



Steven's Story RESOURCE CARDS

The following resource has been created by Holocaust Learning UK in partnership with the Holocaust Educational Trust and is designed for use with Holocaust Learning UK's *Steven's Story* film.

Holocaust Learning UK offers a unique array of films, tailor-made for secondary school students, supported by bespoke resources and expertise provided by the Holocaust Educational Trust. All their films are free to view and provide students with the essential historical facts of the Holocaust, together with memorable personal testimony, archive footage and a diverse cast of student actors to foster historical learning and an understanding of the Holocaust's contemporary relevance: linking the past, present and future.

The Holocaust Educational Trust works to ensure that people from every background are educated about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today. Since 1988, the Holocaust Educational Trust has worked with schools, universities, and communities around the UK to raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust. The Trust provides teacher training, an Outreach programme to enable Holocaust survivors to share their personal testimonies, teaching aids and resources. Through their flagship programme, the *Lessons from Auschwitz* Project, tens of thousands of young people have had the opportunity to see for themselves the site of the former Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. They return inspired and passionate about ensuring that the legacy of the Holocaust continues for generations to come, and having seen where antisemitism can lead, they are committed to calling it out wherever it is found.

INTRODUCTION

This collection of resource/discussion cards has been designed to be used in conjunction with Holocaust Learning UK's film *Steven's Story* to explore the history of the Holocaust, Steven Frank's testimony and lived experience of the Holocaust, other first-hand eyewitness accounts and some of the important challenges raised by its study. The film and these resources are intended to be used in the classroom and are appropriate for a cross-curriculum approach to teaching the Holocaust. In particular, the resource can be used in the following subjects:

1. History
2. RE & Philosophy
3. PSHE & Citizenship

The resource is devised to allow for students to discuss and respond in pairs or in small groups; however, teachers may also wish to choose 2-4 cards (depending on time constraints and students' ability) to discuss as a class. To ensure the most meaningful and effective use, the cards are to be discussed in the classroom with guidance and **not to be given as a homework or independent activity**. This is particularly important as some cards detail events which are emotive and can be difficult to engage with. Therefore, a teacher/educator must be present to support students and ensure that their engagement with the discussions fosters a robust and meaningful understanding of the Holocaust which does not dramatise the events and is empathetic rather than emotional.



Each set of cards has accompanying contextual guidance for teacher/educator use.

The aim of the discussion cards is to ensure students develop an understanding of the Holocaust that is embedded in thoughtful consideration of Steven Frank's testimony and, consequently, individual human experience. This in turn enables students to look beyond the statistics of the Holocaust and recognise that the Holocaust is not simply history but living history, with important implications and relevancy for today. Therefore, the cards are founded in the core pedagogical aim of re-humanisation of the victims of the Holocaust and looking at individual, personal experiences rather than broad, impersonal chronological arcs.

The cards combine testimony extracts from Steven Frank, some of which are featured in the film, with connecting discussion questions. The questions have been chosen to prompt students to deepen their understanding of what is being described in the extract; to connect it to the timeline of the Holocaust; and to further connect the themes and events raised to a wider contextual understanding of the Holocaust. These include, but are not limited to, the geographical scale of the Holocaust, the methods of de-humanisation employed by the Nazis, the impact of living conditions on one's psyche and sense of individual humanity, and ability to survive, and the challenges of liberation. The intention behind this is to scaffold students' historical understanding of the Holocaust with a deeper questioning or awareness of complex issues of identity, survival, antisemitism, resilience, and human behaviour.

It is recognised that the time available to teachers to teach the Holocaust is limited, meaning that opportunities to broaden the scope of students' study of the Holocaust are similarly restricted. In utilising the film and the discussion cards either in part or in whole, there is increased capacity to engage students in a dual focus of essential, foundational, historical understanding with important considerations of diverse questions of humanity and human experience which weigh heavily on this history and require careful unpacking.

LESSON PLAN

Resource Cards: Steven's Story

You will need:

- Timeline of Testimony (this can be either displayed on screen or printed for students preferably in A3)
- A5 Resource Cards 1 (printed double sided)
- Highlighters/pens
- Biographies:
 - o [Steven Frank BEM](#)

These discussion cards can be used alongside the film 'Steven's Story'. Through Steven's testimony, the cards explore the growing threat of Nazism, the impact of strengthening antisemitism and anti-Jewish laws and the effect this had on individuals and their families. Moving through the chronology of the Holocaust and Steven's experiences, the cards also explore living conditions in different Holocaust sites, being a child during the Holocaust, deportations, and finally, the challenge of rebuilding life after the Holocaust.

The connecting questions prompt students to consider, alongside these historical realities, themes such as:

- Unsafe spaces
- Dilemmas and difficult choices
- Identity
- Family
- Home
- Maintaining identity, humanity and agency
- Survival
- Rebuilding Life
- Resistance (including spiritual resistance)
- Hatred and Kindness
- The nature of forgiveness
- The importance of sharing testimony

The discussions are devised to encourage a closer reflection of the impact the historical events of the Holocaust had on real people. Thus, shifting students' understanding of the Holocaust as history to living or lived history, looking beyond the statistics of the Holocaust and at individual experiences. This underpinning aim runs through all discussion cards and teachers should ensure that students come back to this essential point before concluding the lesson.

The discussion cards are categorised in a manner which reflects the chronology of Steven's testimony. If time allows, teachers can spend 3 lessons focussing on each pack of cards or a selection of cards can be used from each category. A summary of this is below alongside some helpful guidance notes to support you in generating thoughtful discussions with your students.

Chapter 1: Life Before the War & Rising Threats

- Life before the Holocaust

- Brotherhood
- Neighbours
- Being Jewish
- School after the Nazi Occupation
- Wearing the Yellow Star
- Staying in Holland

Guidance Notes:

These discussion cards introduce students to Steven's life before the Holocaust and the impact of the Nazis invasion of Holland. This provides important contextual understanding of life in Holland and an emerging awareness of Steven's life, relationships, and interests before his life was turned upside down by the Holocaust. Key historical developments such as the implementation of the Yellow Star, Nazi influence in schools and other areas of civic life, are grounded in Steven's personal experience of this, therefore, illustrating the overarching pedagogical aim of the lesson to humanise, individualise and personalise students' historical understanding of the Holocaust.

The cards on Steven's neighbours and Jewish identity also prompt wider discussion on pre-war communities in Holland and, in extension, across Europe. They provide an opportunity to introduce or reintroduce terminology that can be applied such as integration, assimilation, acculturation and secularism. In addition, students can reflect on the diversity and complexities of Jewish identity and the varying degrees of religiosity, observance, importance, expression and awareness. While Steven's family were Jewish and understanding and appreciative of this, they did not apply a great deal of significance on their 'Jewishness'. They were secular Jews; they didn't attend synagogue and would put up a tree at Christmas. However, Steven describes that his father was very involved in Jewish organisations, and this was how they primarily understood and expressed their Jewish identity. In the film, Steven also explains that this was rather typical for Jews in Holland, so the discussion in the classroom can expand to consider other Jewish communities, extrapolating Steven's experience to build a wider understanding. Teachers may wish to spend further time exploring this and comparing this to what students may have previously learned about pre-war Jewish life (see the Holocaust Educational Trust's resources for further guidance on this here [Holocaust Educational Trust - Pre-war Jewish Life](#)).

The cards on school life after the Nazi invasion and deciding to stay in Holland are also important in starting to deepen students' understanding of the vast challenges and dilemmas facing persecuted Jews across Europe. The growing anxiety in wartime classrooms combined with the imposing questions surrounding whether to stay or leave your home country, provide complex themes and dilemmas for students to grapple with allowing them to develop historical empathy and nuance in their understanding of the Holocaust. Often, students raise the question of why more Jews didn't flee as the Nazi threat became more severe. However, Steven's family's experience illustrates, amongst other key aspects, the emotive nature of this dilemma. Steven's parents felt a sense of duty and responsibility to their home and communities, and Steven's father had a strong desire to continue to utilise his professional talents to make a positive contribution to their vulnerable neighbours.

These discussions also raise the issue of agency while under oppression and the significance of finding ways to express this. For example, while Steven's family had an opportunity to flee, the decision of his father to stay and continue his legal and humanitarian work illustrates that utilising his passion and profession was a crucial part of persevering through adverse circumstances and maintaining a sense of control. In addition, Steven's mother choosing to stay because she couldn't leave her husband, exemplifies the importance of relationships and keeping family together. These are useful discussions which not only demonstrate the challenges and growing threats facing Jews, but the significant personal decisions which featured in daily life.

Teachers should note that this specific extract references the Nazis' euthanasia programme or T4 programme. This should be explained to students in order to understand the extract in more depth. The background reading notes for conceptual understanding at the end of this document provides further information on this programme and other victims of Nazi persecution.

Chapter 2: Camps & Deportations

- Barneveld
- Westerbork
- Deportations
- Birthdays in Westerbork
- Deportation to Theresienstadt
- Mother in Theresienstadt
- Being a Child in Theresienstadt
- Starvation in Theresienstadt
- Religious Education in Theresienstadt

Guidance Notes:

The discussion cards exploring camps and deportations reflect the intensification of events for Steven and his family. Steven's testimony is arguably unique within classroom spaces as he was sent to sites which aren't typically covered in standard narratives of the Holocaust. Subsequently, these cards allow teachers to expand students' understanding of the sites, spaces and places of the Holocaust and deepen their awareness of its scale. Teachers should point out the locations of these sites to demonstrate the breadth of Steven's experiences.

1. **Barneveld:** Central Netherlands
2. **Westerbork:** Nazi-occupied Netherlands
3. **Theresienstadt:** Czechoslovakia

While the cards illustrate the conditions of deportations and in Theresienstadt, prompting students to consider the realities and extremities of the Holocaust, they also demonstrate humanity, agency, resistance and human ingenuity. For example, the extracts reflecting on birthdays, the care Steven received from his mother and religious education from Orthodox Jews in the camp, are meaningful examples of individuals maintaining a sense of their

identity as a means of resilience, strength, resistance and survival. Teachers can, therefore, mature discussions on the themes of humanising narratives of the Holocaust and developing historical empathy, looking beyond broad ideas or assumptions of Holocaust sites, and to individual lived experiences which illustrate the nuance of day-to-day life in camps. It is here that teachers can also introduce more complex themes of spiritual resistance and the role one's inner life played in living in such brutal and dehumanising environments. For example, while the card on Steven's birthday may not initially prompt considerations of resistance, the efforts his mother went to in finding something which could be presented as a gift and to acknowledge the date, is quite remarkable. In a place of despair, fear, brutality and disease, finding cause to celebrate or hold on to a sense of normalcy, as well as protect a semblance of childhood innocence, is arguably a display of spiritual resistance or rejection of the situation they found themselves in. It's also an example which highlights the central role of Steven's mother in protecting her children both physically and emotionally, doing her utmost to provide for them as holistically as possible.

Used alongside the timeline, teachers can also place the cards and Steven's experiences within the wider timeline of the Holocaust and the Second World War, enabling students to utilise their prior historical knowledge in their analysis of the testimony extracts.

Chapter 3: Liberation & Rebuilding Life

- Finding a Home
- Journey to Paris from England
- Experiencing Kindness
- Childhood in England
- Hatred

Guidance Notes:

The third and final set of cards focuses on Steven's liberation and post-war experiences. It is important when discussing these extracts with students that liberation is not presented as an overwhelmingly positive experience nor an immediate 'end' to the Holocaust. As Steven illustrates, there were a number of challenges facing them, relocations, administrative and emotional difficulties in knowing where to go, how and who would help. The cards on kindness and hatred also provide more reflective, philosophical themes to address with students providing further insight into the ongoing impact of the Holocaust and how it has shaped Steven's perspectives and motivations for sharing his testimony with others. The card on hatred is particularly compelling and thought-provoking, but teachers should be mindful of students making simplistic and sentimental conclusions about 'forgiveness' which risks diminishing the importance of the accountability of perpetrators and the role of post-war justice.

Conclusion

At the end of the film and the discussion cards, students should have a fuller understanding of the history of the Holocaust, Steven's experiences of the Holocaust and the importance of humanising our study of the Holocaust. Students should be able to offer reflections on why it is important to focus on individual experiences of the Holocaust and the value this has on

our learning. They should also be appreciative of the fact that Steven's experience is one of millions of others and there is no one experience of the Holocaust. However, in delving deeper into his experiences, they have been able to study in a way which looks beyond the statistics of the Holocaust, avoid generalisations, and consider the complex human impact of the Holocaust which continues to be felt today.

The key points to re-emphasise are:

- The threat of the Nazis developed over time, and the Holocaust did not emerge overnight.
- Jewish people faced various challenges and dilemmas.
- Many Jewish people felt connected to their home countries and had made important contributions to society.
- When learning about the Holocaust, it is crucial that we focus on individual human experiences to understand its impact on real people and look beyond the statistics.
- There were many different Holocaust sites/landscapes and thus there was no one universal experience of the Holocaust.
- Living conditions in ghettos, during deportations, forced labour and at concentration and death camps were appalling and had physical and emotional affects.
- The actions of individuals and different roles that were taken were hugely significant. (For example, Steven's mother, the police officer who was the first person to show Steven kindness, Steven's father and his humanitarian efforts).
- The living conditions and environments Jewish inmates experienced had both external and internal implications. For example, on one's ability and resolve to survive, and strength to hold onto their individual identity. However, there were remarkable instances of individuals resisting their circumstances through maintaining a semblance of normalcy, affirming faith and culture, and attempting to mark important dates and anniversaries.
- The camp environment assaulted all senses which cannot be and should not be replicated in our study. However, this presents the question of what we can really know about the Holocaust.
- Antisemitism was of central importance to Nazi ideology throughout the war despite external factors.
- Liberation and the end of the Holocaust brought new challenges and was not a guarantee of new life. Often, survivors were severely unwell and needed to not only physically recover but recover their faith in humanity. The practical question of where to go and what is home is also a hugely emotive challenge.

BACKGROUND READING FOR TEACHERS

i. Defining the Holocaust

For a fuller exploration of the definition of the Holocaust, we encourage you to read the Holocaust Educational Trust's teaching guide here: [Defining the Holocaust](#). A brief summary

of the key points for conceptual understanding is outlined below. Further explanation to some of the key points has been included for knowledge and interest.

- a. **The Holocaust was the murder of approximately 6 million Jewish men, women and children by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War.**
- b. **The Nazis persecuted many groups of people for racial and ideological reasons.**
- c. **The definition is specific because the Nazi treatment of Jews was distinctive and only Jews were singled out for total destruction.**
- d. **The Holocaust is widely viewed as unprecedented due to the aim to murder every Jewish person in Europe and beyond, and industrialised methods used to carry out mass murder.**
- e. **'Holocaust' has become the accepted term.**
- f. **It had previously been used to describe ritual sacrificial burnings and later to describe calamitous events.**

The Nazis persecuted many groups of people for racial and ideological reasons.

This persecution extended to murder for some cases. 3 million Soviet Prisoners of War lost their lives in Nazi captivity; in occupied Poland thousands of Polish elites and intelligentsia were executed whilst hundreds of thousands perished in massacres, deportations, concentration camps and starvation. More than 200,000 Roma and Sinti were murdered and more than 200,000 people with disabilities were gassed, starved or murdered through lethal injections. Gay men, Jehovah's Witnesses and political opponents were also victims of Nazism and perished in concentration camps. Soviet POWs, Poles, Sinti and Roma and people with disabilities were murdered as threats to the racial 'health' of Germany.

All victims of Nazism deserve to be remembered and there should be no hierarchy of suffering. The Holocaust's definition is specific because historians agree that the treatment of Jews was distinctive and unprecedented because the Nazis aimed to kill every single Jew. Therefore, the specificity and uniqueness of this treatment requires its own definition to differentiate it from both other Nazi crimes, previous and subsequent genocides.

The definition is specific because the Nazi treatment of Jews was distinctive and only Jews were singled out for total destruction.

What was different about Jews was that the Nazis viewed them as an existential threat; that is, the Jews were seen as the mortal enemy of Germany, and Europe. The Nazis genuinely believed in the existence of a world Jewish conspiracy which supposedly had Germany as its chief target. In Nazi thinking, therefore, this threat had to be eliminated in one form or another to ensure the survival of the Reich and, indeed, mankind.

This is not to say that the Holocaust was inevitable, but it does indicate that the Nazis' treatment of Jews would be severe and likely violent.

The key decisions were taken – between the summer of 1941 and the spring of 1942. The Nazi regime and its allies sought to murder all Jews wherever they found them. It is this intended totality – the quest to murder every member of a group, encompassing millions of human beings – that made the Holocaust unprecedented: in no other genocide has a regime attempted to annihilate an entire people.

The attempt to murder every Jew gave the Holocaust another distinctive characteristic: its continental scale. Murder was perpetrated in every state under Nazi control whilst the ultimate aim was to extend this process to every country in Europe and, indeed, beyond – Jews from France’s North African colonies, for example, were also victims, whilst there were plans to send SS killing squads to Mandate Palestine in the event of Britain’s defeat.

The Holocaust is widely viewed as unprecedented due to the aim to murder every Jewish person in Europe and beyond, and industrialised methods used to carry out mass murder.

It has sometimes additionally been said that the Holocaust was unprecedented because of the ‘industrialised’ killing methods used in the form of gas chambers. However, at least half of the Holocaust’s victims lost their lives through other means: mass shootings, extermination through labour, disease or starvation. Indeed, it may be argued that this fact – that every available killing method was deployed – takes us closer to understanding the totality of the Holocaust and thus to comprehending what distinguished it even from the many other dreadful crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators.

For further information and guidance, please refer to the Holocaust Educational Trust’s [Teaching Resources](#) which can be downloaded free online. In particular, teachers may find the resources listed below of note.

- [Myths and Misconceptions](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Timeline](#)

ii. **Antisemitism**

Although Nazism represents history’s most destructive example of antisemitism, it is important to understand that its ideology did not simply emerge from Hitler or Germany. Antisemitism has often been described as the ‘longest hatred’ and it was a belief – or rather a group of beliefs – which had deep roots in European history. Although the Jewish people had, like many other ethnic or religious groups, experienced persecution throughout their history, it was really in the Middle Ages that antisemitism as we understand it emerged as a distinctive and widespread phenomenon in Europe. Persecution of Jews had occurred in Christian states in earlier centuries, but it was from around the time of the Crusades – from the late eleventh century onwards – that antisemitism became an increasingly powerful, and often deadly, force as ideas which had always been implicit in certain strands of Christian thought gained wider currency. In particular, Jews were charged with deicide, i.e. the belief that they were collectively, and perpetually, responsible for the death of Jesus, based on Pilate’s blood curse in Matthew’s Gospel. Allied to this was anger at what some Christians perceived to be the wilful continued refusal of Jews to recognise the divinity of Christ. At the same time, non-religious motives, such as political advantage and greed, also played significant roles on occasions.

Medieval Christian antisemitism was expressed in multiple ways. Jews were falsely accused of various crimes such as the killing of Christian children for religious purposes, host desecration and well-poisoning (especially during times of epidemic). They suffered many legal restrictions, marking, attempts at conversion, and violent attacks both by states and subjects. Some western European countries including England, France and Spain expelled their Jewish populations. Although many monarchs, church leaders and other authorities sought to restrain antisemitism, life in western Europe became increasingly difficult, leading many Jews to migrate eastwards to either the territories controlled by the Polish crown or the emerging Ottoman Empire where generally more tolerant conditions prevailed.

The Reformation initially seemed to offer hope for improvement. Despite increases in Jewish rights in some countries, such as the Netherlands, in the early modern period, it was only with the apparent decline of religious influence and power, in the Enlightenment and more decisively following the French Revolution, that antisemitism appeared to fade in significance.

When antisemitism re-emerged as a serious political and cultural force in the modern era, it did so in a form which had mutated radically from these traditional roots. In particular, persecution and hatred of Jews tended to focus much less on religion. Somewhat paradoxically, Jewish emancipation in much of nineteenth-century Europe partly contributed to this process since Jews came to be associated by many across the political spectrum with symptoms of modernity which alarmed them, ranging from capitalism, socialism and secularism to apparently more innocuous developments such as the mass media, jazz music, smoking and psychoanalysis. Although individual Jews achieved prominence in various fields, what mattered more was a perception of Jewish dominance – whether as department store owners, revolutionaries or modern artists – which was seen as unnatural.

In fact, the success enjoyed by some Jews was in part a legacy of historical antisemitism since earlier restrictions on residence and occupation had tended to lead to Jewish communities developing in cities, meaning that Jews – at least in western Europe – were proportionally more likely than non-Jews to be urban, educated and liberal. The fact that most European Jews were in fact poor traders or craftsmen in eastern Europe did not lessen the new antisemitism but rather further exacerbated it since they were seen as a threatening, potentially revolutionary, mass, especially when large numbers migrated westwards as a result of state-sanctioned pogroms and poverty in the Russian Empire.

These prejudices, against both rich and poor Jews, increasingly fused in the late nineteenth century, the period when the word antisemitism was first popularised by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr, to form the concept of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy which sought to subjugate humanity. Such beliefs were sometimes encouraged by unscrupulous politicians, journalists and others, notably the Russian Tsarist regime whose secret police force produced the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. However, the emerging radical European antisemitism increasingly redefined the traditional concept of Jews as outsiders in terms of race rather than religion. Drawing on the developing theories of social Darwinism, antisemites saw Jewishness as an immutable identity which had no connection with religion. Thus, whereas Christian antisemites had believed that Jews could be 'redeemed' through conversion, there was no such option in the eyes of the racists. Furthermore, these racial theories were often linked to the rise of integral nationalism in much of Europe which sought to define national identity in ethnic terms and to emphasise a bond between land and people. The Jews – dispersed across many countries with no state

of their own – were thus seen as ‘rootless’ alien interlopers who could never be integrated into their host societies; they were rather perceived as parasites seeking to devour these hosts.

It is important to stress that such modern antisemitism was in no sense a uniquely or especially German phenomenon. Indeed, Germany’s Jewish community – which represented less than 1% of the country’s population – was widely regarded as the most assimilated in Europe. Antisemitism had a significant following on the political right and amongst Germany’s elites in the early twentieth century but even here it had relatively limited impact in terms of policy and was less of an obsession for most conservatives than it was for the Nazis and other far-right groups. It took an unforeseeable chain of events to hand power to a singularly antisemitic political movement which had been a marginal force until the late 1920s.

Hitler and other Nazi theorists developed what the historian Saul Friedländer has termed “redemptive anti-Semitism”: a belief that Jews were an existential threat to the survival of Germany and, ultimately, of humanity.¹ Only by defeating this mortal enemy could German society save itself. This was not mere rhetoric – one of the most troubling issues raised by the Holocaust is the knowledge that the Nazis genuinely believed that their aims and actions were necessary and, indeed, moral. This did not make the Holocaust inevitable but it did imply that the Nazis would be willing to carry out radical and violent measures which had the potential to exceed anything Europe had yet seen in its long and tragic history of antisemitism. Although the perpetration of anti-Jewish persecution and, eventually, the Holocaust entailed the mobilisation of people who adhered to more traditional forms of antisemitism within both Germany and other countries, Nazi antisemitism was unprecedented in the sense that beliefs of such uniquely destructive potential were held by the rulers of a major European state.

iii. Victims of Nazi Persecution

Holocaust Learning UK’s film *Steven’s Story* also touches upon the Nazis’ treatment and persecution of other victim groups such as adults and children with disabilities and gay men. As explained in ***Part One of Conceptual Understanding***, the Holocaust refers to the murder of Jews who were uniquely set apart for total destruction; therefore, this resource focuses on the experiences of Jewish victims. However, Steven’s testimony references his father who was aware of and fearful of the Nazi’s eugenics (T4 Programme). Therefore, teachers may find it helpful for their own contextual knowledge to note the information provided below.

For a fuller exploration of victims of Nazi persecution, we encourage you to read the Holocaust Educational Trust’s teaching guide here: [Victims of Nazi Persecution](#). A brief summary of the key points for conceptual understanding is outlined below. Further explanation to some of the key points has been included underneath this for knowledge and interest.

- a. **Nazism sought to create a ‘racial state’ – a utopian society based on principles of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. They believed the wellbeing of Germany was directly linked to blood and, since aptitudes and characteristics were all understood to**

be transmitted through inheritance, it was seen as imperative that the purity of German blood be protected and improved.

- b. The Nazis believed that the 'Aryan' race was under serious threat by so-called 'inferior' races and asocial elements.
- c. During the years 1933 to 1945, the Nazis and their collaborators were responsible for the persecution of millions of people from a variety of ethnic, religious, social and political backgrounds.
- d. Persecution was motivated by ideological, political and racial reasons.
- e. The Nazis persecuted people from Slavic nations (Poland and Soviet Russia/USSR), mixed race Germans, people with disabilities, Roma and Sinti, and gay men.
- f. Persecution took many forms. The most severe was murder and forced sterilisation

The Nazis persecuted people from Slavic nations (Poland and Soviet Russia/USSR), mixed race Germans, people with disabilities, Roma and Sinti, and gay men.

Although only Jews were ultimately targeted for complete extermination by the Nazis, many other groups of people fell victim to Nazi racism. In particular, the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe were considered to be racially inferior. The perception of the USSR as both a racial and an ideological enemy led to Soviet prisoners of war becoming, in numerical terms, by far the largest victim group after Jews. The Roma and Sinti peoples of central and eastern Europe (known pejoratively as 'Gypsies' by the Nazis) were also victims of genocide, being viewed as a racial threat and as an asocial element within Germany.

The Roma and Sinti most likely to be persecuted in Germany were those who were the products of mixed relationships, rather than 'pure Gypsies', since they were seen to be corrupting the 'Aryan' bloodline. Similarly, mixed-race children born to German women and French colonial troops from Africa were forcibly sterilised in the 1930s.

Sterilisation was also used as a weapon against Germans and Austrians with disabilities. Seen as a threat to the long-term biological survival of their 'race', people with disabilities became the first victims of Nazi mass murder in 1939. There was to be significant overlap between the murder of people with disabilities and the Holocaust in terms of both killing methods and personnel.

Gay men were also amongst the 'Aryans' persecuted as a result of racial theories. Their 'crime' was not that they were weakening the nation's racial stock but rather that they were failing to do their 'duty' to add to it. Many Nazi leaders – notably Himmler – were obsessed with the idea that Germany was losing out in the perpetual struggle between the races because of the loss of almost two million potential fathers in the First World War. If, as Himmler believed, a further two million men were homosexual then – it was argued – Germany risked being overrun by other nations with higher birth rates.

However, the persecution of gay men – like that of Roma and Sinti and, to some extent, Jews and Poles – also tapped into long pre-existing prejudices.

Additionally, there were certain groups who were persecuted for rather different, though still ideological, reasons. Political opponents, for example, were subjected to discrimination and violence by the regime not on account of their 'race' but rather for their political 'crimes';



similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their spiritual refusal to accept the regime and their perceived anti-Nazi behaviour. The Nazis hoped to 'reclaim' them aiming to force them to accept the new order through persecution. This helps to explain why they – along with gay men, who were also seen as potentially redeemable, and Black and mixed-race Germans who were relatively few in number – were not targeted for murder, although several thousand members of these groups (chiefly gay men and political opponents) did die as a result of their atrocious treatment.

Thus, only certain groups beyond Jews – Soviet prisoners of war, Poles and some other eastern European civilians, Roma and Sinti, and Germans and Austrians with disabilities – were victims of deliberate mass murder. **However, it is essential that educators and students do not fall into a pernicious trap of seeing victimhood in competitive terms. Instead, it is important to appreciate the specific experiences of each group and what they can tell us about the ideology which brought about their suffering, and to understand the humanity of all victims of Nazi persecution without seeking to create a hierarchy of suffering.**