

HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY

Teacher's Guide

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Teenage Experiences in Nazi Europe

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This classroom library is designed to interest junior and senior high school students in an important part of modern history—the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The library is made up of two types of books: memoirs which furnish very personal accounts of experiences during the Holocaust, and historical novels, some based upon actual people and events, which use fiction to portray the impact of the Holocaust upon individuals. All the memoirs and novels focus upon the lives of teenagers or young adults.

A classroom library is a flexible tool which can fit equally well into traditional and open classrooms. This guide suggests some of the ways the classroom library might be used, suggestions which should be considered selective rather than comprehensive.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

A **CHRONOLOGICAL** approach has the advantage of placing events and developments in a sequential framework, showing the progress of events and raising questions of cause and effect. While a study of the Holocaust might easily take an entire semester, instructors with less time available can still examine the subject with some thoroughness by using the *HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY*. While a minimal amount of class time is taken up with tracing the events of the 1930s and 1940s, students are individually reading the books available. A discussion in which each student makes comments from the point of view of his or her reading might climax the unit.

A **CONCEPTUAL** approach is useful in introducing Holocaust materials into subjects other than history. During an analysis of prejudice, ideologies, ethnicity, social structures, and other topics, readings on the Holocaust can be assigned and the students asked to interpret these readings in terms of the major topic of study.

SUGGESTED UNITS FOR SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

1. American History

A unit on the Holocaust would normally fall within the study of the United States during World War II. If the class is patterned thematically, rather than chronologically, the Holocaust would be studied during a unit on racial attitudes, prejudice, or ideologies.

2. Western Civilization

A chronological course will naturally include information on the Holocaust during the study of World War II. A thematic course would study the Holocaust in units on modern ideologies; the meaning, use, and abuse of power; the treatment of minorities and displaced peoples; and the cultures and societies of the modern world. The *HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY* is particularly useful in integrating information on the Holocaust

into an already overcrowded schedule, since the students can be carrying out their readings while classroom studies cover more general topics.

3. **Language Arts**

The materials in the *HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY* represent some of the finest literary expressions to come from World War II; the library contains both fiction and actual memoirs of people who experienced the Holocaust. If the teacher wishes, students might make book reports based upon the project suggestions on the final page of this guide. This "Student Project Ideas" sheet may be reproduced.

4. **Political Science**

Since the Holocaust was the result of careful policy decisions, it should be included in classes on government. The study might be centered on one or all of the following questions: What are the consequences of public policy decisions? How should political systems treat minority members of the body politic? What is the relationship of individuals to the state? What moral issues are involved in making public decisions? What is the nature of civil disobedience? When is resistance to authority acceptable?

5. **Area Studies and Modern World Problems**

The Holocaust must be studied before students can truly understand the modern situation in the Middle East. Students might be asked to consider, through reading books in the *HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY*, why the victors of World War II felt morally obligated to support the creation of Israel.

6. **Anthropology and Cultural Awareness**

A study of the Holocaust can bring about a better understanding of concepts and processes in group structure and culture. Through their readings students can observe how behavior is learned and controlled by the group, the consequences of systems of social behaviors, and the interdependence of cultural and social systems.

7. **Sociology**

The Holocaust can be integrated into the study of sociology during the discussion of the position of minorities in social systems. It can be compared to similar problems in other social structures, and alternative ways societies have coped with minorities analyzed.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Since the students in a class will have read different titles, discussions must focus upon general topics, with students offering information from the perspective of the book or books they read. The following suggestions will be helpful as discussion starters, and will bring forth other ideas which in themselves will cause discussion and interaction.

1. What warnings were there that Nazi Germany would turn against her Jewish population? How did the characters in the book you read react to these warning signs? If you had been a Jew in Europe, would you have reacted the same way or differently? Morally, were those who fled right in acting to save themselves?

2. Why did non-Jews in Germany and the rest of Europe make so little objection to the policies of Nazi Germany? Were there non-Jews who spoke out against Nazi policies? What were their fates?
3. Many non-Jewish Europeans helped Jews to escape or hid them until the war was over. If you had been a European in occupied Europe, what would have been your reaction to such a request for help? What would your moral duty have been if such help endangered your own family?
4. How did the Jews survive psychologically during the Holocaust? That is, what attitudes did they have to change, what values did they have to replace, whether they were in a concentration camp, in hiding, in the resistance, or in another, unoccupied country?
5. Germany was not the only nation to establish concentration camps for civilians during World War II. In the United States, Japanese-American citizens were sent to camps and the British had camps for Jews who were caught illegally immigrating to Palestine. What were the differences between these camps and Germany's concentration camps? Can any of these camps be justified, even during a war? What rights and freedoms were lost for the sake of "national security"?

THE CLASSROOM LIBRARY AS A LEARNING CENTER

The *HOLOCAUST CLASSROOM LIBRARY* can be used as the focal point of a learning center on the Holocaust, where students can work on self-directed projects based upon one or two books from the collection. The "Student Project Ideas" page at the end of this guide may be duplicated for student use in such a center.

The teacher should stress imagination in student responses to these project questions. Many students will find greater understanding and expression in works of art, music, and poetic writing than in written reports.

To supplement the books, the learning center might also contain visual aids or video programs. Many such materials are listed in the Holocaust Catalog from Social Studies School Service, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232. (800) 421-4264.
www.socialstudies.com

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STUDENT PROJECT IDEAS

Jewish experiences during the Holocaust varied widely, and the books in this collection attempt to show many of these experiences. Pick one question or topic from this sheet which applies to the book you read and develop some type of response: a written or oral report, a work of art, an audiovisual program, or something more imaginative which you think of yourself.

1. Friendship does not always follow group boundaries. Many German Jews had friends who were not Jews. How did the Holocaust affect such friendships? Can government decisions today come between friends?
2. When faced with a crisis many people respond by banding together to help one another. In what ways was this possible during the Holocaust? Show how groups which were formed during the Holocaust are similar to groups formed during crisis times in your own community.
3. Helping another human being when that act might endanger yourself or your family takes great courage. Discuss what motives and values lead people to take these risks, using examples from the book you read.
4. Young people often can accomplish much more than adults think they can. During the Holocaust young adults and even children took on responsibilities which would have been unthinkable before the war. Start with the activities of the young people in the book you read, then imagine what you might be capable of in an emergency.
5. During a crisis people often find their values change. Examine the characters in the book you read. Did their values change during the Holocaust, or were they able to keep their values intact? Examine your own values. Would they survive such a disaster?
6. Many Jews who survived the Holocaust did so by concealing their religious and family backgrounds. How does denying one's identity influence a person's feelings about himself or herself? After denying their heritage for so long, how do you think these people were changed?