

Holocaust teaching and Key Concepts for History

Key Concept No. 1: Significance - Historians debate the significance of the past

Lesson Ideas: Students can debate why the Holocaust happened. What relevance does it have today? Holocaust educators need to understand that the Holocaust was unprecedented in human history. We should not avoid comparative history, but we need to be careful in not trivialising people and issues in such comparisons.

Key Concept No. 2: Continuity and Change - examining change over time, and continuity in times of change

Lesson Ideas: Students can develop a chronology, and put the Holocaust in the context of wider history or general anti-Semitism. Students need to be made aware that the Holocaust is generally believed to have started in 1933.

Key Concept No.3: Cause and effect - Historians investigate the reasons for and the results of events in history

Lesson Ideas: Students can investigate the causes and effects of the Holocaust. A higher-level study can analyse the way the Holocaust is remembered in literature, film and historiography. It also lends itself as an essential pre-cursor to the Palestine-Israel topic.

Key Concept No. 4: Perspective - There are multiple perspectives of the past and these interpretations are contested

Lesson Ideas: Students can study perspectives of the Holocaust, using the views of bystander, perpetrator, victim, collaborator or rescuer. Teachers should avoid putting students “in role” however – as this is often complicated and may trivialise the human story.

Holocaust teaching and the History Achievement Objectives

There are two ‘Achievement Objectives’ each at Levels 6, 7 and 8, for History. Incorporating the Holocaust into these objectives could take the following forms (*Please note: The following ideas provide a guideline only. The Holocaust fits well into all strands of the Curriculum in the senior school, although it may be best to approach the subject analytically at a Year 12 or Year 13 level*):

Level 6

- *A.O. 1:* Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society.

Students can study the causes and consequences of the Holocaust – and move on to a study of Jewish immigration to New Zealand post-World War II and New Zealand’s involvement in the war.

- *A.O.2*: Understand how people’s perspectives differ on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders.

Students can describe the perspectives of those involved (e.g. German bystander, Jewish prisoner, allied soldier). They can also link past perspectives to their own experiences (e.g. Jewish youth and the youth of today). This lends itself particularly well to Achievement Standard 1.4.

Level 7

- *A.O. 1*: Understand how historical forces and movements have influenced the causes and consequences of events of significance to New Zealanders.

Students can incorporate the language of the Holocaust into their 2.5 essays: anti-Semitism, Nazism etc as an example of a “force or movement”. The 2.6 Identity essay can also focus on the Jews as victims and the Nazis as perpetrators.

- *A.O. 2*: Understand how people’s interpretations of events differ that are of significance to New Zealanders.

Students can focus on perspectives of those involved – then extend to later interpretations (e.g. disproving Holocaust denial, using survivor testimony to contextualise the Holocaust experience, study perspectives of refugees to New Zealand and our responses to them).

Level 8

- *A.O.1*: Understand that the causes, consequences, and explanations of historical events of significance to New Zealanders are complex, and how and why they are contested.

Students can analyse the ‘intentionalist vs. functionalist’ arguments of the Holocaust – did Hitler intend for the Holocaust to happen from the start, or was it a decision made by underlings? Students can also discuss the meaning of Holocaust and genocide – are there different “levels” of genocide? Was the Holocaust inevitable? Is it right to even compare genocides through history?

- *A.O.2*: Understand how trends over time reflect social, economic and political forces.

The persistence of neo-Nazism in Europe, around the world and in New Zealand.