

Unit One: Before the Holocaust

Background Information for Teachers:

Obviously, the causes of the Holocaust reach back farther in time than the beginning of the Nazi era. It is not as if anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism was an invention of Hitler and the Nazi Party. The purpose of this unit is to briefly examine the long history that came before the Nazi era to discover the deep roots of the Holocaust. This is not meant to be a detailed history, but to provide a foundation upon which students can begin to construct a conceptual framework. As you teach this unit, help students to understand the following points:

Main Points:

1. Jews lived in Europe for centuries prior to the Holocaust. They were not outsiders or newcomers.
2. Jews were not one single, homogeneous group. They lived in a variety of places. They spoke several languages. They embraced their cultural, religious, and national identities in numerous ways. They were adherents of widely divergent political and social philosophies. It is incorrect to think of them, as the Nazis did, as if they were all the same.
3. Jews faced discrimination and persecution (mostly, but not exclusively, as a minority religious group) throughout European history. This is the main reason they were dispersed so widely across Europe. Most of the Nazis' attacks against Jews followed the patterns established in this earlier history.
4. The history of the Jews in Europe was not uniformly bleak. There were times and places where Jews found greater acceptance and opportunity. There was always hope (until the devastation wrought by the Nazis) that things could and would change for the better.
5. Germany faced real and significant problems in the post World War I era. Hitler and the Nazis portrayed themselves as strong leaders who, alone, possessed explanations and solutions. By their willingness to aggressively address these problems, the Nazis gained credibility with many people. Even though their explanations were lies, and their solutions criminal, the problems themselves were real.
6. The Nazis constructed their program in such a way as to appeal to a wide audience. As a result, not everyone who supported them did so for the same reasons. It is incorrect to assume that the anti-Semitism of the Nazis was the only feature of their ideology that attracted followers. It is also important to note, however, that their anti-Semitism was openly proclaimed. It was never hidden. No follower of the Nazis could credibly claim to have been unaware of it.

Jewish Life in Europe – “Camera of My Family”

The film Camera of My Family serves as an excellent introduction to the Holocaust for several reasons:

1. It gives a brief overview of the entire Holocaust era.
2. It tells the story of a Jewish family with deep roots in German history. As a result, students will see that Jews had a life in Germany before the Holocaust. They belonged in and contributed to the culture in which they lived. This perspective will help students avoid the mistake of seeing Jews only as victims.
3. Catherine Noren uses family photos and reminiscences to tell this story. Almost all students will be able to connect with her perspective since they also have family histories and probably have relatives they have met primarily through photos and/or stories.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Recognize that Jewish people had a long history in Germany prior to the Holocaust.
2. Recognize the universal elements of Catherine Noren’s story by comparing her remembrances of her family with their own.
3. Understand the destructiveness of the Nazi anti-Semitic program by witnessing its impact on Catherine Noren’s family.

Materials:

1. Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust
2. Handout # 1: “The Strauss Family Tree” - Three pages Handouts 1,2,3
*Reproduced from The Camera of My Family, pages 5-7
Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1976.*
(Note: The Strauss Family Tree traces Catherine’s relatives through her grandmother Meta Strauss-Wallach. The video also includes many relatives from the side of her grandfather Moritz, but his family tree was too extensive to reproduce here.)
3. Handout # 4: Camera of My Family Discussion Questions
4. Video: Camera of My Family (19 minutes)
5. Handout # 5: Blank Family Tree Form (optional)

Procedures:

1. Introduce the topic by reading aloud the brief selection from pages 2 and 4 from Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust or summarize the content.

2. Introduce the video by telling students that they are about to learn about a German-Jewish family that was victimized in the Holocaust. Identify the narrator as a Holocaust survivor whose immediate family emigrated from Germany when she was just a few months old.
3. Emphasize the fact that her family history in Germany goes back much farther than the video. Records can be traced with certainty to the early 1600's.
4. Pass out Handouts # 1 and 2
5. Show the video.
6. Allow students time to complete the worksheet. Discuss the student responses as a group.

Extension Activities:

Students may also value the experience of investigating their own family histories. The blank family tree form can serve as a starting point. Students can begin in class by jotting down information that they know. They can ask parents and perhaps even grandparents for more details at home. This can be a quick and informal exercise or it can be an extended project. Students could even bring in photos and family stories and create decorative family tree displays.

- **Note:** For the purpose of this activity, it doesn't matter which "branch" of their family tree students might choose to investigate. It also doesn't matter whether they are related by birth or by adoption. The purpose is to highlight our connections to the people and places of our past and to highlight the fact that all people have these connections (even if they are not as well known and documented as Catherine Noren's).

A Brief History of European Anti-Semitism: Using Maps to Understand History

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Interpret data from the five maps that show the scope of Jewish life in Europe throughout the past two millennia.
2. Compare the maps to understand the impact of anti-Semitic attitudes and actions on Jewish people and communities.

Materials:

1. Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust
2. Holocaust: Maps and Photographs by Martin Gilbert

Note: There are 15 copies of this book in the Middle School trunk. Students may be divided into groups of two or three for this activity.

- Map 1 “Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Europe”
 - Map 2 “A Thousand Years of Jewish Culture and Communal Life”
 - Map 3 “Some Early Records of Town Life in Europe before 1600”
 - Map 4 “Persecution, Expulsion and Refuge, 1000 – 1600 AD”
 - Map 5 “Massacre, Pogrom and Emigration, 1600 – 1920”
3. Handout: “Map Activity Questions”

Procedures:

1. As an introduction to the topic, read aloud the brief selection on pages 6-7 of Tell Them We Remember or summarize the content. (Note: Be prepared, if necessary, to explain more about the history of Christian anti-Judaism. Some students may be very curious. For some, this may be a challenging topic. Keep in mind that most students who have a Christian background will not have been taught hatred of Jews at church or home. Most Christian denominations have rejected the blatant anti-Judaism that was common before the Holocaust. All religions change over time. Prejudice in the past (even the recent past) does not necessarily imply prejudice today. Also point out that the Nazis did not persecute Jews on a religious basis, though they built on the tradition of religious prejudice.)
2. Introduce the activity by telling students that they are going to learn about the long history of prejudice against Jews using the evidence that is apparent from a collection of maps.

3. Divide students into groups and pass out the books.
4. Pass out the handout entitled, “Map Activity Questions”
5. Allow students sufficient time to complete the questions. Discuss the responses as a group.
6. Some of the questions allow for opportunities for students to express opinions. A good example of this is question 3 from map 3. Students may disagree on how many events show evidence of prejudice. Invite students to explain their answers.

Extension Activity:

Some students may be interested in doing additional research on topics related to the history of European anti-Semitism. A few suggestions for topics are:

- Famous Jewish-Americans whose ancestors came to the U.S. fleeing persecution (before the Nazi era).
- Anti-Semitism in European art and literature
- The fate of Jews during the Crusades
- The Spanish Inquisition
- The Dreyfus Affair (from France)

Note: These are complex research topics. They will probably not be suitable for all students.

The Appeal of the Nazis: “The Wave”

The Wave seeks to answer the question, “How could so many people have supported the Nazis and later claim to have been uninvolved?” The video uses the story of an American high school class to explore the emotional appeals of Nazism. In addition to the factors explored in the video, students should also be made aware of the following reasons for the allure of Nazism:

1. The Anti-Semitism of the Nazis appealed to some people because there was a long history of prejudice against Jews. That gave the Nazis the credibility of expressing attitudes that were in the mainstream of the German and European traditions. There were two main types of anti-Semitism that had resonance in Germany. The Nazis didn’t think of the Judaism as a religious identity. They were racists, but they were able to use some of the language and images of Religious anti-Judaism to broaden the appeal of their racial anti-Semitism.
 - Religious Anti-Judaism: (contempt for Jews based on religious and cultural identity) This type of prejudice has been a part of Europe for approximately two thousand years. It has not been restricted to any particular time or place. For example, most Christian churches did not repudiate the teaching of contempt for Jews until the latter part of this century.
 - Racial Anti-Semitism: (based on an erroneous definition of Jews as a racial group) This form of prejudice considers the Jews to be an inferior race and gained popularity in the latter 19th century. (Of course, Jews are not a racial group at all.) There were several anti-Semitic political parties in Europe dating from this period. Adolf Hitler was exposed to them as a young man. He almost certainly began to develop his attitudes then.
2. Most Germans were deeply hurt by their country's defeat and surrender in WWI. Many blamed the new government of the Weimar Republic for accepting the humiliating terms of the Versailles Treaty. War reparations placed a crushing burden on the German economy. Inflation was rampant. Many political parties vied for power, resulting in weak, unstable coalition governments. Thus, the experiment with democratic government in Germany began with little credibility. Some, unable to believe that the German army was militarily defeated, claimed that Germany was "stabbed in the back" by liberals, Socialists, Communists, and Jews.
3. The Great Depression hit Germany in 1929 with devastating force. Millions were unemployed and desperate. The inability of the Weimar government to bring relief provided the Nazi Party with the opportunity to portray itself as the only hope for Germany.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Use the story of “The Wave” to explore the reasons for the popularity of the Nazis.
2. List reasons why some people didn’t support Nazi rule, using the Laurie character as an analogy for dissenters in Germany.
3. Draw contemporary lessons from the story of “The Wave” and from the experience of Nazi Germany.

Materials:

1. Handout: 6 The Wave - Discussion Questions
2. Video: The Wave (45 minutes)

Procedures:

1. Introduce the video by telling students that they are about consider one of the most difficult and important questions about the Holocaust, “Why did so many people support Hitler and the Nazis?” Ask students to volunteer possible responses to this question. Ask them to remember their responses to see if they still have the same opinion after the film.
2. Show the video.
3. Allow students time to complete the worksheet. Discuss the student responses as a group.

Extension Activity:

As a mini-research project to facilitate further group discussion, ask students to find examples from American history where similar group dynamics were at work as were evident in “The Wave”.

Emphasize that this activity is not seeking to compare other events with the Holocaust, but that it is an attempt to explore examples of human behavior in other contexts. Ask students to justify their choices.

A Primary Source from Nazi Germany: The Appeal of the Nazis (Part Two)

Alfons Heck was only a little boy when he became enamored with Adolf Hitler. We might be tempted to dismiss his attraction to youth and inexperience except for that so many adults shared his passion. The reading selection at the heart of this lesson describes the pageantry and emotional appeal of the Nazis. If you read between the lines, you may also discern the underlying conditions in Germany that made it possible. It should also be noted that it took Alfons Heck about three decades to fully acknowledge the evil of the Nazi regime and what happened to him as a part of it. He has spoken to school groups together with a Jewish Holocaust survivor to share his “view from the inside” with students.

Objectives:

The students will:

1. Analyze the methods Adolf Hitler used to appeal to his followers.
2. Understand that a person’s perspective plays a large role in their interpretation of people and events.
3. Recognize that in any situation involving communication, part of the responsibility lies with the listener to discern the truth.

Materials:

1. A copy of the quotation from *A Child of Hitler* by Alfons Heck (Handout 7)
2. The “Appeal Of the Nazis: A First Hand Account” worksheet (Handout 8)
3. [The Nazi Years](#) - page 26

Procedures:

1. Introduce this activity by telling students that they are going to read a short account written by a former Nazi. Tell them to pay attention; not only to his words, but also to any hints he may give about how he feels now.
2. Pass out the handout and the worksheet.
3. Allow students time to read the selection and to complete the questions.
4. Discuss the student responses in class. Pay particular attention to question 5. Ask students what Heck meant when he wrote, “We never had a chance.”
5. Read the quote from Georg Zeidler (an adult storm trooper) found on page 26 of *The Nazi Years*.
6. Conduct a class discussion comparing and contrasting this statement to the one by Alfons Heck.

Extension Activity:

If you want to follow up on other reasons why people may have been willing to follow the Nazis, it may help to look at the official Nazi Party Program. You will find it on pages 28-30 of The Nazi Years. Ask students to number a blank sheet of paper from 1-25. Have them create two columns by drawing a vertical line down the center of the paper. Label the left column "Approve" and the right column "Disapprove". Read each point of the 25 point party program aloud, asking students to mark on their paper whether they would approve or not. You may have to simplify them, rather than read them exactly as written.

Many people are surprised at how "normal" some of the planks of the Nazi Party Program were. It should be noted, however, that there were many items on this list the Nazis never sought to implement. Some seem to have been for propaganda purposes only.

The Strausses



Emilie Cahn

My great-grandmother Emilie Cahn was the fifth of Sibilla and Salomon's nine children.

Born in 1851, she spent her childhood in Remagen. Although it was unusual for a woman in her time to leave home before she was married, her father was ambitious for her to better herself, and so, as a young woman, she left the small village and went to work as a salesgirl in a larger, neighboring town, where she met her husband-to-be, Samuel Strauss.

This photograph was taken about a year before she and Samuel were married.

Emilie Cahn, ca. 1873



Samuel Strauss

My great-grandfather Samuel Strauss was also the fifth of nine children. He was born in 1847 in the Prussian town of Solingen. After the Franco-Prussian War, in which he served as second lieutenant, he worked first as a traveler (traveling salesman), during which time

he met Emilie, who was working in one of the stores that he visited. After their marriage they settled in Bochum, a flourishing coal-mining town, where Samuel opened a store for millinery and men's wear.

He is photographed here in his field uniform: eighth company, fifty-seventh regiment.

Samuel Strauss, 1871

Handout 2

Generation



MARX CAHN
b. ? , Bavaria
d. 1813, Remagen
m.
Sibilla Abraham
b. ? , Breibach
d. 1848



GOTTFRIED CAHN
b. 1786
d. 1856, Remagen
m. 1812
Rosetta Callman
b. 1781, Altenkirchen
d. 1869



SALOMON CAHN
b. 1813
d. 1886, Remagen
m. 1842
Sibilla Gottschalk
b. 1816, Thüringen
d. 1904



ALFRED STRAUSS
b. 1875, Bochum
d. 1891, Bochum

HEDE STRAUSS
b. 1876, Bochum
d. 1953, Israel
m.
Arthur Gotthelf
b. 1872, Solingen
d. 1926, Remscheid

ELSE STRAUSS
b. 187?, Bochum
d. 187?, Bochum

OSKAR STRAUSS
b. 1880, Bochum
d. 1942*
m.
Agnes Zunsheim
b. 1892, Duisberg
d. 1942*

RICHARD STRAUSS
b. 1885, Bochum
d. 1942*



TRUDE GOTTHELF
b. 1899, Remscheid
d. 1942*
m.
Jack Cohen
b. ? , Deventer (Holland)
d. 1942*

FRANZ GOTTHELF
b. 1903, Remscheid
d. 1973, Leominster, Mass.
m.
Ruth Wolff
b. 1916, Hamburg
— Leominster, Mass.

ULLA GOTTHELF
b. 1916, Remscheid
d. 1961, Israel
m.
Zeev Jahalom
b. ?
— Israel

WERNER STRAUSS
(Binyamin Banai)
b. 1924, Remscheid
— Israel
m.
Rosa Klejn
b. 1930, Sarain (Belgium)
— Israel



Two children (One child*)

Four children

Three children

*Died in concentration camps

Handout 3

The Strauss Family Tree



EMILIE CAHIN
b. 1851, Remagen
d. 1935, Frankfurt

m. 1874



SAMUEL STRAUSS
b. 1847, Gräfrath
d. 1922, Düsseldorf



MORITZ WALLACH
b. 1879, Geseke
d. 1963, Lime Rock, Conn.

m. 1908

META STRAUSS
b. 1883, Bochum
— Lime Rock, Conn.



FRITZ STRAUSS
b. 1890, Bochum
d. 1926, Bavaria
m.
Erna Steinhart
b. 18?
d. 19?

GRETE STRAUSS
b. 1892, Bochum
— New York City
m. 1918
Theo Loeb
b. 1888, Frankfurt
d. 1952, New York City



ROLF WALLACH
b. 1909, Munich
— Sherman, Conn.
m. 1933
Violet Hirschfeld
b. 1908, New York City
— Sherman, Conn.



LOTTE WALLACH
b. 1911, Munich
— Cornwall, Conn.
m. 1933
Eric Hanf
b. 1907, Mönchen-Gladbach
— Cornwall, Conn.



FRITZ WALLACH
b. 1914, Munich
— Sarasota, Fla.
m. 1943
Lucille Carey
b. 1919, Salem, Mass.
— Sarasota, Fla.



ANNELISE WALLACH
b. 1919, Munich
— Roslyn, N.Y.
m. 1943
Howard Rosenberg
b. 1912, Hamburg
— Roslyn, N.Y.

HEINZ STRAUSS
b. 1925
— New York City?
m. ?

HAROLD LOEB
b. 1919, Frankfurt
— New York City
m. 1946
Laura Gerstle
b. ?, Munich
— New York City

KURT LOEB
b. 1922, Frankfurt
— Toronto
m. 1946
Zelda Alter
b. ?, Toronto
— Toronto

BRIGITTE HANF

CATHERINE HANF

Two children

Two children

Two children

Three children

HANDOUT 4

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Camera of My Family – Discussion Questions

Directions: After viewing the video and reading the handout, answer the following questions. If you need more space, use the back of this sheet.

1. The Nazis said that Jews could not be Germans. Look at the photo and description of Samuel Stern in the handout. What do you think he might have said about this idea?

2. How does Catherine “meet” her German relatives who died in the Holocaust?

3. What was Moritz Wallach’s (Catherine’s grandfather) business in Germany? Why did the Nazis especially disapprove of his involvement in this kind of business?

4. Why does Catherine think many people were willing to follow Hitler?

5. Why did so many family members remain in Germany after Hitler came to power? Give at least three reasons.

6. What do you have in common with Catherine? _____

How are you different from her? _____

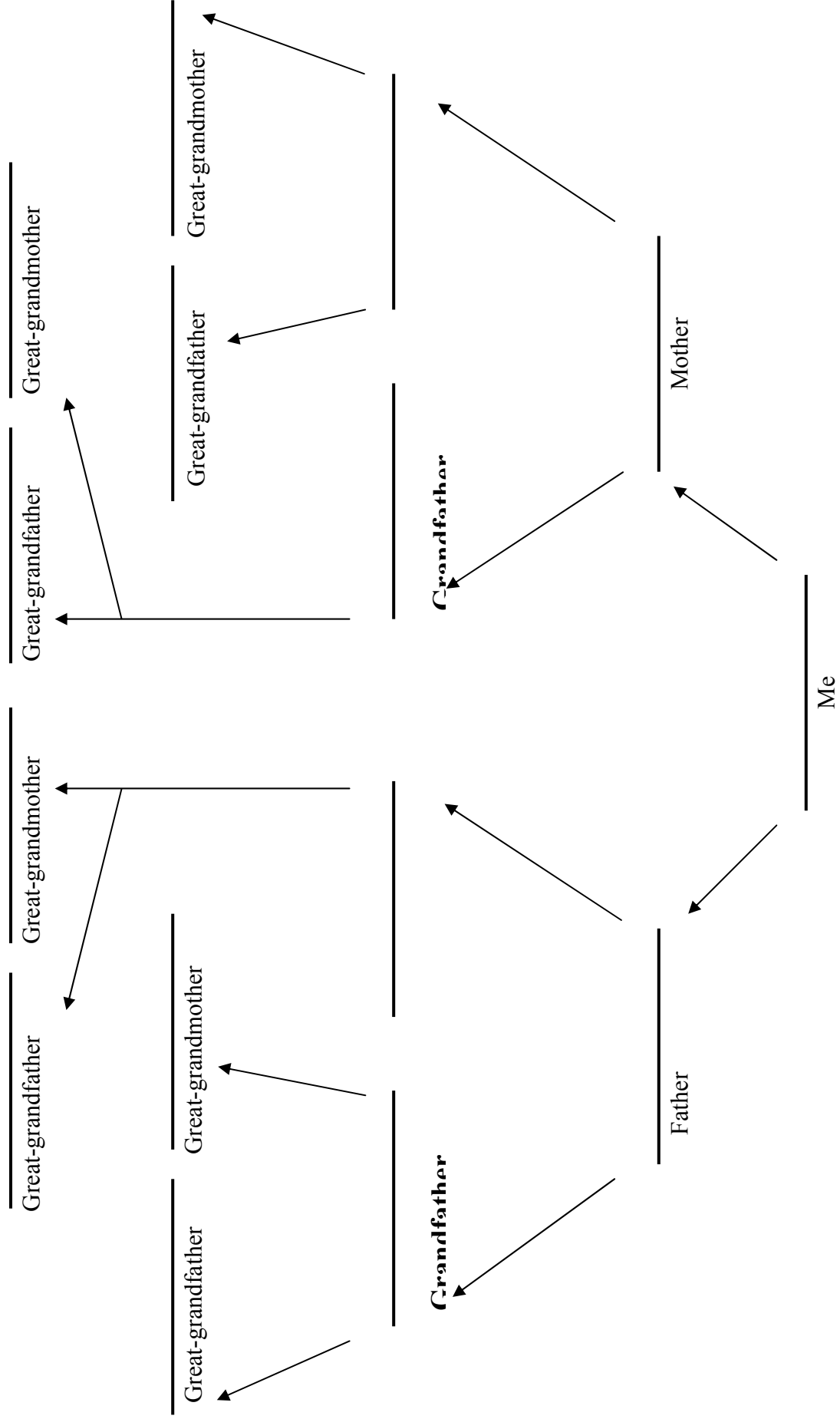
7. What do you think Catherine means when she says, “The past must be linked to the present if we are to have a future.” ?

8. Why do you think people take photos of friends and relatives and keep them in albums or collections?

9. Circle the names of people on the Strauss Family Tree who were murdered by the Nazis in camps. Does their loss seem more real to you now that you have learned a little about them? Why or why not?

Handout 5

Family Tree Form



Handout 6

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

The Wave – Discussion Questions

Directions: After viewing the video answer the following questions. If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper or the back of this sheet.

1. What was the question that prompted Mr. Ross to create “The Wave” class experiment? _____

2. List some of the reasons why students liked “The Wave”. _____

3. Why do you think Robert was especially vulnerable to “The Wave”? _____

4. List 2 objections Laurie’s mother had to “The Wave”. _____

5. List 2 arguments Laurie’s Dad used to say they shouldn’t worry about “The Wave”. _____

6. Why did Laurie quit “The Wave”? _____
7. How did Wave members react to Laurie’s opposition? _____
8. At the end of the rally, how did Mr. Ross explain the popularity of “The Wave”? _____

9. What does Mr. Ross say that he hopes Wave members learned from the experiment? _____

10. Do you think it would be possible to have a group with the good elements of “The Wave” while avoiding the bad? If so, how? If not, why not? _____

11. At the end of World War II, some of the most dedicated Nazis were teenagers. Why do you think young people might be vulnerable to this type of movement? _____

HANDOUT 7

The following excerpt was taken from the book *A Child of Hitler* written by Alfons Heck in 1985. The quote tells of Heck's attendance at a speech by Adolf Hitler when he was a 10 years old member of the Hitler Youth. The occasion was the 1938 Nazi Party Congress, a rally held amid great pageantry in the ancient city of Nuremberg.

“When Hitler finally appeared, we greeted him with a thundering, triple ‘Seig Heil’, and it took all of our discipline to end it there, as we had been instructed. Hitler, the superb actor that he was, always began his speeches quietly, almost conversationally man to man. He then increased both tempo and volume steadily, but occasionally returned to the slower pace, piquing his listeners for the next crescendo. It was a sure-fire method which frequently mesmerized even his bitter foes or the unbelievers. We never had a chance. I am sure none of us in that audience took our eyes off him.

Because of our size, all of the very young Pimpfe of the Jungvolk stood in the first row, about 40 feet from the podium. I don't recall the exact content of the speech 45 years later, but I'll never forget its emotional impact. In the first half-hour, much of it was a surprisingly personal statement. Here was our mighty leader, telling us quite humbly how hard his own adolescence had been, how little hope it had held, and how often he had come close to utter despair, especially after the bitter defeat of World War I. He also touched on the class distinctions of an earlier generation, which he had now obliterated for us. And then his voice rose, took on power and became rasping with a strangely appealing intensity. It touched us physically because all of its emotions were reflected on our faces. We simply became an instrument in the hands of an unsurpassed master. His right fist punctuated the air in a staccato of short, powerful jabs as he roared out a promise and an irresistible enticement because he had already proven his power to the world. ‘You, my youth,’ he shouted with his eyes seemingly fixed only on me, ‘are our nation's most precious guarantee for a great future, and you are destined to be the leaders of a glorious new order under the supremacy of National Socialism!’ He then paused and lifted both arms in a gesture of triumphant benediction. ‘You, my youth,’ he screamed hoarsely, ‘never forget that one day you will rule the world!’

One of my post war professors, who himself became a dedicated Nazi before Hitler came to power, once explained the incredible charisma of his speeches. ‘Hitler's secret was that he wasn't afraid to shout out loud what most Germans were afraid of admitting to themselves, namely that we deserved to rule the world.’ Judging by our reactions to Hitler's speech, that may well be correct. We erupted into a frenzy of nationalistic pride that bordered on hysteria. For minutes on end, we shouted at the top of our lungs, with tears streaming down our faces: Seig Heil, Seig Heil, Seig Heil!’ From that moment on, I belonged to Adolf Hitler body and soul.”

A Child of Hitler – pages 27-28.

HANDOUT 8

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

The Appeal of the Nazis: A First-hand Account

Directions: Answer the following questions based on the reading selection. For multiple choice questions, circle the letter of the correct answer.

Which sentence BEST describes the young Alfons Heck’s opinion of Adolf Hitler as a leader?

- Hitler was a wise and intelligent leader.
- Hitler was a powerful and dynamic leader.
- Hitler was an evil and cruel leader.
- Hitler was a weak and ineffective leader.

Which sentence best describes the appeal Hitler’s speech?

- Hitler’s speech appealed to the listener’s pride.
- Hitler’s speech appealed to the listener’s intelligence.
- Hitler’s speech appealed to the listener’s fears.
- Hitler’s speech appealed to the listener’s desire for peace and safety.

How does Hitler try to convince the young listeners that he understands their lives?

According to Alfons Heck, what made Hitler such a powerful speaker? Use details from the reading selection to support your answer.

In your opinion, was Alfons Heck responsible for becoming a dedicated follower of Hitler? Why or why not? Use statements from the reading selection to justify your position. If you said “no”, would it have changed your answer if he had been older?
