



The Holocaust



3.10 EXPLORE the significance of genocide, including the causes, course and consequences of the Holocaust

Term	Definition
Anti-Semitism	Hatred of or prejudice against Jewish people.
Aryan Race	White non-Jewish people, especially those with a northern European appearance (tall, blonde hair, blue eyes) whom the Nazis considered to be the superior or master racial group.
Concentration Camps	Twenty-Two Camps set up by the Nazis to imprison political prisoners and members of persecuted minorities in poor conditions and were often forced to provide labour.
Death Marches	Prisoners were forced to march out of Nazi concentration camps and away from the advancing Allied soldiers. Many died along the way.
Dehumanisation	Treating people as though they were somehow less than others.
Discrimination	Unjust treatment of different people, usually based on race, religion, sexual orientation or gender.
Einsatzgruppen	Mobile killing squads that murdered thousands of Jews, mostly by shooting.
Extermination Camps	Six camps organised by the Nazis in Poland to imprison political prisoners and members of persecuted minorities in poor conditions where they awaited mass execution.
Gas Chamber	A room built for the purpose of filling it with a poisonous gas that will kill any people inside.
Genocide	The deliberate destruction of a particular national, ethnic, religious or racial group.
Ghetto	Segregated and crowded area of a city where Jewish people were forced to live.
Holocaust	The systematic genocide of European Jews by Nazi Germany
Holocaust denial	An attempt to reject historical facts of the genocide of the Jews; often an expression of anti-Semitism.
Nuremberg Laws	Anti-Semitic laws passed in 1935 that stripped Jews of their citizenship rights.
Nuremberg Trials	The trials of Nazi officials and collaborators that took place at Nuremberg after World War II.
Pogrom	An organised massacre and persecution of an ethnic or religious group.
Racism	Belief that race decides a person's character and that some races are superior to others; prejudice against someone of a different race based on their skin
The Final Solution	The plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe using gas chambers in death camps.

Causes Course and Consequences

Genocide, coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, is defined as "the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group." The process of committing genocide is deliberate, dehumanising and systematic. Throughout history, tens of millions of men, women and children have lost their lives to genocide such as the Holocaust.

Antisemitism: Anti-Semitism had been present in Europe for centuries before the Holocaust, but it reached its peak in the 20th century. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party were openly anti-Semitic and used propaganda to spread their ideology. This created an atmosphere of hatred and fear towards Jews, leading to discrimination, persecution, and ultimately, the Holocaust.

Economic Crisis: Germany was suffering from a severe economic crisis after World War I. The country was in debt and struggling to pay reparations. Hitler and the Nazi Party promised to restore the economy and provide jobs for Germans. To achieve this, they scapegoated Jews as the reason for the economic crisis, and this narrative helped them to gain popularity and power.

Totalitarianism: The Nazi regime was a totalitarian state in which the government used propaganda, censorship, and fear to maintain its power. The Jews were seen as a threat to the regime's control, as they were not loyal to the Nazi Party. This led to the implementation of increasingly harsh laws against Jews, culminating in their deportation and murder.

Racism: The Nazi regime believed in the superiority of the Aryan race, considering Jews to be a subhuman race. This racist ideology was used to justify the persecution and extermination of Jews, and other minority groups such as LGBT+, Roma and disabled people.

World War II: The start of World War II in 1939 provided the Nazi regime with the opportunity to implement their plans for the "Final Solution". The war allowed the Nazis to gain control of much of Europe, and they used this control to carry out the mass deportation and murder of Jews and other minority groups. The war also allowed the Nazis to hide their atrocities from the rest of the world, as they operated in secrecy and often destroyed evidence of their crimes.

The Beginning of the Holocaust: The Holocaust began in 1933 when Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany. They immediately began implementing policies that discriminated against Jewish people, such as the Nuremberg Laws that stripped them of their rights and citizenship. Over time, the discrimination escalated into violence and brutality, such as Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, in 1938, which saw the destruction of Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues. This marked the beginning of the Holocaust, which ultimately resulted in the systematic murder of six million Jewish people and millions of others.

The Ghettos: To isolate and control Jewish people, the Nazis established ghettos in Eastern Europe. Ghettos were typically overcrowded, unsanitary, and lacked food and basic necessities. Disease and starvation were rampant, and many people died as a result. The ghettos were also used as a staging ground for the deportation of Jewish people to concentration and extermination camps. By 1942, the majority of ghettos had been liquidated, with their inhabitants either killed or sent to camps.

The Einsatzgruppen: The Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing units made up of SS and police personnel. They were responsible for carrying out mass shootings of Jewish people, Roma, and other groups deemed "enemies of the state" in occupied territories. Einsatzgruppen killed an estimated 1.5 million people during the Holocaust, often shooting their victims in pits and mass graves. This method was deemed too slow and inefficient, leading to the development of the gas chambers used in extermination camps.

The Final Solution: The Final Solution was the Nazi plan to exterminate all Jewish people in Europe. It was decided upon at the Wannsee Conference in 1942 and involved the construction of extermination camps equipped with gas chambers to kill large numbers of people quickly and efficiently. The Final Solution also involved the deportation of Jews to camps for forced labour, where they were subjected to inhumane conditions and many died from exhaustion, disease, and abuse. By the end of the war, six million Jews had been murdered as part of the Final Solution.

The Concentration Camps: The Nazis established a vast network of concentration camps across Europe, including labour camps and extermination camps. Labour camps were designed to exploit the labour of prisoners for the Nazi war effort, while extermination camps were designed for the systematic murder of Jewish people, Roma, and other groups deemed "enemies of the state". Extermination camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, were equipped with gas chambers and crematoria and were responsible for the murder of millions of people. By the end of the war, it is estimated that over 11 million people had been killed in concentration camps.

Liberation: The liberation of concentration camps began in 1944 with the arrival of Allied forces. The first camp to be liberated was Majdanek in Poland. As the Allies advanced, they discovered the horrors of the camps, with thousands of emaciated and sick prisoners still alive and others dead from starvation, disease, or execution. The liberation of the camps marked the end of the Holocaust, but many survivors faced a difficult road to recovery, as they had suffered physical and emotional trauma that would last a lifetime. The 27th January is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day to commemorate the 6 million Jews and the other millions of victims of the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

Legacy

Genocide: The Holocaust resulted in the systematic murder of millions of people, primarily Jews but also including Romani people, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, and political dissidents. This atrocity has been recognised as one of the worst genocides in history.

Displacement: The survivors of the Holocaust were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, resulting in the loss of homes, communities, and family members, and many survivors faced significant challenges in finding safety and rebuilding their lives.

Trauma and Inter-generational Impact: The Holocaust inflicted deep and lasting trauma on survivors, with many experiencing physical and emotional scars that lasted a lifetime. This trauma was also passed down to future generations, with the children and grandchildren of survivors often experiencing the impact of their family's experiences.

Founding of Israel: The Holocaust played a significant role in the establishment of Israel as a Jewish homeland. The horrors of the Holocaust highlighted the need for a place where Jewish people could live free from persecution and discrimination, and the creation of Israel in 1948 was a direct response to this need.

Legal Recognition: The Holocaust led to the establishment of international laws against genocide, including the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. This convention has been ratified by numerous countries and provides a framework for prosecuting those responsible for genocidal acts. The recognition of the Holocaust as a genocide has helped to ensure that such atrocities are never forgotten and creates a framework for preventing similar acts.

