



ENGINEERING EVIL

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Today's view of the entrance to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Engineering Evil™ would be useful for History, Global Studies, Political Science and World War II courses and lectures. It is recommended for 8th grade students and above.

TERMS TO DEFINE:

Ask students to define the terms below before or after watching this program. They can also write down a list of their own words to define while watching this documentary.

Aryan

Einsatzgruppen

Eradicated

Expunge

Expropriation

Confiscation

Genocide

Holocaust

Premeditated

SS (Schutzstaffel)



HISTORY® presents *Engineering Evil*, a gripping two-hour portrait of the Holocaust from the early days of persecution of the Jewish people in Nazi Germany through the implementation of massive concentration camps. Throughout this program, viewers learn about artifacts, photographs and oral histories that provide detailed evidence of the processes and plans the Nazis developed to extinguish the lives of millions of Jews throughout Europe. Rather than take a sweeping perspective on the Holocaust, this program focuses on more intimate and everyday stories of political transformation, violence and loss under the Nazi regime.

Engineering Evil gives viewers specific and personal insights into the lives of those who perished and into the actions and plans of those who enacted the Holocaust. Viewers travel through the archives of Eastern Europe, to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and to restoration labs in Israel to see how artifacts serve as powerful links to those who lost their lives. Curators and historians help explain how the Nazis were able to accomplish such horrific crimes against humanity over the course of just a few years. Students can explore and discuss the methods historians use to preserve the memory of the communities destroyed during this horrendous chapter in world history.



Auschwitz-Birkenau II extermination camp

TO THE TEACHER: Teaching about the Holocaust can be very difficult. The Holocaust is an emotional topic for many students. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has developed very helpful guidelines and resources to help with teaching this topic. Visit them online at www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators to view these tips and additional suggested activities for the classroom.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When did the Third Reich start the process of eliminating the Jewish population in Europe, and how long did the Holocaust last?
2. One historian in this program states that it is nearly impossible to understand the Holocaust in its entirety, so it is important to study specific stories, documents and artifacts. What are some examples of the primary-source documents and artifacts historians used in this program to describe what happened during the Holocaust?
3. What does the word “expropriation” mean in the context of the Holocaust? Can you give an example of expropriation that you learned about from watching this documentary?
4. What role did photographers play in recording the history of the Holocaust? What insights can these photographs give us into the Jewish people killed during the Holocaust?
5. The “Tower of Faces” at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is comprised of photographs of Lithuanian Jews from one town who were killed during the Holocaust. Rather than showing the images of the dead, the museum shows photos of the living in their everyday lives. Why do you think the museum made this choice?
6. What was the process of “ghettoization” that took place in Warsaw?
7. Who were the SS guards discussed in this program? One historian describes them as becoming “decivilized” during the Holocaust. What does this concept mean?
8. What happened at the Wannsee Conference?
9. What role did railroads play during the Holocaust?
10. What do you think people today can learn from studying the Holocaust?



Sobibor train station, the location of a massive extermination camp in Poland.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

- 1. Six Words.** In this program, scholar Michael Berenbaum states that it is possible to understand the Holocaust by exploring the meaning of six key words. As they are watching, ask students to write down these six words and define them in an essay or another format after watching the documentary.
- 2. Creating Context.** This program discusses key events in the evolution of the Holocaust. Working in small groups, ask students to create a timeline of the Holocaust from its inception through the liberation of concentration camps. Students should also include other key WWII dates on their timelines.
- 3. Examining Evidence.** Throughout *Engineering Evil*, students learn about many kinds of evidence that reveal information about the Holocaust and about those who died, including photographs, bullets, and even physical buildings. Ask students to choose one artifact or piece of evidence they learned about in this documentary and write a short essay about the ways historians use this object to explain the history of the Holocaust.
- 4. In Their Own Words.** Many survivors of the Holocaust have given powerful testimonies of what they experienced. Ask students to read one or more of these testimonies and write a short description of what they learned. Who was interviewed? Where did they live before the Holocaust? What happened to them as the Holocaust transpired? How did they manage to survive? Students can answer these questions in their descriptions.
- 5. Curriculum Trunks.** Several organizations offer curriculum trunks for use by schools with Holocaust teaching materials and primary sources. Visit the Houston Holocaust Museum at www.hmh.org/ed_cur_trunk.shtml to view one traveling trunk program and learn how to apply for these teaching tools.

WEB LINKS:

Background about the Holocaust on History.com:

www.history.com/topics/the-holocaust

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum:

www.ushmm.org

USC Shoah Foundation Institute:

www.dornsife.usc.edu/vhi

Florida Holocaust Museum:

www.flholocaustmuseum.org

BOOKS:

Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. (Vintage, 1997).

Struk, Janina. *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence*. (I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Zullo, Allan and Mara Bovsun. *Survivors: True Stories of Children in the Holocaust*. (Scholastic, 2005).