

Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect



TOPIC

Nazi Persecution of Jews in Pre-War Germany

Universal Human Rights

AGE GROUP

Years 7-11 (ages 12-16)

Progression Steps 4 and 5

LENGTH

1 hour

AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

Health and Well-being

Humanities

Languages, Literacy and Communication

DESCRIPTION

Warning: This activity includes video testimony referring to violent abuse in a pre-war concentration camp.

In this activity, students will learn about the Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany before World War 2 and reflect on the concept of universal human rights.

Students will learn about the chronology of Nazi persecution of German Jews during the period 1933-1939. The activity integrates the video testimony of Irene Kirstein Watts, a Kindertransport refugee, with resources relating to key historical events and Nazi laws in the lead up to World War 2. This aims to provide a foundation to examine how prejudice and human rights violations can contribute to violence, mass atrocity, and genocide.

At the same time, the activity encourages students to consider the human impact that this persecution had on individual families, emphasising the humanity of the victims of the Holocaust.

Finally, students will examine the values that underpin human rights and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and reflect on the importance of such rights and how they may be protected.

The activity can be split easily into two sessions where necessary – Tasks 1-3 can be covered in the first session and Tasks 4 and 5 can be completed in a second session.*

LEARNING AIMS

As a result of completing this activity, students will:

- Reflect on the concept of human rights.
- Understand how antisemitism permeated German society, legally and socially, in the period 1933-1939.

*A full list of activities can be found at the end of this document.



Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect

LEARNING AIMS continued

As a result of completing this activity, students will:

- Recognise that Nazi persecution of Jews during 1933-1939 increased over time.
- Reflect on the human impact that this persecution had on the Jewish community.
- Learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and understand how these rights were violated in Germany during 1933 -1939.
- Reflect on the individual's responsibility to defend human rights.
- Learn about the connection to Wales through the video testimony of a Kindertransport refugee.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Whiteboard/markers, projector, computer to listen to testimony.

Consider

Inform students that they are going to consider and discuss the idea of 'human rights'.

On the board, draw a mind map and ask the class for words that automatically come to mind when thinking about human rights. Encourage the students to think about the general concept rather than specific types of rights. You may want to ask the students questions such as:

- To whom do human rights belong?
- Can you think of the principles that human rights relate to (e.g., fairness)?
- What areas of life do human rights relate to (e.g., social, economic, civil, and political)?

It may help to consider these quotes from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales:

"Human Rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. [...] Human rights are based on core principles like dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and autonomy. They are relevant to your day-to-day life and protect your freedom to control your own life, effectively take part in decisions made by public authorities that affect your rights and get fair and equal services from public authorities."¹

¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Human rights in Wales* (2019) <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights-wales>> [accessed 6 March 2022].

Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect

Consider continued

On the student worksheet, ask the students to write down five specific rights that come to mind when they think about human rights (**Task 1**).

Collect

Ask the students to read **Handout 1**. This handout sets out a timeline of some of the laws that were used in Nazi Germany to persecute Jewish people between 1933 and 1939 (before World War 2).

Then, working in groups/pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet (**Task 2**).

Students should note that the legislation intruded into almost every area of life and that Nazi persecution of Jews increased over time. They may particularly note a concentration of laws in 1938.

Next, ask students to read **Handout 2**: Historical events timeline, 1933-39. Then, working in groups/pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet relating to this handout (**Task 2**).

Next, ask students to look at the photographs set out in **Handout 3**. Working in pairs/groups, ask them to match the photographs to the laws referred to in **Handout 1** or the historical events in **Handout 2**. Then ask each student to choose one photograph from **Handout 3** and write about it (using the guide questions in the student worksheet).

Finally, provide the following descriptions for each photograph set out in **Handout 3** and then ask students to write down one thing they learned from these explanations – or what more they would like to understand about a particular photograph.

Photograph 1:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1176817> - an example of the *Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names*: Annemarie's Israelski 's German passport, showing the name 'Sara'.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives #97638.

Courtesy of Annemarie Warschauer. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect

Collect continued

Photograph 2:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1087403> - Arthur Lewy confers with a customer in his tobacco store in Berlin, 1929. After the *Decree on the Exclusion of Jews from Economic Life*, Arthur was forced to 'Aryanise' his shop and could no longer work.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives #24804.

Courtesy of Stephan H. Lewy. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Photograph 3:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1117675> - Interior of the Zerrennerstrasse synagogue after its destruction during the *Kristallnacht* pogrom (Pforzheim, Germany).

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives #97573.

Courtesy of Stadtarchiv Pforzheim.

Photograph 4:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1032503> - Jewish refugee children, who are members of the first Kindertransport from Germany, arrive in Harwich, England.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives #02725.

Courtesy of Instytut Pamieci Narodowej.

Next, the students will be hearing from Irene Kirstein Watts, a child refugee, who came to Wales during the 1930s to escape Nazi persecution.

Ask the students to read the Irene's biography and watch a short video, where Irene describes her experience of being a Jewish child in Berlin, Germany, in the 1930s.

Then, working in groups/pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet (**Task 3**).

The video testimony and handouts demonstrate how Nazi Germany gradually isolated, segregated, impoverished, and incarcerated Jews between 1933 and 1939. The Tasks also build to show the incremental nature of persecution and highlight that the Holocaust was a process that happened over time and involved many people. They allows students to make inferences about the interrelatedness of time, laws, and historical events and promote critical thinking about the impact on those targeted for persecution, at a group and individual level.



Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect

Collect continued

In particular - encourage students to explore how the removal of fundamental human rights was one of the factors that contributed to the isolation and demonisation of the Jewish people and created a climate of hostility and indifference toward their plight, paving the way for the violence of *Kristallnacht* – and ultimately the murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime, its allies and collaborators.

Project the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on the whiteboard and ask students to read it: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

Explain to the students that the UDHR was adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. It was the result of the experience of World War 2 and represented a commitment by the international community to never allow the atrocities of the Holocaust to happen again.

Then, working in groups/pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet (**Task 4**).

Encourage students to consider that historical events are influenced by human decisions, actions, and omissions and that the history of the Holocaust could have taken a different course if more individuals had made their decisions based on the principles enshrined in the UDHR. Students may also want to debate the value and methods of engaging in political and social debates in contemporary life.

Construct

Task 5: Ask the students to write a newspaper article on what they have learned in this activity.

For example, it could be an article reporting on the Nazi persecution of the Jews before World War 2, an article reporting on the international response to this persecution at the Evian Conference in July 1939, or an article reporting on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Encourage students to refer to the principles and values that underpin the UDHR.

Communicate

Ask students to read an article written by another student. Then ask them to discuss the themes identified in the articles they have read and whether these are the same or different from those in their own article.

Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws Can Persecute or Protect

Appendices

1. Handout 1: A selection of Nazi anti-Jewish laws, 1933-39.
2. Handout 2: Historical events timeline, 1933-39.
3. Handout 3: Photographs.
4. Handout 4: Video transcription.
5. Handout 5: Student Worksheet.

List of Activities

- Activity 1: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 1 - Driving Forces.
Activity 2: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 2 - The Journey.
Activity 3: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 3 - Arrival in Wales.
Activity 4: Jewish Life in Pre-War Europe – Identity, Diversity and Commonality.
Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws can Persecute or Protect.
Activity 6: Prejudice and Propaganda.
Activity 7: Britain and the Legacy of Loss - Part 1.
Activity 8: Britain and the Legacy of Loss - Part 2.
Activity 9: Re-thinking Responsibility.
Activity 10: Resistance and Remembrance.

Cover Image

Irene Kirstein Watts in 1937, aged 6. Image from Irene Kirstein Watts's interview from the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education, 1998. For more information: <http://sfi.usc.edu/>.

