

Teaching the Holocaust

A 5-Part Sequential Module for Grades 6–12

INTRODUCTION

This five-lesson module guides students through a sequential, humanizing approach to Holocaust education beginning with who Jewish people were before the Holocaust and ending with the human faces at its center. Rather than leading with atrocity, the module builds historical context, empathy, and moral literacy across five interconnected lessons.

ConnectED's approach centers Jewish identity before persecution, examines the mechanisms of genocide with clarity and rigor, and invites students to consider their own responsibility as inheritors of this history.

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GRADE LEVEL	LESSONS	SUGGESTED TIMING	SUBJECT(S)
6-12	5 Lessons	5-7 class periods	History, ELA, Advisory

Lesson #1	Lesson #2	Lesson #3	Lesson #4	Lesson #5
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST Jewish Life Before the Holocaust	 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST What is Kristallnacht?	 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST What is the Holocaust?	 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST How Did the World Respond to the Holocaust?	 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST Faces of the Holocaust: The Victim

MODULE BIG IDEAS

Identity Before History

Jewish life in Europe was rich, diverse, and deeply rooted; understanding who Jewish people were before the Holocaust is essential to understanding what was destroyed.

Escalation and Complicity

The Holocaust did not happen overnight. It unfolded through deliberate stages, enabled by bystanders, collaborators, closed borders, and the weaponization of law.

Humanity at the Center

Behind every statistic is a person. The Holocaust must be studied through individual stories of victims, perpetrators, upstanders, and bystanders.

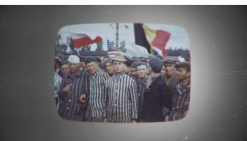
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

EQ1: What was Jewish life like in Europe before the Holocaust, and why does that foundation matter for how we study what followed?

EQ2: How did the Holocaust escalate from discrimination to genocide and what role did ordinary people, institutions, and governments play in making each step possible?

EQ3: What is our responsibility when we study the Holocaust today as students, as citizens, and as human beings who inherit this history?

LESSON RESOURCES & SUMMARIES

Resource	Lesson and Rationale
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST Jewish Life Before the Holocaust	Lesson #1: Jewish Life Before the Holocaust Educator's Guide Introduces students to the diversity and vibrancy of pre-war Jewish life across Europe— culture, religious practice, and community. Establishes Jewish identity as a foundation before persecution.
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST What is Kristallnacht?	Lesson #2: What is Kristallnacht? Educator's Guide Examines the November 1938 pogrom as a turning point in Nazi persecution from legal discrimination to state-sanctioned violence. Explores bystander behavior and the role of ordinary citizens.
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST What is the Holocaust?	Lesson #3: What is the Holocaust? Educator's Guide Provides comprehensive context on the stages of the Holocaust from discriminatory legislation through the Final Solution. Addresses collaboration, resistances, and the international response.
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST How Did the World Respond to the Holocaust?	Lesson #4: How Did the World Respond to the Holocaust? Educator's Guide Uses media literacy as a lens to examine how the press, governments, and the public responded, or failed to respond, to news of Nazi atrocities. Real newspaper headlines serve as primary sources.
 ANTISEMITISM & THE HOLOCAUST Faces of the Holocaust: The Victim	Lesson #5: Faces of the Holocaust Educator's Guide Humanizes the Holocaust through the stories of perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and upstanders, drawing on testimony and individual narratives to illuminate the spectrum of human behavior and moral choice.

SUMMATIVE MODULE ACTIVITY:

The summative activities for this module asks students to synthesize learning across all five lessons by connecting historical evidence, individual stories, and their own sense of responsibility.

Option 1: The Arc of Escalation

Using evidence from at least three of the five lessons, write a 2–3 page analytical essay tracing how the Holocaust escalated from discrimination to genocide. Identify at least two critical turning points, explain what made each step possible, and reflect on what, if anything, could have interrupted the progression.

Option 2: Portrait of a Choice

Select one individual from the module: a perpetrator, victim, upstander, or bystander, and write a 2–3 page profile exploring the choices they made, or failed to make. What context shaped their decisions? What was the outcome? What does their story reveal about individual responsibility during the Holocaust?

Option 3: The World's Response

Choose one moment in the module where a different response by the press, a government, or an aid organization could have changed outcomes for European Jews. Using evidence from the module, present a 2–3 page analysis or 5–7 minute presentation arguing what was known at the time, what failed, and what could have been done differently.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSMENT:

Center individual stories: Summative tasks should ask students to engage with at least one specific person's history, not only broad historical events.

Connect the past to the present: Assessments should invite students to reflect on their own responsibility as inheritors of this history.

Avoid retraumatization: Tasks should be designed so students can demonstrate understanding without reproducing graphic or upsetting content.

Allow for multiple entry points: Consider offering creative choices as well as both written and discussion-based options to serve diverse learners.

DIFFERENTIATION, NOTES & SUBJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

SCAFFOLDING

- Use provided glossary of key terms before each lesson
- Pre-teach using the historical timeline using a visual anchor: students benefit from seeing the 1933-1945 arc before diving into individual lessons
- Use video breakdown from the Educator Guides for students who need additional processing time

EXTENSION

- Assign primary source documents alongside each lesson: newspapers, articles, diary entries, government memos
- Ask students to track an individual's or community's story across multiple lessons
- Encourage independent research into local or regional connections to Holocaust history
- Provide independent reading resources for students looking to bolster academic understanding

SUBJECT AND CROSS-CURRICULAR RECOMMENDATIONS

- **History/Social Studies:** Sequence within a 20th-century history or modern world unit. Lessons 2-4 pair well with units on totalitarianism, propaganda, and WWII.
- **English Language Arts:** Lessons 1 and 5 are natural fits– pre-war Jewish life connects to memoir and identity, and Faces of the Holocaust centers on narrative and testimony. Consider pairing resources sequentially with Holocaust texts such as *Night*, *Maus*, or *Number the Stars*.
- **Media Literacy/Journalism:** Lesson 4 easily connects to previous units on media literacy or journalism.
- **Advisory:** The module's essential questions are well-suited to advisory or courses focused on civic responsibility and moral decision-making.
- **Art:** Lesson 5 can be extended with visual testimony projects, memorial design, or response art. Consider pairing with resources from Yad Vashem's art collection.

Jewish Life Before the Holocaust

Lesson Plan

Timing: 60 minutes

Grade Level: 6–12

Subject(s)

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Materials

→ [ConnectED Video](#)

→ [Observation Chart](#)

→ Exit ticket slips

Rationale/teacher notes

This resource introduces students to the diversity of Jewish communities that existed across Europe before the Holocaust. It is designed to serve as essential context before:

- Reading Holocaust literature or memoir
- Beginning a unit on Jewish history, the Holocaust, or prejudice and discrimination
- Analyzing primary sources related to antisemitism or WWII

Lesson goals

1. Students will be able explain how geography and community size shaped the development of Jewish identity and daily life in Vienna, Salonika, and Buczacz.
2. Students will be able to analyze how Jewish communities balanced maintaining distinct religious and cultural traditions while adapting to local languages, economies, education systems, and political contexts.
3. Students will be able to describe the diversity within and across European Jewish communities and recognize that Jewish communities created vibrant cultural, intellectual, and social life despite facing antisemitism and discrimination.

Essential questions

1. How does geography and location shape the development and experiences of its residents?
2. How did Jewish communities maintain religious and cultural identity while adapting to local languages, customs, and opportunities?
3. What role did education, religion, and social organizations play in sustaining Jewish life across generations?

Big ideas

1. **Identity:** Across history, Jewish communities adapted to their environments and created diverse cultures, all while staying connected through shared traditions and values.
2. **Diversity Within Unity:** Jewish life in Europe was extraordinarily diverse, from different languages, customs, economic roles, political views, and levels of religious observance, yet all communities were connected by shared traditions, holidays, and historical memory.
3. **Resilience and Antisemitism:** Despite the persistent threat of discrimination and antisemitism, Jewish life thrived and Jewish communities created vibrant intellectual and cultural life.

Learning plan

(60 minutes)

WARM UP

Previewing Geography Activity

(3-5 min)

Setup	Think-Pair-Share
Display the 1933 Europe map . Ask students to individually identify 3-5 countries they estimate had thriving Jewish communities before the Holocaust.	Students discuss their choices with a partner, then choose 1-2 countries they have in common to share with the class.

MINI-LESSON

Discuss and Reflect

(5 min)

Reveal the [1933 Europe map with Jewish populations](#). Facilitate group discussion:

- What are two places that surprised you either by the small or large numbers?
- How does this map change or challenge your understanding of Jewish life in Europe?
- Which countries had the largest Jewish populations? Why might this be significant for understanding the Holocaust's impact?

ACTIVITY

Video Jigsaw and Presentation

(35 min)

Part 1

Watch [videos](#)

(10–15 minutes)

Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group one community: Vienna (0:00-5:43), Salonika (5:44-12:08), or Buczacz (12:09-18:22).

Each group watches their assigned video (6-8 minutes) and takes notes on the [observation chart handout](#). Students should focus on:

- Population/demographics
- Economic roles
- Religious diversity
- Daily life and culture
- Antisemitism experienced
- Destruction during the Holocaust

Part 2

Group Processing

(5–10 minutes)

Each group should briefly discuss their findings and prepare to present:

- A summary of your community in 2-3 sentences
 - What were the 3 most important things you learned about the community?
 - What made this community unique?
 - Daily life and culture
 - Antisemitism experienced
 - Destruction during the Holocaust
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Part 3

Presentation

(10 minutes)

Each group takes 2-3 minutes to present about their assigned community to the class. *(For larger classes using home groups: each expert teaches their community to their small group for 3 minutes.)*

Reflection/assessment

(15–20 minutes)

Reflection Questions

(10 minutes)

Bring students back for full-class comparative discussion:

- What commonalities existed across all three communities despite their very different settings?
- How did geography and community size shape Jewish life in each city? Which community do you think felt most “at home” or “safe”?
- How did the diversity of religious observances shape each community’s culture and debates about Jewish life?
- Why is understanding the diversity of Jewish life across Europe essential before learning about what was lost during the Holocaust?

ASSESSMENT

Quickwrite

(3–5 minutes)

Students write continuously for 3-5 minutes responding to any of the following prompts:

- What surprised you most about the diversity of Jewish life in Europe?
- Which community would you want to learn more about? Why?
- What is 1 other city on the map we looked at in the beginning of class that you'd want to learn more about? How might it be different from the cities we studied today?

Extension Activities

From the [Educator's Guide](#): These activities can be used as extensions for students who finish early, for homework, or for deeper exploration in subsequent lessons.

What is Kristallnacht?

Lesson Plan

Timing: 60 minutes

Grade Level: 6–12

Subject(s)

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Civics

Materials

→ [ConnectED Video](#)

→ [Centropa Readings](#)

→ [Observation Chart](#)

Rationale/teacher notes

This lesson examines Kristallnacht as a pivotal turning point in the Holocaust: the moment Nazi persecution escalated from legal discrimination to open, state-directed violence. It is designed to support:

- Units on WWII, the Holocaust, genocide studies, or human rights
- Civic education and discussions of state power and minority rights
- Studying escalation, propaganda, and the psychology of bystanders
- Analyzing primary sources such as survivor testimony and Nazi directives

Lesson goals

1. Students will examine the escalation of Nazi persecution that made Kristallnacht possible.
2. Students will analyze the roles of perpetrators, bystanders, and victims during Kristallnacht and consider what those roles reveal about individual responsibility.
3. Students will connect firsthand survivor accounts to the broader historical events of November 9, 1938.

Essential questions

1. How did years of escalating Nazi policy make Kristallnacht possible?
2. How did Kristallnacht mark a turning point in Nazi persecution of European Jews, moving from legal discrimination to open, state-directed violence?
3. What does Kristallnacht reveal about the roles of bystanders, perpetrators, and the responsibilities ordinary people bear when their government targets a minority group?

Big ideas

1. **Escalation of Persecution:** Kristallnacht illustrates how state-sponsored antisemitism escalated gradually, from boycotts and legal exclusion to open violence and mass arrest, each step normalized by the lack of meaningful resistance.
2. **Bystanders and Complicity:** The silence, and in some cases participation, of ordinary Germans who witnessed Kristallnacht raises essential questions about individual responsibility and the dangers of indifference.
3. **The Law as a Weapon:** Kristallnacht demonstrates how the law can become a tool of persecution rather than protection, impacting the safety of German and European Jewish citizens.

Learning plan

(60 minutes)

WARM UP

Voices from Kristallnacht

(10–12 min)

Setup	Partner Reading and Discussion
Break students into pairs and assign each pair one survivor excerpt from Centropa's "Picturing Kristallnacht" lesson.	Ask partners to read their excerpt aloud to each other and discuss: → What did this person witness or experience? Identify two or three specific details that stand out.

→ What is one question this account raises for you?

Share: Invite 2–3 pairs to briefly share a detail or question with the class before moving on.

MINI-LESSON

Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Victims

(5 min)

Introduce students to the three roles they will be tracking throughout the lesson. Ask students to write the following definitions in the designated space on their [observation chart](#):

- **Perpetrator:** A person or group that actively carries out or directs acts of violence or persecution.
- **Bystander:** A person who witnesses events but does not intervene — either through silence, inaction, or indifference.
- **Victim:** A person or group targeted and harmed by violence or persecution.

Let students know they will be using these definitions actively as they watch the video.

ACTIVITY

Video Viewing & Group Work

(25 min)

Part 1

Video Viewing with [Observation Chart](#)

(15 minutes)

Ask students to keep their observation chart open as they watch and record specific examples of perpetrators, bystanders, and victims from the video.

🛑 **Quick Check (~5:00)** *Pause and ask students to share one example from each column so far. Prompt the class with:*

- Who have we seen giving orders or carrying out violence?

- Who has been watching? What have they done or not done?
- Who has been targeted?

Resume the video and ask students to continue adding to their charts.

Part 2

Key Players Groupwork

(10 minutes)

Place students in small groups and assign each group one of the following key players mentioned in the video: **Herschel Grynszpan, Ernst vom Rath, Joseph Goebbels, or Reinhard Heydrich**. Ask each group to build one slide that captures:

- Who this person is and their connection to Kristallnacht
- Which role they played — perpetrator, bystander, or victim — and why
- One detail from the video that supports their answer

Ask each group to share their slide with the class in 1–2 minutes.

Reflection/assessment

(15-20 minutes)

Whole Class Reflection

(5 minutes)

Bring students back together and acknowledge that the key players activity focused entirely on Nazi perpetrators: the people who planned and carried out the violence. Ask students to return to the survivor excerpt they read at the start of class and consider:

- Where does the person in your excerpt fit within the perpetrator, bystander, and victim framework?
- What does their firsthand account reveal about Kristallnacht that the key players activity could not?

Remind students that Jewish voices and testimony are primary sources that sit at the center of Holocaust history. Use this moment to introduce the written analysis as an opportunity to bring both perspectives together.

ASSESSMENT

Written Analysis

(10 minutes)

Using evidence from the video, their observation chart, and the survivor excerpt from the warm-up, ask students to write a one-page analysis exploring the different roles people played on the night of Kristallnacht. Their analysis should consider:

- Who gave orders and who carried them out? How was responsibility distributed across the Nazi state?
- What choices did ordinary Germans have? What pressures shaped those choices? Does your survivor's account give any indication of how bystanders responded to what they witnessed?
- What does it mean to be a bystander in a moment of state-directed violence? Is there a meaningful difference between active participation and passive witnessing?
- A conclusion that addresses: which voices tend to be centered when we memorialize events like Kristallnacht, and which are pushed to the margins? What is lost when we remember history primarily through the lens of its perpetrators, and what does your survivor excerpt restore?

Extension Activities

From the [Educator's Guide](#): These activities can be used as extensions for students who finish early, for homework, or for deeper exploration in subsequent lessons.

What is the Holocaust?

Lesson Plan

Timing: 60 minutes

Grade Level: 6–12

Subject(s)

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Materials

- [Gallery walk](#)
- [ConnectED Video](#)
- [Viewing Guide](#)
- [Timeline](#)

Rationale/teacher notes

This lesson introduces students to the systematic, state-sponsored genocide of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. It provides essential historical context about how the Holocaust unfolded and how Jewish individuals resisted. This lesson is designed to serve as essential context when:

- Reading Holocaust literature or memoir
- Beginning a unit on WWII, the Holocaust, genocide studies, or human rights
- Analyzing primary sources related to antisemitism or WWII

Lesson goals

1. Students will be able to explain how the Holocaust escalated from discriminatory laws to systematic mass murder, and identify key turning points.
2. Students will be able to analyze the economic, legal, and political barriers that prevented European Jews from escaping, evaluating the role of indifference and collaboration.
3. Students will be able to describe different forms of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, including armed uprising, spiritual and cultural defiance, and daily acts of survival.

Essential questions

1. How did the Holocaust escalate from discriminatory laws to systematic murder in one of Europe's most educated societies?
2. What economic, political, and social barriers prevented European Jews from escaping, and how did collaboration enable the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis?
3. How did Jewish individuals and communities resist the Holocaust, both through armed resistance and acts of spiritual and cultural defiance?

Big ideas

1. **Systematic Escalation:** The Holocaust progressed through deliberate stages—from discriminatory laws (1933), to state-sponsored violence (1938), to ghettoization (1939-41), and finally to systematic murder in Nazi killing centers (1942-1945)
2. **Complicity, Collaboration, and Closed Borders:** The Holocaust required widespread collaboration from governments and individuals across Europe while international indifference and closed borders trapped Jews and made escape nearly impossible.
3. **Resistance and Humanity:** Despite impossible odds, Jewish individuals resisted through armed uprisings, spiritual defiance, preservation of memory, and daily acts of survival—asserting their humanity in the face of systematic annihilation.

Learning plan

(60 minutes)

WARM UP

Activating Prior Knowledge Gallery Walk

(15 min)

Setup	Activity
Create 8 stations around the room using the gallery walk artifacts connected to key events during the Holocaust.	Students should rotate through stations (spending about 1-2 minutes at each section), and answering the questions on a separate piece of paper. After students complete the gallery walk, go over each station as a group and use the teacher notes to explain the importance of each artifact to the class.

MINI-LESSON

Introducing Phases of the Holocaust

(5 min)

Let students know that today you will be focusing on learning about how the Holocaust escalated throughout 1933-1945 in Nazi occupied Europe. Explain to students that they will be focusing on the following three phases as they watch.

- **Phase 1:** Isolation & Discrimination
- **Phase 2:** Persecution and Closed Borders
- **Phase 3:** Systematic Mass Murder

These three phases help students understand that the Holocaust didn't happen all at once—it escalated over a 12 year period through deliberate stages.

ACTIVITY

Watching the Video

(20 min)

Introduce the [viewing guide](#) that students will take notes on as you watch the video as a class. Explain to students that their job is to track the following topics:

- **Laws, policies, and events that made persecution worse**
- **Economic, political, and social barriers to escape**
- **Forms of Jewish resistance (armed, spiritual, cultural)**
- **Collaborators and Perpetrators**
- **Additional victims of Nazi atrocities**

Reflection/assessment

(15–25 minutes)

Timeline Organization

(10 minutes)

Using the [timeline resource](#), students have students work in pairs or small groups to organize important events chronologically and analyze patterns of escalation.

As students work to identify years and organize their timeline, project these three phrases on the board. When students complete their timelines, they should separate it into the following three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Isolation & Discrimination
- **Phase 2:** Persecution and Closed Borders
- **Phase 3:** Systematic Mass Murder

For each phase, students should identify:

- What changed during this period?
- What barriers prevented Jews from escaping Nazi-occupied Europe and surrounding countries?
- What forms of resistance occurred?

ASSESSMENT

Exit Ticket

(5 minutes)

Have students complete the exit ticket, based on their answers and timeline organization:

- Which event marked the biggest turning point? Why?
- What was the most significant barrier to escape?
- What forms of resistance surprised you the most?

Conclude by revealing the three phase date ranges and asking students to share any differentiations in their timelines:

- **Phase 1:** Isolation & Discrimination
- **Phase 2:** Persecution and Closed Borders
- **Phase 3:** Systematic Mass Murder

Extension Activities

From the [Educator's Guide](#): These activities can be used as extensions for students who finish early, for homework, or for deeper exploration in subsequent lessons.

How Did the World Respond to the Holocaust?

Lesson Plan

Timing: 60 minutes

Grade Level: 6–12

Subject(s)

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Media Literacy

Materials

→ [ConnectED Video](#)

→ [KWL Chart](#)

Rationale/teacher notes

This lesson examines how the world outside Nazi-occupied Europe responded to the Holocaust as it was happening. This lesson is designed to support:

- Reading Holocaust literature or memoir
- Units on WWII, the Holocaust, genocide studies, or human rights
- Media literacy and journalism curricula
- Studying the relationship between information, public information and government policy

Lesson goals

1. Students will be able to explain what information was available about the Holocaust as it was happening and analyze why it failed to produce action.
2. Students will be able to identify the roles of the press, governments, and aid organizations in responding to, or failing to respond, to Nazi persecution.
3. Students will be able to evaluate the difference between individual action and governmental responsibility.

Essential questions

1. What did the world know about the Holocaust while it was happening, and when did they know it?
2. Why did newspapers, governments, and the public often fail to act on information about Nazi atrocities? What factors prevented reporting and rescue efforts from being more effective?
3. How do we distinguish between information, understanding, and action in the face of mass atrocity? What turns awareness into moral responsibility?

Big ideas

1. **Responsibility and Complicity:** The world had access to information about Nazi persecution and genocide, yet the gap between knowing and acting demonstrated how societies can witness atrocity without intervening.
2. **Structural Barriers:** Antisemitism, isolationism, bureaucracy, and political calculations created systemic barriers to rescue.
3. **Individual and Organizational Courage:** When governments failed to act, Jewish organizations, aid groups, and courageous individuals worked outside official channels, though their extraordinary efforts could only partially address a statecreated catastrophe with non-state resources.

Learning plan

(60 minutes)

WARM UP

KWL Chart “What Did the World Know?”

(3–5 min)

Setup

Distribute the KWL chart to students.

KWL Chart Activity

Students should individually complete the “K” (know) and “W” (want to know) columns. Project guiding questions on the board or deliver them verbally as students work

- What do you already know about how other countries responded to the Holocaust? Be as specific as you can.
- When do you think the world first learned about Nazi persecution of Jews?
- What do you think newspapers, governments, and ordinary citizens knew while the Holocaust was happening?

Share: Ask a variety of students to share one thing from their K or W column.

MINI-LESSON

Watch the Video

(10 min)

Introduce the video’s focus. Explain to students that today’s lesson won’t just be about what happened inside Nazi-occupied Europe, but how the rest of the world responded, or failed to respond.

As students watch, they should add to their “L” (learned) column, focusing not only on new information, but how the information in the video answers questions they had from the initial activity.

ACTIVITY

Group Processing

(10 min)

Divide students into small groups of 3-4 students each. Each group should spend at least 5 minutes discussing what they learned from the video and what they put in their “L” columns. Each group should prepare to share out to the class:

- 2-3 most important things you learned
- 1-2 questions the video raised, or did not answer from your “W”
- Which section (press, governments, or aid organizations) surprised you most and why

Reflection/assessment

(15–20 minutes)

Whole Class Reflection

(5 minutes)

Return to the essential questions by having students raise their hands for quick polls:

- Do you agree with the following statement: *The world knew more than it acted upon?*
 - Who do you think bears the most responsibility for inaction: the press, governments, or citizens?
 - What's one factor that prevented action that you didn't know about before today? Take 2-3 student responses.
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ASSESSMENT

Independent Exploration: Comparative Study

(10 minutes)

Students will choose one topic to explore in depth and work on for the remainder of class, finishing for homework or during the following class period. The following activities have been scaffolded:

Option 1: Edward R. Murrow, Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Dorothy Thompson

- Compare how three different individuals attempted to alert Americans to Nazi atrocities. Focus on how each individual employed rhetorical devices (ethos, pathos, logos), how effective they were in reaching

their audience, and how their messaging was impacted by external factors.

Option 2: Refugee Ship Comparative Case Study

- Compare the three journeys and how the world responded to the MS St. Louis (1939), SS Quanza (1940), and MS Struma (1942). What factors influenced the success or failure of each journey? What changed (or didn't change) between 1939-1942? What do these case studies tell us about the role of external actors?

Option 3: Comparative Regional Newspaper Analysis

- Using [History Unfolded](#), choose one major event and investigate how different U.S. regions (northeast, west coast, midwest, south) covered the specific event. Consider patterns in placement, language and emphasis as well as what regional variations revealed about American awareness and priorities.

Option 4: A Tale of Two Conferences

- Compare two international conferences that failed to rescue Jews: the Evian Conference in July 1938 and the Bermuda Conference in April 1943. Consider what evidence existed about Nazi persecution at each conference, how action was impacted by political, economic, and social factors, and how the context changed between 1938 and 1943. Examine what could have been done differently by international state actors

Deliverable: Students should choose between a 2-3 page written analysis or a 5-7 minute presentation, presenting their findings and identifying how the comparisons connect to how the world responded to the Holocaust.

Extension Activities

From the [Educator's Guide](#): These activities can be used as extensions for students who finish early, for homework, or for deeper exploration in subsequent lessons.

Faces of the Holocaust

Lesson Plan

Timing: 60 minutes

Grade Level: 6–12

Subject(s)

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Media Literacy

Materials

→ ConnectED Videos:

[Bystander](#)

[Upstander](#)

[Victim](#)

[Perpetrator](#)

→ Exit Ticket Slips

Rationale/teacher notes

This lesson introduces students to the Holocaust through the lens of four interconnected human roles: the perpetrator, the victim, the upstander, and the bystander. Using a jigsaw structure, students explore individual stories that together reveal the full complexity of how genocide happens and how people respond to it. It is designed to serve as essential context before:

- Beginning a unit on the Holocaust or WWII
- Reading Holocaust literature or memoir
- Discussing human behavior during times of injustice
- Exploring survivor testimony and perpetrator accountability
- Analyzing the responsibilities of nations and individuals in humanitarian crises

Lesson goals

1. Students will be able to identify and compare the roles of perpetrators, victims, upstanders, and bystanders in the Holocaust through individual human stories.
2. Students will be able to analyze how individual choices, systemic power, and social context shaped the behavior of people at all levels of society during the Holocaust.
3. Students will be able to explain why understanding the Holocaust through multiple human perspectives is essential to preventing future atrocities.

Essential questions

1. How did individuals, communities, and nations respond to the Holocaust—and what do these responses reveal about human nature, power, and moral responsibility?
2. What motivates people to become perpetrators, victims, bystanders, or upstanders during times of injustice?
3. Why is it essential to study the Holocaust through multiple human perspectives, not just through statistics or a single narrative?

Big ideas

1. **Many Faces, One History:** The Holocaust was shaped by the choices and experiences of perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and upstanders. Understanding all four is essential to understanding how genocide happens—and how it can be prevented.
2. **Ordinary People, Extraordinary Choices:** Perpetrators were not always monsters; upstanders were not always heroes from the start. The Holocaust reveals the full spectrum of human behavior and the weight of individual and collective choice.
3. **The Power of Individual Stories:** Behind every statistic is a person whose story demands to be remembered. Testimony, resilience, complicity, and courage all become more visible—and more instructive—through individual human lives

Learning plan

(60 minutes)

WARM UP

Four Corners Rotation

(15 min)

Setup	Four Corners Rotation
Post four large sheets of chart paper in each corner of the room. Across the top, write each of the four terms: Perpetrator , Victim , Upstander , Bystander with these	Students begin at their assigned corner and spend 2-3 minutes responding to all three prompts on the chart paper. After time is called, each group rotates to the next corner

guiding prompts:

- 1) As a group, define this term in your own words
- 2) Brainstorm historical examples related to this term
- 3) Brainstorm modern day examples.

Divide students into four groups and assign each group a starting corner.

and spends 1-2 minutes reading what the previous group came up with and building on it: adding to the definition, adding new examples, or asking questions (when applicable). Rotate until all groups have reached all four corners. Bring students back together for a 5 minute whole class debrief, highlighting key ideas and examples from each chart.

MINI-LESSON

The Faces of the Holocaust

(5 minutes)

Project [the handout](#) displaying images of the four individuals students will study today. Facilitate a brief whole class discussion:

- Looking at these four individuals, can you tell which role each one played during the Holocaust: perpetrator, victim, upstander, or bystander?
- Do you recognize anyone in the images? What do you know about them?
- What does it tell us that most of these individuals look like ordinary people you might pass on the street?

After discussion, reveal each person and their role with a brief introduction using the second page of the [handout](#). Emphasize that we can't necessarily identify someone's role based on their appearance, age, or gender and today we're diving into each one of their stories.

ACTIVITY

Video Jigsaw and Presentation

(30 min)

Part 1

Watch videos

(10 minutes)

Divide the class into four groups (for larger classes, split the class into two “home” groups and then divide by four). Assign each group one role: [The Perpetrator](#), [The Victim](#), [The Upstander](#), or [The Bystander](#). Each group should watch their assigned video together and take notes, focusing on:

- Who is the central person in this story and what role did they play?
 - What choices did they make, and what motivated those choices?
 - What was the outcome of their actions or inactions?
 - What does their story reveal about responsibility during the Holocaust?
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Part 2

Group Processing

(10 minutes)

Each group should briefly discuss their findings and prepare the following to present to the class or their “home” group:

- Provide a summary of your person’s story in 2-3 sentences
 - What were the 3 most important things you learned?
 - How much responsibility does your individual/role bear for what happened? Directly? Indirectly?
 - What surprised you most about this story?
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Part 3

Presentation

(10 minutes)

Each group takes 2-3 minutes to present about their individual to the class. Encourage students to take notes while others present and let them know that they will use this information on the exit ticket.

Reflection/assessment

(10 minutes)

Whole Class Reflection

(5 minutes)

Bring students back for a full-class comparative discussion::

- Has your thinking shifted since the Four Corners warm-up? Which role do you now think bears the most responsibility for the Holocaust, and why?
 - How were the perpetrator, victim, upstander, and bystander connected to each other? Could any of these stories have happened without the others?
 - What do upstanders like Elsa Holzer tell us about whether ordinary people had a real choice during the Holocaust?
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ASSESSMENT

3-2-1 Exit Ticket

(5 minutes)

Students complete the following independently:

- 3 things you learned today that you didn't know before
- 2 connections you can make across two or more of the four stories
- 1 perspective you want to learn more about and why

For homework, explain to students that they will choose one of the ConnectED video perspectives they did not watch in class and come to class tomorrow prepared to share what they learned and what surprised them.

Extension Activities

From the [Educator's Guide](#): These activities can be used as extensions for students who finish early, for homework, or for deeper exploration in subsequent lessons.