

6 things you should know about the Holocaust

2. Who was responsible for the Holocaust?

The second in a series of 6 20-minute self-study short lessons for KS3 students

Short lesson 2 overview



Hi again, and welcome to the second of six short, 20 minute lessons designed to address some of the common misunderstandings people have about the Holocaust.

In this 20 minute lesson you are going to;

- 1 a) Reflect on who was responsible for the Holocaust (5 mins.)
- 2 a) Explore two case studies that suggest how responsibility for the Holocaust went beyond just Hitler (10 mins.)
- 3 a) Reflect on the implications of this (5 mins.)



Key terms for this lesson

| Term | Meaning |
|-------------------------|---|
| genocide | The deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially if they come from the same nation or ethnic group. |
| Holocaust | the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War. |
| <u>Porrajmos</u> | A name given to describe the genocide of the Roma gypsies. |
| Roma | A group of people scattered through Europe and North America who keep a nomadic way of life. They are originally thought to have come from India over 1,000 years ago. |
| SS | Elite Nazis who ran the concentration camps. |

2 a) Who was responsible for the Holocaust?



As you found out in lesson 1, Jews were the victims of what we understand as *The Holocaust* but that others were also hunted down and targeted for mass murder including the Roma people.

This lesson now focuses on starting to explore the question - who was responsible for the Holocaust?

When we talk about 'responsibility,' really what we're meaning is 'who was to blame?'

2 a) Who was responsible for the Holocaust?



In the centre of this photograph, taken in 1934, is the leader (fuhrer) of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler. Most students think the Holocaust was completely, or mostly, down to his words and actions.

But is this true?

Hitler, flanked by the massed ranks of the Sturm Abteilung (SA), ascends the steps to the speaker's podium during the 1934 harvest festival celebration at Bückeburg. © IWM MH 11040

2 a) Who was responsible for the Holocaust?



In 2016 UCL conducted a big survey of secondary school students in England.

When asked **‘Who was responsible for the Holocaust?’**, nearly 7,000 students replied;

- 79.4% mentioned Hitler.
- 50% said Hitler was alone responsible.
- Only 3.9% of students referenced ‘Germans’ or the ‘German people’ as holding any responsibility.

What do you think? Was anyone else, apart from Hitler responsible? If so, who?

2 b) Who else was responsible?



The next two slides show two case studies;

- The first is about people that worked on the railways in Nazi Germany.
- The second is about buying the possessions of deported Jewish families

Read them both, and then be ready to think about and answer the questions on the slide after them.



The railways



Jewish people at Westerbork camp, in the Netherlands, boarding a train for the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Photo: Yad Vashem



Photo: GHWK

Albert
Ganzenmüller,
Hitler's Minister
for Transport.

The railways played a major part in carrying out the genocide of the Jewish people. Nazi planners intended to murder 11 million European Jews from across the continent – every last man, woman and child they could get their hands on. The job of moving millions of people across Europe to the Nazi death camps and killing centres was huge and needed careful and detailed planning.

The SS discussed with Albert Ganzenmüller, who was in charge of the transport and railway system, how the Jewish people would be deported to their deaths. The railways agreed to organise the trains, to draw up timetables, to make sure that passenger carriages and cattle wagons were available to carry men, women and children across Europe.

The railways charged the SS the standard third class fare to carry Jewish people. Children under ten travelled at half price and those under four went free. Everyone knew this was a one way journey, so the SS only had to pay a return fare for the guards who travelled with these families. The railways even offered a discount – half price for trains carrying more than 400 people. So the SS crammed as many human beings as possible onto the cattle wagons, in order to get a good deal.

The same trains carried the clothes and valuables of the those who had been murdered – trainloads of spectacles, watches, shoes, umbrellas, combs, pots and pans, all travelled to Berlin without their owners. Gold teeth forced from the mouths of the dead and bales of women's hair to be used to make textiles travelled with them.

Thousands were involved: train drivers, engineers, guards, signalmen, and station staff; office workers who drew up the timetables for the trains, kept track of the number of passengers and sent the bill to the SS. The murder of the Jewish people needed the cooperation and support of people at all levels of the railway system.

2 b) Who else was responsible?



Now you have read the two case studies, think about the following;

- 1) To what extent were all those who worked on the railways responsible for the deaths of those they transported to Nazi camps?
(think about what choices they had, and what they actually did that might have helped the Holocaust to happen)
- 2) Ordinary people bought the possessions of local Jews who had been forced to leave their possessions at home and be deported. Do you agree with historian David Bankier that by gaining from the persecution of their neighbours, huge numbers of people became part of the Nazis' crimes?

2 c) End of lesson quiz



You will be given **3 multiple-choice questions** to see how your knowledge and understanding of responsibility for the Holocaust has started to Develop.

Use a pen and paper to record you answers.

At the end of the quiz are the answers. You can use this to see how you've done after you've recorded your best answers...

2 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 1

Which of the following groups of people in Germany and Poland helped make the Holocaust happen? (You can choose more than one);

- A** Train drivers
- B** Train timetable planners
- C** Train engineers
- D** Train guards

2 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 2

What can be said about what happened when ordinary Germans bought the possessions very cheaply of local Jews who had been deported (forced to leave their homes)?

- A. They were being kind and helping the Jews.
- B. They would then keep their possessions to give back to Jews when they returned.
- C. They became part of the Nazis' crimes themselves.
- D. They had no other choice but to buy their possessions.

2 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 3

Choose the best answer;

- A Hitler was the only one responsible for the Holocaust.
- B Some ordinary Germans collaborated (helped) the Holocaust happen.
- C Hitler and the Nazis were the sole perpetrators (the ones that made it happen) of the Holocaust.
- D Hitler committed genocide on his own.

2 c) End of lesson quiz

Answers

1. All of them – A, B, C and D
2. C
3. B

End of short lesson 2

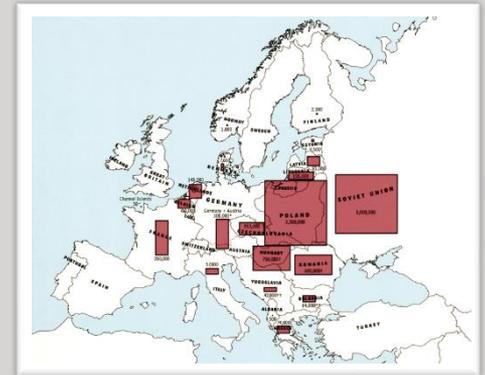
Well done!

You have now completed the first of six short lessons about important things you should know about the Holocaust. Now you are starting to understand that **responsibility for the crime of the Holocaust involved many more people than just Hitler.**

We look forward to seeing you soon for short lesson 3, where you will think about where most murders of Jewish people in the Holocaust took place.

6 things you should know about the Holocaust

2. Responsibility for the crime of the Holocaust involved many more people than just Hitler.



Centre for Holocaust Education

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