

Unit Six: The Aftermath

Background Information for Teachers:

More than fifty-five years have passed since the end of the Holocaust and the ramifications of that human tragedy are with us as much as ever. In some ways, it has taken the passage of years to even begin to understand the scope of the harm that has been done. Questions of responsibility, moral and ethical values, and the meaning of civilization continue to be raised in a variety of ways. As a subject for study, the Holocaust has assumed a position of importance greater than ever before. In light of this fact, we can consider our own teaching of the Holocaust to be part of the aftermath. It is wholly appropriate to ask if the world has yet learned the appropriate lessons and, if not, what we can do to make a difference.

Main Points:

1. Crimes of genocide and gross human rights violations have been committed in many places in the years since the Holocaust, up to the present time. The forces that give rise to such crimes are still a part of the world and demand our active opposition.
2. Questions of responsibility are still current. In recent years, several European nations, such as France and Switzerland, have reassessed their roles in the events of the Holocaust. So too have a myriad of other diverse bodies. The Red Cross, the Vatican, IBM, Ford, the U.S. State Department, and many others have been confronted with questions about their actions or inaction. Of course, there are still individuals alive who bear some of the responsibility as well.
3. Issues of restitution and compensation are still current. In recent years, information has been uncovered concerning looted art, frozen or hidden bank accounts, and insurance policies that were never honored. Those seeking justice in this area also want to communicate the message that the passage of time will not erase responsibility.
4. Racist and neo-Nazi organizations continue to be active in recruiting followers and in committing out acts of violence. Their ideology represents as much of a threat today as the original Nazis did in the 1920's. Holocaust denial is part of the racist and neo-Nazi agenda.
5. Bystanders, through their indifference, helped to make the Holocaust possible. Recognition of this fact reminds us that we have a responsibility to resist attitudes and acts of prejudice whenever we encounter them.
6. Our responsibility with regard to the Holocaust lies mainly in the realm of learning lessons and preserving memory. Holocaust survivors, some of whom are valuable members of our own community, can help us accomplish these tasks.
7. If the Holocaust survivors' goal of "Never Again" is to be realized, it is up to us to help to make it so. The dream may not be fully realized in our lifetimes, but we have the responsibility to carry it forward nonetheless.

The Aftermath - In Pursuit of Justice

How could there be justice in the aftermath of the Holocaust? What punishment could fit the crime? Many of the perpetrators, especially Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, could not be brought to trial. How could all of the perpetrators be identified and located? Could responsibility be assessed for complicity? Certainly, the Holocaust would not have been possible without the support of many people. How many could be held legally responsible? The Nuremberg Trial and subsequent prosecutions cannot be seen as the perfect answer to these questions, but on the other hand, failure to respond to the crimes was hardly an option either. These trials established a precedent of international jurisprudence that is still in force today. The long-term effectiveness of this precedent is yet to be determined.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Read accounts about the Nuremberg Trials and the efforts to bring the perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice.
2. Evaluate the justification for an international tribunal and for continuing prosecution of war criminals.
3. Assess the effectiveness of the Nuremberg Trial and subsequent prosecutions.

Materials:

1. Tell Them We Remember by Susan Bachrach
2. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance by Bea Stadler
3. Worksheet: "Justice : Reading Questions" (Handout 1)

Procedures:

1. Introduce the topic by reading pages 80 aloud from Tell Them We Remember.
2. Introduce the lesson by informing students that they will be reading about the quest for justice in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Ask students if finding such justice was possible.
3. Pass out The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance textbook and assign chapters 22 and 21. Have students read chapter 22 first since it occurred first. Reading may be done silently or aloud.
4. Pass out the worksheet and allow students time to complete the questions. They may work individually or in groups.

5. Discuss the students' responses to the questions in class.

Extension Activity:

The Nuremberg Trial that began in the fall of 1945 was only the first of many trials. There were eventually trials of SS doctors, concentration camp officers and guards, *Einsatzgruppen* members, and numerous individuals. Some of these trials were held in Germany, others in the countries where the crimes were committed. Interested students could do reports on some of the other trials of Holocaust perpetrators.

Students may also choose to examine how war crimes and crimes against humanity are addressed today. Sadly, there are many post-World War II events from which to draw examples.

Survivors: Rebuilding Lives, Families, and Communities

The survivors of the Holocaust faced many difficulties in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. The physical and emotional challenges before them were enormous. Gradually, most were able to build new lives, families, and communities, but this should never mean that the past should be forgotten. Students can learn a great deal from the lives and testimonies of Holocaust survivors. This lesson is about providing that opportunity.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Listen to the testimonies of survivors about their experiences in the Holocaust.
2. Examine the lives of Holocaust survivors after the war.
3. Evaluate the reasons for remembering the Holocaust and the role of survivors in helping us to do so.

Materials:

1. The videotape “Survivors of the Holocaust”
2. The videotape “Looking Into the Face of Evil”
3. Computer workstations with Internet access

Procedures:

Note 1: Whenever possible, students should be given the chance to hear to a Holocaust survivor in person. There can be no substitute for this experience. One or both of the videotapes may be used to supplement this experience, but they should not be used to replace it unless no chance exists for the in-person testimony.

Note 2: The two videotapes represent different approaches to survivor testimonies. The “Survivors of the Holocaust” video features 36 survivors sharing their experiences in brief vignettes. The “Looking Into the Face of Evil” video features three survivors (and one liberator) in more detailed testimonies. The video is organized to present the testimonies in a format that provides a chronological overview of the Holocaust.

1. Introduce the topic of survivor testimonies by informing students that each one is personal and unique. Since survivors didn’t experience the Holocaust at exactly the same times, in the same places or in the same way, their stories may vary widely. This is to be expected.
2. Before hearing from a survivor, have students write down questions that they would like to ask. Remind them that survivors have concerns about dignity and privacy, just like anyone else. Help them understand the types of questions that are appropriate. If at all possible, speak with the survivor first to find out the extent to which he/she is comfortable answering questions. Also, remind students that telling their stories can be painful for survivors, even for those who speak frequently. The Holocaust Center can help you arrange for a visit by a survivor.

3. After students have heard one or more testimonies, have them do follow-up research on the lives of survivors after the Holocaust. There is an excellent on-line program about this topic on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website at: www.ushmm.org

Access the page entitled, "History: Online Exhibits" and select the one entitled, "Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons 1945-1951". If you are able to give students Internet access in class or in a media/technology center, then explore this site together. If not, perhaps some students with access at home could do a report as a class project.

4. As a conclusion to this lesson, have students write in response to the following prompt:
 - Imagine that you have a friend in another school who has never studied about the Holocaust and didn't know that there were any survivors here. Write a letter to your friend telling about the experience of meeting a Holocaust survivor. Also explain what you think were the most important lessons you learned from his/her testimony.

Extension Activity:

Students are often interested in learning more about the personal stories of the people who were victims of the Holocaust. One source for brief biographies can be found in the trunk in the envelope of materials from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. They are contained in a packet labeled "Identification Cards".

Note: These biographies are not only those of survivors, but also of victims who perished.

The Ongoing Fight Against Prejudice

The fight against prejudice is ongoing because prejudice is part of the human condition. Anyone can be prejudiced. Anyone can be a victim of prejudice. It is even possible to be both at the same time. The Holocaust reminds us that the most heinous of crimes begins on a small personal scale. You can't have mass murder and death camps without first having stereotyping and name-calling. Our most important responsibility is to teach students the extreme danger of these "small" violations of the dignity of others. Once we give ourselves permission to hurt another, even if it is only with words, the only thing that changes over time is the weapon we choose to use.

Objectives: Students will:

1. View a film showing the ease with which children can adopt the attitudes and behaviors of prejudice.
2. Analyze the reasons why prejudice can be attractive.
3. Formulate strategies for resisting prejudice within their own spheres of influence.

Materials:

1. The video, "The Eye of the Storm"
2. The book, Holocaust: Maps and Photographs by Martin Gilbert pages 25 (handout 2) and [35](#) (Handout 3)
3. The handout: "The Eye of the Storm: Discussion Questions" (Handout 4)

Procedures:

1. Introduce this topic by writing the following quote on the board:

"The crematoriums of Auschwitz did not begin with bricks, they began with words."
Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel
2. Ask students if they agree with the quote. Tell them you will ask again at the end of the lesson.
3. Introduce the video by telling students that it is the true story of an actual event.
4. Show the video.
5. Pass out the question sheet and allow students time to complete the questions. Students may work independently or in groups.
6. Discuss the students' responses in class. Students sometimes have trouble with question 6. Please help students understand that stereotypes do not allow for variations within groups. Therefore, no stereotype can be true. Statistical norms cannot be used to justify stereotypes either. A statement such as "Men are taller than women" cannot be true as long as any woman at any time in history was

taller than any man. Once we reject stereotyping, we are forced to look at people as individuals. We cannot draw conclusions about them until we know them, which is only fair.

Extension Activities:

1. There is a follow-up video to “Eye of the Storm”. It is called “A Class Divided” and is available through Social Studies School Service. It contains interviews with Jane Elliot and some of her students 15 years later.
2. Students can learn about the dangers of assigning identities and stereotyping through a simple activity like “Identity Map”. The directions for “Identity Map” are as follows:
 - Have students place their names in the middle of a sheet of paper. Tell them to draw spokes out from their names and list brief descriptions of themselves at the end of each spoke. These descriptions may be physical attributes, personality traits, likes or dislikes, etc. Have students do as many of these descriptions as they can. Ironically, these self-created identity maps often lack descriptors (such as race, religion, national origin, etc.) that have been commonly used as a basis for prejudice.
 - Allow students to pair up with a friend. Each person should exchange their paper with their partner.
 - Tell students that they are going to have 3-5 minutes to “introduce” their partner to the rest of the class, using the information on the identity map. Ask them to prepare their introduction carefully in cooperation with their partner.
 - After students have had a chance to begin formulating their introductions, tell them that time is running out and that they will have to shorten their introductions to one sentence apiece. When they complain that it is impossible to do so, tell them that their complaints have wasted more time. Now they will have to limit their introductions to one word.
 - Debrief students at the end of the activity by explaining that prejudice and stereotyping rob people of the richness of their individual identities in the same way that your restrictions limited them in this assignment.
 - Also ask students to imagine how this activity would have gone if an enemy had been assigned to do their introduction, or even to create their identity map in the first place. Finish by asking students, “Who has the right to decide the meaning of another person’s identity?”

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

In Pursuit of Justice – Discussion Questions

Directions: After reading chapters 22 and 21 of The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance, answer the following questions. Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. How did U.S. prosecutor, Justice Robert H. Jackson, explain the need for the Nuremberg Trial? Do you agree with his reasoning? Explain.

2. Describe the extent and sources of the evidence presented by the prosecution.

3. Why was news coverage of this trial important?

4. Some of the defendants in Holocaust trials claimed that they were only following orders. Should this be considered a legitimate defense? Why or why not?

5. Recent studies of the Majdanek and Auschwitz camps have shown that the death toll estimates given by Soviet prosecutors were too high. At Auschwitz, for example, the figure should be closer to 2,000,000. Does this matter in considering the guilt of the perpetrators? Explain your answer.

6. Why do you think Simon Wiesenthal was surprised by Adolf Eichmann’s appearance?

7. Simon Wiesenthal reported that Eichmann once said, “A hundred dead people is a catastrophe, six million dead is a statistic.” What do you think he meant? How would you respond to this statement?



Plate 24: A German road sign at the entrance to a village. It reads: 'We want no Jews. The Jews are our misfortune'.

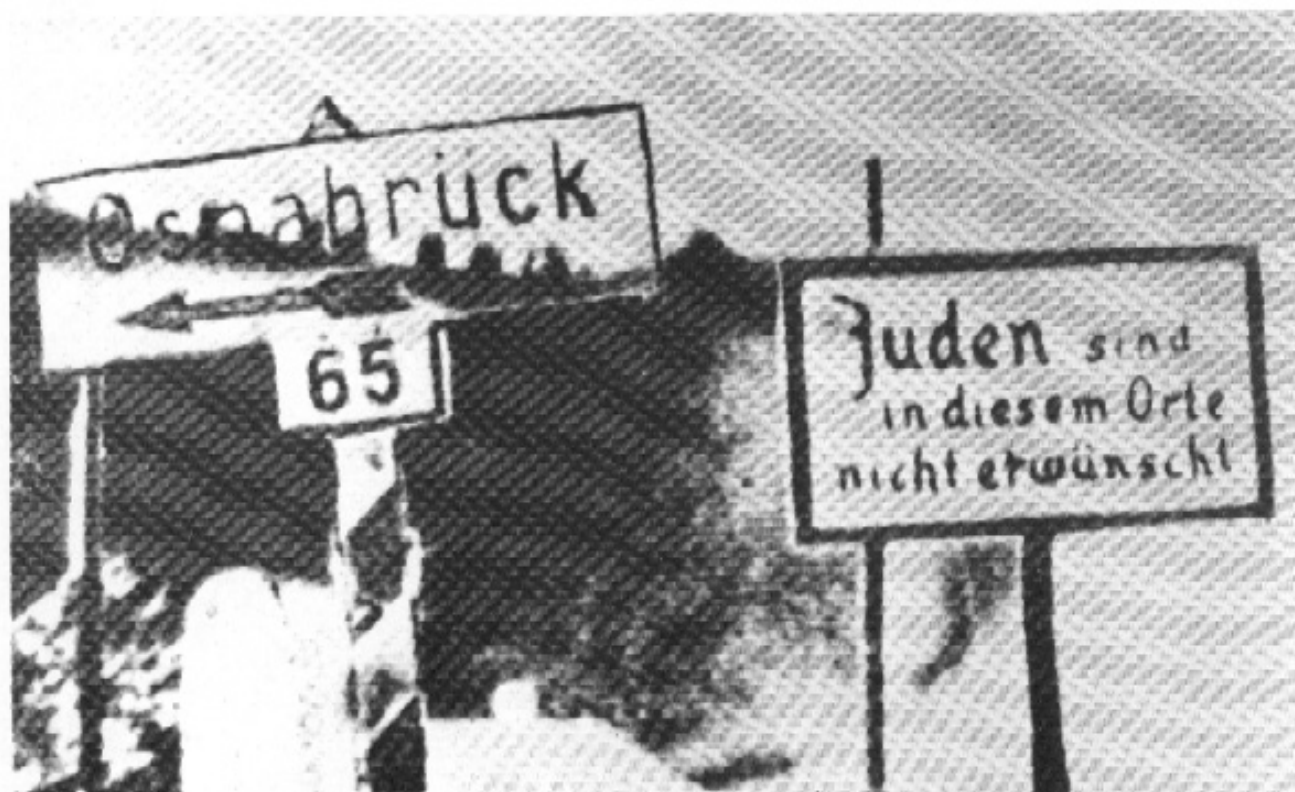


Plate 25: Another German road sign: 'Jews are not wanted in this locality'. Both photographs were taken in the autumn of 1935 by a Dutch motor-cyclist, on the main road between the Dutch frontier, Hanover and Berlin.



Plate 36: Mocking a Jew. German soldiers laugh as a Polish Jew is made to put on his prayer shawl, and then to have his hair and beard cut off. Some Jews were made to kneel down in humiliating postures. Others had the Star of David branded on their foreheads. Such 'sport' was common at the time of the German occupation of Poland in September 1939. At the same time, thousands of Jews were tortured and shot: a prelude to the destruction of nearly three million Polish Jews.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

The Eye of the Storm – 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. On the first day of the experiment, why do you think the blue-eyed children believed Mrs. Elliot?

2. Why do you think the brown-eyed children went along?

3. Describe the impact of this experiment on the way the children treated one another. Why do you think their behavior changed?

4. Describe the performance of the “inferior” group during class work.

5. The statement “Blue-eyed children are superior” is an example of a stereotype. It assumes all blue-eyed children are the same as one another and different from brown-eyed children. List some examples of stereotypes you have heard.

6. Is there any such thing as a stereotype that is true? Explain your answer.

7. Look at the pictures on pages 25 and 35 of the Maps and Photographs book. Explain the connection between these photos and the killing program of the Holocaust.
