

WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?: Circle words you don't understand and underline parts you have questions about. Answer the questions in the box.

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945 across Europe and North Africa. The height of the persecution and murder occurred during World War II. By the end of the war in 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews.

The Nazis believed that Germans were racially superior. They believed Jews were a threat to the so-called German racial community. While Jews were the primary victims, the Nazis also targeted other groups for persecution and murder. The Nazis claimed that Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, some Slavic peoples (especially Poles and Russians), and Black people were biologically inferior.

The regime persecuted other groups because of politics, ideology, or behavior. These groups included Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men, and people the Nazis called "asocials" and "professional criminals."

1. When did the Holocaust take place?
2. Where did the Holocaust take place?
3. Who were the perpetrators of the Holocaust?
4. Who were the primary victims of the Holocaust?
5. Who else did the Nazis and their collaborators target?
6. What was the result of the Holocaust?

WORKSHEET: *Here There Are Blueberries*

NAME: _____

WHAT WAS AUSCHWITZ?

The Auschwitz camp complex was essential for carrying out the “Final Solution,” the Nazi plan to murder all European Jews. Auschwitz was located in German-occupied Poland. It was run by the German Nazi-SS (an elite group within the Nazi regime in charge of the “Final Solution”). Auschwitz consisted of three main camps—a concentration camp, a killing center, and a labor camp.

Most prisoners went through a “selection” process when they arrived at the camp. Some people, whom the Nazis thought looked young and healthy, were assigned to work for the Nazis and for German companies that used prisoner labor. Children, older people, and anyone whom the Nazis thought looked weak or sick were murdered in gas chambers in Birkenau, the killing center at Auschwitz. More than 1.1 million people died at Auschwitz, including nearly one million Jewish people.

The first prisoners arrived at Auschwitz in 1940. The camp grew over the next few years until it became the largest in the Nazi camp system. In spring 1944, more than 430,000 Hungarian Jews arrived at Auschwitz in less than two months; many were murdered in Birkenau. As the Soviet Army approached the camp in January 1945, most of the surviving prisoners were “evacuated.” The Nazi-SS forced them to march west, away from the camp, in the middle of winter. The Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945.

Photos: (top) Fence and barracks at Auschwitz, ca. January 1945.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Philip Vock;
(bottom) Newly arrived Hungarian Jews await “selection,” May 1944.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem

