

# Lesson Plan – Auschwitz Source Study

## Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 50 minutes

## Overview:

This lesson is a companion to the lesson called ‘The Development of Labour and Death Camps’, available [here](#). This lesson allows students to engage with conditions in Auschwitz through a detailed source study. Students will develop source analysis skills, particularly in relation to perspective and reliability. Students will also be encouraged to consider the issue of dehumanisation.

## Essential questions:

- What was life like in Auschwitz?

## Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about conditions in Auschwitz.
- Students will develop source skills.

## Key issues/concepts:

- Significance

## Materials:

Whiteboard and marker

[Worksheet – Auschwitz Sources](#)

[Worksheet – Auschwitz Sources - Answers](#)

## Teaching notes:

This source study engages students in the observation and analysis of source material from Auschwitz. It integrates formal source analysis skills such as assessment of perspective, value and limitations.

The theme of the lesson is dehumanisation, with each object leading students towards an understanding of dehumanisation.

## Glossary:

- Death camp
- Final Solution
- Shoah
- Auschwitz

## Lesson Instructions

### ONE – Warm up activity (5 minutes)

Teacher asks: What do we already know about Auschwitz? As students offer responses, teacher writes them on the board, so that after the discussion, the shared class knowledge is visible.

Teacher states that the lesson today is designed for students to learn more information about life in Auschwitz.

### TWO – Group work (30 minutes)

Teacher arranges sources and question sheets so that there are five ‘stations’ around the room, each with a different source and the relevant questions.

Teacher divides class into 5 groups. The groups rotate around the stations, spending 6 minutes at each station. While at each station, the group looks at the source and answers the questions.

While the groups are rotating, teacher writes the questions from Step Three on the board. Alternatively, teacher may distribute the questions electronically or on paper.

### THREE – Independent Source Analysis Skills (15 minutes)

Students return to their own desks. Each student chooses one of the sources they saw during the previous exercise.

#### For students who are on track:

For their chosen object, students answer:

- Assess the value and limitations of your chosen source. In your response, consider factors such as origin, perspective, content, audience or purpose. Make links to usefulness and reliability.

After 10 minutes of writing time, students swap their answers with another student, and provide feedback.

### For students who need more scaffolding:

Students respond to these scaffolded questions:

- What is the source?
- What does it tell you about life in Auschwitz? (This is the value of the source.)
- Is there more you would like to know about life in Auschwitz, that this source doesn't tell you? (This is a limitation of the source.)
- Do you think you can trust this source? (This is a question about reliability.)

### For students who would benefit from extension:

Students respond to one or both of these questions:

- Compare the value of two of the given sources.
- Account for the perspective of Source E.

## FINISHING UP

Exit ticket or reflection question: what was the most intriguing source you encountered during this lesson, and why?

## Modifications

As an alternative to peer marking in Step Three, students can take their responses home. For homework, they should type their responses into an AI tool such as ChatGPT or Copilot, and ask the tool: show me how to improve on this response to the question "Assess the value and limitations of Source X. In your response, consider factors such as origin, perspective, content, audience or purpose. Make links to usefulness and reliability." Students should record 2-3 specific ways they could improve their original response.

There are suggestions for differentiation in Step Three.

## Related lessons

Next, we recommend you teach about the varied implementation of Nazi policy in different parts of the world, or Resistance. You can find plans for these, and other lessons about the Holocaust, at [this link](#).

[Click here](#) to see a suggested plan for teaching a full unit about the Holocaust.