

Junior Cycle history

The Holocaust: oral testimonies of survivors

**Learning outcomes, Junior Cycle history: 1.1, 1.6, 3.10**

**Learning intentions:**

- To identify background events and the causes of the holocaust
- To develop empathy for the victims of the persecution of the Jews by Nazi Germany
- To assess whether or not oral testimonies are a valuable source of evidence for historians

This worksheet is based on the British Library *Voices of the Holocaust* online learning resource. The website contains oral testimonies (accounts) of survivors of the Holocaust, many of whom came to live in Britain either before or after the Holocaust.

[Life before the Holocaust](#)

Oral testimony 1

“I was about to get on the train”: listen/read [here](#)

Before the Holocaust, what ordinary activities did this child take part in?

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What happened to this child’s family during the Holocaust?

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Do some research online to find out what the **kindertransport** was.

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Oral testimony 2

“It’s not your fault that you are inferior”: listen/read [here](#)

*Glossary*

gymnasium: German secondary school

Aryan: Nazi term to describe Germans as a superior ‘master race’

Pre-reading/listening: look up a definition for *inferior*.

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How did the biology teacher try to show the class that 'Jews were inferior'?

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How would you describe the attitude of the teacher to Peter and the other Jewish children?

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**Oral testimony 3**

**"I just understood we had to get out": listen/read [here](#)**

What news did the mother and child keep from the grandmother? Why did they not tell her?

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How many suitcases were the mother and child allowed to bring with them to England?

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How old was the child at the time of departing for England?

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Based on this witness testimony, do you have sympathy for the survivor? Explain your answer.

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**Oral testimony 4**

**“All Jews must start wearing yellow stars”**: listen/read [here](#)

According to Jack, the worst part of the new laws was that Jewish person was now a ‘person without rights’. What examples does he give of what could happen to Jewish people as a result of this?

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What work did Jack do as a result of the new laws and at what age did he begin working?

Do some research online about the **Nuremberg Laws**. Write down three facts about them in the space below:

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**Assessing the sources**

Having read/listened to the oral testimonies, do you think that oral evidence is a valuable source for historians? Outline the strengths and weaknesses of using oral testimony as a source of evidence.

Strength(s):

Weakness(es):