

# UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

WILLIAM LEVINE FAMILY INSTITUTE  
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

**Rationale statements** clearly identify why a particular period of history should be incorporated into the school curriculum and it is helpful to structure your lesson plans on the Holocaust by keeping questions of **rationale**, or purpose, in mind.

By reflecting on questions of rationale, both goals and objectives for lessons become clearer. Teachers are more apt to design lessons that address issues, concepts, and topics that are meaningful for students.

### Three key questions to consider:

1. Why should students learn this history?
2. What are the most significant lessons students should learn from studying the Holocaust?
3. Why is a particular image, document, or film an appropriate medium for conveying the topics you wish to teach?

### How would you answer the first two questions?

As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain awareness of the **complexity** of the subject and a perspective on how a **convergence of factors** can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values.

### By studying these topics students also come to realize that:

- Democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected.

- Silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, can—however unintentionally—perpetuate these problems.
- The Holocaust was not an accident in history; it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.
- The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century but also in the entire course of human history

**Which one of the above outcomes resonates the most with you? Why?  
How would it inform your rationale?**

**What is your six-word rationale for teaching about the Holocaust?**