

(Image: Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.)

"THE WORLD MUST KNOW": PUBLIC REMEMBRANCE AND THE HOLOCAUST

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12 | TIME REQUIREMENT: 1-2 CLASS PERIODS

“ WHEN THE WAR IS OVER, THE WORLD MUST KNOW ABOUT THIS. IT MUST KNOW THE TRUTH.

ANONYMOUS FRENCH INMATE INCARCERATED AT AUSCHWITZ

INTRODUCTION

As the Allied forces moved toward Berlin, soldiers bore witness to the Nazi's **Final Solution** through the capture and liberation of concentration camps. Witnessing the horrors of the camps firsthand, these liberators documented what they saw to ensure the brutality of the Nazi regime came to the attention of people around the world. Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered extensive documentation of the camps to prevent any future attempts to deny what occurred. Eisenhower recognized the need for this documentation to challenge any allegation that what happened was mere “propaganda.” As the world came to learn of the camps, questions arose asking how such an act could happen. Auschwitz survivor Olga Lengyel wrote in her memoir, “I know that the world must share the guilt collectively. The Germans sinned grievously, but so did the rest of the nations, if only through refusing to believe and to toil day and night to save the wretched and the dispossessed by every possible means.” In this lesson, students will look at examples of different ways European countries have attempted to come to terms with this collective guilt by memorializing the tragedy of the Holocaust, as well as the memories of those whose lives were lost. Through a critical examination of five different modern-day Holocaust memorials, students should critically assess what the memorials are, what stories they tell, and how they respond to the memory of the Holocaust.

MATERIALS

- + Copies of the **overview essay “And Then They Came for Me...”**
- + **Eva Schloss oral history**
- + Images of the Memorials, also available on ww2classroom.org
- + Copies of the **Student Worksheet**

OBJECTIVES

By analyzing images of public memorials commemorating the lives lost in the Holocaust, students should critically assess the presentation of narratives through sculptures and artistic installations. They should combine this visual analysis with information of the Holocaust in the **overview essay “And Then They Came for Me...”** and in the **Eva Schloss oral history** to draw conclusions about the ways memorials tell the story of and commemorate those lost as a result of the Nazi **Final Solution**.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

ONLINE RESOURCES

ww2classroom.org

- ▶ Eva Schloss Oral History
- ▶ Harold Berkman Oral History
- ▶ “What Would You Do?” Scenario: Dachau

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 2

The student comprehends a variety of historical sources, therefore, the student is able to demonstrate the following:

- Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.
- Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations but acknowledge that the two are related; that the facts the historian reports are selected and therefore reflect the historian's judgment of what is most significant about the past.
- Appreciate historical perspectives and demonstrate the ability to (a) describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; (b) consider the historical context in which the event unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoid “present-mindedness,” judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
- Draw upon the visual, literary, and musical sources including (a) photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings; (b) novels, poetry, and plays; and (c) folk, popular, and classical music to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.

HISTORICAL STANDARD 3B

Analyze Hitler's **Final Solution** and the responses of the Allies to the Holocaust and **war crimes**.

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS: RESPONDING.7.1.7a

Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influences how it is perceived and valued.

VISUAL ARTS: RESPONDING.7.1.1a

Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.

VISUAL ARTS: RESPONDING.7.2.7a

Analyze multiple ways that images influence specific audiences.

VISUAL ARTS: RESPONDING.7.2.11a

Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

PROCEDURES

1. Have students read the **overview essay “And Then They Came for Me...”** Ask students to consider whom the Nazis targeted and why. Through a full-class discussion, ask the students what people outside of Nazi Germany knew of what was occurring in concentration camps. How much did the outside world know of the atrocities? What actions did nations take to counter these efforts? How might this information alter the students' perception of the Holocaust and the liberation of the camps?
2. Share the biography of Eva Schloss with the class, and then show her oral history on her time in Auschwitz and liberation from the camp. Have the students discuss her experiences, asking them to consider how Schloss describes the moment of liberation and what she might have felt.
3. As the world learned about the Nazi death camps, disbelief gave way to shock and horror. Discuss the following Dwight D. Eisenhower quote from a letter he sent to George C. Marshall in 1945 after witnessing a concentration camp firsthand: “I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to ‘propaganda.’” Ask the students why they think Eisenhower included such a statement in this letter. How did the Allies spread word of what happened in the camps?

4. Open up the discussion to memory and the Holocaust through an analytical discussion of public memorials installed in different parts of Europe. Present images of either all or a selection of the following Holocaust memorials: The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin; the sculpture at Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site; *Judenplatz* Holocaust Memorial in Austria; Shoes on the Danube Bank in Budapest; and the *Stolpersteine* (“Stumbling Stones”) in Germany.
5. As you present each image, ask the students to describe what they see. Fill in the discussion with context on each memorial (included on pages 63 and 64). After establishing what the memorial is, ask the students to describe, specifically, what the memorial presents. Whose story does each memorial tell? How do these structures convey these stories? Finally, ask the students if they think the memorials are successful in their intended purpose. Students can respond verbally in a class discussion or as written responses on the provided worksheet.
6. Conclude the discussion by informing the students that some claim the Holocaust never occurred, or try to claim, as Eisenhower warned, that the evidence is a form of propaganda. Ask the students how memorials can play a role in preserving the memory of the Holocaust, taking into account the selected narratives that each memorial presents. What other ways might exist to protect the history of the Holocaust against such denial?

ASSESSMENT

Through class discussion, as well as written responses, students should demonstrate the ability to assess the presentation of certain narratives through artistic depictions of historical events. Students should present clear arguments about the memorials and support those claims with evidence from either primary or secondary source materials. Their assessment should determine the nature of the message each memorial presents, the power of the message it conveys, and its overall success in preserving the memory, as well as the broader history, of the Holocaust.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

1. German artist Gunter Demnig intentionally selected the term *stolpersteine* for his installations commemorating victims of the ruthless policies of the Nazi Party. However, this decision received criticism as this term has broader meaning, including ties to anti-Semitic sayings used in Nazi Germany. The artist stated the use of the term was an intentional choice made to force recognition of this history of anti-Semitism. Have students research the history of this term, as well as the broader debate around its use, examining arguments against and in support of the installations. Ask the students to explain where they fall in this debate and why.
2. Public memorials are common ways individuals, as well as governments, acknowledge and commemorate events of the past. However, memorials often fall under scrutiny for their effectiveness and place in preserving historical memory. In an extension exercise, ask the students to locate other examples of public memorials that have received critical responses. Ask them to consider why some memorials appear to be more “successful” in drawing attention to significant moments in history, and why others face public opposition. Have the students then tie this example to the broader discussion about the place and use of public memorials in historical narratives.

NOTES ON THE MEMORIALS



THE MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

Located near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany, and designed by New York architect Peter Eisenman, this memorial covers 200,000 square feet and features 2,711 concrete slabs of varied height, designed to be reminiscent of coffins. Construction began in 2003 with the memorial opening to the public in 2005. Placement upon a slope gives the slabs a wavelike appearance when viewed in different locations. The designers intentionally kept the memorial open and abstract in appearance to allow visitors to approach the subject in a personal way. Critics of the memorial point to the lack of a central message, as well as the intentionally vague name that lacks clear context or direct ties to the Holocaust.

(Image: Alamy, DR6FTH.)



SCULPTURE AT DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMORIAL SITE

Designed by Yugoslavian sculptor Nandor Glid and dedicated in 1968, this monument appears at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site. Glid, whose own family lost their lives while imprisoned in Auschwitz, designed an abstract depiction of skeletal forms contorted into a shape reminiscent of barbed wire. Standing at around 19 feet high, the dark bronze sculpture rests upon two concrete fence posts, made to resemble the fence posts that surround the camp.

(Image: Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.)



JUDENPLATZ HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

Also known as "the Nameless Library," this memorial is located in Vienna, Austria. Designed by British artist Rachel Whiteread, the memorial came into existence through the efforts of Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal. Opened in 2000, the site commemorates the lives of Jews who suffered under the Nazi regime in Austria. Measuring 12 feet in height, the outside design resembles library shelves with the book spines turned inward. Commemorating the Jewish people as "People of the Book," Whiteread's reverse library design intends to capture the memory and culture lost through **genocide**. The artist intentionally designed the memorial to appear severe to reflect the brutality of the Holocaust.

(Image: Alamy, C5CJW3.)

NOTES ON THE MEMORIALS, CONTINUED



SHOES ON THE DANUBE BANK

Located in Budapest, Hungary, this memorial marks the location on the edge of the Danube River where Jews and others deemed enemies of the Third Reich stood before suffering execution. In Budapest, the fascist Arrow Cross Party police captured and executed as many as 20,000 Jews along the river from December 1944 to January 1945. Before their execution, the Arrow Cross police forced their victims to remove their clothing and shoes. The memorial marks the spot of these murders through the haunting depiction of shoes left along the bank of the river. Created by sculptors Gyula Pauer and Can Togay and installed in 2005, the simple yet powerful memorial features 60 pairs of shoes. The passing of time and exposure to the elements has rusted the iron shoes.

(Image: Alamy, HT7P2o.)



STOLPERSTEINE (“STUMBLING STONES”)

The *Stolpersteine* project began in 1992 and features the work of German artist Gunter Demnig, who sought to commemorate the last known place of residency or work for those who lost their lives to the Nazi regime. While the majority of the *Stolpersteine* are a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, Demnig has created memorials for others deemed enemies of the Nazis. He selected the term, which means “to stumble across something,” as the memorials, which consist of a small, brass plate, measuring around four inches by four inches, designed to catch one’s stride as they pass over the plate, thus disrupting the step and forcing an individual to take notice of the memorial. Demnig features the phrase “*Hier wohnte...*” (“Here lived...”) to demonstrate the actual space where victims of the Holocaust once lived or worked. As of 2018, Demnig has installed 70,000 *Stolperstein* in Germany and countries across Europe where Nazi persecution occurred.

(Image: Alamy, AY5oDK.)

NAME:

DATE:

Directions: Fill out the following worksheet as you complete your class discussion on the different Holocaust memorials.

MEMORIAL NAME AND LOCATION:

1. What does this memorial depict? Describe the physical appearance of the memorial, noting shapes, colors, and other distinguishing features.
2. What story does this memorial tell? How does it tell this story?
3. How does this memorial connect to other sources you have read or learned about that relate to the Holocaust?
4. Do you think this memorial is successful in telling the story it presents? Why or why not?