

Timeline of the Holocaust

Daniel's Story Videotape: Teacher Guide. Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993. Copyright United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Framework for Lesson

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., serves as our nation's memorial to the millions of victims of the Holocaust. It is also America's national institution for the study of Holocaust history. Inherent in the historical study that the museum relates to its visitors is the unwavering hope that the Holocaust will never be forgotten or repeated. Helping children learn about the Holocaust is a special concern at the museum. Remember the Children: Daniel's Story is an exhibit designed to teach children about this period in history by experiencing the Holocaust through the eyes of an innocent child. Although Daniel is a fictional character, the historical events that take place within his story really happened. Children are reminded of the fact as they enter the exhibit and are welcome into Daniel's home in Frankfurt, Germany. His room, furniture, books, toys and belongings are all there in replica to be touched and studied. Through his diary, young visitors learn what it was like to be a child of the Holocaust. "Have you ever been punished for something you didn't do?" Young Daniel asks his guests. Daniel recounts for the children how it felt to be the target of prejudice and discrimination at a young age. Like Daniel, thousands of children lost their most basic human rights and were persecuted during World War II. Between 1937 and 1945, up to 1.5 million children were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Daniel represents all of the children forced to endure the unspeakable cruelty of this time. Daniel's Story follows this composite child through life in a crowded ghetto, to the gates of a concentration camp, and to his eventual survival at the end of the war. As they journey with Daniel through the Holocaust, young museum visitors begin to understand the painful consequences of prejudice and discrimination. The museum hopes it is a lesson they will not forget.

The timeline that follows is a review of the anti-Semitic programs and laws that went into effect between 1933 and 1945. It is apparent that the timeline also marks the escalating levels of prejudice, discrimination, and terrifying violence targeting the many victims of the Holocaust. It is offered to place into historical perspective the events and issues described in Daniel's Story.

Timeline of historical events related to Daniel's Story, 1933-1945

Jan. 30, 1933 **Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany**

Mar. 23, 1933 **Dachau concentration camp opens. Its first prisoners are political opponents.**

Apr. 1, 1933 **A nation-wide boycott of Jewish businesses is ordered by the Nazi party. Nazi guards stand in front of Jewish-owned stores and discourage people**

from shopping there. Often the German word for Jew (Jude) is smeared on the store window with a Star of David painted in black and yellow graffiti. People shopping at the stores are threatened and physically molested. Signs often stated that Germans buying at Jewish-owned shops would be photographed and their pictures and names published in the local press. The boycott does not receive widespread support.

Apr. 25, 1933 The law against "overcrowding in German schools and universities" is adopted, restricting the number of Jewish children allowed to attend. Children of war veterans and those with one non-Jewish parent are initially exempted.

May 10, 1933 The Nazis declare that any books they disapprove of should be banned. They burn tens of thousands of books in huge bonfires. This includes many popular children's books, since the authors were Jewish.

July 14, 1933 Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary (Genetic) Diseases is adopted. As a result, German doctors sterilize many disabled adults and children, and also Jewish, Gypsy and Afro-German children.

1933-1935 In German schools it is officially taught that "non-Aryans" are racially inferior. Jewish children are prohibited from participating in "Aryan" sport clubs, school orchestras, and other extracurricular activities. Jewish children are banned from playgrounds, swimming pools, and parks in many German cities and towns.

May 1935 "No Jews" signs and notices are posted outside German towns and villages, and outside shops and restaurants.

May 21 & 31, 1935 Jews are prohibited from serving in the German armed forces.

Sept. 15, 1935 The Nuremberg Laws: laws proclaimed at Nuremberg stripped German Jews of their citizenship even though they retained limited rights.

Oct. 15, 1936 The Ministry of Science and Education prohibits teaching by "Non-Aryans" in public schools and bans private instruction by Jewish teachers.

July 2, 1937 Further restrictions are imposed on the number of Jewish students attending German schools.

Mar 11-13, 1938 Germany occupies and incorporates Austria as a German province called the Ostmark.

May 13, 1938 The German government passes a decree requiring the registration of all Gypsies without a fixed address living in the Ostmark; by June 1938, all Gypsy children above the age of 14 have to be fingerprinted. This is a central part of the growing racial definition of Gypsies as "criminally asocial."

May 17, 1938 Special questionnaires for the registration of Jews and Mischlinge (people of part Jewish-origin) are used for the national census.

June 12-18, 1938 The Germans launch the first major wave of arrests of German and Austrian Gypsies, including all Gypsy teenagers (14 and older). They are sent to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Mauthausen. Females above age 14 are sent to Lichtenburg and its successor concentration camp at Ravensbruck.

July 11, 1938 Jews are prohibited from going to German spas and vacationing at German beaches. Thus, German Jews can no longer go to the beach at Danzig, but are forced into a somewhat smaller enclave the adjacent town of Zoppot, where oil and commercial barges are anchored.

July 23, 1938 A decree is issued that Jews older than the age of 15 must carry, at all times, identity cards that mark them as Jews. The decree goes into effect January 1, 1939.

Aug. 17, 1938 A decree makes it mandatory for Jews to insert the middle names of "Israel" and "Sara" into all official documents. This decree goes into effect January 1, 1939. Thus, Jews are always identifiable.

Sept. 29-30, 1938 Munich Conference: World powers allow Germany to annex Czechoslovakia.

Oct. 5, 1938 Jewish passports must be stamped with a red "J" at the request of the Swiss government.

Nov. 9-11, 1938 Kristallnacht ("Night of Broken Glass"): organized nation-wide pogrom (anti-Jewish riots) result in the burning of hundreds of synagogues, the looting and destruction of many Jewish homes, schools, and community offices, vandalism (including broken glass of store windows), and the looting of 7,500 Jewish stores. Many Jews are beaten, and more than 90 are killed. 30,000 Jewish men are arrested and imprisoned in concentration camps. Several thousand Jewish women are arrested and sent to local jails. This is followed by a punitive fine to be paid by the Jewish community of the damages done to their businesses and the accelerated "aryanization" of Jewish businesses (Jews are forced to sell their business to non-Jews at arbitrarily low prices).

Nov. 15, 1938 An official decree prohibits Jews from attending German public schools; thereafter, they can attend only separate Jewish schools.

Dec. 2-3, 1938 Decrees ban Jews from public streets on certain days; Jews are forbidden driver's licenses and car registrations.

Dec. 3, 1939 Jews must sell their businesses and real estate and hand over their securities and jewelry to the government at artificially low prices.

Dec. 8, 1938 Jews may no longer attend universities as teachers and/or students.

April 30, 1939 German Jews lose all legal protection as renters; many are expelled and forced to move to smaller residences in less desirable neighborhoods.

June 5, 1939 **2,000 Gypsy males above the age of 16 are arrested in Burgenland province (formerly Austria) and sent to Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps; 1,000 Gypsy girls and women above the age of 15 are arrested and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp.**

Sept. 1, 1939 **Germany invades Poland; World War II begins. German and Austrian Jews are subjected to a night curfew and restricted shopping hours in stores during the day.**

Sept. 23, 1939 **Jews are forced to turn in radios, cameras, and other electric objects to the police. Jews receive more restrictive ration coupons than other Germans. They do not receive coupons for meat, milk, etc. Jews also receive fewer and more limited clothing ration cards than other Germans.**

Nov. 23, 1939 **Germans force Jews in Poland to wear a yellow Star of David on their chest or a blue-and white star of David arm band.**

April-June, 1940 **Germany conquers Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France.**

May 1-7, 1940 **Approximately 154,000 Polish Jews are concentrated and imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto which established and sealed off from the outside world.**

May 20, 1940 **A concentration camp is established in Auschwitz, Poland.**

July 29, 1940 **German Jews are denied telephones.**

Mar. 22, 1941 **The Ministry of Research and Education prohibits Gypsy and Afro-German children from attending German schools because of the ostensible danger to Aryan children.**

April 6, 1941 **Germany, joined by Italy and Bulgaria, invades Yugoslavia and Greece.**

June 22, 1941 **Germany invades the Soviet Union; mobile killing squads accompany the army and murder millions of Jews, Communists, and Gypsies in mass graves.**

Sept 1, 1941 **German Jews above the age of 6 are forced to wear a Yellow Star of David sewed on the left side of the chest with the "Jude" printed on it in black.**

Oct. 1941 **Construction begins on an addition to the Auschwitz camp, known as Birkenau. Birkenau includes a killing center, which begins operations in early 1942.**

Oct. 14, 1941 **Deportation of German Jews to Poland begins, including the first transports to the Lodz ghetto.**

Nov. 5-9, 1941 **Five thousand Gypsies are deported from labor and internment camps in Austria to the Lodz ghetto in Poland.**

- Dec. 8 1941** **First killing center (Chelmno) begins operation; the United States declares war on German. First gassing of victims in mobile gas vans.**
- Jan. 16, 1942** **Deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto to the killing center at Chelmno begins.**
- Jan 20, 1942** **Wannsee Conference: senior German government officials discuss the details of their plan for carrying out the "Final Solution" to kill all Jews in Europe.**
- Feb-Mar. 1942** **The "evacuation" of the major Jewish ghettos in the General Government in Poland begins. This marks the launching of the systematic deportation and murder of the Jews in occupied central Poland.**
- May 4-12, 1942** **Approximately 10,000 Jews, who had arrived in the Lodz ghetto some six months earlier from Germany, Luxembourg, Vienna, and Prague, are deported to Chelmno. Before they board the trains, their baggage is confiscated.**
- June 1942** **All Jewish schools in Germany are closed by the government.**
- Summer 1942** **Jews are deported from Nazi-occupied countries throughout Europe to ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers in Poland.**
- Sept. 5-12, 1942** **Approximately 15,000 Jews in the Lodz ghetto are deported to Chelmno, mostly children under 10 and individuals are 65, but also the deportations include others who are too weak or ill to work. By Sept. 16, approximately 55,000 Jews have been deported to the killing center at Chelmno.**
- Dec. 1, 1942** **A special internment camp for non-Jewish Polish youths is opened in Lodz.**
- Mar. 1, 1943** **All Gypsies in Germany, with a few exceptions, are arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.**
- Mar. 7, 1943** **Gypsies in Nazi-occupied countries are deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.**
- June 1943** **Heinrich Himler orders the liquidation (destruction) of all ghettos in Poland and the USSR; the last to be liquidated is the Lodz ghetto in Aug. 1944.**
- May 6, 1944** **A soup strike by younger workers begins in the Lodz ghetto nail and leather (Tannery) workshops; the workers refuse to accept watery soup rations. This hunger strike spreads and continues for several days.**
- June-July 14, 1944** **7,196 Jews are deported from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmno, where they are killed.**
- July 24, 1944** **Advancing Soviet troops liberate the killing center at Majdanek.**

Aug. 2-3 1944 **The Gypsy-family camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau is liquidated, and its inhabitants are killed.**

Aug. 7-30, 1944 **Remaining Lodz ghetto Jews are deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau as Soviet Troops continue their advance into Poland.**

Oct. 1944 **The Nazis deport some prisoners from Auschwitz westward to be used in German camps and factories for forced labor.**

Oct. 7, 1944 **Members of the Sonderkommando (camp prisoners forced to burn corpses) stage a rebellion at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They succeed in blowing up a gas chamber and crematoria.**

Jan. 17, 1945 **With the Soviet army only 10 days away, remaining camp inmates are evacuated from Auschwitz; "death march" to concentration camps inside of Germany begins.**

Jan. 27, 1945 **Soviet troops liberate the camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.**

Apr. 11-12, 1945 **American troops liberate the camp at Buchenwald. Some of the prisoners are former inmates of Auschwitz.**

May 8, 1945 **The war and the Nazi regime end.**

Lesson Questions

Focus on the main idea

1. Review the timeline of anti-Semitic programs and laws that went into effect between 1933-1945. Which actions were announced first and why? How is the order in which they were put into effect significant?

2. It has been said of the Holocaust that, although "all Jews were victims, not all victims were Jewish." Use the timeline to identify other people and groups that became targets of Nazi persecution and violence over the course of the Holocaust.

Reflect on other important issues

3. The timeline begins in 1933 with Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany. Why does this event signal the beginning of the Holocaust years?

4. What is the purpose of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum? Why does the museum feel it has a special obligation to educate children and young people about the history of the Holocaust?

Extend your knowledge

5. Research the first phase of the Holocaust (1933-1939). Who were the initial targets of Nazi persecution, and what were the first signs of prejudice and discrimination

directed at these victims?

6. "The Timeline of Historical Events Related to Daniel's Story" chronicles the 12-year history of prejudice, discrimination, and persecution that came to be known as the Holocaust. Using the timeline, trace the events of the Holocaust from Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 to the end of World War II in 1945. Note the escalation of persecution and violence over the course of those years. What is significant about the fact that the Holocaust took place over a 12-year time period?