

# Lesson Plan – Ghettos

## Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 2 x 50 minutes

## Overview:

Less than a month after the German invasion of Poland, SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich instructed the Nazi civil administration to “concentrate and intern the Jews in separate neighbourhoods in the cities, for reasons associated with general police security...”. (Boaz Neumann, *Nazism*, Tel Aviv: MOD Publishing House 2007, p154.) Thus began the ghettoisation of Europe’s Jews. Ghettoisation can be conceptualised as a radicalisation of Nazi policy; an intensification beyond the earlier period of legal persecution.

(For a recap of the stages of the Holocaust, see the [Fact Sheet – Phases of the Holocaust](#).)

## Essential questions:

- What were ghettos?
- What were conditions like in ghettos?

## Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about the proliferation and location of ghettos.
- Students will learn what conditions were like within ghettos.
- Students will explore the management of ghettos by Judenräte (Jewish councils).

## Key issues/concepts:

- Continuity and change
- Perspectives

## Lesson One Materials:

Laptops and wifi (or print-outs of the web page)

Pens and paper

## Lesson Two Materials:

Sticky notes in two different colours

Pens/pencils

### Worksheet - Ghettos

### Teaching notes:

Lesson One, Activity Two: During the reading and creation phases of the worksheet activity, teacher must actively supervise to ensure that students do the work themselves, and do not use AI tools to create the worksheets. Worksheets should be written and answered on paper, with no computers involved, for the same reason.

Teachers might consider adding a lesson on Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto at this stage of the unit. A lesson plan can be found [here](#). Teachers may also offer an assignment or assessment task about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Note that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is also relevant to the study of Resistance during the Holocaust.

### Glossary:

- Ghetto
- Internment
- Judenrat

## Lesson One Instructions

### ONE – Photo Stimulus (5 minutes)

Teacher displays the photograph below (without the caption), and asks students to contribute to class discussion by saying: “I see \_\_\_\_\_ and I conclude



A Jewish policeman and German soldier directing street traffic in front of the entrance to the Lodz ghetto. The sign reads in German: ‘Jewish residential area. No entry.’

*Source: State Archives in Lodz*

Note: Nazi soldier; Jews with stars on clothing; carrying few belongings; old and young; barbed wire; sign etc

\_\_\_\_\_.”

Teacher exposition of ghettos. Teacher should explain that:

- this was a new phase of the Holocaust, and a radicalisation of Nazi policy.
- Jews were forcibly removed from their homes, and made to move into specified sections of the city or town.
- These sections were sometimes separated by walls or fences, and sometimes they were ‘open ghettos’ within a geographically delineated area.
- Ghettos were essentially open-air prisons, in that Jews were not allowed free movement in and out of the ghetto.
- Conditions in the ghetto were very poor.

## TWO – Worksheet creation activity (45 minutes)

Students read the information on the New Orleans National World War II Museum web page entitled ‘Nazi Germany and the Establishment of Ghettos’, at [this link](#).

Each student creates a question sheet based on the web page.

Students then exchange their question sheet with each other, and each student has time to complete a question sheet written by another student.

Teachers may choose to include parameters for the question sheets, for example:

- There must be at least 10 questions.
- There must be at least 3 multiple choice questions, two short answer questions, and two source-based questions.
- There must be at least two questions from each section of the web page (i.e. the top section, the section headed ‘Establishing the Jewish Ghettos’ and ‘Life in the Ghettos’.)

## FINISHING UP

Optional: As an exit ticket, students write one question that they still have about ghettos. Their homework is to find the answer to that question.

## Lesson Two Instructions

### ONE – Recap (5 minutes)

Class discussion to recall the previous lesson’s learning about Ghettos.

If teacher gave the optional homework activity in Lesson One, check that students found answers to their questions.

## TWO – The role of the Judenrat (15 minutes)

Recall a quote from the [Lesson One reading](#): “Nazi-appointed Jewish councils, or Judenräte, provided civil administration and oversaw daily life in the ghettos while Jewish ghetto police enforced and facilitated orders from German authorities and Jewish councils.” (NB the singular of Judenräte is Judenrat.)

Students are given three sticky notes in each of the two different colours (i.e. six sticky notes each).

On COLOUR ONE, they write a duty/task/job/role that they think might have been performed by the Judenrat or the Jewish police force in the ghetto.

On COLOUR TWO, they write reasons why they think Jewish people might have participated in carrying out Nazi orders by serving on the Judenrat or Jewish police force.

Students then put their sticky notes up on the wall or board, separating the two colours.

Teacher reads through the ideas on the board. Some responses include:

| <b>Jobs done by the Judenrat and Jewish Police</b> | <b>Why someone would serve on the Judenrat or the Jewish Police</b> |
|--|---|
| Manage ghetto affairs                              | For protection  |
| Collect taxes                                      | For extra food  |
| Organise labour                                    | To help their family  |
| Make deportation lists                             | For a more comfortable housing allocation                           |
| Keep order   | To do good work for the community                                   |
| Distribute food                                    | To make connections with powerful people                            |

## THREE – Differentiated exploration activity (20 minutes)

### Students who are Ready for Extension

This is an exercise requiring students to engage with an ethical dilemma that confronted the Judenräte in the ghetto. It deals with two case studies where men were asked to provide lists of children for deportation.

Students should read the information and answer the questions on the [Worksheet – Ghettos](#).

## Students who are on Track

Write a letter from a high school-aged person in the ghetto, to an old friend who is not Jewish. Before starting to write, think carefully about the *purpose* of the letter. Some things to consider:

- What parts of the ghetto will you describe?
- Will you be emotional in your letter?
- Will you discuss your family, and how they are managing?
- Will you ask your friend to help you in any way?
- Will you express any thoughts about the future?

## Students Needing More Support

Choose an activity from this list:

- Draw a picture of a ghetto.
- Write a short description of life in a ghetto.
- Make a list of the things that made living in a ghetto very difficult. Try to think of at least 5 things.
- Fill in the blanks in this cloze paragraph, using the words below:  
 During the Holocaust, Jewish people and others were forced to live in small areas called \_\_\_\_\_. The rooms were very \_\_\_\_\_ and many \_\_\_\_\_ had to share one space. There was little \_\_\_\_\_; people often went hungry. Clean water and basic \_\_\_\_\_ were hard to find, so sickness spread quickly. People tried to help each other and keep \_\_\_\_\_.

**Word list:**

crowded, ghettos, families, hopeful, food, medication

## FOUR Summation (5 minutes)

Class discussion for students to feed back what they discovered about ghettos.

Teacher should try to choose respondents from each of the three differentiated groups. If possible, start with a comment from students in the 'Needing More Support' group, then students from the 'On Track' group, and finish with students from the 'Ready for Extension' group.

## FINISHING UP

To complete their learning about ghetto life, students can return to the photo stimulus from Lesson One, and state how it now makes them feel.



A Jewish policeman and German soldier directing street traffic in front of the entrance to the Lodz ghetto. The sign reads in German: 'Jewish residential area. No entry.'

*Source: State Archives in Lodz*

### Modifications:

If students are not equipped with devices, the teacher can print copies of the web page and students can complete the task by hand.

### Links to SJM Resources

[Click here](#) to see a video collection from the Sydney Jewish Museum, of survivors talking about their experiences in ghettos.

## Related lessons

Sydney Jewish Museum has developed lesson plans to support the teaching of a complete unit about the Holocaust. [Click here](#) to see all the lesson plans. Particularly note the lesson on the Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto.

We suggest following your work on ghettos with a lesson about War in the East and the Move towards the Final Solution.