

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 4 — Investigation: Australians and the world wars (1914–1945): the Holocaust and legacies

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Contents

Section	Page
Why the Holocaust happened	2
How the Holocaust unfolded, step by step	21
Living through the Holocaust: Jewish and non-Jewish experiences	42
Debating what the world wars meant — and left behind	58

Why the Holocaust happened

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K20

Draws on — VC2HH10K20.E01, VC2HH10K20.E02, VC2HH10K20.E03, VC2HH10K20.E04

Builds on — section 3A (VC2HH10K13) and section 1B (VC2HH10K02). This section supplies the causes, and section 4B supplies the events, of the Holocaust.

This section asks one of the hardest questions in history: how did it come about that the German state tried to destroy the Jewish people of Europe? The attempt had causes. None of them made it inevitable — at every step, people made choices — but together they built a road. This section traces that road to 1939. Section 4B follows what happened after the war began.

Because the road ends in genocide, we work carefully. We define our key words before using them (part 1). We separate what Nazis *claimed* from what was true — Nazi ideas were built on lies about Jews, and repeating a Nazi claim in order to explain it is not agreeing with it. And we remember that behind every measure in part 6 were real people: neighbours, classmates, families.

Theory

1. Four words to think with (VC2HH10K20.E01)

The curriculum picks out four words whose meaning we need to be clear about: **racism**, **discrimination**, **antisemitism** and **genocide**. Figure 1 defines each.

Four key words for this section (VC2HH10K20.E01)

Each term is defined before it is used. Historians apply these terms carefully: evidence decides where they fit.

Discrimination	Treating people unfairly because of the group they belong to — such as their religion, descent or background — instead of judging them as individuals.
Racism	The belief that humanity can be divided into so-called 'races' and that some 'races' are worth more than others, and unfair treatment based on that belief. Modern biology rejects the idea: human 'races' are not real biological divisions. Racism is a belief, not a fact.
Antisemitism	Hostility to, or prejudice against, Jews. Hatred of Jews existed in Europe for centuries before the word itself was made popular in Germany in 1879.
Genocide	Acts done with the aim of destroying, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The word was created in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer; the United Nations gave it a legal definition in 1948.
Ideas can escalate step by step — from name-calling, to unfair laws, to violence, to mass murder. But each step was made by human choices, not by fate. The historian's task is to explain how and why each step happened.	

Table defining the four key words for this section — discrimination, racism, antisemitism and genocide — each with a short definition, and a closing note that hatred can escalate step by step, from name-calling to unfair laws to violence to mass murder, but that each step was made by human choices.

Two of the four need a little more history.

Antisemitism did not begin with the Nazis. Hostility towards Jews existed in Europe for many centuries — Jews were blamed for plagues and defeats, forced to live in separate quarters, and driven out of many countries in the Middle Ages. What changed in the late 1800s was that this old hatred was dressed up in the language of “race”: writers

claimed — falsely — that Jews were not a religious community but a so-called “race” that could never belong. That false claim is what the Nazis built on.

Genocide is the newest word of the four. **Raphael Lemkin**, a Polish-Jewish lawyer who lost much of his family in the Holocaust, created the word in 1944 by joining the Greek *genos* (race, tribe) to the Latin *-cide* (killing). In 1948 the United Nations gave the word a legal definition in the **Genocide Convention**: acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide is therefore not just “many deaths”: it is killing aimed at destroying a group *as a group*.

Defining the term. The word **the Holocaust** names the attempt by Nazi Germany, with its allies and collaborators, to murder every Jew in Europe — about six million men, women and children were killed by 1945. Major institutions, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem (Israel’s memorial authority), use *the Holocaust*; the word comes from a Greek term for a burnt offering, and historians adopted it after 1945. Many Jewish writers prefer **Shoah**, the Hebrew word for catastrophe, because it is a term without religious overtones from other traditions. Historians treat the two words as names for the same event, and some prefer *Shoah* for that reason; this section uses *the Holocaust*, following the curriculum and the museums whose sources we cite. Every question here is answerable on that definition alone. Section 4B traces the events; this section asks how a modern European state came to attempt such a thing.

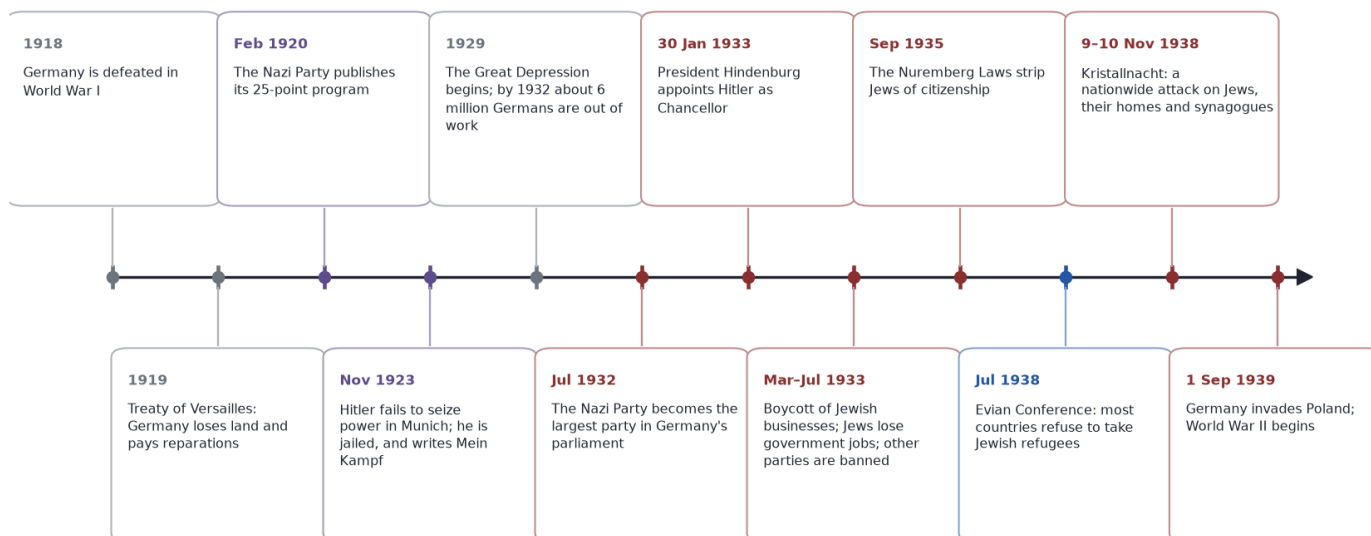
2. After the Great War: a bitter peace and a broken economy (VC2HH10K20.E02, VC2HH10K20.E03)

Germany lost World War I in 1918. The **Treaty of Versailles** (1919) took about a tenth of Germany’s European land and all of its overseas colonies, limited its armed forces, and made it pay **reparations** — payments to the winners for the cost of the war. Many Germans experienced the treaty as a humiliation, and politicians who promised to tear it up won support. In 1923 the German currency collapsed: prices rose so fast that savings became worthless in weeks, and ordinary families lost their security. The young German republic — known as the **Weimar Republic**, after the town where its constitution was written — survived both crises, but trust in it was damaged.

Then came the **Great Depression**. When the American economy crashed in 1929, loans to Germany stopped, businesses failed, and by 1932 about **six million Germans were unemployed**. In a democracy, people blame the government for hard times; and the Weimar governments could not fix the economy. Support drained away from the moderate parties towards the extremes — the communists on the left, and on the right the **National Socialist German Workers’ Party** — the Nazi Party — led by **Adolf Hitler**. In the July 1932 election the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag — Germany’s parliament. They never won a majority: even at their peak in 1933, most Germans did not vote for them. But in January 1933 a small group of conservative politicians, believing they could control Hitler, persuaded President **Paul von Hindenburg** — the war hero who headed the republic — to appoint him **Chancellor**, the head of government. Figure 2 places these steps on the road to 1939.

The road to war: key steps, 1918-1939

Causes on the left; escalation on the right. Section 4B takes the story from 1939 on.



Timeline of twelve key steps from 1918 to 1939: Germany's defeat in World War I; the Treaty of Versailles in 1919; the Nazi Party program of February 1920; Hitler's failed attempt to seize power in Munich in November 1923; the Great Depression from 1929; the Nazis becoming the largest party in July 1932; Hitler appointed Chancellor on 30 January 1933; the boycotts and bans of 1933; the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935; the Evian Conference of July 1938; Kristallnacht in November 1938; and the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939.

The Depression did not cause hatred of Jews — that hatred had older roots, as part 1 showed. What the Depression did was break confidence in democracy, and make a simple lie attractive: the Nazi claim that Germany's suffering had one cause, and one enemy.

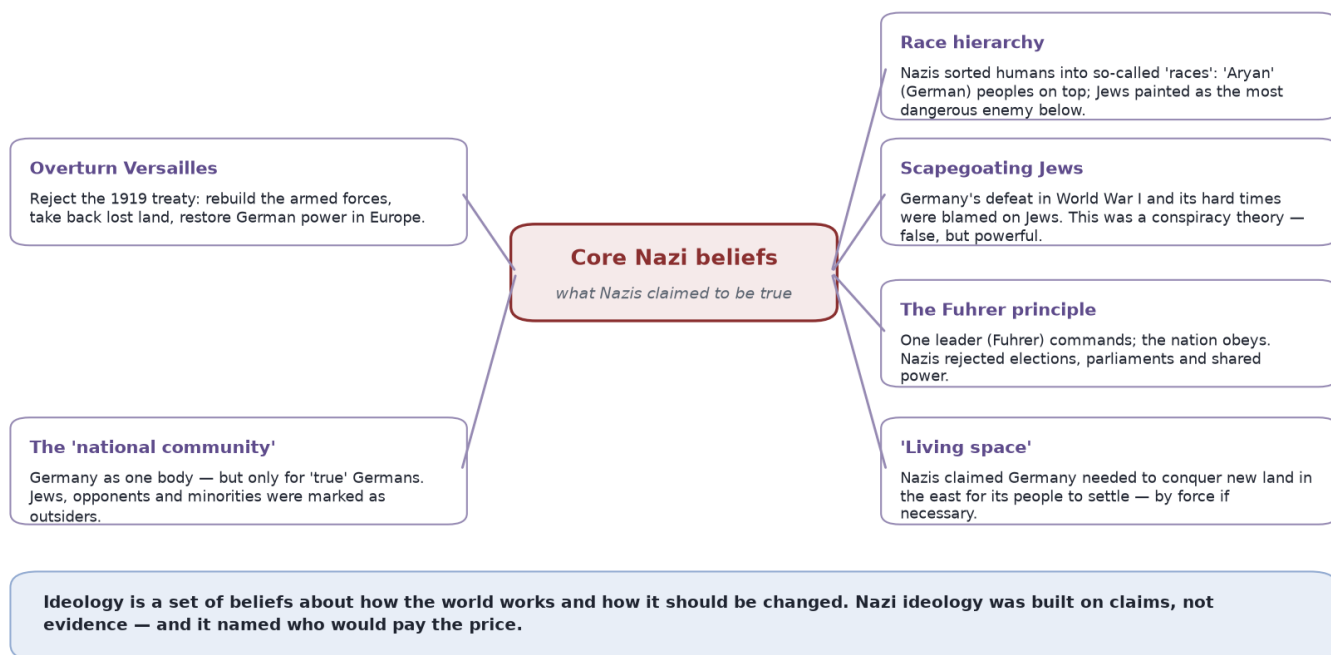
3. Nazi ideas: an ideology built on race (VC2HH10K20 . E03)

Defining the term. Ideology — a set of ideas about how society should be ordered, who belongs in a nation, and what a nation should pursue. The word is a historian's tool, not a compliment or an insult: every political movement has some ideology. **Fascism** is the name historians give to the family of far-right movements that grew up in Europe after 1918 — first in Italy under **Benito Mussolini**, who took power in 1922. Fascism rejected democracy and communism alike, glorified the nation and its leader, and trusted force over argument. Historians debate which movements deserve the label: some treat fascism as a revolutionary movement with its own vision of a new order; others see it chiefly as a reaction against socialism and liberalism that copied Mussolini's style. Nazism belonged to this family, and went beyond it: at its centre sat race, and hatred of Jews.

Nazi ideology can be summarised in six claims, set out in the party's 1920 program and in Hitler's book **Mein Kampf** ("My Struggle", 1925). Figure 3 maps them.

Core Nazi beliefs (Nazi ideology)

Set out in the party's 1920 program and in Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* (1925). Every part pointed at the same enemies.



Concept map of core Nazi beliefs with a central box joined to six boxes: a race hierarchy with Jews painted as the most dangerous enemy; scapegoating Jews for Germany's defeat and hard times; the Fuhrer principle of one leader; 'living space' to be conquered in the east; overturning the Treaty of Versailles; and the 'national community' open only to 'true' Germans; with a note that Nazi ideology was built on claims, not evidence.

The source below is the party's own program, announced in Munich on 24 February 1920. Read it as evidence of what the movement promised from the start.

Point 1. We demand the unification of all Germans in the Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples.

Point 4. Only a member of the Volk [the German people] can be a citizen of the state. Only someone of German blood, regardless of creed, can be a member of the Volk. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the Volk.

Point 5. Anyone who is not a citizen of the state may live only as a guest in Germany and must be subject to foreign legislation.

Point 8. Any further immigration of non-Germans must be prevented.

(Nazi Party Program, Munich, 24 February 1920)

Figure 4 reproduces these points with their source.

Source 1 — the Nazi Party Program, 24 February 1920 (translated extracts)

Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP)

Munich, 24 February 1920 — four of the 25 points:

- Point 1** We demand the unification of all Germans in the Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples.
- Point 4** Only a member of the Volk [the German people] can be a citizen of the state. Only someone of German blood, regardless of creed, can be a member of the Volk. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the Volk.
- Point 5** Anyone who is not a citizen of the state may live only as a guest in Germany and must be subject to foreign legislation.
- Point 8** Any further immigration of non-Germans must be prevented.

Source: National Socialist German Workers' Party, Party Program, 24 February 1920 (translation as published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org, retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source card reproducing four translated extracts from the Nazi Party Program of 24 February 1920 — Points 1, 4, 5 and 8 — showing that the party would let only someone of 'German blood' belong to the nation, and excluded Jews from it.

Notice what Point 4 does. It stops defining Germanness by language, citizenship or religion, and defines it by “blood” — by descent. A Jewish German family that had lived in Germany for generations, served in Germany’s armies, and contributed to Germany’s science and arts was, on this test, an outsider. The test was a lie dressed as biology: there is no such thing as “German blood” marking some people out as a separate kind of human. But a lie written into a party program can become law if the party takes power.

4. Taking apart a democracy, 1933–34 (VC2HH10K20.E03)

The breakdown of German democracy and the rise of a fascist dictatorship belong on any list of the causes of the Holocaust. Once appointed Chancellor, Hitler moved fast — and mostly used the forms of law. Figure 5 sets out the five key steps.

How Germany's democracy was taken apart, January 1933 - August 1934

Each step used law, emergency decrees or fear — or all three at once.

Step 1 — 30 Jan 1933

Hitler is appointed Chancellor

President Hindenburg asks Hitler to lead the government. The Nazis win power through legal appointment, not by force.

Step 2 — 28 Feb 1933

The Reichstag Fire Decree

After the parliament building burns, an emergency decree suspends free speech, free press and freedom of assembly. Opponents are arrested.

Step 3 — 23 Mar 1933

The Enabling Act

Parliament votes to hand law-making power to Hitler's cabinet — while armed Nazi troops watch and intimidate.

Step 4 — 14 Jul 1933

The one-party state

All other parties are banned. Trade unions had already been shut down in May.

Step 5 — 2 Aug 1934

Hitler becomes Fuhrer

When Hindenburg dies, Hitler joins the offices of president and chancellor. Germany is now a dictatorship.

In 19 months a democracy became a dictatorship — and most of the steps were dressed up as law.

Staircase diagram of the five steps by which Germany's democracy was taken apart between January 1933 and August 1934 — Hitler appointed Chancellor; the Reichstag Fire Decree suspending free speech, free press and freedom of assembly; the Enabling Act handing law-making power to Hitler's cabinet; the one-party state; and Hitler becoming Fuhrer — each row set a little deeper than the last, with the note that in 19 months a democracy became a dictatorship and most steps were dressed up as law.

Two steps deserve a closer look. After the **Reichstag fire** of 28 February 1933 — the parliament building burned, and a young Dutch communist was blamed — Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to issue an emergency decree suspending free speech, a free press, and freedom of assembly and arrest. Political opponents could now be locked up without trial. Then, with communists excluded and armed Nazi troops watching the chamber, the Reichstag voted on 23 March 1933 to hand its own law-making power to Hitler's cabinet — the **Enabling Act**. A democracy voted itself out of existence.

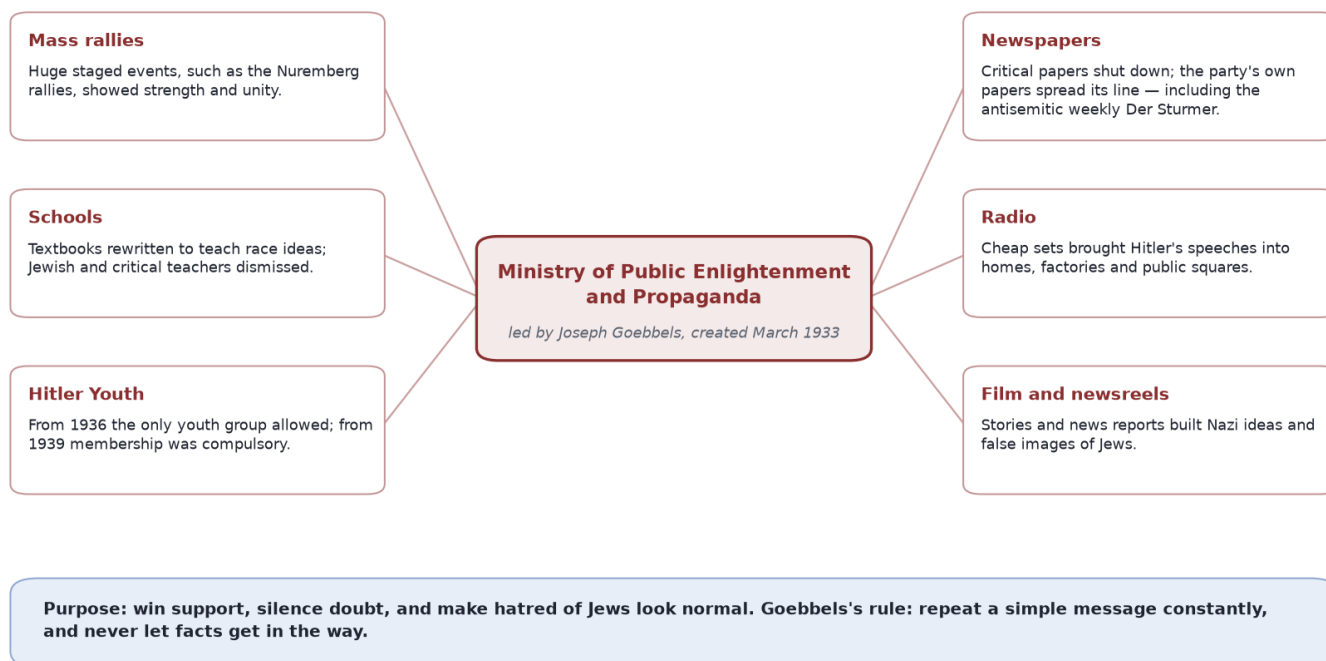
When Hindenburg died on 2 August 1934, Hitler joined the two offices and took the title **Fuhrer** — the German word for “leader”. By mid-1934 Germany was a **dictatorship**: one leader, one party, no free press, no independent courts. This matters for the causes of the Holocaust because dictatorship removed every brake. Once no court could strike down a cruel law, no newspaper could criticise it, and no opposition could organise against it, the racial policy described in part 6 faced no check inside Germany.

5. Propaganda: making hatred look normal (VC2HH10K20 . E03)

Propaganda — information pushed on a public to win support rather than to inform — was the third pillar. In March 1933 the Nazi government created the **Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda**, led by **Joseph Goebbels**. Within months it controlled or silenced the independent press; radio, film, posters, schools and the **Hitler Youth** all carried the same message. Figure 6 maps the channels.

Nazi propaganda: how the message was pushed into daily life

From March 1933 a single ministry controlled what Germans read, heard and saw.



Flow diagram of Nazi propaganda, with a central box for the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda led by Joseph Goebbels from March 1933, joined to six channels — newspapers, radio, film and newsreels, mass rallies, schools, and the Hitler Youth — and a note that the purpose was to win support, silence doubt and make hatred of Jews look normal.

Nazi propaganda did three things. It **repeated lies** about Jews until the lies felt like common sense — above all the **conspiracy theory** that Jews secretly controlled banks, governments and the press, and had caused Germany's defeat in 1918. (False on every point: German Jews were under one per cent of the population.) It **reduced people to stereotypes** — cartoons drew Jews as criminals and poisoners, so that cruelty could feel like self-defence. And it **celebrated the “national community”** while marking who was outside it. Year after year, children met the same lies in textbooks; adults met them in newsreels before every film. Historians of the period stress that propaganda alone did not turn a whole people into killers — but it lowered the bar step by step: what was shocking in 1932 looked ordinary by 1936.

6. Racial policy before 1939: step by step (VC2HH10K20.E03)

From 1933 the Nazi state turned its ideas into law. Figure 7 lists the main measures against Germany's Jews before the war.

Nazi racial policy inside Germany, 1933-1939: step by step

Each measure marked Jews out, cut them off from work, law and community — and made the next step easier.

Date	Measure	What it meant
1 Apr 1933	Nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses	Stormtroopers stand outside Jewish-owned shops; Germans are told not to buy there.
7 Apr 1933	Civil service law	Jews and political opponents are dismissed from government jobs, including teaching.
May 1933	Book burnings	Books by Jewish and critical writers are burned in public squares.
15 Sep 1935	The Nuremberg Laws	Jews lose citizenship; marriage between Jews and other Germans is banned.
1936-37	Olympics and after	Antisemitism is hidden during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, then tightened: Jews' property is seized and businesses forced to sell.
1938	Marked out	Jews' passports are stamped with 'J'; men must add the name 'Israel', women 'Sara'.
9-10 Nov 1938	Kristallnacht ('Night of Broken Glass')	A nationwide attack: over 1,400 synagogues burned or wrecked, about 30,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps, and Jews fined one billion marks.
Most Germans did not protest. Some helped Jews; many looked away. Silence helped the policy work.		

Table of Nazi racial policy inside Germany, 1933–1939, step by step: the nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses of 1 April 1933; the civil service law of 7 April 1933 dismissing Jews from government jobs; the book burnings of May 1933; the Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 stripping Jews of citizenship and banning marriage between Jews and other Germans; the hiding of persecution during the 1936 Berlin Olympics followed by the seizure of Jewish property and businesses; the stamping of Jews' passports and the forced names 'Israel' and 'Sara' in 1938; and Kristallnacht, the nationwide attack of 9-10 November 1938.

The turning point was 1935. At the party rally in the town of Nuremberg, the government announced two laws that made antisemitism state policy.

Reich Citizenship Law, 15 September 1935:

A citizen of the Reich is only that subject who is of German or kindred blood ... Under the first decree to this law (14 November 1935), Jews were stripped of citizenship and, with it, the right to vote.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, 15 September 1935:

Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Relations outside marriage between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden.

(Reichsgesetzblatt, 16 September 1935)

Figure 8 reproduces the laws more fully with their source.

Source 2 — the Nuremberg Laws, 15 September 1935 (translated extracts)

Two laws announced at the Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg

Reich Citizenship Law

- A subject of the state is a person who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich ...
- A citizen of the Reich is only that subject who is of German or kindred blood and who, by his conduct, shows that he is willing and fit to serve the German people and Reich faithfully.
- Under the first decree to this law (14 November 1935), Jews were stripped of citizenship and, with it, the right to vote.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour

- Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden.
- Relations outside marriage between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden.
- Anyone who breaks these rules faces prison.

What the laws did

- The laws turned antisemitism from street violence and boycotts into state policy: they defined, by law, who counted as Jewish — and placed Jews outside the protection of citizenship. Later rules built on them took away Jews' work, homes, schools and freedom of movement.

Source: Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette), 16 September 1935 (translation as published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org, retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source card reproducing translated extracts from the two Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 — the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour — with a short note explaining that the laws defined by law who counted as Jewish and placed Jews outside the protection of citizenship.

The **Nuremberg Laws** did two things no earlier measure had done. They defined, in law, *who counted as Jewish* — not by belief or practice but by grandparents — so that thousands of Germans who lived as ordinary Christians found themselves marked as Jews. And they removed Jews from citizenship: Jews were no longer citizens with rights, but “subjects” of the state. Once the law itself draws a line between who has rights and who has none, every later cruelty can be called legal.

Pressure then escalated. During the **1936 Berlin Olympics** the regime hid its antisemitism from the world’s cameras; afterwards it tightened the screws — seizing property and forcing Jews to sell their businesses. On the night of **9–10 November 1938** came **Kristallnacht** — the “Night of Broken Glass”, named for the glass that littered the streets after the attacks: a nationwide wave of violence in which more than 1,400 synagogues (Jewish houses of worship) and prayer rooms were burned or wrecked, Jewish homes and shops were smashed, about 30,000 Jewish men were sent to concentration camps, and the Jewish community was fined one billion marks. Kristallnacht showed what the state would now allow — and what it would organise. By the end of 1938, the message was plain: Jews had no future in Germany. The question for German Jews became escape — and that brings us to the world’s response.

7. The world looks away (VC2HH10K20 . E02)

The curriculum asks us to investigate the **world situation and the attitudes of the time** around racism and genocide, in the years before the war and during it. The uncomfortable finding is that racist ideas and closed doors were not limited to Germany. Figure 9 gives four examples.

The world's attitudes: racist ideas and closed doors were not limited to Germany (VC2HH10K20.E02)

Australia, 1901	Immigration Restriction Act A dictation test kept out almost all non-European migrants — the policy known as 'White Australia'. It set the mood of 1938: the government said Australia had 'no real racial problem' and wanted none.
United States, 1924	Immigration Act (Johnson-Reed Act) National quotas sharply cut immigration from eastern and southern Europe — exactly where most Jews lived. The quotas stayed through the 1930s.
Evian, July 1938	A conference of 32 countries Called to help Jewish refugees leaving Germany and Austria; nearly every country refused to take more people.
Many countries, late 1938	After Kristallnacht Governments and newspapers condemned the attacks — but borders stayed mostly shut, and trade continued.
Why it matters: in 1938 Jews trying to escape Germany found almost nowhere to go. The world's indifference gave the Nazi government room to act.	

Table of four examples showing that racist ideas and closed borders were not limited to Germany: Australia's Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and its dictation test; the United States Immigration Act of 1924 and its national quotas; the Evian Conference of July 1938 at which nearly every country refused more refugees; and the world's response after Kristallnacht — condemnation but mostly closed borders.

Australia's own law is part of this story. The **Immigration Restriction Act 1901** — the foundation of the policy known as "White Australia" — used a dictation test in any European language to keep out almost all non-European migrants. Racist ideas about who could belong were respectable in many democracies in the early 1900s, and they shaped refugee policy in 1938.

The clearest test came at **Evian**. Figure 10 summarises the conference.

The Evian Conference, 6-15 July 1938: who would take Jewish refugees?

Where	Evian-les-Bains, France — a spa town on Lake Geneva
Who called it	United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt
Who came	Delegates from 32 countries, plus refugee organisations
The problem	Hundreds of thousands of Jews in Germany and Austria (annexed by Germany in March 1938) needed somewhere safe to go
The outcome	Nearly every country said no, or offered token numbers. Only the Dominican Republic promised to take substantial numbers.
The Australian delegate	Colonel T. W. White: 'As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.'
Why it mattered: Hitler took note of the result and mocked it — other countries criticised Germany but refused to take in the very people he was persecuting. The conference showed Jews how few allies they had.	

Table of key facts about the Evian Conference of 6-15 July 1938: held at Evian-les-Bains in France; called by United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt; attended by delegates from 32 countries; facing the problem of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Germany and Austria needing somewhere safe; ending with nearly every country refusing to take more people, apart from token numbers and the Dominican Republic's promise; and quoting the Australian delegate, Colonel T. W. White.

In July 1938, delegates from 32 countries met at the French spa town of Évian-les-Bains to discuss the growing refugee crisis — hundreds of thousands of Jews in Germany and in Austria (annexed by Germany in March 1938) needed somewhere safe to go. Nearly every country refused to take more people; only the Dominican Republic promised substantial numbers. The Australian delegate, **Colonel T. W. White**, explained Australia’s position in words that are worth reading twice: “As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.” Hitler took note of the result and mocked it in a speech: other countries criticised Germany, he said, but would not take in the very people they claimed to pity. Evian did not cause the Holocaust — but it showed Jews how few allies they had, and showed the Nazi leadership that the world would protest without acting.

8. Weighing the ideas: how significant was ideology? (VC2HH10K20.E04)

The curriculum’s last elaboration asks us to **judge how far ideology mattered** in the Nazi programs of racial persecution and genocide. Historians agree on the facts but weigh the causes differently. Figure 11 sets two serious positions side by side.

How significant was Nazi ideology? Two historians' positions (VC2HH10K20.E04)

Both positions are serious scholarship. Each tests the other — that is how historians work.

Position A — ideology was central

e.g. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (1975)

- Antisemitism sat at the heart of Nazism from the start: the 1920 program, *Mein Kampf* (1925) and Hitler's speeches point one way.
- Policy moved in a steady line — from boycott to law, to forced emigration, to mass murder.
- The Holocaust was the carrying out of a long-held aim, not an accident of war.

Position B — other causes weighed as much

e.g. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* (1998)

- In 1933 there was no plan for mass murder. Policy escalated in stages as circumstances — the Depression, war, rivalries among officials — changed.
- Hitler often gave vague orders; ambitious underlings ‘worked towards the Führer’, each pushing policy further.
- So structures and opportunities, not just beliefs, drove the radicalisation.

Common ground: Nazi racist ideas were necessary for the Holocaust — without them it does not happen. The debate is about weight: was ideology the engine, or one cause among several? Evaluating that question is the task of VC2HH10K20.E04 — weigh the evidence on both sides before you judge.

*Two-column comparison of two historians’ positions on the significance of Nazi ideology: Position A, ideology was central, illustrated by Lucy Dawidowicz’s *The War Against the Jews* of 1975, with three supporting points; Position B, other causes weighed as much, illustrated by Ian Kershaw’s *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* of 1998, with three supporting points; and a closing note that Nazi racist ideas were necessary for the Holocaust and that the debate is about weight.*

Position A — associated above all with **Lucy Dawidowicz** (*The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945, 1975*) — argues that antisemitism sat at the heart of Nazism from the start. On this view the 1920 program, *Mein Kampf* and Hitler’s speeches all point one way, and policy moved in a steady line — boycott, law, forced emigration, then murder — once the chance arose. The Holocaust was the carrying out of a long-held aim.

Position B — associated above all with **Ian Kershaw** (*Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris, 1998*) — agrees that Nazi ideas were hateful, but argues that in 1933 there was no plan for mass murder. Policy escalated in stages as circumstances changed: the Depression, the seizure of power, the war, and rivalries among ambitious officials who “worked towards the Führer”, each pushing harder to guess what the leader wanted. On this view, structures and opportunities drove the radicalisation as much as belief did.

Steelman both sides before judging. Position A points to the sources in this section: the 1920 program excluded Jews from the nation fifteen years before any war; the Nuremberg Laws came two years before any plan for mass murder existed. Position B answers that between 1933 and 1939 the regime’s stated policy was to make Jewish life in Germany impossible so that Jews would *leave* — emigration, not murder — and that the turn to mass murder came

only with the war that section 4B studies. The two positions share common ground: without Nazi racist ideology, the Holocaust does not happen. The debate is about weight — was ideology the engine, or one cause among several? — and about where the other causes (the Depression, the death of democracy, the world’s indifference) fit. That weighing is exactly what VC2HH10K20.E04 asks you to practise; question Q10 returns to it.

9. Bringing it together (VC2HH10K20)

Historians sort the causes into **long-term** and **short-term**. Long-term: centuries of antisemitism, re-made in the 1800s as a racial lie; the ideology the Nazis wrote down in 1920; and the resentment left by the Treaty of Versailles. Short-term: the Great Depression, which broke faith in democracy; the legal erosion of democracy in 1933–34, which removed every brake on state power; the propaganda machine that made hatred look ordinary; and the racial policy that escalated from boycott to Kristallnacht while the world — at Evian and after — mostly looked away.

No single cause is enough on its own. Antisemitism existed for centuries without producing the Holocaust; depressions struck many countries without producing a Nazi state. It was the *joining* of the causes — old hatred, new ideology, economic crisis, a dead democracy, a silenced public, and a closed-door world — that built the road. Section 4B follows where the road led after September 1939.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026**.

1. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Encyclopedia*, ‘Nazi Party Platform’ (translation of the program of 24 February 1920, reproduced in part 3 and Figure 4), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.
2. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Encyclopedia*, ‘Nuremberg Laws’ (translations of the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, Reichsgesetzblatt, 16 September 1935, reproduced in part 6 and Figure 8), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.
3. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Encyclopedia*, ‘Kristallnacht’ (synagogues destroyed, 30,000 men arrested, the one-billion-mark fine), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.
4. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Encyclopedia*, ‘Evian Conference’ (32 countries, July 1938; the Dominican Republic; the quotation from Colonel T. W. White), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.
5. United Nations, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, adopted 9 December 1948, Article II (legal definition of genocide), un.org.
6. National Museum of Australia, ‘White Australia policy’ (Immigration Restriction Act 1901 and the dictation test), nma.gov.au.
7. United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, ‘Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson–Reed Act)’ (national quotas cutting immigration from eastern and southern Europe), history.state.gov.
8. Dawidowicz, Lucy, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1975 (Position A, part 8).
9. Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*, Allen Lane, London, 1998 (Position B, part 8).
10. Yad Vashem, ‘The Holocaust’ / ‘Shoah’ terminology notes, yadvashem.org; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Encyclopedia*, ‘Holocaust’ (terminology used in the Defining-the-term box, part 1), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.

Worked examples

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source 1 (the Nazi Party Program of 24 February 1920, quoted in part 3). What does this source show about Nazi ideas *before* the Nazis held any power?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is the official program of the Nazi Party, announced in Munich on 24 February 1920 — thirteen years before Hitler took power, and reproduced from the translation published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.	Start with what the source <i>is</i> : a party’s public promises, written to win votes.

Working	Comment
Step 2: Describe the content. Point 4 says only someone “of German blood” may belong to the Volk, and “No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the Volk.” Points 5 and 8 say non-citizens may live in Germany only as guests, and that further immigration of “non-Germans” must be prevented.	Use the source’s own words where you can.
Step 3: Explain the context. In 1920 the Nazi Party was tiny — a fringe group in a wounded, bitter post-war Germany. The program was written to attract support, so it tells us what the founders believed and were willing to publish.	Context explains what the source could and could not do in 1920.
Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. The purpose is to define who belongs — by “blood”, not by citizenship, language or religion — and to exclude Jews from the nation in writing, openly and from the start. Note what the source shows about perspective: the founders saw Germany as a body defined by descent, with Jews as outsiders.	A program shows a movement’s aims in its own words — strong evidence of intent.
Step 5: State significance and inference. Historians infer that the exclusion of Jews was not an accident of later years but a founding aim of the movement — evidence for Position A in part 8. The source also warns us: in 1920 these words won few votes; the significance came when the circumstances of part 2 gave the party power.	Significance can grow when circumstances change — causes join.

Answer: the program shows that excluding Jews from the German nation by “blood” was a founding aim of the Nazi movement, published openly in 1920 — though in 1920 it was the program of a fringe party, not yet state policy.

Worked source analysis 2 — with help

Question. Read the extracts from the Nuremberg Laws (Source 2, part 6). How did these laws change the position of Jews in Germany?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. Two laws announced on 15 September 1935, published in the Reichsgesetzblatt — the official law gazette of the German state.	A state gazette is the strongest kind of official source: this <i>was</i> the law.
Step 2: Describe the content. The citizenship law reserves citizenship for subjects “of German or kindred blood”; the first decree stripped Jews of citizenship and the right to vote. The blood law forbids marriage, and relations outside marriage, between Jews and citizens of “German or kindred blood”, with prison for breaking the rules.	Quote the exact words: “stripped of citizenship”, “forbidden”.
Step 3: Explain the context. By 1935 the democracy was already dead (part 4): no free press, no independent courts, no opposition parties could answer these laws. The boycott of 1933 and the dismissal of Jews from government jobs had come first (Figure 7).	Sequence matters: the laws came <i>after</i> the brakes were removed.
Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. The laws present racial exclusion as ordinary legislation — neatly printed, dated, decreed. That is the point to notice: the state was teaching its citizens that some neighbours were no longer fellow citizens. For Jews, the perspective was	One source, two perspectives — the state’s and the victims’.

the reverse: the country of their birth had written them out of it.

Step 5: State significance and inference. The laws turned prejudice into state policy and removed Jews from the protection of citizenship. Historians infer that once the law itself drew the line, every later measure — seizure of property, forced names, deportation — could be called “legal”.

Significance: law became the engine of persecution.

Answer: the Nuremberg Laws changed Jews from citizens with rights into subjects without them, making antisemitism state policy and giving every later cruelty the mask of law.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Key words (Figure 1).

- (a) In your own words, define *racism* and *discrimination*.
- (b) What is the difference between old hatred of Jews and the “racial” version that grew up in the late 1800s (part 1)?
- (c) Who created the word *genocide*, and when did the United Nations give it a legal definition?

Q2. The road to 1933 (Figure 2).

- (a) Name two blows suffered by Germany between 1918 and 1923.
- (b) What did the Great Depression do to German faith in democracy, in one or two sentences?
- (c) How did Hitler become Chancellor on 30 January 1933 — by election, or by another route? Use part 2.

Q3. Nazi ideas (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

- (a) List three of the six claims in the Figure 3 concept map.
- (b) What test did Point 4 of the 1920 program use for belonging to the nation, and who failed it?
- (c) Why do we call Point 4 “a lie dressed as biology” (part 3)?

Q4. The erosion of democracy (Figure 5).

- (a) Put these in order: the Enabling Act; Hitler appointed Chancellor; the Reichstag Fire Decree; the one-party state; Hitler becomes Führer.
- (b) Which step suspended free speech and a free press?
- (c) Part 4 says “a democracy voted itself out of existence”. Which vote does this refer to, and why did it pass?

Q5. Propaganda (Figure 6).

- (a) Name the ministry created in March 1933 and its leader.
- (b) Choose two channels from Figure 6 and say what each carried.
- (c) Part 5 says propaganda made “what was shocking in 1932 look ordinary by 1936”. Explain that sentence with one example from the figure.

Q6. Racial policy (Figure 7 and Figure 8).

- (a) What two things did the Nuremberg Laws do that no earlier measure had done (part 6)?
- (b) What was Kristallnacht, and name two things that happened on that night.

On your own

Q7. The world's attitudes (Figures 9 and 10). Explain what the Evian Conference of 1938 showed (i) to Jews trying to leave Germany, and (ii) to the Nazi leadership. Use the words of the Australian delegate in your answer.

Q8. Perspectives. Imagine three readers of the Reich Citizenship Law of 1935: a Nazi official, a Jewish German family, and an ordinary German bystander who disapproves of the Nazis but says nothing. For each, write two or three sentences on how the law would have looked from their position.

Q9. Causes: long and short. Sort these causes of the Holocaust into long-term and short-term, and justify each sorting in one sentence: the Great Depression; centuries of antisemitism; the erosion of democracy in 1933–34; Nazi ideology written down in 1920; the world's closed doors at Evian; resentment of the Treaty of Versailles.

Q10. Evaluating ideology (VC2HH10K20.E04). Using Figure 11 and part 8, write one paragraph judging how far ideology mattered in Nazi racial policy. State which position (A or B) you find more convincing, give two reasons drawn from sources in this section, and state the strongest point of the other side fairly.

Q11. Continuity and change. Identify one feature of the treatment of Jews in Germany that **changed** between 1933 and 1938, and one feature that **continued** across the same period. Justify each with evidence from Figure 7.

Q12. Significance. “Which single cause named in this section mattered most?” Choose one cause, give two criteria for judging its significance, and argue your case in one paragraph. Acknowledge one reason another choice could be defended.

Answers

Q1. (a) Racism: the belief that humanity can be divided into so-called “races” of unequal worth, and unfair treatment based on that belief. Discrimination: treating people unfairly because of the group they belong to rather than as individuals. (b) The old hatred treated Jews as a religious community; the new version falsely claimed Jews were a “race” that could never belong. (c) Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, created the word in 1944; the UN gave it a legal definition in the Genocide Convention of 1948.

Q2. (a) Any two: defeat in World War I (1918); the Treaty of Versailles (loss of land, reparations, humiliation); the currency collapse of 1923. (b) It broke confidence in democracy: with six million unemployed, support drained from moderate parties to the extremes. (c) By appointment: conservative politicians persuaded President Hindenburg to appoint him Chancellor; the Nazis never won a majority in a free election.

Q3. (a) Any three of: race hierarchy; scapegoating Jews; the Fuhrer principle; “living space”; overturning Versailles; the “national community”. (b) The test was “blood” (descent); Jews failed it, however German their family’s life was. (c) Because there is no biological fact of “German blood” dividing humans into kinds — the claim was false, but it was written as if it were science.

Q4. (a) Hitler appointed Chancellor (30 Jan 1933); Reichstag Fire Decree (28 Feb 1933); Enabling Act (23 Mar 1933); one-party state (14 Jul 1933); Hitler becomes Fuhrer (2 Aug 1934). (b) The Reichstag Fire Decree. (c) The Enabling Act vote of 23 March 1933: communists were excluded and armed Nazi troops watched the chamber, so the Reichstag handed law-making power to Hitler’s cabinet.

Q5. (a) The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, led by Joseph Goebbels. (b) Any two, e.g. radio: cheap sets brought Hitler’s speeches into homes and public squares; schools: rewritten textbooks taught race ideas and Jewish and critical teachers were dismissed. (c) Example: cartoons drawing Jews as criminals and poisoners — shocking cruelty presented as entertainment until it looked ordinary.

Q6. (a) They defined by law who counted as Jewish, and they removed Jews from citizenship (and the right to vote). (b) The nationwide attack of 9–10 November 1938 (“Night of Broken Glass”); any two of: over 1,400 synagogues and prayer rooms burned or wrecked; Jewish homes and shops smashed; about 30,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps; the Jewish community fined one billion marks.

Q7. (i) To Jews: the world condemned Germany but would not open its doors — escape routes were closing (White: “As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.”). (ii) To the Nazi leadership: protest was cheap; the regime could push harder without fearing action — Hitler mocked the result.

Q8. Answers will vary. Nazi official: the law as achievement — the party’s 1920 promise now state policy. Jewish family: the country of their birth writing them out of it; rights gone by a paragraph. Bystander: discomfort but silence — the law made cruelty “legal”, so saying nothing felt like obeying.

Q9. Long-term: centuries of antisemitism; Nazi ideology written down in 1920; resentment of Versailles. Short-term: the Great Depression; the erosion of democracy 1933–34; the closed doors at Evian (1938). Justifications must tie each cause to its timing (see part 9).

Q10. Answers will vary. Must state a position, two reasons from section sources (e.g. the 1920 program; the Nuremberg Laws; the escalation in Figure 7), and the other side’s strongest point fairly (e.g. no plan for mass murder existed in 1933; policy turned to murder only with the war).

Q11. Changed: the measures escalated from exclusion (boycott, job losses) to open violence and mass arrests (Kristallnacht). Continued: the aim of making Jewish life in Germany impossible, and the use of law and state power to do it.

Q12. Answers will vary. Award: one named cause; two stated criteria; a paragraph of argument using section evidence; one fair acknowledgment of another choice.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1.

- (a) Racism is the belief that humanity can be sorted into so-called “races” and that some are worth more than others, together with unfair treatment based on that belief; modern biology rejects the sorting — human “races” are not real biological divisions. Discrimination is treating people unfairly because of the group they belong to — religion, descent, background — instead of judging them as individuals.
- (b) For centuries, hatred of Jews treated them as a religious community: in principle, conversion could “remove” the difference. The racial version that grew up in the late 1800s claimed Jews were a “race” fixed by birth — so on that false logic, no Jew could ever belong, however German their family’s life. That is exactly the test Point 4 of the 1920 program applies.
- (c) Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, created the word in 1944; the United Nations gave genocide a legal definition in the Genocide Convention, adopted 9 December 1948: acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

Q2.

- (a) Defeat in World War I in 1918; the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 — loss of a tenth of Germany’s land and all overseas colonies, limits on its armed forces, and reparations, experienced by many Germans as a humiliation; and the currency collapse of 1923, which wiped out ordinary savings.
- (b) The Depression broke faith in democracy: with about six million Germans unemployed by 1932 and the Weimar governments unable to fix the economy, support drained from the moderate parties to the extremes, and the Nazis became the largest party in July 1932.
- (c) By appointment, not election. The Nazis never won a majority in a free election; in January 1933 a small group of conservative politicians, believing they could control Hitler, persuaded President Hindenburg to appoint him Chancellor.

Q3.

- (a) Any three of: a race hierarchy with Jews painted as the most dangerous enemy; scapegoating Jews for defeat and hard times; the Fuhrer principle (one leader, no elections); “living space” to be conquered in the east; overturning the Treaty of Versailles; the “national community” open only to “true” Germans.
- (b) Point 4 used “blood” — descent — as the test for belonging to the Volk. Jews failed it automatically, however long their families had lived in Germany, and so were excluded from citizenship.
- (c) Because no biological fact marks “German blood” as a separate kind of human; the claim was a lie presented in the language of science. Calling it a lie matters: explaining a Nazi claim is not agreeing with it.

Q4.

- (a) 30 January 1933 Hitler appointed Chancellor; 28 February 1933 the Reichstag Fire Decree; 23 March 1933 the Enabling Act; 14 July 1933 the one-party state; 2 August 1934 Hitler becomes Fuhrer.
- (b) The Reichstag Fire Decree of 28 February 1933 suspended free speech, a free press, and freedom of assembly and arrest.
- (c) The Enabling Act vote of 23 March 1933, in which the Reichstag handed law-making power to Hitler’s cabinet. It passed because communists had been excluded or arrested and armed Nazi troops watched the chamber — a democracy voting itself out of existence under intimidation.

Q5.

- (a) The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, created in March 1933 and led by Joseph Goebbels.
- (b) Any two from Figure 6. Newspapers: critical papers shut down and the party's own papers spread its line, including the antisemitic weekly *Der Stürmer*. Radio: cheap sets brought Hitler's speeches into homes, factories and public squares. Film and newsreels: stories and news reports built Nazi ideas and false images of Jews. Mass rallies: huge staged events showing strength and unity. Schools: rewritten textbooks teaching race ideas; Jewish and critical teachers dismissed. Hitler Youth: from 1936 the only youth group allowed, and from 1939 membership was compulsory.
- (c) Model: the cartoons. Drawing Jews as criminals and poisoners was, in 1932, shocking cruelty; repeated for years in newsreels, posters and papers, the same images came to look ordinary — which is how propaganda lowered the bar, step by step, so that cruelty could feel like self-defence.

Q6.

- (a) First, the Nuremberg Laws defined by law who counted as Jewish — by grandparents, not belief or practice — so even assimilated Germans were marked. Second, they removed Jews from citizenship: Jews became “subjects” without the right to vote, outside the protection of citizenship.
- (b) Kristallnacht — the “Night of Broken Glass” of 9–10 November 1938 — was a nationwide wave of state-allowed violence against Jews. Any two of: more than 1,400 synagogues and prayer rooms burned or wrecked; Jewish homes and shops smashed; about 30,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps; the Jewish community fined one billion marks.

Q7.

Model answer. (i) For Jews trying to leave Germany, Evian showed a world that condemned Germany in words but closed its doors in deed: 32 countries met, and nearly every one refused to take more people. The Australian delegate's words — “As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.” — told Jews that even democracies far from Germany did not want them. Escape routes were closing just as the Nazi policy tightened. (ii) For the Nazi leadership, the same result showed that the world would protest without acting. Hitler mocked the conference: other countries criticised Germany but would not take in the people they claimed to pity. Evian therefore gave the regime room to push harder — a cause in the sense of a removed brake, not a trigger.

Q8.

Model answer. The Nazi official reads the law as achievement: the promise of Point 4 of the 1920 program has become state policy, neatly printed in the law gazette — persecution made “legal” and career-making for the ambitious. The Jewish German family reads the same paragraph as expulsion from their own country: a family that served in Germany's armies and contributed to its science and arts is now “subject” rather than citizen, and grandchildren count grandparents to discover who the law says they are. The disapproving bystander reads it as something to keep quiet about: the law makes cruelty look like order, and silence feels like obedience — which is exactly how the policy worked, because most Germans did not protest.

Q9.

Model answer. Long-term causes are those laid down years or centuries before 1933: centuries of antisemitism (hatred of Jews existed in Europe long before the Nazis, re-made in the late 1800s as a racial lie); Nazi ideology written down in 1920 (the program excluded Jews fifteen years before power); and resentment of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which poisoned trust in the republic from its birth. Short-term causes are the crises of 1929–38 that opened the door: the Great Depression (broke faith in democracy and fed the extremes); the erosion of democracy in 1933–34 (removed every brake on state power); and the world's closed doors at Evian in 1938 (removed the brake from outside — the regime learned that protest would not become action). The sorting matters because no single cause is enough: the Holocaust happened where the long-term and short-term causes joined.

Q10.

Model answer (position A, with B treated fairly). Ideology was the most significant cause of Nazi racial policy. First reason: the sources show the aim was there from the start — the 1920 program excluded Jews from the nation by

“blood” thirteen years before the Nazis held power, and the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped Jews of citizenship two years before any plan for mass murder existed; policy followed ideas. Second reason: the policy’s *shape* matches the ideology — a race hierarchy needs a defined enemy, and every measure in Figure 7 marks Jews out, exactly as the ideology demanded. The strongest point of Position B is that in 1933 the regime’s stated policy was to make Jewish life impossible so that Jews would emigrate, and that the turn to mass murder came only with the war; circumstances and structures, not just beliefs, drove the escalation. That point is real — but it explains *timing and speed*, not direction: the direction was written in the ideology. Without it, as both positions agree, the Holocaust does not happen.

Q11.

Model answer. Changed: the *means*. In 1933–35 the measures were exclusion and law — boycott, dismissal from jobs, the Nuremberg Laws. By November 1938 the means had become open, nationwide violence: Kristallnacht’s burned synagogues, smashed shops and 30,000 arrests. The state had moved from writing cruelty into law to organising it in the street. Continued: the *aim and method*. Across 1933–38 the aim — making Jewish life in Germany impossible — never changed, and the method of using the state’s law and power to do it continued: even Kristallnacht ended with a “legal” fine of one billion marks on the Jewish community. Continuity of aim inside a change of means is exactly the pattern of escalation this section traces.

Q12.

Model answer (one of several defensible choices). Cause chosen: the erosion of democracy in 1933–34. Criteria: (1) how completely a cause removed brakes on the other causes; (2) how necessary it was — would the road exist without it? Argument: old antisemitism and the 1920 program sat for years without producing state persecution, because courts, a free press and opposition parties could still say no. The five steps of 1933–34 removed every one of those brakes: after the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Enabling Act, no court could strike down a cruel law, no paper could criticise it, no party could organise against it. The Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht were possible *because* the brakes were gone. Without the Depression the Nazis might never have been appointed; but without the death of democracy, appointment would not have become dictatorship. Another choice — the ideology — can be defended with equal care, as Q10 shows: it supplied the direction the dictatorship travelled. On my two criteria, though, the erosion of democracy is the cause that turned old hatred into state power.

How the Holocaust unfolded, step by step

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owens VC2HH10K21

Draws on — VC2HH10K21.E01, VC2HH10K21.E02, VC2HH10K21.E03, VC2HH10K21.E04

Builds on — section 4A (VC2HH10K20) and the account of World War II in chapter 3. Section 4C (VC2HH10K22) owns the experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish people during the Holocaust, including resistance and rescue; section 4D (VC2HH10K23) owns the legacies and interpretations of the world wars.

A note before we begin. This section studies a genocide: the deliberate destruction of a whole people. It is one of the most fully documented events in history, and everything here rests on named people, dated events and sources that historians have checked for decades. Some of the material is hard to read. It is presented plainly, without needless detail, and with respect for the people who were killed and for those who survived.

In section 4A you met the causes: the Nazi Party's ideas about race, and the persecution of Jews in Germany from 1933. This section follows **what happened** between 1933 and 1945 — the events, the individuals and organisations that carried them out, and the ways the countries of occupied Europe responded. It is the machinery of the Holocaust: how persecution became law, law became exclusion, exclusion became ghettos and deportations, and deportations became mass murder — until the camps were liberated in 1945.

By the end of this section you should be able to explain the Holocaust's six key phases; evaluate the roles of the organisations and individuals associated with it; judge how much the key events and developments mattered — the Wannsee Conference and the Nuremberg Laws among them; and map and compare the responses of the occupied countries of eastern and western Europe — using the language of cause and consequence, continuity and change, and perspective.

Theory

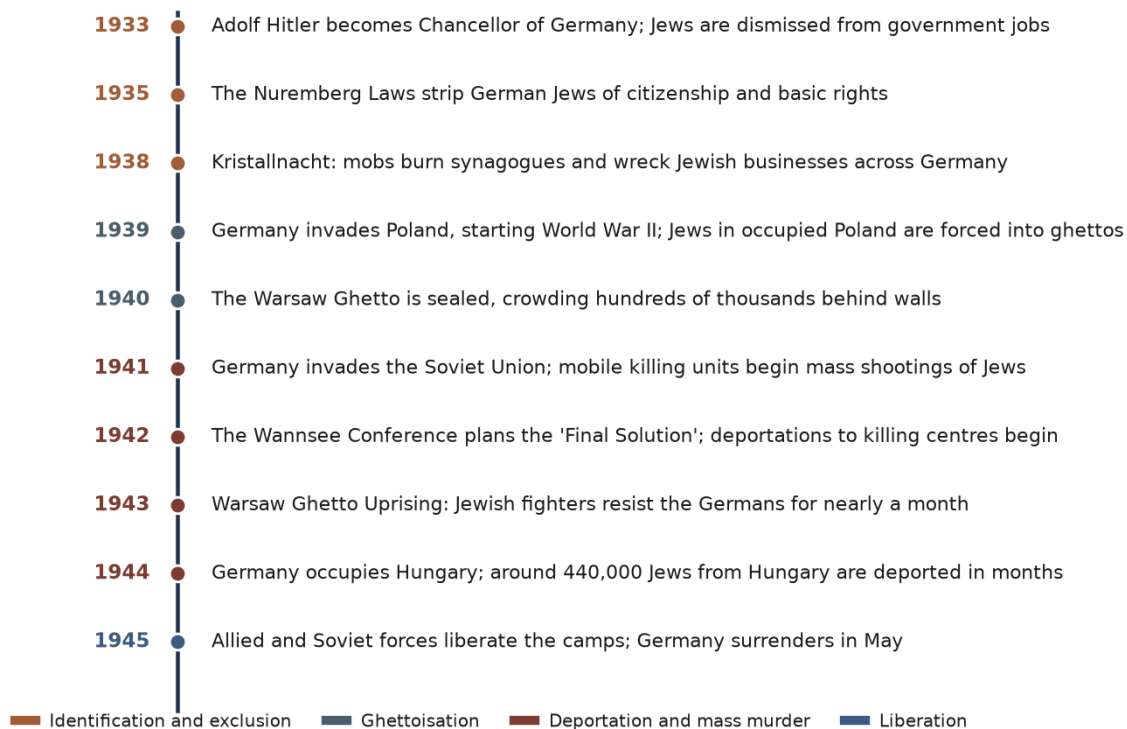
1. What was the Holocaust? (VC2HH10K21)

Defining the term. *Holocaust* and *Shoah*. The curriculum's term is **Holocaust**. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum defines the Holocaust as “the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators” — that is, persecution and murder organised by the state, carried out step by step over years. **Shoah** is the Hebrew word for catastrophe, and many Jewish writers prefer it; Yad Vashem, Israel's centre for remembering the Holocaust, uses both terms. A few writers use *Holocaust* more widely, for all the groups the Nazis targeted; in this section, following Yad Vashem and the museum, *Holocaust* means the genocide of Europe's Jews, and the other victim groups are studied in section 4C. *Genocide* — the word the lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined in 1944 for the deliberate destruction of a national, racial or religious group — is defined fully in section 4A; the Holocaust is the case that led Lemkin to invent the word.

The Holocaust unfolded between 1933, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, and 1945, when Germany surrendered. It reached from Germany itself across every country German armies occupied or controlled. About **six million Jews** were killed — around two of every three Jews in Europe. The number is an estimate: historians at Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have built it up from census records, transport lists, camp registers and post-war investigations, and the rounded figure of six million is where their work agrees.

It is easy to picture the Holocaust as a single decision. The evidence shows something different: a process that grew step by step, and that this section explains in six phases. Figure 1 places the key events of that process on a timeline, colour-coded by phase.

Key events of the Holocaust, 1933-1945



Vertical timeline of ten key events of the Holocaust from 1933 to 1945: 1933 Hitler becomes Chancellor and Jews are dismissed from government jobs; 1935 the Nuremberg Laws strip German Jews of citizenship and rights; 1938 Kristallnacht destroys synagogues and Jewish businesses; 1939 Germany invades Poland and Jews are forced into ghettos; 1940 the Warsaw Ghetto is sealed; 1941 Germany invades the Soviet Union and mobile killing units begin mass shootings; 1942 the Wannsee Conference plans the Final Solution and deportations to killing centres begin; 1943 the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; 1944 Germany occupies Hungary and about 440,000 Jews from Hungary are deported; 1945 Allied and Soviet forces liberate the camps. Events are colour-coded by phase: identification and exclusion, ghettoisation, deportation and mass murder, and liberation.

Figure 1. Key events of the Holocaust, 1933–1945 (source: section 4B, part 2; dates as in Yad Vashem and the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia; accessed 26 August 2026).

2. The six key phases (VC2HH10K21 . E01)

Historians describe the Holocaust in **six key phases**: identification, exclusion, ghettoisation, deportation, mass murder and liberation. The phases overlap — in one country the killings could begin while in another the exclusions were still starting — so think of them as six wheels turning at once, not six rungs on a ladder.

The six key phases of the Holocaust

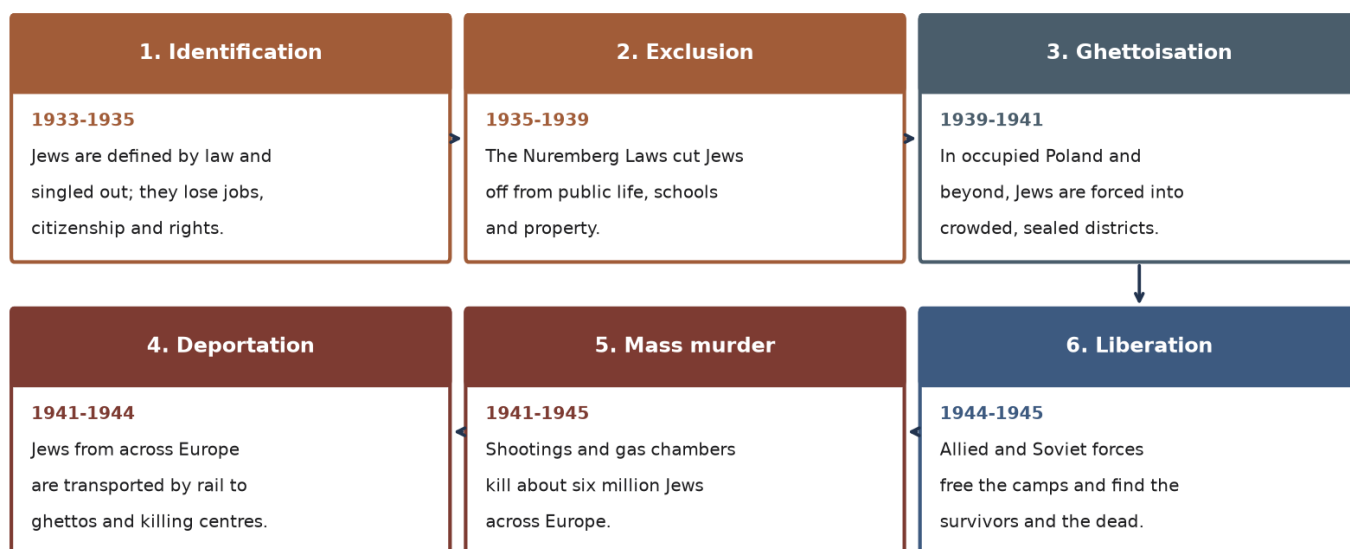


Diagram of six connected panels naming the Holocaust's key phases with rough dates: 1 Identification (1933-1935), Jews are defined by law and singled out and lose jobs, citizenship and rights; 2 Exclusion (1935-1939), the Nuremberg Laws cut Jews off from public life, schools and property; 3 Ghettoisation (1939-1941), in occupied Poland and beyond Jews are forced into crowded sealed districts; 4 Deportation (1941-1944), Jews from across Europe are transported by rail to ghettos and killing centres; 5 Mass murder (1941-1945), shootings and gas chambers kill about six million Jews across Europe; 6 Liberation (1944-1945), Allied and Soviet forces free the camps and find the survivors and the dead.

Figure 2. The six key phases of the Holocaust (source: section 4B, part 2, following the elaboration VC2HH10K21 . E01).

Identification. Before Jews could be excluded, the state had to decide *who counted as a Jew*. From 1933, Jews in Germany were dismissed from government jobs and the professions. Registers and censuses marked them out. Crucially, the Nazis defined “Jew” not by belief or practice but by ancestry — by grandparents — so that people who had never set foot in a synagogue were counted and hunted. Identification also relied on neighbours: lists were completed by local officials and police who knew who lived where.

Exclusion. Laws then cut Jews off from the life of the country. The **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935 (part 3, Figure 3) took away German Jews’ citizenship and banned marriage and sexual relations between Jews and other Germans. Jews were barred from schools, parks, libraries and most jobs; Jewish businesses were boycotted and later seized. Exclusion made ordinary Germans bystanders to their Jewish neighbours’ ruin — and made many profit from it.

Ghettoisation. After Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Jews in occupied Polish territory were forced into **ghettos** — sealed, crowded districts of a city where Jews had to live. The **Warsaw Ghetto**, sealed in November 1940, packed more than 400,000 people into a few square kilometres. Hunger and disease killed tens of thousands there before any gas chamber was built. Ghettos were presented as housing; in practice they were prisons that concentrated Jews for what came next.

Deportation. From 1941, Jews from across Europe — Germany, the Netherlands, France, Greece, and in 1944 Hungary — were transported, mostly by rail, to ghettos, camps and killing centres in occupied Poland and the occupied Soviet territories. *Deportation* here means forced transport: people were ordered to report with a small bag, packed into cattle wagons, and given no choice about where they went. The railways that carried them were run by ordinary timetable clerks and drivers — one of the findings of part 4.

Mass murder. Killing began on a large scale after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, when mobile killing units — the **Einsatzgruppen** — and police battalions followed the army and shot Jews town by town. From late 1941 the Nazis built killing centres with gas chambers in occupied Poland — Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, and

Auschwitz-Birkenau — so that murder could be carried out on an industrial scale and at a distance from the shooters. About six million Jews were killed in all: shot, gassed, and worked and starved to death.

Liberation. The killing ended only when the armies arrived. As Soviet forces advanced from the east and American and British forces from the west in 1944–45, they freed the camps one by one. The guards had often gone ahead of them, driving prisoners west on **death marches** in which thousands more died. Figure 3 lists the major camps, who liberated them, and when.

Liberation of the major camps, 1944-1945

Camp	Location	Liberated by	Date
Majdanek	occupied Poland	Soviet forces	late July 1944
Auschwitz-Birkenau	occupied Poland	Soviet Red Army	27 January 1945
Buchenwald	Germany	United States forces	11 April 1945
Bergen-Belsen	Germany	British forces	15 April 1945
Dachau	Germany	United States forces	29 April 1945
Theresienstadt	Czechoslovakia	Soviet forces	8 May 1945

By the time the Allies reached the camps, Germany had already forced surviving prisoners on brutal westward marches - the 'death marches' - away from the Soviet advance. Soldiers who liberated the camps found the dead, the dying, and survivors in desperate need of food and care. War correspondents and photographers recorded what they found, and that evidence has mattered ever since.

Table of the liberation of the major camps: Majdanek liberated by Soviet forces in late July 1944; Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Soviet Red Army on 27 January 1945; Buchenwald by United States forces on 11 April 1945; Bergen-Belsen by British forces on 15 April 1945; Dachau by United States forces on 29 April 1945; Theresienstadt by Soviet forces on 8 May 1945; with a note that on the death marches of 1944-45 thousands of prisoners were killed or died as the guards drove them west, and that Allied war correspondents filmed and photographed what the liberating armies found.

Figure 3. The liberation of the camps, 1944–45 (source: USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, ‘Liberation’ entries; accessed 26 August 2026).

The soldiers who opened the camps found survivors too weak to stand and piles of the dead; their reports, photographs and films became some of the first evidence the world saw. 27 January, the day Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated, is now an international day of commemoration.

3. Key events and developments (VC2HH10K21 . E03)

Two events named by the curriculum matter above all others as turning points: the **Nuremberg Laws** and the **Wannsee Conference**.

The Nuremberg Laws, 15 September 1935. At a Nazi Party rally in the city of Nuremberg, the German parliament — by then a rubber stamp for Hitler — passed two laws: the **Reich Citizenship Law** and the **Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour**. The first said that only people “of German or kindred blood” could be citizens; Jews became “subjects” in their own country. A decree of November 1935 then defined who counted as a Jew by the number of Jewish grandparents. Figure 4 sets the laws out as a source card; Source 1 quotes the citizenship law.

Source card: the Nuremberg Laws (1935)

What the law said	What it meant for Jewish people
When and where	Announced at the Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, 15 September 1935
Law 1: Reich Citizenship Law	Jews lose German citizenship and the right to vote; they become 'subjects' with no legal protection
Law 2: Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour	Marriage and close personal relations between Jews and other Germans are made a crime
How a 'Jew' was defined	Later rules counted Jewish grandparents - religion and family, not belief, decided who was targeted
Why it matters	Persecution became written law: every court, police force and office in Germany was now bound to enforce it

Historians' note: the laws did not create antisemitism - section 4A traces its causes - but they turned it into state law.

Source card on the Nuremberg Laws: when and where, the Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg, 15 September 1935; the Reich Citizenship Law, which made Jews subjects rather than citizens of Germany; the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, which banned marriage and sexual relations between Jews and other Germans; the note that a Jew was defined by grandparents, not by belief or practice; and the reason it matters, that persecution became written law and every office, court and school in Germany had to apply the racial definitions.

Figure 4. Source card: the Nuremberg Laws (1935) (source: Reichsgesetzblatt I, 16 September 1935; translation as in USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia; accessed 26 August 2026).

Source 1 – the Reich Citizenship Law, 15 September 1935 (translation, abridged) :

"A subject of the State is a person who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich and who therefore has particular obligations towards the Reich."

"A citizen of the Reich may be only that person who is of German or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve loyally the German people and the Reich."

Why do historians rate the Nuremberg Laws so significant? Three reasons. First, they made persecution **legal**: antisemitism was no longer mob violence or party policy but the written law of the state, applied by judges, clerks and teachers as part of their ordinary work. Second, they defined "Jew" by race — by grandparents — which is what made identification, and later deportation, possible at the scale of a whole continent. Third, they showed the direction of travel: each law normalised the one before it. Worked source analysis 2 reads Source 1 in full.

Kristallnacht, 9–10 November 1938. The name means "crystal night", after the glass that littered the streets: a wave of organised violence across Germany and annexed Austria in which mobs burned synagogues, wrecked Jewish shops and homes, and killed around 90 Jews. About **30,000 Jewish men** were arrested and sent to the camps at Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Kristallnacht showed that exclusion could turn to open violence with the state looking on — and that, given a chance to leave, many Jews would try: the flood of pleas for visas that followed is the backdrop to part 6.

The ghettos and the start of mass shooting. The Warsaw Ghetto (sealed November 1940) has been covered in part 2. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the **Einsatzgruppen** — mobile killing units of the SS

and police — followed the army east and shot Jews in thousands of towns. At **Babi Yar**, a ravine at the edge of Kyiv, they shot **33,771 Jews in two days**, 29–30 September 1941, one of the single largest massacres of the war.

The Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942. By late 1941 the killing was already under way, but it was not yet one coordinated plan. On 20 January 1942, in a villa at **Wannsee** on the edge of Berlin, fifteen senior SS officers and state secretaries met for about ninety minutes to coordinate the “Final Solution of the Jewish question” across all of Europe. The meeting was chaired by **Reinhard Heydrich**; the minutes were taken by **Adolf Eichmann**, the SS officer who ran the deportation machinery. Figure 5 is a source card for the conference; Source 2 quotes the minutes.

Source card: the Wannsee Conference (1942)

The meeting, at a glance	
Date	20 January 1942, about 90 minutes
Place	A villa at Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin
Chaired by	Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Police and SD
Minutes taken by	Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer in charge of deportations
Attendees	15 senior officers of the SS and the Nazi Party, plus senior state officials
Purpose	To coordinate one Europe-wide plan the Nazis called the 'Final Solution of the Jewish question'

What the minutes recorded
"Instead of emigration, the next possible solution, after prior approval by the Fuehrer, is the evacuation of the Jews to the East."
- Minutes of the Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942. Translation from the German original held in the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office. Thirty copies were made; one survived the war.

Language that hid murder
The minutes avoided plain words. 'Evacuation' meant deportation; 'the Final Solution' meant the murder of Europe's Jews; 'special treatment' meant killing. The document listed about 11 million Jews across Europe - including countries Germany did not yet control - and how they would be 'taken care of'.

Source card on the Wannsee Conference: the meeting at a glance (20 January 1942, about 90 minutes, a villa at Wannsee on the outskirts of Berlin, chaired by Reinhard Heydrich, minutes taken by Adolf Eichmann, 15 senior officers of the SS and the Nazi Party plus senior state officials, purpose to coordinate one Europe-wide plan the Nazis called the Final Solution of the Jewish question); a quoted line from the minutes, 'Instead of emigration, the next possible solution, after prior approval by the Fuehrer, is the evacuation of the Jews to the East', attributed to the minutes of 20 January 1942, German original held in the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office, thirty copies made and one survived the war; and a box titled 'Language that hid murder' explaining that 'evacuation' meant deportation, 'the Final Solution' meant the murder of Europe's Jews, and 'special treatment' meant killing, and that the document listed about 11 million Jews across Europe.

Figure 5. Source card: the Wannsee Conference (1942) (source: minutes of the Wannsee Conference, German original in the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office; translation as published by the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial; accessed 26 August 2026).

Source 2 — the minutes of the Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942 (translation):

"Instead of emigration, the next possible solution, after prior approval by the Fuehrer, is the evacuation of the Jews to the East."

The significance of Wannsee is threefold. First, it shows the Holocaust was a **whole-of-government project**: the SS could not deport the Jews of Europe without the railways, the foreign office and the ministries of the interior, and Wannsee was where those arms of the state were tied together. Second, the minutes are **evidence of planning** at the highest level — thirty copies were printed, and the one that survived lets historians date and trace the plan. Third, the

minutes show the **language of concealment**: “evacuation” for deportation, “Final Solution” for murder. The writers knew what they were doing and chose words to hide it. Worked source analysis 1 reads Source 2 in full.

The killing centres. Through 1942 the plan became machinery. Under the cover name **Operation Reinhard**, the killing centres of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka were built in occupied Poland, and about **1.7 million Jews** were murdered in them, most from the ghettos of Poland. At **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, about **1.1 million Jews** were killed, most of them Jews deported from across Europe — including, in 1944, around 440,000 Jews from Hungary in a single eight-week wave. By the time the camps were liberated (Figure 3), about six million Jews were dead.

Death marches and the last killings. As the front closed in during 1944–45, the guards emptied the camps and drove prisoners west on foot in winter — the death marches — killing those who fell. The violence continued to the last days of the war: the murder of Europe’s Jews did not slow because the war was being lost. That fact is part of why historians judge the Holocaust to have been a central aim of the Nazi state, not a side effect of the war.

4. Organisations and individuals (VC2HH10K21 . E02)

The curriculum asks you to evaluate *roles*: who did what, and how much each group mattered. Figure 6 sets out the main organisations and individuals.

Who did what: organisations and individuals (VC2HH10K21.E02)

Who they were	Position	Role in the Holocaust
Adolf Hitler	Dictator of Germany, 1933-1945, leader of the Nazi Party	Set the racist aims of the regime and gave the broad orders under which the Holocaust was carried out
Heinrich Himmler	Head of the SS	Built the police, camp and killing system and oversaw its running
Reinhard Heydrich	Chief of the Security Police and SD	Chaired the Wannsee Conference and organised the plan to murder Europe's Jews until he was killed in 1942
Adolf Eichmann	SS officer for Jewish affairs	Organised the trains and timetables that moved millions to ghettos and killing centres
The SS	The Nazi Party's guard force, grown into a state within the state	Ran the camps and the shooting units; carried out deportations
Civil servants, police and railway workers	Ordinary officials across Germany and occupied Europe	Wrote the laws, kept the registers, drove the trains - the machine could not work without them
Civilian populations	Ordinary people in Germany and occupied countries	Some joined in, some looked away, some hid and rescued Jewish neighbours - conduct ranged across all three
Collaborators in occupied countries	Local police, militias and officials who worked with the Germans	In several countries they rounded up Jews themselves or handed them over
Complicit governments	Regimes allied to or controlled by Germany, such as Vichy France and Horthy's Hungary	Passed their own anti-Jewish laws and handed over citizens and refugees

Section 4C examines the people who resisted, rescued and survived; here the focus is on how the machinery of persecution was staffed.

Table of nine rows on what organisations and individuals did in the Holocaust: Adolf Hitler, whose ideas and goals set the direction and whose approval was sought for major steps; the Nazi Party, which spread antisemitism and made it policy; Heinrich Himmler and the SS, which ran the camps and the killing units; Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann, who planned and organised identification, deportation and murder; civil servants, police and railway workers, whose everyday work of offices, courts and timetables made the round-ups and transports possible; civilian populations, mostly bystanders, some helpers of Jews, some informers; collaborators in occupied countries, local police and officials who joined the round-ups and shootings; and complicit governments, such as Vichy France, whose police and laws did part of the German work; with a footnote that resistance and rescue by Jews and non-Jews are studied in section 4C.

Figure 6. Roles in the Holocaust: organisations and individuals (source: section 4B, part 4, following the elaboration VC2HH10K21 .E02; resistance and rescue are studied in section 4C).

Adolf Hitler. Hitler did not need to sign an order for every step. His antisemitism was public from the start (section 4A), and men below him worked “towards the Führer” — competing to turn his broad goals into policy. Historians debate how far Hitler managed the detail, but they agree on the essentials: the regime’s central aim was his, and major steps — including the timing of the Wannsee meeting — waited on his approval.

The Nazi Party and the SS. The Nazi Party — the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, which had ruled Germany since 1933 — supplied the ideas, the propaganda and the local pressure; the **SS** — Heinrich Himmler’s organisation within the party — supplied the machinery: the camps, the Einsatzgruppen, and the Security Police headed by Heydrich. Eichmann’s small office, IV B 4, turned a continent-wide crime into timetables.

The state machinery. This is the finding that most surprises students: the Holocaust ran on the everyday work of ordinary government. Clerks kept the registers that identified Jews; judges applied the racial laws; police ran the round-ups; railway officials scheduled the trains. The bureaucracy was not bypassed by the Nazis; it was used. That is why the Holocaust is often described as a crime of desks and timetables as much as of hatred.

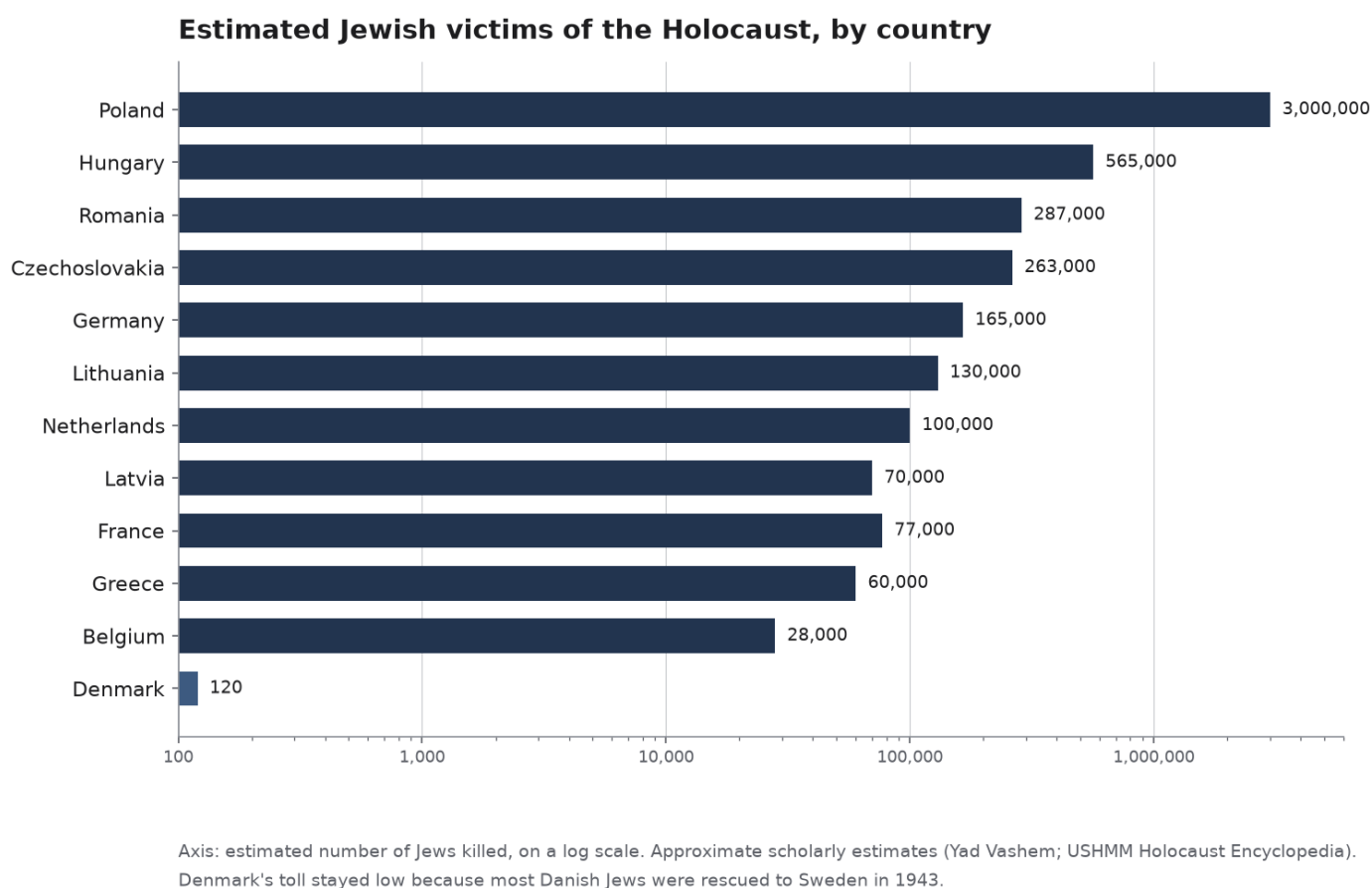
Civilian populations. Across Europe, most non-Jewish civilians were **bystanders**: they watched, and did nothing to stop it. Some benefited, taking over Jewish homes and shops. Some informed on Jews or hid them for money; a few — a very few — hid Jews at the risk of their own lives (section 4C). Evaluating the bystander is part of evaluating the Holocaust: genocide at this scale was impossible without the quiet of the many.

Collaborators and complicit governments. In occupied countries, local police and auxiliaries joined the shootings in the east and the round-ups in the west; some governments gave Germany their police and their laws. The Vichy government of France ran its own round-ups; other governments refused (part 5). The pattern differs country by country, which is exactly why the curriculum asks you to *map and compare*.

The evaluation the elaboration calls for comes to this: the Holocaust was not the work of a handful of monsters. It required a party, a state machinery, collaborating elites abroad, and millions of bystanders. Historians study each layer to explain how a modern society organised the murder of six million of its neighbours.

5. Occupied Europe: mapping and comparing responses (VC2HH10K21.E04)

The fate of Jews varied enormously from country to country. Figure 7 maps the outcome — the estimated number of Jews killed, by country — and Figure 8 compares *why*: the form of German rule, the response of local officials and populations, and the chances of rescue.



Horizontal bar chart of the estimated number of Jews killed in the Holocaust by country of pre-war residence, on a log scale: Poland about 3,000,000; Hungary about 565,000; Romania about 287,000; Czechoslovakia about 263,000; Germany about 165,000; Lithuania about 130,000; Netherlands about 100,000; France about 77,000; Latvia about 70,000; Greece about 60,000; Belgium about 28,000; Denmark about 120; with footnotes that the figures are approximate scholarly estimates drawn from Yad Vashem and the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, and that Denmark's toll stayed low because most Danish Jews were rescued to Sweden in 1943.

Figure 7. Estimated Jewish victims of the Holocaust, by country (source: Yad Vashem and USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, victim estimates; accessed 26 August 2026).

Occupied countries compared: how they responded to the persecution of Jews

Western Europe

Denmark

Rule: Occupied 1940; Danish government stayed in place until 1943
 What happened: When round-ups were planned in October 1943, families, fishermen and officials ferried about 7,200 Jews by boat to neutral Sweden
 Outcome: Most survived; fewer than 120 died

Netherlands

Rule: Occupied 1940; run directly by a German civil government
 What happened: Dutch police and railways were used in the round-ups; in February 1941 Amsterdam workers struck in protest
 Outcome: About three-quarters of Dutch Jews were killed - the highest share in western Europe

France

Rule: Defeated 1940; the Vichy French government cooperated with Germany
 What happened: French police arrested over 13,000 Jews in Paris in July 1942; many ordinary French people also hid Jewish neighbours
 Outcome: About 76,000 Jews were deported from France; about a quarter of its pre-war Jewish population died

Belgium

Rule: Occupied 1940; run by a German military government
 What happened: Local officials cooperated in registering and rounding up Jews; many Jews went into hiding
 Outcome: About 25,000 were deported; about two in five of Belgium's Jews died

Eastern Europe

Poland

Rule: Occupied 1939; ruled directly and brutally by Germany
 What happened: The largest Jewish community in Europe lived here; Germany built the ghettos and killing centres on occupied Polish soil; some Poles rescued Jews at risk of death
 Outcome: About three million Polish Jews - around nine in ten - were killed

Lithuania

Rule: Occupied by the Soviet Union 1940, then by Germany 1941
 What happened: German shooting units were joined by local auxiliary police; most Jews were shot near their towns
 Outcome: Around nine in ten of Lithuania's Jews were killed

Hungary

Rule: An ally of Germany; not occupied until March 1944
 What happened: The government refused to hand over its Jews until Germany invaded; then about 440,000 were deported in eight weeks, most to Auschwitz
 Outcome: More than half of Hungary's Jews were killed, most in the final year of the war

Bulgaria

Rule: An ally of Germany; never occupied
 What happened: Church leaders, politicians and citizens protested, and the government refused to deport Jews who were Bulgarian citizens - though it handed over Jews from lands it occupied
 Outcome: About 48,000 Bulgarian Jews survived the war

Two columns of country cards comparing the responses of occupied countries to the persecution of Jews. Western Europe: Denmark, occupied 1940 with the Danish government left in place until 1943, where in October 1943 families, fishermen and officials ferried about 7,200 Jews by boat to neutral Sweden and most survived; Netherlands, occupied 1940 and run directly by a German civil government, where Dutch police and railways were used in the round-ups, Amsterdam workers struck in protest in February 1941, and about three-quarters of Dutch Jews were killed; France, defeated 1940 with the cooperating Vichy government, where French police arrested over 13,000 Jews in Paris in July 1942 while many ordinary French people hid Jewish neighbours, and about a quarter of French Jews died; Belgium, occupied 1940 under a German military government, where local officials cooperated in registering and rounding up Jews while many Jews went into hiding, and about two in five of Belgium's Jews died. Eastern Europe: Poland, occupied 1939 and ruled brutally by Germany, home to the largest Jewish community in Europe, where Germany built the ghettos and killing centres and about nine in ten Polish Jews were killed; Lithuania, occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 then by Germany in 1941, where German shooting units were joined by local auxiliary police and around nine in ten Jews were killed; Hungary, an ally of Germany not occupied until March 1944, whose government refused to hand over its Jews until Germany invaded, after which about 440,000 were deported in eight weeks and more than half of Hungary's Jews were killed; Bulgaria, an ally never occupied, where church leaders, politicians and citizens protested and the government refused to deport Jews who were Bulgarian citizens though it handed over Jews from lands it occupied, and about 48,000 Bulgarian Jews survived.

Figure 8. Occupied countries compared: how they responded (source: section 4B, part 5, following the elaboration VC2HH10K21 .E04; figures as in Yad Vashem and the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia; accessed 26 August 2026).

Western Europe. In **Denmark**, the king and government were left in place, and Danes treated their small Jewish community as fellow citizens. When the German police planned a round-up in October 1943, a leak let the Jews hide: over two weeks, fishermen ferried about **7,200 Jews to neutral Sweden** in fishing boats, and fewer than 120 Danish

Jews died. In the **Netherlands**, run directly from Berlin, the opposite happened: the efficient Dutch register made round-ups easy, and about **three-quarters** of Dutch Jews were killed — the worst toll in the west — even though Amsterdam workers struck in protest as early as February 1941. In **France**, the Vichy government cooperated: French police arrested more than 13,000 Jews in Paris on 16–17 July 1942 (the Vel d'Hiv round-up, over 4,000 of them children), and about 76,000 Jews were deported from France; about a quarter died. In **Belgium**, many Jews went into hiding with help from ordinary Belgians, and about two in five died.

Eastern Europe. In **Poland**, home to Europe's largest Jewish community, the German rule was direct and brutal: the ghettos and the killing centres were built on Polish soil, and about **three million Polish Jews — nine in ten — were killed**. In **Lithuania**, the killing began in the first weeks of the German invasion of 1941, with local auxiliaries joining the Einsatzgruppen; again about nine in ten were killed. **Hungary** is the late tragedy: an ally of Germany, it refused to hand over its Jews until Germany occupied it in March 1944 — then, in eight weeks from mid-May, about **440,000 Jews from Hungary** were deported, most to Auschwitz, while the war was already being lost. **Bulgaria** shows the power of protest: church leaders, politicians and citizens objected, and the government refused to deport Jews who were Bulgarian citizens — about 48,000 survived — though it did hand over the Jews of territories it occupied in Greece and Yugoslavia.

Comparing the columns. Three patterns stand out. First, *how* Germany ruled mattered: direct rule and local cooperation made round-ups easy (Netherlands, Lithuania), while distance, delay or a standing national government left room for rescue or refusal (Denmark, Bulgaria, Hungary until 1944). Second, *when* mattered: countries occupied late in the war (Hungary 1944) saw the machinery applied at full speed, while by October 1943 the Danish rescue was possible in part because the tide of the war had turned. Third, *people* mattered: officials who leaked the round-up, fishermen who rowed, clerks who lost the files, neighbours who hid a family — and their opposites. The map in Figure 7 is the outcome of those differences. (Jewish resistance to all of this — including the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April–May 1943 — belongs to section 4C.)

6. Australia and the Holocaust (VC2HH10K21)

This sub-strand covers Australians and the two world wars, 1914 to 1945, and Australians met the Holocaust at several points: before the war, as a country asked to take refugees; during the war, as soldiers and airmen; and after it, as a home for survivors.

Australia and the Holocaust: wartime connections

July 1938 - the Evian Conference

32 countries met in France to discuss Jewish refugees fleeing Germany. Australia's delegate, Colonel Thomas W. White, said that because Australia had no 'racial problem' of its own, it did not want to import one. Australia admitted only a small number of refugees.

3 September 1939 - Australia enters the war

Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced on radio that Australia was at war with Germany. Australians were soon fighting German forces in the air, at sea and on land - against the very regime carrying out the Holocaust.

1939-1945 - Australians in the war against Germany

RAAF air crews served in the bombing campaign over Germany; Army units fought in North Africa and Greece; more than 8,000 Australians were held as prisoners of war by Germany and Italy. About 2,500 Jewish Australians served in the Australian forces, from a community of about 25,000.

1942 - Australia learns what is happening

In December 1942 the Allied governments issued a joint statement condemning the murder of Europe's Jews, and Australian newspapers carried the news. Reports of persecution had appeared in the Australian press since 1938.

1945 - Australians witness the aftermath

As the camps were emptied, some Australian prisoners of war in Germany endured forced marches and saw what the prisoners had suffered. Australian service personnel among the occupying forces met survivors and saw the camps.

After 1945 - survivors come to Australia

In the years after the war Australia accepted thousands of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, who rebuilt their lives and founded museums, schools and memorials in Australian cities.

The post-war arrival of survivors is picked up in section 4D as one of the legacies of World War II.

Six cards on Australia and the Holocaust: Evian, July 1938, where at the international conference on refugees Colonel Thomas W. White said that Australia, having no real racial problem of its own, did not wish to import one; 3 September 1939, when Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced by radio that Australia was at war; 1939-45, when about 2,500 Jewish Australians served in the armed forces of a community of about 25,000 and more than 8,000 Australians became prisoners of war of Germany and Italy; December 1942, when the Allied joint statement condemning the German mass murder of Jews was reported in the Australian press; 1945, when Australian prisoners of war on the death marches and near the camps witnessed the aftermath of the Holocaust; and after the war, when survivors of the Holocaust came to Australia as refugees, a story continued in section 4D.

Figure 9. Australia and the Holocaust (source: Australian War Memorial; National Archives of Australia; Sydney Jewish Museum, 'Australia and the Holocaust'; accessed 26 August 2026).

In July 1938, after Germany and Austria together had made a refugee crisis, thirty-two countries met at **Evian** in France to discuss it. Australia's delegate, **Colonel Thomas W. White**, told the conference that Australia, "having no real racial problem of our own", did not wish to "import one". Only a small number of Jewish refugees were admitted before the war. The statement is a primary source for Australia's pre-war response to the persecution of Europe's Jews — and it sat alongside a public that was largely unaware of how far the persecution would go.

During the war, about **2,500 Jewish Australians** served in the armed forces — roughly one in ten of a community of about 25,000 — and more than **8,000 Australians** were prisoners of war of Germany and Italy. In 1945, some of those prisoners, moved on forced marches ahead of the advancing Soviets, came face to face with the aftermath of the death marches and the camps; their letters and diaries are among the first Australian eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust. In December 1942, the Allied governments — including Australia — issued a joint statement condemning "the bestial

policy of cold-blooded extermination” of the Jews, and the statement was reported in Australian newspapers; it was the first official public acknowledgement by the Allies of the mass murder then under way.

After 1945, survivors of the Holocaust came to Australia as refugees — one of the largest per-person intakes of Holocaust survivors in the world — and their arrival, and the legacies and interpretations of the war, are the subject of section 4D.

7. Bringing it together (VC2HH10K21)

Three habits of historical thinking tie the section together.

- **Cause and consequence.** The short-term cause of each phase was a decision — a law, an order, a timetable; the long-term cause was the antisemitism and the racial thinking traced in section 4A. The consequences ran beyond 1945: six million dead, a continent’s Jewish life destroyed, and the new law of genocide that Lemkin and the United Nations wrote in response.
- **Continuity and change.** What changed across 1933–45 was the *means*: from law to ghetto to rail to gas chamber, the persecution escalated in stages. What continued was the *aim*: at every phase, the target was the same people, defined in 1935 by the same racial test.
- **Perspective.** The perpetrators wrote “evacuation” and “Final Solution”; the victims left words of their own — diaries, letters, testimony — which section 4C reads. Holding the two sets of words side by side is how historians keep the machinery visible *and* the people at its centre.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026.**

1. Yad Vashem, *Shoah Resource Center*, yadvashem.org (definitions of the Holocaust and Shoah; victim estimates by country; phase accounts).
2. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, encyclopedia.ushmm.org (definition of the Holocaust; the Nuremberg Laws and their translation; Kristallnacht; the ghettos; Babi Yar; the Wannsee Conference; Operation Reinhard and the killing centres; liberation dates; the Evian Conference; victim figures).
3. House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site, ghwk.de (the conference; the minutes and their translation).
4. *Reichsgesetzblatt* Part I, 16 September 1935 (the Nuremberg Laws, German original; translation as in the USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia).
5. Australian War Memorial, awm.gov.au (Menzies’ announcement of 3 September 1939; Jewish service in the Australian forces; Australian prisoners of war in Europe, 1945).
6. National Archives of Australia; Sydney Jewish Museum, ‘Australia and the Holocaust’, sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au (Colonel Thomas W. White at Evian, July 1938; the Allied joint statement of December 1942 in the Australian press; post-war arrival of survivors).

Worked examples

Both analyses below use the same five moves used in earlier chapters of this book: identify the source; describe the content; explain the context; read the perspective; state the significance.

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source 2 (the minutes of the Wannsee Conference, 20 January 1942 — quoted in part 3 and summarised in Figure 5). What can historians learn from this source about how the Nazis organised the murder of Europe’s Jews, and why does its language matter?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is the official minutes of a meeting of fifteen senior SS officers and state secretaries, held at Wannsee on 20 January 1942, chaired by Heydrich and recorded by Eichmann. Thirty copies were made for the attendees; the surviving copy	Start with what the source <i>is</i> : an internal government record, not a speech or memoir. It was written for the perpetrators, not for us — which is what makes it powerful evidence.

was found in 1947 among Foreign Office files.

Step 2: Describe the content. The minutes record a plan to comb Europe “from west to east” and to replace emigration with “the evacuation of the Jews to the East”, carried out “after prior approval by the Fuehrer”. The full document listed about 11 million Jews by country, including countries Germany did not yet control.

Step 3: Explain the context. The meeting came about six weeks after the killing centres’ mass gassings began and after the Einsatzgruppen had already shot hundreds of thousands. Wannsee did not invent the murder; it coordinated it across ministries and across a continent.

Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. The minutes are written in office language: “evacuation”, “Final Solution”, “special treatment”. The purpose was to record agreement between the SS and the ministries — and the polite language itself shows the writers knew what the plan meant and chose words to veil it.

Step 5: State significance and inference. Historians infer from the minutes that the Holocaust was a coordinated, whole-of-government project directed from the top (“after prior approval by the Fuehrer”), and that its organisers planned for all 11 million Jews of Europe. The surviving copy is among the most important documents in the history of the Holocaust.

Use the source’s own words where you can; the list of 11 million shows the plan was for *all* of Europe’s Jews.

Context stops the common error of treating Wannsee as “the decision” — it was the coordination of a plan already under way.

Perspective includes tone and word choice. A source’s euphemisms are evidence of a guilty conscience at the level of a whole state.

Significance: the document ties the desk-workers of the state to the killing fields of the east — the link Figure 6 draws.

Answer: the minutes show the murder of Europe’s Jews organised as one coordinated, Europe-wide plan that tied the SS to the ministries of the German state — and their euphemisms are themselves evidence that the writers knew what they were doing.

Worked source analysis 2 — with help

Question. Read Source 1 (the Reich Citizenship Law, 15 September 1935 — quoted in part 3 and summarised in Figure 4). Why do historians treat the Nuremberg Laws as a key development in the Holocaust?

Step 1: Identify the source. It is the text of a law passed by the German parliament on 15 September 1935 and published in the Reichsgesetzblatt, the official law gazette.

A law is a public, dated, official source: what the state chose to put in writing for all to see.

Step 2: Describe the content. The law creates two grades of people: “citizens of the Reich”, reserved for those “of German or kindred blood”, and mere “subjects of the State”. Jews — though not named in this paragraph — were thereby made foreigners in their own country; the companion law banned marriage and sexual relations between Jews and other Germans.

Read what the text actually does: it redefines who belongs.

Step 3: Explain the context. By 1935, boycotts and dismissals had already excluded many Jews; the laws wrote that exclusion into permanent, racial, inheritable law, and a November 1935 decree defined “Jew” by grandparents.

Context shows the laws as a step in a sequence — identification hardening into race law.

Step 4: Read the perspective and purpose. The state

Noticing *whose* voice a source carries — and whose it

Working	Comment
presents persecution as order and loyalty: citizenship is earned by being “fit to serve loyally the German people”. The perspective is the regime’s — race as the measure of worth. The missing perspective is the Jews’, who became stateless in their own home in a single day (their words and experiences are the subject of section 4C).	silences — is a core move.
Step 5: State significance and inference. The laws made antisemitism the working law of the state: every clerk, judge and teacher now applied the racial test, which is what later made continent-wide identification and deportation possible. Historians therefore treat 15 September 1935 as the moment persecution became structure.	Significance is judged by consequences: the laws’ racial definitions became the machinery’s starting lists.

Answer: the Nuremberg Laws matter because they turned persecution into the written law of the state — defining “Jew” by race and citizenship by blood — and so built the legal machinery on which the later phases of the Holocaust depended.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. The six phases. Use Figure 2.

- List the six key phases named in VC2HH10K21 .E01.
- Match each of these to its phase: the Nuremberg Laws; the sealing of the Warsaw Ghetto; the Babi Yar massacre; the deportation of the Jews of Hungary in 1944; the freeing of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Why does Figure 2 give each phase a *range* of years rather than a single date?

Q2. Key events and developments.

- Give the dates of the Nuremberg Laws, Kristallnacht and the Wannsee Conference.
- For the Nuremberg Laws and the Wannsee Conference, state one reason each is treated as significant in part 3.
- What did Kristallnacht show about the direction of German policy by late 1938?

Q3. Organisations and individuals. Use Figure 6.

- Name three of the organisations or groups in Figure 6 and one thing each did.
- What was the SS, and which two men in Figure 6 led its killing machinery?
- Why do historians look beyond Hitler when explaining how the Holocaust happened?

Q4. Comparing responses. Use Figures 7 and 8.

- From Figure 8, name one country in western Europe and one in eastern Europe where most Jews were killed, and one where most survived.
- Give two reasons the outcome in Denmark differed from the outcome in the Netherlands.
- What does the Bulgarian case show about protest?

Q5. Australia and the Holocaust. Use Figure 9.

- What did Colonel Thomas W. White tell the Evian conference in July 1938?
- Give two ways Australians came face to face with the Holocaust during World War II.
- Where does the story of survivors coming to Australia continue in this book?

Q6. Source language. Use Source 2 and Figure 5.

- (a) Give two euphemisms from the Wannsee minutes and the plain meaning of each.
- (b) Why did the writers of the minutes use such words?

On your own

Q7. Evaluating significance. “The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were more significant than any single violent outbreak, such as Kristallnacht.” Evaluate this claim using two criteria for significance (for example: how many people it affected; how long its effects lasted; what it made possible later).

Q8. Evaluating roles. “The Holocaust was the work of a small number of evil men.” Use Figure 6 and part 4 to agree or disagree, referring to at least three of the groups in the table.

Q9. Mapping and comparing. Using Figures 7 and 8, compare one occupied country in eastern Europe with one in western Europe. Explain two reasons their outcomes differed.

Q10. Continuity and change. Identify one feature of the treatment of Jews that **changed** between 1933 and 1945 and one that **continued** across the whole period. Justify each with evidence from this section.

Q11. Consequence. Explain two consequences of the Holocaust that were visible by 1948, using evidence from this section. (Hint: one is a body of new international law.)

Q12. Perspective. Source 2 is written in the perpetrators’ words. Whose perspective is missing from it, and how would reading that perspective change a historian’s account? Link your answer to the work of section 4C.

Answers

Q1. (a) Identification, exclusion, ghettoisation, deportation, mass murder, liberation. (b) Nuremberg Laws — exclusion (and identification); Warsaw Ghetto sealed — ghettoisation; Babi Yar — mass murder; deportation of the Jews of Hungary — deportation; freeing of Auschwitz-Birkenau — liberation. (c) Because the phases overlapped: at one time, one country could be in an early phase while another was in a later one.

Q2. (a) Nuremberg Laws: 15 September 1935. Kristallnacht: 9–10 November 1938. Wannsee Conference: 20 January 1942. (b) Nuremberg Laws: they made persecution the written law of the state and defined “Jew” by race, which made later identification and deportation possible. Wannsee: it coordinated the “Final Solution” across the whole German state, and its surviving minutes are key evidence of the plan. (c) That exclusion could turn to open, organised violence with the state looking on — and that about 30,000 Jewish men could be arrested in one night.

Q3. (a) Any three, e.g.: the SS — ran the camps and the killing units; civil servants and railway workers — kept the registers and ran the trains that made deportation possible; collaborators in occupied countries — joined the round-ups and shootings. (b) The SS was the Nazi Party’s own organisation, led by Himmler; Heydrich (Security Police) and Eichmann (deportations) led its killing machinery. (c) Because the Holocaust required a party, a state machinery, collaborators abroad and millions of bystanders — no small group could have carried it out alone.

Q4. (a) Most killed: e.g. Netherlands (west) and Poland or Lithuania (east). Most survived: Denmark (west) or Bulgaria (east). (b) Denmark kept its own government until 1943 and its Jews were treated as fellow citizens, and the round-up was leaked so most could flee to Sweden; the Netherlands was run directly from Berlin and its efficient registers made round-ups easy. (c) That organised protest — church leaders, politicians and citizens objecting — could make even an ally of Germany refuse to deport its Jewish citizens.

Q5. (a) That Australia, “having no real racial problem of our own”, did not wish to “import one” — so only a small number of Jewish refugees were admitted before the war. (b) Any two: about 2,500 Jewish Australians served in the armed forces; Australian prisoners of war on forced marches in 1945 witnessed the aftermath of the death marches and camps; the Allied joint statement of December 1942 condemning the mass murder was reported in Australian newspapers. (c) Section 4D.

Q6. (a) “Evacuation” = deportation; “Final Solution” = the murder of Europe’s Jews (“special treatment” = killing also accepted). (b) Because the writers knew what the plan meant and chose office words to hide it — the language is evidence of concealment.

Q7. Agree (most defensible). Criteria: scale and duration of effect, and what it made possible. The laws affected every Jew in Germany at once and permanently, redefining them as non-citizens by race; their definitions became the starting lists for every later phase, across Europe. Kristallnacht, though shocking, was one outbreak; the laws were structure. (A counter-view that Kristallnacht mattered as the signal that violence was permitted earns credit if argued.)

Q8. Disagree. The SS and Hitler’s circle were small, but the table shows the crime needed more: the state machinery (clerks, judges, police, railway workers) ran the identification and the trains; collaborators in occupied countries joined the round-ups and shootings; complicit governments gave their police and laws; and civilian bystanders, by doing nothing, made the scale possible. A small group of men could hate; only a whole society’s machinery could kill six million.

Q9. Example: Lithuania (east) and Denmark (west). Lithuania: occupied in 1941, killing began at once with local auxiliaries joining the Einsatzgruppen, and about nine in ten were killed. Denmark: kept its government until 1943, the round-up was leaked, and fishermen ferried about 7,200 Jews to Sweden. Reasons: (1) the form and timing of German rule — direct, early, brutal rule in the east left no room for rescue; (2) the response of local people and officials — auxiliaries joining in Lithuania; officials leaking and citizens rowing in Denmark.

Q10. Changed: the means — from laws excluding Jews from public life (1935) to ghettos (1940) to rail deportations and gas chambers (1941–45): persecution escalated into industrial murder. Continued: the target and the aim — the same people, defined by the 1935 racial test, were pursued in every phase to the last days of the war.

Q11. (1) About six million Jews were dead and a continent’s Jewish life was destroyed — survivors were displaced, and many came to countries such as Australia (section 4D). (2) New international law: Raphael Lemkin coined

“genocide” in 1944 in response to the Holocaust, and the United Nations made genocide a crime in 1948; the post-war trials (section 4D) prosecuted the perpetrators.

Q12. Missing: the perspective of the Jews being murdered — and of the bystanders and resisters. The minutes reduce people to “evacuated” numbers. Reading victims’ diaries, letters and testimony (section 4C) restores them as persons, shows what the euphemisms hid, and lets the historian test the perpetrators’ paper against lived experience — an account built on both sets of sources is truer than either alone.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1.

- (a) The elaboration names six phases: identification, exclusion, ghettoisation, deportation, mass murder and liberation.
- (b) The Nuremberg Laws (1935) belong to exclusion — they also did the work of identification by defining who counted as a Jew. The sealing of the Warsaw Ghetto (November 1940) is ghettoisation. The Babi Yar massacre (29–30 September 1941) is mass murder — shooting by the Einsatzgruppen. The deportation of the Jews of Hungary (May–July 1944) is deportation — about 440,000 people transported, most to Auschwitz, in eight weeks. The freeing of Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Soviet Red Army on 27 January 1945 is liberation.
- (c) The ranges overlap because the phases ran at once in different places: in 1941, for example, ghettoisation continued in parts of occupied Poland while mass shooting had already begun further east, and in 1944 the deportation of the Jews of Hungary began while camps in the west were being liberated. The Holocaust was a set of wheels turning together, not a staircase.

Q2.

- (a) The Nuremberg Laws were passed on 15 September 1935; Kristallnacht was the night of 9–10 November 1938; the Wannsee Conference met on 20 January 1942.
- (b) The Nuremberg Laws are significant because they made persecution the written law of the state: Jews became “subjects” rather than citizens, “Jew” was defined by grandparents, and every office, court and school in Germany had to apply the racial test — the legal starting point of everything that followed. The Wannsee Conference is significant because it coordinated the “Final Solution” across the whole German state — SS, ministries, railways — and because its surviving minutes are the clearest single piece of evidence that the murder of all Europe’s Jews was one planned, coordinated project.
- (c) Kristallnacht showed that by late 1938 the state would permit open, organised violence against Jews — synagogues burned, shops wrecked, about 90 killed, 30,000 men arrested — and that the policy was hardening from exclusion towards removal: the flood of visa pleas that followed is the context of the Evian conference in part 6.

Q3.

- (a) Example three: the **SS**, Himmler’s organisation, ran the camps, the Einsatzgruppen and the Security Police; **civil servants, police and railway workers** kept the registers that identified Jews, ran the round-ups and scheduled the deportation trains; **collaborators in occupied countries** — local police and auxiliaries — joined the shootings in the east and the round-ups in the west. (Any three rows of Figure 6 with a correct role are accepted.)
- (b) The SS was the Nazi Party’s own elite organisation, separate from the state police but increasingly in charge of them. The two men who led its killing machinery were **Reinhard Heydrich**, chief of the Security Police and SD and chair of the Wannsee meeting, and **Adolf Eichmann**, whose office IV B 4 organised the deportations.
- (c) Because the evidence shows a division of labour no small group could have sustained: the party supplied ideas and pressure, the SS the killing units, the state machinery the registers and trains, collaborators abroad the local hands, and civilian bystanders the quiet that let it happen. Historians therefore explain the Holocaust layer by layer — which is exactly the evaluation VC2HH10K21 . E02 asks for.

Q4.

- (a) Western Europe, most killed: the Netherlands (about three-quarters of its Jews). Eastern Europe, most killed: Poland or Lithuania (about nine in ten). Most survived: Denmark (fewer than 120 died) or Bulgaria (about 48,000 citizens survived).
- (b) Two reasons. First, the form of rule: Denmark kept its own king and government until 1943, which left space for Danish officials and citizens to act; the Netherlands was run directly by a German civil government with no national authority to shield anyone. Second, the response of people and officials: in Denmark the round-up was leaked and fishermen, families and officials ferried about 7,200 Jews to Sweden; in the Netherlands the efficient pre-war register made Jews easy to find, and Dutch police and railways were used in the round-ups.
- (c) Bulgaria shows that protest could work even under an ally of Germany: when the government moved towards deportation, church leaders, politicians and citizens objected, and the government refused to hand over Jews who were Bulgarian citizens — about 48,000 survived. (The limit of that protest — the Jews of the occupied territories in Greece and Yugoslavia were handed over — also earns credit.)

Q5.

- (a) At the Evian conference of July 1938, Colonel Thomas W. White said that Australia, “having no real racial problem of our own”, did not wish to “import one” — and Australia admitted only a small number of Jewish refugees before the war.
- (b) Any two. About 2,500 Jewish Australians served in the armed forces, some of whom encountered the Nazi regime’s crimes at first hand. Australian prisoners of war, moved on forced marches in 1945, witnessed the aftermath of the death marches and the camps, and wrote home about it. And in December 1942 the Allied joint statement condemning the mass murder of the Jews was reported in Australian newspapers — the first official public acknowledgement of the murder.
- (c) Section 4D, which studies the legacies and interpretations of the world wars, including the arrival of Holocaust survivors in Australia after 1945.

Q6.

- (a) “Evacuation” meant deportation — forced transport to the east; “the Final Solution” meant the murder of Europe’s Jews. (“Special treatment” meant killing.)
- (b) The writers were senior officials recording a plan to murder millions; plain words would have put the plan on paper for thousands of clerks to read. Office euphemisms let the machinery see itself as administration. Because the writers chose hiding words, the language is itself evidence that they knew the plan was murder — the point Step 4 of worked analysis 1 makes.

Q7.

Model answer. Claim evaluated: that the Nuremberg Laws were more significant than a violent outbreak such as Kristallnacht. Criteria used: (1) scale and duration of effect; (2) what the event made possible later.

Applying criterion 1: the laws of 15 September 1935 changed the legal existence of every Jew in Germany at once and permanently — from citizen to “subject”, defined by grandparents. Kristallnacht, by contrast, was one night’s violence: terrible, but brief, affecting those present.

Applying criterion 2: the laws made the later phases possible. The racial definitions became the registers that identified Jews for ghettoisation and deportation across Europe; without them the machinery had no starting lists. Kristallnacht’s main consequence was a signal — that violence was permitted — and a wave of emigration pleas.

Judgement: on both criteria the laws were the deeper development: they turned antisemitism from policy and mob violence into the permanent, working law of the state. A counter-claim — that Kristallnacht mattered because it removed any illusion about the regime’s direction — is creditable if argued with evidence, but on the stated criteria the claim stands.

Q8.

Model answer. Position: disagree.

The claim contains a truth: the direction came from a small circle — Hitler, whose aims and approval shaped every major step, and the SS leadership (Himmler, Heydrich, Eichmann) that built the killing machinery. But “the work of a small number of men” cannot explain the scale. Three groups from Figure 6 show why. First, the state machinery: clerks kept the registers, judges applied the racial laws, railway officials scheduled the trains — the everyday work of government carried the crime from desk to platform. Second, the collaborators: in occupied countries, local police and auxiliaries joined the shootings (as at Babi Yar and in Lithuania) and the round-ups (as in France). Third, the civilian populations: most were bystanders whose quiet made the scale possible, and some benefited from their neighbours’ disappearance. Conclusion: a small circle willed the Holocaust, but it was carried out by a whole society’s machinery — which is why the curriculum asks us to evaluate *roles*, in the plural.

Q9.

Model answer. Countries chosen: Lithuania (eastern Europe) and the Netherlands (western Europe).

Outcome: in Lithuania around nine in ten Jews were killed, most shot near their homes in 1941–42; in the Netherlands about three-quarters were killed, most deported to killing centres in 1942–43. Both tolls are catastrophic, but the *how* and *when* differ, and two reasons explain the difference.

Reason 1 — the form and timing of German rule. Lithuania was taken in June 1941 in the invasion of the Soviet Union, where the Einsatzgruppen and local auxiliaries killed on the spot, town by town, within weeks. The Netherlands, occupied in 1940 and run by a German civil government, was processed through the deportation machinery: registers, round-ups, trains. Direct, early, shooting-front rule produced near-total, immediate killing; western administrative rule produced deportation on a timetable — slightly slower, and leaving slightly more room for hiding.

Reason 2 — local responses. In Lithuania, local auxiliary police joined the shootings, which multiplied the killers’ reach. In the Netherlands, responses were mixed: police and railways were used in the round-ups, but Amsterdam workers struck in February 1941 and some Dutch people hid Jews — the same figure shows why the Dutch toll, though terrible, was not Lithuania’s.

The comparison is the point of VC2HH10K21.E04: the map of outcomes (Figure 7) is explained by the map of rule and response (Figure 8).

Q10.

Changed: the means. In 1933–35 the weapons were laws and dismissals; by 1938, organised violence (Kristallnacht); by 1940, sealed ghettos; by 1941–42, shootings, deportations and gas chambers. Persecution escalated, phase by phase, into industrial mass murder — the single clearest change in the period.

Continued: the target and the aim. From the 1933 dismissals to the 1945 death marches, the same people were pursued, defined by the same racial test written in 1935. Even when the war turned against Germany, the deportation of the Jews of Hungary in 1944 and the death marches of 1945 show the aim continuing to the last weeks.

Justification uses section evidence on both sides (Nuremberg Laws, Warsaw Ghetto, Babi Yar, Wannsee, the 1944 deportations from Hungary, the liberation dates of Figure 3).

Q11.

Consequence 1 — the human cost and displacement: about six million Jews had been killed, around two of every three in Europe; whole communities — Poland’s, Lithuania’s — were largely destroyed, and the survivors were displaced, many unable or unwilling to return home. Some, as part 6 shows, came to Australia; the legacies of all this belong to section 4D.

Consequence 2 — new international law and judgement: the Holocaust produced the word and the crime of **genocide** — Raphael Lemkin coined the term in 1944 precisely to name what was being done to the Jews of Europe — and in 1948 the United Nations made genocide a crime under international law. The post-war trials of the perpetrators

(studied in 4D) likewise grew directly from the crimes mapped in this section, and 27 January — the liberation of Auschwitz — became an international day of commemoration.

Q12.

The minutes carry only the perpetrators' perspective: Europe's Jews appear as numbers to be "evacuated" and "taken care of". Missing are the voices of the people the document is about — and of the bystanders, collaborators and resisters it never names. Reading the victims' own words — diaries such as those kept in the Warsaw Ghetto, letters, and post-war testimony (the material of section 4C) — changes the historian's account in two ways. First, it restores persons: the 11 million listed become named people with fear, hope and witness, which is what commemoration demands. Second, it tests the paper against reality: the polite "evacuation" of the minutes is checked against what deportation and killing actually were, exposing the euphemisms as concealment. An account built on both sets of sources — the perpetrators' files and the victims' words — is therefore closer to the truth than either alone; that pairing is the method of the whole of this chapter.

Living through the Holocaust: Jewish and non-Jewish experiences

Curriculum trace — Victorian Curriculum 2.0 History, Levels 9 and 10

Owns VC2HH10K22

Draws on — VC2HH10K22.E01, VC2HH10K22.E02, VC2HH10K22.E03, VC2HH10K22.E04

Builds on — section 4A (VC2HH10K20) and section 4B (VC2HH10K21).

Section 4A studied why the Holocaust happened, and section 4B studied how it unfolded. This section asks a different question: what was it like to live through it, and how did it look from different positions? The experiences were **diverse** — a child in hiding in Amsterdam lived a different Holocaust from a teenager in a camp, and a non-Jewish rescuer lived a different one again. This section follows those experiences and perspectives, Jewish and non-Jewish, and ends with the questions historians use to read them from sources.

By the end of this section you should be able to describe the diverse experiences of Jewish people (including emigration, hiding, ghettoisation, work and death camps, and resistance), explain how Nazi racial policy also targeted other groups, examine stories of Jewish resistance and of non-Jewish rescuers, and analyse whose perspective a source reflects.

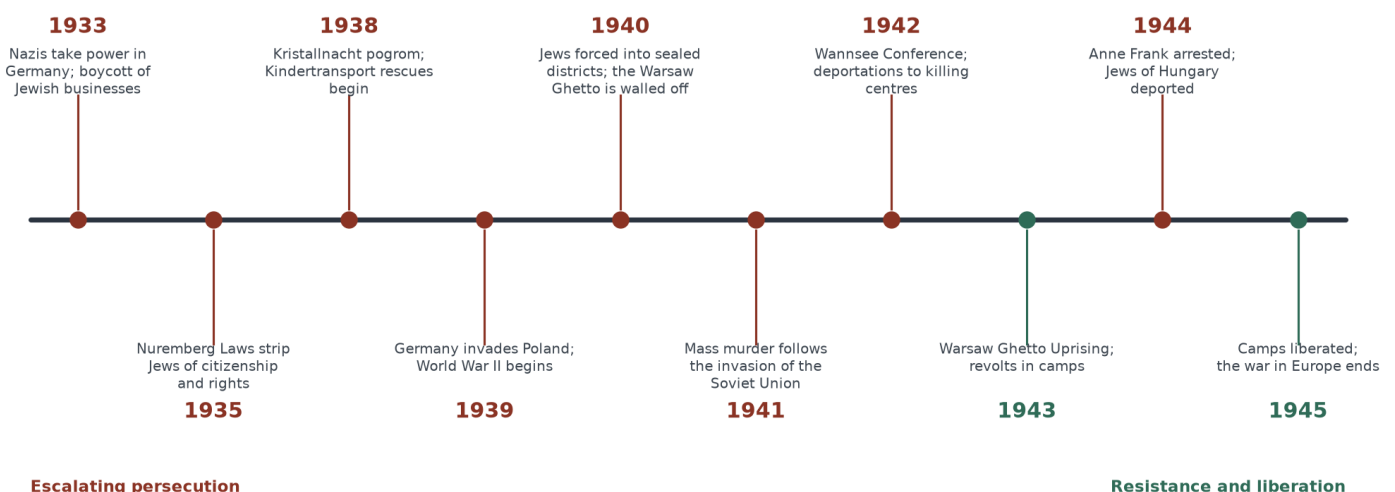
Theory

1. Naming the period (VC2HH10K22)

Defining the term. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum defines the Holocaust as *the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jewish people by the Nazi regime and its collaborators* between 1933 and 1945. Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, defines it in the same terms: the murder of the Jewish people of Europe, carried out step by step until the Nazis tried to kill every Jewish person within their reach. Many Jewish people also use the Hebrew word **Shoah** (meaning catastrophe) for the same event. In this section, *the Holocaust* means exactly that: the persecution and murder of six million Jewish people by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Other groups were also targeted by Nazi racism — part 3 below — and historians use the definition above to keep the two facts distinct: the Holocaust names the attempt to murder every Jewish person in Europe.

Figure 1 places the period in order. Section 4B traces these events in depth; here they are the stage on which the experiences of this section took place.

The Holocaust period, 1933-1945: ten key moments



Timeline of the Holocaust period from 1933 to 1945, showing ten key moments from the Nazis taking power in Germany to the liberation of the camps

Figure 1. The Holocaust period, 1933–1945: ten key moments.

Two features of the timeline matter for this section. First, the persecution **escalated** step by step — from losing rights, to losing homes, to losing lives — so people’s experiences changed with each step. Second, resistance and rescue appear right alongside the persecution, not only at the end: the rescue trains of 1938–39 and the uprisings of 1943–44 sit inside the same twelve years.

2. Diverse Jewish experiences (VC2HH10K22.E01)

The curriculum asks students to build a **biographical exhibition** — a display of individual lives — because the surest way to understand the Holocaust is through real people, named and sourced, not through crowds. Figure 2 sets out six lives, chosen to show the variety the curriculum names: different countries, different ages, different experiences.

Diverse experiences of Jewish people during the Holocaust

Person / group	Country	Age	Experience	How we know
Anne Frank	Germany, then the Netherlands	13-15	Emigrated as a child; hid with her family for two years	Her diary
Elie Wiesel	Romania (Sighet)	15-16	Ghettoisation, then labour and death camps with his father	His memoir, Night
Primo Levi	Italy	adult	Sent to a labour camp near Auschwitz; survived	His memoir, If This Is a Man
Emmanuel Ringelblum	Poland (Warsaw)	adult	Lived in the ghetto; led a secret archive recording daily life	The Oyneg Shabes archive
Mordechai Anielewicz	Poland (Warsaw)	24	Led armed resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	Records of the uprising
Kindertransport children	Germany, Austria, Poland	children	Sent alone to Britain by rescue trains, 1938-39	Testimonies and rescue records

Examples drawn from VC2HH10K22.E01: emigration, hiding, ghettoisation, work/death camps and resistance.

Table showing six rows of diverse Jewish experiences during the Holocaust: Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Emmanuel Ringelblum, Mordechai Anielewicz and the Kindertransport children, with their country, age, experience and how we know

Figure 2. Diverse experiences of Jewish people during the Holocaust — a biographical exhibition in miniature.

Emigration and hiding — Anne Frank. Anne Frank was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1929. After the Nazis took power, her family emigrated to the Netherlands to escape persecution. When Germany occupied the Netherlands in 1940, the restrictions followed: Jews were registered, marked and barred from schools and parks. In July 1942, when her sister Margot was ordered to report for a labour camp in Germany, the family went into hiding in the secret annex of an Amsterdam office building, joined later by four other people. Anne kept a diary. For two years she recorded fear, boredom, quarrels and hope. In August 1944 the hiding place was discovered; the people in hiding were deported to camps. Only Anne’s father, Otto Frank, survived the camps. Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen camp in early 1945, weeks before it was liberated. Her diary, saved by one of the helpers, became one of the world’s most read witnesses to the Holocaust. Her own voice survives in the diary; Source A (Figure 3) is a single entry from it, and worked source analysis 1 below reads it in full.

SOURCE A

A diary entry by Anne Frank, written in hiding

'It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible, but I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.'

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, entry of 15 July 1944, written while hiding in Amsterdam.
Translated from the Dutch.

Source A: a source card quoting Anne Frank's diary entry of 15 July 1944: "It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible, but I keep them, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

Figure 3. Source A — a diary entry by Anne Frank, written in hiding.

Ghettoisation and the camps — Elie Wiesel. Elie Wiesel grew up in Sighet, a town in Romania. In 1944, after Germany had occupied Hungary, the Jews of Sighet were forced into a sealed district — the ghettoisation the curriculum names — and then deported. Wiesel, fifteen, was sent to the Auschwitz death camp with his family and then to the Buchenwald labour camp, where his father died. After liberation he became a writer; his memoir *Night* (first published in 1958) is one of the most powerful testimonies of the camps.

Work camps — Primo Levi. Primo Levi was an Italian Jewish chemist, arrested in 1943 and sent in 1944 to a labour camp near Auschwitz, where his training as a chemist was one of the things that kept him alive. After liberation he wrote *If This Is a Man* (1947), a careful, witness's account of daily life in the camp — what people did, how they kept their dignity, and how the camp tried to strip it away.

Recording the truth — Emmanuel Ringelblum. In the Warsaw Ghetto in occupied Poland, the historian Emmanuel Ringelblum organised a secret group, code-named Oyneg Shabes, that collected diaries, letters, official papers and drawings so that the world would one day know exactly what had happened. Ringelblum and most of his group were killed; the buried archive survived, and it is now one of the most important sources for the history of the Holocaust.

Armed resistance — Mordechai Anielewicz. In April 1943, when the Germans entered the Warsaw Ghetto to deport the remaining Jews, fighters of the Jewish Combat Organisation, led by Mordechai Anielewicz, aged 24, fought back in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The story continues in part 4.

Rescue trains — the Kindertransport children. After the November 1938 wave of violence against Jews in Germany known as Kristallnacht, Britain agreed to admit children fleeing Nazi rule. Rescue trains known as the **Kindertransport** carried about 10,000 children — most of them Jewish — from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to safety in Britain during 1938–39. The children travelled without their parents; most never saw them again. Rescue and loss sat in the same event.

The exhibition also needs a row for **conversions**, which the curriculum lists. Some Jewish people converted to Christianity in the hope of safety. It did not protect them, because the Nazis classified people by family background,

not by belief. Edith Stein, a German-born Jewish woman who had become a Catholic nun, was deported from the Netherlands in 1942 and murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau; the Catholic Church later honoured her as a saint.

Six rows, six different experiences: emigration, hiding, ghettoisation, death and labour camps, recording, resistance, rescue. That variety is the point. The Holocaust was one event with a single cause — the Nazi aim of destroying the Jewish people — but it was lived in hundreds of different ways, and no one story can stand for all of them.

3. Other groups the Nazis targeted (VC2HH10K22.E02)

The Nazis' racism did not target Jewish people alone. Figure 4 sets out the other groups named in the curriculum and how Nazi policy treated each one.

Nazi policy towards other targeted groups

Targeted group	How the Nazis targeted them
People with disabilities	Murdered in a programme the Nazis code-named T4, as 'life unworthy of life'; hundreds of thousands were killed, and many more were forcibly sterilised.
Sinti and Roma	Classed as 'racially inferior'; rounded up, deported to camps and murdered. An estimated 250,000 to 500,000 Sinti and Roma were killed.
LGBTQI+ people	Gay men were prosecuted under Paragraph 175; thousands were sent to concentration camps, where they were marked with a pink triangle.
Slavic peoples	Poles, Russians and others were treated as inferior. Millions of Soviet prisoners of war were starved or shot; Polish leaders and professionals were targeted.
Soviet Communists and political prisoners	Political opponents were among the first sent to concentration camps from 1933; they were marked with a red triangle.
Black people	Faced discrimination and persecution; hundreds of mixed-race children were forcibly sterilised, and some Black people were sent to camps.

Described in VC2HH10K22.E02.

Table of the groups targeted by Nazi racial policies besides Jewish people — people with disabilities, Sinti and Roma, LGBTQI+ people, Slavic peoples, Soviet Communists and political prisoners, and Black people — and how the Nazis targeted each group

Figure 4. Nazi policy towards other targeted groups.

A few threads connect the rows. The Nazis began with their own citizens: people with disabilities were the first to be murdered at scale, in a programme the Nazis code-named **T4**, and political opponents — Communists, Social Democrats and trade unionists — were among the first sent to concentration camps from 1933. In the camps, prisoners were marked with coloured triangles: a red triangle for political prisoners, a pink triangle for gay men prosecuted under the old German law, Paragraph 175. The triangles are now themselves historical evidence — and the pink triangle has since been turned into a symbol of pride and remembrance by the very communities the Nazis marked.

The scale of the killing reached far beyond Germany. Sinti and Roma were rounded up and deported to camps, and an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 were murdered. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, millions of Soviet prisoners of war were starved or shot, and Polish leaders, teachers and professionals were singled out for murder to break Poland's ability to resist. Black people in Germany faced discrimination and persecution, and hundreds of mixed-race children were forcibly sterilised — operations done to stop people having children.

Historians keep two facts in view at once. The Nazi regime persecuted many groups, and each persecution has its own history that deserves study. At the same time, the Holocaust — as defined in part 1 — names the attempt to murder every Jewish person in Europe, and it is that aim that makes the period of this section what it is.

4. Jewish resistance (VC2HH10K22.E03)

A common assumption is that Jewish people went to their fate without fighting back. The historical record says otherwise. Resistance took several forms, and historians include all of them under the one idea. Figure 5 sets out the four forms the curriculum names.

How Jewish people resisted during the Holocaust



Four-panel diagram of how Jewish people resisted during the Holocaust: armed resistance such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, camp-based resistance such as the revolts at Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz, spiritual resistance such as secret teaching and the Oyneg Shabes archive, and concealment by going into hiding

Figure 5. How Jewish people resisted during the Holocaust.

Armed resistance. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April–May 1943 was the largest single act of armed Jewish resistance: for nearly a month, small groups of fighters of the Jewish Combat Organisation held off German forces sent to empty the Warsaw Ghetto. Anielewicz was killed in the fighting; a handful of fighters escaped through the sewers. There were uprisings in other sealed districts too, and in the forests of occupied Poland and what is now Belarus, Jewish partisans — armed fighters living outside German control — fought the Germans and sheltered fugitives. The Bielski partisans, led by three brothers, Tuvia, Asael and Zus Bielski, saved about 1,200 Jewish people by building a family camp in the forest.

Camp-based resistance. In the death camps, prisoners revolted. At Treblinka in August 1943 and at Sobibor in October 1943, prisoners seized weapons and broke out, and both camps were later closed by the Germans. At Auschwitz-Birkenau in October 1944, the prisoner work unit the Nazis called the Sonderkommando blew up one of the buildings used to burn bodies; the revolt was crushed, but it stands in the record as proof that even inside the camps, people fought back.

Spiritual resistance. Not all resistance used weapons. In the sealed districts and camps, people kept faith, learning, art and music alive: they held secret classes for children, kept diaries, observed holy days, and recorded the truth — Ringelblum’s Oyneg Shabes archive is the great example. Spiritual resistance meant refusing to let the Nazis destroy who you were, as well as your life.

Concealment. Going into hiding was itself a refusal of the order to be rounded up. The Frank family’s two years in the annex are the best-known example; across Europe, thousands of children were hidden with non-Jewish families, often under false names and false identities, and the adults who hid them — part 5 — made the concealment possible. Hiding meant silence, fear and total dependence on helpers, and discovery usually meant deportation and death.

Historians include all four forms under *resistance* for a reason: in a system designed to destroy a people, keeping a diary, teaching a child, hiding a family or holding a prayer was an act of defiance, not a small thing. The armed uprisings and the quiet refusals belong in the same story.

5. Non-Jewish protectors and rescuers (VC2HH10K22.E04)

Every story of hiding and escape in this section has non-Jewish people in it — the helpers. Figure 6 collects seven rescuers from seven different countries, with the cost or risk each one accepted.

Non-Jewish people who rescued or sheltered Jewish people

Person	Country	What they did	Cost or risk
Raoul Wallenberg	Sweden (posted to Hungary)	Issued protective passports and sheltered Jews in Budapest, saving tens of thousands.	Disappeared into Soviet custody, 1945
Oskar Schindler	Germany	Protected about 1,200 Jewish people by employing them in his factories.	Spent his fortune; risked arrest
Irena Sendler	Poland	Smuggled about 2,500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto to safety.	Captured and tortured by the secret police
Miep Gies	Netherlands	Helped hide Anne Frank's family for two years and kept Anne's diary safe.	Risk of death if discovered
Nicholas Winton	Britain	Arranged the rescue of 669 children from Czechoslovakia to Britain, 1938-39.	Time, money and persistence
Aristides de Sousa Mendes	Portugal	As consul in France in 1940, issued visas to thousands of refugees, defying his government.	Dismissed from his post
Chiune Sugihara	Japan	Issued transit visas to thousands of Jewish refugees in Lithuania, 1940.	Ended his diplomatic career

Drawn from VC2HH10K22.E04. Many rescuers were honoured later as 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem.

Table of seven non-Jewish people who rescued or sheltered Jewish people during the Holocaust — Raoul Wallenberg, Oskar Schindler, Irena Sendler, Miep Gies, Nicholas Winton, Aristides de Sousa Mendes and Chiune Sugihara — with their country, what they did, and the cost or risk they faced

Figure 6. Non-Jewish people who rescued or sheltered Jewish people.

The seven show how varied rescue could be. Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat posted to Budapest in 1944, issued protective passports and sheltered Jewish people in buildings under Swedish protection, saving tens of thousands; in 1945 he disappeared into Soviet custody and never reappeared. Oskar Schindler, a German businessman and Nazi party member, protected about 1,200 Jewish people by employing them in his factories, spending his fortune and risking arrest. Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker, smuggled about 2,500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto; she was captured and tortured by the German secret police and gave away no names. Nicholas Winton, a young British office worker, organised the rescue of 669 children from Czechoslovakia in 1938–39 and then said little about it for fifty years. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux in France, issued thousands of visas to refugees in 1940 against his government’s orders and was dismissed from his post. Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Lithuania, did the same in 1940, writing transit visas by hand for thousands of Jewish refugees until his post closed, at the cost of his diplomatic career. Miep Gies, one of the Dutch helpers who supplied and hid the Frank family for two years, kept Anne Frank’s diary safe after the arrest and gave it to Otto Frank after the war.

After the war, Yad Vashem began honouring such rescuers as **Righteous Among the Nations**, a title drawn from Jewish tradition for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews. More than 28,000 people have received it, including several of those in Figure 6. The numbers matter for perspective: rescuers were a small minority. Most non-Jewish Europeans were **bystanders** — people who neither helped nor harmed — and a minority were **collaborators** who helped the Nazis, while the **perpetrators** — those who planned and carried out the murder — were fewer still. Rescuers, bystanders, collaborators, perpetrators: four positions, four different histories, all of them part of the non-Jewish experience the curriculum asks us to study.

Miep Gies never accepted the word *hero* for herself. Source B (Figure 7) records how she saw her own actions; worked source analysis 2 below reads it in full.

SOURCE B

Miep Gies on helping to hide the Frank family

'I am not a hero. I am at the end of a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more - much more - during those dark and terrible times.'

Miep Gies, one of the people who helped hide the Frank family, reflecting after the war. Miep Gies with Alison Leslie Gold, *Anne Frank Remembered* (1987).

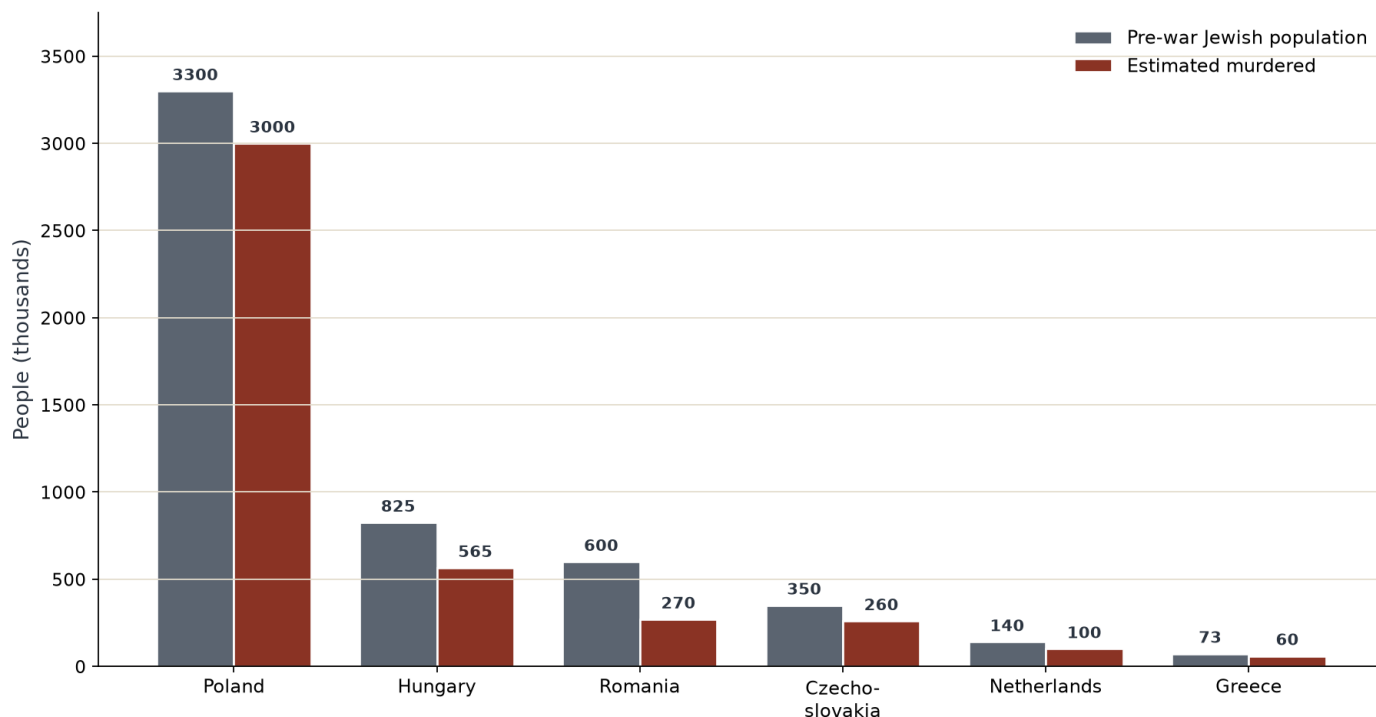
Source B: a source card quoting Miep Gies after the war: "I am not a hero. I am at the end of a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more - much more - during those dark and terrible times."

Figure 7. Source B — Miep Gies on helping to hide the Frank family.

6. The scale of the catastrophe (VC2HH10K22)

The experiences above were individual; the totals were enormous. About six million Jewish people were murdered — roughly two of every three Jewish people then living in Europe. Figure 8 shows the pre-war Jewish population of six countries beside the estimated number murdered in each.

Pre-war Jewish population and estimated deaths in six countries



Estimates: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem. About six million Jewish people were murdered in total.

Bar chart comparing the pre-war Jewish population with the estimated number of Jewish people murdered in six countries: Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands and Greece

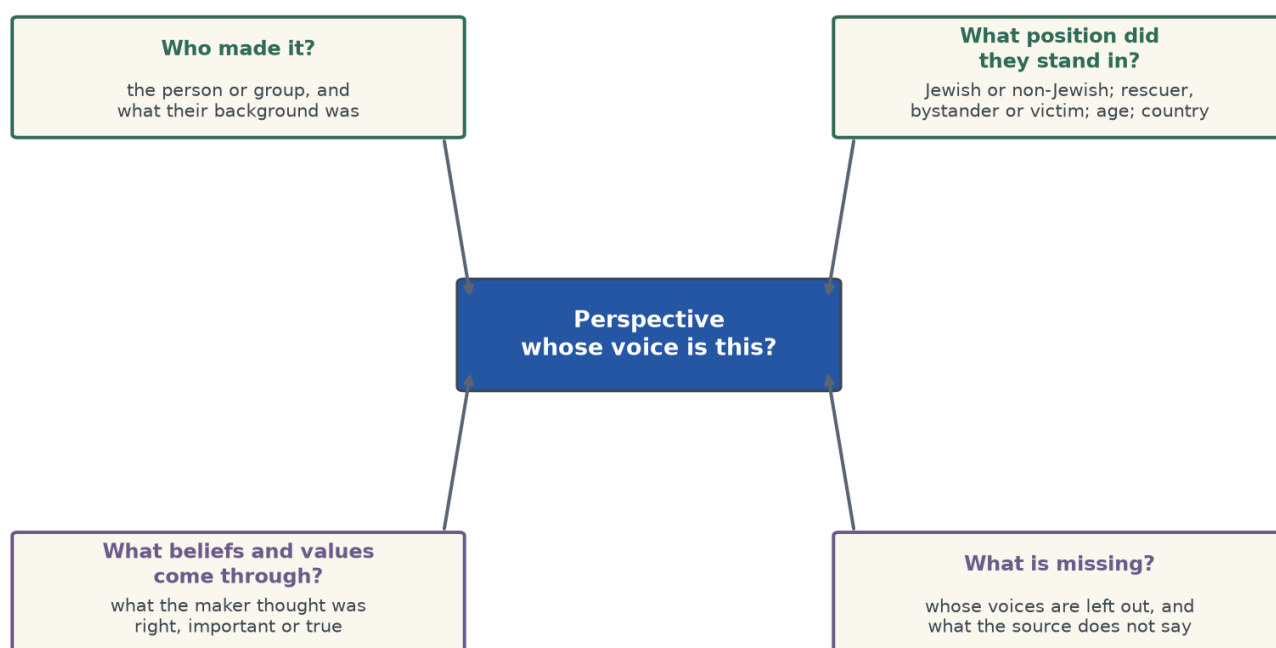
Figure 8. Pre-war Jewish population and estimated deaths in six countries (thousands). Estimates: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Yad Vashem.

Read the chart for both pattern and perspective. The pattern: in Poland and the Netherlands the bars are nearly equal — nine of every ten Jewish people were murdered. In Romania the gap is wider, because changing front lines and the war's end left more survivors there; the experiences and the survival rates differed country by country, another form of the diversity this section studies. The perspective: every bar is made of individual lives — the diarists, the fighters, the hidden children, the rescuers of the earlier figures. Historians hold the six million and the single diary in view at the same time, because each makes the other real.

7. Reading a source for perspective (VC2HH10K22)

The achievement standard for this band asks you to use historical sources to work out the perspectives of people and groups, and to let those perspectives explain what they believed and valued. **Perspective** means the point of view a source is written from — shaped by who the maker was, what position they stood in, and what they believed. Figure 9 gives the four questions historians ask.

Reading a source for perspective: questions historians ask



The same event is seen differently from different positions. This is why historians ask whose perspective a source reflects.

Diagram of the four questions historians ask when reading a source for perspective: who made it, what position did they stand in, what beliefs and values come through, and what is missing

Figure 9. Reading a source for perspective: questions historians ask.

Apply the questions to anything in this section and they work. Who made Source A below? A fifteen-year-old Jewish girl in hiding, writing for herself. What position did she stand in? A victim of persecution, dependent on helpers, on the losing side of the war's maps but hearing the Allies advance. What beliefs come through? A stubborn belief in people's goodness. What is missing? The voices of the millions who left no diary at all. The same four questions applied to Source B — a non-Jewish helper looking back after the war — return different answers, because the position is different. That is the skill this section builds: the same event, read from different positions, gives different — and equally real — histories.

8. Bringing it together (VC2HH10K22)

The content description for this section joins two words: **experiences** and **perspectives**. The experiences were diverse — emigration, hiding, ghettoisation, camps, resistance, rescue — across countries, ages and communities, Jewish and non-Jewish. The perspectives differ because the positions differed: victim and rescuer, bystander and perpetrator, child and adult, 1938 and 1944.

Two historical habits follow. For **cause and consequence**: the cause of all these experiences was one — the Nazi aim of destroying the Jewish people, with the wider racism of part 3 beside it — and the consequences ran from six million deaths to the diaries, archives and testimonies that now anchor the history. For **continuity and change**: between 1933 and 1945 nearly everything in European Jewish life changed, yet people carried beliefs and values through the period — faith, learning, family loyalty, the hope in Anne Frank's diary — and those continuities are themselves evidence. Section 4D takes up what happened after: the interpretations and legacies of the wars and the Holocaust, including how the world has argued about their significance since 1945.

Sources for this section

Retrieval date for all online sources: **26 August 2026**.

1. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (definition of the Holocaust; T4; Paragraph 175 and the pink triangle; Sinti and Roma estimates of 250,000–500,000; Soviet prisoners of war; the uprisings at Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz-Birkenau; Wallenberg, Schindler, Sugihara and Sousa Mendes; pre-war populations and death estimates in Figure 8), encyclopedia.ushmm.org.
2. Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center (definition of the Holocaust; the Oyneg Shabes archive; Righteous Among the Nations, more than 28,000 recognised), yadvashem.org.
3. Anne Frank House, ‘Anne Frank’s diary’ and the family in hiding (the annex, the arrest of August 1944, Otto Frank as the only survivor of the hiding place; Bergen-Belsen, early 1945), annefrank.org.
4. Frank, Anne, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, entry of 15 July 1944 (Source A, Figure 3; consulted in translation, 26 August 2026).
5. Wiesel, Elie, *Night* (memoir of Sighet, Auschwitz and Buchenwald; first published 1958; consulted 26 August 2026).
6. Levi, Primo, *If This Is a Man* (memoir of the labour camp near Auschwitz; first published 1947; consulted 26 August 2026).
7. Gies, Miep, with Alison Leslie Gold, *Anne Frank Remembered* (1987) (Source B, Figure 7; consulted 26 August 2026).
8. Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, ‘The Sonderkommando uprising, 7 October 1944’, auschwitz.org.

Worked examples

Worked source analysis 1 — with help

Question. Read Source A (Figure 3), the diary entry of 15 July 1944 by Anne Frank, written while hiding in Amsterdam. What does this source reveal about the experience and perspective of a Jewish teenager in hiding?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is a private diary entry by Anne Frank, a Jewish teenager hiding in an Amsterdam annex, written on 15 July 1944 — a little over three weeks before the hiding place was discovered and the people in it deported.	Start with what the source <i>is</i> : private, written in the moment, never meant for publication. That shapes what it can tell us.
Step 2: Describe the content. Anne writes that her ideals seem “absurd and impossible”, yet she keeps them, “because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart”.	Use the source’s own words where you can.
Step 3: Explain the context. By July 1944 Anne had spent two years in hiding, dependent on helpers for food and news, and the war was still going on. The phrase “in spite of everything” carries all of that: the fear, the arrests she knew about, the two years of silence.	Context explains why holding on to hope was an achievement, not a simple feeling.
Step 4: Read the perspective. The voice is that of a victim who refuses despair. Keeping her ideals was a form of the spiritual resistance described in part 4 — defiance with pen and belief rather than weapons. Note also what is missing: the source cannot say that she will be arrested within weeks, which we know only from other records.	Perspectives include what a source cannot know about its own future.
Step 5: State significance and inference. Historians infer that even at the worst moment, at least one young writer chose hope — and because the diary survived and was published, her perspective now shapes how millions of people understand the Holocaust.	An inference must be based on evidence in the source plus its context.

Answer: the source shows a Jewish teenager in hiding holding on to her ideals as an act of hope and defiance; it is the perspective of a victim, written in the moment, and its survival makes it one of the most significant personal sources for the history of the Holocaust.

Worked source analysis 2 — with help

Question. Read Source B (Figure 7), in which Miep Gies reflects after the war on helping to hide the Frank family. What does this source reveal about the experience and perspective of a non-Jewish rescuer?

Working	Comment
Step 1: Identify the source. It is a reflection spoken after the war by Miep Gies, one of the non-Jewish Dutch people who helped hide the Frank family, published in her 1987 memoir <i>Anne Frank Remembered</i> .	The form matters: this is memory looking back, written more than forty years after the events.
Step 2: Describe the content. Gies rejects the word <i>hero</i> : “I am not a hero.” She places herself “at the end of a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more — much more — during those dark and terrible times.”	Quote the source’s key move: she turns attention away from herself.
Step 3: Explain the context. In the occupied Netherlands, hiding Jews carried the risk of arrest and death; Gies supplied the annex for two years and kept Anne’s diary after the arrest. Most people around her did neither — they were bystanders.	Context shows that what she called ordinary was in fact rare and dangerous.
Step 4: Read the perspective. The voice is that of a rescuer who sees rescue as duty, not heroism, and who points to others — including people who did “more”. Her perspective also quietly measures the bystanders: if helping was what “good” people did, then not helping was a choice.	A source’s perspective can include a judgement on the people who are not in it.
Step 5: State significance and inference. Historians use the source to show how rescuers experienced their own actions — as ordinary decency under extraordinary pressure — and to correct the assumption that rescue was impossible: Gies insists the “long line” of helpers existed.	Connect the source back to the bigger history it illuminates (part 5).

Answer: the source shows a rescuer refusing the label of hero and presenting her dangerous help as ordinary decency, while pointing to a wider, quieter history of helpers — the perspective of the non-Jewish side of the story this section studies.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Diverse experiences (E01). Use Figure 2.

- Match each experience to one person or group from Figure 2: hiding; ghettoisation and camps; armed resistance; rescue trains.
- The curriculum’s list of experiences in VC2HH10K22 . E01 includes conversions. Using the row of the exhibition about Edith Stein, explain why conversion did not protect Jewish people from Nazi persecution.
- Why does the curriculum ask for examples spanning many countries, ages and experiences rather than one story?

Q2. Other targeted groups (E02). Use Figure 4.

- (a) Name three groups, besides Jewish people, that Nazi racial policies targeted.
- (b) What was the programme the Nazis code-named T4?
- (c) In the camps, political prisoners wore a red triangle and gay men a pink triangle. What do the triangles tell historians about how the Nazis organised their camps?

Q3. Jewish resistance (E03). Use Figure 5.

- (a) Name the four forms of Jewish resistance shown in Figure 5.
- (b) Which form was (i) the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, (ii) the Oyneg Shabes archive, (iii) the Frank family's life in the annex?
- (c) Why do historians count concealment — hiding — as a form of resistance?

Q4. Rescuers (E04). Use Figure 6.

- (a) Name two rescuers from Figure 6 and describe what each one did.
- (b) Choose one rescuer and state the cost or risk they accepted.
- (c) What is the title **Righteous Among the Nations**, and who awards it?

Q5. Scale. Use Figure 8.

- (a) What was the pre-war Jewish population of Poland, and the estimated number murdered there?
- (b) In which two countries on the chart were about nine of every ten Jewish people murdered?
- (c) Give one reason the survival rate differed between countries, using one example from the chart.

Q6. Perspective skill. Use Figure 9 and Source A (Figure 3).

- (a) Answer the question “Who made it?” for Source A.
- (b) Answer the question “What position did they stand in?” for Source A.
- (c) Answer the question “What is missing?” for Source A.

On your own

Q7. Comparing experiences. Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel were both teenagers living through the Holocaust, one in hiding in the Netherlands and one in the camps. Explain two ways their experiences differed and one thing their experiences shared.

Q8. Comparing perspectives. Compare Source A (Anne Frank, 1944) and Source B (Miep Gies, after the war). Explain how the position of each maker shapes what the source says, using one quotation from each source.

Q9. Resistance. “The only resistance that mattered was armed resistance.” Do you agree? Use two named examples from part 4 to argue your answer.

Q10. Rescuers and bystanders. Using Figure 6 and Source B, explain why historians describe rescue as rare but real, and what Gies's own words suggest about the much larger group of bystanders.

Q11. Continuity and change. Identify one feature of Jewish life that **changed** between 1933 and 1945, and one belief or value that people **carried through** the period despite everything. Justify each choice with evidence from this section.

Q12. Significance. “Anne Frank's diary is the most significant source for the history of the Holocaust.” Evaluate this claim: state one reason the diary is significant, and one reason historians must use many other sources beside it.

Answers

Q1. (a) Hiding — Anne Frank (and the Kindertransport children were later hidden in Britain); ghettoisation and camps — Elie Wiesel; armed resistance — Mordechai Anielewicz; rescue trains — the Kindertransport children. (b) The Nazis classified people by family background, not by belief, so becoming a Christian did not change how the Nazis treated a Jewish person; Edith Stein, a convert and a nun, was still deported and murdered. (c) Because the Holocaust was lived in many different ways across countries, ages and situations; one story cannot show the diversity the content description names.

Q2. (a) Any three from: people with disabilities; Sinti and Roma; LGBTQI+ people (gay men under Paragraph 175); Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, Soviet prisoners of war); Soviet Communists and political prisoners; Black people. (b) The programme in which the Nazis murdered hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities as “life unworthy of life”, while many more were forcibly sterilised. (c) That the camps sorted people into categories the Nazis had invented, and marked them visibly — the racism of the regime was built into the daily running of the camps.

Q3. (a) Armed resistance; camp-based resistance; spiritual resistance; concealment (hiding). (b) (i) Armed resistance. (ii) Spiritual resistance. (iii) Concealment. (c) Because hiding refused the order to be rounded up and deported; in a system designed to destroy a people, staying out of its hands was defiance.

Q4. (a) Any two, for example: Irena Sendler smuggled about 2,500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto; Chiune Sugihara wrote transit visas for thousands of Jewish refugees in Lithuania in 1940. (b) For example: Sendler was captured and tortured by the German secret police; Sousa Mendes was dismissed from his post; Sugihara’s diplomatic career ended; Wallenberg disappeared into Soviet custody. (c) A title drawn from Jewish tradition, awarded by Yad Vashem, honouring non-Jewish people who risked their lives to save Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Q5. (a) About 3,300 thousand (3.3 million) before the war; about 3,000 thousand (3 million) murdered. (b) Poland and the Netherlands. (c) For example, Romania’s gap is wider because the changing front lines and the war’s end left more survivors there; survival rates differed with where the war reached and when it ended in each country.

Q6. (a) Anne Frank, a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl hiding in an Amsterdam annex, writing a private diary. (b) A victim of persecution, in hiding, dependent on helpers, writing while the war still hung in the balance. (c) The voices of those who left no record; and the future Anne could not know — her arrest three weeks later and her death in Bergen-Belsen.

Q7. Differed: Anne Frank’s experience was hiding — silence, fear, dependence on helpers, no camp; Wiesel’s was ghettoisation then deportation to the death and labour camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, where his father died. Shared: both were teenagers whose ordinary lives — school, family, a future — were taken by the same persecution; both survived in memory only through what was written (Anne’s diary, Wiesel’s memoir — Anne did not survive to see liberation).

Q8. Source A is written *in* the event by a victim: its hope (“I still believe that people are really good at heart”) is a belief held under pressure, and it cannot know its own ending. Source B is written *after* the event by a rescuer: its humility (“I am not a hero”) looks back and shares the credit with a “long, long line” of helpers. The positions — victim inside the event, rescuer after it — produce the two very different tones.

Q9. Disagree (the expected case). Armed resistance, as in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising led by Anielewicz, matters and is the most visible form. But spiritual resistance — Ringelblum’s Oyneg Shabes archive, which preserved the truth of the Warsaw Ghetto for the future — had consequences no firefight achieved: it is now a founding source of the history itself. Concealment saved lives directly. A definition of resistance that counts only weapons leaves out the forms that kept people, lives and the record alive.

Q10. Rare but real: rescuers were a small minority — most non-Jewish Europeans were bystanders — yet Figure 6 shows rescue happening in seven different countries, in offices, consulates, factories and attics, so it was possible wherever people chose it. Gies’s words (“a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more”) insist the helpers were many more than the famous few, and by calling helping “what good people did” she quietly marks the bystanders’ choice not to help as a choice.

Q11. Changed (example): by 1945, Jewish communities that had lived across Europe for centuries had been destroyed — two of every three Jewish Europeans murdered, whole communities gone (Figure 8). Carried through (example):

beliefs and values — faith and learning kept alive as spiritual resistance in the sealed districts, and the hope in Anne Frank's diary of July 1944. Justification must cite section evidence.

Q12. Reason significant: it is a private, in-the-moment voice of a victim that millions have read, teaching the Holocaust through one real teenager; it is also evidence of spiritual resistance. Reason other sources are needed: one diary cannot show the whole — the camps (Wiesel, Levi), the sealed districts (the Oyneg Shabes archive), the rescuers (Source B), and the totals (Figure 8) come from other voices; historians corroborate perspectives against each other.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1.

- (a) Hiding — Anne Frank, hidden with her family and four others in the Amsterdam annex for two years. Ghettoisation and camps — Elie Wiesel, forced into the sealed Jewish district of Sighet and then deported to Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Armed resistance — Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Jewish Combat Organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Rescue trains — the Kindertransport children, about 10,000 children carried to Britain in 1938–39.
- (b) Nazi persecution was based on the Nazis' racial ideas: they classified people by family background, not by belief. Conversion therefore changed nothing in the Nazis' eyes. Edith Stein had become a Catholic nun, yet she was deported from the Netherlands in 1942 and murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau — proof that conversion offered no protection.
- (c) The curriculum content for this section asks for *diverse* experiences and perspectives, and a single story would flatten that diversity. The exhibition form forces the historian to show variety: Germany, Romania, Italy, Poland; children and adults; hiding, camps, recording, fighting, escape. Only a set of lives can show how different those experiences and perspectives were.

Q2.

- (a) Any three of the six rows of Figure 4: people with disabilities; Sinti and Roma; LGBTQTI+ people; Slavic peoples; Soviet Communists and political prisoners; Black people.
- (b) T4 was the programme in which the Nazis murdered hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities, calling their victims "life unworthy of life". It began before the mass murder of the Jews and used some of the same methods and people; many more people with disabilities were forcibly sterilised under related laws.
- (c) The triangles show that Nazi racism was organised into a system: prisoners were sorted into the categories the regime had invented — political, criminal, and so on — and marked so that guards and prisoners could read a person's category at a glance. The pink triangle also shows how a mark of shame was later reclaimed: since the war it has become a symbol of pride and remembrance for LGBTQTI+ communities.

Q3.

- (a) The four panels of Figure 5: armed resistance; camp-based resistance; spiritual resistance; concealment (hiding).
- (b)
 - (i) The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was armed resistance — fighters of the Jewish Combat Organisation holding off German forces for nearly a month in April–May 1943.
 - (ii) The Oyneg Shabes archive was spiritual resistance — recording and preserving the truth of the Warsaw Ghetto as an act of defiance.
 - (iii) The Franks' life in the annex was concealment — refusing the order to report for deportation by disappearing into hiding.
- (c) Concealment counts as resistance because the Nazis' plan required people to present themselves for round-up and deportation. Every person who hid denied the system one of its intended victims. Hiding was also active, not passive: it took organisation, false papers, money and networks of helpers, and discovery meant death for the hider and usually for the helper.

Q4.

- (a) Example pair: Oskar Schindler, a German businessman, protected about 1,200 Jewish people by employing them in his factories; Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker, smuggled about 2,500 Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto to safety.
- (b) Example: Raoul Wallenberg, after saving tens of thousands in Budapest, disappeared into Soviet custody in 1945 and never reappeared — the cost of rescue could outlast the war itself. (Also accepted: Schindler spent his fortune and risked arrest; Sendler was captured and tortured; Gies risked death; Winton gave time and money; Sousa Mendes was dismissed; Sugihara ended his diplomatic career.)
- (c) Righteous Among the Nations is a title drawn from Jewish tradition, awarded by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, to non-Jewish people who risked their lives to save Jewish people during the Holocaust. More than 28,000 people have been honoured, and the list is itself a primary source for the history of rescue.

Q5.

- (a) Poland: about 3,300 thousand (3.3 million) Jewish people before the war; about 3,000 thousand (3 million) murdered.
- (b) Poland and the Netherlands — in both, the murdered bar is nearly as tall as the pre-war bar, about nine of every ten.
- (c) Model reason: the war's geography and timing changed survival. In Romania the gap between the bars is wider than in Poland because the front moved and the war ended before the murder reached every community; in the Netherlands, under tight German control, almost nobody was out of reach. So the chart shows the same catastrophe falling with different weight country by country — the diversity of experience at the scale of millions.

Q6.

- (a) Who made it: Anne Frank, a Jewish teenager (fifteen in July 1944), hiding with her family and four others in the annex of an Amsterdam office building; a diarist writing for herself.
- (b) What position they stood in: a victim of persecution — registered, marked, ordered to report, then in hiding; dependent on non-Jewish helpers for food and news; on the occupied side of the war, but in 1944 hearing of the Allied advance.
- (c) What is missing: the voices of those who could not write or whose papers were destroyed — the millions with no diary; and the future the source cannot know: within three weeks of this entry, the annex was discovered and its people deported. Historians supply that ending from other records, which is exactly how sources are used together.

Q7.

Model answer. Two differences: first, the shape of danger. Anne Frank's danger was the knock on the door — two years of silence in an annex, dependent on helpers like Miep Gies, never going outside. Elie Wiesel's danger was the system itself — the sealed district at Sighet, the deportation trains, the selections and hunger of Auschwitz and the death of his father at Buchenwald. Second, the ending: Wiesel lived to see liberation and write *Night*; Anne Frank died in Bergen-Belsen in early 1945, weeks before liberation, and her diary speaks for her.

One shared thing: both were teenagers whose ordinary world — school, friends, family life, a future — was taken by the same persecution, and both left written testimony that now carries their perspective into history. The comparison is the content description in miniature: one period, diverse experiences, different perspectives.

Q8.

Model answer. Source A was made inside the event by a victim. Anne Frank writes on 15 July 1944, in hiding, that she keeps her ideals “because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart”. Her position — a teenager shut in an annex, hearing the war but not free in it — makes the sentence an act of hope under pressure, and the source cannot know that her arrest is three weeks away. Source B was made after the event by a rescuer. Miep

Gies says “I am not a hero” and places herself at the end of “a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more”. Her position — a survivor of the war, looking back, honouring the dead — makes the source an act of humility that turns attention from herself to the wider history of helpers and, by implication, to the bystanders who chose not to help. Same hiding place, same two years, two different positions — and therefore two different perspectives on it. That is why historians always ask *whose voice* a source is.

Q9.

Model answer (disagree). Armed resistance has a rightful place: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April–May 1943, led by Mordechai Anielewicz, held off German forces for nearly a month and stands as the largest single act of armed Jewish resistance; the camp revolts at Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz-Birkenau prove the same courage inside the camps. But “the only resistance that mattered” is not what the record shows. Spiritual resistance produced consequences armed resistance could not: Emmanuel Ringelblum’s Oyneg Shabes archive preserved the truth of the Warsaw Ghetto from inside it, and now anchors the history of the Holocaust — the Nazis destroyed the people but not the record. Concealment saved lives directly: every hidden child who survived, and the Kindertransport children, owe their lives to forms of resistance without a single shot. Historians therefore hold all four forms in one idea, because the system they opposed attacked not only lives but identity, truth and memory — and resistance answered on all those fronts.

Q10.

Model answer. Rescue was rare: most non-Jewish Europeans stood outside the four positions of part 5 as bystanders, neither helping nor harming, and the rescuers in Figure 6 — seven people across seven countries — are notable precisely because they were exceptional. Rescue was real: the same figure shows tens of thousands of lives saved by visas, factories, attics and smuggled children, at real cost — torture for Sendler, dismissal for Sousa Mendes, a ruined career for Sugihara, disappearance for Wallenberg. Gies’s words add the perspective from inside: by refusing the title of hero and speaking of “a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more — much more”, she claims that helping was ordinary decency for those who chose it, and that the famous rescuers are only the visible end of a longer line. The same sentence measures the bystanders: if helping was what “good” people did, then standing by was a choice — and historians study that choice as part of the non-Jewish experience of the period.

Q11.

Model answer. Changed: the Jewish presence in Europe itself. In 1933 Jewish communities lived in every country on the chart in Figure 8; by 1945 about six million Jewish people had been murdered — two of every three in Europe — and in Poland and the Netherlands the pre-war and murdered bars are nearly equal. Whole communities, their schools, synagogues and streets, were gone; that is a change without parallel. Carried through: beliefs and values. In the Warsaw Ghetto, Ringelblum’s group kept recording the truth; secret classes, prayer and music continued as spiritual resistance; and in the Amsterdam annex, Anne Frank wrote in July 1944 that she still believed people were “really good at heart”. The persecution changed nearly everything about daily life, but it did not reach the beliefs people carried — and historians read those continuities as evidence of who the people were, not only of what was done to them.

Q12.

Model answer. The claim has real force: Anne Frank’s diary is a private voice written in the moment by a victim, it has taught millions of readers what the Holocaust felt like from inside one hiding place, and as an act of spiritual resistance it is significant in its own right. But the claim overreaches if the diary stands alone. One diary cannot show the camps — for that historians read Wiesel’s *Night* and Levi’s *If This Is a Man*; it cannot show the sealed districts from inside a whole community — the Oyneg Shabes archive does that; it cannot show the non-Jewish side — Source B, Miep Gies, supplies the rescuer’s perspective; and it cannot show the scale — Figure 8’s six million. Historians evaluate sources by corroborating them against each other, and the diary’s true significance is as one voice, vivid and irreplaceable, in a chorus the historian must assemble from many.

Debating what the world wars meant — and left behind

Curriculum: owns VC2HH10K23 · draws on K23.E01, K23.E02, K23.E03, K23.E04, K23.E05, K23.E06.

The world wars did not end in 1918 or 1945. They kept living on in the bodies and minds of returned soldiers, in the way we mark Anzac Day, in Australia's friendships and alliances, in the United Nations, in memorials to the Holocaust, and in a world promise about human rights. This section is about those **legacies** — and about the fact that historians and citizens do not all agree on what the wars mean. You will see how interpretations (historians' accounts of what the past means) have changed over time, and you will practise weighing different sides of a debate with evidence.

Before we begin: what do these words mean?

Some words in this section are **contested** — people do not all agree on one fixed meaning. We will state clearly how they are used here, so every question can be answered on that meaning alone.

- **Legacy.** A legacy is something handed on by the past into the present — an institution, a belief, a wound, a friendship between nations. Legacies can be good, bad or both at once, and people can disagree about which legacies matter most.
- **Interpretation.** An interpretation is a historian's account of what the past means and why it matters. Two historians can agree on the facts and still interpret them differently, because they ask different questions or value different things. Interpretations change over time as new evidence and new questions appear.
- **The Anzac legend.** The Anzac legend is the story Australians tell about their soldiers at Gallipoli in 1915 — a story of courage, endurance and mateship among ordinary men. The word *legend* does not mean “false”: it means a story a nation tells about itself. Whether the legend tells the truth about the past, and whether it is good for us today, are debated questions (K23.E02).
- **Commemoration.** To commemorate is to honour and remember an event or people through ceremonies and memorials, such as the dawn service on Anzac Day.
- **Shell shock.** The name used in World War I for the psychological wounds of war — nightmares, shaking and fear that followed soldiers home. Today we call this kind of wound post-traumatic stress.
- **The Holocaust.** The systematic murder of about six million Jewish men, women and children by Nazi Germany and its helpers during World War II.
- **Decolonisation.** The process, mostly after 1945, by which colonies won their independence and became nations — for example India in 1947 and Indonesia in 1949.
- **The Cold War.** The long rivalry between the USA and the USSR (the group of states led by Russia) after 1945. It was “cold” because the two sides never fought each other directly, but the rivalry shaped wars, alliances and ideas around the world.

Keep these meanings in mind as you read. When a question asks about “significance” or “legacy”, notice which meaning is doing the work.

1. Two wars, two homecomings

Between 1914 and 1945, Australia sent hundreds of thousands of its people to war. In World War I about 416,809 Australians enlisted and over 60,000 died. In World War II about one million served and about 40,000 died (figures as recorded by the Australian War Memorial; retrieved 26 August 2026). When the guns fell silent, the survivors came home — and Australia had to decide what it owed them, and what the wars had meant.

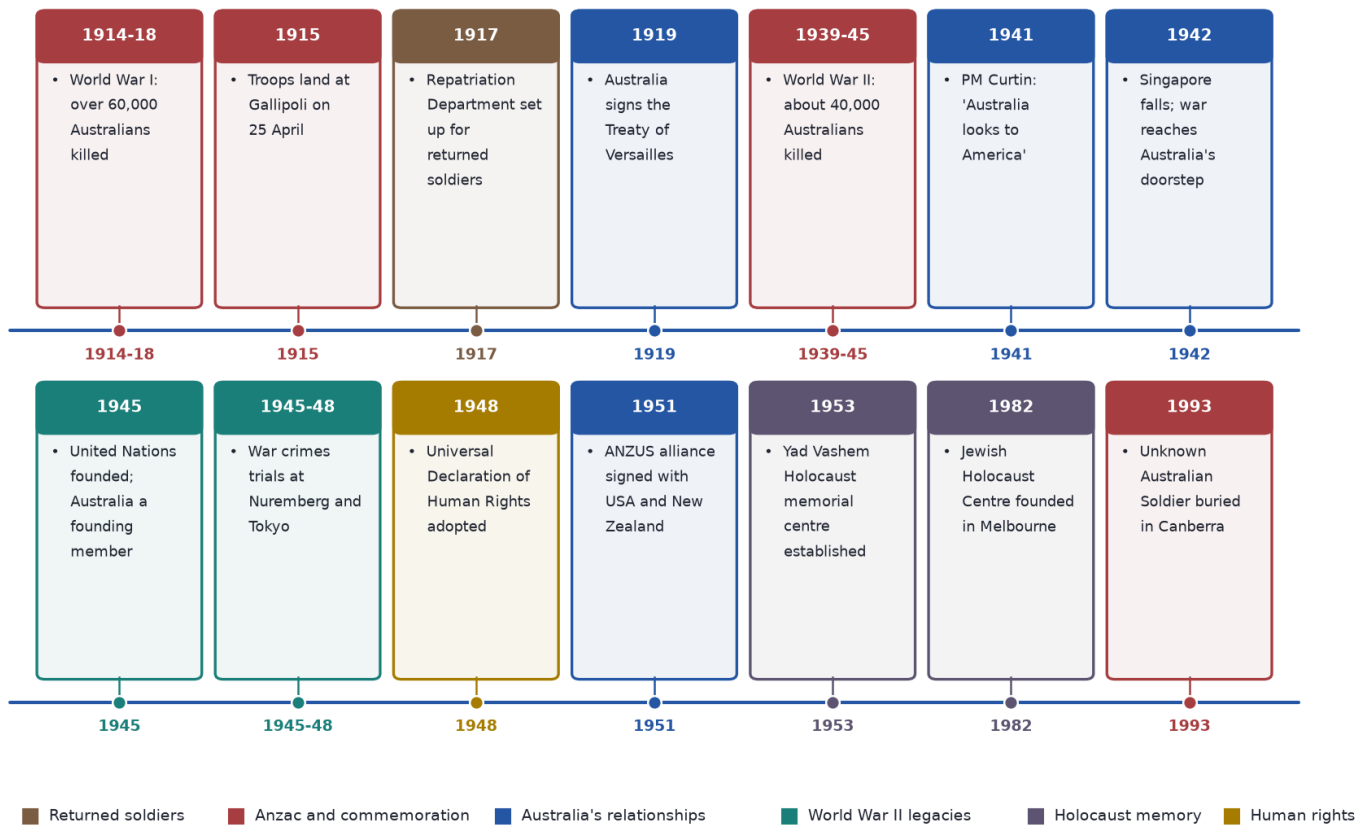
As you read, track three historical ideas:

- **Cause and consequence** — what did each war set in motion, in the short term and the long term?
- **Continuity and change** — what stayed the same across the decades, and what changed?
- **Perspective** — a returned soldier, a war widow, a historian in 1952 and a historian today can all look at the same war and see different things.

The timeline below gives you the shape of the whole section before we zoom in.

The world wars and their legacies, 1914-1993

Key moments from this section. Colours show the theme each event belongs to.



Timeline of the world wars and their legacies from 1914 to 1993, with events colour-coded by theme

2. Coming home: impacts on returned soldiers

The war travelled home with the soldiers. The table below sets out the main impacts on returned soldiers and the support they were offered (draws on K23.E01).

Coming home: how war affected returned soldiers

Australia's two world wars sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers home. This table sets out what they faced and the support offered to them. In World War I about 416,809 Australians enlisted and over 60,000 died. In World War II about one million served and about 40,000 died.

Impact	What it meant	Support for returned soldiers
Physical injuries	Wounds, blindness, lost limbs and the lasting effects of gas attacks.	Repatriation hospitals, prosthetic limbs and ongoing medical care.
Psychological wounds	'Shell shock' - nightmares, shaking and fear that followed soldiers home.	Treatment was still being learned; care improved over time but many struggled for years.
Finding work	Jobs had been filled while soldiers were away; some employers were reluctant to hire injured men.	Preference in hiring for returned soldiers; retraining schemes after World War II.
Land: the Soldier Settlement Scheme	After World War I, about 23,000 returned soldiers were given farm blocks to work.	Loans and training were offered, but many blocks were too small or poor; many settlers failed.
Recognition	Medals, victory marches, war memorials and Anzac Day services honoured service.	Honour boards and memorials were built in almost every town.
Pensions and health care	The Repatriation Department (set up in 1917) paid pensions to injured soldiers and to the families of those who died.	Pensions, hospital care and support for widows and children.

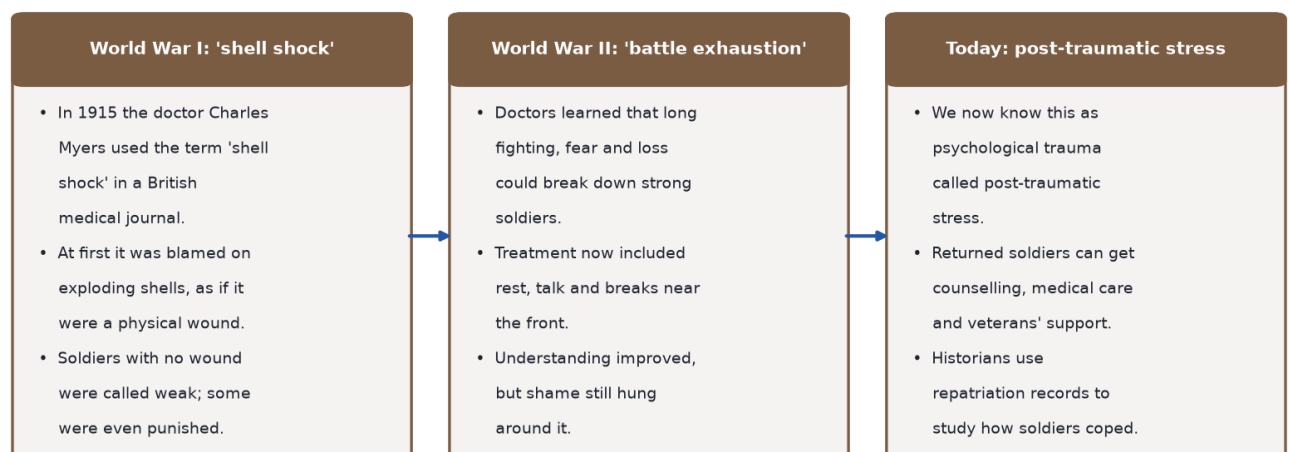
Source: figures as recorded by the Australian War Memorial; Repatriation Department, established 1917 (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Table of how the wars affected returned soldiers, and of the support they were offered

Some impacts were visible — lost limbs, blindness, the effects of gas. Others were invisible. Many soldiers came home with **shell shock**, the name World War I gave to the psychological wounds of war. The diagram below traces how the understanding of these wounds changed, while the suffering itself continued (a clear case of continuity and change).

Understanding the mind's wounds: continuity and change

The name and the treatment changed. The suffering of returned soldiers continued.



Continuity: in both wars many returned soldiers lived with these wounds for the rest of their lives, and families carried the load with them.

Diagram tracing continuity and change in understanding of the psychological wounds of war, from shell shock to post-traumatic stress

Two points deserve care. First, support was real but uneven: pensions, hospital care and the Soldier Settlement Scheme helped many, yet many settlers failed on blocks that were too small or too poor, and some returned soldiers

faced unfair treatment because of their race or background. Second, families carried the load too: a wounded soldier's wife, children and parents lived with the war's consequences for decades.

Quick check (draws on K23.E01). Using the table, list two physical or psychological effects the wars had on returned soldiers, and for each name one form of support they were offered. Then state which impact you think would have been hardest to live with, and why.

3. The Anzac tradition: ideals and commemoration

From 1915, Australians linked a set of **ideals** with the soldiers at Gallipoli: courage and endurance under fire, mateship, duty and sacrifice, and the idea that a young nation had “come of age” in war. The diagram below pairs these ideals with the ways Australians commemorate World War I today (draws on K23.E02).

The Anzac tradition: ideals and commemoration

What the legend celebrates, and how Australians keep the memory of World War I alive.



The Ode: 'They shall grow not old... At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.' - Laurence Binyon, 1914.

Diagram pairing the ideals linked with the Anzac tradition with the ways Australians commemorate World War I

Notice the word *tradition*: commemoration is something each generation chooses to keep doing. The dawn service, the minute's silence on 11 November, the honour board in the local hall and the burial of the Unknown Australian Soldier at the Australian War Memorial in 1993 are all acts of remembering, repeated because Australians decided the remembering matters.

Quick check (draws on K23.E02). Name two ideals linked with the Anzac tradition and two ways Australians commemorate World War I. For one of the ways, suggest which ideal it keeps alive.

4. Historians and the Anzac legend: a debate over time

The Anzac legend has never been settled. Each generation of historians has asked different questions of it, and their **interpretations** have changed over time (draws on K23.E02).

The Anzac legend: what historians have argued over time

The same story, argued about again and again. Each generation of historians has asked different questions of the Anzac legend. Interpretation: a historian's account of what the past means and why it matters. Interpretations change as new evidence and new questions appear.

When	Who	What they argued
1915	Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, British war correspondent	His first reports from Gallipoli praised the Australians as brave citizen-soldiers. They were among the first bricks of the legend.
1916-1940s	Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent	His dispatches and his twelve-volume official history turned Anzac into a story of courage, endurance and mateship among ordinary men.
1952	Manning Clark, historian at the University of Melbourne	In a public lecture he questioned the Anzac legend, arguing the story had grown into a national myth that went beyond the evidence.
1970	Humphrey McQueen, <i>A New Britannia</i>	Attacked the legend: he said many Anzacs were larrikins (rowdy, rule-breaking men), gamblers and unionists, not Bean's noble heroes.
1974	Bill Gammage, <i>The Broken Years</i>	Used soldiers' own letters and diaries to show both their courage and the terrible cost of the war on them.
2010	Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi	In <i>What's Wrong with the Anzac Myth?</i> they argued that Anzac had become a national day focused on war, crowding out other stories of Australia's past.
Today	Most historians	They agree the soldiers' courage was real, but they debate how far the legend exaggerates, and how much of our national story war should fill.

Table of historians and writers and their views of the Anzac legend from 1915 to today

A fair hearing for both sides. Supporters of the legend argue that it rests on real courage: ordinary citizens really did endure Gallipoli, and a nation is entitled to honour its dead and draw ideals from their sacrifice. Critics argue that the legend smooths out the truth — the fear, the failures, the men who came home broken — and that a story about war can crowd out other stories about how Australia was made. Both positions are held in good faith, and the evidence supports parts of each: the courage was real, *and* the legend has sometimes been used to simplify the past. A good historian weighs both sides instead of picking one by instinct.

Quick check (draws on K23.E02). Choose two historians from the table whose views differ. In two or three sentences, explain one similarity and one difference between their interpretations of the Anzac legend.

5. Australia's international relationships: a shift in who we looked to

The world wars changed not only Australia's memory but its place in the world (draws on K23.E03). In 1914, most Australians called Britain "Home", and defence, trade and identity centred on Britain and its empire. Even so, World War I gave Australia a separate voice: in 1919 Australia signed the Treaty of Versailles and joined the League of Nations as a nation in its own right.

World War II forced a faster change. In February 1942 Japan took Singapore, Britain's great base in Asia, and Britain could not spare ships to defend Australia. Prime Minister John Curtin brought Australian troops home from the Middle East and, in the *Melbourne Herald* of 27 December 1941, signalled the new direction in words that became famous: Australia, he wrote, looks to America.

Source: a prime minister signals a change of direction

Written days after Japan entered the war and Australian troops were far away in the Middle East.

Australia looks to America

"Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom."

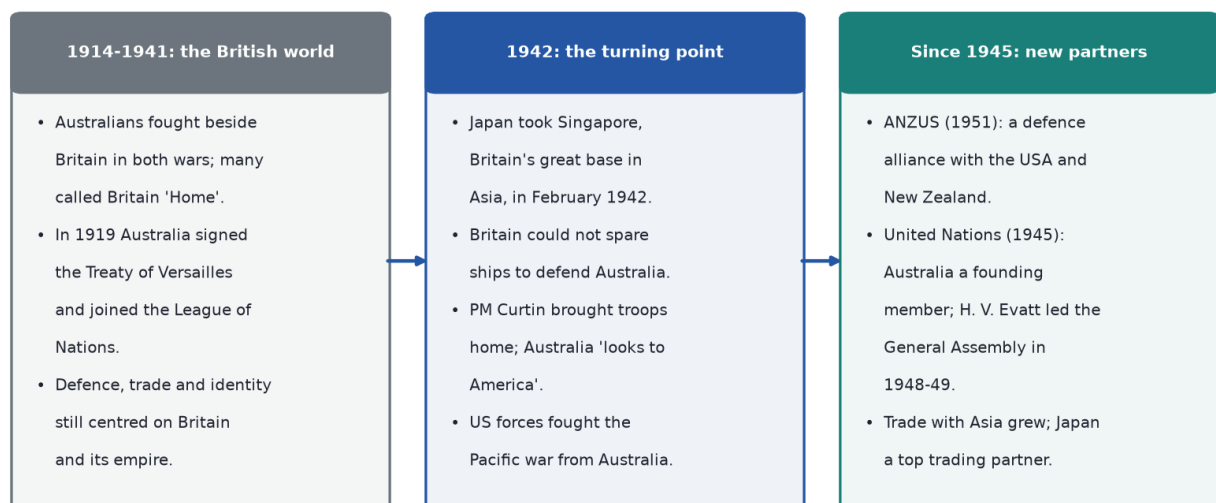
Prime Minister John Curtin, writing in the Melbourne Herald, 27 December 1941.

Source reproduction of John Curtin's statement that Australia looks to America, Melbourne Herald, 27 December 1941

After 1945 the new pattern settled: the ANZUS alliance with the USA and New Zealand (1951); founding membership of the United Nations (1945), with Australia's Dr H. V. Evatt presiding over the UN General Assembly in 1948–49; and growing trade and ties with Asia, Japan becoming one of Australia's biggest trading partners. The significance of the wars for Australia's relationships is therefore double: they loosened the old tie to Britain and tied Australia into new alliances in the Pacific and the wider world.

Australia's international relationships: a shift in who we looked to

The two world wars slowly changed which countries Australia relied on, from Britain to the USA, Asia and the United Nations.



Continuity and change: loyalty to Britain changed into alliance with the USA and engagement with Asia and the UN. The change was fastest between 1941 and 1942.

Diagram of the shift in Australia's international relationships from Britain, to the USA, to Asia and the United Nations

Quick check (draws on K23.E03). Identify one way World War I and one way World War II changed Australia's international relationships. Which change do you think was more significant? Give one reason for your choice.

6. The legacies of World War II: five outcomes historians weigh

Historians agree that World War II left deep legacies, but they debate which mattered most. The diagram below maps five of them (draws on K23.E04).

What did World War II leave behind? Five legacies historians debate

A legacy is something handed on by the past. Historians agree these five outcomes mattered, but they argue about which mattered most.

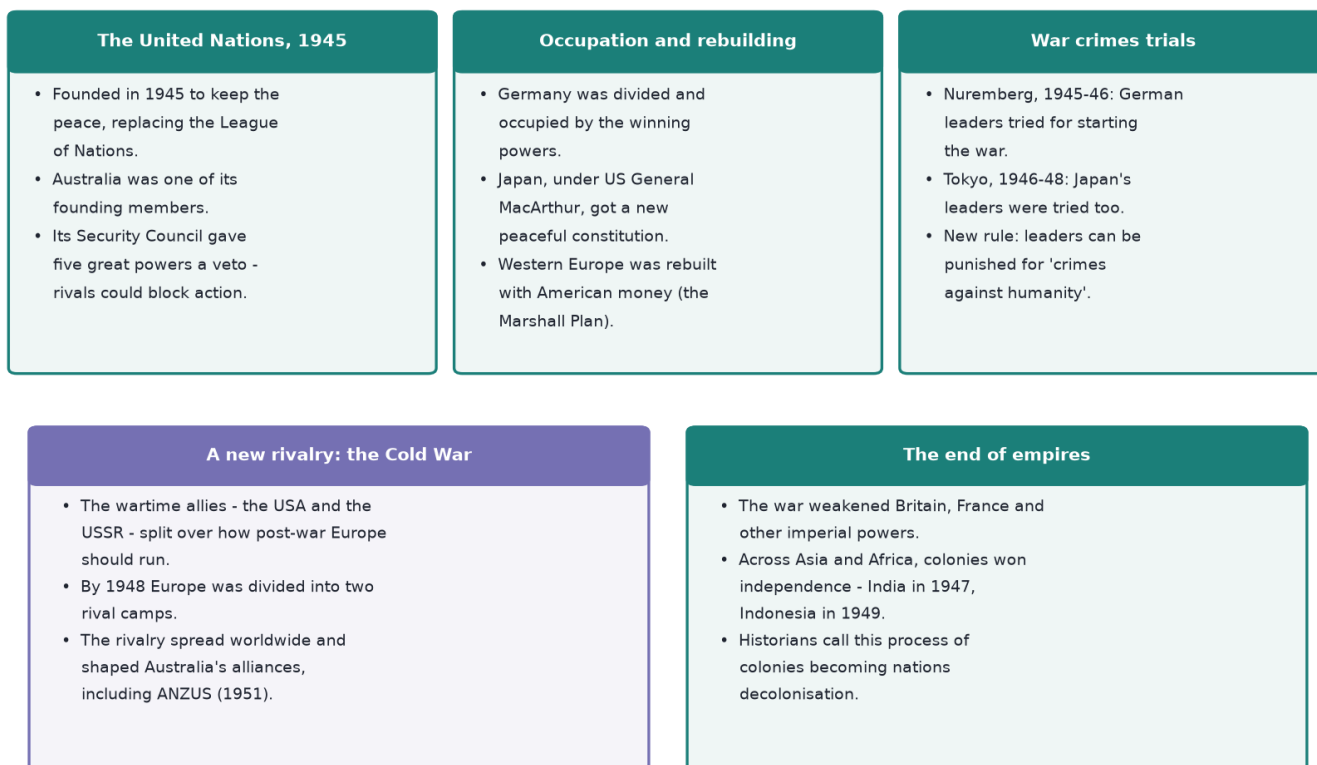


Diagram of five legacies of World War II — among them the United Nations, occupation and rebuilding, war crimes trials, the Cold War and the end of empires

A few notes on each legacy:

- **The United Nations (1945)** replaced the failed League of Nations. Its Security Council gave five great powers a veto — the power to block a decision — which has sometimes frozen the UN when those powers disagree.
- **Occupation and rebuilding.** Germany was divided and occupied by the winning powers; Japan was occupied under US General Douglas MacArthur (1945–52) and given a new, peaceful constitution; Western Europe was rebuilt with American money under the Marshall Plan.
- **War crimes trials.** At Nuremberg (1945–46) and Tokyo (1946–48), leaders were tried for starting wars and for cruel acts. The trials set a new rule for the world: even in war, leaders and soldiers can be punished for crimes against humanity.
- **The Cold War.** The wartime allies — the USA and the USSR — split over how post-war Europe should be run. Many historians interpret World War II as the cause of this rivalry; by 1948 Europe was divided into two camps, and the rivalry shaped Australia's alliances, including ANZUS.
- **Decolonisation.** The war weakened Britain, France and other imperial powers, and colonies across Asia and Africa won independence — India in 1947, Indonesia in 1949.

Interpretations in action. Some historians rank the UN and the war crimes trials as the greatest legacies, because they created new rules for the world. Others rank the Cold War first, because it divided the world for forty years and caused wars in Korea and Vietnam. Still others say decolonisation mattered most, because it changed the lives of more people than anything else on the list. The facts are shared; the ranking is the interpretation.

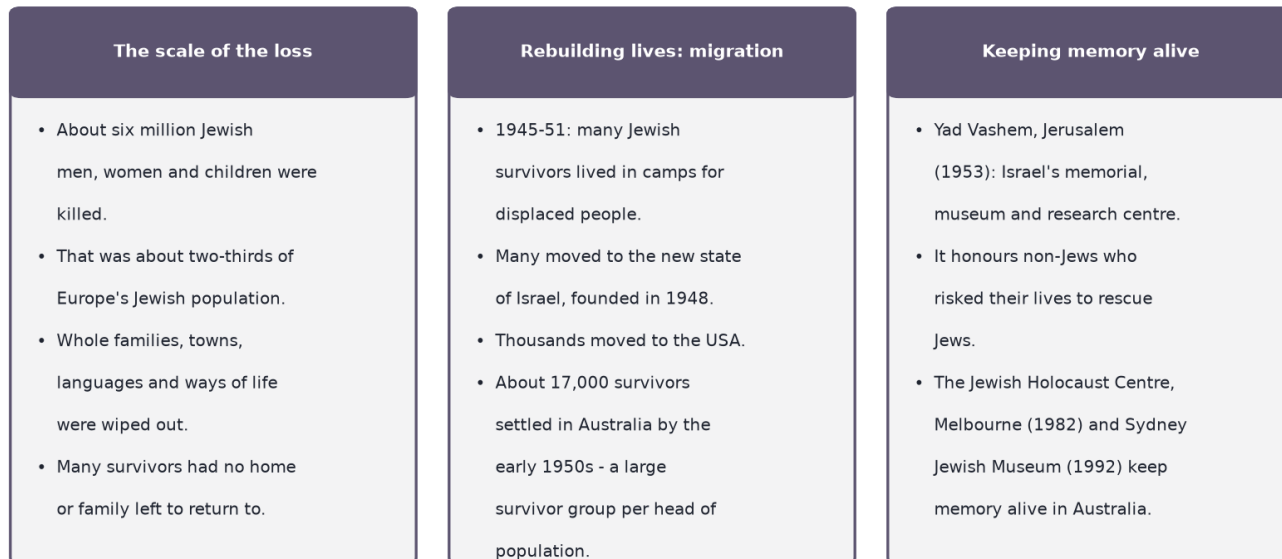
Quick check (draws on K23.E04). Choose two legacies from the diagram. For each, give one reason a historian might call it the most significant legacy of World War II.

7. The Holocaust: impacts on the Jewish community

The Holocaust was not only an event of 1939–45; its impacts reach into the present (draws on K23.E05). The diagram below traces three of them: the scale of the loss, the migration of survivors, and the work of memory.

How the Holocaust affected the Jewish community

The Holocaust was the systematic murder of Jewish people by Nazi Germany and its helpers during World War II. Its effects reach into the present.



Short-term impacts: loss, displacement and grief. Long-term impacts: new communities, memorials, museums and a worldwide promise of 'never again'.

Diagram of the short- and long-term effects the Holocaust had on the Jewish community: scale of loss, migration and memorials

In the short term, the loss was almost beyond measuring: about six million Jewish people killed, around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population, and whole families, towns and ways of life wiped out. Hundreds of thousands of survivors had no home to return to, and between 1945 and 1951 many lived in camps for displaced people.

In the longer term, survivors rebuilt their lives. Many moved to the new state of Israel, founded in 1948; thousands moved to the USA; and about 17,000 Jewish survivors settled in Australia by the early 1950s, making Australia one of the largest homes of survivors in the world per head of population. Their arrival changed Australian Jewish communities, especially in Melbourne and Sydney.

Memory became a duty. **Yad Vashem**, established by law in Jerusalem in 1953, is Israel's Holocaust memorial, museum and research centre; it also honours non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews. In Australia, survivors themselves founded the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne (1982), and the Sydney Jewish Museum opened in 1992. These places exist so that new generations can learn what happened — and why it must not happen again.

Quick check (draws on K23.E05). Give one short-term and one long-term impact the Holocaust had on the Jewish community, and name one place where its memory is kept alive.

8. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: a legacy in debate

On 10 December 1948, in Paris, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR): 48 countries voted for it, none against, and eight chose not to support it. Australia's Dr H. V. Evatt presided over the Assembly that year. The Declaration was a direct response to World War II and the Holocaust: if the war had shown what humans can do to each other, the Declaration stated what every human is owed (draws on K23.E06).

A legacy in writing: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948: 48 countries voted for it, none against, and 8 abstained.

Source: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

"All human beings are born free and equal in
dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason
and conscience and should act towards one
another in a spirit of brotherhood."

UN General Assembly, Paris, 10 December 1948. Dr H. V. Evatt (Australia) presided over the Assembly that year.

Why many see it as a great legacy

- First time the world's nations agreed that all humans have rights.
- It became the foundation of international human rights law and many national laws.
- It gives people a standard to judge their governments by.
- It has inspired rights movements around the world ever since.

Points raised in debate

- It is a declaration, not a law - no court can force countries to obey it.
- Eight countries abstained, including the USSR and its allies.
- Empires voted for it while denying rights to the peoples they ruled.
- Some signers still break these rights today - did it change anything?

Source reproduction of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with arguments for and against its significance

Its first article begins: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

A fair hearing for both sides. Those who call the UDHR a great legacy point out that it was the first time the world's nations agreed that all humans have rights simply because they are human; that it became the foundation of international human rights law and of many national laws; and that it gives ordinary people a standard to judge their governments by. Critics answer that a declaration is not a law: no court can force a country to obey it; some empires voted for it while denying rights to the peoples they ruled; and some countries that signed it still break its articles today. The strongest reply to the critics is that a standard matters even when it is broken — before 1948 there was no agreed standard at all. Deciding how much weight the UDHR deserves is exactly the kind of debate historians have about legacies.

Quick check (draws on K23.E06). In your own words, give one reason the UDHR counts as a major legacy of the war years and the Holocaust, and one reason critics question that standing. State which side you find more convincing, with a reason.

Worked source analysis

Let us analyse a primary source together, using the five steps shown in the diagram.

Source 1. Extract from a speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating at the funeral of the Unknown Australian Soldier, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 11 November 1993.

"We will never know who this Australian was, he never will be identified. He is all of them. And he is one of us."

— Paul Keating, Remembrance Day speech, 11 November 1993; text as published by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked source analysis: a speech that shaped how we remember

The source below is analysed step by step in the section that follows it.

Source: Remembrance Day speech, 11 November 1993

"We will never know who this Australian was,
he never will be identified. He is all of them.
And he is one of us."

Prime Minister Paul Keating, funeral of the Unknown Australian Soldier, Canberra, 11 November 1993.

Step	Question to ask of the source
1 Identify	What kind of source is this? Who made it, when, where and for whom?
2 Context	What was happening at the time? Why was this speech given in 1993, 78 years after Gallipoli?
3 Message	What is the speaker saying about the Unknown Soldier, and about Australia?
4 Perspective	What view of war and nation does the speech promote? What might someone else say about the same ceremony?
5 Usefulness and limits	What can this speech tell a historian about how Australians remembered war in 1993 - and what can it not show?

Source reproduction of Paul Keating's 1993 Remembrance Day speech with the five steps of source analysis

Worked analysis.

1. **What kind of source is it?** A primary source — a speech given in 1993 by a serving prime minister, at a national ceremony.
2. **Context.** It was Remembrance Day 1993, the 75th anniversary of the end of World War I, when the remains of an unknown Australian soldier were brought home from a French war cemetery and buried at the Australian War Memorial.
3. **Content.** Keating says the unknown soldier stands for every fallen soldier ("He is all of them") and yet belongs to every Australian ("he is one of us").
4. **Perspective.** This is the perspective of a national leader trying to connect a distant war to living Australians. The speech honours the dead without glorifying war itself — Keating spoke of the futility of war as well as the courage of soldiers.
5. **Usefulness and limits.** The source is highly useful for understanding how Australians commemorated war in the 1990s, and how the Anzac legend was being renewed for a new generation. Its limit: it is one leader's view on a formal occasion, so it does not, by itself, show what ordinary Australians thought. To weigh the legend's place in society, a historian would add more sources — for example, surveys, newspapers, or the views of historians in the table in section 4.

Notice the shape of the reasoning: identify, give context, describe content, name the perspective, then weigh usefulness and limits. Use this shape for any source.

Practice tasks

A. Recall and understanding

1. Define **legacy**, **interpretation** and **commemoration**, using the definitions from “Before we begin”.
2. Name two effects the wars had on returned soldiers and one form of support offered to them (K23.E01).
3. What name did World War I give to the psychological wounds of war, and what do we call this kind of wound today?
4. Name two ideals linked with the Anzac tradition (K23.E02).
5. Which alliance, signed in 1951, tied Australia to the USA and New Zealand?

B. Source skills

6. Read Source 1 again. Write two sentences of context for the speech and one sentence about its usefulness (K23.E02).
7. Is Source 1 a primary or a secondary source? Give one reason for your answer, and one reason a historian would still need other sources to study commemoration in the 1990s.

C. Explanation and analysis

8. “The Anzac legend tells the truth about Gallipoli.” Using the table in section 4, explain one argument for and one argument against this claim, then give your own reasoned view.
9. Choose one legacy of World War II from section 6. Explain why some historians rank it as the most significant, and why others would rank a different legacy first (K23.E04).
10. Explain how World War II changed Australia’s international relationships, using the ideas of continuity and change (K23.E03).

D. Extended response

11. “The world wars mattered most for what they left behind.” Write a short response (one paragraph) using evidence from at least two different legacies or impacts in this section (K23.E04, K23.E05, K23.E06).

How these are marked. Marks are given for the quality of your reasoning, not for reaching a particular conclusion. A strong answer: uses the defined terms correctly, gives specific named evidence, considers more than one perspective or interpretation, and states a limit or counterpoint. Two students who reach different conclusions can both do well if both reason well from evidence.

Model paragraph (for task 11). The world wars mattered most for what they left behind. In the short term, the wars left hundreds of thousands of returned soldiers living with physical wounds and shell shock, and Australia responded with pensions, repatriation hospitals and the Soldier Settlement Scheme — legacies that shaped Australian life for decades. In the long term, World War II left the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a first attempt to build a world in which such wars and such crimes as the Holocaust could not happen again. Critics make a fair point: the UN has not ended war, and the Declaration is not a binding law; yet before 1945 no agreed world standard existed at all. This shows that the significance of the wars lies less in the fighting itself than in the legacies — painful and hopeful — that people still live with and argue about today.

Key terms

Term	Meaning used in this section
Legacy	Something handed on by the past into the present
Interpretation	A historian’s account of what the past means and why it matters
Anzac legend	The story of courage, endurance and mateship told about the soldiers at Gallipoli
Commemoration	Honouring and remembering an event or people through ceremonies and memorials

Term	Meaning used in this section
Shell shock	The World War I name for the psychological wounds of war; today, post-traumatic stress
Repatriation Department	The Australian government department set up in 1917 to care for returned soldiers and their families
Holocaust	The systematic murder of about six million Jewish people by Nazi Germany and its helpers
Decolonisation	The process by which colonies won independence and became nations
Cold War	The long rivalry between the USA and the USSR after 1945, without direct war between them
Veto	The power to block a decision, as held by the five great powers on the UN Security Council
War crimes trials	The trials at Nuremberg and Tokyo (1945–48) of leaders for starting wars and for cruel acts
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	The UN statement of 1948 that all humans have rights simply because they are human
Primary / secondary source	Evidence from the time studied / a later account of the past