

What caused the Holocaust?

Intended for an Advanced Placement World  
Or United States History Class

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10/27/2009

# What Caused the Holocaust?

An Inquiry lesson on the events leading to the Holocaust

## ABSTRACT

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World War II is considered by many the 'good war'; the war where the world fought against the great evil powers of the time. There's a side of the war that didn't get major attention until near the end, the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the systematic destruction of over 11 million people including gypsies, homosexuals, prisoners of war, the handicapped and disabled, and most of all, the Jews. Students will research why Adolf Hitler wanted to eliminate these groups, giving special attention on the Jewish population. Students will also study why nothing was done to stop such atrocities from happening, as well as what the United States did, or didn't do, to help the Jews.

## IDEAL AUDIENCE

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This inquiry lesson is designed for an Advanced Placement World or U.S. history class. Because it talks about both the United States and world history, it can easily be adapted for either type of course. This lesson requires students to look at multiple sides of the issue, and to think critically about a specific time in history. Students will be required to read and evaluate multiple sets of data that target a wide range of audiences, and come to a conclusion as to what they believe caused the Holocaust to occur.

## OBJECTIVES

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By engaging in this inquiry students will:

- Identify how Hitler rose to power.
- Identify sentiment for the Jewish population at the time.
- Understand the state of Germany in when Hitler became chancellor.
- Evaluate multiple sources with different viewpoints.
- Evaluate primary source documents and use them in the formation of their conclusion.

## WISCONSIN MODEL ACADEMIC STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical even, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches.
- B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion.
- B.12.4 Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events.
- B.12.5 Gather various types of historical evidence, including visual and quantitative data, to analyze issues of freedom and equality, liberty and order, region and nation, individual and community, law and conscience, diversity and civic duty; form a reasoned conclusion in the light of other possible conclusions; and develop a coherent argument in the light of other possible arguments.
- B.12.15 Identify a historical or contemporary event in which a person was forced to take an ethical position, such as a decision to go to war, the impeachment or a president, or a presidential pardon, and explain the issues involved.

## TIME

This lesson plan is structured around 5-45 minute class periods. Given the weight of the topic, the amount of time given for reading and discussions will be great. Students will need time to interpret, discuss and full understand the data sets in order to form a conclusion. Time will most likely fluctuate; time will be allotted near the end in case the 5 class periods isn't enough.

## MATERIALS

The materials necessary to complete this inquiry are as follows:

- Copies of *Hypothesis/Evidence tracking sheet* for each student
- Copies of the data sets for each student
- Reserved computer lab
- A computer with internet access

- A white/chalk board with utensils
- Internet sites:

[-http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5hohayPtso](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5hohayPtso)

[-http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USqiV7phxjc&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USqiV7phxjc&feature=channel)

[-http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykd-syzZ4ZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykd-syzZ4ZY)

<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/silentwitness/lola/flash/index.htm>

[-http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/paper\\_clips/](http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/paper_clips/)

## **INQUIRY LESSON PROCEDURE**

### **ENGAGEMENT IN THE INQUIRY**

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Ask the students if they know anything about the Holocaust or Adolf Hitler. If they do, let them talk about it. Inquire about if they know the difference between the Jewish religion and Christianity. If no one does explain that the main difference is that Jews don't believe that Jesus is the son of God (be careful when discussing this). This has caused a lot of problems for the Jewish people for hundreds of years.

Show them the first two videos on the website list. Each video is about 7 minutes long. Please give time in between the videos for discussion. These videos have been chosen because they show students what happened to people that suffered during the Holocaust as well as introduces them to the topic.

### **ELICIT HYPOTHESIS**

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After watching the two videos split the students up into groups and hand out the Hypothesis/Tracking sheet. Write on the board "What Caused the Holocaust?" Tell them they need to use ideas from the videos as well as prior knowledge (if they have any about this topic) to come up with multiple hypotheses. Each group needs to be able to present one new hypothesis to the class. They need to be written on a class copy of the tracking sheet. Students should write any new ideas on their sheet to be used for future use.

## GATHERING DATA AND REVISING HYPOTHESIS

Hand out the data sets to each student one by one. Read each one before handing out the next one. They are in the order that they should be handed out. Some of the data sets are lengthy and may be confusing, so discussion after each one is necessary. Lead the students back to the tracking sheet and ask them if any of the hypotheses are supported or undermined by the data sets just presented. If the data supports it, have the students put a plus sign next to it, and if it undermines it, place a minus sign next to it. Make sure they put where they found the information that either undermines or supports the hypothesis. Ask the students if any new hypotheses have arose after reading the data sets. Repeat this process until all data sets have been read and discussed in class. Since some of the data sets are longer than others, they may take some time getting through. Let the students take their time if they need it. This is a weighted topic and should be given enough time for students to fully understand what happened. After reading the data sets take the students into the computer lab and have them do an interactive activity on <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/silentwitness/lola/flash/indexhtm>. This website goes into detail about a specific person's struggle during the Nazi regime.

## CONCLUSION

Students need to individually choose a hypothesis they believe caused the Holocaust, based on the data provided (they may decided that there's more than one cause). The students need to then write a 1-3 page paper on what they believed caused the Holocaust, citing the data sets. The computer lab has been reserved for this. It needs to be typed and well-written. Hand out the rubric to show students specifically what they will be graded on. Finally, hand out the last data set from [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com). This article talks about a recent shooting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. It shows students that anti-Semitism is still present in society today, including in the United States. Show them the YouTube video about the leader of Iraq and his denial of the Holocaust (it's listed in the internet sites above) Lead a final discussion about other types of racism that are still present today. Finally, show students the movie *Paper Clips*, a documentary about a small town in Tennessee and what they did when they learned about the Holocaust.

## ASSESSMENT

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Both formal and informal assessments will be used in this inquiry. While students are in their groups assess them informally by walking around and listening (and possibly contributing) to their discussion. Make notes on who is talking and if what they are saying holds substance to the topic at hand. Formal assessment will be used by grading their papers using the rubric that was previously handed out as well as the Hypothesis/Evidence Tracking Sheet.

DATA SET 1- Antisemitism excerpt

Bachrach, Susan. *Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust*. Little Brown and Company. Boston. 1994.

DATA SET 2- Nazi Racism excerpt

Backrach, Susan.

DATA SET 3- *The Seeds of Evil: The Rise of Hitler*

[http://www.schoolhistory.org.uk/ASLevel\\_History/week3\\_impactofwar.htm](http://www.schoolhistory.org.uk/ASLevel_History/week3_impactofwar.htm)

DATA SET 4- *The Rise of the Nazi Party*

<http://fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/TIMELINE/nazirise.HTM>

DATA SET 5- *How Hitler Controlled the Children...*

<http://www.knowthelies.com/?q=node/3944>

DATA SET 6- Excerpt from *Mein Kampf*

<http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111hitler.html>

DATA SET 7- Picture of Jews not allowed into University of Vienna

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/269548/5824/SA-troops-lock->

DATA SET 8- Picture of graffiti in Vienna

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/27646/58225/SA-troops->

DATA SET 9- *First They Came for the Socialists...*

<http://www.history.uscd.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/niem/niempix/Niemoller>

DATA SET 9- *The United States and the Holocaust*

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005182&print=y>

DATA SET 10- Evian Conference political cartoon

<http://www.stbrendanschool.com/WWII/Holocaust/NYTimesEditorialCartoon->

DATA SET 11- Copy of cable originating from Gerhart Riegner

[http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/media\\_da.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005683&](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/media_da.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005683&)

DATA SET 12- War Production Drive Poster

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/I?fsaall:17:./temp/~ammem\\_mLMA](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/I?fsaall:17:./temp/~ammem_mLMA)

DATA SET 13- "Our Destiny is in his hands" picture

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbpe&fileName=rbpe08/>

DATA SET 14- "Help Radford Blow the Hell out of Hitler"

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/I?Fsaall:90:./temp/~ammem\\_mLMA](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/I?Fsaall:90:./temp/~ammem_mLMA)

DATA SET 15- *Guard Dies After Museum Shooting*

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31208188/print/1/displaymode/1098/>

## **Inquiry Lesson Reflection**

### **PASS STANDARD 1: Higher Order Thinking**

**Score: 4**

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This inquiry lesson will meet the criteria for PASS Standard 1 by having students use higher order thinking. Students will read and evaluate multiple sources, and from those sources they will come to a conclusion about what cause the Holocaust. Many students will not have been exposed to the Holocaust on a higher level, therefore this lesson gives them a chance to develop and use comprehending skills for a topic that is very controversial. All students will be working with the data sets, thus using their higher order thinking skills to evaluate the data sets.

### **PASS STANDARD 2: Deep Knowledge**

**Score: 5**

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Students engaging in this inquiry will be focusing on a specific topic and through the paper at the end will demonstrate their understanding of the information that was presented in class. Because this is a higher level inquiry, students will be required to think deeper about the topic and articles they are given. Because of this, this inquiry matches the requirements for this PASS standard.

### **PASS STANDARD 3: Substantive Conversation**

**Score: 4**

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Conversation in this inquiry is imperative. Students are exposed to a very controversial time in world history and asking questions and talking about it is absolutely necessary. They will converse with other students in their groups, as well as a whole in class discussions.

### **PASS STANDARD 4: Connections to the World beyond the Classroom**

**Score: 3**

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Connecting the Holocaust to students' experiences might be more difficult, thus this PASS standard only earned a 3. Using articles that talk about anti-Semitism today (and other racism) helps connect it to the students' lives. The last discussion the teacher will talk about other types of racism that the class sees today, as well as how anti-Semitism is still prevalent in today's society.

### **PASS STANDARD 5: Ethical Valuing**

**Score: 5**

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Ethical Valuing is interwoven throughout this inquiry lesson. Students must make a conscience decision about the Holocaust and what caused it. Students also see the Holocaust from multiple points of view, giving them a more rounded view of the time period.



This inquiry incorporates multiple Social Studies disciplines, including History, Geography and Political Science. Students will be looking at maps, political cartoons, and reading multiple sources, both historical and contemporary. Students will study other types of racism during different time periods and in different places, reaching the other two types of integration, subject area and time or place.