

Name: _____

Date: _____

Introduction to the Holocaust

The Holocaust was the German government-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime. "Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, a political party who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were a threat to the so-called German racial community.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.

WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?

In 1933, the Jewish population of Europe stood at over nine million. Most European Jews lived in countries that Nazi Germany would take over during World War II. By 1945, the Germans killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe. Although Jews, whom the Nazis deemed a priority danger to Germany, were the primary victims of Nazi racism, other victims included some 200,000 Roma (Gypsies). At least 200,000 mentally or physically disabled patients, mainly Germans, living in institutional settings, were murdered in the so-called Euthanasia Program.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE "FINAL SOLUTION"

In the early years of the Nazi regime, the National Socialist government established concentration camps to detain real and imagined opponents. Increasingly in the years before the outbreak of war, SS and police officials incarcerated Jews, Roma, and other victims of ethnic and racial hatred in these camps. To monitor the Jewish population, the Germans and created ghettos, transit camps, and forced-labor camps for Jews.

Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, German SS and police units, murdered more than a million Jewish men, women, and children, and hundreds of thousands of others. Between 1941



Prewar photograph of three Jewish children with their babysitter. Two of the children died in 1942.

Warsaw, Poland, 1925-1926.

and 1944, Nazi German authorities deported millions of Jews from Germany, from countries they controlled to ghettos and to killing centers, often called extermination camps, where they were murdered in specially developed gassing facilities.

THE END OF THE HOLOCAUST

In the final months of the war, SS guards moved camp inmates by train or on forced marches, often called "death marches," in an attempt to prevent the American Allies freeing large numbers of prisoners. As Allied forces moved across Europe, they began to liberate concentration camp prisoners, as well as prisoners en route by forced march from one camp to another.

Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews moved to Israel, including 136,000 Jewish displaced persons from Europe. Other Jews moved to the United States and other nations.

The crimes committed during the Holocaust devastated most European Jewish communities and eliminated hundreds of Jewish communities in occupied eastern Europe entirely.

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1. Look through the text and highlight these words:

regime, persecution, occupy, the Final Solution, tyranny, concentration camp, detain, ghetto, incarcerate, deport, liberate, superior, inferior

2. Skim read the text and look for the answers to these questions:

What does 'Holocaust' mean?	How many Jews died in the Holocaust?	What was the name of the program to kill off all the Jews? <i>The Final</i>
Where did the surviving Jews move to after the war?	What percentage of European Jews were killed?	What other groups of people besides the Jews were victims of the Holocaust?

3. Guessing from where they're used in the article, match the words from question one to their meanings below:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| regime | • a form of government that is dodgy |
| persecution | • a small poor part of city where disadvantaged people live |
| occupy | • abuse of power by a leading group |
| the Final Solution | • better than |
| tyranny | • give freedom to |
| concentration camp | • hold |
| detain | • move out of a country forcefully |
| ghetto | • place where prisoners of war are held |
| incarcerate | • put into prison |
| deport | • severely mistreating people on a big scale |
| liberate | • the name of the policy under which all of the Jews were killed |
| superior | • to take over |
| inferior | • worse than |

4. Finish this word search for words from the article:

P B R T C L W L D V U I M L K
 N E A O W M I O E H C N Y B L
 B A R D I B O M W O C C U P Y
 O A P S E R I U R E T A U O X
 Q E O R E G E B H H J R C U Y
 X J A W E C O F V M Z C Y V I
 F T D R V W U F N O Q E N I K
 E T O E F L B T E I Z R C S R
 R O I R E P U S I A Y A G R I
 B M D S C D F A J O N T H M F
 R Q H E E J Y Z U G N E E H H
 K I P P T S G Q H E A L T O H
 X B O H O A H Y B N R V T E Z
 F R R H Y F I Y P W Y G O V M
 T B O L G B Z N I G T J D V C

deport
 incarcerate
 occupy
 superior
 detain
 inferior
 persecution
 tyranny
 ghetto
 liberate
 regime