

LESSON: SS Quanza

Grade Level:

This unit was developed for secondary students. The approach and materials for this unit follow the [Age Appropriate Guidelines from the USHMM](#).

Subject:

History; English/Language Arts; Multi-disciplinary.

Rationale:

The stories of individuals during the Holocaust can help us understand various facets of history through the eyes of those who lived through it. This story helps to broaden understanding about the experience of Jewish refugees during the era of the Holocaust and the challenges they experienced seeking refuge in North America.

Overview:

Key Question(s):

- What is a refugee? What challenges did Jewish refugees face during the era of the Holocaust?
- How does the journey of the *SS Quanza* illustrate the challenges faced by refugees during this time?
- Who was involved in providing aid to the refugees on the *SS Quanza*?
- What was the ultimate outcome of the journey of the refugees on the *SS Quanza*?

Educational Outcomes. At the end of this lesson, the students will be able to:

- Define the Holocaust, World War II and related terms such as refugee and isolationist.
- Identify the challenges faced by Jewish refugees during the era of the Holocaust.
- Discuss the journey of the *SS Quanza*.
- Identify the response of the United States to those on the *SS Quanza*, including individuals who advocated for their safe passage into the United States.
- Create a plan of action to target issues in one's own community.

Teacher preparation

It's important for teachers to familiarize themselves with the [Pedagogical Principles for Teaching the Holocaust](#). We encourage teachers to familiarize themselves with background knowledge on the Holocaust by viewing this [site](#) at the USHMM and view the [Introduction to the Holocaust](#). Additional information on teaching about this topic can be gleaned from the full-length version of [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#).

In addition, we suggest:

- Prepare access to handouts and student packets.
- Check access to related links.
- Consider having students complete the [What was the Holocaust? Activity](#).
- Identify any terms students may be unfamiliar with in the written text or the podcast.

Materials

- [SS Quanza Chapter](#)
- [SS Quanza Podcast](#)
- [Video on 1938 Anschluss/Evian Conference \(USHMM\)](#)
- [Video on Refugee Ships at Sea \(USHMM\)](#)
- [Action Planning Document](#)

Lesson:

INTRODUCTION

1. If students have not previously discussed the Holocaust, begin with an overview of the term, Holocaust, as defined by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored, persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945 across Europe and North Africa. The height of persecution and murder occurred during World War II. By the end of the war in 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews. The Nazis believed that Germans were racially superior.

They believed Jews were a threat to the so-called German racial community. While Jews were the primary victims, the Nazis also targeted other groups for persecution and murder. The Nazis claimed that Roma, people with disabilities, some Slavic peoples (especially Poles and Russians), and Black people were biologically inferior. The regime persecuted other groups because of politics, ideology, or behavior. These groups included Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men, and people the Nazis called "asocials" and "professional criminals."

For younger students, or students previously familiar with this event in history, you can utilize this shortened definition:

The state-sponsored systematic murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Sinti-Roma, Poles, people with physical and mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents were also targeted by the Nazis.

2. Share with students that today we will be learning about the story of SS Quanza. The Quanza was a ship carrying refugees from Europe, including many Jewish refugees escaping Nazi Germany.
3. Begin by asking students about why Jewish individuals may have wished to escape Nazi Germany at this time? What might these individuals need to take into consideration when planning to immigrate? How difficult do you think this process would be?

RESEARCH/ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

1. Share [this video](#) to set the tone for emigration from Nazi Germany. Note that while this video focuses on Austria, the challenges are the same throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. What does this video tell us about the challenges faced by those who wish to emigrate? What additional challenges may not have been mentioned in the video? (Financial means, learning a new language, leaving family etc.)
2. Next, play this short film on [refugee ships](#). Stop the film at 4:30. Ask students for their initial responses to the video with a particular emphasis on the story of the *MS St. Louis*.
3. Explain to students that they will be assigned one of two ways to learn about the story of another ship, the *SS Quanza* and the refugees who set sail on it - through a podcast or through a written narrative. Each group will seek to answer the following questions:
 - a. What was the SS Quanza?
 - b. Who set sail on the SS Quanza?
 - c. What happened during its journey?
 - d. Who stepped forward to assist the refugees this time?
 - e. How was the outcome different? Why do you think this was the case?
4. Task students to first review their sources and answers to these questions as individuals; then ask them to discuss the answers to these questions with others who shared their medium (text or podcast).
5. Complete the watching of the video on refugee ships. What additional pieces did you learn about this experience?
6. Upon discussing this topic, ask students how the actions of specific individuals “saved” refugees from a fate similar to that of *MS St. Louis*.

CONCLUSION

1. Share with students that they have the power to stand up for issues that matter to them. Have them complete this [Action Planning Document](#).
2. Ask students to complete the document as individuals or as a class.

3. Upon completion, ask students to discuss whether or not they wish to put their plans into action and what support they need to do so. This can be done via an exit ticket or full class discussion.