

The Holocaust

The Holocaust refers to the horrific time period from 1933 to 1945 when throughout Europe over six million Jewish men, women, and children were systematically killed by the Nazi government of Germany. This period is one of the most tragic chapters in human history. The Nazi government perceived the Jewish people as an inferior race and a threat to humanity. As a result, the Nazi government, led by Adolph Hitler, organized the mass murder of Jewish people. Their ultimate goal was to kill all Jewish people.

Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933, representing the Nazi Party. He hated Jewish people. Soon after he became chancellor, the Nazi government made laws to limit the freedoms of Jewish people. The government also distributed anti-Semitic, or anti-Jewish, propaganda to the German people. Hitler wanted a country of all white citizens. He thought that white people were superior to other ethnicities. He believed the Jewish people were not only a religious group; he defined them as a race. Hitler claimed that the Jewish people were a disease to humanity.

The phrase, “The Jewish Question” referred to the question of the role of the Jewish people in society. The Nazi government looked to its own anti-Semitic policies as an answer. The Nazis developed a plan for the **extermination**¹ of all Jewish people. They called it “The Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”

During World War II, the Nazis rounded up Jewish people who were still in Germany and Nazi-controlled territories. Some had already left or were in hiding, but many had decided to stay or had nowhere to go. Allies of Nazi Germany, including Italy and the unoccupied part of France, also rounded up Jewish people. This was one of the ways they contributed to the Nazi agenda.

The Jewish people rounded up by the Nazis and their allies were sent to concentration camps. Most of the Jewish people were sent immediately to camps known as extermination camps, or death camps. The purpose of extermination camps was to kill all the people sent there. Some of the Jewish people were sent to **labor**² camps. The people sent to the labor camps were treated **inhumanely**³ and forced to work hard hours. Many died because of the extremely harsh conditions or because of disease. Jewish people who were first sent to labor camps would often be sent to extermination camps as a final destination.

By the middle of 1942, news about “The Final Solution” reached the Allied governments, including the American and British governments, but they were slow to act in response. Critics say that the governments did too little to save the

¹ **extermination:** complete and immediate extinction by killing off all individuals

² **labor:** work

³ **inhumane:** not human; lacking pity or kindness; not fit for humans

Jewish people. United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt thought that the best method to stop the killings was to defeat the Nazis as quickly as possible. He focused on creating military strategies that would defeat the Nazis as opposed to establishing plans for directly saving the Jewish people. The American government as well as the European governments that made up the Allied governments have been condemned for not doing enough to protect the Jewish people from the cruelty of the Nazi government.

As more and more people found out about the full scope of the Holocaust, they were shocked and horrified. How could over six million people, in the modern world, be killed for no reason other than their ethnicity, or cultural background? It is important to remember the Holocaust and to study what happened. Only by understanding this **bleak**⁴ part of history can we hope to prevent such horror from happening again.

⁴ **bleak**: grim; depressing; cruel; dismal

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How many Jewish men, women, and children were killed during World War II?
 - a. about six hundred
 - b. over six million
 - c. over sixty million
 - d. less than six thousand

2. What does the text describe?
 - a. the cultural impact of the Jewish people throughout Europe
 - b. key events that led to World War II
 - c. Hitler's rise to political power
 - d. the Nazi government's efforts to exterminate the Jewish people

3. Hitler hated Jewish people. What evidence from the text best supports the conclusion?
 - a. Hitler believed that the Jewish people were not only a religious group but also a race.
 - b. Hitler claimed that the Jewish people were a disease to humanity.
 - c. Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933, representing the Nazi party.
 - d. People were horrified when they found out about the full scope of the Holocaust.

4. "The Jewish Question" referred to the question of the role of the Jewish people in society. What was the Nazi government's answer to this question?
 - a. increase the role of the Jewish people in society
 - b. eliminate the Jewish people from society so they have no role
 - c. limit the role of the Jewish people in society
 - d. expand the role of the Jewish people in different areas of society

5. What is this text mostly about?
 - a. World War II
 - b. Hitler's political power
 - c. the Holocaust
 - d. the Nazi government

6. How did the Nazi government plan to exterminate the Jewish people? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Why might people have been horrified when they found out about the full scope of the Holocaust? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Hitler thought that white people were superior to other ethnicities. _____, he wanted a country of all white citizens.

- a. Therefore
- b. However
- c. On the other hand
- d. Initially

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

During the Holocaust, the Nazi government killed over six million Jewish people throughout Europe.

What is the subject of this sentence? the Nazi government

What did the Nazi government do? _____

When? _____

Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** inhumane: lacking compassion, pity, or kindness towards man; not fit for humans.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____