

There's More Online!

- ✓ IMAGE *Kristallnacht* Destruction
- ✓ MAP *Route of the St. Louis*
- ✓ SLIDE SHOW *Nazi Badges*
- ✓ VIDEO *The Holocaust*
- ✓ INTERACTIVE SELF-CHECK QUIZ



LESSON 3

The Holocaust

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS • *Could World War II have been prevented?*
 • *Why do some people not respond to injustice while others try to prevent injustice?*

Reading HELPDESK



Academic Vocabulary

- **prohibit** • **virtually**
- **assume**

Content Vocabulary

- **concentration camp**
- **extermination camp**

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

Organizing As you read about the Holocaust, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below, by listing examples of Nazi persecution of European Jews.

Examples of Persecution	_____

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Nazis first acted upon their racist ideology when they imposed restrictions on Jews and stripped them of basic rights. Eventually, Nazi Germany created concentration camps and systematically attempted to kill all European Jews.

Nazi Persecution of the Jews

GUIDING QUESTION *Why did many Jews remain in Nazi Germany and within Axis-controlled areas of Europe?*

During the Holocaust, the Nazis killed nearly 6 million European Jews. The Nazis also killed millions of people from other groups they considered inferior. The Hebrew term for the Holocaust is *Shoah*, meaning “catastrophe,” but it is often used specifically to refer to the Nazi campaign to exterminate the Jews during World War II.

The Nuremberg Laws

Although the Nazis persecuted anyone who dared oppose them, as well as the disabled, Gypsies (now known as Roma), homosexuals, and Slavic peoples, they reserved their strongest hatred for the Jews. This loathing went far beyond the European anti-Semitism that was common at the time. In the Middle Ages, Jews had been subjected to discrimination and sometimes to mob violence and expulsions. But in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western and Central Europe, both the frequency and intensity of anti-Jewish government policies diminished.

After the Nazis took power, however, they quickly moved to deprive German Jews of many established rights. In September 1935, the Nuremberg Laws took citizenship away from Jewish Germans and banned marriage between Jews and other Germans. Two months later, another decree barred Jews from holding public office or voting. Another law compelled Jews

with German-sounding names to adopt “Jewish” names. Soon the passports of Jews were marked with a red J to identify them as Jewish.

By the summer of 1936, at least half of Germany’s Jews were jobless, having lost the right to work as civil servants, journalists, farmers, and actors. In 1938 the Nazis also banned Jews from practicing law and medicine and from operating businesses. With no source of income, life for Jews became very difficult.

Despite worsening conditions, many Jews chose to remain in Germany during the early years of Nazi rule. Well integrated into German society before this time, they were reluctant to leave and give up the lives they had built there. Many also thought that conditions would surely improve after a time. In fact, conditions soon became worse.

Kristallnacht

On November 7, 1938, a young Jewish refugee named Herschel Grynszpan shot and killed a German diplomat in Paris. Grynszpan’s parents and more than 14,000 other Polish Jews had been deported from Germany to Poland, and the distraught young man was seeking revenge for this act and for the persecution of the Jews in general.

Using this as a pretext, Hitler ordered his minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, to stage attacks against the Jews that would seem like a spontaneous popular reaction to news of the murder. On the night of November 9, this plan played out in a spree of destruction. In Vienna, a Jewish child named Frederic Morton watched in terror that night as Nazi storm troopers broke into his family’s apartment:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“They yanked out every drawer in every one of our chests and cupboards, and tossed each in the air. They let the cutlery jangle across the floor, the clothes scatter, and stepped over the mess to fling the next drawer. Their exuberance was amazing. . . . ‘We might be back,’ the leader said. On the way out he threw our mother-of-pearl ashtray over his shoulder, like confetti. We did not speak or move or breathe until we heard their boots against the pavement.”

—quoted in *Facing History and Ourselves*

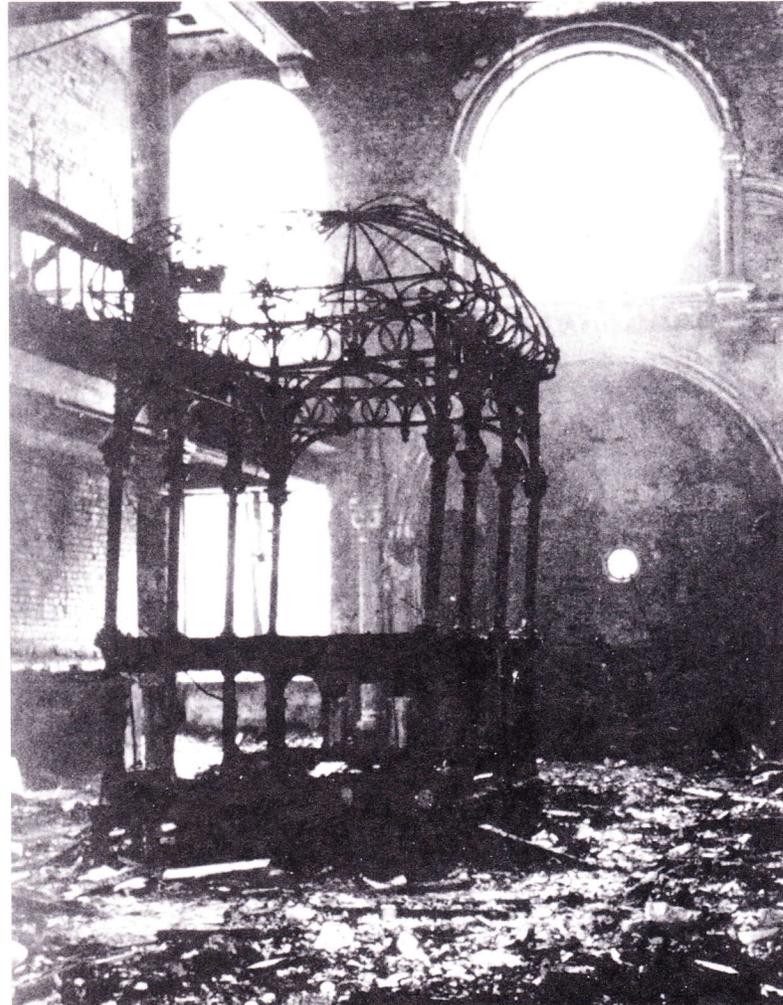
The anti-Jewish violence that erupted throughout Germany and Austria that night came to be called *Kristallnacht*, or “night of broken glass,” because broken glass littered the streets afterward. By the following morning, more than 90 Jews were dead, hundreds were badly injured, and thousands more were terrorized. The Nazis had forbidden police to interfere while roving bands of thugs destroyed 7,500 Jewish businesses and hundreds of synagogues.

The lawlessness of *Kristallnacht* continued to persist. Following the initial night of violence, the Gestapo, the government’s secret police, arrested about 30,000 Jewish men. The state also confiscated insurance payments owed to Jewish owners of ruined businesses.

On *Kristallnacht*, November 9, 1938, Nazi storm troopers destroyed Jewish property, such as this burned-out synagogue, and terrorized Jewish families across the Third Reich.

CRITICAL THINKING

Making Generalizations How do you think publication of the photograph of the synagogue would have affected world opinion toward the Nazis?





After weeks of fierce resistance, Jews in the Warsaw ghetto in Poland are rounded up for deportation to concentration camps in May 1943.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Predicting Consequences What details in the photograph suggest what might happen when these people reach the concentration camps?

prohibit to make illegal by an authority

assume to take for granted or as true

Jewish Refugees Try to Flee

Kristallnacht and its aftermath marked a significant escalation of Nazi persecution against the Jews. Many Jews, including Frederic Morton's family, decided that it was time to leave and fled to the United States. Between 1933, when Hitler took power, and the start of World War II in 1939, some 250,000 Jews escaped Nazi-controlled Germany. These emigrants included prominent scientists, such as Albert Einstein, and business owners like Otto Frank, who resettled his family in Amsterdam in 1933. Otto's daughter Anne kept a diary of her family's life in hiding after the Nazis overran the Netherlands. The "secret annex," as she called their hiding place, has become a museum.

Limits on Jewish Immigration By 1938, one U.S. consulate in Germany had a backlog of more than 100,000 visa applications from Jews trying to leave for the United States. Following the Nazi *Anschluss*, some 3,000 Austrian Jews applied for U.S. visas each day. Most never received visas to the United States or to the other countries where they applied. As a result, millions of Jews remained trapped in Nazi-dominated Europe.

Several factors limited Jewish immigration to the United States. Nazi orders **prohibited** Jews from taking more than about four dollars out of Germany. U.S. immigration law, however, forbade granting a visa to anyone "likely to become a public charge." Customs officials tended to **assume** that this description applied to Jews, because Germany had forced them to leave behind any wealth. High unemployment rates in the 1930s also made immigration unpopular. Few Americans wanted to raise immigration quotas, even to accommodate European refugees. Others did not want to admit Jews because they held anti-Semitic attitudes. The existing immigration policy allowed only 150,000 immigrants annually, with a fixed quota from each country. The law permitted no exceptions for refugees or victims of persecution.

International Response At an international conference on refugees in 1938, several European countries, the United States, and Latin America stated their regret that they could not take in more of Germany's Jews without raising their immigration quotas. Meanwhile, Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels announced, "[I]f there is any country that believes it has not enough Jews, I shall gladly turn over to it all our Jews." Hitler also declared himself "ready to put all these criminals at the disposal of these countries . . . even on luxury ships."

As war loomed in 1939, many ships departed from Germany crammed with Jews desperate to escape. Some of their visas, however, had been forged or sold illegally, and Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, and Costa Rica all denied access to Jews with such documents. So, too, did the United States.

The St. Louis Affair On May 27, 1939, the SS *St. Louis* entered the harbor in Havana, Cuba, with 930 Jewish refugees on board. Most of these passengers hoped to go to the United States eventually, but they had certificates improperly issued by Cuba's director of immigration giving them permission to land in Cuba. When the ships arrived in Havana, the

Cuban government refused to let the refugees come ashore. For several days, the ship's captain steered his ship in circles off the coast of Florida, awaiting official permission to dock at a U.S. port. Denied permission, the ship turned back toward Europe, disembarking in France, Holland, Belgium, and Great Britain. Within two years, the first three of these countries fell under Nazi domination. Many of the refugees brought to these countries perished in the Nazis' "final solution."

✓ **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

Explaining What factors made it difficult for Jewish people to leave Europe?

The Final Solution

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the Nazis try to exterminate Europe's Jewish population?*

On January 20, 1942, Nazi leaders met at the Wannsee Conference to coordinate the "final solution of the Jewish question." Previous "solutions" had included rounding up Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, and others from conquered areas, shooting them, and piling them into mass graves. Another method forced Jews and other "undesirables" into trucks and then piped in exhaust fumes to kill them. These methods, however, had proven too slow and inefficient for the Nazis.

At Wannsee, the Nazis made plans to round up Jews from the vast areas of Nazi-controlled Europe. Jews were taken to detention centers known as **concentration camps**. There, healthy individuals would work as slave laborers until they dropped dead of exhaustion, disease, or malnutrition. Most others, including the elderly, young children, and the infirm (among them laborers who could no longer work) would be sent to **extermination camps**, attached to many of the concentration camps, to be executed in massive gas chambers.

Concentration Camps

The Nazis had established their first concentration camps in 1933 to jail political opponents. After the war began, the Nazis built concentration camps throughout Europe.

concentration camp

a camp where persons are detained or confined

extermination camp

a camp where men, women, and children were sent to be executed

Men, women, and children are packed onto cattle cars for transport to extermination camps.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Making Generalizations What does the fact that Jews were transported on cattle cars indicate about Nazi attitudes toward them?

PHOTO: Yad Vashem Photo Archives, courtesy of USHMM





The Holocaust 1939–1945



- Concentration camp
- Extermination camp
- Location of *Einsatzgruppen* (paramilitary death squads)
- International boundary, January 1938

Jewish Losses: 1939–1945	
Baltic States	228,000
Belgium	40,000
Bulgaria	14,000
Byelorussian SSR	245,000
Czechoslovakia	155,000
Denmark	500
France	90,000
Germany and Austria	210,000
Greece	54,000
Hungary	450,000
Italy	8,000
Netherlands	195,000
Poland	3,000,000
Romania	300,000
Russian SSR	107,000
Ukrainian SSR	900,000
Yugoslavia	26,000

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

Nazi concentration camps and extermination camps extended across several countries.

- 1 THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS**
Where were most of the extermination camps located?
- 2 PLACES AND REGIONS** *Which three nations had the highest number of Jewish losses?*

As one of the largest concentration camps, Buchenwald had more than 200,000 prisoners working 12-hour shifts as slave laborers in nearby factories. Although Buchenwald had no gas chambers, hundreds of prisoners died there every month from exhaustion and horrible living conditions. As a U.S. Army chaplain wrote in his diary in 1945:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“One thousand Weimar citizens toured the Buchenwald camp in groups of 100. They saw blackened skeletons and skulls in the ovens of the crematorium. In the yard outside, they saw a heap of white human ashes and bones. . . . Those who were dead were stripped of their clothing and lay naked, many stacked like cordwood waiting to be burned in the crematory. At one time, 5,000 had been stacked on the vacant lot next to the crematory.”

—from the diary of Captain Luther D. Fletcher, quoted in *World War II: From the Battle Front to the Home Front*

Leon Bass, a young American soldier, saw Buchenwald at the end of the war. A room built to hold 50 people had housed more than 150, with bunk beds built almost to the ceiling. Bass recalled:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“I looked at a bottom bunk and there I saw one man. He was too weak to get up; he could just barely turn his head. He was skin and bones. He looked like a skeleton; and his eyes were deep set. He didn’t utter a sound; he just looked at me with those eyes, and they still haunt me today.”

—quoted in *Facing History and Ourselves*

Extermination Camps

In late 1941, the Nazis built extermination facilities at the Chelmno and Auschwitz camps in Poland. After the Wannsee Conference, extermination facilities were built at four other camps in Poland. At these camps, including the infamous Treblinka, Jews were the Nazis' main victims. Auschwitz alone housed about 100,000 people in 300 prison barracks. Its gas chambers, built to kill 2,000 people at a time, could gas 12,000 people in a day. Of the estimated 1,600,000 people who died at Auschwitz, about 1,300,000 were Jews. Most of the others were Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, or Gypsies.

Upon arrival at Auschwitz, healthy prisoners were selected for slave labor. Elderly or disabled people, the sick, and mothers and children went immediately to the gas chambers, after which their bodies were burned in giant crematoriums.

In only a few years, Jewish culture, which had existed in Europe for more than 1,000 years, had been **virtually** obliterated by the Nazis in the lands they conquered. Despite exhaustive debate, there is still great controversy about why and how an event so horrifying as the Holocaust could have occurred. No consensus has been reached, but most historians point to a number of factors: the German people's sense of injury after World War I; severe economic problems; Hitler's control over the German nation; the lack of a strong tradition of representative government in Germany; German fear of Hitler's secret police; and a long history of anti-Jewish prejudice and discrimination in Europe.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining What was the purpose and outcome of the Wannsee Conference?



American soldiers force German civilians to view bodies after the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp.

CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions Why did American soldiers force German civilians to view the atrocities at the concentration camp?

virtually almost entirely; nearly

PHOTO: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Harold Royall

LESSON 3 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

- Defining** What was the purpose of the concentration camps?
- Identifying** How was the Buchenwald concentration camp different from Treblinka and Auschwitz?

Using Your Notes

- Making Connections** Review the notes you completed during the lesson, and then identify an anti-Jewish policy or action that should have warned the world that the Nazis needed to be stopped immediately.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- Evaluating** Why did many Jews remain in Nazi Germany and within Axis-controlled areas of Europe?
- Explaining** How did the Nazis try to exterminate Europe's Jewish population?

Writing Activity

- ARGUMENT** Imagine that you are living in the United States during the 1930s. You believe that more Jewish immigrants should be allowed to come into the country. Write a letter to your representative or senator in Congress to express your point of view.