

LESSON PLAN

LOCAL HISTORY

What did people know about the Nazi crimes committed in your local area?

 English

 Germany

 Perpetrators

 14-18 years

 125 min

LESSON PLAN

Local history:

What did people know about the Nazi crimes committed in your local area?



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; establishing regional connections to National Socialism; (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 digital learning module “Suspicious” developed by arolsen school. (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 independently identify connections to their regional history and engage with the topic of forced labor or other Nazi crimes in their local area. They realize that Nazi crimes were also committed in their own local area and were visible to the population. (Establish regional connection)
4. 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.

Class Discussion:

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

Question: 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 think it is 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 until 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 video for contextualization:

[Liberation of the Ohrdruf sub-camp | 79 years of remembrance | TikTok \(in German\)](#)

Main Activity I

 30 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](#) 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”, and “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.

Closing

 20 min

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**

Opening

 10 min

Classroom Discussion:

An initial collection of sites of crimes in the region is assembled with the students and listed on a smartboard, for example.

Question I: Which sites of crimes in your area do you know about?

Alternative: Which sites that played a role under National Socialism are you aware of in your area? Do you know of any information signs/panels in your area?

Main Activity II

 30 min

Independent research:

In previously assigned groups, the students independently conduct research on the visibility of Nazi crimes in their immediate area. Prompts for their research are visible on a board in the classroom or sent to the virtual classroom. The aids (see below) for independent research should be made available in the virtual classroom if possible. Their learning task is to conduct independent research in their groups.

Optional short video:

Here are a few research tips. [keine.erinnerungskultur | Susi \(@keine.erinnerungskultur\) | TikTok](#) (short video in German about researching local history)

Learning task:

Using the research aids, first find out about places associated with Nazi persecution and crimes in your area.

Prompts:

Which sites of Nazi crimes are there in your area?

Who was persecuted in your immediate area?

What could the population in your area have known about persecution, forced labor, concentration camps, the conditions for the prisoners, or other crimes committed by the Nazis?

Aids for local research/internet:

Memorial portal – Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: [Memorial Museums](#)

Concentration and Extermination Camps and Major "Euthanasia" Centers: [GHDI map](#)

List of concentration and extermination camps on Wikipedia (in German): [Liste der Konzentrationslager des Deutschen Reichs – Wikipedia](#)

Yad Vashem: [Yad Vashem Collections – Places – Search Results](#)

Nazi crimes atlas (in German): [Nazi Crimes Atlas – Digital Atlas of Nazi Crimes](#)

#lastseen. Image Atlas. The image atlas contains photos of the deportations from the German Reich from 1938 to 1945: [#lastseen Image Atlas](#)

Interview archive "Forced Labor 1939–1945." Map: [Map | Interview archive "Forced Labor 1939–1945"](#)

Directory of concentration camps and similar places of detention as well as institutions and companies who used forced laborers (formerly the Directory of Places of Detention from the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future Foundation EVZ): [Directory of Places of Detention from the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future Foundation EVZ](#)

The War and its Victims. Map: [Map of Nazi crimes – work in progress | Info | dekoder](#)

Arolsen Archives: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search>

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive: [Collections Search - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

Explore the Stolpersteine in North Rhine-Westphalia: [Stolpersteine NRW – interactive map | WDR](#)

Database of Stolpersteine (not yet online): [Database: STOLPERSTEINE by Gunter Demnig | Stolpersteine](#)

Names seeking relatives. STOLPERSTEINE, Gunter Demnig, 2025: [Names seeking relatives - STOLPERSTEINE by Gunter Demnig | Stolpersteine](#)

Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names. Yad Vashem: [About the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names](#)

Aids for local research/books:

Benz, Wolfgang / Distel, Barbara (eds.): Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager, Band 1 bis 9, München 2005 bis 2009.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume I, Part A, Bloomington 2009.

Weinmann, Martin (ed.): Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (Catalogue of Camps and Prisons in Germany and German-Occupied Territories 1939-1945 (CCP)), Frankfurt am Main 1990.

International Tracing Service (ITS) (Arolsen Archives) (ed.): Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933-1945), Konzentrationslager und deren Außenkommandos sowie andere Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS in Deutschland und deutsch besetzten Gebieten, Bad Arolsen 1979.

Schwarz, Gudrun: Die nationalsozialistischen Lager, Frankfurt am Main 1996.

Drobisch, Klaus / Wieland, Günther: System der NS-Konzentrationslager: 1933-1939, Berlin 1993.

Recapitulation:

The research results are summarized on the board.

Questions:

Which sites of Nazi crimes are there in your area?

Who was persecuted in your immediate area?

Closing

 15 min

Closing discussion:

What could the population in your area have known about persecution, forced labor, concentration camps, the conditions for the prisoners, or other crimes committed by the Nazis?

Optional closing:

In a class discussion, the students could talk about potential ways of remembering Nazi crimes in the immediate area. What ideas do the pupils have for this?

LINKS: SHORT FORM VIDEO

1. [Arolsen Archives \(@arolsenarchives\) Official | TikTok \(in German\)](#)
2. [Liberation of the Ohrdruf sub-camp | 79 years of remembrance | TikTok \(in German\)](#)