



South Carolina Council on the Holocaust

Lesson Recommendations for Teaching the Holocaust

Notice to Teachers

The four lessons below can be a useful starting point in helping engage students in understanding multiple facets of the Holocaust. However, teachers should also supplement these lessons with their own historical overview of the context of the Holocaust to ensure that students fully understand the key events of this important era in history.

Additionally, it should be noted that teachers will need to carefully gauge each lesson's appropriateness for their particular students. While the lessons all take into account a wide range of student audiences, and there are recommendations given as to the grade level for each lesson, it is the discretion of the teacher that is paramount to choosing a lesson appropriate for the students he or she teaches.

The first lesson provides an overview of the Holocaust and is applicable for 5th through 12th grades and typically would take about 90 minutes in length to complete. The three lessons after it are most likely to fit well within a time frame of approximately 50 minutes, though length could vary depending on instruction.

Lesson 1: An Overview of the Holocaust

[The Holocaust: An Overview](#)

The goal of the lesson is to provide a basic overview of the Holocaust, while include specific testimonies from survivors and witnesses to enhance students understanding of the event. The visuals and videos are also carefully selected to be appropriate for students of the aforementioned grade levels.

The lesson comes with a teacher guide and student activities included guided notes, probing questions that correspond to the video clips that students will watch, a cause and effect flowchart, and a timeline exercise.

This lesson can be used with students in grades 5-12.

Lesson 2: Ordinary Things

[Ordinary Things Lesson Plan](#)

It is especially meaningful to help young students understand the Holocaust by connecting them with specific stories of victims and/or survivors. One unique way to do this is through the examination of an historical artifact.

In this lesson you will lead students in an examination of a shoe of one of the child victims of the Holocaust. This is a great way to introduce the events of the Holocaust, and its difficult subject matter, in an inquisitive manner that will engage all students of multiple grade levels and abilities. Once engaged with the numerous questions that this lesson elicits from students, then you can move forward in discussing the Holocaust in more depth.

This lesson is recommended for use with students in grades 5-12.

Lesson 3: Path to Nazi Genocide

This lesson will provide the context and basic timeline of events surrounding the Holocaust. The centerpiece to the lesson is a 38 minute documentary produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This film is segmented in four distinct chapters each outlining the progression of the events which would come to be the Holocaust, including the first chapter that provides the background of the Nazi rise to power in Germany in the years following the end of World War I.

[Detailed Lesson Plan](#)

[Path to Nazi Genocide Film*](#)

[Student Worksheet/Viewing Guide](#)

If you have time, a great lesson to follow this one is the creation of a multi-layer timeline of the Holocaust. The lesson guidelines and resources can be found here:

[Timeline Activity](#)

This lesson is recommended for use with students in grades 7-12.

* You will want to preview the film before showing students as there are a few graphic images, most notably in Chapter 4 of the film.

Lesson 4: Seared Souls

[Seared Souls Lesson](#)

Having gained an appropriate overview of the context of the events of the Holocaust in the previous lesson, it is now useful to engage students in examining the Holocaust through the testimonies of survivors who settled in South Carolina in the years following World War II.

You can locate the video testimonies of 37 survivors, 9 US Army personnel, and 2 witnesses on the SCCH website here: [Survivor Testimonies](#). These testimonies offer a wide variety of experiences and are very detailed with many of them being more than an hour in length.

However, due to the time constraints that teachers often face, the SCCH partnered with ETV to create short documentaries integrating segments of the survivor testimonies embedded with archival footage of the events. The result was a 10 part series called [Seared Souls: South Carolina Voices of the Holocaust](#). The series proceeds chronologically starting with Adolf Hitler's rise to power and culminating with the Allied liberation of the camps. This lesson forces students to consider the challenges that potential victims of the Holocaust faced in trying to survive the Nazis and the Holocaust.

This lesson is recommended for use with students in grades 7-12.

Other Notable Lessons

[The Experiences and Fate of Children During the Holocaust](#)

The purpose of this lesson is for students to understand the effects of the Holocaust on its most innocent victims—children—since targeting babies and children was an important step in the attempt by the Nazis to erase the Jews and their future.

[Do You Take the Oath?](#)

What does learning about the choices people made during the Weimar Republic, the rise of the Nazi Party, and the Holocaust teach us about the power and impact of our choices today? Students will recognize that while Germans went along with the Nazi regime for a variety of often complex reasons, dissent was possible in 1933 and 1934, though the consequences left some marginalized or unemployed and others imprisoned or even dead.

[Racism & Nazi Ideology](#)

Nazi ideology was racist. To critically analyze actions taken by Nazi Germany and its collaborators and to understand how and why the Holocaust happened, it is essential to understand the concept of racism, and, particularly, Nazi racial antisemitism.

[Laws and the National Community](#)

How do laws affect the ways that individuals think about their own identities and the identities of others? How do laws affect the relationships between individuals in a society? Through a close reading and discussion of the Nuremberg Laws, students will examine how the Nazis sought to create a racially pure “national community,” one that stripped Jews of their citizenship rights and narrowed Germany’s universe of obligation.

Many more quality lessons can be located at a variety of websites including those identified on our resources page: [SCCH Digital Resources](#)