3.5 TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN GERMANY

How do countries confront chapters of their history that contain prejudice, discrimination, persecution, and genocide?

C3 Framework Indicator	**D2.His.5.9-12.** Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives. **D2.His.7.9-12.** Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past. **D4.1.9-12.** Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims.
Staging the Compelling Question	Students will learn how both the German government and the people in Germany deal with the topic of the Holocaust in contemporary society.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
Why is it important to remember the Holocaust?	How is the Holocaust remembered in Berlin, Germany's capital?	How is the Holocaust taught in German schools?
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**
Students will read remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp Memorial Site and focus on each speaker's perspective of the Holocaust and their relationship to the Holocaust.	Students will identify the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, and discuss what it says about Germany's willingness to remember the Holocaust.	Students will learn how the Holocaust is taught in German schools by reading the listed resources.
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**
Source A: "Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp," a transcript of three speeches given June 5, 2009 (**Handout 3.5.1**) **Source B:** Excerpts of Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp (**Handout 3.5.2**)	**Source A:** Holocaust Memorial PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.5.3**) **Source B:** *YouTube*	**Source A:** Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) (**Handout 3.5.4**) **Source B:** German Secondary Students' Reflections on a School Visit to Auschwitz (**Handout 3.5.5**)

Summative Performance Task	**Argument:** Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical or contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.
	Extension: Interpret a quote by the Education Director at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp Memorial Site.
Taking Informed Action	**Understand:** In the United States, Holocaust education is currently required by law in only 17 states.
	Assess: Investigate to determine if your state/province is one of them.
	Act: Contact your state legislators and discuss how you could work to make it a mandate in your state.

COMPELLING QUESTION

- **How do countries confront chapters of their history that contain prejudice, discrimination, persecution, and genocide?**

INQUIRY OVERVIEW

Students will learn how both the German government and the people in Germany deal with the topic of the Holocaust in contemporary society. Students will be asked to respond to speeches given by Angela Merkel, Barack Obama, and Elie Wiesel at the Buchenwald Memorial; research a Holocaust memorial located in Berlin; and find out how students in German schools learn about the Holocaust. This inquiry helps students understand how people in contemporary Germany learn about and commemorate the atrocities of the Holocaust.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

Holocaust denial and the promotion of Nazi ideology are against the law in Germany. Holocaust education is a mandate in all German *Länder* [federal states]. Throughout Germany many memorials exist that commemorate the victims and events of the Holocaust. Holocaust memorial museums exist at the sites of former concentration camps, among other places.

Before facilitating this inquiry, it is strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with Holocaust education in Germany by reading "Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany" *(International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance)* (**Handout 3.5.4**).

This inquiry assumes that students are already familiar with the events of the Holocaust. Prior to starting this lesson, teachers may want their students to view the animated map on the Holocaust located on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=3372.

➤ Additional reading on Holocaust Remembrance in Germany

- https://www.holocaustremembranceproject.com/Countries/Germany?fbclid=IwAR3bfA1qoMTFh75PhLvtzqTGA6wsdWKeKC5cEjW_7DFNI-j08wGe7eHK0CY

TIME: 4–5 45 minute class periods

CONCEPTS LIST

- Holocaust
- Concentration camp
- Chancellor
- Auschwitz
- Buchenwald
- Memorial
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
- Persecution
- Genocide
- National Socialism

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

All handouts can be found at **www.goethe.de/germanyinfocus**

- "Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp," a transcript of three speeches given June 5, 2009, (**Handout 3.5.1**)
- Excerpts of Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp (**Handout 3.5.2**)
- Holocaust Memorial PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.5.3**)
- Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) (**Handout 3.5.4**)
- German Secondary Students' Reflections on a School Visit to Auschwitz, (**Handout 3.5.5**)
- Bennhold, Katrin. "German schools tour Nazi concentration camps to combat antisemitism." *The Independent*, 14 March 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/nazi-concentration-camps-german-school-tours-antisemitism-auschwitz-sachsenhausen-holocaust-a8252411.html.
- "Buchenwald." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/buchenwald.
- Epstein, Jeremy, Haeg, Nicholas. "Germany." *Holocaust Remembrance Project*, https://www.holocaustremembranceproject.com/Countries/Germany?fbclid=IwAR3bfA1qoMTFh75PhLvtzqTGA6wsdWKeKC5cEjW_7DFNI-j08wGe7eHK0CY.
- "Chancellor Merkel." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., https://www.britannica.com/biography/Angela-Merkel.
- "Elie Wiesel Biography." *Bibliography.com Editors*. The Biography.com Website. A&E Television Networks, Updated 2019, https://biography.com/people/elie-wiesel-9530714.
- "Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany." *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/images/itf_data/documents/02_education/holocaust_education_reports/holocaust_education_report-germany.pdf.
- "The Holocaust—Animated Map." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. United States Holocaust memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=3372.
- "The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (The Holocaust Memorial), Berlin." *YouTube*, uploaded by Trogain, 29 June 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTwcpeb7C1E.
- "President Obama." *White House*, https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/barack-obama/.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

As a class, brainstorm a list of events in your country's history where discrimination or persecution of certain groups took place. Identify how those events are viewed and commemorated today.

SUPPORTING QUESTION #1

Why is it important to remember the Holocaust?

➤ Formative Performance Task

For this close reading activity ask students to read "Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp" (**Handout 3.5.1**), and to focus on each speaker's perspective of the Holocaust and their relationship to the Holocaust. This reading may be done independently, as a read-aloud, or as a shared reading.

Have students Think-Pair-Share to determine what they have learned from the text. Discuss any questions students may have.

Next, ask students to read the speech excerpts (**Handout 3.5.2**) with a partner to examine how each speaker views Holocaust remembrance.

Discuss as a class.

➤ Resources

- "Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp," a transcript of three speeches given June 5, 2009 (**Handout 3.5.1**) The remarks can also be found online at https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/president-obamas-remarks-at-buchenwald.
- Excerpts of Remarks by President Obama, German Chancellor Merkel, and Elie Wiesel at Buchenwald Concentration Camp (**Handout 3.5.2**)

Background information:

- President Obama - https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/barack-obama/
- Chancellor Merkel - https://www.britannica.com/biography/Angela-Merkel
- Elie Wiesel—https://biography.com/people/elie-wiesel-9530714
- Buchenwald - https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/buchenwald

SUPPORTING QUESTION #2

How is the Holocaust remembered in Berlin, Germany's capital?

➤ Formative Performance Task

As a class view the short *YouTube* video, "The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (The Holocaust Memorial), Berlin," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTwcpeb7C1E (2:04 min). Located in the center of Berlin near the Brandenburg Gate, this memorial contains 2,700 concrete slabs covering 19,000 meters. What does this memorial say about Germany's willingness to remember the Holocaust?

View the Berlin Holocaust Memorial's PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.5.3**). Ask student pairs to choose a memorial and to research the event or the subject it commemorates by focusing on the following:

- What event or subject is memorialized, and what is its history?
- Where is the memorial located, and what is the relationship of the site to the event or subject?
- What is the purpose of the memorial?
- What feeling(s) does the memorial evoke in visitors?
- How effective is the memorial in conveying the memory of the event or people memorialized? Explain why you feel this way.

Using what they have learned students will design a presentation to share with their classmates. (PowerPoint, exhibit board etc.)

➤ Resources

- Holocaust Memorial PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.5.3**)
- "The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (The Holocaust Memorial), Berlin." *YouTube*, uploaded by Trogain, 29 June 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTwcpeb7C1E.

SUPPORTING QUESTION #3

How is the Holocaust taught in German schools?

➤ Formative Performance Task

Share the following overview of Holocaust education in Germany with students. (For more detailed information use "Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany" (**Handout 3.5.4**)

- In all 16 *Länder* [federal states] the Holocaust is mandatory as part of history and civics lessons. History lessons deal with the major topic of German and European history in the 20th century. In civics, students study the political, ideological, and psycho-social conditions which led to the Holocaust and the carrying out of genocide possible. How Germany has dealt with and deals with this part of history is also addressed.
- The Holocaust is also taught in classes on German literature and religion, or ethics, as well as in classes on biology (race-based theories), art (pieces of art produced during the Holocaust period or by artists dealing with the topic afterwards), and music (e.g. music composed at the concentration camp in *Theresienstadt/Terezín*).
- Students who are 14-15 years old study and learn the history of the 20th century and the period of National Socialism.
- The events of this time period are addressed and studied again by older students (18 years old) at the college-preparatory *Gymnasium* school before they take the *Abitur* exam.
- It is recommended that classes visit a Holocaust memorial or a museum at the site of a former concentration camp.

Prior to students completing the following activity, have them watch the animated map on Auschwitz from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=0&MediaId=3371.

For this Think-Pair-Share activity ask students to read the "German Secondary Students' Reflections on a School Visit to Auschwitz" (**Handout 3.5.5**) and record what part of the reflections made the biggest impression on them. Tell students to pair up and share their responses. Reconvene the class and ask pairs to report back on their conversations.

➤ Resources

- Holocaust Education in Task Force Member Countries Germany (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) (**Handout 3.5.4**)
- German Secondary Students' Reflections on a School Visit to Auschwitz (**Handout 3.5.5**)

SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK

How do countries confront chapters of their history that contain prejudice, discrimination, persecution, and genocide?

Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical or contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

EXTENSION (OPTIONAL) TASK

Daniel Gaede, the Education Director at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp Memorial, stated the following during an interview about teaching the Holocaust at Buchenwald.

"I'm not sure it would be good to get away from the stigma (Germany and the Holocaust)*…a stigma is a chance to refer to your own history and to reflect on it carefully."*

Ask students to select an event in their country's history where prejudice, discrimination, persecution, or genocide took place. Does Mr. Gaede's statement pertain to this event? Explain why or why not.

TAKING INFORMED ACTION

UNDERSTAND In the United States, Holocaust education is currently required by law in only 17 states. In Canada, it is part of mandatory courses (social studies and/or history curriculum, and sometimes English language arts)

ASSESS Investigate to determine if your state/province is one of them. If yes, what is the mandate and are schools abiding by it? If not, why is there no mandate?

ACT Contact your state legislators and discuss how you could work to make it a mandate in your state.

Portions of this inquiry have been included and adapted from the work of 2010 TOP Fellow Jessica Stock and 2008 TOP Fellow Jacqueline Littlefield.