

Holocaust Education: Rationale and Objectives
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When teachers first offer a Holocaust unit or course, parents and others may raise questions about the purpose and goals of Holocaust education. The following lists may be helpful in communicating the rationale and objectives of Holocaust education:

What is the Rationale for Holocaust Education?

The rationale for Holocaust education—as defined by the United States Holocaust memorial Museum and Holocaust centers nationwide--can be summed up in these 5 points:

1. Holocaust education confronts the dangers of prejudice.
2. Holocaust education promotes tolerance and compassion.
3. Studying the persecution of minorities in a particular historical context helps students develop positive attitudes toward minorities in their own context.
4. Holocaust education gives students an opportunity to understand their own feelings toward issues such as peer pressure, stereotyping, bullying, and discrimination.
5. Holocaust education promotes students' awareness of the power of propaganda—and the urgent need for critical thought in the face of today's propaganda overload.

What are the Objectives of Holocaust Education?

The objectives—as defined by USHMM and Holocaust centers nationwide—can be summed up in these 12 points:

1. Students will learn the history, geography, and political economy of 20th century Europe.
2. Students will comprehend the nature of prejudice and its likely development into discriminatory practices which may culminate in genocide.
3. Specifically, students will understand the complex way in which 2000 years of anti-Semitism led toward (but did not compel) the Shoah.
4. Students will understand how the Holocaust could and did happen--mostly in daylight.
5. Students will learn that no one is born a resister or a perpetrator, and it is up to the individual to choose his role.
6. Students will learn that to be educated is not enough. As Haim Ginottt writes, “Gas chambers were built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians.” Students will comprehend that education fails if it does not make the student more humane.
7. Students will internalize the moral imperative put forth by W.H. Auden: “We must love one another or die.”
8. Students will learn that, in the words of Oscar Wilde, “Disobedience...is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made.”
9. Students will comprehend that the Holocaust is unique among cases of injustice. It was the first case of a government using the means of industrial production to kill a people. It was also the first genocide which did not originate from and was not justified by a war, riot, or attempted revolution.
10. Students will explore the nature of “Genocidal Mentality.”
11. Students will learn the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, both local and international.
12. Students will be inspired to *act* on their learning in order to prevent future genocide. The bottom line is *activism*: all avenues of Holocaust learning should guide students into active participation in genocide prevention.

