

LESSON: Esther Wondolowicz Goldman

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 a young Polish girl whose story shows the impact a foreign invasion can have upon an individual, a family, a community, and a nation. Contemporary issues may include Ukraine, Israel, and Yemen.

Overview:

Key Question(s):

- Who was Esther Wondolowicz Goldman? What was her experience during the Holocaust?
- How did the Nazi invasion impact Esther's family - both in the immediate aftermath and the longer term period?
- What was the long-term effect of this time period on Esther's life?

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

- Define the Holocaust and related terms such as antisemitism, Nazi party, World War II, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbruck and death march.
- Identify who Esther Wondolowicz Goldman was and what her journey was like during the Holocaust.
- Compare and contrast information shared in text and in a podcast.
- Discuss the impact of the Nazi invasion on Polish Jews, with a specific exploration of the impact on the Wondolowicz family.
- Explain the short and long-term impacts of war on individuals, communities and nations.
- Discuss the impact of invasion and war on individuals today.

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 learned from the full-length version of [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#).

In addition, we suggest:

- Prepare access to handout and student packet.
- 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

- Esther Wondolowicz's narrative in [To Life: The Past is Present](#)
- Esther Goldman Podcast: The Signal

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 the 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 Esther Wondolowicz Goldman. Esther was a young Polish Jewish girl who survived the Holocaust. Like many families throughout Europe, Esther's family was impacted by an invasion by a foreign country. Ask students to generate a list of possible consequences an invasion might have on the citizens of a country - both immediate and longer-term.

RESEARCH/ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

1. Provide students with an overview of World War II: The Holocaust occurred during World War II. Share with students that World War II began in Europe on September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union invaded Poland. The Pacific front of the war began when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; however, Japanese aggression against its neighbors began earlier in the 1930s. Later, Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, turned against his former ally, Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union, when Germany attacked the USSR in June 1941.

The European Theater of the war quickly involved countries who came to Poland's aid. The German war machine invaded surrounding nations rapidly, overtaking much of continental Europe by mid-1940. In every single country, the Jewish population was at risk due to the Nazi's antisemitic ideology. (Antisemitism is a hatred of Jewish people as a group or a concept.)

2. Explain to students that they will be learning about how Esther and her family, as well as others in her community were impacted by the German invasion of Poland. They will be assigned one of two ways to learn about Esther - through a podcast or through a written narrative. Each group will seek to answer the following questions:
 - a. Who was Esther Wondolowicz Goldman?
 - b. In 3-5 sentences, summarize Esther's experiences during and after the German invasion of Poland.
 - c. What was the immediate impact of the German invasion on Esther, her family, her community and her nation?
 - d. What were the longer-term impacts of the German invasion on Esther, her family, her community and her nation?
 - e. What were the advantages and disadvantages to learning about Esther's story through your assigned medium?
3. 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).
4. Once this initial period of sharing is complete, place students in heterogeneous pairs or small groups to discuss their answers to the questions. Have students place particular emphasis on discussing how their two mediums varied and what the experience was like for each individual.

5. Have students share out as a whole group discussing the key questions from above and any other observations from their work.

CONCLUSION

1. Unfortunately, war did not end in our world in 1945. War continues to impact our world, with war raging in the Ukraine and other countries today.
2. Ask students to reflect on what they learned during their exploration and how it can connect to today:
 - a) Aside from the broad terms like people and countries, who do invasions impact and how? (Create a chart if it assists in illustrating the discussion)
 - b) Which of these impacts are immediate, and which are more long-term?
 - c) How can we apply what we have learned about the impact of war to shape our world in the present? What actions can we take based on our new information?