



*Curriculum & Discussion Guide:*

*“America and the Holocaust” A Graphic Book,*

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Inquiry by Dr. Mary Johnson and Ellen Resnek

*Examining the  
Power of Individual and  
Collective Choice*

<p>Compelling Question</p>	<p><b><i>What conditions, ideologies, and ideas made the Holocaust possible?</i></b></p>
<p>Overview</p>	<p><b>An Inquiry Discussion Guide:</b>  <b>A study of America's response to Hitler and the Holocaust.</b></p> <p>By targeting this publication to junior high and high school students, Dr. Burstin hopes to encourage their fascination with history, spark their commitment to combat bigotry, and promote democracy today.</p>
<p>Inquiry Standard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture and Cultural Diversity (NCSS Standard I): Apply key concepts such as time, chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity.</li> <li>● People, Places, Environment (NCSS Standard III): Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.</li> <li>● Power, Authority and Governance (NCSS Standard VI): Enable learners to examine the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to their families, their social groups, their communities, and their nation.</li> <li>● Global Connections (NCSS Standard IX): Examine conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.</li> <li>● Civic Ideas and Practices (NCSS Standard X): Examining civic ideals and practices across time and in diverse societies prepares learners to close the gap between present practices and the ideals upon which our democratic republic is based.</li> </ul>
<p>Inquiry Background &amp; Supporting Questions</p>	<p>Adolf Hitler and Franklin Roosevelt came to power within 5 weeks of one another. Hitler on Jan.30th and Roosevelt on March 4th. There is a worldwide economic depression. Many people are out of work, hungry, and scared about the future. Both countries are free and open democracies although the German republic is only a little over a decade old.</p> <p>As soon as Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933, Americans had access to information about Nazi Germany’s persecution of Jews. Although some Americans protested Nazism, there was no sustained, nationwide effort in the United States to oppose the Nazi treatment of Jews. The Great Depression, combined with a commitment to isolationism and deeply-held prejudices against Jewish immigrants, shaped Americans’ willingness to aid Jewish refugees from Europe. Although the United States issued far fewer visas than it could have during this period, it did admit more refugees fleeing Europe than any other nation. In addition, individuals and private relief agencies made efforts to assist refugees.</p> <p>When the United States entered World War II in 1941, the government prioritized its own issues, security, and safety. The government’s wartime aim was not the rescue of Jews. In the spring of 1945,</p>

Allied forces, including millions of Americans serving in uniform, ended the Holocaust by militarily defeating Nazi Germany and its Axis collaborators.

**Supporting Questions:**

*What is possible for a nation to do when responding to something occurring in another nation?*

*Is one nation obligated to take action against a nation failing to respect the rights of its citizens?*

*The Graphic Novel challenges students to look at the decisions made and think about the importance of Response and Responsibility.*

- ❖ *What does this say about the importance of Political leadership? (this may prompt a discussion surrounding what Political Leadership means then and now)*
  - *What do you look for in a leader?*
  - *Why do you vote?*
  - *What are leadership characteristics?*

**Step 1  
Anticipatory  
Set**

**Facilitate a teacher led discussion:**

*Procedure:*

Why We Fight is a series of seven documentary films produced by the US Department of War from 1942 to 1945, during World War II.

Examine the Images from the first in the series *Prelude to War*:

Alternately capture other images from the [film](#)

Possible teaching technique: [Big Paper: Building a Silent Conversation](#)

Using: See, Think Wonder

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does it make you wonder?



Step 2  
Opposing  
Ideas

*Procedure:*

**A Tale of Speeches**

[Hitler's First Radio Address \(February 1, 1933\)](#)

[First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt \(March 4, 1933\)](#)

**Have the students examine the 2 Wordles:**

**Teacher will facilitate a discussion based on the 2 Wordles:**

A Wordle or 'word cloud' is a visual representation of word frequency. The more commonly the term appears within the text being analysed, the larger the word appears in the image generated. Word clouds are increasingly being employed as a simple tool to identify the focus of written material. They have been used in politics, business and education, for example, to visualise the content of political speeches.

- Compare, contrast, discuss, and analyze two speeches.
- Remember that we can use a word count to analyze popular words.
- Analyze the results by looking at the most commonly used words, or even the words that are not used.

**What does this tell us about the orator and their intentions?**

**Is it just leadership or the ability of a leader to capture the essence of the culture and circumstances people are experiencing--what are leadership skills?**



**Enrichment  
Activity:  
Time  
Permitting**

*Procedure:*

**Whole Class Viewing:**

***A Walk Through The 20th Century With Bill Moyers - Episode 05 - The Democrat And The Dictator***

Episode Description

It was as if history had staged a morality play. Two gladiators of light and darkness, Franklin Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler, came to power within weeks of each other, faced off in a contest of global warfare, and died in the same month. In doing so, they embodied the very essences of democracy and dictatorship. Through the spellbinding appeal of decades-old film, Bill Moyers traces the childhoods and early careers of both leaders, illustrates the paths by which they rose to respective pinnacles of power, and shows how each was a master communicator and stylist of ideas, imprinting an entire generation with their actions and ideologies. (52 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTJCS6oh7TI>

***If time is limited consider showing this segment:***

*The Power to Captivate (01:28)*

*For men of such different backgrounds, Hitler and Roosevelt had in common clear unmistakable voices. 20th Century technology allowed their voices to be magnified one-hundred-fold.*

***Extension Activity:***

Have Students Explore the entire text of the Speeches:

- [\*\*Hitler’s First Radio Address \(February 1, 1933\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt\*\*](#)

Think about How these 2 speeches focus on topics of:

- prosperity
- unity
- ideology
- patriotism
- national narrative
- leadership

**Step 3  
Connect to  
Text  
PG 1-5**

*Procedure:*

**Have students read text pages 1-5:**

**Overarching question posed throughout:**

- ★ *How does the text and graphics utilize the 2 narrators to examine the compelling question?*

**Facilitate a discussion surrounding central themes:**

Both these men came to power at the same time:

- ❖ What does this say about the importance of voting?
- ❖ How does charisma factor into the rise to political leadership?
- ❖ What kind of messages are they sending?
- ❖ How do they convey these messages?

**Possible Student Response:**

When times are tough, people are more susceptible  
Moderates Prevailed... extremes start benefiting

**What are the fundamental issues presented in the text?**

- ❖ Scapegoating, who and why?
- ❖ What Hitler is doing?
- ❖ Should America be a Moral Voice?
- ❖ How is America treating marginalized groups in their Country?

**Possible Student Response:**

Segregation, discrimination in USA  
Laws are sometimes unfair

**Illustrative Example:**

- [Nuremberg Laws](#)
- Questioning the USA participation in the [1936 Olympics](#)

Is this a moral question, should the United States go?

What are the arguments on both sides:

*Should Nations take Politics out of Sports or is the Global Stage a place to protest on a grand scale?*

**Contemporary Connection:**

[\*The Debate Over Boycotting the 2022 Beijing Olympics\*](#)

[\*White House announces US diplomatic boycott of 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing\*](#)

[\*FROM BERLIN TO BEIJING, STOP ANOTHER GENOCIDE.\*](#)

Step 4  
Connect to  
Text  
PG 5-13

*Procedure:*

**Have students read Text Pages 6-13**

**Overarching question posed throughout:**

★ *How does the text and graphics utilize the 2 narrators to examine the compelling question?*

**Facilitate a discussion surrounding central themes:**

On March 12, 1938, German troops entered Austria, and one day later, Austria was incorporated into Germany. This union, known as the [Anschluss](#), received the enthusiastic support of most of the Austrian population and was retroactively approved via a plebiscite in April 1938.

- ❖ What is happening here?
- ❖ How does the [USA Johnson Reed Act \(1924\)](#) affect the plight of refugees and immigrants?
- ❖ Why was it passed?
- ❖ Was this immigration policy exclusionary?
- ❖ Why were quotas initiated?
- ❖ Congress continues to reflect these anti immigrant views into the 1930s and early war years, why?
- ❖ Can Roosevelt change the laws himself?

**Illustrative Example:**

[Evian Conference:](#)

- ❖ Nothing substantial happened and Why?
- ❖ What could Roosevelt Do? What Could he not do?
- ❖ And increased prejudice in the 1930, against Jews and Blacks?

[Kristallnacht:](#)

- ❖ How is this happening and Why?
- ❖ How did other Nations Respond?
- ❖ How does President Roosevelt Respond?

[Wagner Rogers Bill:](#)

- ❖ How does the failure of the bill reflect the rise of antisemitism?
- ❖ How desperate parents must be to separate families?
- ❖ Facilitate a discussion on: Choiceless Choices

[Voyage of the Saint Louis](#)

America failed to take in these refugees.

- ❖ What does this tell us about the concern about the rise of Hitler and Preparation for war?
- ❖ What does this tell us about Congress and US priorities?

**Possible Student Response:**

Congress not sympathetic

Humanitarian vs Practical Politics

Risk of Congressional support and popularity

Isolationist attitude Anti Immigrant

The incredible difficulty of Political Leadership

Roosevelt’s role a leader/ he cannot lead if he has no followers

**Contemporary Connection:**

- Discuss the response of contemporary politicians and struggle to pass legislation during the COVID crisis
- Teachers can expand on this topic with connections to plight of refugees in the 21st century

**Outbreak of War**

- ❖ What is happening in the outbreak of the war?
- ❖ What about the lack of Military preparedness in America?
- ❖ Why is America still pursuing a policy of Neutrality?
- ❖ When the war begins and news reports are flowing in, what do they tell us about the plight of refugees?
- ❖ As war rages across Europe, why does America not respond militarily?

**Illustrative Examples**

[Lindbergh and the America First Committee isolationist movement.](#)

Domestic concerns in the United States, including unemployment and national security, combined with prevalent antisemitism and racism, shaped Americans’ responses to Nazism and willingness to aid European Jews.

Step 5  
Connect to  
Text  
PG 14-21

*Procedure:*

**Have students read Text Pages 14-21**

**Overarching question posed throughout:**

★ *How does the text and graphics utilize the 2 narrators to examine the compelling question?*

**Facilitate a discussion surrounding central themes:**

In June 1941 Hitler attacked the Soviet Union breaking the Non- Aggression Pact. The Soviets were totally unprepared, and Hitler swept through hundreds of miles of Soviet territory. For the Jews living in the path of the Germans, it was a nightmare. As soon as the German army conquered a town or village, SS killing squads ( Eisengruppen) attached to the army rounded up the Jews and took them to a nearby isolated spot and then shot them. By the time the Jews realized what was happening and what the German intentions were, it’s too late. There was no escape.

**Illustrative Example:**

[Holocaust and the Einsatzgruppen](#)

- ❖ Facilitate a discussion on Ordinary people becoming Monsters... how can this happen?
- ❖ How do ordinary men become part of a process of mass murder?
- ❖ Extension: [The Psychology of Genocidal Behavior](#)

**Illustrative Example:**

[Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution](#)

- ❖ How are educated men meeting to plan a policy of mass murder?

**Facilitate a discussion on the use of propaganda.**

- If people say something often enough, does it become the truth?
- Role of the press covering the story?

**Illustrative Example:**

[Bermuda Conference](#)

- ❖ Why did it not initiate any relief or rescue projects in 1943?
- ❖ What are the motives of the state department?
- ❖ Why is this called a mockery and a “façade for inaction”?

**Facilitate a discussion on the [Warsaw Ghetto](#) uprising contrast this with the Bermuda Conference**

→ What is the role of neutral nations? The church? The Red Cross?

**Illustrative Example:** The Election in 1944:

- ❖ What are the Presidential priorities?
- ❖ How is racism in America a voice for the ongoing effect of segregation?
- ❖ When does this end in the US?

***War Refugee Board***

- ❖ Who is [Breckenridge Long](#)? What did we know, and when? [Extension](#)
- ❖ Why does [Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau](#) become involved in the debate for the rescue of the Jews?
- ❖ [War Refugee Board](#)
- ❖ What could America do? What could America NOT do? And what did they do?

**Step 6**  
**Connect to**  
**Text**  
**PG 22-29**

*Procedure:*

**Have students read Text Pages 21-29**

**Overarching question posed throughout:**

★ *How does the text and graphics utilize the 2 narrators to examine the compelling question?*

**Facilitate a discussion surrounding central themes:**

***Rescuers***

- ❖ Focus on Raoul [Wallenberg](#)
- ❖ What does it take to be a rescuer?

***Is History a cautionary tale?***

- And if so, how can one not be a bystander?
- What do we want for our Political leaders?
- What can we learn from the Common plight of both Germany and America in the 1930s?

Challenge students to look at the response to the Global Crisis today.

Review and Connect

- ❖ Who could have imagined that people would target their neighbors?
- ❖ Does Hitler resonate with widespread feelings created by the Depression and the failure of Weimar politicians create support for democratic government in the 1920s?
- ❖ Why did so many follow him?
- ❖ What does this say about Political leadership?
- ❖ Are democracies immune to the rise of dictators?
- ❖ Why are Democracies fragile?
- ❖ Could happen here like [Sinclair Lewis](#) suggested in 1935?
- ❖ What could happen in a future economic crisis?
- ❖ Could Americans fall for a demagogue who promises everything and scapegoats a poor minority?

Informed Action

**Exploration into Global Conflict today/ Refugee Crises across the Globe**

- Knowledge of ongoing atrocities does not always lead to action.
- What conditions motivate people to help each other?
- What conditions make people turn away?

With so many news stories breaking every day, how can Americans today at all levels remember and act on humanitarian values to confront hatred, preserve human dignity, and prevent genocide?

[Jewish World Watch](#)

APPENDICES

Links:

- [Informed Action: “Civic Learning Arc” Tool Kits](#)
- [References](#)

