TEACH JEWISH HISTORY

THE 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. Fifteen minutes: add one chapter's story, source, and question to the unit you are teaching, at teachjewishhistory.org/for-tomorrow. One lesson tomorrow: teach Lesson 2 alone, The Years Before the Killing. Three lessons: teach Lessons 2, 3, and 4. 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 Forgery How a lie is built, spread, and taken apart.	teachjewishhistory.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.	teachjewishhistory.org/topic-1933-1939
LESSON 3	**The machinery** · The Camp System What the camps were, in the regime's own records and survivors' testimony.	teachjewishhistory.org/topic-camp-system
LESSON 4	**The response** · Jewish Resistance & Rescue Did anyone fight back?	teachjewishhistory.org/topic-resistance
LESSON 5	**The aftermath** · Liberation and the Displaced Persons Where the survivors went after 1945, and what they built.	teachjewishhistory.org/topic-liberation-dp

Is this unit required?

A 2026 federal review found that 42 of the 50 states and D.C. require Holocaust education through academic standards or state law, 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 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, more than 3,000 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: each plan below uses one question, and the rest are there when you want them.

LESSON 1 · *The lie* · The Protocols Forgery

teachjewishhistory.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 is still in print today. 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: "Long passages of the Protocols were copied from Maurice Joly's 1864 satire, which attacked Napoleon III and never mentioned Jews. 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.*

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

teachjewishhistory.org/topic-1933-1939 · press Open PDF on the page for handouts

FOR THE TEACHER

On January 30, 1933, Hitler took power. Within eleven months the first legal machinery of persecution was built. The steps kept coming for six and a half years. They include the Nuremberg Laws defining "Jew" in law, the pause for the 1936 Olympics, Kristallnacht in November 1938, and the Évian conference, where the world declined to help. The chapter dates each step. None of it was hidden. The opening section, "What the Holocaust was, and when it began," dates the era from January 1933 and the systematic murder from 1941.

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 first sentence aloud: "None of it was hidden."

Reading, 15 min. Read two sections together: "January 30, 1933," the day Hitler took power, then "The legal machinery, built in eleven months." Students circle every date on their handouts, and mark what German Jews built in answer, from the Jewish Cultural League to Leo Baeck's Reich Representation.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 1, straight from the page: "The Nazis built the machinery of persecution step by step for six and a half years before the war began. Choose two steps from this Chapter and explain what each one took away from Jewish Germans, 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

teachjewishhistory.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 regime's own records and the testimony of survivors such as Mordechai Podchlebnik and Szymon Srebrnik of Chełmno. 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 "The killing center that ended in revolt," or "The transports and the governments that helped" if the class is asking who helped. 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: "The Chapter distinguishes a concentration camp from a killing center by purpose. How would you explain that 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.

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

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

FOR THE TEACHER

The chapter covers armed revolt in the ghettos and in the killing centers of Treblinka, Sobibór, and Auschwitz, and the partisans who fought outside them. It also covers the resistance that used no weapons, including the Warsaw Ghetto's clandestine archive, buried in milk cans and tin boxes 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 "Resistance was more than armed revolt," 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: "Historians broadened the definition of 'resistance' after the 1960s to include unarmed and spiritual acts. What is gained, and what might be lost, by defining resistance so broadly?" *Listen for: both sides. The broader definition brings the Warsaw Ghetto's buried archive and the classrooms of Theresienstadt into the record, and historians still debate the scale of armed resistance.*

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

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

FOR THE TEACHER

The chapter opens with the liberation of the camps and the order to get the evidence on record. Then it 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. The chapter's misconceptions box names the belief this lesson tests: "The Holocaust ended on V-E Day, May 8, 1945."

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, and what they built in the camps.

Discussion, 15 min. Discussion question 3, straight from the page: "In the DP camps, survivors married, had children, published newspapers, staged theater, and printed the Survivors' Talmud. What do these choices suggest about how survivors understood their situation, and what evidence on this page supports your reading?" *Listen for: the evidence on the page: the "DP baby boom," the camps' own newspapers and theater, and the Talmud printed with the U.S. Army in Heidelberg in 1948.*

Close, 5 min. Read aloud the chapter's line: "Life in the DP camps went beyond waiting." Then answer the running question as a class, from the unit's evidence.

> ### What the site adds TO YOUR WWII UNIT
>
> This unit adds the mechanism: the lie that came first, the laws that made hatred legal, the machinery, the resistance, and the aftermath, each traced in documents.

What Teach Jewish History is

It's ready. Every chapter can anchor a lesson, with questions, sources, and a print-ready PDF.

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.

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. Units 1 to 3 carry the more than 3,000 years before it: the civilization, its communities across the world, and how the hatred was built century by century. Unit 5 carries the contributions, and Unit 6 the story since 1945. For the present, use Unit 3 · Ch. 12 · Contemporary Antisemitism, the guide to hate symbols, and the Misconceptions page. The full Unit 4 shelf holds more than this guide teaches: the Nazi Ghettos, the Einsatzgruppen, Aktion T-4, and The Holocaust in the Middle East and North Africa. The Einsatzgruppen chapter also covers the Wannsee Conference and the minutes Eichmann compiled. Start from the unit page: teachjewishhistory.org/section-4. If your class can take only two more pages, add these bookends: before the unit, The Nazi Synthesis, the seven inheritances the regime fused, on one page (teachjewishhistory.org/topic-nazi-synthesis). After it, The Legal Record, what the world built from the evidence (teachjewishhistory.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 (teachjewishhistory.org/topic-hatred-moves-east).

If someone challenges you

Each Chapter cites its sources on the page. Hate texts are cited, never linked.

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. teachjewishhistory.org/for-teachers
- **The Timeline.** Project it as a warm-up, or have students place the day's lesson on it. teachjewishhistory.org/timeline
- **The Museum.** Manuscripts, coins, and objects, each credited to the institution that holds it. One object, projected, opens a class. teachjewishhistory.org/museum
- **Virtual Field Trips.** Visits to archaeological sites, memorials, and historic Jewish quarters, from your projector. teachjewishhistory.org/field-trips
- **Films.** Curated film and video by unit, grade bands marked: documentaries, archives, survivor testimony. teachjewishhistory.org/films
- **The Recurring Cycle.** Eight patterns, by lies, by law, and by force, then rebuilt, traced on one page from the ancient world to today. Use it for a lesson on propaganda: students trace each charge in a Nazi poster back to its earlier forms. teachjewishhistory.org/patterns
- **Misconceptions and the Glossary.** The beliefs students bring to class, set beside the documents, and every term defined. teachjewishhistory.org/misconceptions · teachjewishhistory.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. teachjewishhistory.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. teachjewishhistory.org/legal-record
- **Standards & Mandates.** The state requirements, on one page: find your state's. teachjewishhistory.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 and the Response chapter shows how the record answered. teachjewishhistory.org/topic-holocaust-denial

Find your way on the site

Home · teachjewishhistory.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 CAN ANCHOR A LESSON

Each one can anchor a lesson, 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 in the Land · The First and Second Temples · The Synagogue · The Sacred Texts · The Calendar & the Cycle of the Year · Ritual Objects and Material Culture · The Jewish Life Cycle · The Diaspora

Unit 2 · Communities Across the World · /section-2
A Connected People · The Jews of Iraq · The Jews of Iran · The Jews of North Africa · The Departure from MENA · The Jews of Spain and the Sephardic World · The Jews of Poland and Lithuania · 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 of 1879 · The Russian Pogroms · The Protocols Forgery · 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 the Middle East and North Africa · Jewish Resistance & Rescue

Unit 5 · Jewish Contributions · /section-5
Across the Fields · Rashi · Maimonides · Joseph Karo · Moses Mendelssohn · Levi Strauss · Emma Lazarus · Samuel Gompers · Theodor Herzl · Albert Einstein · The Founders of Hollywood · Jonas Salk

Unit 6 · Memory, Responsibility, and Today · /section-6
Liberation and the Displaced Persons · The Postwar Trials · Hannah Arendt · Postwar Restitution · The Memory Architecture · Nostra Aetate · Holocaust Denial and the Response · The Afterlife of the Image · The Hatred That Outlived the War

Teach Jewish History (teachjewishhistory.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 many standard textbooks, the Jewish people appear in the ancient world, then reappear more than two thousand years later as victims of the Holocaust, a history with no in-between. Read in order, its six units 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.

Teach Jewish History · Original content licensed CC BY-NC · This guide may be shared freely with educators.