

LESSON: Introduction to the Holocaust

NAME: _____

STUDENT INTERACTIVE

DEFINITION:

THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi government and by those who helped them.

They believed the Germans were "superior" to all other people, especially Jewish people. Nazis said that Jewish people were "inferior" and a threat to Germany. This was not true.

By 1945, the Germans and people who helped them had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution." The "Final Solution" was the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.

Write a definition of the Holocaust in your own words.

TRANSCRIPT

Gerda Weissmann Klein and Kurt Klein

Gerda: My very clear view of freedom and liberation came that morning when I stood in this doorway of that abandoned factory and I saw a car coming down the hill. And the reality of that came when I saw the white star on its hood and not the swastika. There were two men in that car. One jumped out.

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Kurt: I saw some skeletal figures trying to get some water from a hand pump. But over on the other side, leaning against the wall next to the entrance of the building, I saw a girl standing and I decided to walk up to her.

Gerda: I remember that aura of him, of that awe, of that disbelief in daylight, to really see someone who fought for our freedom, for my ideals. And he looked like god to me.

Kurt: And I asked her in German and in English whether she spoke either language, and she answered me in German.

Gerda: And I knew what I had to say. And I said to him, “We are Jewish, you know.” For a very long time--at least to me it seemed very long--he didn’t answer me. And then his own voice betrayed his emotion. He was wearing dark glasses. I couldn’t see his eyes. He said, “So am I.”

Kurt: I asked about her companions.

Gerda: He said, “May I see the other ladies?” A form of address we hadn’t heard for six years. I told him most of the other girls were inside. They were too ill to walk. And he said to me, “Won’t you come with me?” I didn’t know what he meant. So he held the door open for me and let me precede him. And that was the moment of restoration of humanity, of humaneness, of dignity, of freedom.

Kurt: We went inside the factory. It was an indescribable scene. There were women scattered over the floor on scraps of straw, some of them quite obviously with the mark of death on their faces.

Gerda: I took him to see my friends.

Kurt: The girl who was my guide made sort of a sweeping gesture over this scene of devastation and said the following words, “Noble be man, merciful and good.” And I could hardly believe she was able to summon a poem by the German poet Goethe, which was called, is called “The Divine” at such a moment. And there was nothing that she could have said that would have underscored the grim irony of the situation better than what she did.

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Gerda: And this first young American of liberation day is now my husband. He opened not only the door for me, but the door to my life and my future.

Interview with Gerda Weissmann Klein and Kurt Klein, March 13, 1992

DEFINITION:	GERDA'S STORY:	NOTES:
<p>THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi government and by those who helped them.</p>	<p>Gerda was born to a middle-class Jewish family in Bielsko, Poland. This made her a target for Nazi persecution.</p>	
<p>They believed the Germans were "superior" to all other people, especially Jewish people.</p> <p>Nazis said that Jewish people were "inferior" and a threat to Germany. This was not true.</p>	<p>In the late 1930s, Germany annexed and occupied neighboring countries, bringing more Jews under its control.</p> <p>On Friday, September 1, 1939, German fighter planes appeared over Gerda's hometown in Poland, causing many people to flee the city. Gerda's family remained and was forced by Germans occupying Bielsko to give up their home and move to a ghetto.</p>	

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<p>The "Final Solution" was the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.</p> <p>By 1945, the Nazis and the people who helped them had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution."</p>	<p>1940-45: After being moved to Bielsko's ghetto, Gerda was deported in 1942 to work in a textile mill in Bolkenhain, Silesia. Gerda was later sent to forced labor camps in Marzdorf, Landshut, and Gruenberg. She was liberated by the American Army in May 1945 and immigrated to the United States in 1946. Gerda's brother, her parents, and many friends were murdered in the Holocaust.</p>	
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INSTRUCTIONS:

Working in pairs, groups, or individually, compare **another person's story to Gerda's story and to the definition of the Holocaust** by highlighting parts that on the ID card correlate to the definition. Place the information where it corresponds with the definition on the chart below.

OPTION A:

GERDA'S STORY

ID CARD NAME:

<p>THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi government and by those who helped them.</p>	<p>Gerda was born to a Jewish family in Poland. This made her a target for Nazi persecution.</p>	
<p>They believed that the Germans were "superior" to all other people, especially Jewish people.</p> <p>Nazis said that Jewish people were "inferior" and a threat to Germany. This was not true.</p>	<p>In the late 1930s, Germany annexed and occupied neighboring countries, bringing more Jews under its control. On Friday, September 1, 1939, German fighter planes appeared over Gerda's hometown in Poland, causing many people to flee the city. Gerda's family remained and was forced by Germans to give up their home and move to a ghetto.</p>	
<p>The "Final Solution" was the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.</p> <p>By 1945, the Nazis and the people who helped them had killed nearly two out of every three European Jew as part of the "Final Solution."</p>	<p>1940-45: After being made to live in a ghetto, Gerda was deported in 1942 to work in a textile mill and was later sent to forced labor camps. She was liberated by the American Army in May 1945 and immigrated to the United States in 1946. Gerda's brother, her parents, and many friends were murdered in the Holocaust.</p>	

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OPTION B

GERDA'S STORY

ANNE FRANK

<p>THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi government and by those who helped them.</p>	<p>Gerda was born to a Jewish family in Poland. This made her a target for Nazi persecution.</p>	<p>Anne was born to a Jewish family in Germany, making her a target of Nazi persecution.</p>
<p>They believed that the Germans were "superior" to all other people, especially Jewish people.</p> <p>Nazis said that Jewish people were "inferior" and a threat to Germany. This was not true.</p>	<p>In the late 1930s, Germany annexed and occupied neighboring countries, bringing more Jews under its control. On September 1, 1939, German fighter planes appeared over Gerda's hometown in Poland, causing many people to flee the city. Gerda's family remained and was forced by Germans to give up their home and move to a ghetto.</p>	<p>When Hitler came to power in 1933, Anne's family immigrated to the Netherlands. The Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1940. Anne was now under Nazi rule and seen as "inferior." Anne's family went into hiding to avoid Nazi persecution.</p>
<p>The "Final Solution" was the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.</p> <p>By 1945, the Nazis and the people who helped them had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution."</p>	<p>After being moved to a ghetto, Gerda was deported in 1942 to work in a textile mill and was later sent to forced labor camps. She was liberated by the American Army in May 1945 and immigrated to the United States in 1946. Gerda's brother, her parents, and many friends were murdered in the Holocaust.</p>	<p>In 1944, Anne's family was discovered, and they were arrested. They were sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. Anne and her sister stayed together and were taken to Bergen Belsen after several months, where they died, likely in February 1945. Anne's father was the only member of her family to survive.</p>