



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

Level I Vocabulary:

Antisemitism-Discrimination against Jewish people for racial or religious reasons. Religious antisemitism has existed for thousands of years, but Hitler and the Nazis defined Jews racially, believing them to be separate from and inferior to the "Aryan" population.

Aryan- Term used in Nazi Germany to refer to non-Jewish and non-Roma (Gypsy) Caucasians. Northern Europeans with especially "Nordic" features such as blonde hair and blue eyes were considered by so-called race scientists to be the most superior of Aryans, members of a "master race."

Bystander- A person who is present or aware of an event taking place but does not take part. The Holocaust could not have happened without millions of bystanders.

Collaborator- Someone from the countries that the Nazis occupied who helped and worked with the Nazis to achieve their goals. Collaborators were crucial in the Nazis goal to kill all the Jews of Europe.

Concentration camp- A place where large numbers of people, especially political prisoners or members of persecuted minorities, are deliberately imprisoned in a relatively small area with inadequate facilities, sometimes to provide forced labor or to await mass execution. Nazi concentration camps served a variety of functions and were called by different names: labor camps (*Arbeitslager*); transit camps (*Durchgangslager*); prisoner-of-war camps (*Kriegsgefangenlager*); concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager KZ*), and death camps or killing centers, often referred to in Nazi parlance as extermination camps (*Vernichtungslager*). The Nazis established about 42,500 camps and ghettos between 1933 and 1945.

Gas chambers-Sealed off rooms where poisonous gas (either the insecticide Zyklon B or Carbon Monoxide) is used to kill all those inside. First used against the mentally and physically disabled in a Nazi program known as T-4, gas chambers were the preferred method of killing Jews from 1942 onward. Gas chambers were used in large scales at all Nazi killing centers as well as at Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau, which functioned as both a killing center and a concentration camp.

Genocide-Actions committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

Ghetto- A confined area of the city in which members of a minority group are compelled to live. During the Holocaust, Jews were forced to live in closed-off ghettos so the Nazis could identify and control all the Jews of an area. Lack of food, clothing, medicine, severe winter weather, and the absence of adequate municipal services led to repeated outbreaks of disease and to very high mortality rates. With the implementation of the "Final Solution" in late 1941, most ghettos were systematically destroyed. Residents were either shot in mass graves located nearby or deported, usually by train, to killing centers. The largest ghetto in Poland was the Warsaw Ghetto (pop. 450,000); other major ghettos were established in the cities of Lodz, Krakow, Bialystok, Lvov, Lublin, Vilna, Kovno, Czestochowa, and Minsk.

Hitler Youth- An organization set up by Adolf Hitler in 1933 to indoctrinate all German boys in Nazi ideology. Upon reaching his 10th birthday, a German boy was registered and investigated especially for "racial purity" and, if qualified, inducted into the *Deutsches Jungvolk* ("German Young People"). At age 13, he became eligible for the Hitler Youth, from which he was graduated at age 18. Hitler Youth indoctrinated German boys to blindly follow Nazi orders.

Jews- Followers of the Jewish faith. Jews originated as a separate ethnic and religious group around the second millennium BCE, living in the land of Israel. The Jewish diaspora sent many Jews to Europe over centuries. Ashkenazi Jews are a Jewish diaspora population who merged in the Holy Roman Empire around the end of the first millennium. Many Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe largely maintained their Orthodox way of life in *Shtetls*, which were small, mainly Jewish villages. Yiddish, a mix of Hebrew and Germanic languages, was the language widely spoken by Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. Many Jewish families did not think of themselves as that different from their Christian neighbors, assimilating into their country's culture and society.

Killing Center- The Nazis established killing centers for efficient mass murder. Unlike concentration camps, which served primarily as detention and labor centers, killing centers (also referred to as "extermination camps" or "death camps") were almost exclusively "death factories," with little to no purpose besides the mass killing of human beings. German SS and police murdered nearly

2,700,000 Jews in the killing centers, primarily by asphyxiation with poison gas or by shooting.

Kristallnacht- Translated from German to English as the "Night of Broken Glass", it is the name given to the violent anti-Jewish pogrom of November 9 and 10, 1938. The Nazis used the assassination of a Nazi official in Paris by a young Jewish man as justification for violence and destruction. Instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and the SA (Nazi Storm Troopers), the pogrom occurred throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. *Kristallnacht* was followed by the arrest of 30,000 Jewish men and boys, which was the first large scale arrest of Jews simply for being Jewish.

Mein Kampf- Written in 1924 by Adolf Hitler while he was imprisoned after a failed coup, *Mein Kampf* lays out Hitler's revolutionary goals and racial theory. Hitler identifies the Aryan race as the "genius" race and the Jew as the "parasite," and declares the need for Germans to seek living space (*Lebensraum*) in the East at the expense of the Slavs and the Marxists of Russia. *Mein Kampf's* main thesis is that of scapegoating the Jewish people for Germany's problems and that their influence must be destroyed.

Nazi- Members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The Nazi Party was formed in 1920. They promised a strong central government, increased *Lebensraum* ("living space") for Germanic peoples, formation of a national community based on race, and racial cleansing via the active suppression of Jews, who would be stripped of their citizenship and civil rights. The Nazis proposed national and cultural renewal based upon a mythic vision of Germany's past. The party, especially its paramilitary organization *Sturmabteilung* (SA; Storm Detachment; Brownshirts), used physical violence to advance their political position, disrupting the meetings of rival organizations and attacking their members (as well as Jewish people) on the streets. Nazification of Germany occurred after Adolf Hitler's seizure of power in 1933

Nuremberg Laws- The Nuremberg Laws were antisemitic and racist laws enacted by the Nazi Party in 1935. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor forbade marriages and extramarital intercourse between Jews and Germans and barred the employment of German females under 45 in Jewish households (so no German woman could have a chance to reproduce with a Jewish man). The Reich Citizenship Law declared that only those of German or related blood were eligible to be Reich citizens. Jews were classified as state subjects without any

citizenship rights. A supplementary decree outlining the definition of who was Jewish was passed on 14 November, and the Reich Citizenship Law officially came into force on that date. The laws were expanded on 26 November 1935 to include Romani people and Black people. These laws became the basis for racist anti-Jewish policies and the legal exclusion of Jews from German life.

Perpetrator- Someone who does something is morally wrong or criminal. In the context of the Holocaust, it means someone directly involved in the genocidal acts of the Nazis.

Propaganda- Forms of information used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda and a master of the manipulation of truth, used books, film, newspapers, and radio to further notions of racial superiority and the persecution of Jews.

Star of David- A six-pointed star that is a centuries-old symbol of Judaism. During the Holocaust a badge featuring the Star of David was used by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust as a method of visibly identifying Jews.

Swastika- The symbol of the Nazi Party. The swastika is used as a symbol of divinity and spirituality in Indian religions and was a symbol of auspiciousness and good luck until the 1930s, when it became a symbol of Aryan identity and the Nazi Party.

Upstander- Someone who speaks out and tries to help someone or a group of people when they see injustice or persecution. If more people had been upstanders during Hitler's rise to power and during the Holocaust, the Nazis might not have succeeded in killing two-thirds of European Jews.