

## LESSON: The Holocaust - History and Memory

### ANSWER KEY: Virtual Field Trip Questions

ANSWER KEY: Questions and answers for each scene in the virtual field trip.

#### HALL OF WITNESS

1. The Museum's architect used structures and materials from Holocaust sites - including former camps - as inspiration for the Museum's design. What building materials and structures do you see in this Hall?

**ANSWER:**

Red brick, bolted grey steel, glass, concrete, arches, gates, and bridges are all incorporated in the building design.

2. Does this space remind you of any buildings or places you've seen? How does it make you feel?

**ANSWER:**

Any honest answer is acceptable. Common responses include: like I'm in a train station, prison, or factory; confused; disoriented; small; uneasy; cold; confined; trapped.

3. What does the architecture suggest your Museum experience will be like? Does it remind you of anything you've studied or experienced?

**ANSWER:**

Students' responses will vary. Common responses are: sad, scary, intimidating, cold, uncomfortable, etc

#### THE JEWS OF EJSZYSZKI AND THE HOLOCAUST

1. How many Jews were killed in the Holocaust?

**ANSWER:**

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

2. Which photos are you drawn to and why? How would you describe the people of Ejszyszki?

**ANSWER:**

Any honest answer is acceptable. Encourage students to notice the diversity of individuals in Ejszyszki, from religious and traditional to modern and cosmopolitan. See if you can find Mickey Mouse.

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3. Hundreds of years of Jewish civilization was annihilated during the Holocaust. How does getting a glimpse of life in one community help visitors understand the human losses?

**ANSWER:**

Here, the Museum displays ordinary photographs of individuals from just a single town living their lives to illustrate the tremendous human toll of the Holocaust.

### KRISTALLNACHT: THE NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS

1. What was Kristallnacht?

**ANSWER:**

Nazis and collaborators launched the first nationwide violence against Germany's Jews, destroying hundreds of synagogues and looting more than 7,000 businesses. Almost 30,000 Jews were imprisoned in camps.

2. Examine what the Nazis and their collaborators destroyed on Kristallnacht. How were these things important to the Jewish community? What message did their destruction convey?

**ANSWER:**

The destruction of synagogues and torahs signaled an end to Jewish spiritual and communal life in Germany. Jews lost their economic livelihood; there was no future for Jews in Germany.

3. How do the photographs and artifacts displayed in the Museum illustrate what had changed for Jews in Germany as a result of Kristallnacht?

**ANSWER:**

Jews lost their businesses, as well as community centers of group prayer, education, and support. They were not safe, even in their homes. Police and firemen did not protect them.

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#### GHETTOS: CONCENTRATION AND ISOLATION

1. What were Nazi ghettos?

**ANSWER:**

They were segregated sections of towns and cities where the Germans concentrated Jewish populations -- mostly in Eastern Europe -- in an attempt to isolate and control them.

2. Why did the Nazis create a system of ghettos? What function did the ghettos serve?

**ANSWER:**

The Nazis created ghettos to control and isolate Jewish populations prior to deportation to concentration camps and killing centers. The Germans also used Jews imprisoned in ghettos as forced laborers.

3. What do the artifacts and photographs in the Museum reveal about life, death and survival in the ghettos?

**ANSWER:**

Jews struggled to survive deprivation, overcrowding, hunger, disease, and the constant risk of violent death or deportation. The photos show segregation and isolation; the milkcan represents preserving evidence as resistance.

#### THE RAILCAR: DEPORTATION TO THE KILLING CENTERS

1. How do the railcar and historical photographs help visitors learn about the experiences of deportees? What were conditions like during deportations?

**ANSWER:**

Under armed guard, thousands of people were crowded into trains, often in public. They could bring few belongings. Any property left behind was confiscated. Most went directly to killing centers.

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2. How were rail lines an important part of the process by which the Nazis and their collaborators annihilated European Jewry?

**ANSWER:**

Deportations to killing centers allowed Nazis to kill large numbers of people in a systematic, industrial manner in remote locations; it also enabled large-scale theft of Jewish property and money.

3. Countless people participated in the confiscation and auctioning of Jewish property, as well as the arrest and transport of millions to camps. Do they bear any responsibility for the Holocaust?

**ANSWER:**

Any honest answer is acceptable. Students' assessments should be drawn from Expedition photographs and artifacts (e.g., Slovakian officials overseeing deportations or Jews publicly marched under police guard through Wurzburg).

### THE BARRACKS: CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS

1. How do the artifacts and photos displayed here depict conditions in the camps?

**ANSWER:**

Conditions in most camps were primitive. Prisoners were regularly subjected to humiliation and degrading treatment. There was no privacy. Hunger, disease, and brutal forced labor led to high death rates.

2. How were concentration camps different from ghettos?

**ANSWER:**

In most camps, people were segregated by gender, had little personal freedom and remained under guard night and day. Many prisoners died within weeks from starvation, disease and hard labor.

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3. What factors made it difficult for people to survive or escape from camps?

**ANSWER:**

Isolation, starvation, disease, and forced labor made survival and escape extremely difficult. If prisoners escaped the heavily guarded camp, they were alone and vulnerable with shaved heads wearing prisoner uniforms.

#### “FINAL SOLUTION”: KILLING CENTERS AND GAS CHAMBERS

1. The Nazis often deceived people to get them to do what they wanted. How did they deceive Jews into entering the gas chambers?

**ANSWER:**

They told them that the gas chamber was really a shower. Disinfection was an expected part of prisoner processing and registration.

2. Look closely at the model. What would have discouraged people from attempting to resist or escape?

**ANSWER:**

Inside the high barbed-wire fences are armed guards with dogs. The people entering the gas chambers are mostly women, children, and elderly. They have been told it is a shower.

3. Look closely at the model. The artist carefully sculpted each person as an individual with their own story. What effect does this have? Why do you think he did this?

**ANSWER:**

It reminds us that the Nazis' victims were individuals, each with a unique experience. His model seeks to return some individuality, humanity, and dignity to the victims as it tells the story of their murder.

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#### HALL OF REMEMBRANCE

1. How does the Museum memorialize victims of the Holocaust in this space?

**ANSWER:**

The Museum uses triangles and hexagons, which are symbolic shapes connected to the history; biblical quotes related to remembrance, witnessing, testifying, and mutual responsibility; and the pan-cultural tradition of candle lighting.

2. Holocaust Survivor, Elie Wiesel, called the Museum a “living memorial,” warning, “a memorial unresponsive to the future would violate the memory of the past.” What does that mean to you?

**ANSWER:**

Wiesel believed the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum should honor victims of the Holocaust by serving as a warning about the fragility of democracy and dangers of unchecked hatred.

3. Why is it important for visitors to glimpse monuments to American democracy from the Hall of Remembrance?

**ANSWER:**

The Museum “speaks” to America’s national monuments with a powerful warning about the fragility of freedom, the myth of progress, and the need to preserve democratic values.

#### CONSERVATION LAB: RESCUING THE EVIDENCE

1. Why is it important to preserve collections related to the Holocaust? Why is it important to preserve the stories that go with the artifacts as well as the artifacts themselves?

**ANSWER:**

Collections provide information about individual experiences during the Holocaust. They help us to see the people behind statistics.

History is a continuous process. Each collection tells a different story about individuals and their experiences. Together, the collections allow us to know what happened during the Holocaust.

2. Many documents, photographs, and artifacts are of significance to individuals and their families. Why would it be important for the Museum to house them instead of remaining in people’s homes?

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**ANSWER:**

The Museum staff have training and equipment to preserve a range of media - paper documents, clothes, even large wooden barracks in secure climate-controlled storage.

3. What can we learn from this collection about the challenges facing Jewish refugees trying to flee Nazi Germany in the late 1930s?

**ANSWER:**

They could not bring much property or money with them. It was not easy to find a country that would take them.