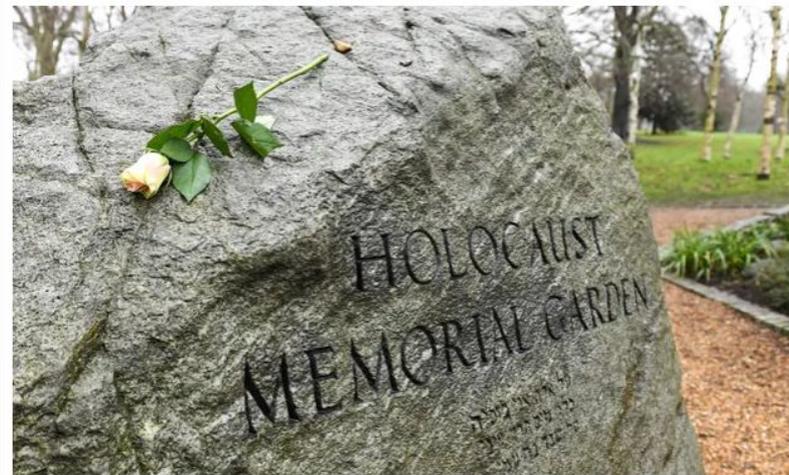


Remembering the Holocaust



Half of Britons do not know 6m Jews were murdered in Holocaust

Survey also finds majority of UK respondents believe fewer people care about Holocaust today than used to



 The Holocaust Memorial Garden in Hyde Park, London. Photograph: Anthony Harvey/Rex/Shutterstock



Why are we doing this assembly?

Last year I was involved in the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme by the Holocaust Education Trust alongside some other students.

This project seeks to offer sixth formers the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust and consider its relevance in the modern world.

One of the aims of the programme is to have those who partook to use their experience to educate others about the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust.

Our generation will be the last to be able to hear first hand accounts of Holocaust survivors, so educating others about its significance is only going to become more important as time goes on.

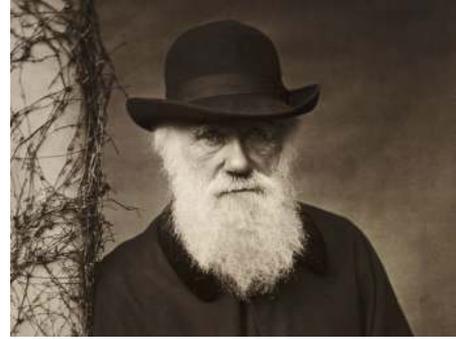
Anti-semitic sentiment

The origins of anti-Semitic sentiment across Europe can be traced back to the origins of Christianity.

Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, along with his followers. They saw themselves as a Jewish sect. The story that Judas betrayed Jesus for silver is the origin of the stereotypical association with Jews and greed, something that lasts even to this day.

Early Christian writings were essentially propaganda against traditional Judaism. Jews are held responsible for conspiring with the Romans to achieve the death of Jesus. It is these writings that are responsible for Jews being depicted as cruel, conspiratorial and greedy.

Anti-Semitism in Europe



Anti-Semitic sentiments have run rampant throughout history and continue to do so even with religious belief on the decline.

It wasn't uncommon for Jews to be given the ultimatum of renouncing their religion and converting to Christianity, moving into ghettos or being removed from the country they called home.

In the late 1700s things started to change, with scientists/science beginning to challenge the mindsets instilled by religion.

As a result Jews began to flourish, but with their success came resentment from those unwilling to let go of their hatred. Jew-haters now claimed they were not acting upon religious superstition, but on the ground that Jews were inherently inferior. **This theory was held by very prominent members of the scientific community, such as Charles Darwin. He believed that each race could be placed in a distinct hierarchy (with Jews at the bottom); this would be later coined 'Social Darwinism'.**

Adolf Hitler's View

Adolf Hitler was a German nationalist, and the loss of the First World War was a major blow to him. He blindly believed the Army's propaganda that Jewish revolutionaries were at fault for their loss.

He was inspired by the work of Darwin, bastardising it to fit his already warped world view, believing the Jews as a lesser type of person who were at an evolutionary disadvantage. The Nazi party used a racialised scientific rhetoric which was directly inspired by Social Darwinism.

Hitler additionally believed in 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion', which was created by the Tsarist secret police, claiming that there was an international Jewish conspiracy against Christianity and society.



Nazi Persecution of Jews: The Night of Broken Glass

Following the Nazis coming into power, the persecution of German Jews increased leading up to what was a boiling point of sorts on the night of November 9–10, 1938. This became known as *Kristallnacht* or the "Night of Broken Glass." It was named for the shattered glass from shop windows that littered the streets after the violence.

It was supposed to look like an unplanned outburst. In fact, it was actively coordinated by Nazi leaders. Many of the riots were started by members of the SS or Hitler Youth.



The Final Solution (1941-1945)

In the early stages of World War II, Jews were being forced into Ghettos. Although the plan wasn't to actively exterminate Jews, many were dying due to the horrific conditions they were subjected to.



The Final Solution (1941-1945)

At the Wannsee Conference, the decision was taken for a 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem' – they decided to murder every Jew in Europe. This would involve murdering 11 million Jews.

Camps were built at places such as Auschwitz, and Jewish people were rounded up and sent there to be gassed. Others were worked to death in labour camps to help the war effort.



Adolf Eichmann was a Nazi *SS-Obersturmbannführer* (lieutenant colonel). He was tasked with facilitating and managing the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and extermination camps in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe.

He was hanged for his war crimes in 1962.

The Holocaust and the Role of death camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau



The Holocaust was the murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children by the Nazis and their collaborators. They built death camps across Poland in order to commit a systematic killing of the European Jewish Population.

The problems associated with transporting the millions of people was seen as purely economic - they often used freight trains and forced the Jews to pay for their tickets to the death camps. Most of those who arrived were immediately murdered. Those who weren't were subject to forced labour.

The living conditions were abhorrent; the rations only amounted to a mere 600 calories per day, with illnesses being rife.



The Holocaust and the Role of death camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau



Maintaining humanity in a place designed to inherently dehumanise could be a small but significant triumph to the Jews.

Towards the end of the war, as allied troops began to close in on the camps, guards would burn them down and force the remaining Jews to march to the next death camp. These were called Death Marches, and many died from exhaustion as a result.

Anti-Semitism didn't stop after the Holocaust. The UK was the third worst country in the world for violent anti-Semitic attacks in 2020, behind only Germany and the USA. The community security trust, which is charity that monitors anti-Jewish incidents in the UK, estimates that 2021 will have been the worst year on record.

Humanising the Holocaust

It is easy to look at the facts, figures and data of all those lost during the Holocaust and draw a conclusion from that alone, and easier yet is it to forget that every one of those names that comprise the incomprehensible six million figure was an individual.

An individual who was no different from you or I. They were a friend or partner, a son or a daughter, a mother or a father, a brother or a sister, and most importantly they were a person. They had dreams, aspirations and an identity. However because they had Jewish heritage the Nazi party wished to discriminate against and eventually annihilate them.

A final thought from Holocaust survivor Arek Hersh

Arek grew up in Poland and was imprisoned in Łódź ghetto and then in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Arek survived a death march before finally being liberated from Theresienstadt ghetto (Czechoslovakia) in 1945.



[Arek's story: Speaking out](#)