

What do you know about the Holocaust?

Student 1: She knows a lot about what took place in the concentration camps, but she doesn't know a lot about the war outside of Jewish life.

Student 2: A better question to ask would be "How would you describe the Holocaust?"

Student 3: He separates WW2 (actual war) with the Holocaust (Jewish aspect of the war). He learnt a lot about the Holocaust in school, through his great-grandparents who survived Auschwitz, and from reading Anne Frank's diary in school. He also did research on his own about the battles with Japan and Germany. He thinks it would be interesting to bring those two things together (meaning WW2 and the Holocaust).

Student 4: She separates WW2 and the Holocaust because they are two different events. The Holocaust narrows down to a genocide of the Jewish people, whereas WW2 is a whole different topic with different people. The Holocaust in a broad perspective was an attempt to exterminate the Jewish people (through concentration camps), a group of people viewed as dirty. The Holocaust is a Jewish "thing" and it affects us still today.

Student 5: She knows a bunch about the Holocaust because members of her family are Holocaust survivors. She thinks pre-war is also very important to talk about and how Hitler rose to power (she said she didn't know much about it until she traveled to Europe and saw for herself). The end of the war is also very important with the bombing of the train tracks and liberation. There is so much more than just the concentration camps. It's about how one group of people was able to exterminate 6 million Jews as well as non-Jews.

Student 6: Everyone learns different things about the Holocaust -- She learned more of the Jewish aspects because her family has Holocaust survivors. She didn't know a lot about the pre-war and after-war or the military aspect of it. It is important to bring the Holocaust and WW2 together because it is one event.

Student 7: He says that sometimes people scratch the surface of the Holocaust by thinking of the Nazis, the camps, and Hitler. But he says that it is important to also learn about Kristallnacht and the kinder transports.

Teacher: Emphasized the incremental process in which the Nazi's were able to legalize the "Final Solution" (Wannsee Conference)

Conclusion:

- Defined the Holocaust as a Jewish “thing”
- Suggested a better way to ask the question: “How would you describe the Holocaust?”
- Separated the events: World War 2 (actual war) from the Holocaust (Jewish aspect of the war)
- Associated the Holocaust with family members (survivors of the Holocaust)

- Uninformed about the pre-war and post-war history of WW2
- Referenced the Wannsee Conference for legal basis of the “Final Solution”

How and why did ordinary people across Europe contribute to the persecution of their Jewish neighbors?

Student 4: She says it was a very long process. This year in her Jewish History class she is learning about antisemitism in Europe in the 1700s and seeing how it evolves. She notices a rise in nationalism and snakes the connections to the Holocaust. Antisemitism dates back hundreds of years before. She says it is important to note that these social and political attitudes shape everything for decades and centuries to come. “It is not like it just happens. it is a very slow and gradual process”, she says.

Student 6: She says that it was a very gradual process that started with Jews having to wear yellow stars, and nobody did anything about it and no one thought it was going to be so bad. These people were also manipulated by the Nazis which resulted in citizens becoming bystanders (seeing something happen and not doing anything about it; however still contributing to the problem) She believes this was the way people hurt the Jews without physically or intentionally taking part.

Student 3: He thinks the primary reason people did this was because of a real hate for Jews, Blacks, and Gays, and a love for the Aryan race. The second reason was because of nationalism and being proud to be German. Importantly, he referenced how in teacher's class, we learnt about how not every Confederate soldier fought in the Civil War because they agreed with the ideals and beliefs of the Confederates. Instead, they did this because they wanted to fight with their people and be the heroes in their households. He says that the third reason was because most people cared more about their families than other people. They wanted self-preservation rather than hiding a Jew, especially if it meant endangering their own lives. He also talked about a small percentage of people, like Oskar Schindler, who tried to save the Jews. He ended with saying that it was important to discuss both aspects.

Student 5: She says that because Jews have been a target since the beginning of time, they were easy people to attack since they were not numerous in size, didn't have their own military, and didn't have a homeland to go to. She also talks about the way that the Nazis brainwashed other people to make the Jews look evil and terrible.

Teacher: He talks about a class he took called "Third Reich and the Jews" at UCLA. He mentions his professor, a Holocaust survivor, referencing that for the ordinary Aryan German, the era between (1933-1939) was "the best of life". And for the Germans who lived through the Weimar Republic which was a fiasco, Hitler brought them something that they wanted. He brought them back national pride, unity,

purpose, income; which were all important. People praised and adored Hitler because of these things. He also talks about self-preservation, and that we want to protect what is close to us, which may be a human characteristic.

Conclusion:

- Emphasized the opinions of Europeans formulated before the war towards Jews
- Manipulated bystanders and the general public into justifying the Nazis' actions
- Defined the power of nationalism and propaganda towards Aryan identity
- Introduced Hitler's role after the Weimar Republic
- Aligned with the Nazis for self-preservation, a human characteristic

How did the United States Government respond to the events of the Holocaust?

Student 8: He says that the U.S. played an isolationist kind of role and that at the time, they did not want to get involved with matters in Europe because it didn't affect them. They also did not accept Jews who were fleeing Europe (including declining ships filled with Jews trying to escape). They did not get involved in the war until the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Student 2: From what he learned, the U.S. was very isolated and forced to get involved after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He strongly believes that outside the concern of the American people, that the American government and military did not care about what was happening during the Holocaust and the extermination of the Jews.

Student 1: She read that the U.S. cut down on the number of visas that were given out, and that it was extremely hard to get into the country. The worst part was that they were aware of what was going on and completely ignored it.

Student 5: Her great-grandparents were in the United States during the Holocaust and she asked them in an interview what they knew about what was going on in Europe. They both told her that they were well aware, but not to the full extent. She says that people were aware but did not step in to help. She says that it is hard to hear that considering that she lives in America and that it is her country. America contributed to so many more killings than there had to be.

Student 4: The Americans swept in and liberated the camps. Everyone praised and glorified them, calling them their saviors and heroes. However, in reality the Americans did turn people away and there was still this attitude of “no Jews allowed”. She said that we must recognize that America did play a role in this. By not doing anything (while still being a powerful country) they didn’t free the camps because they were good people, but because it was in their best interest during the war.

Conclusion:

- Isolated role during WW2 until Pearl Harbor
- Concluded that the US knew about the Holocaust and did not care about the Jews
- US had a self interest in liberating the camps due to their involvement in the war, but not due to their interest in saving the Jews

How would you feel if the police targeted you based on your identity?

Students: “Scared, angry, I’d lose all hope...”

Teacher: He mentions that depending on the context (especially asking this question to students in public schools), people will say that the police already target them for who they are (he said it would be a very interesting discussion).

Student 8: He says that with respect to targeting Jews, if this started happening, he would be very upset. However, he says it is also hard to target Jews today because they are not visibly Jewish (like we are not wearing a yellow star identifying us as Jews).

Student 6: She disagrees with Student 8 and says that this can happen to anyone anywhere. She mentions that we will be the last generation to know Holocaust survivors, and that there are already people who deny the Holocaust ever happened. Once there is no living proof, it gives people the initiative to target Jews more. It is not a question of if this will ever happen again but a question of when. She says that because we as Jews (and our ancestors) know what it is like to be targeted for who we are, we must show compassion and hope to people who are dealing with that now.

Conclusion:

- Expressed emotions of fear, anger, and lost of hope
- Connected the current events of “Black Lives Matter” to the question
- Identified this issue as “already happening in society”
- Recognized our responsibility as the last generation to know Holocaust survivors and to overcome history repeating itself
- Demonstrated our need to remain compassionate towards those being targeted for their identities

**What do you think is the difference between historical justice and social justice?
How are you able to participate in both?**

Student 4: The first thing that comes to mind for historical justice is the creation of laws by the government for the people. In comparison, she believes that social justice is the way people are actually being treated by those laws in society.

Student 6: She recognizes that neither social or historical justice were demonstrated in the Holocaust.

Student 5: She talks about the recent voting rules passed in Georgia and how she was shocked by it. She believes that historical and social justice do connect with each other, and as a result, does not see such a big difference between the two.

Conclusion:

- Recognized that this was the most difficult question to answer
- Identified historical justice as the law (the result of the Civil Rights Movement) versus social justice (how Blacks are actually being treated)
- Recognized that neither historical nor social justice were apparent in the Holocaust
- Distinguished little difference between the two

Have you ever asked yourself how art exhibited in a museum gets there? Do you ever think about the information that the museum provides about the art on display?

Student 2: He does not think that way when it comes to art pieces. However, when it comes to historical artifacts, he does ask himself, "How did the museum get this historical artifact from 300 years ago, I'm sure it was not legal." He mentions how colonialists go and take all this loot, and how they are now exhibiting these pieces in museums today. He says that there is probably the same dynamic with Jewish artwork and artifacts from the Holocaust.

Student 3: He thinks context usually adds to art. He always thought that the context of art would always be about the life and story of the artist, but he thinks the journey on how they found the art, adds intricacies and complexities that will impact how people view it as a whole.

Student 7: He has never thought about art not rightfully being displayed in a museum, but has thought about this for artifacts. He recognizes that this is a problem, and that students need to be educated about these artworks, where they came from, and their meanings. He then poses a question of what makes something a historical artifact? Is art a historical artifact?

Conclusion:

- What constitutes a historical artifact, and is it art?
- Referenced the word "artifact" as an important factor in distinguishing whether a museum rightfully acquired the display piece. The word "artifact" implied that the cultural object was looted by colonialism or imperialism. Art was distinguished differently, and often perceived as the story of the artist and its piece
- Recognized the value of the provenance history and journey of the art piece and how it affects how people view it