

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

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to use with

Tree of Hope

*Anne Frank's Father Shares His
Wisdom With An American Teen
and the World*

book by

Cara Wilson-Granat

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Why Teach the Holocaust?

Defining the Holocaust

The **Holocaust** was the systematic destruction of European Jews by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945. This state-sanctioned genocide perpetrated by the Nazi regime, its allies, and collaborators resulted in the devastating loss of six million Jewish lives. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) identifies the Holocaust's origins in 1933, when Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party ascended to power and began implementing antisemitic policies. These policies laid the groundwork for the subsequent mass murder that unfolded in Germany during the 1930s and escalated with the Nazi invasion of Europe. The Hebrew term "Sho'ah," meaning "catastrophe," is sometimes employed to reference the Holocaust.

Note to Teachers

In addition to targeting European Jews, the Nazis also persecuted and victimized other groups they deemed racially or physically inferior. This included Roma and Sinti communities, individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, and Slavs. These groups were considered undesirable by the Nazi regime, and many suffered the same fate as the Jewish population. The Nazis adhered to the ideology of "race hygiene" or eugenics, a pseudoscientific belief that selective breeding could create a superior Aryan race and used it to justify discrimination and murder. While the term "Holocaust" is sometimes used broadly to encompass the Nazis' mass murder of these other groups, it is important to note that the strict definition of the Holocaust focuses specifically on the systematic extermination of Jews in Europe.

According to the United Nations, genocide is defined as the intentional killing, causing of serious harm, or destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, which may include preventing births or forcibly displacing children. As the deadliest genocide in modern history, the Holocaust offers a profound lesson on the factors that can lead to such atrocities. Through the study of the Holocaust, students can develop a heightened ability to recognize and respond to risk factors and warning signs of future genocides. For instance, the Holocaust teaches us about the devastating consequences that arise when hate, prejudice, and violence go unchallenged.

Why Teach the Holocaust?

Although extensive teaching materials, including survivor testimonies and other primary documents, are readily available, the Holocaust remains one of the most challenging topics to teach in middle and high schools in the United States. Educators teaching this subject should have a comprehensive understanding of its historical context and possess the skills to responsibly convey graphic and sensitive information. Additionally, they must establish a safe and inclusive learning environment while providing effective resources to address and counter the prejudice, hate, and discrimination often associated with Holocaust denial.

Despite the challenges, all middle and high schools should offer meaningful and age-appropriate Holocaust curriculum to their students. Learning about the Holocaust serves not only to inform students about recent history, but also to impart valuable lessons on **genocide** that remain relevant today.

**Where genocide occurs,
there usually have been
earlier acts of discrimination,
persecution, and violence
against people who belong
to a certain group.**

- United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum

Review "Introduction
to the Holocaust"
USHMM

Explore Holocaust
definitions
Echoes & Reflections

Review United
Nations definition of
genocide

Read about why we
should study the
Holocaust - USHMM

Why Teach the Holocaust?

Read "Hate Crimes, Explained" - Southern Poverty Law Center

Analyze FBI's 2021 Hate Crime Statistics

Review Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022 – ADL

Teaching about the Holocaust remains highly relevant today, as hate crimes continue to rise each year. Hate crime is legally defined as a criminal offense "motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias(es) against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity" (*Federal Bureau of Investigations*). According to data collected from U.S. Law Enforcement Agencies, the FBI has observed an increase in hate crimes from 8,263 incidents in 2020 to 10,840 incidents in 2021. Out of the total reported incidents, approximately 64.5% were motivated by factors such as race, ethnicity, or national origin (*FBI's Supplemental Hate Crime Statistics, 2021*). Most of these incidents were anti-Black hate crimes (*Anti-Defamation League Press Release, March 13, 2023*).

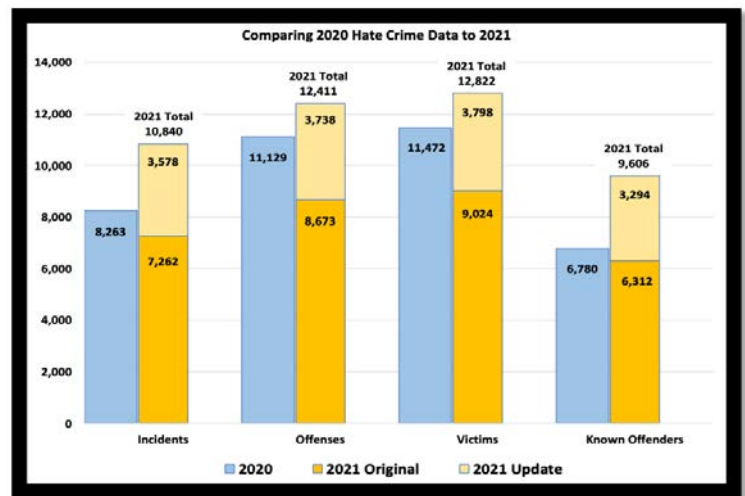
In its Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, an annual report published since 1979, Anti-Defamation League reports 3,697 acts of antisemitism in the United States in 2022, a 36% increase from 2021. The incidents varied from harassment and vandalism to assault, often without the use of a deadly weapon, but sometimes resulting in fatalities. While this increase can be due to more than one cause or ideology, it is important to note that both K-12 schools and college campuses experienced dramatic increase in antisemitic incidents.

In addition to providing a historical understanding and preparing students to identify warning signs and risk factors of genocide, teaching the Holocaust imparts an important lesson in humanity. The voices from the Holocaust, though deeply harrowing, are profound in their ability to highlight what makes us human.

Learning about Holocaust victims enables students to cultivate empathy and develop a deep sense of compassion for those who endured such tremendous suffering. Engaging in honest conversations about the struggles faced by others prompts us to reflect on the impact of our actions and how we can contribute to a more inclusive society.

Effective Holocaust education actively encourages learners to embrace diversity and uphold the utmost respect for all individuals, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, or any other defining characteristic. It serves as a constant reminder that we need to value inclusivity, equality, and human dignity, while also reminding us of the substantial efforts required to ensure these values are upheld.

Examining the actions of the Nazi perpetrators, their allies, and collaborators is also important as it provides us with a stark realization that ordinary people are capable of committing unfathomable evils. By studying the motivations, decisions, and complicity of those involved, we gain a deeper understanding of the potential for darkness that resides within humanity. This exploration serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of critical thinking, moral responsibility, and the need to stand against injustice and oppression. It prompts us to examine our own actions and choices, ensuring that we actively work towards creating a more compassionate and just world.



FBI's Supplemental Hate Crime Statistics, 2021.

Why Teach the Holocaust?

Considerations When Teaching About the Holocaust

Historical Context

Some U.S. states have enacted laws requiring the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides in the middle and high schools and provide broad guidelines on what topics should be addressed with students. Each school district is tasked with producing a curriculum map, and while some may be offering quality resources and guidelines, other districts provide insufficient guidance. Consequently, teachers without academic or professional background in Holocaust history may end up solely using prescribed history textbooks that contain limited information. Even when educators utilize the extensive and high-quality teaching resources provided by the USHMM and other Holocaust websites, they may feel overwhelmed by the vast volume of information and struggle to determine where to begin. This can lead them to center their lessons mainly on Nazi murders and atrocities in the concentration camps, without providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contributed to these events. It is crucial for educators to accurately convey the historical context, including the rise of Nazism, German and European antisemitism, racial ideologies, and other factors that ultimately culminated in the Holocaust. [Click here](#) for the list of states that require or encourage Holocaust curriculum in their middle and high schools. Please note that this list may not be updated at the time you access it.

Emotional Impact

Teaching about the Holocaust involves handling sensitive and graphic materials that can have a profound emotional impact on students (see USHMM [Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust](#)). Educators must carefully select age-appropriate curriculum and establish a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable engaging in difficult discussions while respecting one another. However, when discussing sensitive topics, there is always a risk that students may intentionally or unintentionally say something insensitive and hurtful to their peers. As educators, this uncertainty can be daunting since we cannot know everything about our students or anticipate what might trigger a negative reaction. Therefore, it is crucial to have safeguards in place before introducing such sensitive topics. One approach could be collaboratively generating classroom discussion rules that are prominently displayed and serve as reminders for students to maintain respectful dialogue. Additionally, it is important to recognize that some students may have strong emotional responses to the materials and may require support in processing their feelings. Before initiating a unit on the Holocaust, it would be beneficial to consult with the students' guidance counselor to gain insight into any individual circumstances that might require modifying the presentation of information. It may not always be possible to have access to this information, but it is worth trying given the nature of the curriculum. In situations where students are unable to participate in the classroom discussions, providing alternative assignments that are more suitable to their needs can be a valuable option.

Student Bias

When teaching about historical events that involve marginalization of minority groups, it is important for educators to be mindful of student biases. This awareness ensures that teachers' presentation of the historical events does not further victimize these groups. Furthermore, some students may be unfamiliar with the Holocaust or hold misconceptions about it, which can impact classroom discussions. As Holocaust educators, it is essential to assist students in distinguishing between fact and fiction by providing accurate and diverse resources that challenge misinformation. Equally important is the examination of the underlying ideologies, such as xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism, that, in addition to individual and collective bias, contributed to the Holocaust. Students should have the opportunity to discuss how these prejudices can escalate into hateful and discriminatory acts and lead to genocide (see [ADL Pyramid of Hate](#)). While some students may have personal experiences of discrimination based on their race, religion, or gender, others may not be able to relate directly. However, most students have had experiences where they are dismissed or targeted for other reasons and can empathize. Educators face the challenge of creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters open dialogue, empathy, and respect for all students so that students can understand how these ideologies affect people.

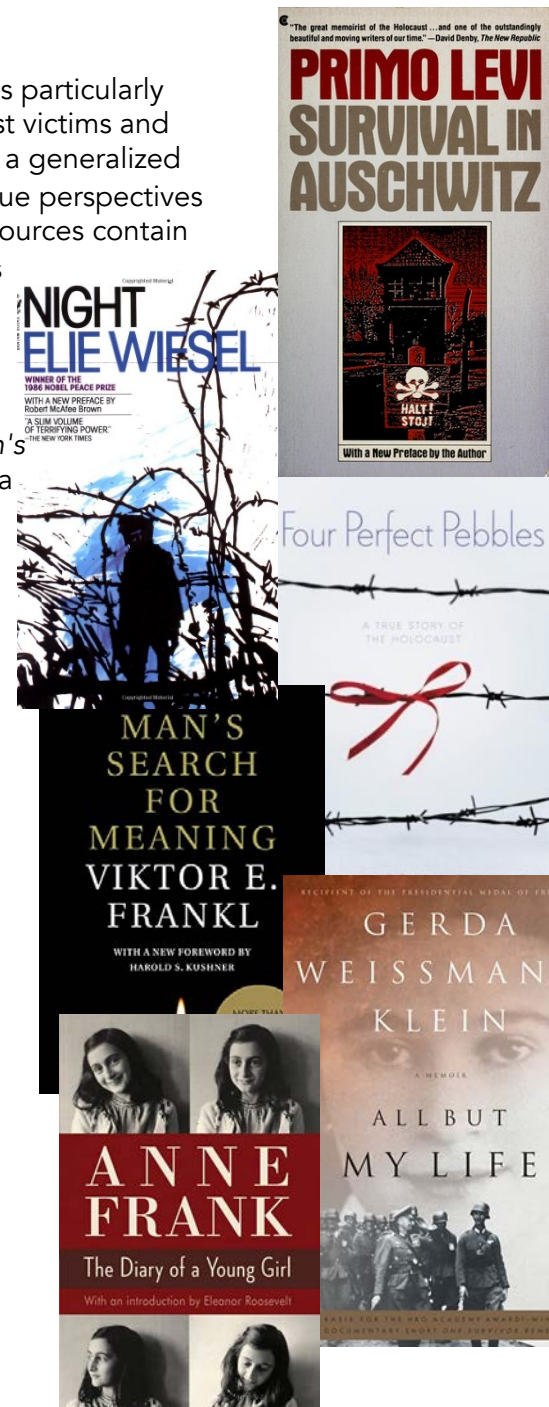
What to Use to Teach the Holocaust?

While history courses offered in middle and high schools across the United States vary in their content, they typically cover a wide range of historical periods and themes. When it comes to teaching about the Holocaust, it is often integrated into history or ELA curriculum. However, given the extensiveness of the topic and the limited time available, it becomes challenging for teachers to provide thorough coverage. Educators are often responsible for multiple courses and have limited preparation periods to develop their own materials. While online resources are abundant, it requires significant time and effort for teachers to thoroughly research and familiarize themselves with the important information needed to create engaging lessons and course materials. Having an organized educator's resource that outlines key Holocaust topics in a chronological or thematic manner can greatly assist teachers in delivering impactful classroom lessons while allowing them to focus on enhancing student engagement.

Voices from the Holocaust

While researching the information for this guide, one detail that stood out as particularly meaningful was the importance of considering individual voices of Holocaust victims and survivors. Relying primarily on textbooks and secondary sources can lead to a generalized understanding of the Holocaust, overlooking the individual stories and unique perspectives of those directly affected. Fortunately, many reputable online Holocaust resources contain the testimonies of individual survivors and are easily accessible to educators and students. In addition, many educators take into consideration that each victim and survivor experienced the same Holocaust events differently, and instead of being tempted to blend their voices into one collective narrative, teachers strive to include as many as possible. Some notable voices include Elie Wiesel in *Night*, Primo Levi in *Survival in Auschwitz*, Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*, Marion Blumenthal Lazan's *Four Perfect Pebbles*, Gerda Weissmann Klein's *All But My Life*, and, of course, Anne Frank.

Among the authors mentioned above, Anne Frank was the only one who did not survive the Holocaust. During the war, Anne and her family, along with two other Jewish families, went into hiding and stayed in a concealed "Secret Annex" within a building in Amsterdam. Throughout that time, Anne wrote in her diary until their discovery and subsequent arrest by the Nazis. The residents of the Annex were then sent to the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands, and soon after, they were all transported to Auschwitz, where only Anne's father Otto managed to survive. Following his liberation from Auschwitz, Otto received Anne's diary from Miep Gies and Bep Voskuijl, two women who had aided the Frank family during their time in hiding. While it took him several months to read Anne's diary, Otto dedicated the remainder of his life to spreading her message of peace. In addition to publishing the diary and overseeing its adaptation into stage and film, Otto established the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam, which manages the Anne Frank House and the International Youth Center. This Educator's Guide serves as a tool for teachers to explore the events of the Holocaust while considering Otto Frank's life and voice, and the legacy he forged beyond Anne's story.



What is in the Guide?

Otto Frank's Story

After the publication of Anne's diary and the subsequent release of the play and film adaptations, readers from around the world began reaching out to Otto. They expressed their admiration and offered words of encouragement for the strength he displayed in the face of his family's tragic loss. Unsurprisingly, as Otto did not relish the spotlight, many Holocaust educators who incorporate *The Diary of Anne Frank* into their curriculum are unaware of this aspect of Otto's life. Otto, in a remarkable gesture, personally responded to every individual who wrote to him, establishing deep connections with those who shared an understanding of Anne's experiences. As a result, several of these correspondents visited Otto and his new wife, Fritzi, and reciprocally, Otto and Fritzi visited some of their newfound pen pals. These lesser-known facets of Otto's life are revealed in various books written about him, including *Tree of Hope* by Cara Wilson-Granat, who maintained correspondence with Otto for over two decades. Using her own letters written to Otto, and his heartfelt responses, Cara reflected on her long-lasting relationship with Otto Frank and the lessons he taught her, and others like her.

What is in the Guide?

This Educator's Guide to Teaching the Holocaust in Middle and High Schools is a valuable tool designed for educators to achieve two important objectives. Part I of the Guide offers a comprehensive framework for accessing online Holocaust resources, enabling educators to explore the historical events that unfolded in Germany and other European countries following World War I. Furthermore, Part I explores the social, economic, and political transformations that impelled Germany towards embracing Nazi rule and becoming the central perpetrator of the Holocaust. The Guide provides a compilation of primary and secondary resources, online lessons, and relevant links, allowing teachers to directly utilize these materials with their students or adapt them to suit their specific teaching needs. It is important for educators to review each resource prior to assigning it to students to ensure it is age appropriate. Additionally, this Guide also considers Otto Frank's enduring legacies, as exemplified in *Tree of Hope*. His life story as a German Jew, who was compelled to leave the nation his ancestors called home for generations, is interwoven throughout Part I. By engaging with the resources pertaining to specific topics, educators can also gain insights into Otto's remarkable journey.

There is a wealth of primary and secondary sources available for Holocaust educators, and this Guide includes a comprehensive list of resources at the end. Here are some of the most widely used ones:

- The USHMM is an invaluable resource with extensive coverage of various Holocaust topics, offering clear overviews suitable for both teachers and students.
- The National Archives and the Library of Congress provide primary sources related to the World Wars, including images and historical records that can enrich the learning experience.
- Facing History is a highly regarded online platform that offers a wide range of materials, including overviews and handouts that can be assigned to students with minimal vetting.
- Echoes & Reflections offers specific lessons, which educators can use in part or as a whole. This website provides essential short clips of survivor testimonies that greatly contribute to Holocaust education.
- Yad Vashem is strong source with comprehensive historical overviews of the Holocaust, including digital lists of victims and Righteous Among the Nations. It also provides numerous primary sources and lesson plans or other educational materials that can be incorporated into teacher's curriculum.

NOTE: Facing History, Echoes & Reflections, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Learning For Justice are excellent resources for addressing current events and teaching lessons on antisemitism, hate crimes, and other human rights violations.

What is in the Guide?

Part II of this Guide focuses on exploring the life of Otto Frank after the war and the lasting legacies he left behind as a Holocaust survivor. Through the examination of Otto's personal correspondence, including the letters featured in *Tree of Hope* and those sent to family and friends, students can gain a deeper understanding of his mission. By deeply exploring Otto's story, students are encouraged to reflect on their potential to contribute to the world and make a positive impact. To honor Otto's powerful message and ensure the continuity of his life's mission, Part II also offers six distinct projects that educators may choose from to engage their middle or high school students. These projects provide valuable opportunities for students to actively participate in upholding Otto's legacy and strive towards a better world.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This Guide, which provides educators with guidance on selecting appropriate Holocaust materials, is specifically designed for educators and is not intended to be shared with students. The comprehensive background provided on the following pages may be overwhelming for most students to navigate on their own, so it is recommended that educators carefully consider the age and abilities of their student population when selecting resources, topics, and projects to include in the classroom. Whether exploring other Holocaust narratives or aiming for desired outcomes of compassion and understanding, Part I serves as a valuable tool for educators. If educators choose to assign any of the projects outlined in Part II of the Guide, it is important that they create their own handouts clearly communicating expectations to the students. This allows for a more tailored and effective learning experience. While the projects in this guide were inspired by Otto Frank's legacies, they remain relevant in a world that strives for peace, respect, and kindness.

How to Use the Information in the Guide

This Guide maintains a consistent format to ensure ease of navigation and comprehension. Active links are denoted within navy blue and yellow outlined boxes, allowing easy access to the referenced resources. The bright blue "Note to Teachers" section provides additional clarification or explanations pertaining to specific resources or content, serving as important considerations before teaching. The blue, red and white "Making Frank Connections" section offers short selections from Otto Frank's life that correspond to the historical events discussed on the respective page, fostering connections and deeper understanding.

This box contains an active website (USHMM used as an example)

Note to Teachers

This informational box is included throughout the Guide to provide clarifications, essential details, or helpful tips related to the content on that page. These notes aim to offer teachers guidance that can assist in processing the information provided in both parts of the Guide and give further direction to teachers as they create lessons and activities for their students.

frank connections

making

This is an example of the information typically included in this box: Otto and Edith Frank were afraid of what the Nazi regime meant for them and other German Jews. Otto later recalled groups of Stormtroopers singing in 1932, even before Hitler became Chancellor, "When Jewish blood splatters off the knife," but leaving Germany was still a difficult choice to make. Otto worried about how he was going to support the family if they left Germany, but the level of antisemitism incited by the Nazi propaganda was becoming worse (Lee, 36).

The Jews of Germany

In order to understand the Holocaust and its underlying causes, it is crucial for educators to examine the pre-Hitler era and explore the lives of the Jewish community in Germany. This exploration provides important context by contrasting the vibrant Jewish culture and political freedoms of the early 20th century with the eventual devastation and loss. Often, in a typical history or ELA classroom where the Holocaust is taught, the topics of Jews and antisemitism are introduced simultaneously. This approach poses a challenge as students may not grasp that the Holocaust, which originated in Germany, began with the discrimination and persecution of ordinary individuals by their own neighbors. The Jewish victims in Germany were largely indistinguishable from their non-Jewish counterparts, yet they were specifically targeted for complete annihilation due to prevailing antisemitism. By highlighting these nuances, educators can help students comprehend the complexities of the Holocaust and the tragic impact it had on ordinary men, women, and children.



Various resources explore the prewar Jewish life in Europe, including helpful online articles from the USHMM and Yad Vashem. These materials, which also consist of photographs and film footage, can be easily adapted to teachers' lessons and activities.

Read about Jews in Prewar Germany USHMM

Watch "Why the Jews: History of Antisemitism" video USHMM

Note to Teachers

There are two important topics that educators should discuss with their students before beginning to study the Holocaust: the lives of Jews in Germany and other parts of Europe before the Nazi regime, and the evolution of antisemitism. Studying the lives of German Jews before the Nazis came to power helps us see a more complete picture of the complexity of the Holocaust. Secondly, exploring the evolution of antisemitism uncovers its long and intricate history, particularly the intensified form it took under the Nazis. By thoughtfully exploring this subject, students can gain a deeper comprehension of the Holocaust's unfolding events.

By 1933, when Hitler assumed power in Germany, there were approximately 9.5 million Jews residing in Europe (USHMM).



About 525,000 Jews lived in Germany, representing less than one percent of the German population during that time. Seventy percent of the Jews in Germany lived in urban areas (USHMM).

Learn about Jewish life before the Holocaust Yad Vashem

Explore "Glimpses of Jewish life before the Holocaust" Yad Vashem

frank connections

making

Otto Frank, whose ancestors had been in Germany since the 1700s from both his father's and mother's sides, had a deep connection to his German heritage. He fought for his country in World War I, and the rise of Nazi persecution and targeting of Jews came as a shock to him. Like many other German Jews, Otto placed blame on the Nazis rather than Germany as a whole. When he and his family relocated to the Netherlands in 1933, they deeply missed their home in Frankfurt. Otto, along with others, had assimilated into German culture, and Germany was their cherished homeland (Lee, 8-9, 16-19 and Pressler, 141, 533-535).

Part I

Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Unveiling the Impact of World War I

The **Weimar Republic** was a complex era in German history. It was named after a town in Germany where the national assembly met to adopt a new constitution in 1919, after the end of World War I. While this government only lasted until 1933, the Weimar period was marked by social progress and cultural advancements. At the same time, this period witnessed considerable political and economic turmoil, contributing to the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the fascist government responsible for the worst genocide in modern history. This period in German history is notable for its rapid liberal progress and pushback by extremist groups throughout the 1920s. It is imperative to understand the conditions within a nation that justified stereotype-driven discrimination and made the Holocaust possible. No genocide ever happens in a vacuum, and the Weimar Republic is a powerful lesson for all nations.

End of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles

Describing World War I as the deadliest war to that time only somewhat acknowledges the monumental effect it had on the world. The conflict itself, and the international policies that officially ended the war, profoundly influenced the subsequent actions taken by the winners and the losers, particularly Germany. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many European nations competed for the resources outside of their continent, and Germany was no exception. Its proud leaders and citizens wanted their nation to be respected and feared internationally, and they believed this would be achieved by using Germany's growing military both in Europe and in Africa. Consequently, at the start of the war in 1914, many Germans enthusiastically enlisted to fight, believing the world would be soon convinced of the superiority of the German military.

Note to Teachers

Some educators spend a considerable amount of time addressing the terms and impact of the Treaty of Versailles and the early years of the Weimar Republic to help their students understand the precursor to the Nazi regime. In this Educator's Guide, you will find a brief overview of this period, along with links to primary and secondary sources for further exploration. Additionally, any vocabulary terms highlighted in bold throughout the Guide are defined in the Glossary at the end of the document, providing additional clarity for educators and students.



War Cripples (45% Fit for Service), 1920 Drypoint by Otto Dix
(The Museum of Modern Art).

While Germany inflicted immense casualties on its enemies, it also suffered tremendous losses among its own troops. Historians estimate that close to 9 million soldiers died during the Great War, but over 2 million of these men were German – the highest number by a single nation. Additionally, over 4.2 million Germans returned home physically and psychologically scarred only to be reminded of their humiliating loss by having to abide by the newly negotiated **Treaty of Versailles**. Use of warfare technology was greatly responsible for the kinds of injuries the soldiers suffered and served as a reminder of the humiliation endured by Germany.

War Contributions of Jewish Germans

Note to Teachers

Facing History offers a reading titled *The Brutal Realities of World War I*, which addresses mass casualties on the Western Front. It includes a chart estimating the number of mobilized forces and total casualties of the Allied and Central Powers. When examining the casualties of the war, it is crucial to take into account the Jewish population in Germany during that period. In the early 20th century, there were approximately 500,000 Jews residing in Germany, which constituted less than 1% of the total German population, but 100,000 of these men enlisted and in greater proportions than non-Jews. See Museum of Jewish Heritage resources to explore this topic in depth.



"Boche" (German) prisoner, wounded and muddy, coming in on the 13th, 1914 (National Library of Scotland).

[Access The Brutal Realities of WWI Facing History](#)

[Read about Jewish Germans in WWI – Museum of Jewish Heritage](#)

Judenzählung or Jewish Census

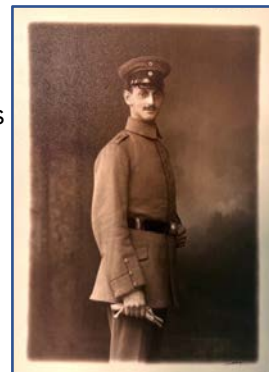
Also referred to as the "**Jew Count**" or *Judenstatistik*, a Jewish census was conducted by the Prussian War Ministry in 1916 as a response to antisemitic accusations that Jews were evading frontline military service. The military leadership conducted a census to determine how many Jewish soldiers were serving in the front lines compared to those serving in non-combat support roles. Historian Michael Geheran explores the reasons behind this census, as well as the effect it had on German Jewish soldiers.

Considering that approximately 500,000 Jews lived in Germany at that time, the fact that 100,000 German Jews were enlisted during World War I shows that Jews in Germany joined the war effort at a greater proportion than non-Jewish Germans. Furthermore, some German Jewish soldiers became officers and were honored for their service with the Iron Cross. Approximately 18,000 German Jewish front-line combatants received this award.

frank connections

making

Otto Frank fought as a German soldier in WWI and was initially sent to the Western Front to serve as a range-finder attached to the infantry. He became an officer in 1917 after demonstrating bravery in a reconnaissance action. Otto was subsequently promoted to lieutenant in 1918 and was awarded the Iron Cross. He considered himself a German patriot who was prepared to die for his country. Subsequently, after he and his family were discovered in the Secret Annex, the arresting SS officer was surprised, and almost hesitated when he saw Otto's World War I uniform (Lee, 16-18).



[Click here to read about the Jewish Census](#)

[Click to learn more about German Jewish soldiers' war effort](#)

Otto Frank in WWI
(Courtesy of Father John Neiman).

End of the War and the Treaty of Versailles

Treaty of Versailles

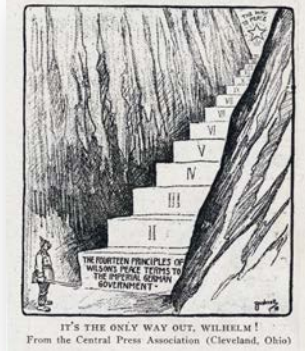
Before the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919, officially ending the war, United States President Woodrow Wilson proposed the **Fourteen Points** to address how the post-war world would be rebuilt. In his speech, Wilson introduced the points addressing territorial and political settlements, self-determination of ethnic populations in Europe, and how to prevent another war.

[Access Fourteen Points student activity on DocsTeach](#)

[Explore the Treaty of Versailles information USHMM](#)

[Review Fourteen Points on National Archives](#)

[Access full text of the Treaty of Versailles](#)



E.A. Bushnell cartoon about Kaiser Wilhelm considering Wilson's Fourteen Point Plan, 1918 ([Wikimedia Commons](#)).

Note to Teachers

Wilson's speech was important because the German leaders were very receptive to his proposals and hoped that the final treaty would contain the same elements. The National Archives contains both a digital photocopy of the *Fourteen Points* and a transcribed version for easy creation of student handouts. In addition, the National Archives' DocsTeach online tool has an already created Fourteen Points student activity that you can assign.

Note to Teachers

The page on the USHMM website includes a background on Wilson's *Fourteen Points*, as well as the terms and impact of the *Treaty of Versailles*. It is a short summary and can be given to students to read prior to analyzing the language from the Treaty. The pamphlet was published by Rand McNally in 1919 and it contains information about the treaties, the League of Nations, key figures who negotiated the end of the war, and territorial changes. While this is not a primary source, it is an excellent resource to use with students because it was written during that time.

Unfortunately for Germany, neither France nor England agreed to Wilson's Fourteen Points, and instead insisted on a treaty that imposed harsh conditions on Germany and labeled it as a sole instigator of the war.

In addition, the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to return or concede land, causing it to lose 13% of territory used for coal, demilitarize the Rhineland, pay massive reparations, limit or abolish its military, and other conditions. Full text of the Treaty can be broken down into smaller sections for further analysis.

Treaty Between the United States and Germany

By choosing not to sign the Treaty of Versailles on November 19, 1919, for the first time in its history the United States Senate rejected a peace treaty. Instead, the United States and Germany signed a separate treaty on August 25, 1921, restoring friendly relations between the two nations. Additionally, the United States worked with Germany to address debt repayment and reparations that Germany was responsible for under the Treaty of Versailles. The **Dawes Plan** (1923) restructured Germany's reparation payments, and the **Young Plan** (1928) devised a final settlement of the German reparations. Much of this was doomed by the advent of the Great Depression.

[Review "The World, Today and Yesterday" pamphlet](#)

[Click here to access the Treaty between the U.S. and Germany](#)

[Click here to explore the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan](#)

Creation of Weimar Germany

Creation of the Weimar Republic

In November 1918, when Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated and left Germany, Social Democrats collaborated with military leaders to establish a new government in the country. This civilian-military pact was seen by some historians as a violation of democratic values, but others believed that Social Democrats had no choice but to agree.

The members of the new cabinet signed the cease-fire agreement on November 11, 1918, but there was a widespread belief in the military ranks that the German military was undefeated, and surrendering was seen as “stab-in-the-back” by Social Democrats, Communists, and Jews. This belief became even more prominent among the right-wing extremist groups, such as the Nazis. The early post-World War I period was followed by frequent violent protests between the left-wing groups and right-wing extremist paramilitary organizations, such as the **Freikorps**.



Communist Party of Germany (KPD) leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht murdered by the Freikorps, 1919 (National WWII Museum).

Explore the Weimar Republic USHMM

Learn more about the Weimar Republic Britannica

Incorporate Weimar Republic readings into lessons Facing History

Note to Teachers

The USHMM website has a helpful overview of the early beginnings of the Weimar Republic. This section expands to other topics, such as political and economic upheavals, as well as some cultural changes in Weimar Germany, but it is a useful place to begin reviewing the content before teaching it. Encyclopedia

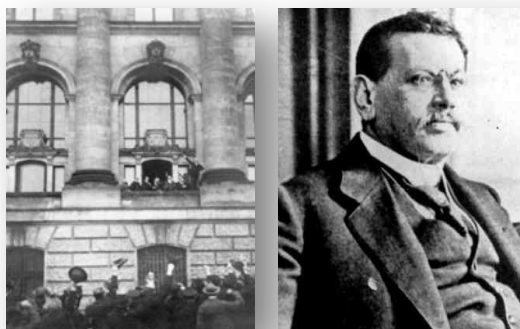
Britannica offers a more in-depth exploration of the creation of the Weimar Republic. It provides specific information about some key figures who helped redefine Germany, an overview of the Weimar government structure, and the terms and ramifications of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I. To challenge your students to think critically about the efforts and challenges of building a democracy after a major war, use the resources from Facing History, *The Weimar Republic: Fragility of Democracy*, which offers over 20 readings, which are organized by subtopics.

Weimar Constitution

As the warring nations were negotiating a treaty to end the war, a group of legal scholars, politicians, historians and sociologists crafted a new constitution which became law on August 11, 1919.

Jewish lawyer **Hugo Preuss** was a chairman of the constitution committee for several months, and he was credited for writing the first draft of this text. Significant portions of his draft was included in the final version of the Weimar Constitution.

Preuss closely worked in the final draft of the Weimar Constitution, but it did not reflect his suggestions regarding the territorial changes. The final constitution model did include the appointment of a chancellor by the president, and the equal status of the president of the Reichstag (Parliament).



Left: Proclamation of the Weimar Republic from the Reichstag building.

Right: Hugo Preuss, Reich Minister of the Interior, (Wikimedia Commons).

Access English translation of Weimar Constitution

Politics and Economy in Weimar Germany

The new Weimar government was structured to include President, Chancellor, and Parliament. The President and members of the Parliament (Reichstag) were elected by the people, and the Chancellor was appointed by the majority party in the Reichstag. **Article 48** of the Weimar Constitution allowed the President to assume emergency powers and suspend civil rights without the Reichstag's consent for a limited period.

Politics in Weimar Germany

The new political parties that protested the Weimar government often ran on the platform to nullify the Treaty of Versailles and make Germany great. Even some German citizens believed that their nation had been "stabbed in the back" by those who formed the Weimar Republic and negotiated the Treaty of Versailles that they felt humiliated Germany. Socialists, Communists, and Jews were believed to be the reason for this humiliation, and the members of these other parties advocated against them.



Election posters from Weimar Germany (*Deutscher Bunderstag*).

Note to Teachers

The Bundestag, the national parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, as part of its historical exhibition, has an excellent overview of several political parties in the Weimar Republic.

[Access Bundestag overview of political parties](#)

[Explore economic hardships in Weimar Germany](#)

Economic Hardships in the Weimar Republic

The value of German currency, the Reichsmark, had fallen substantially during World War I, causing the government to print more money. As a result, more Reichsmarks were flooding the markets further devaluing German currency and causing hyperinflation. What made matters worse was that pursuant to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was required to pay for reparations in gold and it was unable to do so. This inability to fulfill the terms of the Treaty caused more problems between Germany and the Allied Powers and even greater economic hardships for the German people.



Worthless marks stacked in a bank during hyperinflation (*Deutsche Welle*).



Worthless money weighed instead of counted (*Deutsche Welle*).

Note to Teachers

Many resources provided on the USHMM website, and referenced in this guide, pertaining to the Weimar Republic, contain information about Germany's economic hardships in the 1920s. While the Great Depression of 1929 was a global financial crisis, it affected Germany significantly because Germany struggled with the repercussions of the Treaty of Versailles. It was this, historians argue, that made Germany an environment open to influence by extremist political parties.

Cultural Life in Weimar Germany

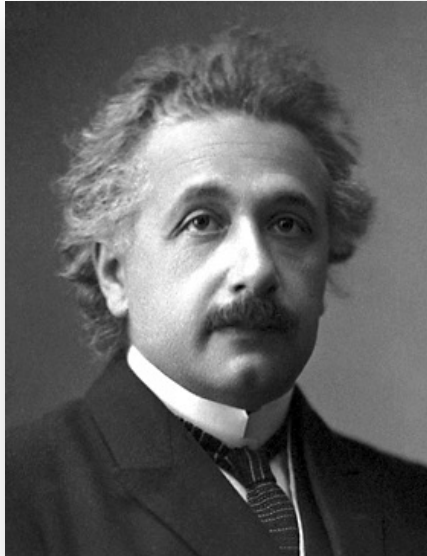
German Cultural Life and Progressive Change

While Germany's politics and post-war issues continued through the 1920s, the new constitutional democracy gave rise to a more liberal atmosphere and artistic expression. People moved into the cities from rural areas in hope of finding jobs and helped create a vibrant urban life. Women over twenty gained the right to vote in 1919, and there were significant cultural advancements in literature, arts, theater and science. German citizens were recognized and awarded for their contributions, and from 1918 to 1933, German contributors won at least one Nobel Prize each year.

Explore the Feminist Movement in Weimar Germany

Access Weimar Culture
British Library

Explore the cinema of Weimar Germany



Albert Einstein, German-born Jewish physicist who won the Nobel Prize for his work on photoelectric effect (*Wikimedia Commons*).

Note to Teachers

The Jewish Women's Archive, British Library, and Museum of Jewish Heritage are useful resources for exploring the transformative developments in interwar Germany. These sources provide valuable insights into the lives of prominent figures such as artists, musicians, scientists, filmmakers, philosophers, and other noteworthy individuals. It is often difficult to understand how such a seemingly progressive nation that embraced more liberal ideas could lead to such an authoritarian regime that undid that progress in no time.

frank connections

making

In the aftermath of World War I, the Franks' banking business was in trouble, and it fell to Otto to take over the running of the bank. Otto often travelled for business between Berlin, Frankfurt and Amsterdam, where he met a lot of people. One of those people was Jonannes Kleiman who became a close friend and later helped hide the Franks in the Secret Annex in Amsterdam. In the early 1920s, Otto and his business partner decided to open a branch of their bank in Amsterdam, but it failed the following year. The Franks' growing list of debts was partially solved by Otto's marriage to Edith Hollander in 1925, as her dowry contained a significant amount of money. Like many other Germans, the Franks began to lose their wealth in the wake of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and were beginning to consider other alternatives, such as leaving Germany and moving to Amsterdam (Lee, 21-28).



Otto and Edith Frank.
(*Anne Frank House*)

Section 2: Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

Rise of the Nazi Party

Originally founded in 1920 as part of the movement to abolish the Treaty of Versailles, the **National Socialist German Workers Party**, also known as the **Nazi Party**, came to power in Germany in 1933. Like many other racist and antisemitic groups of that time, this populist movement emerged from a far-right nationalist and intolerant culture. Its rhetoric reflected anti-Communist and antisemitic themes prevalent in Germany after World War I. The Nazi Party had little popular support until the Great Depression which caused Germany's economy to collapse.

The Nazi Party is synonymous with **Adolf Hitler** who became its leader in 1921. Hitler gained a following among those Germans who were resentful of the political and economic conditions after the war. He popularized a **25-point program**, the only written Nazi platform demanding a withdrawal from the Treaty of Versailles, a Greater Germany, more land, and blood purity.

Hitler sought to unify smaller radical groups under the Nazi Party. Its paramilitary force, **Storm Troopers** or SA, also known as "**Brown Shirts**," comprised of war veterans and members of the Freikorps, was united under the same racist and antisemitic ideologies.

Explore the Nazi Party origins - USHMM

Review the Nazi Party platform - USHMM

Access the Beginning of a Nazi Party Facing History

Note to Teachers

There are plenty of helpful resources that provide a detailed overview of the origins of the Nazi Party, which can be used to expand teacher's knowledge of the material, as well as to provide sufficient background for students before exploring the topic in depth. The USHMM includes a thorough summary of Hitler's role in the Nazi Party, including the Nazi Party platform, and is a great first resource to begin the unit. Additionally, Facing History offers a short reading and guiding questions to assign to students.

Hitler's Attempt to Overturn the Government

In 1923, Adolf Hitler and several other leaders of the Nazi Party attempted to overturn the government by storming a beer hall in Munich where government officials were meeting. While this attempted takeover known as the **Beer Hall Putsch** was unsuccessful and Hitler was convicted of treason and imprisoned, it solidified his role as the party's leader. Moreover, it convinced Hitler to use other methods to come to power, such as influencing the popular vote by taking advantage of the Weimar democracy. In fact, Hitler made a commitment to obtain power solely through elections and subsequently reestablished the Nazi Party with himself at the helm. The defining characteristic of the Nazi Party was the absolute allegiance and devotion to Hitler as its leader.

Learn more about the Beer Hall Putsch
USHMM

Explore Hitler's time in prison
Warfare History

Hitler in Landsberg prison in 1924 where he was given many privileges. He was released after 8 months due to good behavior (*Creative Commons*).



While he initially began to write his autobiography **Mein Kampf** (My Struggle) while still in prison, Hitler did not publish his book until after his release in 1925. This manifesto set out Hitler's personal and political grievances and plans for Germany. The book's main themes include Hitler's personal beliefs in the superiority of the Aryan race and his hatred of Jewish people and other non-Aryans.



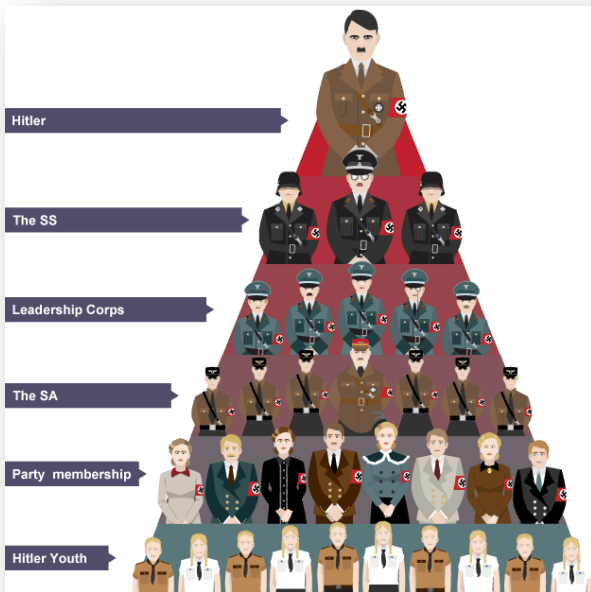
Cover of Hitler's Mein Kampf (*Jewish Virtual Library*).

The Nazi Party Rebuilds

After his release from prison, and over the next several years, Hitler managed to rebuild the Nazi Party as a major political organization with two aims: (1) to gain popular support while undermining the Weimar government, and (2) to create a shadow Nazi governmental structure that would some day replace the Weimar Republic. In addition, Hitler created the **SS (Schutzstaffel)** to serve as his personal bodyguards. He appointed **Heinrich Himmler** as the leader of the SS who meticulously screened candidates based on their "racial" lineage and political allegiance. Under Himmler, the SS were transformed into an elite corps aligned with race-based nationalist ideologies and unwavering loyalty to Hitler. The foundations were laid for the Nazi control of the government that took place in 1933.



Heinrich Himmler
(Wikimedia Commons).



Structure of the Nazi Party (BBC).

After the Great Depression struck Germany, Hitler and the Nazi Party began to exploit the economic crisis to their advantage. With their powerful slogan, "Germany, Wake Up," the Nazi Party's message of **nationalism**, job creation, and eradication of a perceived Jewish threat began to resonate with more Germans. Coupled with President **Paul von Hindenburg's** validation of Hitler when he appointed him as Chancellor, many German citizens began to see him as someone who would restore Germany to its former strength.

[Read about Heinrich Himmler's powerful rise - USHMM](#)

[Explore the Nazi Party objectives The History Place](#)

[Access the "Rise of Nazism to Power" film by Yad Vashem](#)

Note to Teachers

The History Place article offers a very detailed account of what happened after Hitler was released from prison. He methodically planned the next steps and was not discouraged when things began to improve in Germany following the U.S.-originated and Allied-approved Dawes Plan reducing German war reparations. *The Rise of Nazism to Power*, a short film by Yad Vashem provides a brief overview of several factors that contributed to the Nazi Party's rise to power, including the examination of antisemitism present in their rise.

frank connections

making

Life continued for middle-class Jewish Germans even as more antisemitic incidents took place. Otto Frank, centrist liberal, was aware of the political situation, often commenting to his relatives about the dangers of fringe parties and a weakened German government. In 1927, Otto, Edith and their daughter Margot rented an apartment from a Nazi supporter in a Frankfurt neighborhood where few Jewish families resided. Anne was born during the time the Frank family lived in that neighborhood, but in 1931, the landlord asked the Franks to leave. Even though there was a substantial presence of Hitler's Brownshirts who targeted Jews, the Frank family decided to stay in Frankfurt, and moved to Otto's family home. The Nazi Party continued to gain in popularity and power in the early 1930s, but Jews in Germany still had some legal rights at that time. For example, when Otto's brother Herbert was arrested on the grounds of violating the 1931 Regulation Governing the Trade in Securities with Foreign Countries Act, Otto represented him and won an appeal avoiding a fine. Jews in Germany would soon lose these basic privileges afforded to non-Jewish German citizens (Lee, 32-33).

The Nazi Party Rebuilds

The Nazi Party was somewhat more reserved between 1926 and 1929, but it was not idle. In addition to reorganizing the Nazi shadow government and working behind closed doors to squash party infighting, Hitler elevated some members to a higher leadership status. **Joseph Goebbels**, a member of the Nazi Party since 1924, had a doctorate in literature with a talent in speech writing and extreme antisemitic beliefs. Hitler sent him to Berlin in 1926 to serve as its Gauleiter (district leader), and as such, publicize the party and gain more members. He became the Reich Leader of Propaganda in 1929, and Minister of Propaganda in 1933.



Read the USHMM section on Joseph Goebbels

Review Goebbels' propaganda themes on BBC

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister, 1933 (BBC).

April 13, 1926

"... I learned that Hitler had phoned. He wanted to welcome us, and in fifteen minutes he was there. Tall, healthy and vigorous. I like him. He puts us to shame with his kindness. We met. We asked questions. He gave brilliant replies. I love him... I can accept this firebrand as my leader. I bow to his superiority, I acknowledge his political genius!"

Excerpt from Goebbels' diaries, which he kept from 1924 until his death in 1945. Goebbels frequently expressed antisemitic ideology and his strong thoughts and opinions on Adolf Hitler (PBS).

Note to Teachers

The USHMM section on Goebbels provides a detailed overview and videos of his speeches. An ardent antisemite, Goebbels' goal was to purify German culture from Jewish influence. The BBC Bitesize article discusses the factors contributing to the rise of the Nazi Party and briefly outlines Goebbels' propaganda themes. Further details on Nazi propaganda will be covered in the subsequent sections of this Educator's Guide.

German Parliamentary Elections (1930 – 1932)

After the Great Depression struck, Germany's economy collapsed. The banks failed, factories stopped producing goods, and middle-class Germans were cast into poverty. Hitler and the Nazi Party saw this collapse as a great opportunity to grow and become the most powerful party in Germany.

As a result of the Weimar government's failure to achieve consensus and address economic challenges, a parliamentary election took place in 1930. During this election, the Nazi Party experienced significant growth, increasing its representation from 12 to 107 seats and becoming the second largest party in the Reichstag. With the aim of becoming the majority party in Parliament, the Nazi Party consistently emphasized the necessity of a strong leader to unite the nation and combat lawlessness and crime.



1928 - 12 seats

1932 - 230 seats

Nazi Party membership was slow to grow in the late 1920s, mostly because life was getting better in Germany, and the party's brand of politics did not appeal to many. In 1928, the party only had 12 seats in the Reichstag, while in the next election, it grew to 230 seats (BBC).

Parliamentary Elections and Consolidation of Power

When in July 1932 the Nazi Party won 230 seats in the Reichstag, Hitler refused to join the coalition unless he was appointed Chancellor. Initially, President von Hindenburg rejected Hitler's demands, but on January 30, 1933, believing he and other members of the conservative coalition could control Hitler while using his mass following, von Hindenburg acquiesced and appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany. Immediately after becoming Chancellor, Hitler began to consolidate his power. He succeeded at pressuring von Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag and hold the new elections in March 1933.



Hitler and German President von Hindenburg after Hitler's appointment to Chancellor, 1933 (*National WWII Museum*).

Watch "Rise of Nazi Party" video
Facing History

Watch "How Hitler Rose to Power" video
TED Ed

Note to Teachers

"He told us what he was going to do. And then he did it." Facing History's 10-minute video about Hitler's rise to power, which includes some of the major Holocaust scholars is a great resource to show to students. Similarly, the TED Ed 6-minute video clip is an engaging resource that uses powerful narration and animation to show how easy it was for Hitler to become a dictator.

frank connections

making

Otto and Edith Frank were afraid of what the Nazi regime would mean for them and other German Jews. Otto later recalled groups of Stormtroopers singing in 1932, even before Hitler became Chancellor, "When Jewish blood splatters off the knife," but leaving Germany was still a difficult choice to make. Otto worried about how he was going to support the family if they left Germany, but the level of antisemitism incited by the Nazi propaganda was becoming worse. Many of the Franks' Christian friends were influenced by the Nazis and no longer interacted with Otto and Edith. (Lee, 36)

Note to Teachers

Echoes and Reflections has a guiding unit plan on Nazi Germany that is broken down into three different topics, which can be helpful to incorporate in your lessons. It includes objectives, guiding questions, and reading material, but it may require some modification to align with your unit objectives. Additionally, Facing History offers its own unit plan for learning about the rise of the Nazi Party, and it has more connected lesson plans that can work in their entirety. Teachers often use Echoes and Facing History materials to supplement their own materials, or in many cases, they begin with pre-written curriculum and adapt it to their courses and students. Both are included for your consideration.

Explore the
Nazi Party unit
Echoes & Reflections

View Facing History's
unit on the Rise of
Hitler

Seizure of Power and the Beginning of the Holocaust

January 31, 1933

"... We've made it. We've set up shop in Wilhelmstrasse. Hitler is chancellor. It's like a fairy tale come true! He deserved it. Wonderful euphoria. People were going mad below. ... A new beginning! An explosion of popular energy. Bigger and bigger crowds. I spoke on the radio, to every German station. 'We are immensely happy,' I said."

Excerpt from Goebbels' diary after Hitler was appointed Chancellor (PBS).

On February 24, 1933, the Nazis raided Communist headquarters in Berlin claiming that they were acting to prevent a planned Communist uprising. Conveniently, three days later, when the Reichstag Building burned down, the Nazi leadership blamed Communists. The arrest was made, and the accused was tried and sentenced to death, but later evidence casts doubt on this historical record. Consequently, while the origins of the fire remained unclear, Hitler was successful in convincing Hindenburg to sign the decree "For the Protection of the People and State" pursuant to Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. Also known as the **Reichstag Decree**, this law placed restrictions on personal liberty, free speech, freedom of the press and the rights of assembly, and enabled Hitler closer to becoming a dictator.



The Reichstag building in flames. USHMM

Learn more about the
Reichstag Fire
USHMM

Read the Smithsonian
article on the
Reichstag Fire

Read Article 48 of the
Weimar Constitution
USHMM

Explore U.S. press
articles about
Nazis in 1933

Note to Teacher

Article 48, which enabled the President to "declare a state of emergency in times of national danger and to rule as a dictator for short periods of time" (USHMM), was embedded in the Weimar Constitution as a compromise to appease the conservative factions. This provision was fundamental to Hitler's rise to power, and he had no intention of returning his dictatorial powers once he assumed them. The linked resources on this page provide additional context that can be used to enhance student learning. Also included is the link to the U.S. press reactions about Hitler's ascent to power published from January until March 1933.

frank connections

making

Hitler did not waste time making the lives of German Jews more difficult. However, it was the new law forcing Jewish school children to be separated from their non-Jewish classmates that finally compelled Otto to make official plans to leave Germany. He approached his brother-in-law Erich Elias who provided Otto an interest-free loan to start an independent pectin supplier firm Opekta in Amsterdam. The Franks' decision to start a new life outside of Germany was timely because in April 1933, with the encouragement of Hitler and the Nazi regime, a nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses took place. Public opposition to the Nazi government was met by arrests, imprisonments and even murder. Otto left Germany in August 1933 to start a new company, while Edith and their children remained in Frankfurt until December of that year. Both the Franks' and the Hollanders' families had lived in Germany for centuries, but remaining in Frankfurt was no longer possible. In his letter to Cara Wilson dated June 19, 1968, Otto wrote: "The world around me had collapsed. When most of the people in my country turned into hordes of nationalist, cruel anti-Semitic criminals, I had to face the consequences, and though this hurt me deeply I realized that Germany was not the world and I left forever" (Lee, 37-39 and Wilson-Granat, 84).

Section 2: Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

Seizure of Power and the Beginning of the Holocaust

Enabling Act

The **Enabling Act** was passed on March 23, 1933, less than a month from the Reichstag Fire. It solidified the power of Hitler by allowing him to pass laws without the approval of the Parliament or President von Hindenburg. The Enabling Act was pushed through using intimidation as the Nazis prevented all Communists and some Social Democrats from being seated in the Parliament and voting on this law. This legislation, as well as The Law for the Imposition and Implementation of the Death Penalty enacted on March 29, 1933, served as the foundation of Hitler's dictatorship.



After the Enabling Act of 1933, democracy ceased to exist in Germany. Some who disagreed left the country, but most Germans stayed, either supporting Hitler or assuming his power would be short-lived. And as Hitler achieved ultimate power, he was free to fulfil promises he made in his speeches and bring to life the plans he made in *Mein Kampf* almost a decade before. Antisemitic laws were slowly but steadily implemented in Nazi Germany, paving the way for the normalization of violence.

Read about the
Enabling Act
USHMM

Learn about the Nazi
1933 Death Penalty
law - USHMM



Top: Testimonies of Jewish survivors about what it was like when Hitler came to power (access videos here: ["The Jews of Würzburg"](#) and [Jewish Life in Nazi Germany](#)) (Yad Vashem Video Testimonies Resource Center).

Left: Joseph Goebbels speaks to a crowd in Berlin on April 1, 1933 urging German civilian men and women to boycott Jewish-owned businesses. Goebbels often gave propaganda speeches justifying the regime's antisemitic policies as a legitimate method to force Germany's Jews out of the country (USHMM Photo Archives).

Explore 1933 book
burnings - USHMM

Read about 1933
Jewish business
boycotts - USHMM

Note to Teachers

In May 1933, the Nazis staged massive book burnings to remove "Jewish influence" from German institutions. While it is crucial to acknowledge that this event holds a unique and unparalleled significance, students may engage in discussions exploring the motivations and justifications behind contemporary instances of book bans.

May 11, 1933

"... Worked until late at home. In the evening, I gave a speech outside the opera house, in front of the bonfire while the filthy, trashy books were being burned by the students. I was at the top of my form. Huge crowds. Superb summer weather began today!"

Excerpt from Goebbels' diary after Nazi-sponsored book burnings began (PBS).



Burning of the books labeled as "un-German" in May 1933 in Berlin (USHMM).

Section 2: Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

Fascism in Germany

Fascism, a far-right political ideology, rose to prominence as a political movement in 20th century Europe with the establishment of the National Fascist Party, led by **Benito Mussolini**, in Italy in 1919. Nazi Germany is considered one of the prime examples of fascism because it embraced this ideology more than any other country. It possessed all the elements of a fascist society:

1

Highly centralized **authoritarian** government with Adolf Hitler as the dictator whose word was final. The regime suppressed individual freedoms, civil liberties, and the power was concentrated in the hands of a few leaders.

2

Germany's emphasis on extreme **nationalism**, and racial and national superiority. The Nazis employed nationalist propaganda, symbols, and rhetoric to foster a sense of national unity and pride among the German population.

3

Establishment of a **totalitarian** state with complete control over all aspects of society: a single-party rule, regulating every aspect of life, control over the economy, education, culture, press, and private life to ensure conformity to Nazi ideology, use of propaganda to shape public opinion, and censorship on all media to control and manipulate public perception.

4

Advocacy for military might and territorial expansion: when Hitler came to power, he immediately began rebuilding the German military and pursuing aggressive militarism. The Nazis sought to expand Germany's living space (Lebensraum) through conquest, which led to the occupation of neighboring countries and the outbreak of World War II.

5

Fostering of a **cult a personality** around a single leader: the portrayal of Hitler as a powerful leader, cultivated by Goebbels, who could bring former greatness to Germany.

6

Rejection of communism and socialism, considering both a major threat to Germany. Although the Nazi Party has "socialist" in its name, it was not a socialist movement.

7

Belief in the idea of racial superiority. Antisemitic policies were at the core of their ideology, but also targeted Roma, Jehovah Witnesses, people with disabilities, homosexual men and others.

Role of Police in Nazi Germany

The police agencies in Nazi Germany played a crucial role in the stabilization of Nazi control and the persecution and genocide of European Jews and other perceived enemies of the regime. While Hitler founded the SA (Storm Troopers) and SS (Protection Squadron) before he came to power, after he became Chancellor, Germany's police force became deeply embedded in Germany's political apparatus.

Note to Teachers

The SS is one of the most confusing administrative systems primarily because many of its agencies overlapped. Each agency played a specific role within the Nazi police force, and its role in the Holocaust varied. They are, however, included in this Guide as a reminder of the complex hierarchy of the Nazi police and the culpability of all enforcers in the persecution and genocide of European Jews and other targeted groups. Gestapo was one of the most feared agencies and it was responsible for the arrest, interrogation and detainment of Jews and other perceived Reich enemies. Below resources provide a helpful overview of the German Police, and the USHMM film *Path to Nazi Genocide* examines the role of the Nazis and their collaborators. For more information about the hierarchy of the Nazi police agencies under the SS, see Appendix 1 at the end of the Guide.

Explore primary
sources on German
police - USHMM

Watch "Path to Nazi
Genocide" film
USHMM

Section 2: Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

Racism in Nazi Germany

Racism is a belief system based on the fallacy that some races are fundamentally superior or inferior to others. People who are racist believe that a person's "innate and inherited characteristics determine human behavior" (USHMM), and for centuries such beliefs have been widely embraced all over the world. While racism can manifest in numerous ways, key components include a presence of implicit or explicit bias, prejudice, discrimination, and power imbalance. It can be systemic, acutely ingrained in social institutions, and cause significant disadvantages for certain racial groups. It can also exist in combination with other types of discriminatory behavior, such as ableism or sexism. Historical and cultural factors, such as slavery or colonialism, often shaped and perpetuated racism, racial biases and stereotypes for years to come.

Note to Teachers

Chances are, if you are teaching about the Holocaust, you are not addressing race or racism for the first time and may already have the tools to have this important conversation with students. However, if you have not had the opportunity to discuss the concept of race, there are many excellent resources that can help you prepare. One of the best resources for the discussion of race is Facing History's *Discussing Race and Racism in the Classroom*. This unit offers several lessons starting with how to create an inclusive and safe classroom environment so that students can study this topic constructively. There is a disclaimer on the website which states that the unit was designed for teachers in the UK, but it is easily adaptable to US classrooms. The USHMM offers helpful overviews and lesson plans on Nazi racism, which should be discussed early in the Holocaust Unit.

Explore "Discussing Race and Racism in the Classroom" Facing History

Read the overview of Nazi Racism Yad Vashem

Read about Nazi racism - USHMM

Teach Nazi Racism lesson primary USHMM lesson plan

Bias is defined as an "inclination or predisposition for or against something" (APA Dictionary of Psychology). While bias can be positive or negative, prejudice is a negative attitude and belief about individuals or groups based on particular grouping, whether racial or other. According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, prejudice includes "emotions that range from mild nervousness to hatred, ... assumptions and beliefs about groups, ... and negative behaviors, including discrimination and violence." Finally, the presence of a power imbalance reinforces racism because privileged racial groups may exercise control over laws, policies, and societal institutions, thus continuing discriminatory practices.

Manifestation of Nazi Racism

Eugenics: Eugenic programs were established to selectively promote reproduction among those considered racially "fit" while suppressing procreation among those deemed racially "inferior." The Nazis implemented sterilization laws to actively enforce eugenics.

Genetic Superiority: The Nazis considered Germanic people and northern Europeans a superior race or "Aryans." They sought to prove their superiority and non-Aryan inferiority by conducting medical experiments, none of which yielded favorable results for the Nazi regime.

Antisemitism: Before they even came to power, the Nazis were vocal about their hatred of Jews and blamed them for Germany's economic problems. Through their use of propaganda, the Nazis further promoted antisemitic stereotypes, gradually normalizing their discriminatory behavior towards Jews. Moreover, they reinforced their antisemitic ideology by asserting that Jews posed a biological threat to Aryans and should be kept segregated from non-Jews.

Genocide: The ultimate display of Nazi racism was its genocidal nature and between 1933 and 1945, millions of Jews and other groups of people were persecuted and murdered. The Nazis aimed to eliminate entire populations based on their racial backgrounds and implemented a range of systematic measures to achieve their objective.

Who Were the Nazi Victims?

Regarded as the worst genocide in modern history, the **Holocaust** did not begin with mass murder. While the Nazi harassment of Jews began prior to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany, when the Nazi Party finally came to power, it began using state-sponsored methods to eradicate Jews from German society and coerce their emigration, ultimately seeking to create a society free of Jews. Hitler and other Nazi leaders gauged the prevailing sentiment of the nation to determine the extent to which they could enforce antisemitic policies. As a result, the gradual implementation of antisemitic laws by the regime, and the enforcement by the feared Nazi police groups, encouraged German citizens to marginalize Jews and embrace the ideologies of Nazi Germany. Eventually the Nazis established over 44,000 incarceration sites throughout the territory they controlled.

Explore "Who Were the Victims?"
USHMM

Read about the Nazi era racial ideology
USHMM

Read "Mosaic of Nazi Victims" - USHMM

Learn more about persecution of Roma in pre-war Germany
USHMM

Roma and Sinti, Individuals with Disabilities, Slavs, and Homosexual Men

While the Nazis targeted Jews as Germany's primary enemy, slated for complete annihilation, they also targeted other groups whom they deemed racially inferior. The Nazi regime persecuted Roma and Sinti, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and Slavs because they perceived them as racially inferior. The Nazis' embrace of **eugenics**, a pseudoscientific notion that advocated for selective breeding to create a supposedly superior race, fueled their relentless pursuit of racial purity and justified their ruthless policies of oppression and extermination. The **1933 Law for the Protection of Hereditary Health**, which mandated the forced sterilization of certain individuals with physical and mental disabilities, was only the beginning of the Nazis' practice of eugenics and their persecution of people believed to be a threat to the Aryan race.



Romani prisoners in the Belzec concentration camp (USHMM).

Persecution of Roma during World War II -
USHMM

The Nazi regime also viewed Poles (as well as other Slavic and Asiatic people of the Soviet Union) as racially inferior and treated them as such. They furthermore targeted their real and perceived political opponents, which included not only Communists and Socialists, but also some Catholic and Lutheran clergy and **Jehovah's Witnesses**. Another group arrested and sent to the concentration camps by the Nazi regime were homosexual men. Unlike homosexual women who could be forced to give birth to Aryan children, homosexual men were seen as an impediment to the expansion of the German race.

Read about Poles as Nazi Victims –
USHMM publication

Read about Jehovah's Witnesses as Nazi Victims – USHMM

Learn about "Gay Men Under the Nazi Regime" – USHMM

Note to Teachers

The USHMM resources linked on this page provide an overview of different groups of people that the Nazis targeted. Many of those web resources contain the links to survivors' testimonies. They are short clips and can be easily shared with students as part of lessons. This page also introduces the Nazis' practice of eugenics, which significantly affected adults and children with disabilities. Additional information is provided in Section 4 of Part I of the Guide.

The Nazi Camp System in 1930s Germany

As soon as the Nazis assumed power in 1933, they began creating a **camp system** to manage their real and perceived political opponents. These camps were established throughout Germany and were centrally organized institutions operated by the Waffen-SS and other SS divisions. The individuals detained in these camps were denied any form of judicial due process. Furthermore, prisoners were subjected to forced labor and utilized for various SS projects, such as constructing camps or building railways. **Dachau** was the first major concentration camp in Germany and served as the blueprint for expanding the Nazi concentration camp system. The system encompassed different types of camps, and it included labor camps, transit camps, prisoner of war camps, and extermination camps. By 1939, seven large concentration camps had been established in Germany: Dachau (1933), Sachsenhausen (1936) north of Berlin, Buchenwald (1937) near Weimar, Neuengamme (1938) near Hamburg, Flossenburg (1938), Mauthausen (1938), and Ravensbruck (1939).



USHMM

Learn about Nazi
Camps, 1933 - 1945
on USHMM website

Explore primary texts
on early Nazi camps,
University of London

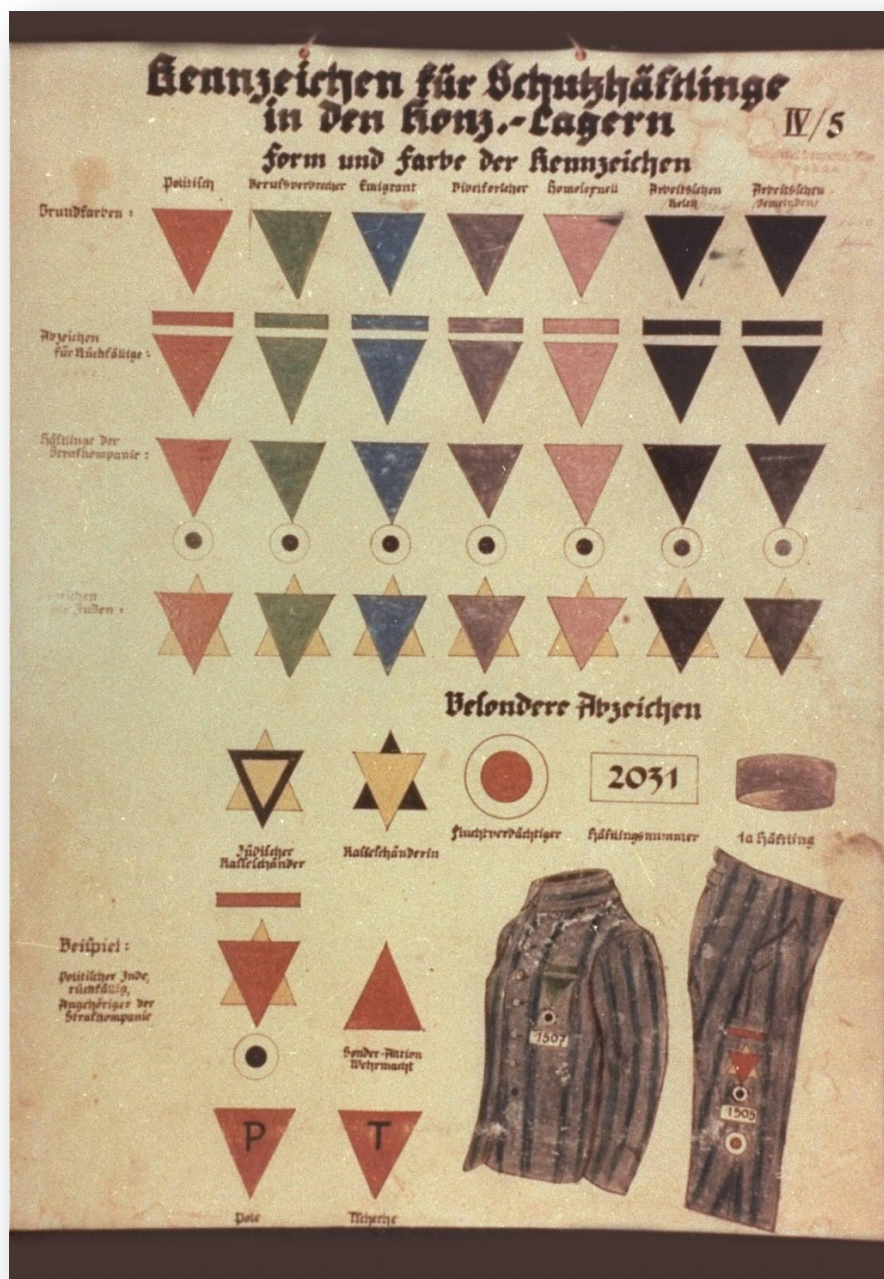


Prisoners in Dachau concentration camp between 1933 and 1940 (USHMM).

Note to Teachers

The USHMM website provides a collection of articles that explore the Nazi camps of the 1930s and 1940s, spanning both Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe. The initial article in the series titled *Nazi Camps* delivers a general overview of the various types of Nazi camps. It also clarifies the generic use of the term “concentration camp” to describe all Nazi incarceration facilities prior to and during World War II. Each of these articles can be assigned to students in short excerpts or in their entirety for more comprehensive study. The camp system played a crucial role in the Nazi vision of achieving a racially homogeneous Germany, ultimately enabling the carrying out of the Holocaust. By establishing early camps like Dachau, the Nazis could swiftly incarcerate both real and perceived political adversaries, while simultaneously sending a powerful message to the German population about the consequences of challenging the regime. In addition to USHMM, Birkbeck-University of London website offers a valuable repository of primary and secondary resources concerning early Nazi camps. Particularly enriching is the “Related Documents” section located at the bottom of the page, which contains interviews with prisoners and prison guards, speeches and other records. These resources provide students with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the conditions that prevailed in various camps during that period. Information about other types of camps that were established in Nazi-occupied Europe for the purpose of murdering Jews and other groups deemed inferior by the Nazis will be provided later in this Guide.

Classification System in the Nazi Camps



Note to Teachers

The information regarding the classification system in the Nazi camps is an important topic for analysis when students are learning about the administration of the camps and the management of the camp population. The Nazis used this system to differentiate between their prisoners. Knowing which group each prisoner belonged to allowed the Nazis to keep better track of the prisoners and their intended fate. The classification system and reducing the inmates' identities to numbers or symbols was also used to demoralize and dehumanize them. The use of markings with the intent to depersonalize Jews and other prisoners began pre-war and extended into Nazi camp system during war.

These prisoner markings were sewn on the uniforms and identified the reason for an inmate's incarceration. The **classification system** had the markings for political prisoners (red), professional criminals (green), German citizens who left the country after the Nazis came to power, then returned (blue), Jehovah's Witnesses (purple), homosexual male prisoners (pink), "asocial" inmates (black), and Roma and Sinti (brown). Jews wore an inverted yellow triangle under their assigned color triangle, forming a Star of David (Arolsen Archives).

A chart of prisoner markings used in Dachau concentration camp between 1938 – 1942 (larger image can be accessed [here](#) and USHMM information about the classification system can be reviewed [here](#)) (USHMM).

Read about Jewish Badge: During the Nazi Era - USHMM

Student Handout: Identification badges Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh

An image of prisoner markings with English translations (Faces of Auschwitz).



The Nazi regime officially ordered that all Jewish children and adults in Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe wear a yellow badge. The decree was imposed after the invasion of Poland, but quickly spread to Germany and other parts of Europe. The badge was used to dehumanize and demoralize Jewish prisoners, as well as to control their movements.

Evolution and Impact of Antisemitism

Prior to the beginning of the Nazi regime, Hitler and his followers expressed their antisemitic beliefs primarily through speeches and Nazi publications, such as *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official Nazi newspaper. After Hitler became Chancellor and the Nazi Party solidified its power, **antisemitism** was institutionalized in Germany through the implementation of laws and formal decrees.

Antisemitic Laws & Decrees in Germany: A Timeline

1933

Law limits Jews in public schools

Jews not allowed in civil service, university, and government positions

Law taking away German citizenship from East European Jewish immigrants

1935

Jews prohibited from serving in the German armed forces

Nuremberg Laws: only racially pure Germans could be citizens, Jews forbidden from marrying Aryans, Jews were not allowed to display the German flag

Germany defines who is considered Jewish

1936

Jewish doctors can no longer practice medicine in German institutions

1938

Mandatory registration of all Jewish property

Law on Alteration of Personal Names: Jews can only be given specific first names from a Nazi-approved list. Jews with non-Jewish names had to add "Israel" for men and "Sara" for women.

Jewish passports had to be stamped with a letter "J"

Kristallnacht (additional antisemitic laws and policies were enacted in the aftermath of the November Pogrom.

See section on Kristallnacht)

1941

Jews in Germany were forced to wear a yellow star of David badge

This partial timeline was created using the information provided on the [Museum of Tolerance](#) and [USHMM](#) websites.

Note to Teachers

This page contains a wealth of information and resources that can greatly enhance the student learning experience. This partial timeline, created using information from the Museum of Tolerance and USHMM, illustrates the gradual evolution of antisemitism in Germany, demonstrating how it might have become more acceptable to ordinary non-Jewish Germans. The links on the left provide opportunities for in-depth exploration of the lives of Jews affected by these discriminatory laws. The USHMM offers comprehensive overviews and engaging lesson activities that educators can easily incorporate into their classrooms. Yad Vashem and Echoes & Reflections provide valuable student lessons featuring testimonies from survivors that relate to specific topics. The testimonies linked on this page are particularly useful for discussing antisemitism during the early years of Nazi Germany. The Museum of Tolerance's *Children of the Holocaust*, adapted from passport photo cards, serve as a haunting reminder of the Jewish children who tragically perished, and can be used as a teaching resource. Lastly, the *#ItStartedWithWords* campaign by the Claims Conference, which highlights the impact of words, is a powerful tool for high school students to develop their own campaigns against hate speech.

Read about the Nuremberg Laws USHMM

Access Yad Vashem lesson on "Being a German Jew in the 1930s"

Explore Echoes & Reflections unit on antisemitism

Explore #ItStartedWithWords survivor's testimony

Consider USHMM Holocaust Timeline Activity

Examine Children of the Holocaust resources from Museum of Tolerance

Evolution and Impact of Antisemitism

frank connections

making

When Otto Frank began to consider leaving Germany, it was primarily because of the public display of antisemitism by the Nazis. However, the new law in 1933 requiring Jewish school children to be separated from their non-Jewish classmates finally forced Otto to make official plans to leave for Amsterdam. And if the family had stayed, only a few years later, all Jewish students, including his daughters, would have been expelled from German schools. While the lives of Jews in Germany were getting more endangered, Otto and his family settled down in Amsterdam in a neighborhood where hundreds of other European Jewish families lived. Although initially not facing the same restrictions as Jews in Germany, Jews in the Netherlands still experienced antisemitism. They could not advance in the civil service and some private establishments did not allow Jews on their premises, but these restrictions were isolated and did not affect their freedoms. Some Dutch authorities and citizens rejected the refugees, which appeared to have been related more to their nationality as Germans than their Jewish heritage. While Dutch Jews varied in socioeconomic status, most German Jews were wealthy and moved into wealthier neighborhoods causing resentment among poor Dutch Jews and non-Jews. Upon the Franks' arrival in Amsterdam, the world was still dealing with the Great Depression, and Otto Frank worked tirelessly so that his company would succeed. It was in these early years that Otto met Victor Kugler and Miep Santrouschitz (m. Geis) who later became his most trusted friends and protectors. The Franks lived quietly in Amsterdam and developed close friendships with some of their neighbors. They traveled frequently, visiting family in Switzerland and Edith and Otto each going to Frankfurt as late as 1936. They were very aware of Hitler's quest for expansion, and Edith, fearing the family was not safe in the Netherlands, hoped to emigrate to England. Those plans were put on hold when Otto founded another company Pectacon in 1938 that sold herbs and spices, and the family remained in Amsterdam (Lee, 37-39, 43-47).

Note to Teachers

The following pages outline and provide an overview of some of the tactics employed by the Nazis to implement their antisemitic ideology. It is important to note that the Holocaust is a complex topic with a vast amount of information. While this guide offers suggestions for online Holocaust resources as a starting point for educators, it cannot encompass every aspect. For a comprehensive understanding, educators may find it beneficial to read Saul Friedlander's books, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* and *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945*. These texts provide invaluable information about the Holocaust. Alternatively, educators may consider reading *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933-1945*, Friedlander's abridged version edited by Orna Kenan. It is crucial for educators to review all resources before assigning them to students in order to ensure that the materials, including visuals, are age-appropriate. Additionally, much of the information in this guide contains sensitive and graphic details. Proper introduction and handling of such content will optimize student learning.



A sign reading "Jewish quarter" in German and "Jewish neighborhood" in Dutch (Jewish Virtual Library).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Propaganda in Nazi Germany

In addition to passing discriminatory laws and policies discussed in Section 3 of the Guide, the Nazi regime used other tactics to promote and enforce antisemitism. The following additional methods were used to marginalize, discriminate against, and ultimately eliminate Jews from German society:

- Propaganda
- Nazi Camp System
- Kristallnacht (state-sponsored pogrom)
- Ghettos and Forced Segregation
- Einsatzgruppen and the Final Solution

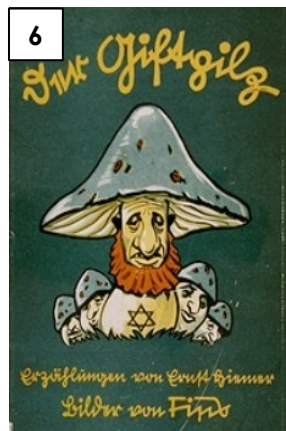
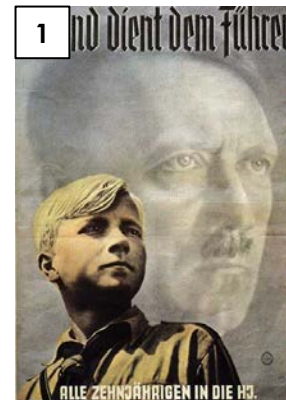
Use of Propaganda in Promoting Stereotypes

The Nazi regime extensively utilized **propaganda** to promote antisemitic ideas and stereotypes. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda who was introduced earlier in the Guide, oversaw the publication of propaganda through various media channels, such as films, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, posters, and public events. Goebbels was a staunch antisemite, and as one of the most influential Nazi speakers, he was able to effectively convey the message of Hitler and the Nazi party.

In Nazi Germany, German Aryans were portrayed as racially pure, physically attractive and strong, heroic, and upholders of traditional family values. On the contrary, Jews were depicted as dangerous, disloyal, and a threat to the well-being of German society.

Visual Essay on Effects of Propaganda Facing History	Anti-Jewish Propaganda Lesson Echoes & Reflections
German Propaganda Posters archive Calvin University	Antisemitic Historic Propaganda Footage USHMM

Nazi posters displayed in public places were some of the most potent propaganda tools. The regime's use of powerful albeit offensive imagery was intended to evoke fear and disgust in non-Jewish Germans and lead them to validate Nazi persecution of Jews. The propaganda machine headed by Goebbels also produced and supported documentary and fictional films, which served to glorify Hitler and the Nazi regime and paint Jews as greedy and untrustworthy enemies of the Reich.



Nazi propaganda posters 1-4 emphasized perceived racial purity, physical strength and beauty, heroism, and family values of German Aryans (Calvin University). Antisemitic propaganda posters 5-7 highlighted the perceived inferiority of Jews in posters, films and other publications. Below is the cover of an antisemitic children's book, *The Poisonous Mushroom* (USHMM).

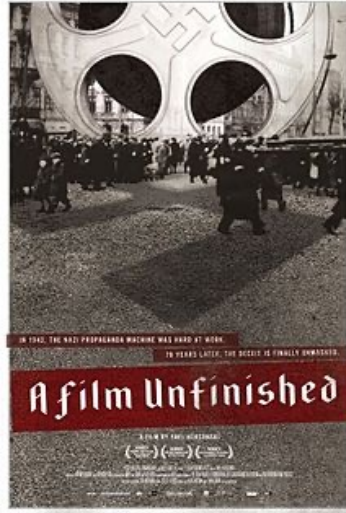
Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Propaganda in Nazi Germany

A Film Unfinished:

Historical Truth or Fake News?

In 1954, film footage labeled *Das Ghetto* was discovered in the archives in East Germany, and it contained footage from the Warsaw Ghetto. Some of the scenes offered a window into the lives of the Jews who were suffering on the streets of the ghetto: they were sick, starving and destitute. In addition, the footage included other Jews living in the ghetto, who were seemingly well-off, had a say in their lives and did not appear to care about those Jews living in poverty. For many years, historians considered this footage an authentic record about the life in the Polish ghettos and used it in some Holocaust documentaries. Then, in 1998, a reel of outtakes was discovered on the U.S. Air Force Base in Germany containing footage from that same filming, but this time German cameramen and SS guards were visible in some of the scenes. What became clear was that the scenes of the ghetto, filmed by several cameramen from different angles, was staged by the Nazis. The scenes of the Jews suffering on the streets of the ghetto were very real, but the smiling faces of well-dressed and well-fed Jewish men and women were staged. Filmmaker Yael Hersonski juxtaposed the actual footage with five survivors who were in the Warsaw Ghetto at the time, and incorporated the diary entries of Adam Czerniakow, the head of the ghetto's Jewish council, who followed the Nazis' orders but kept detailed account on what he was forced to do. The purpose of this edited but unfinished Nazi film is not known, but the staged alternate reality present in the footage suggests the Nazis were contrasting the suffering Jews with their fictitious greedy and indifferent counterparts, perhaps aiming to make the impending Final Solution more palatable to ordinary Germans.



Note to Teachers

A Film Unfinished is a valuable resource that sheds light on Nazi propaganda and challenges us to critically examine historical records when teaching about the Holocaust. The discovery of an additional reel in 1998 revealed that scenes depicting well-fed and well-dressed Jews were staged, highlighting the importance of verifying the credibility of the sources before using them with students. Given its length of ninety minutes, it might not be feasible to show the entire film in the classroom. Additionally, there are brief scenes of nudity around the sixty-minute mark that involve a staged Jewish ritual bath, possibly making it difficult for classroom viewing. However, educators teaching about propaganda may find it beneficial to watch this video to gain deeper insights into how the Nazis humiliated Jews. The link for this film is available in the Resources section.

Public Humiliation of Jews

The Nazis used public humiliation and shaming to exert power over people they considered inferior, as well as a tool to intimidate or embolden German citizens who interacted with the targeted population. In fact, publicly humiliating tactics by the Nazis not only stripped their victims of their dignity and humanity, but also served to reinforce the indoctrination of racial hierarchy among German citizens and populations living under Nazi occupation. Consequently, non-Jewish German citizens, whether through active participation or passive support, contributed to the widespread acceptance and implementation of the Nazis' humiliating tactics, becoming desensitized to the gradual escalation of persecution.



Vienna Jewish men and women forced to scrub the streets to remove political messages critical of Germany (USHMM).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

The November Pogrom

Public Humiliation of Jews



"I am a defiler of the race." Example of public humiliation for those who violated the Nazi race laws (USHMM).

Explore Nazi use of
public humiliation
USHMM

"Some Were
Neighbors" Exhibition
USHMM

Note to Teachers

Public humiliation had a profound psychological impact, affecting both the victim and the observer. For the latter, it served as a chilling warning of the consequences they might face if they dared to deviate from newly-established Nazi norms. The USHMM's exhibit, *Some Were Neighbors*, is one of the best online resources because it examines the actions of ordinary Germans during the Holocaust, highlighting the choices they made. While some became rescuers, others willingly participated in the Nazi regime's efforts.

Whether directly involved or as bystanders, these ordinary Germans played a significant role in perpetuating public humiliation as a tool of control and oppression. The same exhibit also provides an excellent lesson plan, which can be easily adapted to any middle or high school Holocaust curriculum.

The November Pogrom: Kristallnacht

Nazi propaganda played a central role in fostering a climate of hatred and antisemitism during the Nazi regime. From the moment they came to power, the Nazis deliberately created a hostile environment that dehumanized Jews and manipulated public opinion to fuel prejudice against them. Through persistent portrayals of Jews as the enemy responsible for Germany's social and economic decline, and the exaggeration of Jewish influence, the Nazis were able to incite violence against the Jewish population. One pivotal event that exemplified the escalation of violence against Jews was **Kristallnacht**, also known as the "Night of Broken Glass," which occurred on November 9 and 10, 1938, in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland, the part of Czechoslovakia annexed by Nazi Germany. This pogrom was triggered by the shooting of Ernst vom Rath, a German embassy official, by Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew. Grynszpan's act was in response to the Nazis' forced deportation of Polish Jews, including members of his own family.

"Some Were
Neighbors"
Teacher Guide

Read "The Forgotten
Life of Herschel
Grynszpan" Museum
of Jewish Heritage

Learn about
Kristallnacht USHMM



Herschel Grynszpan, November 7, 1938 (USHMM).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

The November Pogrom

Note to Teachers

Kristallnacht was a pivotal event in the history of the Holocaust because it marked the beginning of the Nazis' use of violence to persecute Jews. Until that time, the Nazi regime primarily relied on antisemitic decrees and laws to target Germany's Jews. As such, it is important to discuss this pogrom in the classroom to help students understand its impact. For anyone needing a background on Kristallnacht, the USHMM website (referenced on the previous page) offers a concise overview and is the best starting point. The resources provided on Yad Vashem and Wiener Library websites contain many oral and written testimonies, which offer even more powerful first-person accounts of the events during and following Kristallnacht. While these resources can and should be shared with students, they are extensive, and students will likely need some guidance on how to utilize them.

November 10, 1938

"...[Hitler] decides: demonstrations should be allowed to continue. The police should be withdrawn. For once the Jews should get the feel of popular anger...I immediately give the necessary instructions to the police and the Party...The synagogue burns...We extinguish only insofar as is necessary for the neighboring buildings...From all over the Reich information is now flowing in: 50, then 70 synagogues are burning. The Führer has ordered that 20–30,000 Jews should immediately be arrested...!"

Excerpts from Goebbels' diary. (*Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933–1945*, 147). Below: Germans walking by Jewish businesses vandalized by the mobs. One of the most powerful images is the look of indifference on non-Jewish Germans' faces (USHMM).



Prior to the death of vom Rath, anti-Jewish riots and the destruction of Jewish property had already commenced in certain parts of Germany on November 7th and 8th, even before any public response from Hitler or other Nazi leaders. Upon hearing the news of vom Rath's death on the evening of November 9th, Hitler put Joseph Goebbels in charge with overseeing the Nazi Party's reaction. Exploiting the situation, Nazi propaganda falsely presented the assassination of a German diplomat by a Jewish teenager as part of a wider Jewish conspiracy. This distorted narrative served as a precursor for a widespread wave of violent acts targeting Jewish homes, businesses, synagogues, and individuals.



USHMM

Explore Kristallnacht and survivors' testimonies
Yad Vashem

Kristallnacht written testimonies
The Wiener Library

"Cologne. In entire residential streets every single home has been wrecked; not one item, not one chair, not a cup remains intact. Grand pianos, upright pianos were thrown out of the windows onto the street. The mobs were partly led by "Braune Schwestern" (who are now working in hospitals in place of the discharged nuns), who showed them which homes should be wrecked. A 60-year-old man was seriously injured in the presence of his three small children..."

Report regarding deaths, injuries, arrests and destruction during the November pogrom, Anonymous Person's report, November 28, 1938 (*Wiener Library*).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

The November Pogrom

Kristallnacht marked a brutal attack on Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues, resulting in widespread destruction and desecration. The violence unfolded across various regions in Germany, with Berlin, home to the largest Jewish population, experiencing the most severe atrocities. In an attempt to conceal that this was a state-sponsored pogrom, many Nazis wore civilian attire, presenting the events as a spontaneous civilian protest. However, the highest levels of Nazi leadership had given direct orders for the pogrom to take place. The consequences were devastating, with over 1,200 synagogues vandalized, at least 90 lives lost, and approximately 30,000 Jewish men arrested and sent to camps like Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. While the SS had been incarcerating political prisoners since 1933, it was during the November Pogroms that the regime increasingly began utilizing the camps, such as Dachau, to persecute Jews and other groups deemed inferior by the Nazis.



Left: A Synagogue in flames (Yad Vashem). Right: Jews arrested after Kristallnacht forced to walk through the streets with a sign reading, "God does not forgive us" (Yad Vashem).

Access Kristallnacht lessons and activities
Facing History

Explore Kristallnacht lesson activities
Echoes & Reflections

Learn about world responses to
Kristallnacht -
Facing History

Note to Teachers

For any educators seeking prepared materials, Facing History provides a lesson unit addressing the events and impact of Kristallnacht. This resource is suggested for grades 6-8, but it can be easily adapted for higher grades using the primary sources digitally available on the Wiener Library website (see previous page). For example, students can juxtapose the testimonies of the victims and the reports of non-Jews who also witnessed Kristallnacht and discuss how each group experienced this pogrom. Another lesson option is to examine world responses to Kristallnacht and consider what impact they might have had on the Nazis' subsequent actions.

frank connections

making

The Franks were residing in the Netherlands during the Kristallnacht pogrom and were in a relatively safe situation. Otto's mother, Alice, was visiting him and his family during that time, and because she was recovering from an unexpected illness, she needed to prolong her stay. In the letter to her daughter Leni, Alice expresses her heightened concerns caused by the events of Kristallnacht and her strong desire to return to Basel, Switzerland, fearing the worsening situation. Meanwhile, Edith's brothers, Julius and Walter Höllander, were in Germany during Kristallnacht and were among the tens of thousands of German Jews who were arrested. Due to a World War I injury, Julius was swiftly released and managed to leave Germany, eventually settling in the United States. Walter Höllander, on the other hand, was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he remained until early December 1938. Through Otto Frank's efforts, Walter was eventually transferred to the Dutch refugee camp at Zeeburg later that year, and in December 1939, he was able to join his brother in the United States. (*The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, 55 and *Anne Frank's Family*, 184-185)

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Effects of Kristallnacht and Emigration

In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, the Nazi regime implemented a series of oppressive measures aimed at curtailing the rights and livelihoods of German Jews. The Nazis used assassination to justify the pogrom and to punish the Jewish community. The primary architects of these policies, Goebbels, Himmler, Hermann Göring, and Reinhard Heydrich, who held prominent positions in Hitler's inner circle, were directly responsible for the creation and enforcement of these antisemitic laws. These new laws* built upon the existing antisemitic legislation that had been in place since 1933:

November 12

Jews were required to pay one billion marks for their property damages resulting from Kristallnacht, bearing all the cost of repairing their businesses. They had to stop all business activity as of January 1, 1939, and sell all their assets. Jews were also denied access to cultural institutions and exercise of free Jewish press in Germany, and were forced to sell all their enterprises, jewels and works of art.

November 15

All Jewish children that remained in German schools by this time were expelled and were only allowed to attend Jewish schools.

November 19

Jews were denied access to the general welfare system.

November 28

Some public areas were forbidden to Jews and their right of access to public places was limited to a few hours a day.

December 3-8

Jews were denied access to driver's licenses. Those with a special permission to use university libraries were denied access. Jews were banned from all museums, theaters, cinemas, concert halls and sporting facilities. Lastly, they were denied access to the city districts where most government offices and cultural institutions were located.

December 20

Jews were forbidden to train as pharmacists and were excluded from midwifery.

January 17, 1939

Jews banned from working in any paramedical and health-related fields (pharmacy, dentistry, and veterinary medicine).

Forced Emigration of Jews

After the November Pogrom, Hitler sought to make the lives of Jewish Germans so unbearable that they would be compelled to leave Germany. However, despite widespread international condemnation of the Nazis' treatment of Jews, most countries were reluctant to accept Jewish refugees. Hitler found satisfaction in the fact that at a conference organized by the United States in July 1938, attended by representatives from thirty-two countries, none were willing to accept more Jewish refugees. The gathering, known as the **Evian Conference** because of its location in Evian, France, offered no substantial solutions for the Jewish population of Europe, with only the Dominican Republic agreeing to accept additional refugees.

[Read about German Jewish Refugees, 1933–1939 - USHMM](#)

[Explore the effects of Kristallnacht on Germany's Jews – Yad Vashem](#)

[Review documents required to emigrate from Germany - USHMM](#)

[Read about the Evian Conference - USHMM](#)

[Review International response to Jewish immigration attempts USHMM](#)

[Identify documents required to obtain a US visa - USHMM](#)

In 1939, Great Britain closed off Jewish immigration to Palestine, while the United States did not even fill its 1938 immigration quotas for Germany and Austria. In fact, the United States made it difficult for Jews in Germany to obtain a visa to enter the country. Japanese-occupied Shanghai accepted around 18,000 Jewish refugees without a visa requirement.

*Retrieved from *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933-1945*

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Jewish Emigration

Kindertransport, 1938 - 1940

Despite the lack of meaningful policies from European countries to aid Jewish refugees, the British government did grant temporary visas to unaccompanied minors under the age of seventeen. Most of these children were Jewish and came from Germany, Austria, and Czech territories. For the children to enter Britain, British citizens or organizations had to ensure their care, education, and a guarantee that they would eventually return to their families once the crisis subsided. The first children's transport, also referred to as **Kindertransport**, arrived in Harwich, Great Britain on December 2, 1938, with children traveling by train from major cities in central Europe. Upon arrival, they were greeted by their sponsors in London, while those without sponsors were housed in a camp in Dovercourt Bay or other facilities until suitable arrangements could be made. Many of the children who were part of this program became British citizens or emigrated to countries such as Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Tragically, most of these children were never reunited with their parents, who perished in the Holocaust.



Jewish refugee children arrive in Great Britain on December 2, 1938, as part of the Kindertransport program (USHMM).

Read about
Kindertransport
USHMM

Explore
Kindertransport
primary texts from UK
National Archives

MS St. Louis



Jewish refugees aboard the *St. Louis* off the coast of Havana, Cuba waiting to hear whether Cuba will grant them entry, June 3, 1939 (USHMM).

A notable example of the plight of German Jews was the refusal by the governments of Cuba, America, and Canada to accept 936 Jewish emigrants who arrived on MS St. Louis in 1939. The ship was forced to return to Europe, and many of the passengers perished in the Holocaust.

Note to Teachers

The urgency for Jews to leave the German Reich intensified after the events of Kristallnacht, as it appeared to be their last chance to escape the tightening grip of the Nazi regime. Exploring this topic with students is crucial, as it raises important questions about the limited options available to Jewish individuals seeking refuge, and why other countries were generally reluctant to help. The comprehensive collection of articles, photographs, testimonies, and other documents linked on this page and in the *November Pogrom* section of this Guide provides valuable resources for student analysis of how Kristallnacht worsened the plight of Jews in Germany. Additionally, the *Education* section of the The National Archives (UK) includes several primary documents from the British government, offering important insights into the responses of Britain during that time.

Read about MS St.
Louis - USHMM

Explore Interactive
Voyage of the MS St.
Louis - PBS

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

The Outbreak of World War II and Jewish Persecution

Jewish Emigration Attempts

frank connections

making

Meanwhile in Amsterdam, Otto and Edith watched with alarm as the Nazis expanded into Austria and Sudetenland in 1938 and decided to put the family's names on the waiting list for American immigration visas. After the visa files were destroyed by the Nazi bombs and Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands, Otto contacted his American friend Nathan Straus Jr. in 1941 who agreed to sponsor their immigration. Edith's two brothers, Julius and Walter Holländer, who had immigrated to the U.S. after Kristallnacht, tried to help secure a visa for the Franks. When this path failed, Otto wrote to Mr. Straus again asking for help but this time attempting to secure a Cuban visa. Before the paperwork was processed, Germany declared war on the United States, and Cuba cancelled Otto's visa application, possibly fearing that German refugees would become stuck in Cuba indefinitely. The Franks were forced to remain in Amsterdam with no way out. (USHMM)

Read about Otto Frank's attempt to emigrate - USHMM

Read about The Otto Frank File - YIVO Institute for Research

Note to Teachers

The compelling story of Otto's efforts to obtain American or Cuban visas and save his family from the impending danger in Europe, before they were forced into hiding, is powerfully depicted in the 2016 film *No Asylum: The Untold Chapter of Anne Frank's Story*. This short film is based on Otto's letters to Nathan Straus Jr., interviews with surviving family members, such as his nephew Buddy Elias and stepdaughter Eva Schloss, as well as other archival documents. Educators can access this film on popular streaming platforms.

The Beginnings of Jewish Persecution at the Outbreak of World War II

After signing the **Nazi-Soviet Pact** in August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union reshaped Poland, bringing immense suffering upon European Jews. This agreement, also known as the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**, divided Poland into three parts: western regions were annexed by Germany, eastern Poland was occupied by the Soviet Union, and the central part that contained major Polish cities, *Generalgouvernement*, was controlled by the Nazis and became a site of some of the worst atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. As Germany assumed control over this part of Poland, approximately 1.8 million Jews fell under its jurisdiction, while over a million Polish Jews came under Soviet rule.



Terms of the Nazi-Soviet Pact: the checkered area represents the territory annexed or occupied by Germany (including the General Government part), the striped area indicates Russian troop occupation, and the line between the two regions separates the German and Soviet territorial control (*German Historical Society*).

Read about the Nazi invasion of Poland USHMM

Examine Jewish Persecution at the outbreak of WWII Yad Vashem

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

The Outbreak of World War II and Jewish Persecution

January 30, 1939

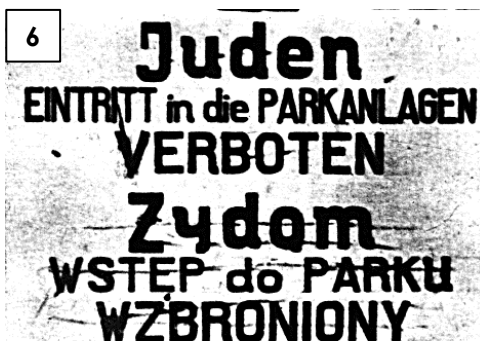
"...In the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it. During the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance the Jewish race which only received my prophecies with laughter when I said that I would one day take over the leadership of the State, and with it that of the whole nation, and that I would then among many other things settle the Jewish problem. Their laughter was uproarious, but I think that for some time now they have been laughing on the other side of their face. Today I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!"

The words of Hitler given on the anniversary of the Nazi regime's ascension to power were all too real for the Jews in Germany. With Germany's subsequent declaration of war on Poland in September 1939, the Jews of Europe were soon going to experience unimaginable horror. Because of their recently signed pact, the Nazis faced no opposition from the Soviet Union, enabling Nazi Germany to orchestrate the fate of nearly two million Polish Jews. Unburdened by concerns over public opinion or international repercussions, the Nazis unleashed a reign of terror upon the Jewish population of Poland, forcibly relocating many from rural areas to newly established ghettos. The stage was set for further atrocities to unfold, as the Nazis no longer hesitated to enact their brutal agenda against Jews.

Excerpt from Hitler's speech on January 30, 1939 (Yad Vashem).



(1) German soldiers with a sign "We are traveling to Poland to beat the Jews." (2) Public humiliation of a rabbi. (3) Street sign in Warsaw forbidding Jews to walk on that side of street. (4) Public humiliation of a Jewish man. (5) Decree forcing all Jews to wear arm bands or badges with a Jewish star. (6) Sign in Cracow forbidding Jews to enter park. (7) Jews leaving in mass deportations from Plonsk, a town 50 miles northwest of Warsaw, Poland (Photos 1,2,4: Yad Vashem. Photos 3,5-7: University of South Florida).



Explore Jewish testimonies after German invasion of Poland - USHMM

Color photos from Life Magazine of Nazi-occupied Poland

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Deportations and Ghettos

Following the invasion of Poland, Chief of the SS **Reinhard Heydrich** sent a “**Schnellbrief**,” a directive outlining the treatment of Polish Jews in the Generalgouvernement. This directive, implemented on September 21, 1939, mandated the transfer of Jews from towns and villages to newly-established **ghettos**, where Jewish councils (**Judenräte** or **Judenraete**) would enforce German orders. The establishment of these ghettos marked the beginning of a systematic plan to imprison and ultimately move toward the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. Ghettos were typically created in the oldest sections of cities, enclosed by walls or barbed-wire fences to isolate prisoners from the outside world. Life in the ghettos was characterized by extreme suffering, with constant humiliation, deplorable living conditions, limited access to food and clean water, and the spread of infectious diseases leading to additional deaths. The largest of these ghettos, the **Warsaw Ghetto**, was established in October 1940 and stands as a haunting symbol of the dehumanization endured by its inhabitants, as captured in images and archival footage.

Explore the Ghettos Series - USHMM

Learn about ghettos Yad Vashem

Note to Teachers

The USHMM series of articles provides a comprehensive overview of different types of ghettos, offering valuable insights into the living conditions and acts of resistance within them. Educators may choose to assign full articles or select excerpts and videos featuring survivors' testimonies, depending on available time. This resource is particularly useful due to its thorough coverage of the topic. Additionally, other resources linked on this page offer a range of supplementary documentation, including additional survivors' testimonies, photographs, primary documents, and overviews, providing diverse perspectives on the history of the ghettos. While the Nazis initially established ghettos in Poland, they soon expanded throughout Eastern Europe. Educators can use these Nazi ghettos as examples for students to compare, allowing them to consider the role of ghettos in the Nazi's original plans for genocide. For those seeking structured lesson plans, *Echoes & Reflections* and the *Museum of Jewish Heritage* provide comprehensive resources, including primary texts and survivors' interviews, to examine the lives of Jews in the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe.



Ghettos in Nazi-occupied Poland 1939 – 1941 (USHMM).

“The Ghettos” lessons - Echoes & Reflections

Museum of Jewish Heritage Lesson on “Life in the Ghettos”



Ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe 1939 – 1944 (USHMM).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Jews in Nazi-Occupied Europe

Ghettos in Occupied Poland



(1) Jews forced to build the brick wall enclosing the Warsaw Ghetto. (2) Jews being moved to the Warsaw Ghetto, Sept.-Oct. 1940. (3) Children working in a shoe factory in the Lodz ghetto. (4) A starving child lying on the sidewalk in the Warsaw Ghetto. (5) Jewish refugees waiting in a soup line in the Warsaw Ghetto. (6) Jews being taken from the ghetto for forced labor by German soldiers (Photos 1-6: Yad Vashem).

Jews in Occupied Western Europe

There was a methodical approach to Nazi Germany's Western and Eastern European conquests. Western European Jews generally tended to be more integrated into the society than the Jews in Eastern Europe, so in implementing antisemitic policies, the Nazis were cognizant of the public opinion. For example, while the Nazis immediately established ghettos in Poland, they did not do so in France, Belgium or the Netherlands. They did, however, require that Jews in Western European countries register their businesses, and later, report themselves for registration. In some Western European nations, Jews were brought in from the provinces and concentrated in specific urban neighborhoods. They were also required to wear a yellow Star of David badge, forced to give up their property, and eventually compelled to report for deportation. Jews in Western Europe, where ghettos were not established, often faced deportation to **transit camps** as an intermediate step before their eventual transfer to concentration camps or killing centers. Some German Jews were deported to ghettos before their transfer to killing centers.

frank connections

making

Many Dutch citizens, including the Franks, were in disbelief when the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. While most of the Dutch did not support Hitler, some did embrace the Nazi regime, as was evidenced by the prompt burning of English-language books and anti-Nazi literature. It took the Nazis several months after the invasion to begin implementing antisemitic policies. When they declared that all Jewish businesses had to report to the Bureau of Economic Investigation, Otto founded a new company La Synthese N.V. and appointed Jan Gies and Viktor Kugler as directors to make it appear it was not Jewish-owned. He had a great relationship with his employees who were able to help Otto hide his ownership from the Nazis. However, while Otto and his family had a lot to fear from the Nazis, there was some evidence-based speculation that Otto's business was providing pectin products to the German military ensuring the survival of his business and likely avoiding arrest or deportation (Lee, 63-68).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Nazi Transit Camps

Nazi **transit camps** were temporary internment facilities that were used to detain Jews and other targeted groups of people and facilitate their deportation to killing centers and concentration camps in Eastern Europe. These camps were generally located close to large cities and near train stations, making it possible for the Nazis to move large numbers of people efficiently. There were several major transit camps in Europe: Drancy (France), Theresienstadt (Czech Republic), Salonika (Greece), Fossoli (Italy) and Westerbork (Netherlands). Although the term "transit camp" implies that it was a temporary location, the prisoners still experienced horrific conditions. Hunger and disease were prevalent, and many people died in transit camps or were transported directly to death camps.



Arrival at Westerbork, October 1942 (USHMM).

The **Westerbork** camp had been established by the Dutch government in 1939 near the German-Dutch border as a refugee camp for German Jews who fled Nazi Germany. Westerbork was meant to be temporary while the refugees sought more permanent alternatives. It provided them with necessities, such as food and shelter, education, and medical care. Two years after invading the Netherlands, the Nazis converted Westerbork into a transit camp and the conditions worsened significantly. Deportations to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and other camps started immediately, but the camp continued to have a school, restaurant, and even a hairdresser. While the Nazis were completely in charge, Jewish police force (*Ordedienst* or the OD) kept order in the camp.

frank connections

making

In 1939, when the Dutch authorities opened Westerbork to house German Jewish refugees, the Franks were still living in relative freedom. After the Nazis invaded the Netherlands in May of 1940, they immediately implemented antisemitic laws and Otto had to be very careful to avoid the Nazis' attention. Aware of the dangers posed by the Nazi regime, it was in the early months of 1941 that Otto began to plan for his family to go into hiding. He approached Johannes Kleiman, Viktor Kugler, Bep Voskuijl, and Jan and Miep Gies, who were married at that point, and asked for their assistance. All of them agreed to help and the preparation of the Secret Annex in the company building began. On July 1, 1942, the Nazis converted Westerbork into their own transit camp and within days sent notices to a select number of Jews to report for labor. Margot Frank received that summons on July 5, 1942, and the next day, the Frank family moved into the Secret Annex where they remained in hiding for two years. They were discovered by the Nazis in August 1944 and deported to Westerbork (*The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, 82-83, USHMM, and *Anne Frank House*).

Note to Teachers

The USHMM and Yad Vashem websites provide extensive information about the Nazi camp system, serving as an excellent starting point for studying this subject. Additionally, the Jewish Virtual Library (JVL) offers a vast collection of resources, including a dedicated section on Westerbork and other transit camps, featuring maps and photographs. While much of the information on the JVL website is sourced from USHMM, it provides supplementary details from other reliable sources.

Learn more about
Westerbork - USHMM

Listen to survivor
experience in
Westerbork
Holocaust Explained

Westerbork resources
Jewish Virtual Library

Drancy transit camp
Jewish Virtual Library

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Jewish Resistance

During World War II, Jews in Europe were forced to endure unimaginable suffering under the Nazi regime. Despite these dire circumstances, the Jewish community demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination to survive. Many Jews participated in the resistance movement, armed as well as unarmed, serving as a testament to their indomitable spirit. Some joined partisan groups in ghettos and forests, launching surprise attacks against the Nazis and disrupting their operations. Others engaged in acts of sabotage, intentionally impeding the Nazi war effort by hindering the production of essential supplies or working as undercover agents to gather vital intelligence. Additionally, some Jews engaged in spiritual resistance to counteract efforts to dehumanize them. Each act of resistance, whether armed, unarmed, or spiritual, played a pivotal role in the ongoing fight against the Nazi regime.

Read about types of Jewish Resistance USHMM

Watch Echoes & Reflections video about different types of Jewish Resistance

Active Resistance

Motivated by the Nazi atrocities committed against their families and communities, many Jews chose to join active or armed resistance movements during the Holocaust. Despite lacking formal weapons training and being aware of the grave risks, these individuals were willing to sacrifice their lives in the fight against the enemy. While the **Warsaw Uprising of 1943** stands as a widely known act of resistance, it inspired other armed rebellions to take place in ghettos and concentration camps. These Jewish uprisings could not stop the German forces, but the participants persisted in their resistance, employing any available means and fighting for their survival. A notable example of courage were the **kashariyot**, women couriers, like Vladka Meed or Tema Sznajdermann, who smuggled news, food, and other items into ghettos, including weapons. Many young kashariyot worked with the partisans and risked their lives rescuing Jews from the ghettos and fighting alongside men in armed resistance groups.



Learn about Jewish Partisans on Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation

Yad Vashem Voices of the Inferno (testimonies about the Warsaw Ghetto)

Explore kashariyot (couriers) in the Jewish Resistance

Student handout for armed resistance in ghettos and camps Echoes & Reflections

Note to Teachers

These resources provide a wealth of information needed to effectively teach about Jewish resistance. The USHMM, Jewish Women's Archive, and Yad Vashem include helpful overviews of the uprisings and the links to primary documents and survivors' testimonies that will enhance students' understanding of this topic. The Echoes & Reflections film is co-sponsored by multiple groups. The Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation's short films and activities can be incorporated into educators' curriculum.



(1) Jewish partisans near Pinsk, 1944 (JPEF). (2) Family deported after Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (USHMM). (3) Identity card of Tema Sznajdermann, issued in the name of Wanda Majewska - undercover operative, who smuggled information and other items into Warsaw ghetto (Jewish Women's Archive).



Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Jewish Resistance

Active Resistance in the Killing Centers

Jewish revolts also occurred in the killing centers of Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz. In early 1943, a group of Jewish prisoners in Treblinka attempted a revolt by clandestinely acquiring weapons from the camp's armory. Although their plans were discovered before they could execute the revolt, many prisoners launched a desperate assault on the main gate in an effort to escape. While over 300 Jewish prisoners managed to flee, they were eventually recaptured and executed by the SS. Similarly, in Auschwitz in 1944, prisoners rebelled upon learning of their impending extermination. Jewish women assigned to forced labor in a nearby armaments factory smuggled explosives into the camp, which were used in the uprising. However, the Nazis swiftly suppressed the revolt and brutally killed most of the participating prisoners. Consequently, the women who had smuggled the explosives were publicly hanged in early January 1945. These courageous acts of resistance within the killing centers serve as a testament to the courage and determination of the Jewish prisoners, even in the face of certain death.

Unarmed Resistance

Resistance took many forms and involved many people, and all who engaged in the acts of resistance against the Nazis risked their own lives and the lives of others. In some cases, for any one attempted act of revolt or sabotage, the Nazis punished 100 people, regardless of whether those individuals were involved. This did not stop Jews and some non-Jews from resisting the Nazi regime. Historian Emanuel Ringelblum opposed the Nazi rule by creating an archive of evidence of Nazi crimes within the Warsaw Ghetto ([read more here](#)). Some Jews created pamphlets and covert items or *Tarnschriften* ([learn more about Tarnschriften here](#)) to provide guidance on how to sabotage the Nazis. Another powerful example of non-violent resistance were the actions of **Hans and Sophie Scholl**, young German siblings who were active members of the White Rose, a resistance movement led by students at the University of Munich. The Scholls, together with other students, published and distributed six anti-Nazi pamphlets. They were discovered by a Nazi-supporting janitor at their university and immediately arrested by the **Gestapo**. Sophie and Hans, among others, were charged with treason and put to death.



Prisoner Ala Gertner, assigned to forced labor at an armaments factory, smuggled gunpowder into Auschwitz. After the revolt was crushed by the Nazis, Ala and other Jewish women were publicly hanged in January 1945 (USHMM).



Top: Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst, July 1942 (Smithsonian). Mid: Tarnschriftentom with anti-Nazi message (Wiener Library). Bottom: A milk can used by Warsaw ghetto historian Emanuel Ringelblum to store and preserve the secret Oneg Shabbat ghetto archives (USHMM).

Note to Teachers

In addition to teaching students about Jewish resistance during WWII, there is an opportunity to have an important conversation about what kinds of actions constitute resistance and what forms it can take. Sometimes, what looks like a small act of resistance can have a tremendous impact and students can explore this topic through the lens of ordinary men and women who were aware they were risking death. The websites linked on this page and in the Resources section at the end of the Guide contain helpful videos, curriculum, and primary documents that can be incorporated into student lessons.



Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Jewish Resistance and Rescue

Cultural and Spiritual Resistance

In addition to actively rebelling against the Nazi regime, Jews engaged in various acts of cultural and spiritual resistance. In a world where they had to face constant dehumanization and humiliation, many Jews sought to preserve their dignity and humanity. Within the confines of ghettos and concentration camps, Jews organized religious, cultural, and educational activities. They established schools, created art, kept diaries, performed in theater productions as actors and musicians, and maintained religious practices.

Learn about Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos - USHMM

Read about Spiritual Resistance Yad Vashem

Explore Cultural and Spiritual Resistance Echoes & Reflections

Rescue

Another form of resistance was **rescue**, and many non-Jews who were motivated by their own moral principles participated by smuggling refugees into Switzerland or hiding Jews in safe locations. They also helped some Jews hide in plain sight by procuring false papers. One notable example is the story of Miep and Jan Gies, Johannes Kleiman, Viktor Kugler and Bep Voskuijl who hid Otto Frank and his family in Amsterdam. In post-war interviews, Miep Gies expressed that she felt compelled to assist Otto and his family, as she couldn't bear to live with the guilt of doing nothing. It is important to recognize that these non-Jewish rescuers faced significant risks themselves, particularly in Poland where their actions could result in death. Many Jewish individuals and organizations also participated in rescue missions and worked alongside non-Jews to rescue children, organize immigration operations, and provide substantial aid to Holocaust survivors in displaced persons camps.



A Hanukkah candle lighting ceremony in the Westerbork camp, December 1943 (Yad Vashem).

"... Permanent remorse about failing to do your human duty, in my opinion, can be worse than losing your life"
- Miep Gies,
May 1997

frank connections

making

Actively defying Nazi orders was a tremendous act of resistance, especially knowing that any wrong move or even a harmless word to a wrong person could lead to deportation. Otto Frank resisted the Nazis from the moment they came to power by leaving Germany and moving his family to Amsterdam. When the Nazis began carrying out antisemitic policies in the Netherlands, such as prohibiting interactions of Jewish and non-Jewish children at school or home, the Franks defied the Nazis by continuing to invite their daughters' friends to their home. In the world of hate and exclusion, Otto and Edith taught their children how to be generous and inclusive. Otto resisted the Nazis by entrusting others as he arranged the Secret Annex to become his family's place of hiding. At the time when distrust was a necessity, it must have taken incredible strength for Otto to not become overwhelmed by fear and instead, embrace the help of people who couldn't possibly understand what it was like to be a Jew in Nazi-occupied Europe. He continued teaching his children and allowed them to imagine a future different from persecution and hiding (Lee, 85).

Learn about rescue USHMM

Read about Jewish Aid and Rescue USHMM

Watch witnesses talk about rescue – USC Shoah Foundation

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Euthanasia Programs

Children During the Holocaust

Children were particularly vulnerable targets of the Nazi regime's systematic persecution. They were primarily singled out based on their race or whether they had physical or mental disabilities. In addition, the Nazis targeted the children of other groups they considered undesirable. It is estimated that approximately 1.5 million Jewish children, along with tens of thousands of Romani children, German children with disabilities, and Slavic children, fell victim to the Nazis' murderous campaign. Those who managed to survive did so by hiding or assuming false identities as Aryan children, but their lives were shadowed by the constant threat of discovery and danger.

Read about children during the Holocaust - USHMM



Clinics and gassing installations in Nazi Germany (USHMM).

Euthanasia Program

In the first part of 1939, under the leadership of Phillip Bouhler, director of Hitler's private chancellery and Karl Brandt, Hitler's physician, the Nazis began the child euthanasia program. All physicians, nurses, and midwives were required to report all children under the age of three who had signs of any disability. In addition, parents of children with disabilities were encouraged by the Nazi authorities to send their children to pediatric clinics, which secretly served as killing centers. Historians estimate that at least 10,000 German children with physical or intellectual disabilities were murdered as part of this program.

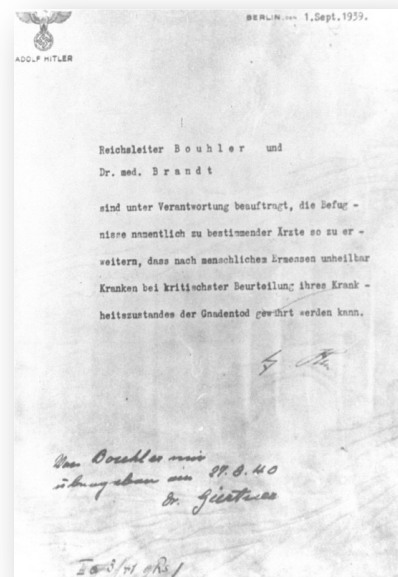
"Aktion T4" Program

The Nazis also implemented "Aktion T4," a forced euthanasia program with a goal to eliminate from German society children and adults with disabilities, mental illness, or other perceived genetic defects. Named after the Tiergartenstraße 4 address of the organization that was responsible for its implementation, the program officially ended in 1941, but the practice of euthanasia of people with disabilities continued throughout the war. As part of the euthanasia program, the Nazis murdered around 200,000 people using gas chambers, lethal injections, and starvation, which set the stage for the later implementation of the Final Solution.

Explore Nazi Germany's "Racial Hygiene" - USHMM

Read about Nazi euthanasia Facing History

Right: Adolf Hitler's authorization for the Aktion T-4 dated September 1, 1939. This document was signed in October 1939, and was the only known written and signed order for a killing program. Hitler did, however, approve all other Nazi plans to murder Jews and other people the Nazis targeted, but he was careful not to leave paper trail. Left: Death registry at Hadamar euthanasia center listing false causes of death, Germany, April 5, 1945 (USHMM).



Learn about Nazi euthanasia and Aktion T4 program - USHMM

Nazi racist propaganda artifacts USHMM

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Mass Murder and the Creation of the Killing Centers

Einsatzgruppen

While the Nazis' camp system and ghettos were always a part of their plan to persecute and murder Jews, prior to 1942, the regime did not have an official written plan for the systemic extermination of the entire Jewish population. However, as German soldiers invaded new territories, **Einsatzgruppen**, special task forces of the Security Police and the SS intelligence service, swiftly followed. Their primary goals were to secure the conquered areas, recruit collaborators, and establish intelligence networks. The Einsatzgruppen, also known as mobile killing units, perpetrated the mass murder of Jews and thousands of others whom they considered enemies of the Nazi regime. Working in conjunction with other SS groups and local collaborators, they identified victims and assembled them at designated locations, where they were stripped of their valuables and lined up near pits and shot. The locals were enlisted to identify who should be shot and sometimes helped facilitate the process of the murder operation. One of the most horrific massacres took place at **Babi Yar** on September 29-30, 1941, resulting in the murder of 33,771 Jews.

Read more about
**Einsatzgruppen: An
Overview - USHMM**

Learn about **Babi Yar
Massacre - USHMM**

Mobile Gas Vans

By late 1941, the Nazis introduced mobile **gas vans** that pumped carbon monoxide gas into the sealed compartment containing Jews or other groups the Nazis intended to murder. However, the process of killing a large group with gas vans was time-consuming, requiring the Einsatzgruppen to remove the bodies and clean the compartments. Consequently, mass shootings remained the preferred method for the systematic murder of Jews, and by the end of the war, approximately two million victims had been killed through mass shootings and gas vans in Soviet territory.

Review Killing Center
Series - USHMM

Learn more about
**Chelmno from
Yad Vashem**

Operation Reinhard
USHMM



Killing centers in German-occupied Poland (USHMM).

Killing Centers in Poland

Initially experimenting with gas vans as a method of killing led the Nazis to establish killing centers and use the gassing method on a larger scale. Chelmno, a village located within 30 miles of a major Polish ghetto Lodz, was established as the first "stationary facility where poison gas was used for the mass murders of Jews" (USHMM). Killing operations began on December 8, 1941.

Operation Reinhard

Another notable step toward the complete extermination of the Jews located in the General Government region of Poland was the Nazis' plan codenamed "**Operation Reinhard.**" Named after Reinhard Heydrich, the Chief of Germany's Security Police, the plan established three additional killing centers - Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka and were responsible for murdering approximately 1.7 million Jews. This number does not include non-Jews who were also murdered in those killing centers. Operation Reinhard ended in 1943 and all three of those death camps were liquidated by the end of that year.



Jewish women and children transported from the Siedlce ghetto to killing centers (USHMM).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Final Solution to the Jewish Question

Deportations to the Killing Centers

The Nazis meticulously orchestrated the deportation process for Jews in the ghettos. They issued deportation orders to the Jewish Council which had to comply or risk death for themselves and their families. They were forced to create a list for each deportation. The prisoners were instructed to gather with minimal belongings at a designated location, where they were forced into cramped and poorly ventilated train cars. Weakened physically and manipulated through deceit, many Jewish prisoners found it difficult to grasp that they were being transported to **killing centers** where they would face gas chambers. One of the reasons for compliance with the Nazi orders was the deceitful promises made by the Nazis, who falsely claimed that they were being sent to labor camps in the East.

Read about
Deportation to Killing
Centers – USHMM

Learn more about
Deportation to the
Death Camps – Yad
Vashem

Note to Teachers

Yad Vashem offers a powerful narrative of the process of deportation from a ghetto to a killing center, which may be assigned to students for a background reading before reviewing other documents available on the same website. It also offers testimonies and video lectures that may be incorporated into lessons. Additionally, when teaching about the deportations to the killing centers, it is important to note that these actions were orchestrated through the collaboration of many Nazi governmental agencies, including multiple SS groups, the Order Police, the Ministry of Transportation responsible for coordinating train schedules, and others. This was a collective effort that required massive complicity of many individuals and organizations in carrying out mass murder.



Major railroads in 1939 Europe relative to the extermination camps. Jews and other victims were transported to killing centers by rail, which played a crucial role in the execution of the Final Solution (USHMM).



(1) Jews saying goodbye before their deportation to the camps from Lodz. (2) Lublin Jews gather in the street with their belongings before deportation (Photos 1-2 Yad Vashem) (3) Jews forced into boxcars for deportation to the Belzec killing center, 1942 (4) A deserted street after the deportation of the ghetto population, May 1944 (5) German soldiers assist during the deportation Jews from the Zychlign ghetto to Chelmno, March 3, 1942 (Photos 3-5 USHMM).



Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Final Solution to the Jewish Question

Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution

On January 20, 1942, senior Nazi officials, including Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office, and Adolf Eichmann, head of the Office of Jewish Emigration, met in the Wannsee suburb of Berlin to coordinate the implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” There appears to be no known documentation informing who gave specific orders for the total extermination of Jews, but historians believe that it was given verbally by Hitler in the summer of 1941.

The **Wannsee Conference** attendees discussed plans for the deportation and extermination of Jews in German-occupied Europe and agreed on a plan to use the existing ghettos and concentration camps as transit points for Jewish deportations. Those Jewish prisoners were then taken to killing centers in German-occupied Poland, where they were murdered in gas chambers. The Wannsee Conference marked the point in Holocaust history at which the Nazi leadership officially committed to the systematic extermination of European Jews.

Wannsee Conference
and the Final Solution
USHMM

Wannsee Conference
Yad Vashem

The Development of
the Final Solution –
video lecture

Wannsee Conference
Protocol
Yad Vashem

Note to Teachers

The *Wannsee Conference Protocol* was a top-secret Nazi document reflecting the purpose of the conference and the intent of the Nazis to murder European Jews. It is an important primary document both for the information it contains and the details it fails to provide – specifically the plans to use extermination camps and gassing to achieve the regime's final solution to its Jewish question.

frank connections

making

Shortly after their arrest on August 4, 1944, the Franks were taken to Westerbork to await further deportation. There, they encountered many acquaintances and met new friends, including Sal and Rose Judy De Liema who had also been in hiding and were arrested on the same day as the Franks. Upon arrival, the Franks were robbed of their possessions and forced to wear camp uniforms. Otto and his family were able to stay together during the day, but they had to sleep in separate barracks. They worked sorting old flashlight batteries, and Otto and Sal also had to collect the black substance inside the batteries which was grueling work. On September 2, 1944, an announcement was made that 1,019 men, women and children were going to be transported to Auschwitz. The Franks, the De Liemas, and all the other residents of the Secret Annex were on that final transport from Westerbork to Auschwitz (*Rose De Liema Manuscript, The Hidden Life of Otto Frank, 135-138*).

Ruth Moser Borsos
describes the process
of selection for
Auschwitz deportation

Deportations from
ghettos and transit
camps - USHMM



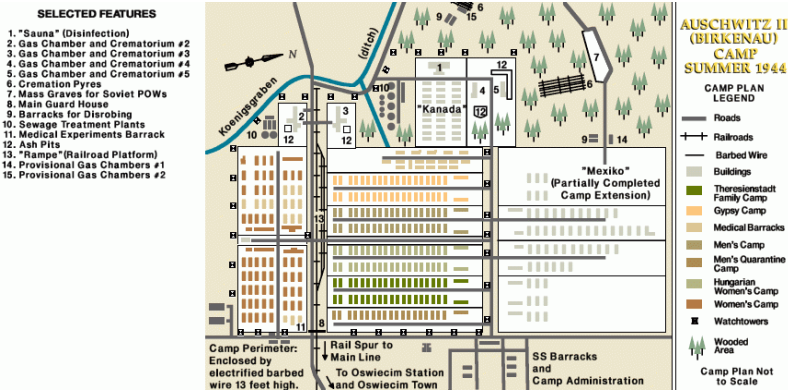
Jews in Westerbork boarding the deportation train to Auschwitz (Yad Vashem).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Final Solution to the Jewish Question

Auschwitz Camp Complex

The stories of the Nazi brutality have been shared by many survivors who personally experienced the pain and suffering. During the Holocaust, the Nazis murdered over six million Jews. Millions of people physically survived but were forced to live with the memories of physical and psychological abuse.



Auschwitz II (Birkenau) camp, 1944 (USHMM).

Concentration camps,
1942-1945
USHMM

Ella Blumenthal's
testimony about
Majdanek experience

Auschwitz - USHMM

Auschwitz ID
Cards/Oral History
USHMM

Auschwitz Camp Complex was located in Oswiecim, Poland, and consisted of three camps and many subcamps. Auschwitz I was established in April 1940 as a concentration camp in which imprisoned "professional criminals" were used for forced labor; its earliest prisoners were "professional criminals" and Poles. Auschwitz I, the main camp, was also the site for medical experiments performed on inmates by SS physicians. Auschwitz II-Birkenau was the main

extermination camp built in early 1942. Approximately 1.1 million people were murdered in its gas chambers by means of Zyklon B gas. While the majority of those murdered in Auschwitz were Jews, the Nazis also killed Romani people, persons with disabilities, homosexual men, and others deemed inferior by the Nazi regime. Prisoners also died from disease, shooting, forced labor and starvation. SS physicians performed medical experiments on inmates in Auschwitz II-Birkenau as well. Auschwitz III was constructed in October 1942 as a facility to house inmates who worked at I.G. Farben, a German company that manufactured synthetic rubber and fuel.

frank connections

making

The Jews from Westerbork were transported to Auschwitz in cattle cars. Sal De Liema, another prisoner on the same transport as the Frank family, recalled the conditions in the cattle car and upon arrival in Auschwitz. Each car held 30-40 people, with no place to sit and only one barrel present for waste. Upon arrival, the guards began hitting the prisoners and screaming at them to get out. Mr. De Liema remembered the stench of burned flesh that was omnipresent. Men and women were separated, and each had to go to their designated barracks where they were forced to take their clothes off and get tattoos on their forearms. Mr. De Liema struck up a friendship with Otto, and they tried to deal with the horrors of Auschwitz by talking about normal things like music. He recalled Otto asking him to call him Papa Frank. The treatment of prisoners in Auschwitz was brutal. The Nazi guards played cruel tricks on the prisoners by asking if they wanted to work in the bakery. When some prisoners volunteered because it was their only hope to have sufficient food, the Nazis killed them. The Germans also forced prisoners to take their clothes off in the snow then run to the sauna where the steam and boiling water burned their skin. The prisoners were then forced to run back to their barracks and many of them died. Otto Frank managed to survive Auschwitz. His wife Edith was tragically separated from their daughters Margot and Anne, who were transferred to Bergen-Belsen in October 1944. She died in Auschwitz-Birkenau shortly after her daughters were transported. Margot and Anne died of typhus in 1945, weeks before the camp was liberated by British forces (USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Sal Bernard De Liema, Anne Frank House).

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

Final Solution to the Jewish Question

Nazi Medical Experiments

Between 1942 and 1945, the Nazi regime conducted a series of **medical experiments** as part of their broader agenda to "'cleanse' German society of individuals viewed as biological threats to the nation's 'health'" (USHMM). These experiments were supported by various scientists and medical professionals who collaborated with the Nazis to shape Germany's health policies, including the mass sterilization of those considered inferior by the regime. The objectives of these highly unethical experiments were as follows: (1) to develop methods that would enhance the survival rates of the German military, (2) to test the effectiveness of drugs and medical treatments, and (3) to further the Nazis' racial and ideological goals. Some of the experiments involved exposing prisoners to high altitudes or extreme temperatures to evaluate how human bodies would deal with these exposures. Additionally, unproven medications were administered to prisoners for the treatment of infections, resulting in devastating consequences. For instance, the use of sulfonamide drugs on healthy prisoners led to the loss of limbs and even loss of life. The Nazis argued that these experiments would advance Germany's medical knowledge and directly affect the survival of its military personnel.

Nazi medical experiments article USHMM	Auschwitz personnel performing medical experiments - Jewish Virtual Library
Josef Mengele article USHMM	Eva Kor's testimony on her experience with Josef Mengele

Among all the medical experiments performed by Nazi doctors, the most infamous were those performed by **Josef Mengele**. He was a physician at Auschwitz and directly responsible for the death and torture of many prisoners. Mengele was famous for conducting experiments on twins. Although many of the doctors who experimented on prisoners during the Nazi regime were arrested and tried post-war, Mengele fled and escaped justice. Only a few were convicted.

Selecting Inmates for Death

One of the main responsibilities of the medical personnel at Auschwitz and other camps was to identify individuals unable to work. These evaluations, known as "selections," took place when new groups of prisoners arrived at Birkenau. Those who appeared physically capable were usually sent for forced labor, while those who were weak or ill were directed towards the gas chambers. Children and elderly individuals were also singled out for the gas chambers. Additionally, the camp medical staff would regularly conduct inspections of infirmaries and barracks to identify prisoners who were too frail or unwell to perform labor. The methods employed to eliminate those individuals who were selected varied among different camps, but typically involved the use of lethal injections or gassing.

Note to Teachers

Nazi medical experiments are very difficult to process. The extent to which the Nazis had gone to exert their power and perceived superiority are unfathomable. While Josef Mengele is commonly associated with these experiments, other physicians in Nazi camps also engaged in unethical medical procedures. For example, in Ravensbrück, SS doctors deliberately infected inmates' legs with dangerous bacteria, resulting in gas gangrene and amputations. Nazi doctors also conducted sterilization experiments on women and children. If discussing these experiments with students, teachers need to be cognizant of the type of information they provide. It is not always necessary to delve into the most graphic details of these horrific practices. Instead, teachers should consider exploring this topic within the broader historical context beyond Nazi-occupied Europe. It is important to highlight that the Nazis drew inspiration from pre-existing American eugenic programs when implementing their proposed sterilization program. There is always at least one student in class who will raise questions about the unethical actions of the United States during that time, and it is crucial for teachers to be well-prepared to address those inquiries effectively.

Liberation of the Camps

International press had been publishing articles about the existence of the Nazi concentration camps and killing centers for years, but no one was prepared for the sight they encountered when the liberating forces entered these camps. The liberation of the camps began in 1944 as the Allies advanced into German-occupied Europe and continued until the end of the war in 1945. Majdanek in Poland was the first major camp to be liberated by the Soviet forces in July 1944. Because the Soviet Army was approaching, the SS had forced the Majdanek prisoners to relocate to other camps, including Auschwitz. The Nazis did not have time to fully dismantle the camp, and the Soviet forces found significant evidence of the horrors of Majdanek.



(USHMM)

As the Allied forces approached the camps, the Nazis attempted to evacuate or destroy the camps and hide evidence of their atrocities. They often forced the remaining prisoners on death marches and subjected them to grueling conditions. In some instances, the Nazi guards and officials abandoned the camps before the arrival of the Allied troops, leaving the prisoners behind. In these situations, the prisoners were often liberated by the advancing troops who discovered them. The responses of individual Nazi soldiers and the SS personnel also differed. Some chose to surrender to the liberating troops, while others attempted to blend in with the civilian population or escape.

Explore Liberation of
Nazi Camps Series
USHMM

The Death March to
Volary – Yad Vashem



A pile of victims' shoes outside a structure in Majdanek, August 1944 (USHMM).

Note to Teachers

Liberation of the camps is another topic that needs to be discussed sensibly. The footage produced by the liberators show unbelievable brutality committed by the Nazis. While educators should use disclaimers to warn their students that these photographs and videos are graphic, this remains one of the most important topics to discuss with students because the liberation itself was a tragic end to a horrifying chapter in Europe's history. Yad Vashem offers a thorough lesson plan on liberation and survival of the victims that effectively addresses the reality of liberation and the attempt of the survivors to put the pieces of their lives back together. Also helpful in learning about the liberation is *Liberators and Survivors*, a short video from Echoes & Reflections. *You Couldn't Grasp It All* reflects on the reactions of American soldiers when they liberated the camps.

Teach: Liberation and
Survival Lesson Plan
Yad Vashem

Access Holocaust
video toolbox from
Echoes & Reflections

Watch Stories of
Liberation: Survivors
and Liberators - USC
Shoah Foundation

Read "You Couldn't
Grasp It All" article
National WWII
Museum



Dwight Eisenhower touring a liberated concentration camp. Former inmates demonstrated how they were tortured by the Nazis, April 1945 (Truman Library).

Section 5: End of the War

Liberation of the Camps

The liberation of Auschwitz took place in January 1945 by the Soviet Red Army, and other major camps such as Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, and Dachau, were liberated by Allied forces in the months that followed. The conditions in the camps showed evidence of extreme brutality, starvation, disease, and forced labor. As the liberating armies approached the camps, they discovered thousands of victims who were barely alive, and piles of corpses. In some instances, the soldiers needed to continue fighting the Germans and had to move on without stopping to help. In others, the liberators entered the camps and tried to help the survivors get food and medical treatment. Because the inmates' bodies were in a state of severe malnutrition and starvation, some of them died after ingesting normal amounts of food. Consequently, they had to be given immediate medical attention and small amounts of food, like soup or broth, to allow their bodies to gradually improve.



The liberation of Auschwitz, January 1945. (Yad Vashem)

For many survivors, the trauma of their experiences in the concentration camps did not end with liberation. Many were too weak or sick and had to be hospitalized, were unable to find their relatives, or feared returning home. During this time, Allied forces set up Displaced Persons' (DP) camps with a goal to provide temporary housing to those who had no place to go. The survivors did not have many options for emigration. At that time, Palestine was still under British control and the United States continued to restrict immigration after the end of the war. One of the biggest problems with DP camps was that they often grouped together camp survivors with other displaced persons of the same nationality, sometimes including former oppressors. The conditions of the refugees changed for the better after the implementation of the United States-issued Harrison's Report, which is explained [here](#).

Smithsonian: What happened after Auschwitz liberation?

The Aftermath of the Holocaust USHMM

Liberation and the Return to Life Yad Vashem

Survivors and Displaced Persons Holocaust Explained

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making

Weakened from malnutrition, work exhaustion and illness that affected many prisoners at Auschwitz, Otto was admitted to the hospital barracks in November 1944 and stayed there until he was found by the Russian liberators in January 1945. Otto referred to the medical barracks as a "so called" hospital because he argued its focus was not to provide effective medical treatment (*Oral Testimony of Otto Frank, 1974*). However, while staying there, Otto met other inmates who shared the same interests in music and literature, and they provided each other with some level of comfort. On January 19, the Germans forced thousands of Birkenau inmates to go on a death march into Germany. Otto and other prisoners who were too sick to walk remained in the sick barracks. After the Nazis left, the Soviet Army launched an air attack cutting the electricity and water supplies in the camp. The remaining inmates, including Otto, survived by using the ice from the neighboring lakes as their water source. Several days before the Russians arrived, the SS returned to fulfill its orders and kill all the surviving inmates, including Otto. According to Carol Ann Lee's account in *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, the SS lined up under the "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign to shoot Otto and other prisoners who were lined up in several rows. Before they fired their weapons, they were distracted by three nearby explosions and fled. The Soviet Army entered Auschwitz on January 27, 1945. Out of the millions of people who passed through Auschwitz, only 6,000 remained alive at the time of liberation. Among the millions of clothing items and tens of thousands of pairs of shoes, the Russians also found 15,000 pounds of women's hair (*Oral Testimony of Otto Frank, 1974* and *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank, 148-159*).

Nuremberg Trials and Tracing Services

After World War II, as a response to the war crimes committed by Nazi Germany, the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union established the International Military Tribunal (IMT). The IMT sought to bring justice by indicting 24 German leaders and organizations for a range of offenses, including crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes (*USHMM*). The **Nuremberg Trials** were held in Nuremberg, Germany, and were conducted by an international tribunal consisting of judges and prosecutors from the four participating countries. To ensure accessibility and understanding, the proceedings were translated simultaneously into French, English, Russian, and German. The primary objectives of the Nuremberg Trials were to hold accountable individuals responsible for their actions and to set a legal precedent for prosecuting war crimes in the future. In addition to the original Nuremberg Trials, the United States conducted twelve military tribunals targeting Nazi Germany leaders, also held in Nuremberg. These subsequent trials focused on high-ranking SS officials, military personnel, police officers, physicians, judges, and businessmen.

[Read about the Nuremberg Trials - USHMM](#)

[Review information about the Nuremberg Trials – National WWII Museum](#)

[Access the Nuremberg Trials Project – Harvard University Law School](#)

International Tracing Service

A big challenge after the end of World War II was figuring out how to help the survivors reunite with their families. Many Jews and other victims were murdered in the camps and ghettos, but the Nazis, in an attempt to conceal evidence of their murders, burned many records and the prisoners' possessions before evacuating. Additionally, many victims perished in remote areas where there were no witnesses, and their bodies were buried in pits with no markers and no hope for easy identification. Allied forces knew that it was going to be difficult locating and connecting family members without some form of centralized communication system.

The magnitude of death and destruction was only beginning to be realized and many people held out hope that they would find their loved ones. As a result, the **International Tracing Service (ITS)** was established to help individuals look for information about the fate of their families. The creation of a centralized organization to facilitate missing and displaced persons was a long, protracted process because of the number of individuals as well as incomplete or destroyed records. Many records found by the Russians were not released until after the fall of the Soviet Union. The ITS, now known as Arolsen Archives, is based in Germany. It is a digital repository for over 30 million pages of Holocaust-related files, containing information on over 17.5 million people. Additionally, Yad Vashem's Pages of Testimony (lists of Holocaust survivors and the dead) and Sharit ha-Platah (a list of the "Surviving Remnants") are two repositories that attempt to account for as many Holocaust victims as possible.

Note to Teachers

The information provided in the Arolsen Archives was established for survivors, their families and families of victims. The collection contains sensitive data on identified and identifiable persons, and those who access it are required to treat it as such. Scholars, authors, researchers and others are permitted to search the Archives, but are personally responsible for respecting privacy rights and other laws. The USHMM's ITS Digital Archive provides search services for affected individuals, but anyone seeking the information for academic or other purposes would need to visit the Washington DC facility in person. There are additional digital and in-person resources at the USHMM for conducting research about Nazi victims and survivors that you can access and further explore on the USHMM webpage below.

[Read about the International Tracing Service Holocaust Explained](#)

[ITS Digital Archive USHMM](#)

[Research Holocaust survivors and victims – database - USHMM](#)

The Liberation of Otto Frank

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making

Immediately following his liberation, Otto Frank began keeping a diary. At first, it contained very brief statements about what he saw on a particular day, but soon he began to include much more information about his experiences as a liberated man. Otto was very anxious to find out what happened to his family but there was not much he could do to try to locate them while still in Auschwitz. Moreover, the war was ongoing even after the liberation of Auschwitz and the German soldiers continued to attack the Russians guarding the camp. Otto's journey back home began by traveling to Katowicze, a safe zone, where he and other refugees were placed in various buildings. The local people were friendly but did not have many resources to share with concentration camp survivors. Otto appeared to have a good experience with the Polish people who welcomed him and shared their food with him, but the anguish of not knowing about the fate of his wife and children persisted. While still in Katowicze, Otto learned of Edith's death from Rootje de Winter whom he recognized from Westerbork. She was with Edith in the Auschwitz sick barracks and watched her die on January 6, 1945. Rootje also told Otto that Anne and Margot were transported to another camp, which he later learned was Bergen-Belsen. Otto was greatly affected by Edith's death and his letters to his mother were both filled with grief for Edith and a hope that he would find Margot and Anne alive and well. It took several months from the time he was liberated from Auschwitz to arrive in Amsterdam, and finally on June 3, 1945, Otto Frank returned to the city he and his family called home.

If Otto and other survivors expected any assistance and compassion from the Dutch government after the war ended, they were mistaken. Most survivors were placed in a camp for displaced persons, which also included members of the SS, and lived in deplorable conditions. The Dutch feared camp survivors were going to cause disease outbreaks and the government closed off a large part of the country from the East. Survivors found that antisemitism among the Dutch citizens was more apparent after the war. As a German Jew, Otto Frank was designated as a "stateless person of German origin," but was able to remain in Amsterdam and live with Miep and Jan Gies. He seemed more fortunate than many other Jewish survivors who were held in displaced persons' camps as he was able to rely on family and friends to help him financially until he could repay them. In addition, Miep and Johannes Kleiman had kept his factory operating while he was in Auschwitz, and Otto soon resumed his role as a director of Gies & Co. Nevertheless, Otto's life was forever changed, and it was taking him a long time to regain his balance.

It was important to Otto to remain in Amsterdam to find out what happened to his daughters, and finally, after desperately contacting friends and all known acquaintances, Otto learned on July 18, 1945, that both Margot and Anne perished in Bergen-Belsen. Their names were listed with the Red Cross and Otto was able to find out what happened from Lin Brilleslijper, the woman who had confirmed their deaths. It was devastating to Otto to learn that his children died of typhus and only weeks before the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Lin and her sister Janny carried Anne and Margot to one of the mass graves where thousands of other people were buried. That Otto was devastated to learn of his daughters' deaths is an understatement. Any hope of ever seeing them alive was gone and he had to figure out how to rebuild his life. Shortly after learning that Margot and Anne died, Miep Geis gave Otto the pages of Anne's diary which she found scattered on the floor after the family's arrest. She hoped to return it to Anne, and even kept it in a drawer during that time without ever reading it. Had she read it, Miep would have likely destroyed it as it contained the names of everyone who helped hide the residents of the Secret Annex. It took Otto several weeks to begin reading the diary because he was still grieving for his family (*The Hidden Lives of Otto Frank*, 160-186).

Part II

Educator's Guide to Tree of Hope

The War Ends for Otto

Otto Frank Survives Auschwitz

It's often difficult to anticipate how a person will react to loss. Sometimes our deepest emotions are hidden from others, and we can only speculate on the internal struggles of those who grieve. While we all make common assumptions about how grief can affect an individual, the reality is that everyone experiences it in their own unique way. Otto Frank had already faced significant adversity in his life, losing his father at an early age and serving on the front lines during World War I. After surviving the war, he returned to Frankfurt where it took him several years to build a business and start a family with his wife Edith Höllander.

However, the Nazi regime that pressured him to leave Germany for the Netherlands in 1933, also spilled into Amsterdam forcing Otto to go into hiding with his family in July 1942. After two years of hiding in the Secret Annex, the Franks were captured by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps. It must have been very traumatic for Otto having to hide for over two years and shift his daily business practices to others. The impact of these events on Otto's life cannot be overstated, but the loss of his entire family in the camps was devastating. He learned that Edith died in the Auschwitz sick barracks on January 6, 1945, but he held onto the hope that his children had somehow survived.

When he finally learned that both girls died of typhus only weeks before the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Otto was plunged into unimaginable grief. His reaction to this profound loss and the subsequent steps he undertook to preserve the legacy of his younger daughter Anne played a significant role in shaping discussions about the Holocaust and the experiences of its victims. The weeks following Otto's release from Auschwitz were very traumatic. In fact, hours before the arrival of Russian soldiers at Auschwitz, Otto and other survivors were rounded up by the SS and faced with the terrifying prospect of being executed. Fortunately, through a stroke of luck, the German soldiers received word of the approaching Russians and fled the scene hastily. Otto and the other prisoners were spared.

Despite feeling physically weak at the time of his liberation, Otto Frank survived the horrors of the concentration camp and longed to return home to his family. The survivors began their journey from Auschwitz on March 5, 1945, first arriving in Katowice. The Russians trains carried the survivors who were still afraid for their lives as Hitler's armies in Poland continued to fight. At this point, Otto was writing to his family members in Switzerland detailing his experiences as a liberated man. These letters, preserved by his sister Leni and mother Alice, offer a unique glimpse into Otto's thoughts and emotions during this tumultuous period. He described the people he encountered on his journey, the food he finally received, and the emotional pain of not knowing whether his wife and daughters had survived.

IMPORTANT NOTE

When discussing the life and legacy of Otto Frank with students, it is important to acknowledge that his experience is just one of many among Holocaust survivors, and not necessarily representative of a universal survivor experience. The Holocaust was an unprecedented tragedy, and it is essential to continue learning about the complex behaviors of the victims, perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders. It is also vital to recognize that each survivor's experience and response to adversity is unique and equally valid, just as each human being is unique. Therefore, educators must take the necessary steps to avoid oversimplifications and respect the individuality of each experience.

Note to Teachers

Most of the Part II of this Educator's Guide pertaining to Otto Frank's life was based on the information provided in *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* by Carol Ann Lee and *Anne Frank's Family* by Mirjam. All these books were extensively researched by the authors who had access to the letters from and to Otto and who interviewed his living relatives and friends. Most of the letters and interviews are held by the Anne Frank Foundation and are not easily available to the public.

Otto also reflected on the bravery of his Dutch friends Johannes Kleiman, Victor Kugler, Miep and Jan Geis, and Bep Voskuijl, who risked their lives to help his family. He expressed concern for their safety and hoped that they had managed to survive the war unscathed.

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The War Ends for Otto

Otto Frank Returns Home

The letters that Otto wrote to his family in Switzerland as he embarked on a tumultuous journey from Auschwitz offer a rare look into his character. Despite facing his own struggles, Otto's concerns for the well-being of others, as evidenced by the contents of these letters, showcase his selflessness and compassion. During his journey home, Otto observed both acts of kindness and animosity toward him and other survivors. Some locals were generous enough to share their food and provide shelter to the exhausted survivors. However, when Otto returned to Amsterdam, he was disappointed to find out that Jewish survivors were not welcomed and were instead placed in displaced persons' camps. Despite this, Otto remained grateful for the help he received from his friends who risked their own lives to assist him and his family during the war. As a token of his appreciation, he shared his possessions with them, including some of Edith's antiques, clothing, and furniture. He even gave a gift to Hendrik van Hoeve, the greengrocer who had helped them during the war.

Otto helped other survivors as they searched for loved ones, maintaining contact with friends he met in Auschwitz, such as Sal De Liema and his wife Rose. In his quest to find Margot and Anne, he visited the homes of many survivors hoping to uncover information about his daughters. During one of these visits, he knocked on the door of Fritzi Geiringer and her daughter Eva. Otto first met Eva after they were liberated in Auschwitz, and she recognized him as Anne's father. Even back then, Otto was asking everyone he encountered if they knew anything about his wife and daughters. Eva introduced Otto and Fritzi on their journey from Auschwitz to Amsterdam, but he was too grief-stricken after learning about Edith's death at the time to remember their encounter. It would take several years, but Otto and Fritzi bonded over their shared experience at Auschwitz, grew close over time, and got married on November 10, 1953.

"...I have almost everything I need personally now, and I am writing to Julius for a few smaller things, he can send them. There are still some sheets and blankets here. I'm sure you understand how happy I am to be able to help my friends a little after all the endless things they've done for me and since they don't have any relatives."

- Otto to Leni, 1945
(Excerpt from *Anne Frank's Family*)

[Read Rose Judy De Liema memoir: "So You Will Remember"](#)

[Watch Rose Judy De Liema's interview – ADL Holocaust Oral History](#)

[Watch short excerpt of Sal De Liema's testimony – USC Shoah Foundation](#)

The Franks met Sal and Rose De Liema in the Westerbork transit camp, and both families were among the group deported to Auschwitz in the last transport on September 3, 1944. Otto and Sal grew close in Auschwitz and offered each other moral support. Otto asked Sal to call him "Papa Frank," a story Rose shared in her memoir *So You Will Remember*. Sal also told of his friendship with Otto in Auschwitz in his survivor's testimony which can be accessed in the USC Shoah Foundation archives. After the war, while the De Liemas lived

in the Netherlands, Otto visited them frequently. The De Liemas immigrated to the United States on September 2, 1950, and spoke publicly about their experiences as Holocaust survivors.

Based on what we know about Otto, he was not a religious man before the war, and he did not become more religious even after Auschwitz. After liberation and while still in the camp, Otto did join a "group of his fellow inmates to celebrate the Sabbath...but [although none of them were religious] they found comfort in their small congregation" (*The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, 159). Edith, on the other hand, grew up in a religious household and took Margot and Anne to synagogue. During their marriage, Edith knew that Otto had no interest in religious services and recognized that he "went only for her sake" (*Anne Frank's Family*, 324). After liberation, Otto witnessed other family members and friends turning to religion but wrote that for him it would be "pointless and hypocritical" to do the same (*Anne Frank's Family*, 324).

The War Ends for Otto

Otto Frank Returns Home

Otto worked to rebuild his factory with the help of his friends, but he also found solace in helping other war victims. He visited patients in sanatoriums and worked to reunite orphaned children with their relatives. One example was Anne's friend Hanneli Goslar was also in Bergen-Belsen with Anne and Margot. He helped her and her sister Gabi reunite with their uncle in Switzerland. It is possible that reuniting survivors with families was one way for Otto to cope with the deaths of Margot and Anne and begin to resolve his grief. Talking to his family in Switzerland about his daughters was a struggle for Otto, but with people like Hanneli, who herself had a special connection to Anne, he found it easier to be more open. Otto also formed relationships with some other classmates of his daughters. He contacted Anneliese Schütz who took a literature class with Margot and later translated Anne's diary into German.



Hanneli Goslar, 1930s (Scholastic).



Refugees looking through lists for Holocaust survivors (USHMM).

Otto received the devastating news of Margot and Anne's death on July 18, 1945. The Red Cross lists that he had been checking since his arrival in Amsterdam finally contained Anne and Margot's names, with the symbols of crosses next to them. Otto learned from Lin Brilleslijper that his children died of typhus in March 1945, some weeks before Bergen-Belsen was liberated, with their bodies buried in a nearby mass grave.

Otto immediately wrote to his family in Switzerland to share the heartbreaking news. In that same letter, Otto revealed that "Miep was somehow able to save an album [actually a few albums] and also Anne's diary" (*Anne Frank's Family*, 311). Although Anne's diary mentions that Margot kept a diary too, it was never found after the Secret Annex was ransacked by the SS. For Otto, the scattered pages of Anne's diary would soon become the center of his world.

Note to Teachers

Miep and Bep were two of the five individuals who hid the Franks in the Secret Annex from July 1942 until August 1944. Over the years, Miep has become the face of the helpers and is known as the person who found Anne's diary after the arrest. According to *The Last Secret of the Secret Annex*, a new book by Jeroen De Bruyn and Bep's son Joop van Wijk-Voskuil, Bep's role in the Annex was more extensive. She provided the loose paper that Anne used to rewrite her diary. She was also the person who found and hid Anne's rewritten pages, which were scattered in a different part of the Annex.

"... I am not letting myself go and am distracting myself as much as I can. I don't have any pictures from the last few years of course, but Miep was somehow able to save an album [actually a few albums] and also Anne's diary. I still don't have the strength to read it. From Margot, there's nothing except her Latin exercises. Since they ransacked our whole house, there aren't all the little things that we were used to and that Edith or the children had. Obviously, it's useless to immerse yourself in such things and thoughts, but of course a person isn't always reasonable."

- Otto to Leni, 1945
(Excerpt from
Anne Frank's Family)



Top: Miep Geis (Holocaust Memorial Day Trust).
Bottom: Bep Voskuil (Wikimedia Commons).

Anne's Diary

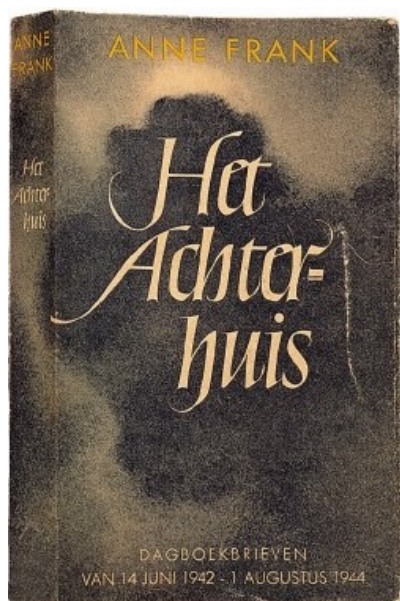
Otto was deeply shaken when he received Anne's diary, believing that there were no family belongings left. Discussing the deaths of his children and Edith was depressing for Otto, so he attempted to escape from his grief by immersing himself in work. He wrote to his family in Basel that he was "trying not to think about things too much, but just stay busy," and while that worked most of the time, he was "overcome with shock only every now and then." (letter to Otto's mother Alice, *Anne Frank's Family*, 308). Otto's letters to his family after that period often centered on his thoughts about his children and Edith, but he also tried to maintain a sense of normalcy by writing about his business. However, every time he had to inform someone new about the deaths of Anne and Margot, it was like reopening a wound. This was particularly difficult when at the time he received a letter addressed to Margot from a girl in America who had been corresponding with both Margot and Anne and wanted to continue writing after the war. Otto replied to her letter, but it was one of the hardest things he had to do.

To Publish or Not To Publish?

As he read through Anne's diary, he was struck by her writing style, her striking imagination, and her astute observations of the world around her. In the letters to his family in Switzerland, Otto shared small excerpts of the diary and expressed his amazement at Anne's writing and keen observations. His family became concerned that Otto was becoming too fixated on the diary, but they kept their opinions to themselves because they understood that it was his way of coping with the loss of his children.



Anne's diary displayed at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam (Wikimedia Commons).



The original cover of Anne's Diary, "Het Achterhuis" (The Annex) (Wikimedia Commons).

Otto was so impressed with Anne's diary that he began thinking about publishing it. However, as he read more pages, he was faced with the decision about whether to omit certain passages. Otto knew that Anne would not want certain diary entries to be published and it was the reason why she decided to rewrite her diary. In her revised pages, Anne "changed words, removed references, added sentences, deleted whole passages, added scenes from memory, and combined entries to make the writing flow" (*The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, 215). Otto had in his possession the original and the revised diaries, but both versions were incomplete. Otto himself had to decide which diary entries to include in the final publication. Some early diary entries addressed Anne's relationship with her mother, a discussion about sexuality and her thoughts on Peter, but her rewritten version omitted these passages or considerably toned them down. As he was preparing the diary for publication, Otto decided to reinstate these diary entries in the final version because he believed that it would help the readers empathize with Anne. Otto shared the contents of the diary with his family and some friends in the publishing industry. Their reaction varied. His mother Alice thought that the readers would think it was boring and "just a child's thoughts and feelings"

(*Anne Frank's Family*, 379). However, others, like his friends Albert Cauvern, Dr. Kurt Baschwitz, and Werner and Jetty Cahn, whose opinion Otto valued, reacted positively. Finally, on June 25, 1945, the diary was published in the Netherlands with Anne's name on the cover. In the years that followed, the diary was translated into other languages: German (1950), French (1950), English (1952), and Japanese (1952).

Anne's Diary

When Otto visited his nephew Buddy Elias in Brussels at the end of 1947, he contended that Anne's diary was of "universal significance, about living together in difficult circumstances, about humanity itself, and about believing in life" (*Anne Frank's Family*, 380). During the same visit, Otto shared that as a witness to "organized, mechanized, assembly-line murder of millions of people" (384), he feared the possibility of it happening again. He showed to Buddy a crumpled newspaper article written by Dr. Jan Romein, Professor of History in Amsterdam in *Het Parool*, a Dutch newspaper. Dr. Romein's call for a "a society in which talent is no longer destroyed, repressed and oppressed, but discovered, nurtured and assisted, wherever it may appear" (382) resonated deeply with Otto. He saw Anne's diary as a weapon against inhumanity, and perhaps this gave Otto an idea to create the Anne Frank Foundation.

"... the idea that my loved ones were only three out of millions is no consolation. It doesn't make it any easier for me. And I have a hard time believing what happened—even me, who saw it all with my own eyes and went through it in person. Auschwitz was another world, another planet. I've heard that said many times—many of us talk about 'Planet Auschwitz.' And Auschwitz wasn't the only one, of course. We have to tell this story, every one of us, even if, in truth, it can't be told, because there are no words for it, words like 'horrible' and 'monstrous' are not enough to describe it. I sometimes think we need to invent a new language for it."

- Otto to Buddy, 1947
(*Anne Frank's Family*)

Theatrical Adaptation of The Diary of Anne Frank



The original playbill cover for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, 1955. (click on the image above for cast and other information)

Anne's diary was particularly successful in Japan, where Anne was viewed as a heroic victim who inspired hope. The American publication of the diary included an introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt, but it was the theatrical adaptation that turned it into a worldwide bestseller. After the diary was published, Otto signed a contract to work with Kermit Bloomgarden to adapt it for the stage. *The Diary of Anne Frank* made its debut on October 5, 1955 in New York to overwhelming success. It also gained popularity in Europe, especially in Germany where it helped to "break the silence" surrounding the Nazi era.

However, not everyone viewed the play favorably. Dutch journalists who attended early Broadway shows were shocked by the seemingly lighthearted attitude of the American audience towards Anne's experiences and the plight of Jews. A review by Brooks Atkinson in *The New York Times*, published the day after the debut, praised the actors but seemed to lack genuine acknowledgment that the events depicted were not fictional. The philosopher in exile Hannah Arendt criticized the public's reaction to Anne Frank's story as a form of shallow sentimentality that overshadowed the magnitude of the catastrophe. Despite these criticisms, the play overall achieved tremendous success, winning the 1956 Pulitzer Prize for drama and other awards. Even today, some school districts use the play as part of their assigned curriculum and not the diary itself.

New York Times
Review of "The Diary
of Anne Frank" play

Anne's Diary

Filming The Diary of Anne Frank

Because *The Diary of Anne Frank* play was a huge success, Otto received offers to create a film based on his daughter's diary. The first motion picture titled *The Diary of Anne Frank* was based on the diary revised by Otto Frank. The 1959 film was directed by George Stevens and starred Millie Perkins as Anne Frank. The making of the movie was a significant undertaking as the filmmakers sought to authentically adapt Anne Frank's diary into a compelling and moving film. To accomplish this, the filmmakers extensively researched the historical context of Anne Frank's life and the events that occurred during World War II. The film was shot on location in Amsterdam and the filmmakers carefully recreated the cramped living conditions of the attic. To bring Anne Frank's story to life, the filmmakers used photographs and measurements taken from the actual location. They also interviewed Otto and other people who knew Anne and her family.



Millie Perkins as Anne Frank and Joseph Schildkraut as Otto Frank (Wikimedia Commons).

Even though he was too emotional to watch the play or the film, it was very important to Otto that any theatrical or motion picture adaptations get every single detail about their life in the Secret Annex represented accurately. Consequently, Otto wrote a letter to George Stevens on October 21, 1957 in which he described the curtains in the Secret Annex that were to be represented in the film. Otto had the opportunity to meet everyone involved in the making of the film. He and his wife Fritzi traveled to the United States to advise the director and the actors and provide crucial details in order to create an accurate representation of Anne Frank's diary.

Note to Teachers

As the popularity of the play and film increased, some individuals began questioning the authenticity of Anne Frank's diary, claiming it was a fabrication and not actually written by her. Otto Frank took these challenges seriously and pursued legal action against those who made libelous claims. Upon Otto's death, he gave all of Anne's manuscripts to the Dutch government, which subsequently transferred their ownership to the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD). In 1986, NIOD published all three versions of the diary in one volume, including Anne's original version, her rewritten version, and the edition compiled by Otto and published in 1947. After thorough examination, NIOD concluded that the first two versions were indeed written by Anne between 1942 and 1944, and that the 1947 publication "captured the essence of Anne's writing" (*The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition*, 166). For educators interested in exploring Anne Frank's diary or other Holocaust books and literature, the USHMM offers excellent guides and lesson plans that can be utilized as they are or adapted to suit individual teaching needs.



Drive-in film advertisement from 1959 (Wikimedia Commons).

The film was a huge success, winning three Academy Awards and bringing Anne Frank's story to a wide audience around the world. With the publication of Anne's diary and the subsequent movies and theater productions, Otto became an extension of Anne's voice; if he had not pushed so hard, her voice would have been lost, as was the case for countless other victims of the Holocaust.

Explore "Teaching Materials Using Books and Literature" - USHMM

Access "Exploring Holocaust Era Diaries" - USHMM

The Anne Frank Foundation

Otto Frank sold his ownership of Pectacon and Geis & Co to set up and fully devote himself to the Anne Frank Foundation. Established on May 3, 1957, the Foundation had the goal of "preserving the Prinsengracht 263 building in Amsterdam and in particular the Secret Annex...[and]... advancing the ideals that Anne Frank left behind for the world" (*Anne Frank's Family*, 452). Otto established the Foundation to manage the building, which was eventually renovated. His plan was to use the front of the house for exhibitions on Nazism, the

Holocaust, and the German occupation. He would keep the Secret Annex empty as a symbol of the family's hidden life. In addition, Otto wanted the Foundation to focus on establishing a legacy for Anne by promoting mutual understanding and acceptance among young people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. When the Anne Frank House finally opened its doors to the public in 1960, it became a center for educational exhibits, activities and materials embracing tolerance and mutual respect. The International Youth Center that opened in 1961, with Otto as its chairman, became a base for workshops and seminars on discrimination, prejudice, and war issues.

"... Otto never wanted anything for himself, he was always there for others...He devoted the rest of his life to his daughter's work. The success of the diary[...]."

- Buddy and Gerti
(*Anne Frank's Family*)

Even today, the Secret Annex remains a significant attraction, drawing countless visitors year after year. Otto Frank's goal was to honor his daughter's memory and promote mutual understanding and tolerance among young people of different religions. He devoted the rest of his life to this important task.

The Anne Frank-Fonds

In January 1963, Otto and Fritzi established the Anne Frank-Fonds in Basel as a trust under Swiss law. It was a small organization with family members on the Board. The goal of this Switzerland-based foundation was to manage the copyrights to Anne diary, the income from the sales of the book, the play and movie royalties, and any other projects related to Anne's legacy. Guided by the last will of Otto Frank, the Anne Frank-Fonds was created to support "work relating to peace, young people and dialogue, and advocated the strengthening of human rights as well as opposing any form of discrimination, racism or anti-Semitism" (*Anne Frank-Fonds, History of the Foundation*).

How Anne's Legacy Became Otto's

When Otto founded the Amsterdam Foundation, he wanted to promote a cross-cultural and religious acceptance among the world youth and preserve original documents and objects that belonged to Anne and the others who were in hiding. Over the years, the Foundation has worked to expand this collection through acquisitions, donations, and loans. Its archives also include a collection of audio and video recordings of eyewitness accounts relating to the history of the Frank family as well as documents related to stage and film performances.

Equally important to Otto was his own outreach and connection with the youth of the world, especially with the youth in Germany. He wanted young German people to know the history of their country and the role the Nazis actively played in the murder of European Jews. One might assume that after World War II and the subsequent Nazi trials, most Germans became aware of what had happened and had begun to atone for their country's past, but the reality was different.

"... Only in Germany have I actively sought publication of Anne's Diary. Of all the thousands of letters inspired by a reading of The Diary, I have been most diligent in answering the ones from German youth. For their education-in democratic ideals and ways of life-is of paramount importance to me."

- Otto Frank,
Coronet Magazine
February 1960

The Anne Frank Foundation

In February 1960, *Coronet Magazine* published an article written by Otto Frank in response to a letter he received from a 16-year-old German girl. She asked how to initiate a direct conversation with older Germans who lived through and largely participated in the Nazi regime but refused to talk about their involvement. Her question and Otto's response perfectly summed up why Otto felt the Anne Frank Foundation and the affiliated International Youth Center were his life's purpose. He reiterated his belief that Anne's diary and the related plays and films attracted many young people who identified with Anne. To Otto, these young people were the future and the future of a free and compassionate world. Only their involvement and acceptance of the truth and mutual differences could prevent another genocide.

"... a battle is going on in Germany today for [the young German woman's] mind and those of her generation. It is being fought largely between the guilt-ridden older generation responsible for Hitler and a middle generation, too young to have been deeply involved with Nazism, but old enough to have fought and been hurt by the war. Thus far, she is mainly aware of the older people whose attitudes she finds so discouraging. Their younger opponents have not yet made themselves sufficiently felt, but their strength is growing."

- Otto Frank,
Coronet Magazine
February 1960

In reading this article, published in the same year as the opening of the Anne Frank House, one can see how much Germany mattered to Otto. He always considered himself German and he was equally appalled yet hopeful that the country would ultimately redeem itself. He was quite disappointed that "the older generation of Germans [could not] yet face up to past history and communicate its lessons to the future" (*Otto Frank, Coronet Magazine*). In *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, the author quotes Otto's stepdaughter Eva Schloss saying that "Otto always loved Germany," a nation he would never abandon, but "he was appalled by it just the same" (*The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, 260). Lee further discusses that Otto did not believe in collective guilt, and in 1946 he traveled to Germany to let two old friends (who were not Nazis) know that not all Germans were responsible for the atrocities of the Nazi regime. Moreover, when some of his staff from the Anne Frank Foundation wanted to ban Germans from visiting the Anne Frank House, he vetoed that idea because he believed that, if given the opportunity, the youth of Germany could remedy what the Nazis did.



Young Eva Geiringer, nd
(*Shoah Foundation*). Schloss
is the author of three books
about her Holocaust
experiences.



Learn more about Eva
Schloss from USC
Shoah Foundation

Note to Teachers

Eva (Geiringer) Schloss was a young Jewish girl living in Amsterdam who, like Anne, went into hiding with her family and was captured and sent to Auschwitz in 1944. Eva and her mother Fritzi survived Auschwitz and returned to the Netherlands in 1945. After Auschwitz was liberated and while waiting to be transported home, Eva recognized Otto Frank in the camp barracks, and introduced him to her mother. After completing her studies at the University of Amsterdam, Eva moved to England where she met her future husband. Eva did not talk about her Holocaust experience until Otto's death in 1980. She began to speak at educational institutions and co-founded The Anne Frank Trust UK. Her full testimony is available on the USC Shoah Foundation website.

Otto's Outreach

Otto traveled all over the world to oversee schools and other organizations created in Anne's name as it was important to him that their mission was aligned with Anne's legacy. Both *The Diary of Anne Frank* book and the play that premiered in New York in 1955 became huge successes. In 1956, the play won the Tony Award, and the diary won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Later that year, the play premiered in Europe, opening in Sweden, Germany, Vienna, and Zurich.

Author Miriam Pressler wrote in *Anne Frank's Family* in 2011 that when the sold-out play performed in Germany in front of many young people, "sometimes the audience sat in deathly silence for many minutes after the play ended, before leaving the theater without a sound; sometimes the applause went on longer than anyone had ever seen at a play" (440). Otto truly believed that one way to ensure a peaceful world was to educate the youth about the evils of the Nazi regime. However, as a realist, Otto understood in 1960 why many of his German

contemporaries were unwilling to confront their recent past. He believed that Germans appeared "determined to blanket the events of the Nazi years with silence." Otto would have been proud to read Miriam Pressler's later remarks that "[t]he Diary of Anne Frank helped to break the silence that still blanketed the Nazi era" (440).

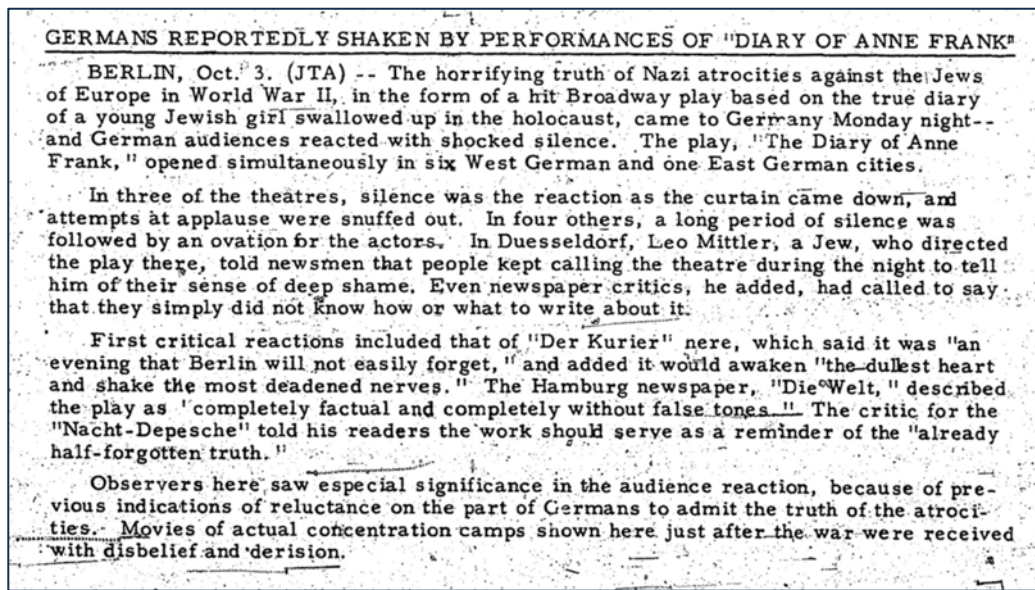


Image from Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin from October 4, 1956

Regardless of their tremendous success, the play performances that took place in many countries were often disrupted by neo-Nazis. Some former members of the Nazi party even challenged the authenticity of Anne's diary. As discussed in the previous sections, Otto took these challenges very seriously and brought criminal charges against the individuals who publicly claimed the diary was inauthentic. Otto's family knew how these charges "hurt him and how terrible it was for him to have to go before a judge and show the tattooed number on his arm in front of everybody" (*Anne Frank's Family*, 503). The slander against the *Diary* continued during Otto's lifetime but he was unwavering in his fight to clear its name.

Read about evidence of authenticity of Anne's diary – Anne Frank Foundation

In the autumn of 1962, Otto and Fritzi moved from the family house on Herbstgasse in Basel to their own home in Birsfelden. Their new residence in Birsfelden was conveniently located just fifteen minutes away from Basel, allowing Otto to maintain frequent contact with his family. He remained closely connected with his relatives, particularly his nephew Buddy Elias, who shared a deep personal investment in the success of Anne's legacy. Buddy fondly recalled the close bond between Otto and Anne and believed that publishing the diary was a way of fulfilling Anne's post-war aspiration to become a published author. However, as Otto witnessed the profound impact of Anne's diary, he realized that its significance was much greater than he anticipated.



Otto and Fritzi in their Birsfelden home, June 4, 1976 (courtesy of Father John Neiman).

Otto's Outreach

Although Anne did not survive to write about her experiences in the concentration camps, her diary provided a poignant glimpse into her life in hiding, allowing others to see her as an ordinary young girl. Through reading the diary or viewing the play, young people all over the world could relate to Anne on a human level, effectively humanizing the victims of the Holocaust in a way that photographs or films captured in the concentration camps could not. Otto was keenly aware of the dissonance experienced by many young people who learned about the truth of the Nazis, as they often reached out to him to share their thoughts and struggles. Otto shares in his 1960 article *Has Germany Forgotten Anne Frank?* the words of a Frankfurt youth after a history lesson: "My head reels because I am still trying to understand what I have read. My reason refuses to accept what I know to be true: that human beings have acted like beasts" (*Coronet Magazine*).

"... Otto had no idea what the diary would become, the thing took on a life of its own with the book's worldwide success. Now Otto has something to do about it every day, because people write to him or visit him or invite him somewhere to dedicate a school or give a lecture. But that doesn't at all mean that he has no pleasures in life. He can obviously never forget the loss of his family, but I think that Anne's success and everything that goes with it, and his trips, make him happy, even if it's a strain at the same time. It is very, very important to him to be in contact with young people: I wouldn't say it's fun for him, but it does give him pleasure. What I really think is that he needs people he can talk to about Anne."

- Buddy Elias, excerpt from
Anne Frank's Family

Letters from Otto

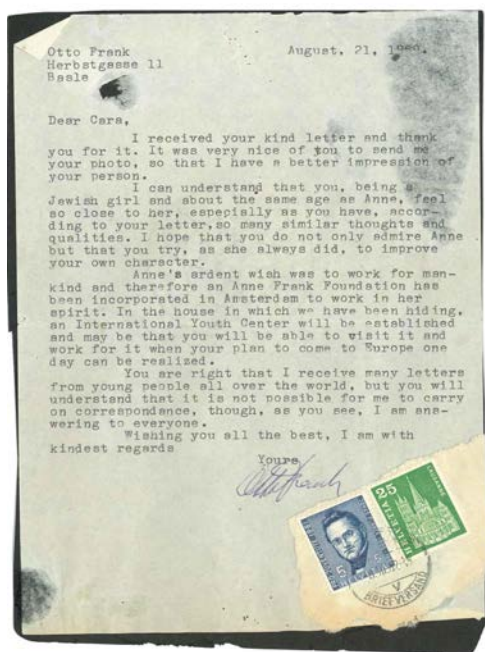
As *The Diary of Anne Frank* and its adaptation for the stage and screen reached a global audience, Otto started to receive numerous letters from young people who were inspired by Anne's experience. These letters fostered a deep bond between Otto and the younger generation. Otto's investment in young people was driven by his unshakeable faith in their ability to create positive change. He recognized the immense potential within these young men and women to shape a more inclusive and just world. It was not enough for Otto that the youth merely learned about the past; he wanted to inspire them to act against prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. Otto understood that true progress required an active approach, and he sought to empower young individuals to create a better world. Through his dedication to this cause, Otto became a source of inspiration himself. His passion and vision resonated deeply with young people, sparking their desire to make a difference. Otto's ability to inspire and motivate others played a vital role in fostering a generation of individuals who would be determined to confront and combat the challenges of injustice.

Over the years, Otto received an overwhelming number of letters from people whose lives were deeply touched by Anne's diary. These heartfelt letters not only expressed admiration for Otto's mission to preserve Anne's legacy and inspire activism but also sought his guidance and support in their personal struggles. Despite the immense volume of mail pouring in from all over the world, Otto made a sincere effort to respond to each letter personally.

While most writers exchanged letters with Otto once, others formed a unique bond with him. What began as a single letter grew into heartfelt correspondence and sincere friendship that lasted until Otto's death in 1980. The enduring relationships that Otto cultivated with select men and women exemplified the influence he had on those who reached out to him. Through his letters, Otto provided guidance, wisdom, and empathy, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of those fortunate enough to connect with him.

Tree of Hope

One of the young people who wrote to Otto was a girl from California, Cara Weiss, now known as Cara Wilson-Granat. In 1957, at the age of twelve, Cara auditioned for a role in the movie adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Inspired by the diary, she felt compelled to reach out to Otto Frank by writing him a letter. To her surprise, she received a response from Otto not long after. At first, Otto's reply appeared to be a formal response sent to many first-time letter writers. He touched upon the mission of the recently established Anne Frank Foundation and mentioned the upcoming opening of the International Youth Center. Additionally, Otto kindly explained that his response might be the first and last due to the overwhelming number of the letters he received. However, while Cara appreciated his letter, she continued to write to Otto regularly. Much to her joy, Otto replied to each of her letters, and a genuine and lasting relationship between Cara and Otto began. Despite initially indicating that his response might be a one-time occurrence, Otto's continued warm replies signaled his genuine interest and concern for Cara. Their correspondence that lasted over twenty years became a treasured connection, embodying the profound impact that Otto had on those who asked for his friendship and guidance.



Cara and Otto's correspondence grew into a genuine mentorship, with Otto assuming the role of a grandfather and trusted guide. She wrote to him frequently, and just as often, Otto responded. Cara found comfort in Otto's words as she navigated the complexities of her teenage years and family relationships. She sought his valuable insights on matters of her future, as she aspired to be an actress and dancer. As Cara embarked on her journey through college, met her future spouse Kent Wilson, embraced motherhood, and searched for a fulfilling career, she sought Otto's guidance and support. Whenever doubts arose regarding potential obstacles, such as concerns about religious differences impacting her relationship with Kent, Otto provided reassurance. Even in moments of outrage over insufficient activism against racism, Cara felt encouraged by Otto. He validated her experiences and genuinely listened to her thoughts and concerns. Relating to Anne and Margot's relationship when Cara wrote about her sister, Otto sincerely responded to Cara, never dismissing her letters as mere musings of a young teenager.

Note to Teachers

While Otto Frank's name was signed at the bottom of the letters sent to all who wrote to him, it is important to recognize the significant role played by his wife Fritzi in spreading Anne's message. Among Otto and Fritzi's family and friends, it was well known that both of them would respond to the letters addressed to Otto. During Cara's visit, they welcomed her into their cozy study, where she observed two typewriters set up in separate corners of the room. Otto's nephew, Buddy, also hinted at the valuable support Fritzi provided in helping Otto promote Anne's ideals, implying that Fritzi played a pivotal role in bringing organization to Otto's life.

Top: Letter from Otto to Cara, August 21, 1959
Bottom: Letters from Otto Frank donated by Cara to University of South Carolina Anne Frank Center (courtesy of Cara Wilson-Granat).

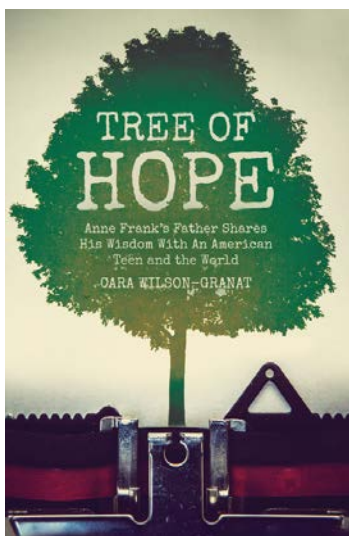


Tree of Hope

In 2021, Cara published *Tree of Hope*, a memoir containing the heartfelt letters that documented her life and the invaluable guidance of Otto Frank. Throughout her book, Cara offers thoughtful reflections on significant and personal events that took place in the United States and in her own life during the 1960s and 1970s, including societal concerns such as racism, antisemitism, and feminism. Through the lens of Cara's own letters and Otto's responses, readers gain a deep understanding of the man who endured the tragic loss of his family to senseless violence yet managed to leave a permanent impact on the world. Cara's memoir also highlights the fact that she was not the sole recipient of Otto's correspondence throughout the years. When she finally visited Otto and his wife in Switzerland in 1977, Otto revealed a closet filled with letters from individuals all over the world. Otto read the words of the multitude of people who needed to be heard and validated, just like Cara, and he offered them his wisdom and support. This extraordinary contribution by a Holocaust survivor to the rest of the world often remains overlooked in Holocaust education, despite its significance.

"... Now I want to tell you that the confidence you always had in me was a precious gift from your side. Having contributed a little to your development, gives me satisfaction"

- Otto to Cara,
letter dated
March 26, 1968



Cover for *Tree of Hope* book
(courtesy of Cara Wilson-Granat).

Throughout their correspondence, Otto demonstrated a keen interest in the future, prioritizing discussions about the present and upcoming challenges rather than dwelling on the past. He openly expressed his frustrations regarding racial unrest in the United States, the consequences of the Vietnam War, and in a letter dated May 27, 1967, he drew a comparison between a Palestinian political leader Yasser Arafat and Hitler due to the aggression of the Arab states toward Israel. These topics showcased Otto's engagement with current events and his concerns about the global landscape.

As part of his mission to promote accurate Holocaust education and foster religious, cultural, and racial tolerance, Otto dedicated his time to studying youth pedagogy. He understood the importance of providing effective guidance to young people and recognized the need to stay informed about youth movements and pedagogical matters. In his correspondence with Cara, Otto shared his commitment to these pursuits, mentioning that he had to read extensively to deepen his knowledge (*Tree of Hope*, 8). When Otto responded to Cara's initial letter, he had recently established the Anne Frank Foundation and was enthusiastic about updating her on the progress of the upcoming International Youth Center. Examining Otto's letters to Cara reveals glimpses of both his hopes and anxieties. While he remained hopeful about the impact of his mission, there were underlying fears that it might not be as effective as he desired. His act of writing to others reflected his optimistic outlook, yet his words conveyed a sense of urgency, concerned that all his efforts could be in vain.

"... You are right that at certain periods of my existence the world around me collapsed. When most of the people of my country, Germany, turned into hordes of nationalistic, cruel anti-Semitic criminals, I had to face the consequences and through this did hurt me deeply I realized that Germany was not the world and I left forever. When I returned from the concentration camp alone, I saw that a tragedy of unexpressible extent had hit the Jews, my people, and I was spared as one of them to testify, one of those who had lost his dear ones. It was not in my nature to sit down and mourn. I had good people around me and Anne's Diary helped me a great deal to gain again a positive outlook on life. I hoped by publishing it to help many people in the same way and this turned out to be true. When later the Anne Frank Foundation was established I wanted it to work in the spirit of Anne's ideals for peace and understanding among peoples."

- Otto to Cara, letter dated June 16, 1968

Tree of Hope

Cara and Otto wrote letters to each other from 1959 until 1977. They never spoke on the phone until Cara called him to let him know she was coming to visit. Her plan was to fly to Amsterdam and visit the Anne Frank House with Miep Geis, then travel to Switzerland to meet Otto and Fritzi. Cara's excitement and nervousness were palpable throughout the pages of *Tree of Hope*, and it is clear to the reader how emotional and impactful it was for her to finally meet Otto Frank. Otto, her mentor, friend, surrogate grandfather, survivor, social activist, all of this in one man who devoted his entire life to fight hate with kindness and hope.

And just like that I was actually being hugged by Otto Frank.

- Cara Wilson, 1977

Otto and Fritzi welcomed Cara with open arms like she was a long lost relative. They brought her to their home, fed her, showed her Anne and Margot's old pictures, talked to her about their lives, and spent this time catching up like old friends. Fritzi even prepared special meals for Cara's vegetarian diet. She shared with Cara how she and Otto met after Auschwitz liberation and even showed Cara the tattooed numbers on her forearm. Cara met Otto and Fritzi's family, including his younger sister Leni who lived in Basel, not too far from Birsfelden. Cara began to understand more about Otto as a man who lost his family but found his life's purpose devoting every single day of his life to fulfill it.



Pictures of Cara, Otto and Fritzi during her visit to Birsfelden in 1977. Cara spent several days with the Franks who treated her like family during that time (courtesy of Cara Wilson-Granat).



Otto's Other Children

One of the most remarkable moments recounted by Cara in her memoir was when she visited Otto and Fritzi's home. During her visit, Otto proudly led her to a spacious cupboard filled with shelves from floor to ceiling. To her amazement, the shelves were overflowing with notebooks containing countless letters from people all over the world. It was a powerful visual representation of the tremendous impact Otto had made through his correspondence. After the publication and global reach of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Otto started receiving letters from people who were deeply moved by the Diary and Otto's dedication to it. Similar to Cara, who wrote to him after reading the diary and auditioning for the film, others reached out to express their admiration of Otto and offer words of encouragement. Otto diligently replied to each and every letter, and while some exchanges were limited to a single interaction, many people continued corresponding with him for years. Some of these individuals developed a close bond with Otto and Fritzi, and a few even visited them at their home in Birsfelden.

Tree of Hope

"...Otto Frank was a very special person. He had charisma. Everyone who was lucky enough to meet him would confirm what I am saying. Every one of our countless visitors would mention, in writing or verbally, how friendly he was and how sincerely he welcomed them. He never wrote a book, but the thousands of letters he wrote to friends and to readers of Anne's diary, many of whom became friends in turn, are a monument in themselves. They contain his immense understanding, for young and old, and express his great love of humanity, and his goodness. Practically every recipient wrote to say that they treasured his letters as a unique and prized possession. This voluminous correspondence took up a lot of his time and energy, but he knew only too well how important a friendly written word can be in a world where so few people take the time to be considerate or compassionate. It was his life's work to spread the ideas and ideals that Anne had expressed in her diary, and he gave courage to many people, especially young people, when they were unhappy. Not a few of them have had their paths in life changed, for the better, thanks to him."

- Fritzi's statement after Otto's death in 1980, titled *My Life With Otto Frank*, nd. Excerpt from Anne Frank's Family by Mirjam Pressler

family. After watching *The Diary of Anne Frank* film, Ryan, who experienced the loss of his mother and a devastating breakup that shook his faith, was deeply moved by Anne's story and decided to start his own diary. Immediately after writing to Otto, Ryan made a life-changing decision to sell his home in California and embark on a journey to Switzerland to visit Otto and Fritzi. Ryan documented his 1973 experience in his book, *We Never Said Goodbye*, published in 2021. His dream was to live in Amsterdam and work at the Anne Frank Foundation, but that plan did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, Otto warmly accepted Ryan, making him feel like a part of the family. Ryan saw Otto as his adopted father and shared his journal with him. Otto even granted him a rare privilege of examining Anne's original diary. Despite hoping to make Amsterdam his home, he ultimately returned to the United States. Ryan continued to maintain regular contact with Otto and visited him multiple times until Otto's death in 1980.

Cara Wilson-Granat recounts the stories of other individuals whom she refers to as "Otto's Children," whose lives were profoundly impacted by Otto Frank. One young Jewish woman from New York maintained a years-long correspondence with the Franks and even introduced her husband to them during their honeymoon. Sumi, a young woman from Japan who had lost her father and was placed in a convent by her mother, reached out to Otto after reading Anne's diary. Otto became a father figure to Sumi, who signed her letters as "your daughter, Sumi," seeking guidance from him. Otto shared with Cara that Anne's diary resonated deeply in Japan due to the horrifying aftermath of atomic warfare. During their visit to Israel in 1971, Otto and Fritzi met a group of young people from a Japanese Christian organization, who were profoundly moved by meeting Otto. They later visited Otto and Fritzi in their home in Birsfelden. Vassa and Teti, two young women from Greece, also formed connections with Otto. Vassa had lost her father during the Nazi occupation of Greece and learned French to correspond with Otto, while Teti faced challenges with her own family's lack of support. Otto encouraged both women to maintain hope, and he and Fritzi even visited them in Athens. Because the specific details of Otto's letters to these individuals are not publicly available, we cannot delve into the depth of their relationships. However, their stories serve as a strong testament to Otto Frank's extraordinary ability to build connections with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

Ryan Cooper

There were also others who, like Cara, reached out to share their personal stories and connections to Otto. One such man was Ryan Cooper from California who was raised in a Jehovah's Witness

"... Through the years that followed, was always at my side with wise counsel, but never critical of anything I did even though he may not have thought it wise. It was exactly how he guided Anne and Margot ..."

- Ryan Cooper,
We Never Said Goodbye

Tree of Hope

John Neiman

John Neiman was completing his history degree when he reread *The Diary of Anne Frank*, compelling him to reach out to Otto. He wrote a letter to Otto in which he expressed his admiration for his tenacity in bringing Anne's diary to the world. This exchange marked the beginning of their correspondence, forging a connection that grew into a deep friendship. Impressed by John's dedication to Anne's mission, Otto invited John to visit him in Switzerland, which John accepted in June 1976.

Meeting Otto in person only reinforced their friendship. The bond that formed between Otto and John was characterized by mutual respect and shared values. Upon his return to the United States, John spoke at local schools and community groups that offered programs about Anne's diary and often sent Otto autographed literature. Inspired by the spirit of Anne's diary and Otto's words encouraging John to "do what Anne wanted to do and live [his] life doing good for other people" (Father Neiman, Personal Interview), John felt compelled to pursue a future as a Roman Catholic priest. In 1986, he was ordained as Father John. Miep and Jan, life-long supporters of Otto's mission who also developed a friendship with Father John, attended his ordination in California. To this day, Father John reflects on "how God used Otto Frank as an instrument to help [him] make that decision to become a priest" (Father John Neiman, Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh Speech, 2022). He continues to draw inspiration from Otto and Anne's resilience to spread goodness and compassion in the world.



Throughout the years, Father John had the opportunity to connect with Holocaust survivors who had crossed paths with Otto. One such encounter was with Sal and Rose De Liema who met Father John when he gave a talk about his friendship with Otto at Sal and Rose's temple. They became close friends and both Sal and Rose visited the parish school where Father John worked to share their painful Auschwitz experiences. Even after Otto's death, Father John remained dedicated to keeping their friendship alive. He continued to visit Fritzi and maintained a correspondence with her until her death in 1998. Father John was extensively interviewed by Carol Ann Lee for her book *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, in which he shared his insights and personal experiences with the Frank family. This contribution provided a deeper understanding of the man behind Anne's diary and the impact he had on those he touched. Father John continues to visit schools and Holocaust centers to speak about his friendship with Otto Frank. Through his heartfelt speeches, he honors the memory of Otto and ensures that his message of tolerance, understanding, and remembrance resonates with future generations.



"... He was a unique man who made everyone a part of his family; made you feel heard, safe. Otto was a living witness who made a difference: all the things he went through, yet he was so full of caring, love compassion...despite all that personal loss, Otto had a heart of gold and wanted to make the world a better place."

- Father John Neiman,
Personal Interview, 2023

Top: Otto and John Neiman, Edgware (London), 3 January 1979, Middle: Fr. John Neiman's ordination with Miep and Jan Gies in attendance, Encino, CA, February 2, 1986, Bottom R: Miep Geis' 100th Birthday Party, February 15, 2009, Hoorn, the Netherlands (courtesy of Father John Neiman).

Tree of Hope

After Otto's death, Fritzi inherited a community of individuals whom she had watched grow and who remained devoted to her just as they had been to Otto. While Otto occupies a central place in Anne Frank's story due to his determination and resilience in publishing her diary and helping promote projects that shared Anne's message, it is crucial to acknowledge the role played by Fritzi in spreading Anne's mission. Working closely with Otto, Fritzi contributed to the growth and outreach of Anne's message. Cara's memoir reveals that both Otto and Fritzi were actively involved in reading and writing letters, even though the letters bore Otto's name. These correspondences were a testament to Fritzi's unwavering dedication and love. In *We Never Said Goodbye*, Ryan recounts that Otto and Fritzi had a routine for handling the letters: they would discuss the content, which Fritzi would type out. Afterwards, Otto reviewed the letter and made the necessary corrections in ink. The final letter was signed by Otto before it was mailed to the recipient. The mutual partnership of Otto and Fritzi magnified the impact of Anne's message ensuring her message reached many people around the world.

"... Otto has his life under control, he loves Fritzi and Fritzi loves him. And she does everything she can to help him spread Anne's ideals. Otto sees it as his task to work toward a peaceful coexistence of different religions and peoples, as Anne would have wanted. He could never have found someone better to help him than Fritzi."

- Buddy Elias,
Excerpt from
Anne Frank's Family



Otto and Fritzi, Edgware (London), January 3, 1979 (Courtesy of Father John Neiman).

Otto's Lessons for Humanity

Like many other Holocaust survivors, Otto Frank endured significant personal loss and emerged from the camps bearing physical and emotional scars that would last a lifetime. Like others, he grappled with the bewildering question of how such atrocities could unfold in a progressive nation that had been a home to his family for generations. Otto, like many German Jews, witnessed the growing impact of Hitler and the Nazis on the socio-political landscape of the country and made efforts to relocate his family. But this is where the similarities end. Holocaust victims who were forced to endure similar hardships experienced them differently because they were individuals with unique stories and backgrounds.

After the war, survivors coped with trauma in their own ways. Some wanted to move on with their lives and did not want to talk about their experiences. Some survivors spoke because of the rise of Holocaust denial in the 1970s and 1980s and they wanted the truth known and never forgotten. They agreed to be interviewed by Holocaust organizations, despite the emotional challenges. Many expressed themselves through creative outlets, writing memoirs, poems, and creating art. They provided guidance to playwrights and filmmakers, ensuring their stories were accurately depicted. They visited schools and universities worldwide, offering students the opportunity to hear firsthand accounts of the devastating consequences of hatred. Certain survivors dedicated themselves to the pursuit of justice by tracking down Nazis who had escaped Germany and Europe. The experiences of Holocaust survivors are vast and varied, and it is essential to recognize and honor the diversity of their journeys as a testament to their resilience and humanity.

Otto Frank went into hiding with his family, only to be discovered by the SS and subsequently sent to Auschwitz. Although his post-liberation life is often overlooked by the publication of Anne's diary, Otto's own experiences and contributions are worthy of recognition. While he did not publish books detailing his own camp experiences, his interviews and public appearances largely focused on magnifying Anne's message. As an educator who explores Anne Frank's diary with students, I find that many teachers tend to regard Otto's presence through Anne's eyes. Aside from acknowledging his major role in establishing the Anne Frank House, little is known about his personal life. It was not until I explored *Tree of Hope* that I discovered the extent to which Otto embraced and connected with individuals who reached out to him after learning about the diary. Otto's dedication was evident in his responses to every letter, forming meaningful relationships with many of the correspondents. While most of Otto's letters remain unpublished, various books shed light on the impact he had on people's lives. Through his personal correspondence and relationships, Otto Frank's long-lasting legacy comes into focus, resonating with those who have come to learn about him over the years. His letters reveal a commitment to counter the dehumanizing tactics employed by the Nazis, as he made a deliberate effort to humanize every individual he encountered. By responding to their letters and attentively listening to their stories, Otto validated the experiences and perspectives of others. Furthermore, his willingness to show vulnerability encouraged others to do the same, fostering a sense of connection and shared resilience. Against all odds, Otto Frank held onto hope, serving as a beacon for others in the face of adversity.

Otto's Lessons

Fighting dehumanization with humanization

Validating others by hearing what they needed to say

Willingness to show vulnerability

Keeping hope against all odds

Otto's Lessons for Humanity

Fighting dehumanization with humanization

Understanding how ordinary Germans became complicit with the Nazis requires examining the role of dehumanization in Nazi-occupied Europe. While antisemitism was not a new phenomenon, Hitler skillfully weaponized it by dehumanizing Jews, thereby making antisemitism more socially acceptable. The Nazi Party actively engaged in practices that dehumanized Jews, and many ordinary Germans either participated actively or remained passive bystanders (see Part II, Section 4 for in-depth exploration of Nazi propaganda). Alternately, the Anne Frank Foundation has worked to promote dialogue and positive interactions among individuals from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Otto Frank, through his outreach efforts, exemplified a humanizing approach. His initial letters to strangers who reached out to express admiration and encouragement served as a testament to his commitment to recognizing and dignifying others. By engaging in genuine and empathetic interactions, Otto fostered a sense of shared humanity that stood in direct opposition to the dehumanizing ideology propagated by the Nazis.

Validating others by hearing what they needed to say

Creating the International Youth Center, with its goal of fostering meaningful connections, was, in itself, an act of validation. Otto Frank believed in the importance of respectful dialogue and uncomfortable conversations about the past as a means to understand one another. His letters to individuals like Cara, Father John, Ryan, and others serve as a powerful testament to his validation of others. Cara began corresponding with Otto at the age of twelve, and despite Otto initially expressing the challenge of maintaining correspondence with everyone, he not only continued to respond to every single letter Cara sent, but he also listened to her and validated her thoughts and feelings. Otto did not pass judgment on Cara or the issues and dilemmas she shared, which, in comparison to his own life experiences, may have seemed minor. He engaged with Cara's letters about topics such as college, love, marriage, jobs, and children, and each response from Otto validated her choices or guided her in making new ones.

Willingness to show vulnerability

To gain a deeper understanding of Otto Frank, it is crucial to delve into his relationships beyond his relationship with Cara. Otto's correspondence with his family that began before World War I, as well as the insights provided in books like *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* and *Anne Frank's Family*, offer compelling glimpses into his character. In his letters to his mother Alice and his siblings, Otto demonstrates a genuine sense of openness and vulnerability as he shares his experiences and offers advice. This reveals that Otto's letters and interactions with others following the publication of Anne's diary were not a departure from his true character. Rather, they provide further evidence of a man who believed in the transformative power of trust and openness in making the world a better place.

Keeping hope against all odds

When examining the concept of "hope" within the context of the Holocaust, there is a risk of misunderstanding its true significance. Hope possesses immense power. It can ignite a fierce drive to survive even in the darkest moments, as many Holocaust survivors can attest. However, when hope repeatedly leads to disappointment, it can also lead a person to lose faith and give up. While we cannot fully gauge the extent of Otto's hope during the most difficult times of his life, we do know that hope became a driving force behind his actions after the war. Otto allowed hope to guide his path. He wished for the world to understand Anne's humanity through her diary and to use that insight to recognize the humanity in all individuals. It is always inspiring to witness another person finding the strength in times of utmost pain to spread a message of peace and acceptance akin to what Anne expressed in her diary. Through Otto's dedication to publishing the diary, advocating for Anne's message, and embracing all those who shared the same mission, hope is at the core of it all. As Otto writes to Cara on June 16, 1968, "If the end of the world would be imminent, I would still plant a tree today" (*Tree of Hope*, 31).

Project-Based Learning

Projects

Fighting Dehumanization Campaign
Storytellers for Humanity
Validation Through Volunteering
Validation Through Artistic Expression
Breaking Barriers
Hope is Action Initiative

Frameworks

ELA and Social Studies Curriculum
Frameworks
Common Core Standards
Social Justice Standards

Objectives

In addition to the objectives outlined by teachers based on the Common Core and Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Standards, each project includes specific objectives that students will be able to achieve through their participation. These objectives can be customized according to the components included in the project, allowing for flexibility and alignment with the desired outcomes.

Projects

As Holocaust educators, it is crucial for us to ensure that the voices of victims and survivors are given adequate representation. We can achieve this by sharing their testimonies and learn about as many experiences as possible because they are all unique and can motivate us to make the world better. Otto Frank's story and his powerful lessons provide a unique opportunity to inspire students to create a positive impact in their world through meaningful action.

Drawing from the insights gained from *Tree of Hope* and the lessons learned from Otto Frank, educators can design and implement community service-based projects that engage their students. These project ideas are best suited for middle and high school students who have already acquired a foundational understanding of the Holocaust's challenging events and themes. However, elementary educators can also adapt these projects to suit younger students by focusing on the overarching themes of humanization, validation, vulnerability, and hope. The projects can have varying levels of impact, categorized as either low or high impact. Low impact outcomes are usually attained when educators limit the scope of the projects to the classroom and when the intended audience consists solely of students. Alternately, high impact projects are designed to reach a broader audience and may involve partnerships and collaborations with other individuals or organizations.

Curriculum Framework

When designing Holocaust lessons, educators need to review their state's ELA or Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks, as they may vary in each state. In addition, educators can also incorporate the standards from Common Core (ELA and Literacy State Standards) and Learning for Justice (Social Justice Standards) to complement the proposed projects and enhance the learning experience.

The Common Core Standards outline the necessary skills for college and career readiness in areas such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, and are [available here](#). Each of the proposed projects provides opportunities for students to develop their reading comprehension, analysis, conceptual integration, and implementation skills.

The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Frameworks [available here](#) provide essential standards that are applicable to these projects, as they can shape curriculum development to foster greater justice, equity, and safety within schools. The four standards encompassed by the Anti-Bias Frameworks are identity, diversity, justice, and action. By incorporating these standards into their lessons, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of their own identities, appreciate diverse perspectives, promote justice, and inspire meaningful action.

The Learning for Justice: Anti-Bias Framework

Anchor Standards and Domains

IDENTITY

1. Students will develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.
2. Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
3. Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.
4. Students will express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
5. Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture and other cultures and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces.

DIVERSITY

6. Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
7. Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
8. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
9. Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.
10. Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

JUSTICE

11. Students will recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups.
12. Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).
13. Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
14. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.
15. Students will identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

ACTION

16. Students will express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they themselves experience bias.
17. Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.
18. Students will speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.
19. Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.
20. Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.

Project-Based Learning

PROJECT **Fighting** **Dehumanization** **Campaign**

Students will work together to identify instances of dehumanization within their local or broader communities. Working individually or in teams, students will develop a comprehensive online campaign aimed at raising awareness about these identified acts of dehumanization and propose constructive solutions to address the problem. As part of this project, each student or team can choose a unique medium to express their final project. For instance, they may create engaging content such as videos, infographics, PSA-style posters, or articles that highlight the consequences of dehumanization while promoting empathy and understanding. To showcase their campaign, students can utilize social media platforms and post on public forums to raise awareness among a broader audience. In addition to reaching a wider audience, students can seek partnerships with local organizations relevant to their chosen topic. For example, if focusing on bias in medicine, students can collaborate with a local hospital or medical office to gain sponsorship for their campaign. Similarly, if addressing bias in the workplace, students can partner with a local business to vocalize the issue. The campaign can be solely digital, or students can combine their digital presentation with an in-person event, such as speaking at local organizations to shed light on the problem and foster dialogue.

This project idea involves launching storytelling initiatives that capture personal narratives of individuals who have experienced dehumanization. This initiative can take place either within the classroom or extend to the broader community, and it can involve personal stories or recorded testimonies. To create a safe and respectful environment for students to share their own experiences, the teacher plays a crucial role in cultivating an atmosphere of empathy and support. Students can choose to work individually or in teams, share their own stories, seek volunteers who are willing to share their experiences, or research recorded testimonies from genocide survivors. There are various options for displaying this project. One approach is to utilize mediums such as podcasts or short films, following the format of platforms like *The Moth Radio Hour*, where true stories are shared live on stage without scripts, notes, or props. Another option is to create written publications, possibly using the school newspaper if available, or partnering with a local newspaper or magazine willing to showcase this initiative. Regardless of the chosen medium, the project aims to foster understanding and empathy among a wider audience.

PROJECT **Storytellers for** **Humanity**

PROJECT **Validation** **Through** **Volunteering**

Students will collaborate with their school's administration to establish a volunteering program focused on recognizing and affirming the worth and dignity of others. The initial step involves brainstorming the various needs that can be addressed through such a program. Student-participants can then engage volunteers in activities aimed at directly supporting vulnerable or marginalized individuals. Examples of potential outcomes include organizing community events, developing mentorship programs, or providing resources and assistance to those in need. While some schools may already have existing programs in place, students can identify areas that are currently not addressed, such as organizing food drives or events for specific causes or addressing seasonal projects (ex. helping the elderly with yardwork). By actively engaging in acts of service and support, students contribute to a more inclusive and validating school environment.

Project-Based Learning

This project offers the flexibility to be implemented within the school or expanded to encompass the wider community. Students can organize community art projects or exhibitions that celebrate and showcase the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals. Whether working individually or in teams, students can collaborate with local community art groups to invite artists from diverse backgrounds to create artworks that challenge stereotypes, foster empathy, and validate the rich tapestry of human experiences. The primary objective of this project is to initiate meaningful conversations, promote understanding, and emphasize the significance of every individual's story. To achieve this, students can curate and display the artwork within the school premises or collaborate with the town's public library. Additionally, they can work with local authorities to create a walking tour utilizing public spaces, where the artwork becomes an integral part of the community's landscape. Another option is to partner with local businesses willing to showcase the artwork within their locations, thereby magnifying its reach and impact.

PROJECT Validation Through Artistic Expression

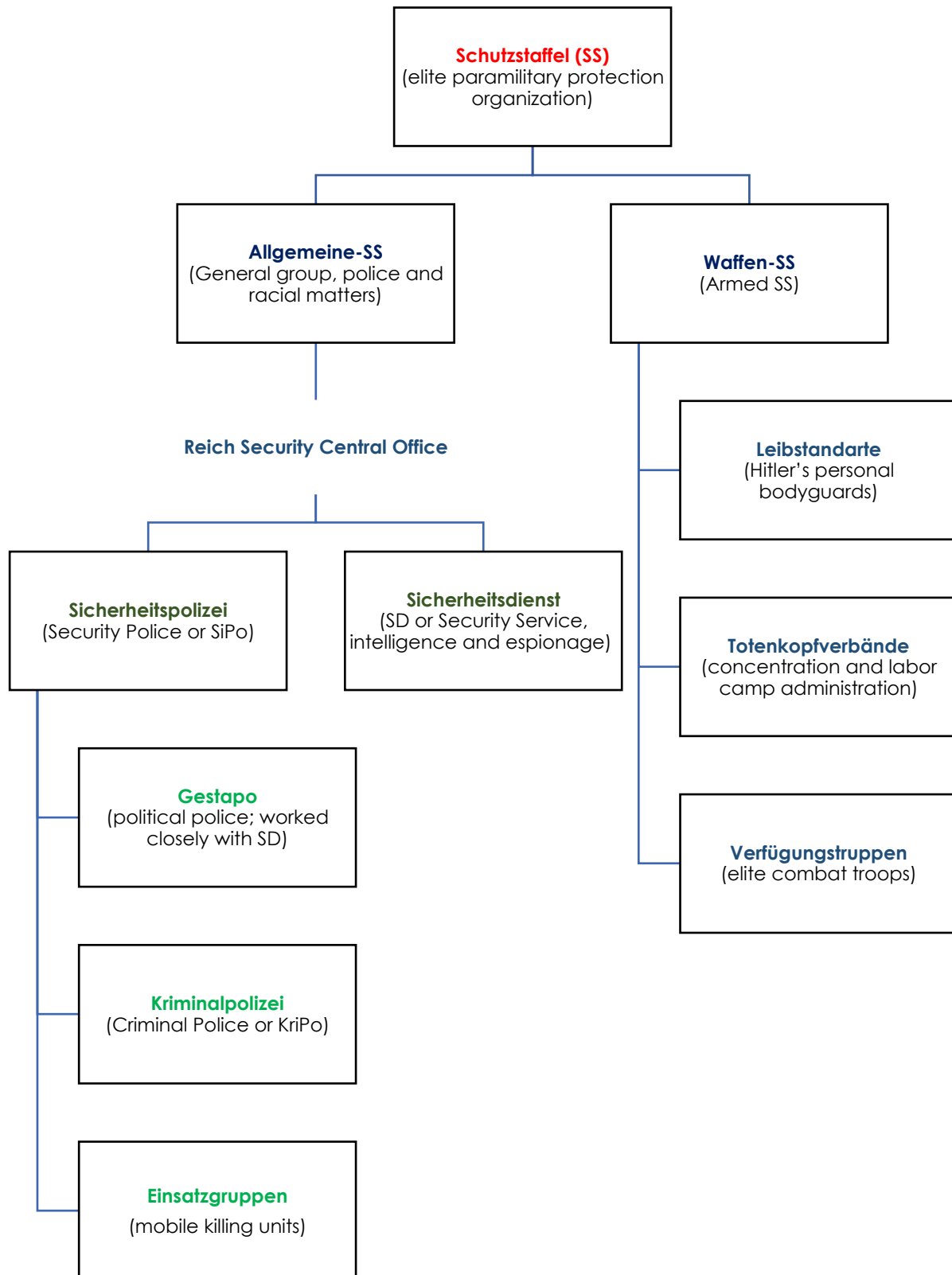
PROJECT Breaking Barriers

Students will work together to launch a school or community initiative where people can write letters in which they will share stories about something that happened during their elementary or high school years that made them feel vulnerable. For many students, feeling vulnerable can be lonely especially if no one appears to be going through the same thing. The written letters will be collected, compiled, and shared as part of an exhibit, serving as a poignant reminder that vulnerability is a universal human experience. By sharing these personal stories, the initiative aims to cultivate empathy, foster connection, and promote understanding within the community. Students can decide how they want to present these letters and can use any method acceptable to the teacher. It is crucial for teachers to review and vet the letters to ensure appropriateness, given the anonymous nature of the initiative. Once the exhibit is organized, students can facilitate small group discussions to explore and reflect upon how these personal narratives foster a profound sense of empathy among individuals. These discussions provide an opportunity for students to delve deeper into the shared human experiences highlighted in the letters, deepening their understanding of others and nurturing a more compassionate and inclusive community.

Students will work together to create a campaign that inspires and promotes acts of kindness and mutual support among individuals. This project encompasses various initiatives, including organizing community service events, fostering a culture of volunteerism, and spreading positivity through social media platforms. Additionally, students can develop a program that encourages individuals to write and send uplifting letters or messages to those in need, such as hospital patients, elderly residents in care homes, or individuals facing challenges. The goal of this project is to bring comfort and hope to individuals who may be experiencing feelings of isolation or discouragement. Another possibility is to organize a cultural event representing different cultures in the school or town community. By engaging in acts of kindness and extending support, students aim to make a positive impact on the well-being and sense of belonging within their community. Through their collective efforts, they seek to foster a culture of compassion, empathy, and unity.

PROJECT Hope in Action Initiative

Appendix: Hierarchy of Police Agencies Under SS



Glossary

The websites of USHMM, Yad Vashem, and Echoes & Reflections feature glossary sections that can be accessed through the provided links. Additionally, the glossary below was created using the information provided on USHMM and Yad Vashem websites.

[USHMM Glossary](#)

[Yad Vashem Glossary](#)

[Echoes & Reflections
Glossary](#)

1933 Law for the Protection of Hereditary Health	Enacted during the Nazi regime, this law required the forced sterilization of men and women with physical and mental disabilities.
25-point program	Adopted in early 1920s, this Nazi Party platform sought to create a blueprint for a creation of the Nazi state. It contained nationalistic and antisemitic elements and used as propaganda to attract more people to the Nazi Party.
Adolf Hitler	Dictator of Germany from 1933 – 1945; leader of the Nazi Party since the early 1920s who espoused strong antisemitic beliefs that became one of the elements of the Holocaust.
Aktion T4	Codename for the Nazi euthanasia program which involved murder of people with physical and mental disabilities.
Anne Frank Foundation	A non-profit foundation established by Otto Frank in Amsterdam to promote the message of Anne Frank's diary. This organization also manages the Anne Frank House.
Anne Frank-Fonds	Non-profit foundation based in Switzerland that manages the copyrights from the diary, and stage and film adaptations.
antisemitism	Hostility and prejudice against Jewish people.
Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution	Provision in the Weimar Constitution allowing the President to declare a state of emergency in Germany during times of national danger to rule as a dictator. This section played a large role in Hitler's ascension to power.
Aryan race	While the term "Aryan," has origins predating Nazi Germany, the Nazi regime used it to describe a superior race that fit its ideology.
Auschwitz	The largest of the Nazi concentration camps and killing centers in Poland. Over 1.1 million people were murdered in Auschwitz.
authoritarian government	System of government characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of a single leader or a small elite group of people, lack of political and civil freedoms, and no established mechanism for the transfer of power.
Babi Yar	The site of one of the largest mass shootings of Jews in Kyiv (Kiev), Ukraine, which took place on September 29–30, 1941; also referred to as Babyn Yar.
Beer Hall Putsch	A military coup on November 8, 1923, in which Hitler and his followers attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic. The coup failed and Hitler was arrested and charged with treason. He was convicted and sentenced to prison.

Glossary

Benito Mussolini	Italian Prime Minister and the founder of the Italian fascist movement. He was an important ally of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany.
Brown Shirts SA	The Nazi Party militia that helped Hitler rise to power. Also referred to as Storm Troopers or Sturmabteilung.
camp system	Nazi system that consisted of labor camps, transit camps, prisoner of war camps, and extermination camps. Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its allies established over 44,000 camps and other imprisonment sites.
classification system	The Nazis uses color-coded symbols to designate camp prisoners for easy identification. The symbols were displayed on badges sewn onto uniforms and they represented alleged criminals, political prisoners, "asocials," Jews, Roma, homosexual men and Jehovah's Witnesses.
cult of personality	A devotion to a charismatic leader who embodies the character traits of an ideal leader.
Dachau	Established in March 1933, Dachau was the first concentration camp that later became a model for other camps. When it was initially open, Dachau imprisoned political opponents of the Nazi regime, and later incarcerated Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma and homosexual men. Jews were not initially imprisoned at Dachau, but their number increased after Kristallnacht in November 1938.
Dawes Plan	Named after its principal negotiator Charles G. Dawes in 1923, this plan reduced Germany's annual reparation payments until its economy approved.
Einsatzgruppen	Mobile SS killing units responsible for the murder of Jews in mass shooting operations in Nazi occupied Europe.
Enabling Act	Enacted on March 23, 1933, this Act allowed Hitler to enact laws without the consent of the President or Germany's Parliament.
eugenics	The belief or practice of improving one's genetic quality through selective breeding. The Nazis used this movement to promote their ideology of racial hygiene, which provided the basis for the Nazis' sterilization practices among certain populations.
euthanasia	Systematic killing of the people the Nazis deemed undesirable due to alleged genetic disease. The Nazis used lethal injections or gassing facilities or installations to murder selected patients.
Evian Conference	A meeting held in 1938 in Evian-les-Bains, France, where representatives from various countries discussed the growing refugee crisis caused by the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany.
fascism	A far-right political ideology characterized by dictatorial power, strong nationalism, suppression of dissent, and a centralized autocratic government.
Fourteen Points	A proposal outlined by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in 1918 addressing territorial and political settlements, self-determination of ethnic populations in Europe, and how to prevent another world war.
Freikorps	Volunteer group of armed former World War I German soldiers who helped suppress political riots in Weimar Germany. They often acted with brutality and violence.

Glossary

genocide	Systematic extermination of a specific ethnic, racial, religious, or national group with the intent to destroy them entirely or in part. For more details, please see the United Nations definition of genocide.
Gestapo	The secret state police in Nazi Germany that targeted political dissidents, Jews and other groups that challenged the Nazi regime.
ghettos	Segregated areas in Nazi-occupied cities where Jewish populations were forcibly confined under horrible conditions. Ghettos were meant to be temporary holding areas and their residents were often transported by trains to the killing centers in Eastern or Central Europe.
Hans and Sophie Scholl	Hans and Sophie Scholl were German siblings who became prominent members of the White Rose resistance movement during World War II. They courageously distributed anti-Nazi leaflets and spoke out against Hitler's regime, ultimately sacrificing their lives for their beliefs.
Heinrich Himmler	Head of the SS who played a crucial role in organizing and carrying out the systematic genocide of millions of people, particularly targeting Jews.
Reinhard Heydrich	A high-ranking Nazi official who implemented Nazi Germany's genocidal policies. He was one of the main organizers of the Wannsee Conference, where plans for the extermination of European Jews were discussed.
Holocaust	The systematic persecution and genocide of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime during World War II.
Hugo Preuss	A German Jewish politician who played a major role in drafting the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which established the democratic framework for the Weimar Republic in Germany.
International Tracing Service	An organization that provided information related to the fates and whereabouts of victims of Nazi persecution and forced labor during World War II.
Jehovah's Witnesses	Religious group known for their distinctive beliefs and practices, including the refusal to participate in military service, salute flags, or engage in political activities, based on their interpretation of biblical principles. They were heavily targeted by the Nazis.
Jewish Council (Judenräte or Judenraete)	Established in ghettos during World War II, these councils contained appointed Jewish leaders who were forced to implement Nazi orders and manage daily affairs within the ghettos.
Josef Mengele	A Nazi physician known for his inhumane medical experiments on prisoners, particularly at Auschwitz concentration camp.
Joseph Goebbels	A prominent Nazi politician and propagandist who played a key role in spreading Nazi ideology and manipulating public opinion.
"Jew Count" or Judenstatistik	A Jewish census conducted by the Prussian War Ministry in 1916 as a response to antisemitic accusations that Jews were evading frontline military service. The military leadership conducted a census to determine how many Jewish soldiers were serving in the front lines compared to those serving in non-combat support roles.

Glossary

<p>killing centers</p>	<p>Extermination camps established with the sole purpose of systematically exterminating millions of people, primarily Jews. These centers used gas chambers and other methods to carry out mass murder on an industrial scale.</p>
<p>Kindertransport (Children's Transport)</p>	<p>A rescue mission that took place during the late 1930s and early 1940s, which transported nearly 10,000 predominantly Jewish children from Nazi-occupied territories to safety in the United Kingdom.</p>
<p>Mein Kampf</p>	<p>A book written by Adolf Hitler during his imprisonment in the 1920s, outlining his political ideology and plans for Germany. It also promoted antisemitism and Aryan supremacy.</p>
<p>Nazi-Soviet Pact</p>	<p>The non-aggression agreement signed in 1939 between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany divided Poland into German and Soviet territories; also known as Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.</p>
<p>Nazi Party</p>	<p>The National Socialist German Workers Party that promoted extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and totalitarianism. It became the ruling party in Germany in 1933 and it implemented policies that led to the Holocaust.</p>
<p>nationalism</p>	<p>An ideology that emphasizes the extreme pride of one's nation and promotes the interests of that nation over all other individual or group interests.</p>
<p>Nuremberg Laws</p>	<p>Antisemitic laws enacted by Nazi Germany in 1935, which aimed to strip Jews of their rights and citizenship, segregate them from the rest of society, and implement systematic discrimination and persecution based on racial criteria.</p>
<p>Nuremberg Trials</p>	<p>A series of military trials held to prosecute prominent leaders of Nazi Germany for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed during World War II.</p>
<p>Operation Reinhard</p>	<p>The codename for the secretive Nazi plan to systematically exterminate Jews in German-occupied Poland during World War II. As part of this operation, which was named after Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazis established additional killing centers, including those in Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec.</p>
<p>Paul von Hindenburg</p>	<p>A German military officer and the President of Germany from 1925 to 1934. He appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933.</p>
<p>propaganda</p>	<p>A tool used by the Nazi regime to shape public opinion and manipulate information to promote Nazi ideology.</p>
<p>Reichstag Decree</p>	<p>Enacted by the German government in 1933 as a result of the Reichstag fire suspending civil liberties and restricting freedom of speech and assembly.</p>
<p>rescue</p>	<p>Efforts made by individuals, organizations, and countries to save Jewish people and other targeted groups from persecution, deportation, and extermination during the Holocaust, often at great personal risk.</p>
<p>resistance</p>	<p>Efforts made by Jews and non-Jews to fight against the Nazis. It involved armed and active resistance as well as cultural and spiritual resistance movements.</p>
<p>Roma</p>	<p>European ethnic group whose ancestry can be traced to modern-day India and Pakistan. Romani communities were targeted by the Nazi regime and subjected to the same racial persecution as the Jewish people.</p>

Glossary

schnellbrief	A priority message commonly used by the Nazis to transmit important information or instructions.
Schutzstaffel (SS)	A Nazi organization whose members were initially tasked with acting as Hitler's personal bodyguards but later became a powerful force responsible for the implementation of Nazi policies.
<i>Tarnschriften</i>	Underground or clandestine literature often camouflaged to promote anti-Nazi viewpoints.
transit camps	Temporary holding facilities used during World War II to detain and process Jews and other targeted individuals before transporting them to labor camps or killing centers.
Treaty of Versailles	Signed in 1919, this peace settlement officially ended World War I, but imposed significant restrictions on Germany.
Wannsee Conference	A meeting of senior Nazi officials where plans were discussed for the systematic extermination of European Jews. This conference that took place on January 20, 1942 marked a significant turning point in the implementation of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question."
Warsaw Ghetto	A confined area in Warsaw, Poland, where over 400,000 Jews were forcibly segregated and subjected to extreme living conditions, starvation, and mass deportations during the Holocaust.
Warsaw Uprising of 1943	Armed resistance by the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto that took place in April 1943 after German police moved to deport its residents. The resistance lasted twenty-seven days but the Germans managed to suppress the uprising and deported surviving ghetto residents to concentration camps and killing centers.
Young Plan	A 1929 plan that reduced the amount Germany owed after World War I and extended the payment schedule. The goal was to lessen Germany's economic burden and stabilize international relations.
Zyklon B	A cyanide-based pesticide used by the Nazis during the Holocaust as a lethal gas in extermination camps.

Resources

This Guide was developed using a variety of primary and secondary resources, most of which are already included in the relevant sections of the Guide. The list below features web resources that have been incorporated in the previous section, along with additional websites that can provide valuable assistance to educators in preparing to teach the Holocaust.

Introduction

Echoes & Reflections: [Holocaust Definitions](#)
Federal Bureau of Investigations: [2021 hate crime statistics](#)
Anti-Defamation League: [2022 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#)
Southern Poverty Law Center: [Hate Crime, Explained](#)
USHMM: [Introduction to the Holocaust](#) article
USHMM: [What have we learned about the risk factors and warning signs of genocide?](#) article
USHMM: [Jews in Prewar Germany](#)
USHMM: [Why the Jews: History of Antisemitism](#) video
United Nations: [Genocide background and definition](#)
Yad Vashem: [Jewish Life Before the Holocaust](#)
Yad Vashem: [Glimpses of Jewish Life Before the Holocaust](#)

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 1: The Weimar Republic (1919 – 1933)

The British Library: [Culture in Weimar Germany](#)
Bundestag: [Overview of political party in Weimar Germany](#)
Cornell University: [Weimar Constitution](#) (English Translation)
DocsTeach: [Analyzing Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points](#) Lesson Activity
Encyclopedia Britannica: [Years of Crisis \(1920-23\)](#)
Facing History: [The Brutal Realities of World War I](#)
Facing History: [The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy](#) lesson plans
Harvard Film Archive: [The Cinema in Weimar Germany](#)
HathiTrust: [Full Text of the Treaty of Versailles](#)
International Encyclopedia of the First World War: [Judenzählung \(Jewish Census\)](#)
Jewish Women's Archive: [The Feminist Movement in the Weimar Republic](#)
Museum of Jewish Heritage: [German Patriots: Jewish Germans in World War I](#) article
National Archives: [Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points](#)
The National WWI Museum and Memorial: [The World, Today and Yesterday](#) pamphlet
PBS: [Economic hardships in Weimar Germany](#) essay
US Department of State, Office of the Historian: [Treaty between US and Germany](#)
US Department of State, Office of the Historian: [The Dawes and the Young Plans](#)
USHMM: [The Weimar Republic](#)
USHMM: [Treaty of Versailles](#)
Volksbund, Portal of Remembrance: [German-Jewish Soldiers](#)

Resources

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 2: Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

BBC GCSE Edexcel: [Goebbels' propaganda themes](#)
Echoes & Reflections: [The Nazi Party](#) unit
Facing History: [The Beginning of the Nazi Party](#) reading
Facing History: [Hitler's Rise to Power](#) video
Facing History: [The Rise of the Nazi Party](#) lesson
Facing History: [Discussing Race and Racism in the Classroom](#) unit
The History Place: [A New Beginning \(Nazi objectives\)](#)
PBS: [Nazis in the News, 1933](#)
Smithsonian: [The True Story of the Reichstag Fire and the Nazi Rise to Power](#)
TED Ed: [How did Hitler Rise to Power?](#) video
USHMM: [The Nazi Party](#)
USHMM: [Nazi Party Platform](#)
USHMM: [The Beer Hall Putsch \(Munich Putsch\)](#)
USHMM: [Heinrich Himmler](#)
USHMM: [Joseph Goebbels](#)
USHMM: [Reichstag Fire](#)
USHMM: [Article 48](#) (of the Weimar Constitution)
USHMM: [The Enabling Act](#)
USHMM: [Law for the Imposition and Implementation of the Death Penalty](#)
USHMM: [Book Burning](#)
USHMM: [Boycott of Jewish Businesses](#)
USHMM: [German Police and the Nazi Regime](#)
USHMM: [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#) film
USHMM: [Nazi Racism, an Overview](#)
USHMM: [Nazi Racism](#) lesson plan
Warfare History: [Adolf Hitler's Time in Landsberg Prison](#)
Yad Vashem: [The Rise of Nazism to Power](#) video
Yad Vashem: [Racism](#)

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 3: Nazi Leadership and the Holocaust

Claims Conference: [#ItStartedWithWords](#) Survivors Testimony
Echoes & Reflections: [Antisemitism](#) lesson unit
Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh: [Identification Badges in the Holocaust](#) handout
Museum of Tolerance: [Children of the Holocaust](#)
USHMM: [Who Were the Victims?](#)
USHMM: [Nazi Racial Ideology](#)
USHMM: [Mosaic of Nazi Victims](#)
USHMM: [Persecution of Roma in Prewar Nazi Germany](#)
USHMM: [Genocide of European Roma, 1939-1945](#)
USHMM: [Poles, Victims of the Nazi Era](#)
USHMM: [Nazi Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses](#)
USHMM: [Gay Men Under the Nazi Regime](#)
USHMM: [Nazi Concentration Camp Series](#)
USHMM: [Jewish Badge During the Nazi Era](#)

Resources

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 3: Nazi Leadership and the Holocaust

- USHMM: [Nuremberg Race Laws](#)
- USHMM: [Holocaust Timeline Activity](#)
- University of London: [Early Nazi Camps primary sources](#)
- Yad Vashem: [Being a German Jew in the 1930s](#) lesson plan

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

- Calvin University: [Nazi Propaganda Posters](#)
- CBS 60 Minutes: [Survivors of Mengele's Twin Experiments](#)
- Echoes & Reflections: [Nazi Antisemitic Ideology and Propaganda](#) lesson
- Echoes & Reflections: [The Kristallnacht Pogrom](#) lesson plan (scroll to the bottom)
- Echoes & Reflections: [The Ghettos](#) lesson plans
- Echoes & Reflections: [Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust](#) video
- Echoes & Reflections: [Armed Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps](#) student handout
- Echoes & Reflections: [Cultural and Spiritual Resistance](#) student handout
- Facing History: [Visual Essay on Effects of Propaganda](#)
- Facing History: [Kristallnacht](#) lessons and activities
- Facing History: [World Responses to Kristallnacht](#) reading
- Facing History: ["Unworthy to Live" – Nazis' medical killing program](#)
- Facing History: [Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement](#)
- Holocaust Explained: [Survivor experience in Westerbork](#)
- Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation: [Jewish Partisans](#)
- Jewish Virtual Library: [Westerbork Transit Camp](#)
- Jewish Virtual Library: [Drancy Transit Camp](#)
- Jewish Virtual Library: [Auschwitz/Birkenau Nazi Medical Experimentation](#)
- Jewish Women's Archive: [Kashariyot \(Couriers\) in the Jewish Resistance](#)
- Life Magazine: [Color Photos from Nazi-Occupied Poland, 1939-1940](#)
- Museum of Jewish Heritage: [The Forgotten Life of Herschel Grynszpan](#) article
- Museum of Jewish Heritage: [Jewish Life in the Ghettos](#) lesson plan (you will need a free account to access this lesson)
- The National Archives (UK): [Kindertransport](#) primary documents
- National Library of Medicine: [U.S. Scientists' Role in the Eugenics Movement \(1907–1939\): A Contemporary Biologist's Perspective](#)
- PBS: [Interactive Voyage of the MS St. Louis](#)
- TubiTV (Online Streaming Platform): [A Film Unfinished](#) (full film)
- USC Shoah Foundation: [Rescue: Preserving Humanity During the Holocaust](#)
- USC Shoah Foundation: [The Journey into Majdanek Death Camp](#) video
- USHMM: [Nazi Propaganda Historical Film Footage](#)
- USHMM: [Public Humiliation](#)
- USHMM: [Some Were Neighbors: Choice, Human Behavior, and the Holocaust](#)
- USHMM: [Some Were Neighbors](#) Teacher Guide
- USHMM: [Kristallnacht](#)
- USHMM: [German Jewish Refugees, 1933-39](#)
- USHMM: [Documents required to emigrate from Germany](#)
- USHMM: [Emigration and the Evian Conference](#)

Resources

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 4: The Nazi Plan for Jews – Persecution, Segregation, Annihilation

- USHMM: [International Response to Jewish Refugees](#)
- USHMM: [Documents Required to Obtain a Visa](#)
- USHMM: [Kindertransport, 1938-40](#)
- USHMM: [Voyage of the St. Louis](#)
- USHMM: [Otto Frank's Attempt to Emigrate](#)
- USHMM: [Invasion of Poland, 1939](#)
- USHMM: [Jewish Testimonies After the German Invasion of Poland](#)
- USHMM: [Ghettos Series](#)
- USHMM: [Westerbork](#)
- USHMM: [Jewish Resistance](#)
- USHMM: [Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos](#)
- USHMM: [Rescue of Jews](#)
- USHMM: [Jewish Aid and Rescue](#)
- USHMM: [Children During the Holocaust Series](#)
- USHMM: [Deadly Medicine in Nazi Germany series](#)
- USHMM: [Euthanasia Program and Aktion T4](#)
- USHMM: [The Power of Nazi Propaganda, Artifacts](#)
- USHMM: [Einsatzgruppen](#)
- USHMM: [Mass Shootings at Babyn Yar](#)
- USHMM: [Killing Centers](#) series
- USHMM: [Operation Reinhard](#)
- USHMM: [Deportations to Killing Centers](#)
- USHMM: [Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution](#)
- USHMM: [Ruth Moser Borsos describes the process of selection for Auschwitz deportation](#)
- USHMM: [Deportations survivor testimonies](#)
- USHMM: [Concentration Camps, 1942-45](#)
- USHMM: [Auschwitz](#)
- USHMM: [Auschwitz ID/Oral History](#)
- USHMM: [Nazi Medical Experiments](#)
- USHMM: [Josef Mengele](#)
- The Wiener Library: [Testimonies from Kristallnacht](#)
- Yad Vashem: [The November Pogrom](#)
- Yad Vashem: [1938 – “The Fateful Year”](#) Kristallnacht documents
- Yad Vashem: [The Conquest of Poland and the Beginnings of Jewish Persecution](#)
- Yad Vashem: [Polish Ghettos](#)
- Yad Vashem: [Voices of the Inferno, Warsaw Ghetto Experience](#)
- Yad Vashem: [“What We Value” Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust](#)
- Yad Vashem: [Chelmno](#)
- Yad Vashem: [Deportation to the Death Camps](#)
- Yad Vashem: [The Wannsee Conference](#)
- Yad Vashem: [The Development of the Final Solution](#) video lecture
- Yad Vashem: [Protocol of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942](#)
- YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: [The Otto Frank File](#)

Resources

Part I: Educator's Guide to Holocaust Resources

Section 5: End of the War

Echoes & Reflections: [Video Toolbox](#)

Harvard Law School Library: [Nuremberg Trials Project](#)

The Holocaust Explained: [Survivors and Displaced Persons](#)

The Holocaust Explained: [International Tracing Service](#)

The National WWII Museum: [The Liberation of Majdanek](#)

The National WWII Museum: ["You Couldn't Grasp It All": American Forces Enter Buchenwald](#)

The National WWII Museum: [The Nuremberg Trials](#)

Smithsonian: [What Happened After the Liberation of Auschwitz](#)

USC Shoah Foundation: [Stories of Liberation](#)

USHMM: [Liberation of Nazi Camps](#)

USHMM: [The Aftermath of the Holocaust: Effects on Survivors](#)

USHMM: [Nuremberg Trials](#)

USHMM: [International Tracing Service Digital Archive](#)

USHMM: [How Can I Learn What Happened to Individuals During the Holocaust?](#)

Yad Vashem: [Liberation and Survival](#) lesson plan

Yad Vashem: [Liberation and the Return to Life](#)

Yad Vashem: [The Death March to Volary](#)

Part II: Educator's Guide to Tree of Hope

Anne Frank Foundation: [Evidence of authenticity of the Diary](#)

New York Times: [Review of the Diary of Anne Frank Play, 1955](#)

[Common Core State Standards](#)

[Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Frameworks](#)

USC Shoah Foundation: [Eva Schloss](#)

USHMM: [Teaching Materials Using Books and Literature](#)

USHMM: [Exploring Holocaust Era Diaries](#)

Additional Information

[Echoes & Reflections Glossary](#)

[USHMM Glossary](#)

[Yad Vashem Glossary](#)

[APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)

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Given the alarming rise in hate crimes, including acts of antisemitism, it is extremely important to prioritize Holocaust education in middle and high schools. However, educators face significant challenges in teaching about the Holocaust. The vast amount of information available on the topic can be overwhelming, leaving teachers uncertain about where to begin. Moreover, many history and ELA teachers in the United States are tasked with teaching this complex subject without formal training, which makes it difficult to address such sensitive and challenging themes effectively. Lastly, the time constraints teachers face make it challenging to thoroughly research and develop meaningful and engaging lessons. As an experienced educator, I have often contemplated the issues mentioned above and understood the struggle firsthand. I wished there was a comprehensive resource that would not only provide guidance on how to teach the Holocaust effectively and where to start, but also grant access to all the necessary materials in one place.

This project did not begin with the plan to create the ultimate guide to teaching the Holocaust. It began as a request from Cara Wilson-Granat, author of *Tree of Hope*, a memoir about her friendship with Otto Frank, to have a teacher's guide for her book. Cara's story provided a unique window into the life of a very famous Holocaust survivor who devoted his life to educate the youth about the discrimination and the dangers of intolerance. In reading *Tree of Hope*, I recognized an opportunity to create a valuable resource that would not only honor Otto's legacy and inspire action but also serve as a practical tool for time-constrained educators seeking comprehensive materials.

I am deeply grateful to Cara for entrusting me to convey Otto's remarkable legacy through this resource. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Father John Neiman who generously shared Otto's letters and invaluable photographs to be included in this Guide. I extend my eternal gratitude to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research in Belmont, Massachusetts and its incredible team for granting me access to their library and necessary research materials.

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