: Occupation of Holland

The Germany invasion begins on May 10, 1940 and is a complete surprise. Holland expected to remain neutral, as it had done during World War I.

The occupation is swift. In a few days all important areas are seized. The prime minister and his cabinet, as well as the Royal Family, fly to England. After fierce fighting near Arnhem and the bombing of Rotterdam, Holland is forced to surrender. As of May 15, 1940, the country is under German occupation.

Hiding Place

Anne's father, Otto Frank, had prepared a house in the two upper floors of his workplace, and with the help of some very loyal friends the escape was possible. These brave people, by helping to hide the Frank family, were embarking on one of the most dangerous ways of resisting and defying the Nazis. To hide Jews was considered a terrible crime by the Nazis, and yet almost every day of the period that the Franks and their friends spent in hiding, Mr. Kraler, Elli, Mr. Koophius and Miep risked their lives by taking food and supplies to the "Secret Annexe."

Anne writes in her diary about the resistance movement in Holland: *"There are a great number of organizations, such as "The Free Netherlands" which forge identity cards, supply money to people underground, find hiding places for people, and work for young men in hiding, and it is amazing how much noble, unselfish work these people are doing risking their own lives to help and save others. "*

A few days after settling into the hiding place the family were joined by friends of the Franks, Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan and their son Peter. Later Mr. Dussel, a dentist, moved into the "Secret Annexe" bringing the total to eight.

Life was difficult for the people in hiding. They had to be very careful not to be seen or heard during the day and could not go out. They had stopped existing to the outside world.

Anne tried hard to keep herself busy. She read, mainly, as she loved books and studying. Keeping her diary became a great pastime, and she even apologized to it when she missed a few days.

Anne and the others received reports of the outside from the radio and from the people who helped them hide. Anne wrote: *"I get frightened when I think of close friends who have now been delivered into the hands of the cruelest brutes that walk the earth. And all because they are Jews. Every now and then, when Miep lets out something about what has happened to a friend, Mummy and Mrs. Van Daan always begin to cry, so Miep thinks it better not to tell us any more..."* Despite the constant horrific reports, Anne was always hopeful. She thanked God for taking care of them and looked towards the future with joy.

She longed to be outside, but instead could only gaze at the sky through windows.

“Believe me, if you have been shut up for a year and a half, it can get too much for you some days. In spite of all justice and thankfulness, you can’t crush your feelings. Cycling, dancing, whistling, looking out into the world, feeling young, to know that I am free — that’s what I long for: still I mustn’t show it, because I sometimes think if all eight of us began to pity ourselves, or went about with discontented faces, where would it lead us?”

Hardships

Life for non-Jewish Dutch people was becoming harder as well. Many were taken to Germany to work on the Nazi war effort. Families were left without fathers and sons. There was a particularly intensified labor draft in 1943.

Everything became scarce — even ordinary household goods like soap and fuel. Living conditions were crowded and more people had to share the same meager fires. Transport was made difficult: trains were overcrowded and buses and trains infrequent. When bicycle tires wore out they could not be replaced. Such luxuries as alcohol and tobacco were rare. But people tried to go on as normal, turning to comforts and escapes. Film-going, for example, doubled between 1941 and 1943 and there was an increase in the sale of books. Anne, in hiding, wrote *“We always long for Saturdays when our books come. Ordinary people just don’t know what books mean to us, shut up here.”*

From October 1942 onwards there were thorough searches of homes in an attempt to find all Jewish families in hiding.

Anne wrote: *“Evening after evening the green and grey army lorries trundle past; The Germans ring at every front door to enquire if there are Jews living in the house. If there are then the whole family has to go at once. If they don’t find any they go on to the next house. No-one has a chance of evading them unless one goes into hiding.*

By the middle of 1944 there was almost a complete breakdown of services in Holland: there was no transport, telephones were cut off and gas and electricity were intermittent or cut off altogether in some areas. People in the cities cut down trees and stole any wood they could find. Diseases, including tuberculosis and diphtheria became widespread and the death rate increased. In Amsterdam there were too many corpses to bury

Anne wrote: *“North Amsterdam was heavily bombed on Sunday. The destruction seems terrible, whole streets lie in ruins and it will take a long time before all the people are dug out. Up till now there are two hundred dead and countless wounded; the hospitals are crammed.”*

The Hiding Place Betrayed

After two years in hiding the Frank family were tracked down, arrested and, in August 1944, taken to the Auschwitz camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. Auschwitz was both a labor camp and an extermination center where the mass slaughter of Jews, Poles, Gypsies and other groups was carried out. Anne’s mother died there. Anne and her sister Margot died from typhus after being moved to another camp at Bergen Belsen.

The war and occupation caused the deaths of 240,000 Dutch people, 106,000 of whom were Jews. In the whole of Europe nearly 27 million people had died as a result of acts of war, nearly 20 million of them Russians. Another 11 million — political opponents, homosexuals, at least 250,000 Gypsies, and six million Jews — had been systematically and cold-bloodedly murdered. It was this, and the acts of genocide against the Jews and Gypsies, which were classified by the Allies’ War Crimes trials as “crimes against humanity”

Deportation of the Dutch Jews

Most razzias and transportation to the camps occur at night. In Amsterdam most Jews are first brought to the Jewish Theatre and then on to Westerbork. The majority stay there several weeks, some more than a year .

In 1943 one transport follows another until the camp is full and life becomes unbearable. Westerbork, however, is not a final destination. Rather, it is a collection point to transport the Jews to the extermination camps.

Endlösung (The Final Solution}

When Germany marches through Eastern Europe, the army is followed by SS special units (Einsatzgruppen) that start the mass execution of Jews. More than one million Jews are shot. In 1941 the decision is made to make Europe clean of Jews. During the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 plans are made to annihilate the 11 million European Jews.

The plans become known as the Endlösung, the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question”. Extermination and labor camps are built. A large number of the deported Jews - mostly the elderly, mothers and children - are gassed upon arrival. The others must work a couple of months until they die of exhaustion. In this way nearly six million Jews are killed. In addition to the Jews, countless others, die in concentration camps: political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, “antisocial elements”, Russian prisoners of war and at least 220,000 Gypsies.

The End of the War in Germany

On May 8, 1945, the German Army surrenders unconditionally. During the last months of the war German cities are so heavily bombed that little remains. Hitler and Goebbels commit suicide. Many Nazis are arrested. The Soviet, American and other Allied troops work closely to defeat Nazi Germany.

Although the liberation comes too late for millions, many in prisons and concentration camps can be saved.

Germany is brought under joint Allied authority

Liberation of the Concentration Camps

The Allied advance into Germany influences the situation at the concentration camps. In January 1945 the Nazis clear the camps by forcing prisoners to walk hundreds of miles through snow and rain. Thousands die.

What the Allied Forces find when they finally arrive at the concentration camps is indescribable. For the survivors, a difficult journey home begins. For many of them the homecoming is a bitter disappointment. Most have lost friends and family. Houses are occupied. Property is stolen. Many survivors encounter disbelief and ignorance about their experiences in the camps. Only 4, 700 Jewish survivors return to Holland from the camps.

GLOSSARY

| | |
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| ANTI-SEMITISM: | Prejudice against and fear of Jews, either religiously or racially – or both. |
| ARYAN: | Under Nazis, people of “proven,” non-Jewish, purely Teutonic “racial” background. |
| AUSCHWITZ: | Established in Upper Silesia as a concentration camp in 1940, became an extermination camp in early 1942. “Birkenau” was Auschwitz’s extermination center. |
| CONCENTRATION CAMPS: | <p>Complexes for the imprisonment of “enemies” of the Nazi regime. In “Labor camps” inmates were used for slave labor and died due to abuse, starvation and disease.</p> <p>Extermination camps were established in 1941 specifically to destroy large numbers of people in gas chambers or vans. Some camps were combinations of concentration and extermination camps (i.e. Auschwitz-Birkenau). The term “death camp” usually refers to an extermination camp or to that part of a camp that contained the crematorium.</p> |
| CREMATORIUM | Literally: a furnace that reduces a dead body to ashes by burning. The crematorium refers to the entire complex in an extermination camp where inmates were killed, usually consisting of an “undressing room,” a “gas chamber” (for asphyxiation), and an “incineration chamber” (where bodies were burned in large “ovens”). |
| DEPORTATION: | When Jews were routed out of their homes and sent live in another place (i.e. a ghetto, another country, a concentration camp or extermination camp). |
| FINAL SOLUTION: | Cover name for the plan to destroy the Jews of Europe. (Also called “Total Solution,” “Territorial Solution.”) |
| GHETTO: | Compulsory “Jewish Quarter” where all Jews from surrounding areas were forced to reside. |
| HOLOCAUST: | The destruction of some six million European Jews by the Nazis and their followers between the years 1933-1945. |
| JUDENREIN (Ger): | “Free of Jews.” |
| LIQUIDATION: | Emptying a place of its Jews – either through mass murder or deportation. |
| NAZI: | Member of Hitler’s National Socialist Party. |
| RAMP: | Railroad platform at Auschwitz where “selection” took place. |
| RESETTLEMENT: | Euphemism to disguise true purpose of transports of Jews to extermination camps in Eastern Europe. |
| SELECTION: | Euphemism for the process of choosing victims for the gas chambers by separating them from those considered fit to work whenever a new transport arrived. |
| THIRDREICH: | The German government which Hitler promised would last 1000 years. |
| TRANSPORT: | Forced rail shipment of Jews. |
| WANNSEE CONFERENCE: | Meeting held on January 20, 1942, to coordinate the Final Solution. Attended by Heydrich, Eichmann, and other Nazis. |
| ZYKLON B GAS | In Auschwitz and Maydanek, crystallized prussic acid dropped into the gas chambers through ceiling by SS “disinfection squad.” Once pellets dropped, fumes asphyxiated the people inside. |

INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

Find a quotation in Anne Frank’s diary that you think will appeal to your students; each quotation can serve as material for discussion.

For example: “It’s really a wonder I haven’t dropped all my ideals...”

Challenge students to imagine what it would be like to be in hiding like Anne.

What would you miss? What would you do each day? What would the constant threat and fear do to you?

Consider the following quote:

“I can feel the suffering of millions and yet, if I look up to the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty, too, will end and that peace and tranquility will return again.”

July 15, 1944

Discuss the poem by Martin Neimoller:

First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out, because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

It is all over now, isn’t it?

While there may not be a great number of neo-Nazi groups in the United States, it is important to note that these groups do exist and they represent ideas that are alive in many people.

- **Let students collect newspaper clippings about neo-Nazi activities and racist or Hate crimes**
- **Ask students to discuss whether they think there is a racial problem in their own school or town.**

Let students talk about their own experiences with racism.

What was their role in the incident? Were they victims, bystanders, spectators or offenders? What did they do? What did other people do?

Scapegoats

Read the sentence: *“People will spot a problem and will not rest until they have found a scapegoat to blame on it.”*

What have students learned from the presentation and Anne Frank’s story that indicates that Jews and other minority groups were used as scapegoats by the Nazis ?

Let the class **give examples** of groups that are used as scapegoats today.

Conclusion

Ask the question: *Could today’s racism lead to something like the Holocaust?*

