

## LESSON: Introduction to the Holocaust

### STUDENT INTERACTIVE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

#### TRANSCRIPT

##### Gerda Weissmann Klein and Kurt Klein

**Gerda:** My very clear view of freedom and liberation came that morning when I stood in this doorway of that abandoned factory and I saw a car coming down the hill. And the reality of that came when I saw the white star on its hood and not the swastika. There were two men in that car. One jumped out.

**Kurt:** I saw some skeletal figures trying to get some water from a hand pump. But over on the other side, leaning against the wall next to the entrance of the building, I saw a girl standing and I decided to walk up to her.

**Gerda:** I remember that aura of him, of that awe, of that disbelief in daylight, to really see someone who fought for our freedom, for my ideals. And he looked like god to me.

**Kurt:** And I asked her in German and in English whether she spoke either language, and she answered me in German.

**Gerda:** And I knew what I had to say. And I said to him, “We are Jewish, you know.” For a very long time--at least to me it seemed very long--he didn’t answer me. And then his own voice betrayed his emotion. He was wearing dark glasses. I couldn’t see his eyes. He said, “So am I.”

**Kurt:** I asked about her companions.

**Gerda:** He said, “May I see the other ladies?” A form of address we hadn’t heard for six years. I told him most of the other girls were inside. They were too ill to walk. And he said to me, “Won’t you come with me?” I didn’t know what he meant. So he held the door open for me and let me precede him. And that was the moment of restoration of humanity, of humaneness, of dignity, of freedom.

**Kurt:** We went inside the factory. It was an indescribable scene. There were women scattered over the floor on scraps of straw, some of them quite obviously with the mark of death on their faces.

**Gerda:** I took him to see my friends.

**Kurt:** The girl who was my guide made sort of a sweeping gesture over this scene of devastation and said the following words, “Noble be man, merciful and good.” And I could hardly believe she was able to summon a poem by the German poet Goethe, which was called, is called “The Divine” at such a moment. And there was nothing that she could have said that would have underscored the grim irony of the situation better than what she did.

**Gerda:** And this first young American of liberation day is now my husband. He opened not only the door for me, but the door to my life and my future. *Interview with Gerda Weissmann Klein and Kurt Klein, March 13, 1992*

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#### DEFINITION:

**THE HOLOCAUST** was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million *Jews* by the *Nazi* regime and its allies and collaborators.

The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933. They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was "superior" to all others. They claimed that the Jews belonged to a race that was "inferior" and a threat to the so-called German racial community.

By 1945, the Germans and their allies and collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution." The "Final Solution" was the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Working in pairs, groups, or individually **annotate the definition of the Holocaust with details from [Gerda's story](#)** by highlighting parts that correlate to the definition on the ID card and the film clip transcript, and placing it where it

corresponds with the definition on the chart below. You will return to this cart and add additional information when you read another individual's story.

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	<u>Gerda's story</u>	<u>Second Individual</u>
THE HOLOCAUST was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators.		
The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933. They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was "superior" to all others. They claimed that the Jews belonged to a race that was "inferior" and a threat to the so-called German racial community.		
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- What questions do Gerda's story and the definition of the Holocaust raise?

Read the complete [Introduction to the Holocaust](#) article from the Holocaust Encyclopedia. This [online encyclopedia](#) is a trusted place to find information about the Holocaust.

- What questions did the *Introduction to the Holocaust* article answer?
- What questions do you still have? Refer to the FAQ for more answers.