

GEORGIA COMMISSION ON THE HOLOCAUST

LESSON PLAN: THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE HOLOCAUST

American History

SSUSH19 Examine the origins, major developments, and the domestic impact of World War II, including the growth of the federal government.

c. Examine the European Theater including difficulties the U.S. faced in delivering weapons, food, and medical supplies to troops, D-Day, and the Fall of Berlin.

e. Examine Roosevelt's use of executive powers including the integration of defense industries and the internment of Japanese-Americans.

OVERVIEW: In these lessons, students will learn about how the United States responded to World War II and the Holocaust. Using the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's exhibition, Americans and the Holocaust, we will examine the following: Holocaust history raises important questions about what the United States could have done to stop the rise of Nazism in Germany and its assault on Europe's Jews.

What did the US government and the American people know about the threats posed by Nazi Germany? What responses were possible? And when?

This exhibition examines individual stories to help us examine the motives, pressures, and fears that shaped Americans' responses to Nazism, war, and genocide. <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust>

LESSON PLAN

Explain how individual stories help us to understand the larger history of the Holocaust and World War II. In this lesson, we are going to learn about what individuals, organizations and governments did to respond to the war and the Holocaust.

Divide the class into 4 groups. Each of the groups will focus on one of the following true stories:

Franz: A Professor's Plea

Jewish professor Dr. Franz Goldberger was desperate to escape Nazi persecution in Vienna, Austria, in the late 1930s. He wrote letters to strangers in the United States, searching for someone to serve as his sponsor for immigration.

Eleanor & Gilbert: A Couple's Mission

Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus of Philadelphia traveled to Nazi-controlled Vienna to rescue 50 Jewish children in spring 1939—just months before the start of World War II.

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Marianne & Jane: A Pen Pal's Story

Marianne Winter from Vienna and Jane Bomberger from Pennsylvania had been pen pals for several years when the Nazis took control of Austria in 1938. Marianne's family wanted to immigrate to the United States, but they needed an American to sponsor them.

Tony: A Soldier's Journey

US Army medic Tony Acevedo was captured in January 1945 and taken to a German prisoner-of-war camp. There he and his comrades were beaten, tortured, and forced to do hard labor. Tony recorded every atrocity and death he witnessed in a secret diary to honor his fellow soldiers and keep their memory alive.

CONCLUDING ACTIVITY

After each group has completed their activities and answered the questions, they will report back to the class about the person or people they researched. This may be in the form of:

- An oral presentation
- A PowerPoint
- A museum panel
- A newspaper article