

LESSON PLAN

VISIBILITY OF NAZI CRIMES



English



Germany



Perpetrators



14-18 years



90 min

LESSON PLAN

Visibility of Nazi Crimes



National Curriculum:

Related topics in the curricula of German federal states:

Visibility of Nazi crimes; National Socialism – the seduction of violence; A nation of yes-men – Personal conviction or conformity?; consent and resistance among the German population; (virtual) memorial visit; historical culture; historical narratives using original sources; changes in public approach to history; reappraisal; forced labor under National Socialism; end-phase crimes (death marches)

Equipment/Material:

Tablets or PCs with internet access and headphones for all students; cameras or cell phones and potentially microphones for each group for recording short videos

OBJECTIVES

1. The students interpret and analyze the historical context surrounding the visibility of Nazi crimes to the German population by evaluating various historical sources and contemporary interpretations in the learning module “Suspicious.” (Promotes interpretation and analysis skills)
2. The students present their findings on the visibility of Nazi crimes, contextualize them, and interpret them. (Promotes methodological skills)
3. The students form a critical judgement about remembrance in Germany or their region and the responsibility of today’s generations. (Promotes critical judgement/evaluative skills)

LESSON PLAN

OPENING

 20 min

Introductory short video: Have you ever heard of Ohrdruf concentration camp?
[ArolsenArchives \(@arolsenarchives\) Official | TikTok](#)

Watch the short video together in the classroom or send it to the virtual classroom for individual viewing.

Classroom discussion:

The students briefly summarize what the video is about and speculate about what the population could have known about the Nazi crimes.

Question I: What is the short video about?

Question II: What do you think the local population could have known about the Ohrdruf concentration camp in the Nazi era?

Background information:

A street survey was carried out by young people in Gotha as part of the project “Deutsche Erinnerungslücke KZ Ohrdruf” by the Friedenstein Stiftung Gotha following the concept of a “memory walk.” The passers-by say whether they had heard of the nearby Ohrdruf concentration camp and provide an insight into whether and why they consider it important to remember the camp.

The Ohrdruf concentration camp was one of more than 130 sub-camps of Buchenwald. It was the first to be liberated by the US Army in 1945. Ohrdruf therefore has a place in the remembrance of Nazi crimes in the USA – it appears in the first room of the exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example – but the camp is relatively unknown in Germany, even within the region. In the USA, photos from the liberated camp have come to symbolize the crimes of the Nazis. From November 1944 to April 1945, around 20,000 prisoners from various European countries passed through the camp. They carried out heavy forced labor in the nearby Jonastal valley, where they had to work for up to twelve hours a day digging tunnels into a cliff. Around 7,000 prisoners perished.

Optional:

Additional short videos for orientation:

[Befreiung des KZ-Außenlagers Ohrdruf | 79 Jahre Erinnerung | TikTok](#)

MAIN ACTIVITY

 50 min

Independent exploration of the learning module “Suspicious”:

The learning task is presented to the students. Working individually or in groups, they explore the [Suspicious: A Landscape of Crime](#) digital learning module on the education platform developed by arolsen school. To complete the learning task, they should focus on the landscapes “Tents in winter,” “An inconspicuous mass grave,” “A busy construction site in the valley,” and the tour “Crimes in full view.”

Learning task: Find out and take notes on what the population could have known about the Nazi crimes committed nearby.

Note:

“Suspicious” was financed by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media in the context of the “Open Friedenstein!” project of the Friedenstein Stiftung Gotha. The learning module was developed by the Arolsen Archives with the support of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation.

Recapitulation:

The findings from the learning task about the visibility of Nazi crimes in the region around Ohrdruf are assembled on a board. To provide structure, the students can help sort the findings by topic, namely, the visibility of forced labor and end-phase crimes (death marches). The topics can then be addressed and explained.

➔ **Teacher’s guide to download**

CLOSING

 20 min

Closing discussion:

The pupils are given a quotation about remembrance of Nazi crimes. They should form their own critical judgement about this statement and present arguments for it. Alternatively, students can also use the opinion barometer method to position themselves on whether they agree or disagree with the statement. They should then justify their position, and potentially make a statement of their own.

Potential Statement:

“However, anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.”

Speech by Richard von Weizsäcker on the 40th anniversary
of the end of the war on May 8, 1985, in Bonn.

LINKS: SHORT FORM VIDEO

1. [ArolsenArchives \(@arolsenarchives\) Official | TikTok](#)
2. [Befreiung des KZ-Außenlagers Ohrdruf | 79 Jahre Erinnerung | TikTok](#)