



Educator's Guide

The Perpetrator

Meet Maria Mandl a small town girl lured by the Nazi party's promise of stable, well-paid work and upward mobility, who rose to the highest position a woman could hold as an SS officer in a concentration camp. A classical-music lover since childhood, Maria Mandl wielded art as a method of torture and earned herself the nickname "The Beast." After watching the video, the prompts below can be used to engage students in thought-provoking discussion about what they have learned.

[Link to video](#)

Further Learning

1. Erik Larson, [In the Garden of Beasts](#)
2. Deborah Lipstadt, [The Eichmann Trial](#)
3. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, [Humanity and the Holocaust](#)
4. [The Wave](#)
5. Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, [10 Stages of Genocide Posters](#)
6. Yad Vashem, [Perpetrators of the Holocaust - Consequences at a Distance](#)
7. The Zekelman Holocaust Center, [Trust No Fox](#) (video and resources)

Film Guide

1. What do you think motivated Maria Mandl to join the Nazi Party initially and then act as "The Beast?"
2. Anne Frank wrote in her diary, "It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideas, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in



spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.” After watching the story of Maria Mandl, do you agree with Anne Frank?

3. Why do you think Maria Mandl claimed that she had not committed the crimes and expressed no remorse until her very last moments?
4. In her *Hitler's Furies*, Wendy Lower highlights some important female figures in the Nazi Party to demonstrate that evil was not carried out exclusively by men, but also by women. In fact, over thirteen million women were involved in the Nazi Party. Why is it important to also highlight female perpetrators?

Discussion Questions

1. Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf is sold on [Amazon](#) with over 1,300 reviews. Do you think Nazis' writings should still be distributed and read, or should they be banned?
2. Were people like Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders like Joseph Goebbels and Heinrich Himmler born evil? What about a modern-day person like Nikolas Cruz, the school shooter at Marjorie Stoenman Douglas?
3. At the Nuremberg Trial, [defendant Rudolf Hoss argued](#) “we were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody, and somebody else would have done just as well if I hadn't.” The judges at the Nuremberg Trial rejected the idea that obeying orders was a defense. Do you agree?
4. Israel tried Adolf Eichmann in 1961 for his role in masterminding the Final Solution. [Some argue](#) that Israel did not have the right to try Eichmann for his crimes because the modern State of Israel did not yet exist during the Holocaust, the crimes were committed in another part of the world, and the victims were not Israeli. [Others argue](#) that Israel gave a voice to the Jewish victims and represented them as the Jewish State; if Israel had not tried Eichmann, no other country would have. Did Israel have the right to prosecute and execute a perpetrator of the Holocaust?



5. [Many European countries](#) declared that reference to Nazism or Holocaust denial is illegal, in an attempt to stop a resurrection of Nazi ideology. The United States, however, does not prohibit this type of speech under the protections of the First Amendment. Should the promotion of Nazism should be illegal?

Learning Activities

1. Utilize our [film guide](#) about the Perpetrator video.
2. Hannah Arendt coined the term “banality of evil,” in her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. She argued that most people who commit evil acts are not motivated by an intent to commit evil; instead, they act in the way that has become normalized by society. After defining the term, students should read Ruth Wisse’s [description](#) in Parts II and III of critiques against Arendt’s argument. Students should then participate in a [walking debate](#) and answer the question, “Should Eichmann be called a monster?”
3. Students should read this [article](#) by a grandchild of two Nazis. Write a letter to the author with your thoughts.
4. Present this [timeline](#) of Hitler’s rise to power. Students should individually identify and rank the three most significant turning points in Hitler’s rise to power and write an explanation of their responses.
5. Read [Joseph Goebbels’ last letter](#) to his stepson, Harald Quandt, out loud to the classroom, but substitute “our people” for German and leave out the two phrases which mention Fuhrer. Ask for students’ reactions; many will think that it is a Jewish victim writing to his son. Then, identify the author of the letter and discuss students’ reactions.

Reflection Questions

1. The Hitler youth became the only allowable youth organization in 1936 and membership became mandatory for all German youth in 1939. There were two



age groups: 14 to 18, and 10 to 14. At what age do you think people become responsible for their actions, and why?

2. All people have been tempted to do the wrong thing at some point. How did you stop yourself from acting that way?
3. There is a concept of *teshuvah* in Judaism, which means that a person can repent for their sins. The Bible tells us a story of [Nebuzaradan](#), who was responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews but then repents and then even converts to Judaism. Do you think that every sinner can repent, or that some acts are so evil that the sinner has no opportunity of repentance?
4. What does remembering the stories of the perpetrators teach us?