

Lesson Plan – Introduction to the Holocaust

Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 50 minutes

Overview:

This lesson is an exercise in Object Based Learning. It uses a range of objects to introduce students to the Holocaust, establishing a broad understanding of what the Holocaust was, and identifying the key stages of the Holocaust. It also leads students to reflect on the human impact of the Holocaust, and why remembrance matters.

Essential questions:

- What was the Holocaust?

Learning Objectives

- Students will define the Holocaust.
- Students will identify the key stages of the Holocaust.
- Students will reflect on the human impact of the Holocaust, and why remembrance matters.

Key issues/concepts:

- Significance

Materials:

Handout – Objects

Handout – Object Descriptions

Each student needs paper and a drawing implement

White board and marker

Teaching notes:

The material in this lesson may be upsetting to some students. Teachers should begin by explaining it is a very difficult topic, establishing the classroom as a safe space, and reminding students where they can seek support if the material is disturbing. These reminders should be repeated at the end of the lesson.

Glossary:

- Holocaust
- Genocide
- Ghetto
- Concentration Camp
- Death Camp
- Final Solution
- Liberation

Lesson Instructions

ONE – Introductory Talk (5 minutes)

Teacher states that the class will begin learning about the Holocaust, and provides the guidance mentioned under ‘Teaching Notes’, above.

TWO – Object Based Learning – Introductory exercise (5 minutes)

Teacher divides the class into 5 or 6 groups.

Teacher provides each group with ONE page from the **Handout – Objects**. Each group should have a different object. The teacher must hand out the pages **face down**, and tell the students not to turn them over until instructed to do so.

When all the pages have been distributed, teacher instructs the students to turn over the page and look at the object.

After 15 seconds, teacher instructs the students to turn the page over again, so they can no longer see the object.

Each student must draw what they remember of the object.

After students have drawn the object, they may turn over the sheet again.

Teacher asks students to compare their picture to the original. Did they include everything? What did they leave out? Did they add anything that wasn't there? Note the importance of detailed observation in historical work.

THREE – Object Based Learning – Deep Observation (30 minutes)

Students make more detailed observations of their object, and in groups, discuss the following questions:

- What is it?
- What information can you discern about when, where and how the object was created?
- What else would you like to know about this object?

After students have had time for a full discussion, teacher distributes the information pages from **Handout – Object Descriptions**. Students discuss:

- What does your object reveal about the Holocaust?
- What does your object reveal about the human experience of the Holocaust?

Each group presents their object, and discusses its role in the Holocaust. Ideally, go in order from Object One to Object Six.

FOUR – Object Based Learning – Drawing Conclusions (10 minutes)

After all objects have been presented, teacher leads class discussion, to answer these questions:

- What was the Holocaust? Students record this definition in their notes: *the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators during World War II.*
- What different elements or stages of the Holocaust have the objects revealed? Students record the three stages in their notes:
 - *persecution (Object #1)*
 - *ghettoisation, (Object #2)*
 - *labour and death camps, (Objects #3, #4, #5)*
- During this lesson, what did you learn about the suffering and the response of Jewish people during the Holocaust?

FINISHING UP

Students reflect: having learned what you did today, why do you think it's important to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive?

Modifications:

If teachers would prefer, they could work with the class as one group, displaying the objects on a screen, and going through each of the objects in turn.

If the class is so big that it requires students to form more than six groups, the teacher can give two groups the same object for analysis.

Related lessons

After this lesson, we recommend you teach about the history of antisemitism, prior to the rise of the Nazi Party. You can find this, and other Holocaust lesson plans, at [this link](#).

You will also find a suggested plan for teaching a full unit on the Holocaust at [this link](#).