

# Americans and the Holocaust and



“While it took place in Europe, the Holocaust is also an American story. Many newspapers reported on events in Europe, and broad segments of the American public knew of the threats of Nazism, but such awareness seldom translated into action to help Europe’s endangered Jews. Americans’ responses were shaped by competing factors, such as isolationism, prejudice, economic uncertainty, and national security concerns. This lesson challenges students to consider how such factors influenced the “newsworthiness” of Holocaust-related events, as well as how news of the Holocaust was presented to American readers.” USHMM

## Introduction

- a. <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>
- b. [newspapers.ushmm.org](https://newspapers.ushmm.org)

1. Students will be looking for specific headings, reading and analyzing articles, and watching video clips from the time period of 1933-1945.
2. Students will also be researching news stories from around the state of North Carolina during these years and reflecting on the reactions from local communities.

# 1933-1935

Go to the following link:

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>.

A. ***Under 1933***: Scroll down and watch the silent video clip (1:29) then read the items below the video.

1. List two points about what was happening in the United States at this time...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Continue to scroll down and read the paragraphs about *Nazism in the News*.

a. About how many newspapers were published daily in the US? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why do you think so many people read newspapers at that time?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Continue to scroll down and read about *Protesting Nazism in the US*.

a. Name two ways Americans tried to protest against the Nazis.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Scroll down until you see *American Newsreels*. Click on the video and watch (6:40).

a. List one opinion expressed (ie, immigration, war, specific groups)

\_\_\_\_\_

b. List one US event shown in the clip.

\_\_\_\_\_

c. List one world event shown in the clip. \_\_\_\_\_

# 1933-1935 History Unfolded

Go to the following link:

[newspapers.ushmm.org](http://newspapers.ushmm.org)

**Click on MENU in top RH corner.**

**Click on BROWSE EVENTS.**

**Click on SORT EVENTS. (By Dates: 1933-1935)**

1. Click on the page with each heading. Read the summary provided.
2. In **Box 1**, briefly list three facts about the event.
3. In **Box 2**, list three vocabulary words associated with the event.
4. On the RH side of the page, click on **VIEW ALL RESEARCH ON THIS EVENT**.
5. You will now be on a new page. Click on **Advanced Filters**.
6. Go down and pull up North Carolina under “**Select A State.**”
7. You should be able to find a North Carolina newspaper article, photo, or cartoon associated with this event.
8. In **Box 3**, put in the following information about the article:
  - a. Newspaper name and location; Publication date and page section number
9. In **Box 4**, put the Author/Byline and the Headline.
10. In **Box 5**, list anything else you noticed about the article, a photo, etc., associated with this event.

**Students in group:** \_\_\_\_\_

# 1933-1935

<b>Nazis Boycott Jewish Businesses 4/1/1933</b>	<b>American Citizens Attacked 10/10/1933</b>	<b>Dorothy Thompson Expelled from Germany 8/26/1934</b>	<b>Hitler Announces Nuremberg Race Laws 9/15/1935</b>
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# 1936-1939

Go to the following link:

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>

**Under 1938:** Scroll down and watch the silent video clip (1:02) then read the items below the video.

1. List two points about what was happening in the United States at this time...

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Continue to scroll down and read the paragraphs about the *Refugee Crisis*.

a. What sudden event by Germany brought about a refugee crisis in March 1938?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What were some immediate changes brought about by this event?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Continue to scroll down and read about the *Evian Conference* and *The Challenges of Escape*.

4. Scroll down to “A Piece of Paper With A Stamp” and explore how American immigration law affected Jewish refugees attempting to flee Europe and the many documents they needed to obtain US immigration visas.

Click on either *Immigration by the Numbers* or *How to Acquire a US Visa*.

List four things you learned under the heading you chose.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Look at the Public Opinion Polls After Kristallnacht (Nov.1938). Write a short statement on the reason for the discrepancy between how Americans felt about the treatment of the Jews by the Nazis and why Americans didn't want any more Jewish refugees.**

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**6. Scroll down to *Refugee Ships at Sea*. Read the text, then watch the video to see how the patterns of passenger ships coming into New York changed over the course of just three years (7:50).**

a. **The MS St. Louis (1939)**. List five facts you learned about this ship and the fate of its passengers.

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b. **The SS Quanza (1940)**. List five facts you learned about this ship and the fate of its passengers.

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c. Reflect on the similarities and differences between the two events.

# 1936-1939

## History Unfolded

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11. Students in group: \_\_\_\_\_

# 1936-1939

<b>Evian Conference 7/6/1938</b>	<b>Kristallnacht 11/9/1938</b>	<b>American Nazis Rally in NYC 2/20/1939</b>	<b>Jewish Refugees Seek Safe Harbor 6/2/1939</b>
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# 1940-1942

Go to the following link:

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>.

*On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Great Britain and France declared war two days later. President Roosevelt reassured Americans that the United States would remain neutral in World War II.*

1. Continue to scroll down and read the paragraphs about *Fear of Spies*.

- a. How many tips on spies was J. Edgar Hoover/ FBI getting per day? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What event seemed to cause this fear in Americans?
- 

2. Continue to scroll down and read the public opinion poll on America entering World War II.

- a. Reflect on why Americans were so opposed to entering the war.
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4. Scroll down until you see *America First Committee*. Respond to the following:

Who?			
What?			
When?			
Why?			

5. Scroll down until you see *On The Verge of War*. Watch the short documentary video that shows how FDR steered the country into war. (6:01). List three things you learned:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**6. Scroll down until you see “Citizens or Enemies.” Read the text then click on one of the six images below that.**

a. Summarize the executive order FDR signed in February 1942.

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b. Why were American citizens of Japanese, German, and Italian descent forcibly moved to internment camps across the US? What is the irony of this action by the US government?

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**7. Scroll down until you see the Public Opinion Poll on Japanese Internment (March 1942).**

a. Reflect on why you think the results of the two polls came out this way?

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**8. Scroll down and look at the propaganda posters under “This Is The Enemy.” Continue scrolling and look at the video under In 1942 (1:25), reading the list below the video. List two points about what was happening in the country at this time.**

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Continue reading under “Cold-Blooded Extermination.”**

a. In November 1942, what message did Rabbi Stephen Wise give to the press.

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b. What was the response of the US government to these reports? \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Reflect on the decision by the US government not to act.

# 1940-1942

## History Unfolded

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# 1940-1942

<b>Lindbergh Makes “Un-American” Speech 9/11/1941</b>	<b>FDR Authorizes Incarceration of Japanese Americans 2/19/1942</b>	<b>Nazi Plan to Kill All Jews Confirmed 11//24/1942</b>	<b>Allies Denounce Nazi Plan to “Exterminate” the Jews 12/17/1942</b>
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# 1943-1945

Go to the following link:

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>.

*“As details of the Nazis’ murderous plans trickled out to the public in 1943, American Jews remained divided about how much pressure to exert on the federal government to take special action to rescue Jews. Two non-Americans, Jan Karski and Peter Bergson, played prominent roles in trying to mobilize a US government response.”*

**1. Start with the *Pressure To Act* text. Respond to the following:**

a. Who were the two non-Americans who played prominent roles in trying to mobilize about a US government response to the Final Solution? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Briefly describe what each of these individuals tried to do to pressure FDR into action.

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**2. Scroll down to *State Department Obstruction Exposed*. After reading under this heading, reflect on the following:**

a. Why do you think the US State Department and wanted to keep the news about the Nazi atrocities a secret from the American public?

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b. What action did the US Treasury Department’s investigation into this obstruction bring about on January 22, 1944?

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**3. Scroll down and read about the *War Refugee Board*. Respond to the following:**

a. Name the four primary leaders of WRB. \_\_\_\_\_

b. What tasks did the WRB accomplish?

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**4. Continue to scroll down and watch the video (00:58) about *A Refugee Camp in New York*. Respond to the following about this camp.**

<b>Who?</b>			
<b>What?</b>			
<b>When?</b>			
<b>Where?</b>			
<b>Why?</b>			

**5. Scroll down and read under “*Direct Bombing*” of *Auschwitz?* and *Could The Allies Have Stopped The Killing?* Respond to the following:**

- a. Thinking about the goals of the US Government and when it knew about the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews, reflect on whether the military should have acted in a different manner.

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**6. Continue reading under *Naming The Crime*.**

- a. Who coined the new term for what had taken place in Nazi-occupied Europe?

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- b. How did he define this “new crime” ?

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- c. What does this tell you about the nature and extent of the crime faced by world leaders?

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# 1943-1945

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# 1943-1945

<b>Warsaw Ghetto Revolt 4/19/1943</b>	<b>FDR Establishes War Refugee Board 1/22/1944</b>	<b>FDR Shelters Jews in Oswego, NY 6/12/1944</b>	<b>The Crime Now Has A Name: "Genocide" 12/1/1944</b>
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# 1945, Liberation, and Displaced Persons

Go to the following link:

<https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/main>.

A. ***Under 1945*: Scroll down and watch the silent video clip (1:25) then read the items below the video.**

**1. List two points about what was happening in the United States at this time.**

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Scroll down and read the paragraph on *Liberation*. Then choose one of the nine images to click on and read/view the document or photograph. Write a brief summary of what you learned.**

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**3. Continue scrolling and read the information on *Displaced Persons*.**

a. Who were Displaced Persons? How many of them were there at the end of the war?

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b. Where were these people initially housed? What were the issues with that first housing?

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c. How did President Harry Truman deal with the situation of Displaced Persons?

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d. What law did Congress pass to assist Displaced Persons?

# 1945

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# 1945, Liberation, and Displaced Persons

<b>Roosevelt Delivers His Fourth Inaugural Address 1/20/1945</b>	<b>Eisenhower Asks Congress and Press To Witness Nazi Horrors 4/19/1945</b>	<b>Truman Orders Quota Preference for Displaced Persons 12/22/1945</b>
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