



Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum

The History of the Holocaust – A Reference Tool



“Not to transmit an experience is to betray it”
Elie Wiesel

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Introduction

The Holocaust (*Shoah*) was the systematic persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II (WWII). Millions of others, including Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), the physically and mentally challenged, homosexuals, as well as political and religious opponents of Nazism were targeted for destruction.

The Holocaust was not an accident in history. Individuals, organizations and governments made choices that permitted discrimination, prejudice, hatred and ultimately, mass murder to take place.

The teaching of the Holocaust demands a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. This guide provides background material to the Permanent Exhibition of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum. Pre-visit preparation will reinforce your students' ability to connect to the subject matter, as they encounter the artefacts, photographs, videos and Holocaust Survivor testimonies.

This guide presents the history of the Holocaust through the following sections: Historical background, Holocaust chronology, Artefacts, Glossary and Bibliography.

As an educator you can select the content that speaks to your students' interests, in order that their visit to the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum be a memorable one.



Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum

TO LEARN, TO FEEL, AND TO REMEMBER

The mandate of the Museum is to educate people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust, and to alert the public to the destructive powers of racism and antisemitism while promoting respect for diversity.

The exhibition weaves the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust into a tapestry of Jewish history and heritage, describing both the extraordinary and everyday experiences of individual men, women and children. It explores the unimaginable devastation as witnessed by those who perished, and recalled by those who survived.

Montreal became home to the third largest survivor population after World War II. Approximately 5 000 survivors still reside in the Montreal area today.

The Museum's collection of 448 artefacts have been donated or loaned by Montreal survivors and their families. In addition, 372 photographs and 14 original films featuring testimonies by Montreal survivors further enhance the visitors' experience.

Established by Holocaust survivors and the Montreal Jewish community in 1979, the Museum stands as an indictment against indifference, and encourages visitors to take ownership of the absolute responsibility to fight intolerance in all its forms.

Facilities & Services:

The Museum is located in the main lobby of 1 Cummings Square (5151 Côte-Ste-Catherine).

Access by public transportation: Metro Côte-Ste-Catherine, bus 129.

Tel: (514) 345-2605

Fax: (514) 344-2651

info@mhmc.ca

website: www.mhmc.ca

For Museum hours, group tours and admission fees, please contact:

Museum Coordinator, (514) 345-2605, ext. 3291.

The Museum is accessible to individuals with mobility and/or hearing impairments. All films can be viewed with either French or English subtitles.



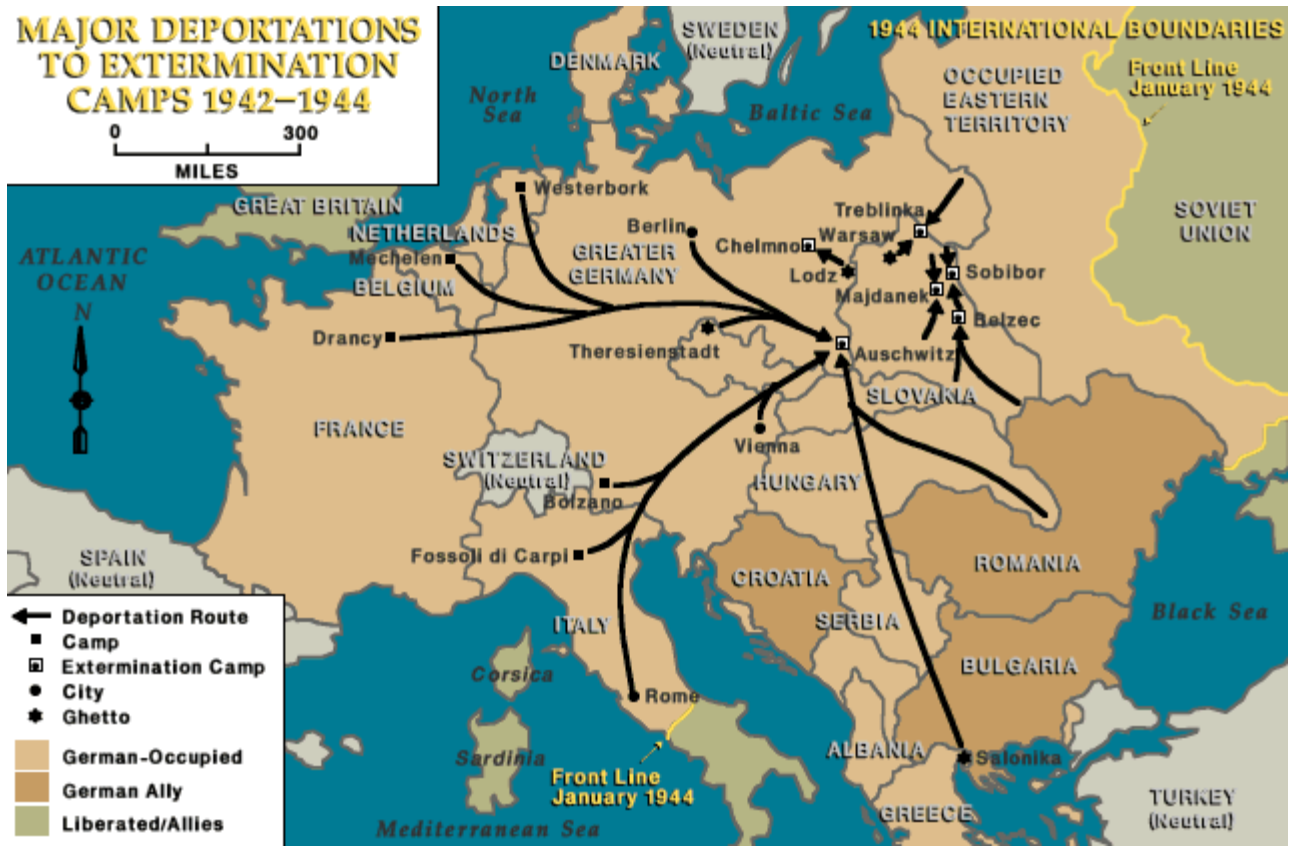
Map of Europe 1933



TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE IN EUROPE BY 1933



MAJOR DEPORTATIONS TO EXTERMINATION CAMPS 1942-1944



Historical Background

Pre-Holocaust Jewish Communities

- Well before Christianity, there were vigorous Jewish communities throughout North Africa and the Middle East, and later in Europe. By 1939, there had been a Jewish presence in Europe for over 2000 years.
- There was great diversity between and within the various Jewish communities, with respect to economic situation, level of education, political affiliation, and religious observance. There is no one description that defines all pre-Holocaust Jews or Jewish communities.
- The first evidence of a Jewish community in Germany dates back to the 4th century in the city of Cologne. The Jewish communities of Germany grew over the years, at times thriving both culturally and economically while at others enduring extremely harsh decrees and libels. By the 20th century, many Jews were well integrated within German society, active in the arts, sciences, and political life.
- The first Jewish community in North America was established in 1654, when 23 Jews arrived in New Amsterdam (New York) after being expelled from Brazil. Jews settled in Canada shortly thereafter and, in 1768, the first Canadian synagogue was founded in Montreal. Prior to the Holocaust, the Jewish population in Canada had reached 131,000 and was situated primarily in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg.

Rise of Nazism

- World War I (1914-1918) ended with the defeat of Germany by France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States.
- The Versailles Peace Treaty (1919) forced Germany to accept moral and financial responsibility for the unprecedented destruction that had devastated Europe. Severe restrictions limited its armed forces, and the production and use of heavy weapons. Germany was ordered to pay reparations to the Allies and to give up significant territory. The treaty was perceived as unduly harsh, a belief later exploited by the Nazis. Military and right-wing leaders propagated a claim that the German army had been betrayed by Communists, liberals, and Jews.
- In the midst of post-war chaos, a democratic, parliamentary republic was formed known as the Weimar Republic.



- In 1919, unemployed German World War I veterans formed the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi Party), of which Adolf Hitler became the leader in 1921. Nazi ideology was characterized by a platform based on militaristic, racial, antisemitic and nationalistic policies.
- Economic chaos in Germany was widespread throughout the 1920's. Runaway inflation and unemployment rose to extremely high levels, resulting in political instability. Germans lacked confidence in their government, known as the Weimar Republic.
- After failing to seize power in an armed coup in 1923, the Nazis turned to electoral politics, exploiting Germany's fragile democracy.
- In 1929, worldwide depression again created massive unemployment, driving many Germans to seek radical solutions.
- The Nazi party grew from 12 to 107 parliamentary seats in 1930, while actively spreading propaganda, staging street fights and further destabilizing Germany. In 1933 Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party were elected. The Nazis' inflammatory mixture of patriotism and racism drew upon historical myths of a racially pure 'Aryan nation' that offered simplistic solutions, pledging to end economic instability and restore Germany's role as a world power.
- On January 30th, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, head of the German government. Democracy was soon abolished, replaced with a totalitarian regime. In 1934 Hitler declared himself ultimate dictator of Germany.

Racist And Antisemitic Ideology

- Antisemitism refers to ideas and actions directed against Jews and Judaism. Until the 19th century, antisemitism was largely based on religious, political and economic discrimination. Antisemitism had been part of European culture for centuries, a sentiment which the Nazis later exploited.
- Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") portrays Jews as Germany's chief enemy and the primary cause of its ills.
- Based on popular pseudo-scientific theories, the Jews were, for the first time, defined as a race rather than as a religion. The Nuremberg Laws (1935) provided the legal foundations for the Nazi exclusion and degradation of Jews. The alleged inferiority of the Jewish people was no longer based on religious differences but on supposedly inherent biological defects.
- The Nazis divided humans into racial categories, with "Aryans" (Germanic peoples) seen as a biologically superior 'Master race', destined to rule the world. The "inferior" races included the Slavs, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), and Blacks.



The Jews were designated at the very bottom of this racial hierarchy. These categories were defined along genetic lines. To ensure “racial purity”, Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Germans.

- Book burnings took place in universities across Germany in May 1933. Literature by Jews and non-Jews considered “un-German” was destroyed. Examples include Ernest Hemmingway, Thomas Mann and Helen Keller. Discriminatory policies against “degenerate” artists and musicians led many of them to flee.
- From 1933 to 1935, Jewish businesses were boycotted. Jews were barred from the civil service, legal professions, and health services. Eventually, the Jews were denied full German citizenship.
- On November 9-10, 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), the Nazis unleashed their first state-organized and coordinated campaign of terror against the Jews of Germany and Austria (which Germany had recently annexed). Over one thousand synagogues were destroyed, Jewish stores were looted and homes ransacked. Over thirty thousand Jewish men and boys were arrested and sent to concentration camps.
- Never before had the Nazis unleashed this level of mass violence. *Kristallnacht* was followed by a series of decrees designed to ruthlessly complete the ejection of Jews from any economic or social participation. Persecution of Jews continued to escalate, as the world response remained minimal and ineffective.

World War II

- Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, bringing Poland’s allies, Great Britain and France, into the war. Germany’s technological superiority resulted in Poland’s defeat in less than a month.
- Between 1940 and 1941, the Nazis attacked and defeated Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia and Greece.
- Despite the non-aggression pact signed between the two countries, German forces attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.
- World War II was fought between the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and the Allies (the British Empire, France, the Soviet Union and the United States).
- On the European front, World War II ended with Germany’s unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945 to the Western Allies, and on May 9, 1945 to the Soviets. Japan’s formal surrender came on September 2, 1945.



Ghettos

- After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, approximately two million Polish Jews came under German control.
- Almost immediately, Jews were confined in ghettos, usually located in the poor areas of the towns or cities. Jews were forced to live in guarded, overcrowded and unsanitary areas. Many of them suffered or perished from hunger, disease, brutal treatment and forced labour.
- The *Judenrat* (Nazi-appointed Jewish councils) were charged with carrying out orders issued by the Nazis for the daily operation of the ghettos. The *Judenrat* tried to provide a desperate, starving and overcrowded population with housing, food, health care and sanitation. In addition, they were responsible for supplying the Nazis with a labour force and, eventually, filling deportation quotas. Failure to comply with Nazi orders meant certain death.
- Hundreds of ghettos were established across Europe, with more than 400 in Poland alone.
- Despite the inhumane conditions, the ghetto population struggled to provide for its physical and spiritual needs, resisting Nazi efforts to dehumanize them. Orphanages, soup kitchens, and medical care were established. Underground schools, religious and cultural activities continued to operate, demonstrating resourcefulness and a determination to survive.
- The Nazis viewed most ghettos as a temporary measure. By 1944, the ghettos were liquidated, the remaining population deported to concentration and death camps.

Concentration Camps

- Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany established a series of detention centres to imprison and eliminate “enemies of the state”. The camps were an essential part of Nazi systematic oppression. The extensive camp system included over 9000 camps and sub-camps, which ranged from transit and forced labour camps to concentration and death camps. Death, disease, starvation, crowded and unsanitary conditions and torture were a daily part of concentration camp life.
- In the beginning (1933-1936), the camps primarily imprisoned political and ideological opponents of the regime (such as Communists and Social Democrats). Later (1936-1942), concentration camps were expanded to include non-political prisoners (Jews, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, Jehova’s Witnesses, handicapped people, those accused of “asocial” or socially deviant behaviour, and Soviet POWs.



- The mass murder of the Jews began in 1941. Death squads, known as the *Einsatzgruppen*, followed the advancing German army on the Eastern front. Their primary mission was to annihilate the local Jewish population, mostly through mass shootings. Approximately 1.3 million Jews were murdered in this manner
- The Wannsee Conference was held near Berlin on January 20, 1942. High-ranking German officials convened to deliberate the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”, the code name for the total destruction of European Jewry. For the first time in history, the annihilation of a people had become official government policy.
- The Nazis established 6 death camps from 1942 on: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka, all located in Poland. Gas chambers were devised to increase killing efficiency and to make the process more impersonal for the perpetrators. 2.5 million perished in the gas chambers. Mass murder had now become an industrial process.
- Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest concentration and extermination camp, consisting of 48 sub-camps. At its most efficient, over 10,000 people a day were murdered. By the end of the war, the fatalities had reached 1.5 million.
- Transit camps were established in Western Europe where Jews were held prior to being transported to death camps in the east.
- Deportees were transported in overcrowded, filthy cattle cars without windows, food, water, or toilets, resulting in the death of many.

Jewish Resistance

- Individually and in groups, Jews engaged in both planned and spontaneous opposition to the Germans. Despite overwhelming odds, Jews fought against the Nazis and their collaborators in ghettos, concentration camps and death camps. Examples of armed resistance include the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 1943), and the revolts at the death camps of Treblinka (August 1943) and Sobibor (October 1943).
- Jews joined partisan units (both Jewish and non-Jewish) that were formed in the forests of Eastern Europe, functioning with minimum arms and support from the surrounding population. Jews were also active in underground resistance movements throughout Western Europe.
- Resistance cannot be measured by armed assaults alone. Jews endlessly struggled to maintain their Jewish identity and their humanity. Cultural and educational activities, the preservation of Jewish institutions and clandestine



religious activities were some of the acts of spiritual resistance against the Nazi policy of genocide.

Nazi collaborators

- The Nazis could never have carried out their deadly scheme alone. Pro-Nazi governments cooperated in the arrest and deportation of Jews to death camps, and in several cases committed atrocities against their Jewish fellow citizens within their own national borders. Such collaboration was a crucial element of the “Final Solution”.
- Amongst the collaborators were the French Vichy government, the Ustasa government in Croatia, the Norwegian government; Lithuanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Latvian, and Belorussian pro-Nazi units; as well as paramilitary organizations such as the Hlinka Guard in Slovakia, the Iron Guard in Romania, and the Arrow Cross in Hungary.

Rescuers

- Despite the widespread indifference of Europeans and the participation of collaborators, thousands risked their lives to save Jews.
- These remarkable individuals defied the Nazis, risking constant danger of discovery, imprisonment, and death for themselves and their families. They showed that ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary deeds.
- The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem has honoured more than 20,000 such individuals, designated as “Righteous Among the Nations.”
- Some exceptional communities, ranging from the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to the government of Denmark, demonstrated courage by actively defying the Nazis and saving Jewish lives.

Liberation

- The Allied forces (the Soviet, British, Canadian and American armies) liberated death and concentration camps as they advanced against Germany between July 1944 and May 1945.
- Six million Jews, two-thirds of European Jewry, had been murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.



- The nightmare of the war was over, but this new reality brought its unique hardships to the surviving Jews. Unlike other liberated inmates, most attempts by Jewish survivors to find remaining family members ended in failure. Once vibrant communities throughout Europe were destroyed. Many Jews, dispossessed of their homes and properties, found themselves with nowhere to go.
- Displaced Persons (DP) camps were established for the Jews who were unable to return to their former lives. In many instances the Allies were forced to use former concentration camps as DP camps, such as the one in Bergen-Belsen. Many homeless Holocaust survivors migrated westward to territories liberated by the Allies, where they were placed in such camps.
- Those choosing to return to their countries of origin were generally met with indifference and/or hostility. In Poland, continuing antisemitic sentiment resulted in a number of pogroms, most notably in Kielce in 1946, when 42 Jews were killed. This convinced the majority of Jews that they had no future in Poland and caused many to flee to DP camps, waiting for an opportunity to leave.
- Survivors in the DP camps returned to pre-war community models, establishing schools, religious institutions, social services, and political and cultural organizations.
- Those attempting to immigrate to North America faced harsh quotas resulting in extended periods in the DP camps. A new destination presented itself for the surviving remnant with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.
- Montreal became home to the third largest Holocaust survivor population in the world after the war, reaching a peak of approximately 30 000.

Pursuit of Justice

- The Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946) set in motion trials against leading Nazi war criminals. These hearings exposed to the world the full horror of the Nazi genocide and provided a public forum for survivor testimony. Until 1949, the so-called Nuremberg follow-up trials took place to prosecute others implicated, such as medical doctors, legal practitioners, the SS, the police, industrialists and high-ranking government officials.
- Eventually, approximately 150 German leaders were convicted and 12 executed, but the majority evaded justice. A number escaped to South America, including Dr. Mengele, notorious for his medical experiments at Auschwitz. Leading German scientists were invited to work in the United States and the Soviet Union. Many continued to live in Germany, while others entered Western countries under assumed identities.



- Adolf Eichmann, head of the Gestapo's section for Jewish affairs, was captured by the Israeli Secret Service in Argentina in 1960. Responsible for the deportation of three million Jews to extermination camps, he was brought to Israel to stand trial for crimes against humanity. The Eichmann trial aroused considerable media interest, marking the turning point in Holocaust awareness.
- Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005), a survivor of the Nazi death camps, dedicated his life to documenting the crimes of the Holocaust and to hunting down the perpetrators still at large. He is credited with mobilizing Western governments to locate and prosecute escaped Nazis, and with ferreting out nearly 1,100 Nazi war criminals, including Adolf Eichmann.
- In 1979 the United States created an Office of Special Investigations to prosecute Nazis accused of hiding their pasts to enter the country.
- In 1985, the Canadian Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals (the Deschênes Commission) was established to examine issues relating to the number of Nazi war criminals living in Canada, the circumstances under which they entered, and the legal means to hold them accountable for their crimes.
- Sixty years later the majority of Nazi war criminals and their collaborators had not been brought to trial.
- International rules created during the course of the Nuremberg Trials formed the basis for the Convention of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention. They remain inscribed in the constitution of the United Nations.
- The Nuremberg Trials continue to be a precursor for international tribunals established for the prosecution of war criminals. Post-WWII examples of international tribunals include those for crimes committed in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia.



Holocaust Chronology

1933-1936

- January 30, 1933 Adolf Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany.
- March 22, 1933 Dachau concentration camp is established.
- March 23, 1933 The German parliament passes the Enabling Act which empowers Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.
- April 1, 1933 The Nazis organize a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many of these boycotts continue throughout much of the 1930's.
- April 7, 1933 The German government passes the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Service which excludes Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affect Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors and teachers.
- May 10, 1933 Nazi party members, students, professors and others burn books written by Jews, political opponents and other "undesirable" authors.
- July 14, 1934 The Nazi government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless Jews as well as Roma (Gypsies) of German citizenship.
- August 2, 1934 Following the death of German President von Hindenburg, Hitler proclaims himself *Führer* (leader) in addition to his position as Chancellor, becoming absolute dictator. Armed forces must now swear allegiance to him.
- April 1, 1935 Nazis outlaw and arrest many Jehovah's Witnesses because of their refusal to swear allegiance to the state.
- June 28, 1935 The Nazis criminalize homosexuality, bringing persecution and imprisonment.



- September 15, 1935 A Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour and the Reich Citizenship Law are passed. Commonly known as the “Nuremberg Laws”, these “racial” laws strip Jews of their German citizenship and forbid them to marry people of “pure German blood”. The Nazi government later applies the laws to Roma (Gypsies) and to Black people residing in Germany.
- July 12, 1936 Construction of Sachsenhausen concentration camp begins.
- August 1, 1936 The Olympics open in Berlin. Canada participates, as does the United States, reversing a 1933 vote by the U.S. Amateur Athletic Union to boycott the games.
- July 15, 1937 Buchenwald concentration camp is established.
- October 25, 1937 Hitler and Mussolini form the Rome-Berlin axis.

1937 – 1939

- March 12-13, 1938 “Anschluss” - Germany invades Austria and annexes it to the *Third Reich*. All antisemitic decrees are immediately implemented in Austria.
- July 6 -15, 1938 At the Evian conference in France, 32 nations discuss the Jewish refugee crisis yet take little action. Canada refuses to change its restrictive Jewish immigration policy.
- August 17, 1938 Men or women whose names are not obviously Jewish are forced to include the name of “Israel” or “Sara” on official documents.
- September 30, 1938 Eager to avoid war, Britain and France sign the Munich Pact which forces Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas of Sudetenland to Germany.
- November 9 -10, 1938 “Kristallnacht” - the state-organised anti-Jewish attacks across Germany and Austria.



- November 12-15, 1938 Jews are stripped of their professions, are forced to close their businesses and their remaining assets are confiscated. Jews of all ages are banned from educational institutions.
- December 1938 The British government allows 10 000 unaccompanied mostly Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia into Britain in an action called the *Kindertransport*. The majority of these children would never see their families again.
- May 13 – June 17, 1939 Cuba and the United States refuse to accept more than 900 refugees – almost all of whom are Jewish – aboard the ocean liner *St. Louis*, forcing its return to Europe.

1939

- August 23, 1939 The Soviet Union and German governments sign the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact.
- September 1, 1939 German troops invade Poland. Polish defences crumble under a massive land and air assault (*Blitzkrieg*).
- September 3, 1939 Britain and France declare war on Germany.
- September 27-28, 1939 Warsaw falls. Poland's capital, home to 350 000 Jews, surrenders to German troops after a three-week siege. Poland's Jewish population is 3.35 million, making up 10% of Poland's total population.
- October 1939 As part of the "euthanasia" program, doctors are instructed to kill physically or mentally "defective" German children and adults. Approximately 200 000 handicapped persons are murdered.
- October 12, 1939 Germany begins deportation of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland.
- October 28, 1939 The first Jewish ghetto in Poland is established in Piotrkow.



November 23, 1939 A visible Jewish Badge sewn on clothing or worn as an armband becomes mandatory for Jews aged ten and older in occupied Poland.

1940 – 1942

April 9-June 22, 1940 Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France. Most of Western Europe is under Nazi control.

May 20, 1940 The Auschwitz concentration camp is established outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.

June 30, 1940 German authorities order the first major ghetto in Lodz, to be sealed, confining at least 160 000 Jews.

November, 1940 5 000 Roma and Sinti are deported from Austria to the Lodz ghetto.

November 15, 1940 German authorities order the Warsaw ghetto to be sealed off. It is the largest ghetto in both area and population. The Germans confine more than 350 000 Jews – about 30% of the city’s population – into about 2.4% of the city’s total area.

April 6, 1941 Germany and other Axis forces invade Yugoslavia and Greece.

June 22, 1941 German troops invade the Soviet Union and are followed by death squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) that massacre over a million Jews.

July 31, 1941 Hermann Goering, General Field Marshall of the Reich, orders Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service) to take measures for the implementation of the “Final Solution”.

September 3, 1941 Zyklon-B, a poisonous gas, is used for the first time to mass murder Soviet prisoners-of-war at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



September 15, 1941	The Nazi government decrees that Jews over the age of six who reside in Germany must wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.
September 29-30, 1941	33 000 Jews are massacred at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev.
December 7, 1941	Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declares war on Japan.
December 8, 1941	Gassing operations begin in Chelmno, one of the six Nazi killing centres using special mobile gas vans.
December 31, 1941	Abba Kovner, in the Vilna Ghetto, calls for Lithuanian armed resistance, leading to the first Jewish fighting force, the United Partisan Organization.
January 20, 1942	At a meeting in Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, the implementation of the "Final Solution" is deliberated and coordinated.
March 17, 1942	Gassing operations begin at the Belzec killing centre. An estimated 600 000 people, mostly Jews, are murdered.
March 27, 1942	Germans begin the systematic deportation of Jews from France, mostly to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
May 1942	Gassing operations begin at the Sobibor killing centre. By November 1943, an estimated 250 000 Jews are killed.
May 4, 1942	SS officials perform the first selection of weak, sick and "unfit" prisoners for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing centre. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people are killed. Nine out of ten victims at the Auschwitz complex are Jewish.
July 15, 1942	Deportation of Dutch Jews begins from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
July 23, 1942	Gassing operations at the Treblinka killing centre begin. By November 1943, an estimated 750 000 Jews and at least 2 000 Roma (Gypsies) are murdered.



November 1942 Jan Karski, an emissary of the London-based Polish Government-in-Exile provides British and American leaders (including Churchill and Roosevelt) with personal eyewitness reports of atrocities against Jews. No action is taken.

1943

January, 1943 German army surrenders at Stalingrad, a major turning point in World War II.

March 15, 1943 Deportation of Jews from Salonika, Greece, to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

April 19- May 16 1943 Jewish fighters resist the German attempt to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is the first mass armed revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.

April 19-30, 1943 At the Bermuda Conference, Britain and the United States discuss policies related to the rescue of European Jewry, but no concrete action is taken.

June 1943 Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, orders the deportation of all Jews in the Baltic States and Belorussia to concentration camps.

August 2, 1943 Jews at the Treblinka death camp stage a revolt, using weapons stolen from the SS guards. Of those that escape, most are recaptured and killed.

Late summer, 1943 Armed resistance by Jews in the ghettos of Bedzin, Bialistock, Czestochowa, Lvov, and Tarnow.

October 1, 1943 Non-Jewish Danish resistance groups launch a three-week operation that ultimately smuggles more than 7 900 Jews and their non-Jewish relatives to safety in Sweden.

October 14, 1943 Armed revolt at the death camp of Sobibor. After the recapture and murder of most of the escapees, the camp is closed and dismantled.



1944 – 1945

March 19, 1944	German troops occupy Hungary.
May 15-July 9, 1944	<p>Under the guidance of German SS officials, Hungarian rural police units deport nearly 430 000 Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The majority are gassed upon arrival.</p> <p>Through the monumental efforts of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and others, thousands of Hungarian Jews are saved.</p>
June 6, 1944	British and American troops launch an invasion in Normandy, France, on what becomes known as D-Day.
June 22, 1944	A massive Soviet offensive destroys the German front in Belorussia.
July 23, 1944	Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek death camp. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.
January 17, 1945	Germans begin evacuating Auschwitz-Birkenau. Approximately 66 000 prisoners are forced on "Death Marches" in which at least 15 000 people perish. Some 7 650 of the sickest prisoners are left behind.
January 27, 1945	Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz-Birkenau.
April 6-10, 1945	Death march of inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany.
April 11, 1945	U.S. troops liberate Buchenwald.
April 15, 1945	British and Canadian troops liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
April 29, 1945	U.S. troops liberate the Dachau concentration camp.
April 30, 1945	Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin.



May 7-9, 1945 German armed forces surrender unconditionally. Allied and Soviet forces proclaim May 8 as Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).

September 2, 1945 Japan surrenders. World War II is officially over.

1945 – 1987

November 14, 1945-
October 1, 1946 An International Military Tribunal convenes in Nuremberg, Germany. Twenty-two top Nazi leaders stand trial for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes.

July 4, 1946 A violent pogrom breaks out in Kielce, Poland. Forty-two Jews are killed. Other anti-Jewish pogroms break out across Poland. Following the violence, 100 000 Polish Jews leave their native country.

December 8, 1946 -
April 11, 1949 An American military court in Nuremberg tries 177 German industrialists who used slave labour, judges and doctors who took part in Nazi euthanasia programs.

1948 Canada finally opens its doors to Jewish immigration. In 1948, 180 000 immigrants are admitted into Canada. Between 1939 and 1944, only 4 000 Jews – or 6.5% of all immigrants – had been allowed entrance.

May 14, 1948 The State of Israel is established. Jewish immigration is unrestricted, and almost 700 000 are admitted, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DP's from Europe.

April 10, 1961 Adolf Eichmann is put on trial in Israel for Crimes Against Humanity. He is convicted and sentenced to death.

February 1985 The Canadian government establishes a Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals.



Estimated Jewish Deaths in the Holocaust

Country	Jewish Population at Outset of WWII	Deaths
Austria	185,000	50,000
Belgium	65,700	28,900
Bohemia and Moravia	118,310	78,150
Bulgaria	50,000	0
Denmark	7,800	60
Estonia	4,500	1,500-2,000
Finland	2,000	7
France	350,000	77,320
Germany	566,000	134,500-141,500
Greece	77,380	60,000-67,000
Hungary	825,000	550,000-569,000
Italy	44,500	7,680
Latvia	91,500	70,000-71,500
Lithuania	168,000	140,000-143,000
Luxembourg	3,500	1,950
Netherlands	140,000	100,000
Norway	1,700	762
Poland	3,300,000	2,900,000-3,000,000
Romania	609,000	271,000-287,000
Slovakia	88,950	68,000-71,000
Soviet Union	3,020,000	1,000,000-1,100,000
Yugoslavia	78,000	56,200-63,300
Total*	9,796,840	5,596,029-5,860,129

The above statistics are taken from the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, edited by Israel Gutman and published by Yad Vashem in 1990.

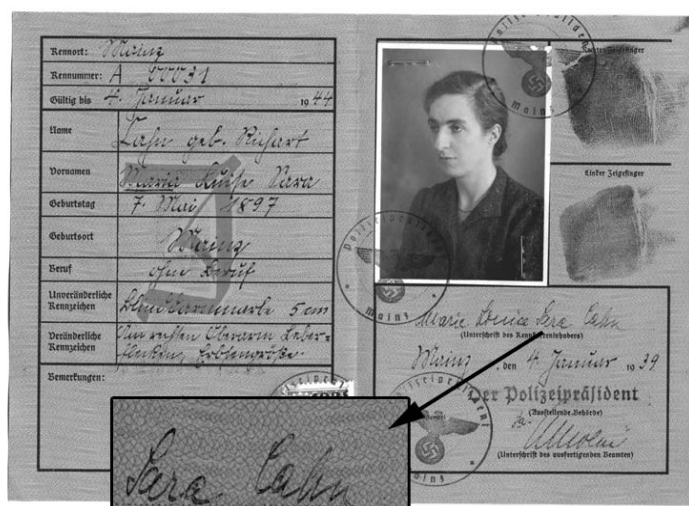
Note that the figure for deaths of German Jews (134,500-141,500) seems low in relation to Germany's Jewish population of 566,000. By 1939, many had emigrated or were expelled to countries from which they were later deported. The deaths of these Jews are included in the statistics for the countries in which they died.

* Of this total, 1.5 million Jewish children perished in the Holocaust.



Artefacts

The “Artefacts” section illustrates objects from the permanent collection. These tangible items provide the students with a personal connection to the historical narrative, and can be used in a classroom setting to concretise the events of the Holocaust.



Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre Collection.

Identifying the Jews

As anti-Jewish persecution increased, new measures were introduced to isolate and victimize German Jews. All official documents were marked with a “J” and the name “Sara” or “Israel” was added to the holder’s given name, singling out Jews and making them easy targets for control and humiliation.

This Identity Card was issued to Maria Louise Cahn on January 4, 1939. Maria Cahn, who was born May 7, 1897 in Mainz, Germany, was renamed Maria Sara Cahn by the Third Reich.

In November 1938, Maria’s husband, Karl, was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Maria’s mother wrote to Canadian businessman William Birks, who had met Karl briefly many years earlier, and asked him to sponsor them as immigrants. Canada’s policy regarding Jewish immigration was very restrictive at the time, so Mr. Birks wrote to Prime Minister MacKenzie King. The Prime Minister replied that there were difficulties involved, “particularly at the present time, when conditions in Europe have increased manifold the numbers of those seeking permits for entry into Canada, and when economic and other conditions in the Dominion itself make it more than ever necessary that particular care and scrutiny be observed in the granting of applications”. He did, however, refer the matter to the Minister of Mines and Resources, who approved their admission. Karl was released because of this approval, and Maria landed in Halifax on March 5, 1939 with her mother, husband, and three sons.





Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre Collection.



Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre Collection.

Concentration Camp Clothing

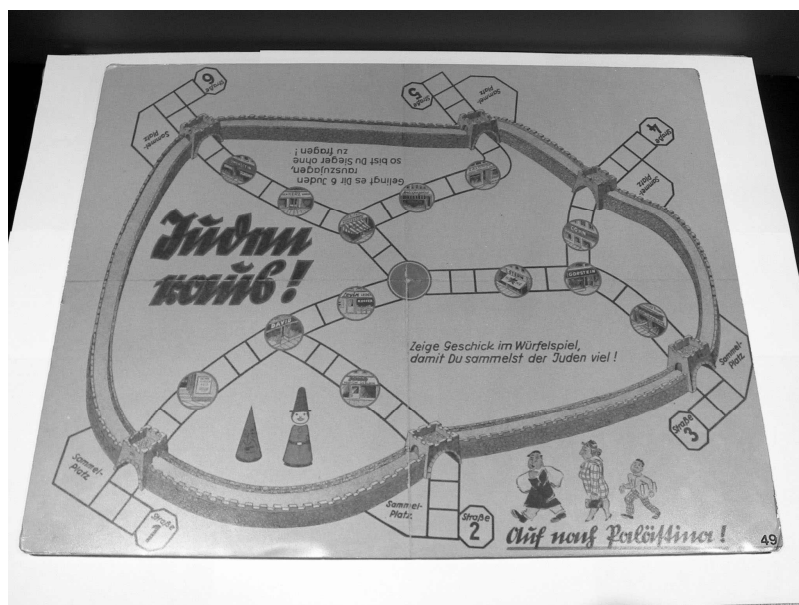
Most concentration camp prisoners selected for forced labour were shaved, deloused, deprived of all their clothing and belongings, and given a uniform to wear. For women, this consisted of a thin blue and grey striped dress; for men a pyjama-like jacket and pair of pants of the same material. The more fortunate were also allocated hats and shoes. This clothing was their only protection against the harsh conditions of the Polish climate.

The dress above belonged to Sonia Tencer, born in 1915 in Vilna, Poland, where her family had lived for hundreds of years. Sonia, whose parents owned a beer and lemonade factory, grew up surrounded by brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

During the Holocaust, Sonia and her husband were forced into the Vilna Ghetto together with the rest of their family, where they lived for two years until the ghetto was liquidated in 1943. Sonia was sent to a forced labour camp together with her sister-in-law and a close friend. These three women made a pact that they would stay together. This mutual support helped them survive the severe conditions in the various camps to which they were sent. They were forced to do hard manual labour, barely existing on extremely meagre food rations. By the end of the war, Sonia weighed only 80 pounds. Sonia and her two friends survived, as well as her parents, who had been hidden by Poles. Sonia remarried in 1949 and emigrated to Montreal.

Little is known about the jacket above. It belonged to Zigmunt Schick. Zigmunt was born in 1920 in Czechoslovakia, and moved to Antwerp, Belgium with his family when he was seven. He was liberated from Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, wearing nothing but this jacket.





Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre Collection.

BEST-SELLING CHILDREN'S GAME

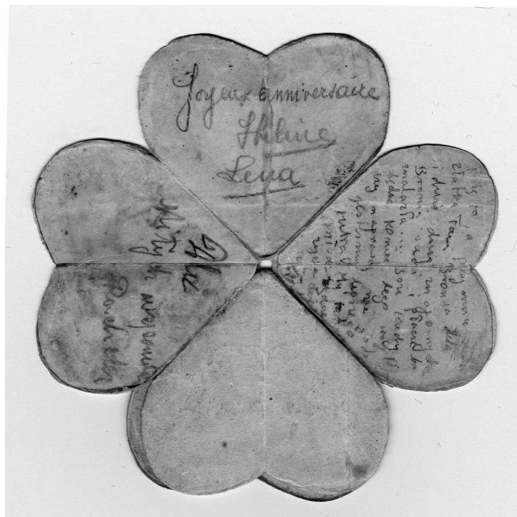
Germany, 1938

No one was too young to escape recruitment to the Nazi cause. In the schools, the playing fields, their homes and even in their games, German children were taught the 'evil nature of the Jews,' to fear and to hate them.

In this family board game children scored points by chasing the Jews out of Germany, exemplifying the policy of forced emigration. The game is called "Get rid of the Jews - out with them to Palestine!". The instructions are: "With every skillful throw of the dice, you can collect Jews at the collecting places. If you succeed in chasing out 6 Jews, you are the unquestionable victor." Fat, dark-skinned Jews are shown at the bottom of the board. As a social game, it was a lesson in economic antisemitism and harassment of Jews still living in Germany.

The propaganda game was designed for young children, played with moveable pieces and dice. Manufactured in 1938 by Rudolf Fabricius Co., it was a success at the Leipzig and Vienna trade fairs (1938-40) selling nearly one million games.





Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre Collection.

A GIFT FOR A 20th BIRTHDAY, AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU, 1944

This autograph book was presented to Fania Fainer on the occasion of her 20th birthday. Created by 16 young women enslaved in an Auschwitz munitions factory, this heart-shaped gift is a symbol of commitment to friendship, life and humanity. It would be next to impossible to produce such an item inside a concentration camp, since it required such scarce essentials as scissors, paper, thread, materials and pencils. To be found in possession of any these objects would lead to severe punishment or death.

After the Germans liquidated Auschwitz-Birkenau, Fania Fainer was one of the thousands forced onto a “Death March” toward Germany. She somehow managed to keep the book hidden in her armpit. A dying woman near her requested to write one last thought, which she inscribed on one of the last pages in the autograph book. Signing her name, she wrote, “I am here, and I am dying”.

Fania Fainer’s favourite inscription is “Freedom, Freedom, Freedom.” The autograph book, with inscriptions in several languages, indicates a refusal to give up hope, and the understanding that no one could survive the camps alone. It is a poignant example of spiritual resistance in the Holocaust.



Glossary

Allies: The nations – Canada, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States – that joined together in the war against Germany and its partners – Italy and Japan (known as the Axis powers). Later, the Axis was joined by Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Anschluss: The annexation of Austria by Germany on March 13, 1938.

Antisemitism: Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group. Hatred of Jews dates back to ancient times, but the word “antisemitism” was coined in the late 19th century. Jews were accused of conspiracies to dominate the world, an idea perpetuated through false publications such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. A new dimension was added to traditional Jew hatred with the emerging “pseudo-science” of racial stereotyping. The Nazis drew from these “theories” in their war against the Jews, which culminated in the murder of two-thirds of European Jewry.

Aryan: The Nazis took a term used to describe an ancient tribe and applied it to themselves, falsely claiming their own “Aryan race” to be superior to all other racial groups. The term “non-Aryan” was used to designate Jews, part-Jews and others of supposedly inferior race.

Blitzkrieg: Meaning “lightning war”. Used to describe the speed, efficiency and intensity of Germany’s military attack against its opponents.

Bund: The Jewish Socialist Party founded in Western Russia in the late 1800’s. The movement was cultural rather than territorial and, thus, was at odds with much of the Zionist movement. The Bund was active in the underground resistance during the Holocaust.

Concentration Camp: Any internment camp for holding “enemies of the Third Reich”. The construction of concentration camps began almost immediately after Hitler came to power. Thousands of camps were established during the war.

Death Camp: Extermination centres established in occupied Poland for the mass murder of Jews and other victims, primarily by poison gas. These were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.



Death Marches: Trapped between the Soviets in the East and the Allies in the West, the Nazis emptied concentration camps, forcing inmates to march long distances toward camps in Germany. Facing intolerable conditions and brutal treatment, thousands died as a result of mistreatment, starvation and shootings.

Deportation: The removal of people from their homes for purposes of “resettlement”. The Jews of Europe were designated for deportation to ghettos, concentration camps and extermination centres.

Displaced Persons (DP) Camps: Camps established after World War II for those who had been liberated but could not to return to their former homes. Tens of thousands of Jews remained in the camps for a number of years until they were able to emigrate to other countries.

Einsatzgruppen (German, literally “operational squads”): Mobile killing units of the Nazi SS.

Euthanasia: Nazi euphemism for the deliberate killing of institutionalized physically and mentally handicapped people.

“Final Solution of the Jewish Question”: Nazi euphemism for the extermination of European Jewry.

Führer: Leader in German.

Genocide: (from Greek *genos*, “race”, and Latin *caedes*, “killing”): A word first used by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943 to describe an official government policy for the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, cultural, or religious group.

Gestapo (German): Nazi Secret State Police.

Ghetto: The Nazis revived the medieval term to describe their device of concentration and control, the compulsory “Jewish Quarter”. Established in poor areas, Jews were forced to live in overcrowded and desperate conditions.

Holocaust: Derived from the Greek *holokauston*, meaning sacrifice, especially by fire. The term refers to the systematic, state-sponsored murder of approximately six million Jews and millions of others by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Judaism: the monotheistic religion of the Jews having its spiritual and ethical principles embodied chiefly in the *Torah* (Old Testament) and in the *Talmud* (Jewish law and ethics).



Jude: the German word for Jew.

Kapo: Concentration camp inmates designated by the Nazis to positions of authority.

Nazi: The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), established in 1919. In 1933 the Nazi Party achieved political control of Germany through democratic election.

Nuremberg Laws: A series of laws promulgated in 1935, defining "Jews" while systematizing discrimination and persecution.

Nuremberg Trials: Trials against major Nazi figures held in Nuremberg, Germany in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

Partisans: Groups operating in enemy-occupied territory using guerrilla tactics. Some partisan groups were Jewish or included Jewish members, while others were made up entirely of non-Jewish resistance fighters.

Pogrom: Derived from Russian, literally meaning "devastation". An organized, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of Jews.

Shoah: The Hebrew word for Holocaust, a biblical term meaning "catastrophe", "destruction", "disaster".

Shtetl: A small Jewish town or village in Eastern Europe.

SS (*schutzstaffel*: protection squad): Guard detachments originally formed in 1925 as Hitler's personal guard. From 1929, under Himmler, the SS became the most powerful affiliated organization of the Nazi party. By mid-1934, they had established control of the police and security systems, forming the basis of the Nazi police state and the major instrument of racial terror in the concentration camps and occupied Europe.

Third Reich: The Nazi designation of Germany and its regime from 1933 to 1945. Historically, the First Reich was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806. The Second Reich included the German Empire from 1871 to 1918.

Yiddish: A language that combines elements of German and Hebrew, spoken by Jews and descendants of Jews of central and eastern European origin.

Zionism: A Jewish movement that arose in Europe in the late 19th century in response to growing antisemitism. It highlighted the need for the establishment of a Jewish state.

Zyklon B: Hydrogen cyanide. A poisonous gas originally developed as an insecticide, and later used in the Nazi gas chambers for the purposes of mass murder.

