



## **Lesson 6: Timeline**

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**Objective:** Students will start to build an understanding of the sequence of key events during the Holocaust.

### **Activity:**

The teacher will select groups of 2-3 students each.

The teacher will distribute a Holocaust Timeline to each group (or each student, if that works better). While many Holocaust Timelines are available on the Internet, I use the Holocaust Timeline available from [www.neveragain.org](http://www.neveragain.org). This Timeline breaks down each year into months and days. This format is more useful than a Timeline that does not break down years.

The teacher offers instruction:

*Today we will work in pairs or groups to learn about some of the key events of the years 1933 to 1945. Working in our groups, we will create a Holocaust Timeline that is accurate and easy to read even from a distance. Our Timeline will be posted where anyone can refer to it.*

*As we work today, we will bear in mind that the Holocaust was made up of thousands of events. But our groups will limit themselves to 12 events.*

*In this basket are 13 slips of paper. On each slip of paper, I have written one year. Please choose a slip.*

Representatives from each group pick a slip of paper. The teacher continues instruction:

*As a group, read the Timeline's events for "your" year. For example, if you have been assigned the year 1936, read that year's events carefully. What events happened during 1936?*

*Think about, and discuss, the events of "your" year. Decide which events are the ones your colleagues most need to learn about?*

As the groups read about the year they've selected, the teacher circulates. She helps groups pick and choose among events. She guides their discussion of which events should appear on the Timeline.

As groups settle on the events they will put on their Timelines, the teacher explains the next step:

*When you've decided which events you will put on your Timeline, choose construction paper. We're going to "color-code" our Timeline, so choose a color that is not being used by the groups close to you on the timeline. For example, if you're working on the year 1939, and you want to use blue paper for your timeline, make sure that the years 1938 and 1940 are using a color other than blue.*

*If there's a problem regarding color, work it out. What's important is to make sure your year is a different color than the year just ahead of yours and the year just after yours. Why? Color-coding of the years will help people read and understand the Timeline.*

When all the groups have chosen construction paper, the teacher explains their next step:

*For each event on your Timeline, cut a strip of white paper. On each strip, write the event, and the month and day it occurred. You may want to write a brief sentence or two describing the event.*

*Once you've got your strips made, arrange them on the Timeline paper. You will probably need 3 or 4 sheets of construction paper. You may need more.*

*Be sure the events are easily read from a distance, accurate, and in chronological order. Then glue them in place.*

As the students complete their Timeline years, they post them, year by year, on the wall. The Timeline will end up being large. Hallway walls are optimal for posting: they offer plenty of space and promote school-wide interest in the subject.

Once the Timeline is posted, the groups stand next to their year. In chronological order, starting with 1933, the groups teach what they have learned. They explain why certain events are important and how they lead to later events.

The teacher sometimes asks the class to consider a given event: the March 23, 1933, opening of Dachau, for instance. She asks the students to consider these questions:

*What might have happened if local citizens had chosen to speak out in protest against the opening of Dachau?*

*Could the Holocaust have been prevented?*

She asks students to consider the role of ordinary folks who disagreed with Hitler:

*What if ordinary folks had refused to turn in their neighbors to the Gestapo?*

The teacher may briefly explain that people *did* resist Nazi policy in ways that had wide-reaching effects:

- Bulgarian officials defied Nazi policy and saved most Bulgarian Jews.
- Ordinary Danish citizens defied Nazi policy and saved most Danish Jews.
- Members of the Red Orchestra resistance group spied effectively for the Russians, encouraging the military defeat of the Germans.
- The Bishop of Munster spoke out against the extermination of mentally disabled people, and his protest stopped the killing.
- German General Guderian defied Hitler's orders in 1941 and contributed to Germany's subsequent defeat on the Eastern front.

The teacher poses a question:

*Was the Holocaust inevitable?*

After discussion, the teacher underscores her point:

*Bystanding was not the only response to Nazi policy. Some leaders and ordinary people defied Nazi policy at points along the way, and if others had stood up when their time came, Hitler might have been stopped.*

She leaves her students with a reminder:

*No person is ever forced to be a bystander. All of us have the power to get involved. When we stand up for people who are being mistreated, when we stand up for what we know is right, we prove that we have learned from the Holocaust. We have learned that we are free to be heroes.*

As always, she thanks her students for their hard work and meaningful participation.

**Materials:**

- Handouts: one Holocaust Timeline per group or one per student. While many Timelines are available, I recommend the Timeline from [www.neveragain.org](http://www.neveragain.org).
- 13 strips of paper. On each strip, one year—starting with 1933 and ending with 1945—is written. These slips, in a basket, are pulled by groups to determine which year they will work on.
- Large sheets of construction paper, various colors
- Sheets of white paper
- Glue Sticks
- Markers
- Masking tape