

The Problem of Evil

FILM FIVE

The Holocaust: a brief history

WARNING: This Film contains graphic documentary footage of concentration camps and Holocaust victims

Length: 11 minutes

TEACHERS

To assist your lesson plans here are some questions, with time-codes

- {1}. Explain the meaning of the word '*Holocaust*'. {00:13 – 00:51}
- {2}. What happened to Germany after World War One {00:52 – 01:26}
- {3}. What year did Adolf Hitler become Chancellor Of Germany? {01:28 – 01:40}
- {4}. Where and when was the first concentration camp opened? {02:46 – 02:53}
- {5}. How did the Nazis treat Jewish people? {02:56 – 03:41}
- {6}. What happened after *Kristallnacht* {the Night of Broken Glass}? {03:42 – 04:32}
- {7}. What happened in 1939 after the outbreak of World War Two? {04:34 – 05:14}
- {8}. What was the so-called '*Final Solution*'? {05:15 – 05:55}

{9}. What was the name of the largest and most notorious concentration camp and explain what happened there? {05:57 – 06:49}

{10}. How many people are estimated to have died during the 'death marches' in the last months of Nazism? {06:51 – 07:11}

{11}. What were the 'Nuremburg Trials'? {07:47 – 08:05}

{12}. Who are the 'Holocaust deniers'? {08:26 – 08:58}

{13}. What did the U.S. State Department report in 2008. {09:00 – 09:36}

AFTER SCREENING

**When *FILM FIVE* finishes ask
Your pupils/students to engage with:**

TASK 1

WRITE or SKETCH down the most memorable image or statement that sticks in their mind. **SHOW** a friend their image or statement and explain the reason why they chose it. **DISCUSS** what they consider to be the most important message of the film. **EXCHANGE** their findings with the rest of the class.

TASK 2

Split up into groups of three/four. Nominate a scribe from your group to take notes. You have 20 minutes for each group to discuss the following quotes - by people who experienced the Holocaust - before exchanging your group's thoughts and feelings to the rest of the class:

QUOTE ONE

“Monsters exist, but they are too few in numbers to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the functionaries ready to believe and act without asking questions.”

Primo Levi, {1919 – 1987}, Jewish writer and survivor of Auschwitz concentration camp

QUOTE TWO

“Who has inflicted this upon us? Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now? It is God that has made us as we are, but it will be God, too, who will raise us up again. If we bear all this suffering and if there are still Jews left when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and that reason alone do we have to suffer now. We can never become just Netherlands, or just English, or representatives of any country for that matter; we will always remain Jews, but we want to, too.”

Anne Frank, {1929 – 1945}, Dutch girl who died in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp aged 15, but whose diary chronicling her life was published posthumously and became an international best-seller

QUOTE THREE

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become molded into the form of the typical inmate”.

Viktor Frankl, {1905 – 1997}, Psychiatrist, Holocaust Survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, a remarkable chronicle of his experiences in Auschwitz & Dachau

QUOTE FOUR

“Stripped of possessions, all human ties severed, the prisoners found themselves in a social and cultural void. “Forget”, they were told, “Forget where you came from; forget who you were. Only the present matters”. But the present was only a blink of the Lord's eye. The Almighty himself was a slaughterer: it was He who decided who would live and who would die; who would be tortured, and who would be rewarded. Night after night, seemingly endless processions vanished into the flames, lighting up the sky. Fear dominated the universe. Indeed this was another universe; the very laws of nature had been transformed. Children looked like old men, old men whimpered like children. Men and women from every corner of Europe were suddenly

reduced to nameless and faceless creatures desperate for the same ration of bread or soup, dreading the same end. Even their silence was the same for it resounded with the memory of those who were gone. Life in this accursed universe was so distorted, so unnatural that a new species had evolved. Waking among the dead, one wondered if one was still alive”.

Elie Wiesel, {born 1928} survivor of Auschwitz, author of “*Night*” and recipient of The Nobel Peace Prize {1986}. This is an extract from his Nobel Acceptance Speech on December 11, 1986

QUOTE FIVE

“When my parents were liberated, four years before I was born, they found that the ordinary world outside the camp had been eradicated. There was no more a simple meal; no thing was less than extraordinary: a fork, a mattress, a clean shirt, a book. Not to mention such things that can make one weep: an orange, meat and vegetables, hot water. There was no ordinariness to return to, no refuge from the blinding potency of things, an apple screaming its sweet juice.”

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

QUOTE SIX

“The survivors wanted to communicate everything to the living: the victim's solitude and sorrow, the tears of mothers driven to madness, the prayers of the doomed beneath a fiery sky. They needed to tell the child who, in hiding with his mother, asked softly, very softly: “Can I cry now?” They needed to tell of the sick beggar who, in a sealed cattle-car, began to sing as an offering to his companions. And of the little girl who, hugging her grandmother, whispered: “Don't be afraid, don't be sorry to die... I'm not”. She was seven, that little girl who went to her death without fear, without regret”.

Elie Wiesel: Holocaust survivor, author, and recipient of The Nobel Peace Prize {1986}. This is an extract from his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech.

QUOTE SEVEN

“Inside the kingdom of night, I witnessed a strange trial. Three rabbis, all erudite and pious men, decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing his children to be massacred. I remember: I was there, and I felt like crying. But nobody cried. The trial lasted several nights. Witnesses were heard, evidence was gathered, conclusions were drawn, all of which issued finally in a unanimous verdict: the Lord God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, was found guilty of crimes against

creation and humankind. And then, after an infinity of silence, the Talmudic scholar looked at the sky and said "It's time for evening prayers," and the members of the tribunal recited the evening service".

An event witnessed in Auschwitz by Elie Wiesel when he was a teenager and which he later wrote about in his book and play *The Trial of God*, dramatized by the BBC in 2008

QUOTE EIGHT

"I don't believe that the big men, the politicians and the capitalists alone are guilty of the war. Oh, no, the little man is just as keen, otherwise the people of the world would have risen in revolt long ago! There is an urge and rage in people to destroy, to kill, to murder, and until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything that has been built up, cultivated and grown, will be destroyed and disfigured, after which mankind will have to begin all over again.....It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart. I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery, and death. I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that this cruelty too shall end and that peace & tranquility will return once again".

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, first published in Amsterdam in 1947

HANDOUTS FOR PUPILS

Presentations

- **Presentation and Research are key skills in today's world and this exercise aims to enhance these skills. The aim is to research and produce a powerful SEVEN minute presentation.**
- **You will work in small groups in which everyone from your allocated group will be expected to address the rest of the class during your presentation, *without notes*, and *all members* of the group will be active in producing a visual/dramatic/ musical presentation/short film/ power-point/ debate/drama/dance/'epic' poem/piece of artwork/ textile/ montage/ 'graffiti wall'/'**

poem/play/comedy routine/historical reconstruction/opera/choir/song/ musical/ or rap.

- Each group will be marked for knowledge, understanding and evaluation in the same way as an individual is marked for an essay. So take it seriously, but above all be creative and express yourselves and enjoy the search for the “X” factor
- Your Presentation will take place in.....
- The most highly marked groups of presenters will be encouraged to perfect their presentations with a view to recording them as a resource for future use in the classroom.

Planning Suggestions

Each group has three lessons to create a dramatic and dynamic seven minute presentation on their allocated task to the rest of the class.

Each group will have three lessons to prepare and its suggested that you spend the 1st lesson researching your chosen subject via the internet and library; the 2nd lesson planning a strategy for a dynamic and informative presentation, and the 3rd hour in creatively putting your ideas into practice, ensuring that you have a dress rehearsal before the big day.

GROUP ONE: Adolf Hitler and the Rise of Nazism: After Germany's defeat in World War I, the Versailles Treaty reduced the size of the nation's pre-war territory, specified the payment of reparations, and vastly shrunk their military. Afterwards, the Weimar Republic was formed, which experienced massive economic disorder after the 1929 stock market crash. Unemployment soared, thus exposing underlying socio-political tensions in the country, and weakening the Weimar government. Adolf Hitler, {1889-1945} the Austrian born leader of the National Socialist German Worker's Party, or Nazi Party as it was more commonly known, became Chancellor of Germany on January 30th 1933. The Nazi Party utilized vicious propaganda to take on its political rivals: specifically the Weimar government and the Jewish people, whom the Nazis blamed for Germany's woes.

GROUP TWO: ‘The Final Solution’: The “*Final Solution*” refers to Nazi Germany’s plan and execution of the systematic genocide of European Jews resulting in the most deadly phase of The Holocaust. The Jews were marked for organized extermination, dubbed “Special Treatment” or “Resettlement”, which meant being killed in groups with Zyklon-B gas, which was normally used for the extermination of vermin. Located near railway lines to help expedite the Nazi's programme of mass murder, the death camps were home to squalid conditions, and numerous means of torture, deprivation, sadistic experimentation, and mass murder. The largest and most notorious camp of all was Auschwitz-Birkenau where like at many other camps, inmates were

put through a swift process called "Selection". SS Doctors would deem who was fit for slave labour before condemning the rest to be stripped and sent for showers. However, these shower rooms were in fact gas chambers located next to crematoriums, and as many as 1 million people lost their lives at Auschwitz.

GROUP THREE: The Nuremberg Trials: In the wake of the devastation of World War II, the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-1946, brought-to-light the true scale of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi Regime. War Criminals were tried, convicted, and punished for their actions. Further trials during the 1950s and 1960s shed yet more light upon the unimaginable terrors of the Holocaust. Even to this day, War Criminals who managed to flee Germany in 1945 are still being caught and convicted by the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

GROUP FOUR: Anne Frank: Anne Frank, {1929 – 1945}, Dutch girl who died in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp aged 15, but whose diary chronicling her life was published posthumously as *The Diary of a Young Girl*, in Amsterdam in 1947 – a book that become an international best-seller. In her diary Anne writes: *"Everyone has inside of them a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is! ...My advice is Go outside, to the fields, enjoy nature and the sunshine, go out and try to recapture happiness in your self and in God. Think of all the beauty that's still left in and around you and be happy!"*

GROUP FIVE: Elie Wiesel: Elie Wiesel, {born 1928} survivor of Auschwitz and author of *The Trial of God and Night* and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. In his Acceptance Speech Wiesel said: *"Was Auschwitz a consequence or an aberration of "civilization"? All we know is that Auschwitz called that civilization into question as it called into question everything that had preceded Auschwitz: Scientific abstraction, social and economic contention, nationalism, xenophobia, religious fanaticism, racism, mass hysteria. All found their ultimate expression in Auschwitz.....To forget a holocaust is to kill twice. I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented".*

GROUP SIX: Viktor Frankl: Viktor Frankl, {1905 – 1997}, Psychiatrist, Holocaust Survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, a remarkable chronicle of his experiences in Auschwitz & Dachau. In the book Frankl describes life in the concentration camps from the perspective of a psychiatrist: *"As the inner life of the prisoner tended to become more intense, he also experienced the beauty of art and nature as never before. Under their influence he sometimes even forgot his own frightful circumstances. If someone had seen our faces on the journey from Auschwitz to a Bavarian camp as we beheld the mountains of Salzburg with their summits glowing in the sunset, through the little barred windows of the prison carriage, he would*

never have believed that those were the faces of men who had given up all hope of life and liberty. Despite that factor, or maybe because of it we were carried away by nature's beauty, which we had missed for so long”.

SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FURTHER WORK

The Script

The term “*Holocaust*” derives from the Greek words “*holos*” {whole} and “*kaustos*” {burned} and was originally used to describe sacrificial burnings. However, since World War II, the term has been redefined as the name given to the organized and systematic mass murder of millions of Jewish people, in addition to the slaughter of millions more so-called enemies of the Nazi party, which included Gypsies, Homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, the disabled, and others.

After Germany's defeat in World War I, the Versailles Treaty reduced the size of the nation's pre-war territory, specified the payment of reparations, and vastly shrunk their military. Afterwards, the Weimar Republic was formed, which experienced massive economic disorder after the 1929 stock market crash. Unemployment soared, thus exposing underlying socio-political tensions in the country, and weakening the Weimar government.

Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Worker's Party – or Nazi Party as it was more commonly known – became Chancellor of Germany on January 30th 1933. The Nazi Party utilized vicious propaganda to take on its political rivals: specifically the Weimar government and the Jewish people, whom the Nazis blamed for Germany's woes. This ideology was nurtured in the Nazi newspaper ‘*Der Sturmer*’ {*The Attacker*} which stated “*The Jews are our misfortune!*”

Following fresh elections, in which Hitler and the Nazis gained full control of the German Parliament, a wave of terrorization sought to quash any and all political opponents. Then, after the Reichstag burned to the ground on February 27th 1933, the Nazis suspended Civil Liberties. Soon, a vast police force was constructed – including the Storm Troopers, the SS, and the Gestapo – and opponents of the Nazis were sent to any one of a growing number of Concentration Camps for political prisoners – the very first of which was Dachau, opened on March 20th 1933.

Now in total control of Germany, the Nazis were able to paint the Jews as 'evil, cowardly, foreign mongrels' who had corrupted the nation's culture and economy, while the “Aryan Race” was deemed superior and the source of sanctuary for the German people. So began a purge of anything Jewish from Germany – Jewish books were burned on vast pyres, while the Jews

themselves were removed from schools, excluded from public life, and had their businesses and property confiscated in a systematic degradation of rights. Countless thousands of Jews attempted to escape, and while some were successful, so many more were left trapped within Germany's borders.

In November of 1938 however, proceedings became openly violent, after a Jewish teenager shot and killed a member of the German Embassy. *Kristallnacht* {the Night of Broken Glass} resulted: Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues were destroyed, while tens of thousands of Jews were beaten, killed, arrested, or shipped to Concentration Camps. They were persecuted not without resistance though, most viscerally embodied by the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. However, with the sheer might of the Nazi forces, any resistance was ultimately crushed – with reprisals of 100 to be slaughtered for every 1 German killed.

September 1939 brought the invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II as well as the creation of ghettos, forcing countless Jews, identified by the Star of David on their clothing, into these crowded areas, which helped facilitate the Nazis in deporting them to various Concentration, Extermination, Labour, Transit, and Prisoner-of-War camps.

Mobile killing groups marched through town-after-town of Jewish people, to pre-dug pits where they were promptly lined up, executed, and buried in mass graves. And so, with the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, the “Final Solution” began. The Jews had been marked for organized extermination, dubbed “Special Treatment” or “Resettlement”, which meant being killed in groups with Zyklon-B gas, which was normally used for the extermination of vermin. Located near railway lines to help expedite the Nazi's programme of mass murder, the death camps were home to squalid conditions, and numerous means of torture, deprivation, sadistic experimentation, and of course mass murder.

The largest and most notorious camp of all was Auschwitz-Birkenau – a network of camps where Jews, politicians, activists, resistance members, and cultural luminaries were subjected, like at many other camps, to a swift process called “Selection”. SS Doctors would deem who was fit for slave labour – to help perpetuate the Nazi war machine with munitions and other material requirements – before condemning the rest to be stripped and sent for showers. However, these shower rooms were in fact gas chambers located next to crematoriums, and as many as 1 million people lost their lives at Auschwitz.

In the last months of Nazism, as the German armies receded with the inwards progression of the Allied military, death marches into still-occupied German territory were organized. It is estimated that as many as 375,000 people died during these marches. Then, on April 29th, hidden within the confines of his bunker, Hitler continued to blame his nation's ills on the “International Jewry and its helpers”, urging his now crumbling army to maintain “*merciless resistance against the universal poisoners of all peoples*”. Hours later he

committed suicide, and within a week, on May 8th 1945, Germany's formal surrender came forth.

In the wake of the devastation of World War II, the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-1946, brought-to-light the true scale of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi Regime. War Criminals were tried, convicted, and punished for their actions. Further trials during the 1950s and 1960s shed yet more light upon the unimaginable terrors of the Holocaust. Even to this day, War Criminals who managed to flee Germany in 1945 are still being caught and convicted by the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

However, despite the vast amount of documented evidence, which laid bare the sheer horror that humankind is capable of inflicting upon their fellow man, there persists to this day a group known as “Holocaust Deniers” who refute the overwhelming evidence: an immense collection of documents, photographs, film, testimonies, blueprints, and physical evidence found at the now-inoperative camps.

Furthermore, there is a worrying continuation of antisemitism to this day. In 2008, the U.S. State Department produced a report that confirmed that there had been an increase in antisemitism globally. Verbal attacks, offensive graffiti, fire bombings, desecration of religious sites, and even killing in the name of antisemitism astonishingly still occurs, despite the important lessons long-since learned by the majority of humankind: a majority who will never forget the meaning of names such as Arnstadt, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Hanover, and Mauthausen.

{Written by Nick Thomson}

Time Line of Jewish Persecution

1933 – Civil Liberties suspended, books considered anti-Nazi burned, Jews described publicly as the nation's “misfortune”.

1934 – Jewish newspapers no longer to be sold on the street.

1935 – Jewish people have their rights and citizenship removed: The Nuremberg Laws.

1936 – Boycotting of Jewish businesses, Jews no longer able to vote.

1937 – Anti-Jewish regulations continue apace, including being banned from living or walking in certain parts of German cities.

1938 – Jews made to carry ID cards, their passports marked with a “J”, no longer able to run businesses, attend social events, and Jewish children moved to Jewish schools only. Driving Licenses and car registrations are also rescinded.

1939 – Forced to wear the yellow Star of David for easy identification in public, Jews are made to hand-in radios, and must obey strict curfews.

1940 – Jews are moved into ghettos and Concentration Camps, while in Poland the mass murdering begins.

1941 – Jews cannot leave their homes without permission, and are unable to use public telephones.

1942 – Jews not allowed to subscribe to newspapers, nor own pets, electrical equipment, attend school, use public transportation, or buy meat, eggs and milk.

1943 – Up to 85% of the Jews who will die in the Holocaust are already dead.

1944 – 12,000 Jews in newly-occupied Hungary moved to Auschwitz every day for extermination.

1945 – The Holocaust ends with the Allied victory over the Nazis.

WATCH-WORDS!

The following words and phrases have been used in the film and in the resources - sometimes more than once - and are useful words and phrases for pupils and students to know, and understand:

Antisemitism, '*Aryan Race*', Arnstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Concentration Camps, crematoriums, Dachau, extermination camps, "Final Solution", Gestapo, Gypsies, Hanover, Adolf Hitler, Holocaust, "Holocaust Deniers", Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish people, '*Kristallnacht*': The Night of Broken Glass, Labour camps, mass murder, Mauthausen, National Socialist German Worker's Party, Nazi Party, Nazism, Nuremberg Trials, Reichstag burning, 1929 Stock market crash, sacrificial burnings, Simon Wiesenthal Center, SS, SS doctors, Star of David, "Special Treatment", Storm Troopers, Synagogues, Transit camps, war criminals, Wannsee Conference, The Versailles Treaty, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Weimar Republic, Zyklon-B gas.

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