



THE MAKOR TEACHING GUIDES

Teaching the Holocaust

One lesson, three, or five · Free, fully planned, and built to fit the unit you already teach · Grades 6–12

Start at your size. One lesson tomorrow: teach Lesson 2 alone, The Years Before the Killing. Three lessons: teach Lessons 2, 3, and 5. The full set: five chapters in an order that tells one story, the lie, the laws, the machinery, the response, the aftermath. Each lesson is one class period, planned on the pages that follow: background for you, then the lesson, beat by beat. The plans are a floor, not a script: teach them as written, or take the chapters your own way.

Every chapter opens as a clean, print-ready PDF, so handouts are one click.

Keep one question running through the unit: why did the hatred keep coming back?

LESSON 1	The lie · The Protocols of the Elders of Zion How a lie is built, spread, and taken apart.	makorproject.org/topic-protocols
LESSON 2	The laws · The Years Before the Killing, 1933–1939 Six and a half years of laws, dated one by one.	makorproject.org/topic-1933-1939
LESSON 3	The machinery · The Camp System What the camps were, in the perpetrators' own records.	makorproject.org/topic-camp-system
LESSON 4	The response · Jewish Resistance & Rescue Did anyone fight back? The record answers.	makorproject.org/topic-resistance
LESSON 5	The aftermath · Liberation and the Displaced Persons The war ends and the story does not.	makorproject.org/topic-liberation-dp

Is this unit required?

Roughly twenty-nine states mandate Holocaust education, and the requirement usually arrives without a curriculum. This unit is a curriculum: five lessons, sourced, sequenced, and aligned to the standards each chapter names.

Will this unit be too much for my class?

The history is carried by documents and numbers, and the imagery is memorials and records, not atrocity photographs. The horror is in the facts, where students can reason about it, not in images they cannot unsee. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum gears its own teaching materials to grade six and above, and this unit follows that line.

OPEN EVERY LESSON WITH THE STORY SO FAR

Five sentences, spoken aloud, ground any lesson in this guide. Each has a chapter behind it if the class wants more.

1. The Jews are a people, with a faith, a language, and a calendar, three thousand years old. [/topic-who-are-the-jews](#)
2. Their homeland is the Land of Israel, where their two Temples stood in Jerusalem. [/topic-land-of-israel](#) · [/topic-temples](#)
3. The diaspora spread Jewish communities across the world, before and after the Second Temple fell in the year 70, and some always remained in the land. [/topic-diaspora](#) · [/topic-continuous-presence](#)
4. Wherever they lived, they kept the same book, the same calendar, and the same hope of return. [/topic-sacred-texts](#) · [/topic-calendar](#)
5. The hatred they met kept changing its reasons, faith, then money, then race, but the target never changed. [/topic-adversus-judaeos](#) · [/topic-nazi-synthesis](#)

Meeting the subject for the first time? Give it one full period: Who Are the Jews?, the site's front door, so students meet a civilization before they meet the hatred.

Each chapter page carries the full set of discussion questions, its sources, and key takeaways: the plans below use the first question, and the rest are there when you want them.

LESSON 1 · *The lie* · The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

makorproject.org/topic-protocols · [press Open PDF on the page for handouts](#)

FOR THE TEACHER

The Protocols is a forged text, first circulated in Russia in the early 1900s, presenting a fabricated secret meeting of Jewish leaders plotting to rule the world. In 1921 the Times of London proved long passages were copied from an 1864 French satire that never mentioned Jews. Exposure did not stop it: the Nazi state printed and circulated it, and it remains in print today. The chapter walks through how the forgery was assembled, how it spread, and how historians took it apart.

THE LESSON

Before class. Read the chapter once. Print the PDF if you want handouts. That is the whole prep.

Opening, 5 min. Open with the claim at the heart of the chapter: a document once spread the story that Jewish leaders had met in secret to plan world control. No such meeting ever happened. That document became one of history's most damaging lies. Today: how the lie was built, and how it was taken apart.

Reading, 15 min. Read the exposure sections together: the 1864 French satire, then the Times of London investigation. Students note each piece of evidence that the text is a forgery.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: why is a match between two texts stronger evidence of forgery than an expert simply declaring the document false? *Listen for: an expert's verdict can be doubted, a side-by-side match anyone can check cannot. The copying is the proof.*

Close, 5 min. The lie existed before the Nazis. Leave the class with the running question: why did the hatred keep coming back?

LESSON 2 · *The laws* · The Years Before the Killing, 1933–1939

makorproject.org/topic-1933-1939 · a fully planned version of this lesson is in the free teacher guide: makorproject.org/for-teachers

FOR THE TEACHER

On January 30, 1933, Hitler took power. Within eleven months the first legal machinery of persecution was built. The laws kept coming for six and a half years before the war began: the Nuremberg Laws defining “Jew” in law, the pause for the 1936 Olympics, Kristallnacht in November 1938, and the Évian conference at which the world declined to help. The chapter dates each step. None of it was hidden.

THE LESSON

Before class. Read the chapter once. Print the PDF for handouts.

Opening, 5 min. Open with three laws, fifteen centuries apart: 438, Jews barred from public office. 1215, Jews ordered to dress differently. 1935, Jews stripped of citizenship. Ask what students notice. Then read the chapter’s line aloud: “The Nazis did not need a secret parallel system.”

Reading, 15 min. Read the first two sections together: the day Hitler took power, then the eleven months of legal machinery. Students circle every date on their handouts.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: choose two steps and explain what each took away, and why the order of the steps mattered. *Listen for: the order. Exclusion from jobs and schools came first, the 1935 race laws defined “Jew” in law, and each step relied on the one before it.*

Close, 5 min. Return to the running question. In the 400s the reason was faith. In 1935 it was race. The reasons change. Why does the hatred keep coming back?

LESSON 3 · *The machinery* · The Camp System

makorproject.org/topic-camp-system · press Open PDF on the page for handouts

FOR THE TEACHER

A camp was not a single kind of place. The chapter distinguishes five types, from the concentration camps the regime opened in 1933 to the dedicated killing centers of the Final Solution, and tells the story through the perpetrators’ own records: counted, dated, and documented. The distinction students need is purpose: what a concentration camp was for, and what a killing center was for.

THE LESSON

Before class. Read the chapter once, especially the section distinguishing the five types.

Opening, 5 min. Ask students to define “concentration camp” in one sentence. Collect several answers and keep them in view. By the end of class, they revise their own definitions.

Reading, 15 min. Read the five-types section together, then one killing-center section. Students build a two-column chart: concentration camp on one side, killing center on the other.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: how would you explain the distinction to someone who has only ever heard the phrase “concentration camp”? *Listen for: purpose. A concentration camp imprisoned and worked its prisoners. A killing center existed to murder.*

Close, 5 min. Students revise their opening definitions. Add this lesson to the running question: the machinery was built inside a modern country, in view of its people.

LESSON 4 · *The response* · Jewish Resistance & Rescue

makorproject.org/topic-resistance · press Open PDF on the page for handouts

FOR THE TEACHER

They did not go without a fight. The chapter covers armed revolt in the ghettos and in the camps themselves, including Treblinka, Sobibór, and Auschwitz, the partisans who fought outside them, and the resistance that used no weapons, including the Warsaw Ghetto's clandestine archive, buried in milk cans so the record would survive. It closes with the rescuers, Jewish and non-Jewish, from neighbors to diplomats.

THE LESSON

Before class. Read the chapter once. Choose one armed and one unarmed section for class.

Opening, 5 min. Tell the class about the milk cans: a community that knew it might not survive buried its own archive in the cellars of Warsaw. Ask: why bury paper?

Reading, 15 min. Read the section on what resistance means, then your two chosen sections. Students list every form of resistance they meet, armed and unarmed.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: what is gained, and what might be lost, by defining resistance so broadly? *Listen for: both sides. A broad definition brings the buried archive into the record, and it can blur what the armed fighters risked. Either answer, argued from the documents, is doing history.*

Close, 5 min. Return to the opening question of the lesson: did anyone fight back? Students answer it from their own lists.

LESSON 5 · *The aftermath* · Liberation and the Displaced Persons

makorproject.org/topic-liberation-dp · press Open PDF on the page for handouts

FOR THE TEACHER

The killing ended. The Holocaust did not. The chapter opens with the camps the Western Allies entered and the order to get the evidence on record, then follows the survivors: roughly a quarter-million Jews who could not go home, living in displaced-persons camps, some as late as 1957. It includes the American investigator's famous warning that the survivors were still being treated as prisoners, and the first substantive U.S. response.

THE LESSON

Before class. Read the chapter once. Print the PDF for handouts.

Opening, 5 min. Open with the date: May 8, 1945, the war in Europe ends. Ask: what happens to the survivors the next morning? Keep the answers visible. The chapter tests them.

Reading, 15 min. Read the liberation sections, then the displaced-persons sections. Students track where the survivors go, year by year.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: why might a survivor be unable to go home even after the killing stopped? *Listen for: the concrete reasons. Homes stood occupied by former neighbors, whole communities no longer existed, and at Kielce in 1946 returning survivors were killed a year after the war ended.*

Close, 5 min. Answer the running question as a class, from the unit's evidence: the reasons kept changing, and the target did not. Ask students what that tells them about the reasons.

WHAT MAKOR ADDS TO YOUR WWII UNIT

The standard school treatment begins in 1933 and ends in 1945. Students see the crime, but not how it was built or what came after, and the question they actually ask, how could this happen, goes unanswered. This unit adds the mechanism: the lie that came first, the laws that made hatred legal, the machinery, the resistance, and the aftermath. Students trace it in documents, so the answer is theirs, not the teacher's. The gap it closes is the in-between: the history that makes the Holocaust explicable rather than unimaginable.

WHAT MAKOR IS

It's ready. Every chapter is a lesson: planned, one class period, teachable tomorrow.

It fits. Chapters drop into the units you already teach, with no new course to add.

It's solid ground. Primary sources and verified standards, so the documents do the talking.

It's free, with no logins and no ads.

The story around this unit

The unit in focus is Unit 4 of the textbook's six: The Holocaust Era. The five lessons reach beyond it on purpose: the lie comes from Unit 3, where the hatred was built, and the aftermath from Unit 6, where the story continues. The Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum, and Makor holds its foundation. Units 1 to 3 carry the three thousand years before it: the civilization, its communities across the world, and how the hatred was built century by century. Units 5 and 6 carry the story since, to the present: [the chapter on antisemitism today](#), [the guide to hate symbols](#), and [the misconceptions page](#) give students the tools to recognize what they see now. The full Unit 4 shelf holds more than this guide teaches: the Nazi Ghettos, the Einsatzgruppen, Aktion T-4, and the Holocaust in North Africa and the Middle East, the part of the story most curricula never reach. Start from the unit page: [makorproject.org/section-4](#). If your class can take only two more pages, add these bookends: before the unit, The Nazi Synthesis, the centuries of changing reasons for the same hatred on one page ([makorproject.org/topic-nazi-synthesis](#)). After it, The Legal Record, what the world built from the evidence ([makorproject.org/legal-record](#)). One more chapter completes the map: The Eastward Turn, how European antisemitism entered the Arabic-speaking world, from the Protocols in translation by the mid-1920s to Nazi wartime radio and after ([makorproject.org/topic-hatred-moves-east](#)).

If someone challenges you

Every claim carries its source on the page: you are not asking anyone to trust you, you are showing them a document. Contested questions are labeled contested. Hate texts are cited, never linked, so no student is ever sent to read one.

The classroom toolkit

- **The teacher guides.** A fully planned first lesson, this five-lesson unit with notes for each lesson, and chapter charts for grades 6 to 8 and 9 to 12. [makorproject.org/for-teachers](#)
- **The Timeline.** Project it as a warm-up, or have students place the day's lesson on it. [makorproject.org/timeline](#)
- **The Museum.** Manuscripts, coins, and objects, each credited to the institution that holds it. One object, projected, opens a class. [makorproject.org/museum](#)
- **Virtual Field Trips.** Visits to archaeological sites, memorials, and historic Jewish quarters, from your projector. [makorproject.org/field-trips](#)
- **Films.** Curated film and video by unit, grade bands marked: documentaries, archives, survivor testimony. [makorproject.org/films](#)
- **The Recurring Cycle.** The pattern behind the unit's running question, named step by step on one page. [makorproject.org/patterns](#)
- **Misconceptions and the Glossary.** The beliefs students bring to class, set beside the documents, and every term defined. [makorproject.org/misconceptions](#) · [makorproject.org/glossary](#)
- **The Incident Record.** Documented antisemitic incidents of the contemporary era, each entry ending with its record: a verdict, a plea, or an official finding. [makorproject.org/incident-record](#)
- **The Legal Record.** The judgments, treaties, and statutes of the post-Holocaust era, each linked to its primary document. The natural next page after Lesson 5. [makorproject.org/legal-record](#)
- **Standards & Mandates.** The state requirements, on one page: find your state's. [makorproject.org/state-mandates](#)

- **A note on reading level.** Lesson 2 reads at middle-school level. The other chapters sit at high-school level, and every chapter's print-ready PDF makes excerpting easy for younger classes.
- **Reading time.** A full chapter is a half hour's read. The lessons assign sections, never the whole chapter, and the print PDF makes the excerpts.
- **Exit tickets.** Every chapter's key takeaways double as exit-ticket prompts and review sheets.
- **When denial shows up.** The Misconceptions page sets the claims beside the documents, and the Holocaust Denial & the Response chapter shows how the record answered. makorproject.org/topic-holocaust-denial

Find your way on the site

Home · makorproject.org

The Curriculum Gap, why the site exists · </curriculum-gap>

Table of Contents, the whole site on one page · </table-of-contents>

For Teachers, the guides, a self-paced course, and registration for updates · </for-teachers>

For Students · </for-students>

K–5, the early-grades program · </k5>

EVERY CHAPTER IS A LESSON

One class period of material each, with discussion questions, sources, a print-ready PDF, and a Where-this-Chapter-fits note naming the courses it supports, all on the chapter page. The shelf is a menu, not a syllabus: take the chapter your unit calls for, and leave the rest where they are. The lessons planned in this guide come from this shelf, and any other chapter teaches the same way.

Unit 1 • The Jewish World · </section-1>

[Who Are the Jews?](#) · [The Land of Israel](#) · [The Continuous Jewish Presence](#) · [The First & Second Temples](#) · [The Synagogue](#) · [The Sacred Texts](#) · [The Calendar & the Cycle of the Year](#) · [Ritual Objects & Material Culture](#) · [The Jewish Life Cycle](#) · [The Diaspora as a Phenomenon](#)

Unit 2 • Communities Across the World · </section-2>

[A Connected People](#) · [The Jews of Iraq](#) · [The Jews of North Africa](#) · [The Jews of Iran](#) · [The Departure from MENA](#) · [Soviet Jewry](#) · [American Jewry](#) · [Ethiopian Jewry](#) · [Beta Israel](#) · [The Modern State of Israel](#)

Unit 3 • The Evolution of Antisemitism · </section-3>

[Adversus Judaeos](#) · [The Blood Libel](#) · [The Ghetto System](#) · [The Expulsions](#) · [The Racial Turn](#) · [The Russian Pogroms](#) · [The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#) · [The Nazi Synthesis](#) · [The Dhimma](#) · [The Eastward Turn](#) · [The Terror Record](#) · [Contemporary Antisemitism](#)

Unit 4 • The Holocaust Era · </section-4>

[The Years Before the Killing](#) · [Aktion T-4](#) · [The Nazi Ghettos](#) · [The Camp System](#) · [The Einsatzgruppen](#) · [The Holocaust in North Africa & the Middle East](#) · [Jewish Resistance & Rescue](#)

Unit 5 • Jewish Contributions · </section-5>

[Across the Fields](#) · [Rashi](#) · [Maimonides](#) · [Joseph Karo](#) · [Moses Mendelssohn](#) · [Emma Lazarus](#) · [Theodor Herzl](#) · [Albert Einstein](#) · [The Founders of Hollywood](#) · [Jonas Salk](#)

Unit 6 • Memory, Responsibility, and Today · </section-6>

[Liberation & the Displaced Persons](#) · [The Postwar Trials](#) · [Hannah Arendt](#) · [Postwar Restitution](#) · [The Memory Architecture](#) · [Nostra Aetate](#) · [Holocaust Denial & the Response](#) · [The Afterlife of the Image](#) · [It Didn't End](#)

The Makor Project (makorproject.org) is a free online textbook of Jewish history and the history of antisemitism, built from primary sources. It was built to close a gap: in standard textbooks, the Jewish people appear in the ancient world, then reappear two thousand years later as victims of the Holocaust, a history with no in-between. Read in order, its six units and 57 chapters form a full course. Taken singly, each chapter drops into lessons teachers already teach. Every chapter names the standards it supports in its Classroom Connections section, so the alignment work is already done.

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