

Lessons from *Surviving Hitler: A Love Story*



THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EDUCATION FUND
OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION.

ABOUT THE JFCS HOLOCAUST CENTER

The JFCS Holocaust Center is dedicated to the education, documentation, research, and remembrance of the Holocaust. The Holocaust Center is Northern California's primary resource for Holocaust education, leading the effort to increase awareness among the general public about the causes and consequences of racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance, and indifference during the Holocaust and today.

The Center is funded by the generous support of individuals, foundation grants, and program fees. Special gratitude to the Lazlo N. Tauber, M.D. Family Foundation, the Lilly Manovill Tauber Endrei Education Fund, the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, Lydia and Douglas Shorestein, and the Zisovich Fund. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany also provides partial social service support for victims of Nazi persecution.



An Introduction to *Lessons from Surviving Hitler: A Love Story*

Instructions for the teacher:

This curriculum examines resistance against the oppressive Nazi party. The Germans would not have been able to carry out their treacherous attempt to destroy European Jewry and the brutal occupation of Europe without the assistance of European society. However, in a massive wave of collaboration there were individuals and occasionally entire towns, which resisted and spoke out against Nazi brutality. *Lessons from Surviving Hitler* follows the path of Jutta Cords in her teenage years, and those that impacted her life, and the choices she made. This is not an introductory curriculum on the Holocaust or World War II. Students should have a strong foundation in Holocaust history, and the ghettoization, deportation and extermination of Europe's Jews prior to this curriculum.

Length: This curriculum should be taught in either two class periods (Total of 2 -2.5 hours) or three class periods (3-3.5 hours) if you wish to include the optional lesson on the White Rose.

The film should be screened during Activity Three after the class has been appropriately introduced to the themes of the curriculum. The educational version of *Surviving Hitler: A Love Story* has a running time of 56 minutes.

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First Edition: February 2011



Surviving Hitler: A Love Story

As a teenager in Nazi Germany, Jutta is shocked to discover she is Jewish. She joins the German resistance and meets Helmuth, an injured soldier. The two become sweethearts and soon co-conspirators in the plot to assassinate Hitler.



Lesson One: Eugenics, Anti-Jewish Legislation and the Rise of the Nazi Party

Directions for the Teacher: Start the lesson with a short discussion on *What is the Holocaust* and *Who is a Survivor*. Before sharing the following definitions with your students have them brainstorm as a group. You might also wish to discuss when the Holocaust started and ended (this is not a simple answer and will create a good discussion).

Activity One:

What is the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. "Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire".

Who is a survivor?

Within the context of the Holocaust, a survivor is someone who escaped death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. This includes those who were hidden as children, escaped from Nazi Europe, and marked as "non-Aryan".

Note to the teacher: Use the provided definition and background to give your students a brief introduction to eugenics, and how it was applied in Nazi Germany.

Eugenics: The study of hereditary improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding; a science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human mating) of hereditary qualities of a race or breed.¹

A background of eugenics in Nazi Germany:

The fascination with racial purity and eugenics throughout not only Germany, but England and the United States began decades before the rise of Nazism. However, eugenics and euthanasia reached their peak after the turn of the twentieth century, as some Germans researched ways to "improve" the German race. Following in the direction of Charles Darwin's theories, German eugenicists looked for a policy to promote so-called "racial hygiene".² Examples of this include Nazi Germany's policies of tax credits and bonuses in order to foster large "valuable" families and promote positive breeding amongst racially "superior" couples.

¹ www.dictionary.com

² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, An Exhibit, Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race (2004).



Sterilization and euthanasia for the “unfit” were also administered in Nazi Germany as a means of limiting, and eventually eradicating, the genetically “inferior” elements of the German population.³ In 1935, the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Ill Offspring was passed, authorizing the sterilization or castration of an estimated 400,000 “mentally handicapped ... hereditary epileptics, and the blind, deaf, or alcoholic.”⁴

Nazi Germany triumphed in military combat, they began to occupy more land. *Ostraumlösung* was Germany’s plan to “move eastward” in an imperial expansion that would take land from Jews and Slavs in the east and replace them with new German settlements.⁵ The land or *Lebensraum* (living space) was to be taken from the “inferior” and redistributed to those Germans deemed the racially “élite.” This movement became one factor in the motivation to increase the Aryan population.

Who was Hitler and what influenced him?

Note to the teacher: Before examining Hitler’s theories and the horrific events he orchestrated, have your students become familiar with him as a person. This piece is important in understanding that perpetrators should be seen as they were, actual members of society.

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)

Hitler was born in Braunau, Austria. His parents were modest landowners and his father, who died young (1903) was a customs official. While attending secondary school in Linz, Austria young Hitler was influenced by a history teacher promoting pan-German ideals. His teacher taught Hitler that all those of German descent (including Austrians) would again one day belong to one mighty Teutonic nation.⁶

In 1913 Hitler moved to Munich, Germany and in the following year when World War I broke out, joined the German army. Hitler thrived in the authoritative structure of the army and advanced from a message runner to Lance Corporal. Germany lost the war and a bitter Hitler returned to Munich to begin his political career. He joined the small anti-Semitic war veterans party that, in 1920, became the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazi party). By 1923 the party had a following of 56,000 members and Hitler as their chairman. During the Munich Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 Hitler attempted to overthrow the Weimar government,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Deborah Dwork and R. J. van Pelt, *Auschwitz, 1270 to the Present*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1996) 96.

⁵ Götz Aly, *'Final Solution': Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*, trans. Allison Brown and Belinda Cooper (London; New York: Arnold; Oxford University Press, 1999) 274-75.

⁶ Hendrik Willem van Loon, *Our Battle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938) 78.



playing on the anti-Berlin government sentiment of many Bavarians. He did not succeed and was sentenced to jail for five years.

After only nine months in jail, Hitler was released and had written the first part of his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). His manifesto was first written in two parts: *A Reckoning* (1925) and *The National Socialist Movement* (1926). *Mein Kampf* became a platform to express Hitler's foreign policy goals of conquering Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia as the extended Lebensraum (living space) for the German people, and as a forum for outlining his anti-Jewish program. However, *Mein Kampf* did not explicitly outline the murder of European Jewry.

When the Nazi party was established in 1920, it had 40 members, and it was one of many right wing parties. In the 1920 elections, the Nazis did not win a single seat in the Reichstag (German parliament). By 1932, the party had won 230 out of 599 seats in Parliament, giving them 27.3% of the vote (making them the largest party). By 1933 Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany, and by August 1934 with the death of President Von Hindenburg he assumed that office as well.

Hitler viewed the Jews as his ideological enemies and a danger to the "Aryan" race, Germany, and the world in general. He also saw them as the major proprietors of democracy, liberalism, and socialism—ideological trends directly opposed to his beliefs. Thus, as the *Fuehrer* (Leader) of Germany, Hitler focused on destroying the Jews through Nazi racial principles and establishing German dominance in Europe, and later the world.⁷

Hitler orchestrated the events of the Holocaust and German occupation of Europe. On April 30, 1945, Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker, with his wife Eva Braun.

Activity Two: copy quote 1 onto a piece of paper and hand out to each student. Have them read over and reflect in their journals.

1. Which stereotypes are displayed?
2. Do you think the German people and others around the world took him seriously?
Why or why not?

Following their time journaling, have the class discuss as one large group their thoughts and ideas.

The following quotes are taken from a version of *Mein Kampf* translated into English:

Quote 1: "With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate ... It

⁷ www.yadvashem.org.il



was and it is Jews who bring the Negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought and clear aim of ruining the hated white race ... For a racially pure people which is conscious of its blood can never be enslaved by the Jew.”⁸

⁸ Adolf Hitler and Ralph Manheim, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971) 325.



Quote 2:

“On this first and greatest lie, that the Jews are not a race but a religion, more and more lies are based in necessary consequence. Among them is the lie with regard to the language of the Jew. For him it is not a means for expressing his thoughts, but a means for concealing them. When he speaks French, he thinks Jewish ...”⁹

Instructions for the Activity Two: Put quote 2 on the board and have a student read aloud, and then ask the students what the line “greatest lie, that the Jews are not a race but a religion” means?

1. Is Judaism a race or a religion? Can it be both? Consider people from other faiths (Christian, Catholic, Islamic, Buddhist).
 - Are these races and/ or religions?
2. What is the difference between a race and religion?

Have them create their own definitions and then share the following with them.

Race: A group of persons, animals, or plants, connected by common descent or origin

Religion: A particular system of faith and worship¹⁰

Discussion questions:

1. Can two people be of the same race, but not the same religion? Why?
2. Can two people be of the same nationality, but not the same race and or religion? Why?
3. How are these labels different now than they were in the Holocaust era? (1935-1945)
4. How does this quote relate to what you just learned about theories of eugenics?

⁹ Ibid 307.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary



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Background on Anti-Jewish Legislation

Hitler explicitly stated his anti-Semitic philosophy in his writings and public addresses. However, it was in 1933 that the first official anti-Jewish legislation was passed in Germany and his theories were put into action.

On April 7, 1933 the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was created. This law defined the term “non-Aryan”.

“A non-Aryan is a person who is the descendent of non-Aryans, particularly Jewish parents or grandparents, even if only one parent or grandparent is non-Aryan. This is presumed especially if one parent or grandparent is of the Jewish faith ... If ‘Aryan’ descent is doubtful, an opinion must be obtained from the ‘expert on racial research.’”¹²

This classification provided for the expulsion of “non-Aryans” from German civil life.

¹¹ www.ushmm.org

¹² Reichsgesetzblatt, 471 (Tauber Holocaust Library, JFCS Holocaust Center)



For example:

1. “The admission of “non-Aryan” lawyers to practice law may be revoked as of September 30, 1933, and no new “non-Aryan” lawyers may be admitted.”¹³
2. “This law restricts the number of “non-Aryan” students in proportion to the percentage of “non-Aryans” in the German population”¹⁴

However there was an exception made for: ““non-Aryans” who were soldiers or whose fathers fought for Germany or her allies in the war or 1914-18. Also to “non-Aryans” whose parents were married before the proclamation of this law, if one parents or two grandparents are of ‘Aryan’ descent.”

In an appendix to this clause the following terms were defined:

i. Jews: Persons with two Jewish grandparents, if they belonged to the Jewish religion or were married to a Jewish person on September 15, 1935, and persons with three or four Jewish grandparents.

ii. Non-Aryans: Mischlinge “halfbreeds” of the second degree: Persons with one Jewish grandparent.

Mischlinge of the first degree: Persons with two Jewish grandparents who did not belong to the Jewish religion and were not married to a Jewish person on September 15, 1935.

In September 1935 from a direct order by Hitler the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor* was included in what is now known as the Nuremberg Laws.¹⁵

“to conserve the purity of German blood ...Marriages as well as extra-marital relations between Jews and persons of German or cognate are forbidden. Jews may not employ in their homes female persons of German or cognate blood under 45 years of age. Jews are not allowed to display the colors of the Reich or to hoist the national flag. Severe penalties will be imposed for violation of this law.”¹⁶

¹³ Reichsgesetzblatt, Law Regarding the Admission to the Legal Profession, 472 (Tauber Holocaust Library, JFCS Holocaust Center)

¹⁴ Reichsgesetzblatt, Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities (April 25, 1933) 474 (Tauber Holocaust Library, JFCS Holocaust Center)

¹⁵ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1982) 102.

¹⁶ Gesetz zum Schutz des Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre



Throughout the following years anti-Jewish supplements were added to the Nuremberg Laws.

For example:

1. Jews who are German subjects have to apply for identification cards ... All Jews over 15 years of age must carry this card at all times ... Heavy punishment is provided for violation of these provisions. (July 23, 1938)¹⁷
2. Jews are allowed certain first names only ... Jewish persons with first names different from those listed must register and use the first names “Israel” (for men) and “Sara” (for women), in addition to their own names. (August 17, 1938)¹⁸

¹⁷ Reichsgesetzblatt, Third Notice regarding Identification Cards, 491 (Tauber Holocaust Library, JFCS Holocaust Center)

¹⁸ Reichsgesetzblatt, Second Decree Supplementing the Law Regarding the Change of Family Names, 492 (Tauber Holocaust Library, JFCS Holocaust Center).



Lesson Two: Acts of Resistance

Note to the teacher: this activity may be done in small groups or individually. This first part of the activity should be done before screening the film. After they complete the activity share with them the definition of resistance. Provide students with the blank chart and explain that they should take notes in column one while watching the film. If the class period is not long enough to continue this lesson following the film screening part II of the activity maybe be completed as homework.

Activity Three:

Part I:

1. Ask the students to create their own definition of resistance.
2. Share the Oxford English Dictionary definition.
 - a. Do they agree?
3. What might the difference be between active and passive resistance?

Resistance: A struggle against someone or something, a secret organization resisting political authority, the ability not to be affected by something.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary



Screen: *Surviving Hitler a Love Story*

Part II:

1. Have students mark each act of resistance as active or passive.
 - a. A blank version for students and completed version are included in the lesson for teachers to use for reference. There are many more acts of resistance that can be found in the film--those provided are just an example.
2. Have them explain the details of the act of resistance in the notes column.
3. Discuss as a group or have students reflect individually:
 - a. Was active resistance more important than passive? Why or Why not?
 - b. Would active resistance have been possible without passive resistance?





Act of Resistance	Active/ Passive	Notes
Jutta's father has her arm wrapped into a sling so that she cannot do the "Heil Hitler" salute that is demanded at school	Passive	There are many involved in this act: Jutta, Kurt Sorge, the doctor friend
The Sorge family secretly listens to the BBC radio (against the law in Nazi Germany)	Passive	This act allows the Sorge family to have a different perspective on the political situation in Europe and shows Jutta that the Nazi party is oppressive for forbidding free radio use.
Jutta and her parents correspond while she is in Switzerland about Hitler and the Nazi Party by speaking in code.	Passive	All mail correspondence was censored and substituting "Auntie" for Hitler gave the Sorge family the chance to discuss the political situation.
The Sorge family hides Ludwig Gehre who was a career military officer involved in the German Resistance and wanted by the Gestapo.	Passive	The Sorge family put their own lives at risk to harbor Ludwig Gehre in their home. From that point on they were connected to the German Resistance.
Helmuth Cords and his Wehrmacht Battalion decide to disobey orders to directly bomb Soviet villages full of civilians. In several different instances they shot a warning shot on the outskirts of the villages first.	Active	Many Wehrmacht soldiers were prosecuted for treason for both small and large acts of defiance. These men put their own lives at risk in hopes to save the lives of Soviet civilians.



Operation Valkyrie	Active	<p>Operation Valkyrie was an emergency plan for the continuity of government operations that was developed in Nazi Germany for the Home Army (this is the correct name) of Germany to execute and implement in case of a general breakdown in civil order of the nation. Failure of the government to maintain control of civil affairs could be caused, for example, by the Allied bombing of German cities, or an uprising of millions of foreign laborers forced to work in German factories.</p> <p>German Army officers General Friedrich Olbricht, Major General Henning von Tresckow, and Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg modified the plan with the intention of using it to take control of German cities, disarm the SS, and arrest the Nazi leadership once Hitler had been assassinated. Hitler's death (as opposed to his arrest) was required to free German soldiers from their oath of loyalty to him personally. After lengthy preparation, the plot was carried out on July 20, 1944, but failed.</p>
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Student Worksheet

Act of Resistance	Active/ Passive	Notes



Lesson Three: The Journey of Identity



Image One

Activity Four:

Directions for the teacher: Either project this image or make color copies for your students to answer the following discussion questions.

1. What do we know about the individual in this passport?
2. What symbols are displayed which give us an insight into his life?
3. Today a passport is optional. If one wishes to travel outside of their country of citizenship they apply for a passport. Do you think Erich Goldstein chose to apply for this passport?
4. Do people today travel across country lines without a passport? If so why do you think this is necessary?



5. What do people today who cross borders without a valid passport have in common with Erich Goldstein?
6. Do you have a passport? What does it say about you?

Directions for the teacher: As the educator be familiar with the following historical background prior to the lesson, but do not share it with the students until they explore the passport themselves first.

Historical Background:

In 1938 the German Government passed the following laws:

Jews over age 15 are obliged to apply for a special identification card (July 23, 1938)

Jews are obliged to use the second name Israel or Sarah. (August 17, 1938)

All Jewish passports have to be marked with a “J” (October 5, 1938)

Suggested Responses:

There are several interpretations. This is a good introductory lesson to get the students interested and discussing the connections between the Holocaust era and today.

- There were amendments made to Goldstein’s passport. You can see by the date on pg 2 his passport was issued May 15, 1934, but following the new laws of 1938 the passport was stamped with the name “Israel” and the red “J” on October 14, 1938.
- There are several SS stamps on both pages to mark that the changes had been made by the current government.
- Prior to Nazi occupation he was a German citizen.



REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE No. 689688.

ISSUED AT Harrogate.

ON 23rd March 1939.

NAME (Surname first in Roman Capitals) SORGE Jutta.

ALIAS

Left Thumb Print (if unable to sign name in English Characters).

PHOTOGRAPH

Signature of Holder Jutta Sorge

Nationality German

Born on 3-4-1920 in Berlin

Previous Nationality (if any)

Profession or Occupation Companion

Single or Married Single

Address of Residence Aldborough Lodge, Boroughbridge, Yorks.

Arrival in United Kingdom on 5-1-39.

Address of last Residence outside U.K. c/o 9, Av Bertrand, Geneva, Switzerland.

Government Service

Passport or other papers as to Nationality and Identity. German Passport No. 463R/494/35, issued Berlin 16-12-35.

Image Two

“I no longer had the option to get married or go to University....and that was everything to girls my age.” –Jutta Cords

In 1935 when the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor* (commonly known as the Nuremberg Laws) were issued Jutta was sent home from school with an assignment to report on her racial identity and heritage. At this time Jutta learned that her mother Eva Sorge was born Jewish and converted to Christianity at the age of 18. Therefore according to Nazi racial ideology Jutta was branded as *Mischling*.²⁰

²⁰ Interview with Claudia Cords Damon, 2011.



Directions for the Teacher: The following brief timeline, together with the film and Image Two will serve as a resource for answering the following discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Jutta's identity card (Image Two) different from Erich Goldstein's German passport (Image One) and Eva Sorge's papers (Image Three)
2. What symbols are missing from Jutta's identity card that might illustrate her identity?
 - a. List three examples
3. What symbols are represented on your passport, drivers license, or school ID?
 - a. What symbols are missing which describe your identity?



Image Three

Note: In Image Three Jutta's mother Eva Sorge's papers from when she was released from Ravensbrück Concentration Camp have "Sara" inserted into her name.



Timeline (1920-1940)

April 3, 1920: Jutta is born to Eva and Kurt Sorge in Berlin, Germany.

September 1935: The *Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor* (commonly known as the Nuremberg Laws) was issued.²¹ Therefore according to Nazi racial ideology Jutta was branded as *Mischlinge*.

Early 1938: Jutta's parents send her to Geneva, Switzerland where she would be protected from anti-Jewish legislation and discrimination. While living in Geneva, Jutta befriends a fellow student from England.

November- December 1938: Following *Kristallnacht* (November Pogrom) Jutta's parents are no longer permitted to send money to Switzerland to support Jutta. Jutta's friend offers to help her out and she journeys to England where her school friend's family takes her in.²²

March 1939: While in England Jutta finds work as a nanny and French tutor and is issued a registration certificate that serves as work permit and allows her to stay in England (Image Two).

June 1939: Jutta is homesick and very concerned for her parents so she decides to return to Berlin, Germany.

August 1939: Jutta returns to Switzerland to be with her sister and attend the christening of her nephew. Eva convinces her daughter to remain in Switzerland to "help with the children" which was code for it was not safe for her to return to Germany.

September 1, 1939: World War II breaks out and England and France are at war with Germany.

Summer 1940: As the war continues Jutta is deeply concerned for the well-being of her parents and against their advice returns to Berlin, Germany.²³

Activity Five: Use the format of the timeline above and create your own timeline of the events for the second part of Jutta's life after the summer of 1940 when she returns to Berlin, Germany.

²¹ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1982) 102.

²² Kristallnacht is also known as the Night of Broken Glass or the November Pogrom (November 9, 1938)

²³ Interview with Claudia Cords Damon, 2011.



What came next for Jutta and her family...

Shortly after Jutta, Helmuth and her parents were reunited, the two were married in the first wedding Berlin saw after liberation. After the war, Jutta and Helmuth left Berlin and moved to Heidelberg, Germany. Helmuth enrolled in the university to study chemistry. Jutta and Helmuth started their family with Claudia who was born in 1946 and Manuel in 1948.

Helmuth received his PhD in chemistry in 1952 from the Max Planck Institute. Shortly after, the young family emigrated to the United States and settled in New Jersey. Helmuth worked at Squibb as a chemist.

In 1953, Jutta's parents joined the family in New Jersey. Jutta's father, Kurt, loved to play golf and loved America. However, Jutta's mother, Eva, found it difficult to live in an English-speaking country and so Jutta's parents decided to return to Germany in 1956.



Jutta worked first as a secretary and then as the admissions officer at a hospital. In 1957 their third child Marina, was born. In 1959 the family moved to Bakersfield, CA. It was in California that Helmuth began giving talks about his experiences in World War II. Jutta started her college coursework with the goal of becoming a teacher and began working as a substitute teacher. Jutta received her B.A. in 1969 and began her full-time career as a teacher, first in elementary school and then in middle school.

In 1972 Helmuth died and a few years later Jutta moved to New Hampshire. Jutta spent the years 1978-1981 training teachers to improve their teaching skills with *Follow Through*, the federally funded program that enhanced the gains children made in *Head Start*.



Jutta now lives in Connecticut, has six grandchildren and two step-grandchildren. In her retirement she has returned to being an artist. On special occasions Jutta joins John-Keith Wasson for screenings of *Surviving Hitler: A Love Story*.



Additional Reading

Baigent, Michael. *Secret Germany: Stauffenberg and the True Story of Operation Valkyrie*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008.

Beevor, Anthony. *The Fall of Berlin 1945*. New York: Penguin, 2003

Galante, Pierre. *Operation Valkyrie: The German Generals' Plot Against Hitler*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002.

Gisevius, Hans Bernd. *Valkyrie: An Insider's Account of the Plot to Kill Hitler*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2008.

Muller, Ingo. *Hitler's Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Taking A Stand: The White Rose

There were many cases of resistance throughout Europe during the Nazi occupation. Another example of Resistance under the Third Reich was the White Rose. The following lesson compliments *Lessons from Surviving Hitler: A Love Story*.

Lesson Four: Die Weiße Rose (The White Rose)

The previous lesson depicts the change that rescue, resistance and action can make when individuals act against injustice in the world. The story of the White Rose tells of the immediate impact a small group of students had on spreading awareness. The lesson also discusses their legacy of speaking out against the injustice and atrocities of the Nazi regime.

Background: The resistance group, known as the White Rose, was created in Munich, Germany (1942). Throughout the years that the Nazi party was in power, academic freedom was severely curtailed, Jewish professors were fired, and the outstanding University of Munich saw a significant decline in the quality of scholarship and in pluralism of thought as a result of conformity to Nazi ideals. It was inside this environment of intolerance, fear and collaboration that a few young students and one professor actively represented their beliefs against the oppressive Nazi regime.



Munich, the city of the White Rose is circled in red.

Activity One:

Divide the class into three groups. Group A will be assigned Reading One: *Hans Scholl*, Group B –Reading Two: *Sophie Scholl* and Group C: *The Other Key Players*. Have the students read the enclosed descriptions of *Hans* or *Sophie*, the other key players, as well as using the timeline as a resource. The students will put together a mini presentation to the class.

A few suggested talking points:

- What role did your person take in the White Rose resistance movement?
- What role did the other players of the White Rose take to assist your person?
- Do you agree with the actions they took?

Taking A Stand: The White Rose

Timeline

1942: White Rose movement began in Munich

- Founders: Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, Christoph Probst, Willi Graf, and Kurt Huber (philosophy professor)
- Summer/Fall 1942, the first four leaflets were prepared and distributed (“Leaflets of the White Rose” series)
- Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell wrote and distributed the first four leaflets

January 1943: the fifth leaflet, “Appeal to all Germans” is written and distributed

- The fifth and sixth leaflets were part of the “Leaflets of the Resistance” series

February 1943: German defeat at Stalingrad prompts the writing of the sixth leaflet, “Fellow Fighters in the Resistance” (written by Kurt Huber)

- Hans, Alex, and Willi graffiti “Freedom” and “Down with Hitler” on the walls of the university

February 18, 1943: Hans and Sophie were caught distributing copies of the sixth leaflet in the halls of the university and were arrested; and later that night Christoph Probst was arrested too.

February 22, 1943: Hans, Sophie, and Christoph stand trial, are found guilty of treason, and sentenced to death by guillotine.

April 19, 1943: Kurt Huber, Willi Graf, and Alexander Schmorell are sentenced to death

July 13, 1943: Schmorell and Huber beheaded

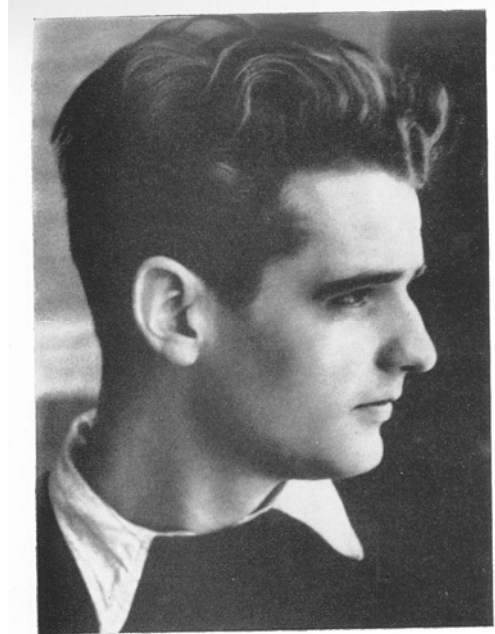
October 12, 1943: Willi Graf beheaded

Mid-1943: The text of the sixth leaflet is smuggled out of Germany to England and was later dropped by Allied planes over Germany re-titled as “The Manifesto of the Students of Munich”

Taking A Stand: The White Rose

Reading One: Hans Scholl

Hans Scholl was born on September 22, 1918 to Magdalena and Robert Scholl. As a young boy, he was a member of the Wandervogel, which later in his life would greatly influence his political activism. In 1933, against his father's advice, Hans joined the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend); and not long after his entry into the movement, he was elected squad leader of a unit of boys. It was not until 1936 that Hans began to question the ideals of the Hitler Youth. Hans, as a member of the Hitler Youth attended the 1936 Nuremberg Rally, the annual massive event where supporters of the Nazi party gathered to celebrate ideals of "Aryan" superiority and the Hitler inspired Nazi policies. After witnessing this event, Hans began to question the extreme regimentation of the organization and he strongly disliked their rejection of anything "non-German".



In 1937, Hans began participating in the outlawed German Youth Movement and was later arrested for his participation in "illegal youth activities". Hans also began his compulsory National Labor Service in 1937.

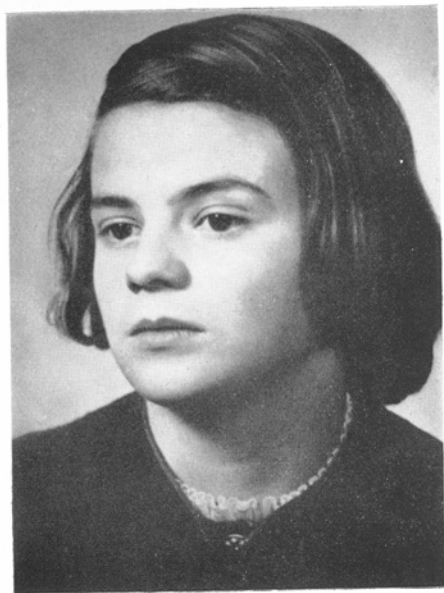
Throughout his service, he was assigned twice to active duty as a medic; once in 1940 on the frontlines of France, and again in July 1942 in Russia where he witnessed firsthand the atrocities taking place against the Jews and Russians. After his required assignments in the Wehrmacht (German Army) Hans returned to the University of Munich to become a full time student.

While attending the University of Munich, he and Alexander Schmorell wrote and distributed the first four leaflets of the White Rose during the summer and fall of 1942. The White Rose successfully continued with their resistance activities until a Nazi collaborator discovered them in 1943. On February 18, 1943 Hans and Sophie distributed the sixth leaflet in the halls of the University before classes ended. Before they left, they noticed they had many leaflets leftover, so they climbed to the top of the atrium and threw the remaining papers down. Jakob Schmid, the building custodian, witnessed the act. The Gestapo was called, and Sophie and Hans were placed under arrest. Hans was placed on trial and found guilty of treason on February 22, 1943 and was sentenced to death by guillotine that same day.

Taking A Stand: The White Rose

Reading Two: Sophie Scholl

Sophie Scholl was born on May 9, 1921; she and Hans were frequently described as having a special relationship, “enriched by tacit understanding. What they experienced together was not so much a meeting of personalities as of complementary ones” (Sophie Scholl, 36). In 1933 at the age of twelve, Sophie followed Hans’ example and joined the League of German Girls (BDM: Bund der deutschen Mädchen).



Despite her involvement in an organization that emphasized conformity to Aryan values and strict gender roles, Sophie remained completely unconventional. She was thoughtful, held strong desires for independence, and had an appearance that was unique for the times. One of the sayings of the day was “German girls wear braids,” but Sophie had a short, boyish bob. From an early age, she knew she was not meant for a life dominated by marriage and motherhood; she was too firm in her own convictions. Because she had a strong personality and her own beliefs, the indoctrinations of the BDM did not affect or influence her.

Early in 1941, Sophie began working with children at the Fröbel Seminar in Ulm. She took this position hoping that it would fulfill the six-month work requirement of the National Labor Service. Typically, women working for the National Labor Service were required to do housework or manual labor. Unfortunately, Sophie’s work at the Fröbel Seminar was deemed unacceptable and she was sent to a work camp for young women to complete six months of manual labor in March 1941.

By May 1942, Sophie enrolled in the University of Munich to study biology and philosophy. Hans, already established at the University had found a close-knit group of friends, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, and Christoph Probst; Sophie, with her strong opinions and love of philosophy fit in well.

It was prior to Sophie’s arrival in Munich, that Hans and Alexander decided to actively voice their opposition to the Nazi Party. Sophie, against her brother’s wishes, joined their cause and activities after discovering Hans’ involvement in the White Rose. In 1942, Sophie joined their resistance movement and participated in the production and distribution of the White Rose leaflets. At the University of Munich on February 18, 1943, Sophie and Hans were caught distributing the sixth leaflet and were arrested. Following their arrest and heavy interrogation by the Gestapo, Sophie, Hans, and Christoph were tried and found guilty of treason. On February 22, 1943, the three young students were executed.

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The other key players:

Alexander Schmorell was born on September 16, 1917 to a German father and a Russian mother. After his graduation from secondary school and the fulfillment of his duty to the National Labor Service, he was drafted into the army. When he was not on active duty, he studied medicine at the University of Munich where he met Hans Scholl in 1940. He soon became the co-founder of the White Rose and wrote two of the first four leaflets. After Sophie and Hans were arrested, Alexander was suspected of being a co-conspirator and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He too was arrested, found guilty on April 19, 1943, and executed on July 13, 1943.



SUMMER, 1942

Hans
Scholl

Sophie
Scholl

Willi
Graf

Alexander
Schmorell

Willi Graf was also an active member of the White Rose. As a young boy, Willi was a member of the Catholic organization Neudeutschland (New Germany), until the Nazi party banned all other youth organizations. It was at this time that he refused to join the Hitler Youth because he realized that Catholicism and National Socialism could not coexist. After his completion of six months of military service, he began studying medicine at the University of Bonn. Stationed in Munich, in April of 1942, Willi met Hans, Sophie, Alexander, and Christoph, but he did not take an active role in the White Rose until July 1942, after he served in the German army on the Russian front. Willi helped distribute leaflets outside Munich in Bonn, Ulm, Cologne, Freiburg, and Saarbrücken. He was arrested for his involvement in the White Rose on February 18, 1943, found guilty on April 19, 1943, and executed on October 12, 1943.

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Christoph Probst first met Alexander Schmorell at secondary school in 1935. The two maintained their friendship during their military service and medical studies at the University of Munich. It was at the University that Christoph became friends with Hans and Sophie Scholl. At age twenty-one, he married Herta Dohrn and they had two children; it was because of his family that the other members of the White Rose would not let Probst participate in anything incriminating. In 1943, Probst wrote the first draft of a leaflet, which he gave to Hans for editing, and the draft was found with Hans during his arrest. Probst was arrested on February 19, 1943; he was tried and condemned with Hans and Sophie on February 22, 1943. He never met his third newborn daughter.

Kurt Huber, professor of philosophy, psychology, and musicology at the University of Munich, was also a member of the White Rose. As one of the few professors left on staff whom openly disliked the Nazi party, Huber was introduced to the White Rose through Hans Scholl who came to him for advice. The sixth leaflet, "Fellow Students" was written by Huber. He was arrested on February 26, 1943 and executed by guillotine on July 13, 1943.

After Hans and Alexander decided to challenge the National Socialist party, they needed to decide on a name, which would capture the different nuances of their organization. They eventually decided on the White Rose. It was a symbol of beauty while at the same time representing purity and innocence. Essentially, it was the complete opposite of everything that the Nazi party represented.

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Activity Two:

Note to the Teacher: Have students read silently or as a group (reading three)

- Axelsson, George. "Nazi Slur Stirred Students' Revolt." *New York Times*, April 18 1943.

1. Why do you think that the Gestapo and the German court looked at the case of the White Rose as a serious case of treason?

2. In the New York Times article (Reading 3) the American version of the story is portrayed differently. Why do you think that is? What message is the New York Times trying to give their readers?



SUMMER, 1936 Hans and Werner Scholl

3. Our society has taught us that dying for a cause we firmly believe in is brave and honorable. This is what the Scholls and the other members of the White Rose believed. In their case, the movement they created died with them, but their beliefs and resistance to the totalitarian dictatorship is still alive today. Imagine you are a member of the White Rose. You are given the option of escaping execution if you renounced your beliefs, would you?
4. What message did the young members of the White Rose leave for the youth of today?

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READING 3

NAZI SLUR STIRRED STUDENTS' REVOLT

Official Was Jeered When He
Told Girls It Was Duty to Bear
Children Without Marriage

THREE WERE GUILLOTINED

Woman, Brother and Another
Soldier Beheaded for Issuing
Anti-Nazi Tracts

By **GEORGE AXELSSON**

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

licemen charged. A riot ensued in front of the university.

The following day Munich house walls bore the inscription: "Revenge for Stalingrad! We want our liberty back!"

The student body issued two tracts, one an appeal to men and girl students, protesting against Nazism and its suppression of individual thinking and the free expression of opinion and also against the attempt to force uniformity on students.

The tract praised the men for protecting the girl students and called for a fight to recapture the right of the individual to decide his own destiny "without which no spiritual values can be created."

The tract concluded with a call to battle against the Nazi party by resigning from Nazi organizations and by refusal to attend lectures

by pro-Nazis. The war was condemned and German youths were urged to establish a new Europe.

"A new faith in liberty and honor dawns," it said.

The university was occupied by the police and Scholl and Probst were arrested for distributing the tracts. They were tried the next day on charges of "favoring the enemy."

When Sergeant Scholl was accused of Communist activities he replied, "I am not a Communist; I am a German." To Judge Freisler he said, "You will soon stand where I stand now."

The executions were carried out immediately after the sentence. For several ensuing nights the city walls bore inscriptions: Scholl lives! You can break the body but never the spirit."

STOCKHOLM, Sweden, April 17 —The pictorial weekly Veckojournalen reports that a woman was among the three Munich University students who were executed last February for spreading anti-Nazi tracts. The others, it says, were soldiers, one a Stalingrad Sixth Army survivor who had been decorated with two Iron Crosses, —first class and second class.

The weekly asserts the victims were a medical student, Sergeant Hans Scholl, veteran of Stalingrad and son of an official of Ulm; his sister, Maria Scholl, a philosophy student, and another medical student, Private Adrian Probst.

They were guillotined after Gauleiter Gieseler of Munich had demanded that they be publicly hanged on the campus.

Details Are Reported

The background of the incident was reported as follows:

Gauleiter Gieseler in a speech at a university festival Feb. 11 denounced women students for using studies as a pretext to escape war service and declared in an insulting fashion that if they did not want to work in munitions factories they ought at least to bear children, without marriage.

The women students retorted with jeers. Men students formed lines protecting the girls when po-

The New York Times

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Originally published April 18, 1943

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Activity Three:

Have the students read silently Reading 4: leaflet 2 written by the White Rose. Divide the students into groups of four or five students.

After reading the leaflet as a group students should choose a current local, national, or international crisis you are interested in and write a leaflet that informs the public. Some research might be involved to make the leaflet accurate and accessible to a large demographic, but it is not a research paper. Remember your opinion counts!

Suggested topics: war in Iraq, Darfur, Afghanistan, Iran, Nuclear Proliferation, Global Warming or Gang Violence.

Taking A Stand: The White Rose

READING 4

Leaflets of The White Rose

The Second Leaflet:

It is impossible to engage in intellectual discourse with National Socialist Philosophy, for if there were such an entity, one would have to try by means of analysis and discussion either to prove its validity or to combat it. In actuality, however, we face a totally different situation. At its very inception this movement depended on the deception and betrayal of one's fellow man; even at that time it was inwardly corrupt and could support itself only by constant lies. After all, Hitler states in an early edition of "his" book (a book written in the worst German I have ever read, in spite of the fact that it has been elevated to the position of the Bible in this nation of poets and thinkers): "It is unbelievable, to what extent one must betray a people in order to rule it." If at the start this cancerous growth in the nation was not particularly noticeable, it was only because there were still enough forces at work that operated for the good, so that it was kept under control. As it grew larger, however, and finally in an ultimate spurt of growth attained ruling power, the tumor broke open, as it were, and infected the whole body. The greater part of its former opponents went into hiding. The German intellectuals fled to their cellars, there, like plants struggling in the dark, away from light and sun, gradually to choke to death. Now the end is at hand. Now it is our task to find one another again, to spread information from person to person, to keep a steady purpose, and to allow ourselves no rest until the last man is persuaded of the urgent need of his struggle against this system. When thus a wave of unrest goes through the land, when "it is in the air," when many join the cause, then in a great final effort this system can be shaken off. After all, an end in terror is preferable to terror without end.

We are not in a position to draw up a final judgment about the meaning of our history. But if this catastrophe can be used to further the public welfare, it will be only by virtue of the fact that we are cleansed by suffering; that we yearn for the light in the midst of deepest night, summon our strength, and finally help in shaking off the yoke which weighs on our world.

We do not want to discuss here the question of the Jews, nor do we want in this leaflet to compose a defense or apology. No, only by way of example do we want to cite the fact that since the conquest of Poland *three hundred thousand* Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way. Here we see the most frightful crime against human dignity, a crime that is unparalleled in the whole of history. For Jews, too, are human beings - no matter what position we take with respect to the Jewish question - and a crime of this dimension has been perpetrated against human beings. Someone may say that the Jews deserve their fate. This assertion would be a monstrous impertinence; but let us assume that someone said this - what position has he then taken toward the fact that the entire Polish aristocratic youth is being annihilated? (May God grant that this program has not yet fully achieved its aim as yet!) All male offspring of the houses of the nobility between the ages of fifteen and twenty were transported to concentration camps in Germany and sentenced to forced labor, and all the girls of this age group were sent to Norway, into the bordellos of the SS! Why tell you these things, since you are fully aware of them - or if not of these, then of other equally grave crimes committed by this frightful sub-humanity? Because here we touch on a problem which involves us deeply and forces us all to take thought. Why do German people behave so apathetically in the face of all these abominable crimes, crimes so unworthy of the human race? Hardly anyone thinks about that. It is accepted as fact and put out of mind. The German people slumber on in their dull, stupid sleep and encourage these fascist criminals; they give them the opportunity to carry on their depredations; and of course they do so. Is this a sign that the Germans are

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brutalized in their simplest human feelings, that no chord within them cries out at the sight of such deeds, that they have sunk into a fatal conscienceness from which they will never, never awake? It seems to be so, and will certainly be so, if the German does not at last start up out of his stupor, if he does not protest wherever and whenever he can against this clique of criminal, if he shows no sympathy for these hundreds of thousands of victims. He must evidence not only sympathy; no, much more: a sense of *complicity* in guilt. For through his apathetic behavior he gives these evil men the opportunity to act as they do; he tolerates this "government" which has taken upon itself such an infinitely great burden of guilt; indeed, he himself is to blame for the fact that it came about at all! Each man wants to be exonerated of a guilt of this kind, each one continues on his way with the most placid, the calmest conscience. But he cannot be exonerated; he is *guilty, guilty, guilty!* It is not too late, however, to do away with this most reprehensible of all miscarriages of government, so as to avoid being burdened with even greater guilt. Now, when in recent years our eyes have been opened, when we know exactly who our adversary is, it is high time to root out this brown horde. Up until the outbreak of the war the larger part of the German people was blinded; the Nazis did not show themselves in their true aspect. But now, now that we have recognized them for what they are, it must be the sole and first duty, the holiest duty of every German to destroy these beasts.

If the people are barely aware that the government exists, they are happy. When the government is felt to be oppressive they are broken.

Good fortune, alas! builds itself upon misery. Good fortune, alas! is the mask of misery. What will come of this? We cannot foresee the end. Order is upset and turns to disorder, good becomes evil. The people are confused. Is it not so, day in, day out, from the beginning?

The wise man is therefore angular, though he does not injure others; he has sharp corners, though he does not harm; he is upright but not gruff. He is clear minded, but he does not try to be brilliant.

-Lao-Tzu

Whoever undertakes to rule the kingdom and to shape it according to his whim - I foresee that he will fail to reach his goal. That is all.

The kingdom is a living being. It cannot be constructed, in truth! He who tries to manipulate it will spoil it, he who tries to put it under his power will lose it. Therefore: Some creatures go out in front, others follow, some have warm breath, others cold, some are strong, some weak, some attain abundance, others succumb. The wise man will accordingly forswear excess, he will avoid arrogance and not overreach.

-Lao-Tzu **Please make as many copies as possible of this leaflet and distribute them.¹**

¹ Scholl, I. and D. S  lle (1983). The White Rose : Munich, 1942-1943. Middletown, Conn. Scranton, Pa., Wesleyan University Press ; Distributed by Harper & Row.

Glossary and Chronology

Aktion (action): Operation involving the mass assembly, deportation and murder of Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Aktion Reinhard: Code name for the German plan to murder the Polish Jewish population initiated in the autumn of 1941, the “Final Solution to the Jewish problem.” The Aktion was named after SS General Reinhard Heydrich, who was assassinated in June 1942. Three camps were specifically built for this operation: Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Allies: A military alliance of twenty-six nations that opposed the Axis during World War II. The Allies were led by Great Britain and the United States and included the Soviet Union and China.

Annihilation: Total destruction.

Anschluss (connection): Annexation of Austria by Germany on March 13, 1938.

Anti-Semitism: Prejudice or discrimination against Jews. Anti-Semitism can be based on hatred against Jews because of their religious beliefs or their group membership (ethnicity), but also on the erroneous belief that Jews are a race. Nazi anti-Semitism was racial in nature; Jews were viewed as ethnically inferior to Aryans and destructive of the world order.

Appell (roll call): Roll call of concentration camp prisoners, during which inmates were forced to stand at attention for hours being counted.

Arbeit macht frei (“Work makes you free”): The motto inscribed on the main gates of numerous concentration camps.

Aryan: “Aryan” was originally applied to people who spoke any Indo-European language. The Nazis, however, primarily applied the term to people of northern European racial background.

Ashkenazi: Refers to Jews of central and eastern European descent.

Auschwitz-Birkenau: A complex consisting of concentration, extermination, and labor camps in Poland. Auschwitz I was established in 1940 as a concentration camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau (or Auschwitz II), the extermination camp, began operation in 1942.

Axis: A military alliance of Germany, Japan, Italy, Hungary, and others who opposed the Allies during World War II.

Badge: A distinctive sign that Jews were compelled to wear in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied countries. It often took the form of a yellow Star of David. Badges were also used to identify categories of prisoners in the concentration camps.

Belzec: The second Nazi camp to operate solely as a killing center and the first to have permanent gas chambers. Between its establishment in March 1942 and November 1942 when its operations ceased, approximately 600,000 Jews were murdered there.

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Bergen-Belsen: A concentration camp in Germany that originally opened in 1940 to house prisoners of war.

Buecherverbrennung (the burning of the books): In an effort to promote Nazi ideology, on May 10, 1933 the Nazis had a countrywide burning of books they considered to be “undeutsch” (non-German).

Buchenwald: Concentration camp in north central Germany, established in July 1937. It was one of the largest concentration camps on German soil, with more than 130 satellite labor camps. It held many political prisoners. More than 65,000 of approximately 250,000 prisoners perished at Buchenwald.

The Bund: A Jewish socialist party founded in Russia, 1897. The group was devoted to Yiddish language and culture, and secular Jewish nationalism. During the Nazi occupation of Poland, Bund members were influential opponents of the rampant anti-Semitic Polish government. The Bund promoted Jewish world nationality and was strongly opposed to Zionism.

Bund Deutscher Mädel (The League of German Girls): The female branch of the Hitler Youth and only female youth organization in Nazi Germany. It offered many activities with the goal to educate girls within the Nazi belief system, and to train them for their roles in German society.

Canada: The camp name given to the area of Auschwitz-Birkenau where prisoners’ confiscated belongings were stored. It was so named after the vastness and wealth of the country of Canada.

Chelmno: Built in 1941 near Lodz, Poland, it was the first camp whose sole purpose was mass murder. An estimated 300,000 people were killed there, mostly Jews from Lodz and the surrounding areas, but also including “Gypsies,” Poles, and Soviet POWs. The Nazis destroyed the camp in late 1944.

Collaborator: A political term with moral implications; one who cooperates with the enemy. During World War II, both individuals and governments (e.g. Vichy France) collaborated with the Nazis.

Concentration Camp: Camps established by the Nazi regime, which eventually became a major instrument of terror, control, punishment, and killing performed through deliberate means as well as attrition by hunger and/or disease.

Crematorium: A place with a furnace for burning bodies of prisoners who had been killed. Cremation became the method of choice for Nazis to dispose of their victims.

Adam Czerniakow: Appointed by the Germans to be the head of the Judenrat in the Warsaw Ghetto. He was ordered to deliver 6,000 to 7,000 Jews daily for transfer to the camps in the east. When Czerniakow learned that even the children and elderly would not be spared, he decided to take his own life.

D-Day: June 6, 1944, when the Allies landed at Normandy on the northern coast of France to open a second front in Western Europe.

Dachau: First Nazi concentration camp. Established near Munich in 1933, Dachau operated continuously until April 1945. The camp generally housed enemies of the Nazi state: political prisoners, “Gypsies,” homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Jews. Inmates were forced to work in war production.

Glossary and Chronology

Death marches: In the winter of 1944-1945, when Allies were closing in on concentration camps, prisoners were marched hundreds of miles into the German interior without food, shelter, sanitation, or rest to keep them from falling into Allied hands.

Denial: Alleging something is not true, refusal of truth.

Deportation: Forced relocation. During World War II groups of Jews were deported from their homes, first to ghettos and later from ghettos to concentration, slave labor, and extermination camps.

Der Stürmer (The Stormer): A propaganda newspaper published from 1923 to 1945, by Julius Streicher, an avid supporter of Hitler and the Nazi party.

Disease: A pathological condition of a body part, an organ, or system resulting from various causes, such as infection, genetic defect, or environmental stress.

Karl Adolf Eichmann: SS-Obersturmbannführer (1906-1962) was head of the Department for Jewish Affairs in the Gestapo from 1941-1945 and was chief of operations for the deportation of three million Jews to extermination camps. In 1962 Eichmann was brought to trial in Israel under the Nazi Collaborators Law of 1950. After being found guilty on fifteen counts, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, he was executed in 1962.

Einsatzgruppen: Battalion-sized mobile killing units of the Security Police and SS Security Service that followed the German armies into the Soviet Union in June 1941. Their victims, primarily Jews, were shot to death and buried in mass graves from which they were later exhumed and burned. At least one million Jews were killed in this manner.

Ethnic Germans: Germans who lived as minorities outside the German Reich, mostly in Eastern Europe.

Euthanasia Program: Beginning in 1939 the deliberate extermination of people institutionalized with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, carried out as a measure to prevent contamination of the Nazi-defined Aryan race.

Evian Conference: A conference on the question of Jewish immigration and refugee problems held at Evian-les-Bains, France July 1938. Representatives of 32 countries met. The only agreement reached was that existing immigration quota systems in effect in the various countries would be upheld.

Extermination Camp (also called Death Camp): A Nazi facility where victims were killed on a mass industrialized scale and their bodies burned or buried in mass graves. The Nazis operated six extermination camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

“Final Solution to the Jewish Question”: A Nazi code phrasing referring to their systematic plan to murder every Jewish man, woman, and child in Europe.

Führer (leader): Hitler was the Reichsführer, or leader of the state.

Glossary and Chronology

Galicia: Geographic area consisting of Germany, Poland, and Central Europe.

Gas Chamber: A closed room in either a fixed or mobile space in which people are killed by means of poison gas that is piped in. The Nazis originally used carbon monoxide, but later found Zyklon B to be more efficient. Typically, fixed gas chambers were disguised as showers, and victims disrobed before entering, having been told they would be given a shower.

Genocide: (The United Nations Genocide Convention: Article II) Any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Gentile: Someone who is not of the Jewish faith; most often referring to a Christian.

Gestapo: An acronym for Geheime Staatspolizei, meaning Secret State Police. Prior to the outbreak of war, the Gestapo used brutal methods to investigate and suppress resistance to Nazi rule within Germany. After 1939, it was expanded into Nazi-occupied Europe.

Ghetto: A quarter in a city, especially a thickly populated slum area, inhabited by a minority group or groups, as a result of economic or social pressures; an area occupied by an isolated group; an isolated or segregated group, community or area.

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945): Head of the Nazi Party's Propaganda Ministry who manipulated newspapers and radio broadcasts to solidify support for Hitler.

Herman Göring (1893-1946): The military and economic chief of the Third Reich.

"Gypsies": The Roma and Sinti, nomadic people believed to have come originally from northwest India. Prejudice toward "Gypsies," who first appeared in Europe in the 1400s, was and is widespread. It is estimated that the Nazis killed more than 100,000 and as many as 500,000 Gypsies during World War II. The term "Gypsy" is now considered derogatory.

Heimatland (homeland): The country where you, your parents and grandparents were born.

Heinrich Himmler: Known as the Reichsführer-SS, head of the Gestapo and the Waffen-SS, Minister of the Interior from 1943-1945, and organizer of the mass murder of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945): Also referred to as Der Führer (leader) and Chancellor of the Third Reich, from 1933 until his death, by suicide, in 1945.

Hitler Youth (hitlerjugend): A youth movement under the Nazi party for boys under the Nazi party, which emphasized physical training, Nazi ideology and obedience to Hitler. Propaganda and material incentives were used to gain popularity. After 1939, "Aryan" boys of all ages were required to participate.

Glossary and Chronology

IG Farben: A major German chemical conglomerate made up of eight companies. It exploited over 350,000 slave laborers during the war to profit from the war effort. An IG Farben company also produced Zyklon B, which was used in the gas chambers of the extermination camps. After World War II, IG Farben was broken up into six separate companies.

Jehovah's Witnesses: A religious sect whose beliefs forbid them to swear allegiance to any worldly power. They thus were considered enemies of the Third Reich. About half of the 20,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany during World War II were put in concentration camps. About 2,500 died there.

Jewish Council: see Judenrat

JOINT: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; an organization founded in 1914 to provide emergency aid for European Jewish war victims.

Juden verboten (Jews forbidden): Jews are not tolerated.

Judenbann: A phrase indicating a ban on Jews and Jewish items.

Judenrat: Council of Jewish "elders" appointed and held responsible for carrying out "the exact and prompt implementation of directives" as issued by the Nazis. Some members believed that resistance should only be used as a last resort, while others were active members of the local underground and resistance movements. Members often faced impossible moral and ethical decisions which affected their communities.

Kapos: Camp prisoners who worked for the SS to supervise prisoner work crews. Nazi camps operated in part through a hierarchy in which prisoners had differing levels of authority. Using prisoners to help administer the camps allowed the Nazis to use fewer guards. Kapos were sometimes hardened German criminals and sometimes members of other prison populations. They received various benefits for cooperating with the Nazis. Some were vicious in their treatment of other prisoners.

Kehilla: An organization that had traditionally maintained Jewish religious institutions supported their functionaries and cared for the communities' needs.

Kiddush: The prayer recited over a cup of wine to consecrate the Sabbath or festival.

Kindertransport (child transport): The popular name of an exodus of unaccompanied children from Nazi-occupied Europe to England between 1938 and 1939.

Kishinev Pogrom: This pogrom in Russia began on the eve of Easter in 1903, when an accusation spread that Jews had murdered a Christian girl. An anti-Jewish riot ensued and by its end, forty-seven Jews and been killed and hundreds of Jewish homes and shops had been looted and destroyed.

Kol Nidre: The opening prayer on the eve of Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement).

Glossary and Chronology

Kommandant (commander): The top overseer of concentration camps who had complete authority over the treatment of prisoners.

Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass): On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis unleashed a wave of violence against German Jews, destroying hundreds of Jewish businesses, synagogues, and private homes, and arresting tens of thousands of Jews.

Labor camps: Locations where prisoners were made slave laborers working for the war effort.

Liquidated: A Nazi euphemism for eliminating a ghetto and its inhabitants by conducting massive deportations to concentration and extermination camps, or by murdering Jews on the outskirts of towns.

Łódź Ghetto (historically the Litzmannstadt Ghetto): The second-largest ghetto (after the Warsaw Ghetto). The ghetto managed to survive until August 1944, when the remaining population was transported to Auschwitz. It was the last ghetto in Poland to be liquidated.

Majdanek: A concentration and mass extermination camp in Lublin, eastern Poland. First established as a labor camp for Poles and Russian POW camp. It was later turned into an extermination camp for Jews. The Red Army liberated Majdanek in July 1944, but not before 250,000 men, women, and children had been killed.

Mauthausen: A camp for men, opened in August 1938, near Linz in northern Austria, Mauthausen was classified by the SS as a camp of utmost severity. Conditions were brutal, even by concentration camp standards. Nearly 100,000 prisoners of various nationalities were either worked or tortured to death at the camp before liberating American troops arrived in May 1945.

***Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*:** Hitler's memoir written while he was imprisoned in the Landsberg fortress in 1923. Published in 1925, the book outlines Hitler's ideas, beliefs, and plans for the future of Germany based on an ideology of Aryan racial superiority.

Dr. Josef Mengele: The infamous Auschwitz doctor, also known as the Angel of Death.

Mischlinge (half breed): Nazi term for persons having one Jewish parent or grandparent; part of the definition of Jewishness based on bloodlines that were established by the Nuremberg Laws. Accordingly many Germans of mixed ancestry faced anti-Semitic discriminations.

Musselmann: Concentration camp slang word for a prisoner who had given up fighting for life.

Molotov cocktails: A homemade petrol bomb consisting of a glass bottle partially filled with flammable liquid and a cloth rag fixed securely around the mouth. The bottle shatters on impact, spilling the flammable liquid over the target, which is then ignited by the burning rag. A common weapon used in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact: A pact signed by Germany and Russia that publically stipulated non-aggression between the two countries. Secretly, the pact contained articles that divided territories in Eastern Europe.

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Nazi: Acronym for Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei (N.S.D.A.P.), the political party that emerged in Munich after World War I. The party was taken over by Adolf Hitler in the early 1920s. The swastika was the party symbol.

Nuremberg Laws: The laws that first deprived German Jews of their citizenship and all pertinent, related rights. These laws effectively removed Jews from all spheres of German political, social, and economic life and established definitions of Jewishness based on bloodlines. In September 1935, from a direct order by Hitler, the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor* was enacted.

Pale of Settlement: A western border region of Imperial Russia in which permanent residence of Jews was allowed, extending from the Pale or demarcation line, to live near the border with Central Europe.

Partisan: A member of an organized body of fighters who attack or harass an enemy, especially within occupied territory; a guerrilla fighter.

Passover: The Jewish holiday that commemorates their liberation from slavery in Egypt. The holiday, which lasts for eight days, requires all Jews to place themselves spiritually in the shoes of their ancestors and remember the era of bondage in order to never allow such oppression to happen again.

Pearl Harbor: Japan attacked the United States by bombing Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. This was the catalyst that brought the United States into World War II against Japan, Germany, and Italy.

Perpetrator: An individual responsible for, acting, or directing abuse against a person or selected group.

Peyes: Curly side burns (it is the Chassidic custom never to cut them).

Pogrom: A Russian word meaning destruction; specifically now, destruction of Jewish life and property.

Propaganda: False or misleading information used to manipulate public opinion.

Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A major piece of anti-Semitic propaganda, first published in 1903 in a Russian newspaper. The Protocols stated that Jews were plotting world dominion. It gained great popularity after World War I and was translated into many languages, encouraging anti-Semitism in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. Long repudiated as an absurd and hateful lie, the book currently has been reprinted and is widely distributed by Neo-Nazis and others who are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel.

Rassenschande (race dishonor): A term of the Third Reich that referred to marriage or sexual relation between persons considered “Aryan” and Jewish. This was considered a severe crime.

Ravensbruck: Concentration camp for women opened in May 1939, fifty-six miles north of Berlin. An estimated 120,000 prisoners were inmates there, including many political prisoners, Jews, Gypsies, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Glossary and Chronology

Razzia (raid): raids were carried out among the Jews in of Amsterdam.

Reich (empire): The Third Reich was the term used by the Nazis to describe Germany under their rule. The first Reich was the Holy Roman Empire, which ended in 1806. The Second Reich was the German Empire of 1871-1918.

Reichsführer (state leader): The title Hitler gave himself in 1934 when he took on the role of president and chancellor of Germany.

Rosenstraße (Rose Street, Berlin): The remaining Jews in Berlin were rounded up on February 27, 1943 and interned at the Rosenstraße Jewish community center. The non-Jewish German wives of those imprisoned, arrived at Rosenstraße, and through protest demanded their men be released. Nazi officials, fearful of domestic unrest, released the men.

Righteous Among the Nations: A term applied to those non-Jews who, at the risk of their own lives, saved Jews from their Nazi persecutors. Formerly known as *Righteous Gentiles*.

Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski: Born in 1877 in Byelorussia. He was first involved in the factory business in Lodz, and then communal work. After the German occupation of Łódź, he was ordered to become the chairman of the Judenrat. On August 20, 1944, he and his family were deported to Auschwitz where he perished.

Munich Pact: Signed on September 29, 1938, between Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain. The Munich Pact outlined Hitler's demands for the secession of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to Germany.

SA (sturmbteilung, storm troopers): The brown-shirted militia that was the private army of the Nazi movement.

SD: Head of the security apparatus of the SS.

SS (schutzstaffel): Originally organized as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS, or secret police, was transformed into a giant organization under Heinrich Himmler. Although various SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.

Sachsenhausen: A concentration camp north of Berlin, Germany, which opened in 1936. The camp held Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, Jews, "Gypsies," and others, who worked in a brickyard and armaments plants. Many were executed.

Selection: Euphemism for the process carried out by German physicians to choose victims for extermination or forced labor.

Shtetl: The Yiddish word for a small town or village, usually used to refer to a Jewish community.

Slavic: Relating to speakers of the Slavic languages of Eastern Europe, including Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Polish.

Glossary and Chronology

Sobibor: Nazi extermination camp in eastern Poland. During its operation from May 1942 until October 1943, the camp executed 150,000 to 250,000 Jews. In October 1943 about 300 prisoners escaped from the camp, although most were eventually caught or killed. Soon thereafter, the camp was closed.

Sonderkommando (special commandos): Jewish death camp prisoners, whose job of a Sonderkommando was to remove bodies from gas chambers, burn them in camp crematoria, and dispose of the remains in order to hide the evidence.

St. Louis: A refugee ship that left Hamburg in the spring of 1939, bound for Cuba. When the ship arrived, due to visa difficulties, only twenty-two of the 1128 refugees were allowed to disembark. Initially, no country, including the United States, was willing to accept the others. The ship returned to Europe where most of the refugees were granted entry into England, Holland, France and Belgium.

Starvation: To become weak, suffer and die from lack of food.

Stereotype: An oversimplified generalization about a person or a group of people without regard for individual differences.

Sudetenland: Mainly German-speaking region that was part of Czechoslovakia between the two world wars. Annexed by Germany in October 1938.

Survivor: Within the context of the Holocaust, a survivor is someone who escaped death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

Swastika: An ancient Eastern symbol appropriated by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Synagogue: A meeting place for worship and religious study in the Jewish faith.

Terezín (Czech), Theresienstadt (German): Established early in 1942 outside Prague as a “model” ghetto, Terezín was not a sealed section of town, but rather an eighteenth-century Austrian garrison. It became a Jewish town, governed and guarded by the SS. The Nazis used Terezín show the International Red Cross how well Jews were being treated. For many thousands, however, Terezín, was only a station on the road to the extermination camps; others died of starvation and disease. The Red Army liberated Terezín on May 8, 1945.

Torah: A sacred symbol of Judaism, kept in a synagogue. Contains the first five books of the Bible.

Transit camp: A place where enemies of the Nazi state were held, pending their deportation to concentration and/or death camps.

Treblinka: A concentration camp opened in 1942 as a part of Aktion Reinhard. Treblinka operated as an extermination camp for only about 16 months but killed more than 800,000 Jews and several thousand “Gypsies.” The camp targeted primarily Jews from ghettos in central Poland.

Umschlagplatz: The square in the Warsaw Ghetto used as a collection point for the Jews to be loaded onto cattle cars for deportation to the camps.

Glossary and Chronology

Untermensch: A second-class citizen.

Underground: Organized group acting in secrecy to oppose the government or, during war, to resist occupying enemy forces.

Raoul Wallenberg (1912-?): Swedish diplomat who, in 1944, went to Hungary on a mission to save Jews by administering Swedish papers, passports and visas. He is credited with saving the lives of at least 30,000 people. After the liberation of Budapest, the Russians took him into custody and his fate remains unknown.

Wannsee Conference: On January 20, 1942, at a meeting in the Wannsee district of Berlin, SS leaders informed leaders of the German bureaucracy of the role they would play in implementing the Final Solution. Various ministries were assigned responsibilities for the deportation, forced labor, and mass extermination of European Jews.

Warsaw Ghetto: Established in November 1940, the Ghetto, surrounded by a wall, confined nearly 500,000 Jews. Almost 45,000 Jews perished in 1941, due to overcrowding, forced labor, starvation, and disease.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 19-May 16 1943): A twenty-eight day uprising to resist the deportation of the ghetto inhabitants to Treblinka. Led by Mordecai Arielewicz, 750 members of the ZOB participated in the battle against 2,054 German soldiers.

Wehrmacht: German armed forces during World War II.

Weimar Republic: Parliamentary democracy established after the First World War in Germany that ruled from 1919 to 1933.

Westerbork: Transit camp in northeastern Holland for almost 100,000 Jews who were deported between 1942 and 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, Theresienstadt, and Bergen-Belsen. Anne Frank and her family were held at Westerbork between August 8, 1944 and September 3, 1944, when they were put on the last transport to Auschwitz.

Winterhilfe (winter help): When Jewish families were deported to ghettos and camps, their homes were looted. Train loads of their finest articles, furniture, art, silver and porcelain was shipped to Germany for distribution.

Norbert Wollheim: The man who initiated the organization of the Kindertransport from Berlin. Wollheim escorted the children to England, and returned to Germany to continue his work.

Yeshiva: An institute of learning where students study sacred texts, primarily the Talmud.

Yiddish: A High German language with a mixture of vocabulary from Hebrew and the Slavic languages, written in Hebrew letters, and spoken mainly by Jews in eastern and central Europe and by Jewish emigrants from these regions and their descendants.

Glossary and Chronology

ZOB: The Jewish fighting organization of the Warsaw Ghetto, which worked with the Polish underground. Together they collected weapons for resistance, and traveled in and out of the Ghetto through the Warsaw sewer system.

ZZW: A Jewish military organization that emerged from the ZZW Polish Jewish youth group. They were part of the underground that contributed to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising against the Nazis. Their headquarters were in a shop above a tunnel, which led them from the Ghetto to the outside.

Zionism: An international political movement that originally supported the reestablishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine and continues primarily as support for the modern state of Israel.

Glossary and Chronology

1914-1918: WORLD WAR I (WWI)

Conflict between 1914 and 1918 fought mainly in Europe. On one side were the Allies (mainly France, Britain, Russia, and the United States). On the other side were the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey). Both Hungarian nationalism and German imperialism were among the causes. The Central Powers were defeated. The Treaty of Versailles that ended the war changed the face of Europe and the Middle East, toppling empires and replacing them with a variety of forms of government.

Timeline of the Holocaust (1933-1948)

1933

January:

- Hitler appointed Chancellor.

February:

- Hitler convinces President von Hindenburg to invoke an emergency clause in the Weimar Constitution that suspended the civil rights provisions in the existing German constitution.

March:

- Nazis open Dachau near Munich, to be followed by Buchenwald near Weimar in central Germany, Sachsenhausen near Berlin in northern Germany, and Ravensbrück for women.
- The German parliament passes the Enabling Act, which empowered Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.

April:

- Nazis boycott Jewish shops.
- Jews and political opponents excluded from university and governmental positions.

May:

- Nazi party members and others burn books written by Jews, political opponents of Nazis, and the intellectual avant-garde during the public rallies across Germany.

July:

- The Law on the Revocation of Naturalization strip Jewish immigrants from Poland to Germany of citizenship.
- The Law for Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases passes mandating forced sterilization of people with certain genetic defects.

September:

- Jews prohibited from owning land.

October:

- Jews prohibited as newspaper editors.

November:

- Laws against habitual/dangerous criminals pass, imprisonment in concentration camps follow.

1934

January:

- Jews banned from German Labor Front (Nazi labor organization)

May:

- About a year after it was published, the book *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (about the Armenian Genocide) is banned in Nazi Germany.

June/July:

Glossary and Chronology

-“The Nights of the Long Knives,” (June 30 - July 1, 1934) during which members of the Nazi party and police murder members of the Nazi leadership, army and others. Hitler declares the killings legal and necessary.

August:

-German President von Hindenburg dies. Hitler became Führer in addition to Reich chancellor with no legal limit to power.

October:

-Jehovah's Witness congregations from all over Germany declare their political neutrality but also affirm defiance of Nazi restrictions on the practice of their religion.

1935

April:

- The Nazi government bans the Jehovah's Witness organization and persecutes Jehovah's Witnesses because of their religious refusal to swear allegiance to the state.

May:

-Jews banned from the German military.

June:

-Forced abortions used to prevent passing on certain genetic defects.

-Nazi Party criminalizes male homosexual acts.

August:

-Jewish performers/ artists forced to join Jewish-only Cultural Unions.

September:

-Nuremberg Race Laws decreed.

1936

February:

-German Gestapo (secret police) operates above the law.

March:

-Germany invades the Rhineland in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. (March 7, 1936)

July:

-Prisoners and civilian workers begin construction of the concentration camp Sachsenhausen at Oranienburg near Berlin. By September, 1,000 prisoners are imprisoned there.

August:

-Olympic Games held in Berlin.

-Office established to combat homosexuality and discourage healthy women from having abortions.

October:

-Hitler and Mussolini form the Rome-Berlin Axis.

1937

January:

-Jews banned from many professions, including accountancy and dentistry; Jews forbidden to teach non-Jewish Germans.

July/August:

-Buchenwald concentration camp opens.

1938

March:

Glossary and Chronology

-The Anschluss (March 12-13, 1938): After invading Austria, the Third Reich declares it a province of Germany.

-Mauthausen opens.

April:

-Aryan “front-ownership” of Jewish businesses prohibited.

-Jews required to register wealth and property.

July:

-Jews prohibited from trading and other commercial enterprises.

-Jews over the age of 15 were required to apply for identity cards.

-Delegates from thirty-two countries and refugee aid organizations attend the Evian Conference, in France from July 6-15, to discuss immigration quotas for refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. The United States, among most other countries, is unwilling to ease immigration restrictions.

August:

-Nazis destroy synagogue in Nuremberg.

-The names Sarah (for Jewish women) and Israel (for Jewish men) required on all legal documents.

-Adolf Eichmann established the Office of Jewish Emigration in Vienna to increase the pace of forced emigration.

September:

-Jews prohibited from practice of law.

-Britain, France, Italy, and Germany sign the Munich Pact, forcing Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas to Germany.

October:

-Red “J” required on passports of Jews.

-Germany occupies Sudetenland (part of Czech lands with significant German speaking population) under the stipulations of the Munich Pact. (October 1-10, 1938)

November:

-Jewish students banned from schools.

-Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass (November 9-10, 1938): Jewish synagogues and property were destroyed.

1939-1945: WORLD WAR II

An international conflict between 1939 and 1945 involving nearly every major power in the world. World War II was fought between the Axis nations (Germany, Italy, and Japan) and Allied nations (Great Britain, Russia, the United States, and others). War was officially declared in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, but in the years preceding 1939, Axis countries encroached on their neighboring countries numerous times. Initially, the primary combatants were Germany and Italy on one side and Great Britain and France on the other. France had earlier pledged to aid Poland, if invaded. Russia, which had previously signed a nonaggression pact with the Nazis, joined the war in 1940 when Germany invaded it despite the pact. The United States entered the war after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in late 1941. Initially, the Axis forces won many battles. U.S. and Soviet armaments production was relatively safe from attack because it was far away from the front lines (unlike Axis industries, which were frequently bombed). The war ended in Europe in May 1945, when the Allies defeated Germany. Japan surrendered in September 1945, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japanese cities.

Glossary and Chronology

1939

January:

-Hitler declares in Reichstag speech, "If war erupts it will mean the extermination of European Jews."
(January 30, 1939)

March:

-Germany seizes remaining unoccupied areas Czechoslovakia.
-Slovakia declares itself an independent state under protection of Nazi Germany.

April:

-Jews lose rights as tenants; relocated to Jewish households.

May/June:

-Cuba and the United States refused to accept more than 900 refugees (almost all Jewish) aboard the *St. Louis*, forcing its return to Europe.

August:

-The Soviet and German governments sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact in which they agree to divide up eastern Europe.

September:

-Germany invades Poland. (September 1, 1939)
-England and France declare war.
-Germany and Soviet Union divide Poland.
-Jews forbidden outdoors after 8pm in winter and 9pm in summer.
-Jews forbidden wireless radios.

October:

-Euthanasia of sick and disabled in Germany begins.
-Jews in Poland over age 10 required to wear yellow star.

November:

-German authorities begin the forced deportation of Jews from West Prussia and Poland to locations in the General Government.

1940

February:

-First deportation of German Jews to occupied Poland.

April:

-German authorities order the first major Jewish ghetto, in Łódź, Poland, to be sealed off.
-Germany invades Denmark and Norway.

May:

-Germany invades France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.
-SS authorities establish the Auschwitz concentration camp (Auschwitz I.)

July and August:

-Anti-Jewish measures implemented in Vichy (France) and Romania.

October:

-Germany invades Romania.

November:

-Krakow and Warsaw (Poland) ghettos sealed.

1941

March:

-Germany invades Bulgaria.

Glossary and Chronology

April-June:

- Germany invades Yugoslavia, Greece and Soviet Union.
- German mobile killing squads called *Einsatzgruppen* are assigned to identify, concentrate, and kill Jews behind the front lines.

July-September:

- Ghettos established throughout the Soviet Union, including Kovno, Lvov and Vilna.

July:

- German authorities establish a ghetto in Minsk in the German-occupied Soviet territories.
- Majdanek opens.
- Reich Marshal Hermann Göring charges SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service), to take measure for the implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”

August:

- Kovno ghetto sealed off.

September:

- First tests of Zyklon B gas begin at Auschwitz.
- German Jews required to wear yellow star; deportations begin.
- Mass murder of over 33,000 Jews at Babi-Yar (near Kiev, Soviet Union.)
- German authorities establish two ghettos in Vilna.

September and October:

- Mass murders at Kamenets-Podolsk and Odessa, Soviet Union.

October:

- German Jews forbidden to emigrate.
- German authorities begin the deportation of Jews from the German Reich to the ghettos of Łódź, Riga, and Minsk.
- After requiring all Kovno ghetto inhabitants to assemble at Demokratu Square, 9,200 people are shot in an event called the “Great Action.”

November:

- Theresienstadt (Terezín) opens.
- SS authorities establish a second camp at Auschwitz, called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II.

December:

- Chelmno opens. Gassing operations begin here and at five other camps.
- Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941): The United States declares war on Japan. As a result, Germany and Italy declare war on the United States soon after.

1942

January:

- Mass killings begin at Auschwitz.
- Jews deported from Łódź to Chelmno.

-Wannsee Conference (January 20, 1942): Delegates of the Nazi party coordinate “Final Solution to Jewish Question.”

March:

- Deportations to newly opened Belzec begin.
- Deportation of Slovak and French Jews to Auschwitz.

April:

Glossary and Chronology

- Deportations to Majdanek begin.
- German Jews forbidden on public transport.

May:

- Sobibor opens.
- SS officials perform the first selection of victims for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center.

June:

- Jews in France, Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Slovakia and Romania required to wear yellow star.
- Extermination by mobile gas vans begins.
- Lidice (village in Czechoslovakia) liquidated in retaliation for assassination of SS leader Heydrich.

July:

- Deportation of Jews from Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Norway, Germany, and Terezín to Auschwitz begins.
- Treblinka opens.
- Deportation of Jews from Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka begins.
- Himmler gives permission to start sterilization experiments at Auschwitz.

October:

- Jews in concentration camps in Germany sent to Auschwitz and Majdanek extermination camps.

December:

- Belzec dismantled (600,000 killed.)
- Sterilization experiments on women at Birkenau begin.

1943

- Einsatzgruppen (mobile extermination squads) have killed over 1,000,000 Jews

January:

- SS and police units deported Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center. Members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) fought against the deportation in armed revolt.
- Warsaw Ghetto uprisings

February:

- Germans surrender at Stalingrad. (February 2, 1943)
- Greek Jews ordered into ghettos.

March-November:

- Ghettos of Krakow, Bialystok, Vilna, Minsk, Riga liquidated.

March –December:

- Jews from Greece, Rome and Vienna deported to Auschwitz.

April:

- Warsaw Ghetto uprising; survivors deported to Treblinka and Majdanek or to forced labor camps.
- Exterminations at Chelmno end (300,000 killed.)

June:

- Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS, orders the liquidation of all ghettos and deportation of Jews to concentration camps.

August:

- Jewish prisoners revolt at Treblinka; 200 who escape are hunted down. Exterminations end at Treblinka (870,000 killed.)

September:

- Family transports from Terezín to Auschwitz begin.
- SS authorities convert Kovno ghetto into a concentration camp, Concentration Camp Kauen.
- SS authorities order the final deportation of Jews from the Vilna ghetto.

Glossary and Chronology

October:

- 300 prisoners escape from Sobibor (50 survive) and exterminations cease (250,000 killed.)
- German authorities declare Minsk ghetto officially liquidated.

November:

- German SS and police units implement Operation Harvest Festival where several labor camps are liquidated and over 42,000 Jews are killed.

1944

March:

- Nazis occupy Hungary.

April-July:

- Greek and Hungarian Jews deported to Auschwitz.

June:

- D-Day, June 6th.
- Massive Soviet offensive destroys the German front in Belorussia.
- SS authorities liquidate Kauen concentration camp in response to the Soviet offensive.

July:

- Soviet troops liberate Majdanek.

August:

- Lodz ghetto liquidated and its remaining occupants sent to Auschwitz.
- Members of the Slovak resistance revolt.

October:

- Auschwitz Sonderkommandos (Jewish prisoners who removed corpses from gas chambers) revolt.
- Last transport from Terezin to Auschwitz.
- Last use of gas at Auschwitz occurs.

November:

- Nazis dismantle gas chambers at Auschwitz.

1945

January:

- In advance of Soviet troops, SS units force remaining prisoners at Auschwitz on the "Death March" toward Germany
- Soviets liberate Budapest, Warsaw and Auschwitz

April-May:

- Allies liberate Ohrdruf, Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Mauthausen.
- Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. (April 30, 1945)
- German units in Berlin surrenders to Soviet forces. (May 2, 1945)
- Germans surrenders unconditionally in the West and East. May 7-8, 1945)

November:

- Nuremberg trials (November 14, 1945): An international tribunal prosecutes twenty-one major Nazi leaders for war crimes.