

# The Nuremberg Trials

Unit by

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Grade-Level Applicability: 9 – 12

## **Overview and Background of the Unit**

The Nuremberg project is part of an historical film studies class that I have written on World War II. The inclusion of the film *Nuremberg* and the examination of its historical accuracy are a vital part of the ultimate goal for the class. Much of what Americans know about history, unfortunately, comes from their exposure to “Hollywood” films. Introducing the students to original documentation and oral histories, or transcripts of such histories, will assist them in evaluating the film’s accuracy and, ultimately, the process undertaken in the Military Tribunal commonly known as the Nuremberg Trials. In the process of evaluating the film, it is my intent to refine the students’ abilities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate historical documents.

## **The Lessons of the Unit**

### *1. Evaluating Holocaust-Related Websites*

Day one will be spent examining a Holocaust website as a class activity. The teacher will guide the students through series of steps to determine the authenticity and legitimacy of the website. The next day will be spent in small groups examining a Holocaust website. This lesson will take 2 class periods to complete.

### *2. Readings on Nuremberg*

Using materials from Facing History and Ourselves, the students will be confronted with issues about obedience to orders, the rules of war, and the establishment of international standards. A careful examination of the readings will provide much to discuss for the weeklong lesson. Having wrestled with these issues, the students will be prepared to analyze Nazi documents used in the military tribunal and, hopefully, draw conclusions about the benefits or international law and standards.

### *3. Nuremberg: Film Review*

After spending 3 class periods viewing the film, the students will write a 1-2 page review discussing the accuracy, or inaccuracy, of the film. As a basis for determining accuracy, the students will refer to transcript documents found online, transcripts from Interrogations by Richard Overy, the oral histories found in Witness to Nuremberg by Bruce A. Stave and Michele Palmer and information found in The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials by Telford Taylor. This lesson may be completed in 4 – 5 class periods.

#### 4. *The Case Against the Defendant*

Having viewed the HBO film *Nuremberg* and determined its accuracy, the students examine the evidence available about a select defendant. Having determined the charges levied against the defendant, the students will construct an opening statement for the trial against the defendant or write a journalist's columns or radio broadcasts covering the case. This lesson occurs the third week of a four-week unit on Nuremberg in a semester film class on World War 2. Prior to beginning the unit the students will have learned how to analyze primary sources and websites. This lesson will take 5-7 class periods to complete if all work is done in class or 3 class periods if the research is conducted outside of the classroom

#### 5. *Examination of the USHMM Website*

Using the information on the website, the students will examine the opening statement of General Telford Taylor. Having read the statement, they will select a "medical experiment" to research and prepare a ten-minute presentation for their classmates outlining the "experiment", those involved, and the sentences handed to the defendants. This lesson will take 5 class periods to complete.

# LESSON ONE: Evaluating Holocaust-Related Websites

## Subject

History Elective (War Studies or Holocaust Studies)

## **Purpose of Lesson**

The purpose of the lesson is to evaluate various holocaust websites for accuracy and authenticity.

## **Goals for Student Understanding**

- The students will gain an understanding of websites and how to determine the author, his/her credentials, and the overview of the site and it's accuracy.
- The students will develop an understanding of how to evaluate a website.

## **What Students will do to Build Their Understanding**

- The students will evaluate several holocaust websites to determine credibility and accuracy of the sites.
- The students will confer with one another to share opinions about their evaluations. A consensus will be reached concerning each website examined.

## **State Standards**

### **Kansas**

- World History Benchmark 8
  - Indicators 2 and 3
    - The student engages in historical thinking skills.
    - Develops and implements effective research strategies for investigating a given historic topic
    - Examines and analyzes primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.

### **Missouri**

#### Knowledge Standards

- Social Studies
  - Indicator 3
    - In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge and proficiency in
      - reading and evaluating nonfiction works and materials.
      - Comprehending and evaluating the content and artistic aspects of oral and visual presentations

## **Resources and Handouts: Specific Resources**

- ◆ *Evaluating Holocaust-Related Websites* worksheet: adapted from materials prepared by David Klevan

## **Resources and Handouts: Materials for Students**

- ◆ Student information sheet *Evaluating Holocaust-related Websites* giving information about evaluating websites
- ◆ Project assignment sheet *Evaluating Holocaust-related Websites*
- ◆ Computers with Internet Access
  - <http://ushmm.org>
  - <http://google.com>

## **LESSON TWO: Readings on Nuremberg**

### Subject

History Elective (War Studies or Holocaust Studies)

### **Purpose of Lesson**

The purpose of the lesson is to introduce students to issues of obedience to orders, the rules of war, and the establishment of international standards. Students will analyze the various readings through classroom discussions.

### **Goals for Student Understanding**

- The student will gain an understanding of issues of obedience and rules of war in order to analyze Nazi documents used in the military tribunals at a later date.
- The students will express their opinions, supported by facts from the readings, with their peers.

### **What Students will do to Build Their Understanding**

- The students will complete various readings and discuss them with their peers.
- The students will complete the assigned Connections to go with each reading.

### **State Standards**

#### **Kansas**

- Civics-Government Benchmark 5

##### Indicator 6

The student understands various systems of governments and how nations and international organizations interact.

- Describes the purpose and functions of multi-national organizations (e.g. NATO, International Court of Justice, International Red Cross, Amnesty International, United Nations)

- World History Benchmark 6

##### Indicator 3

- Describes the origins, course, and consequences of World War II

#### **Missouri**

##### Knowledge Standards

- Social Studies

##### Indicator 3

- In Social Studies, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge
  - of principles and processes of governance systems

- Communication Arts

##### Indicator 3

- In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of and proficiency in reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material

##### Performance Standards

Goal 1: Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze and apply information and ideas.

- 5. comprehend and evaluate written, visual and oral presentations and works

Goal 2: Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom.

- 3. Exchange information, questions and ideas while recognizing the perspectives of others

Goal 4: Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions and act as responsible members of society.

- Students will demonstrate within and integrate across all content areas the ability to

3. analyze the duties and responsibilities of individuals in societies

**Resources and Handouts: Specific Resources**

- ◆ Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., Holocaust and Human Behavior, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994.

**Resources and Handouts: Materials for Students**

- ◆ Reading list: Holocaust and Human Behavior.
- ◆ Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., Holocaust and Human Behavior, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994.

## LESSON THREE: Nuremberg: Film Review

### Subject

History Elective (War Studies or Holocaust Studies)

### **Purpose of Lesson**

The purpose of the lesson is to evaluate the accuracy or inaccuracy of the film, *Nuremberg* using transcripts from the military tribunal.

### **Goals for Student Learning**

- The students will gain an understanding of how Hollywood films may embellish the truth for the purposes of entertainment.
- The students will develop an understanding of how to use original documents to evaluate film.

### **What Students will do to Build Their Understanding**

- The students will evaluate *Nuremberg* to determine its accuracy and credibility as a resource for Holocaust study.
- The students will analyze original transcripts from the military tribunal in order to use them as an evaluation tool for the film.
- The students will write their conclusions in a review of the film.

### **State Standards**

#### **Kansas**

- World History Benchmark 8

Indicators 2 and 3

The student engages in historical thinking skills.

- Develops and implements effective research strategies for investigating a given historical topic.
- Examines and analyzes primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.

#### **Missouri**

#### **Knowledge Standards**

- Communication Arts

Indicators 2,3,4 and 5

- In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of and proficiency in
  - reading and evaluating fiction, poetry, and drama
  - reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material
  - writing formally and informally
  - comprehending and evaluating the content and artistic aspects of oral and visual presentations

### **Resources and Handouts: Specific Resources**

- ◆ Film: *Nuremberg* (Alec Baldwin)
- ◆ Stave and Palmer. Witnesses to Nuremberg: An Oral History of American Participants at the War Crimes Trials, Twayne Publishers, New York, NY, 1998.
- ◆ Overy, Richard. Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands, 1945, Penguin Books, New York, NY, 2001.

- ◆ Taylor, Telford. The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials, Little, Brown & Company, United States, 1992.
- ◆ Computers with Internet Access
- ◆ Nuremberg Film Review assignment sheet.

**Resources and Handouts: Material for Students**

- ◆ Assignment sheet *Nuremberg Film Review*
- ◆ Computers with Internet Access
- ◆ The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials, Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands, 1945, Witness to Nuremberg: An Oral History of American Participants at the War Crimes Trial.

## **LESSON FOUR: The Case Against the Defendant**

### Subject

History Elective (War Studies or Holocaust Studies)

### **Purpose of Lesson**

The purpose of the lesson is to examine and analyze original Nazi documents to construct a case against a war crimes defendant.

### **Goals for Student Understanding**

- The students will gain an understanding of the Nazi documentation used to construct cases against the defendants.
- The students will analyze documents to formulate a comprehensive list of evidence in which to try a defendant.
- The students will write in a clear, concise manner.

### **What Students will do to Build Their Understanding**

- The students will analyze a series of Nazi documents to determine whether or not they address the charges levied at the military war tribunal.
- The students will use the information in the documents to construct a case against a defendant.

### **State Standards**

#### **Kansas**

- World History Benchmark 8  
Indicators 1, 2 and 3

The student engages in historical thinking skills

- Analyzes historical materials to trace development of an idea or trend across space or prolonged period of time to explain patterns of historical continuity and change.
- Develops and implements effective research strategies for investigating a given historical topic.
- Examines and analyzes primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretation.

#### **Missouri**

##### Knowledge Standards

- Communication Arts  
Indicators 3 and 4

- In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge and proficiency in
  - reading and evaluating nonfiction works and materials
  - writing formally and informally

##### Performance Standards

- Goal 1

###### Indicator 2

- Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze and apply information and ideas.
  - conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas

- Goal 3

###### Indicator 5

- Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills recognize and solve problems.
  - reason inductively from a set of specific facts and deductively from general premises

➤ Goal 4

Indicator 3

- Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions and act as responsible members of society.
- Analyze the duties and responsibilities of individuals in society.

**Resources and Handouts: Specific Resources**

- ◆ Alphabetic List of Persons from <http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu>
- ◆ Original Nazi documents found on the various Holocaust internet sites

**Resources and Handouts: Materials for Students**

- ◆ Student assignment sheet *The Case Against the Defendant*
- ◆ Computers with Internet Access  
<http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu>  
other Holocaust sites

## **LESSON FIVE: Examination of the USHMM website**

### Subject

History Elective (War Studies or Holocaust Studies)

### **Purpose of Lesson**

The purpose of the lesson is to introduce the students to the additional trials that occurred after the military tribunal.

### **Goals for Student Understanding**

- The students will examine the USHMM website exhibit of the doctors' trials.
- The students will utilize the internet to obtain further information about one of the medical experiments that took place in the camps.

### **What Students will do to Build Their Understanding**

- The students will research one medical experiment and prepare a presentation for classroom use.

### **State Standards**

#### **Kansas**

- World History Benchmark 8

##### Indicators 2 and 3

The student engages in historical thinking skills.

- Develops and implements effective research strategies for investigating a given historical topic.
- Examines and analyzes primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.

#### **Missouri**

##### Knowledge Standards

- Communication Arts

##### Indicators 3 and 4

- In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of and proficiency in
  - reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material
  - writing formally

##### Performance Standards

- Goal 1

##### Indicators 2 and 5

- Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze and apply information and ideas.
  - conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas
  - comprehend and evaluate written, visual and oral presentations and works

- Goal 4

##### Indicator 3

- Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions and act as responsible members of society.
  - analyze the duties and responsibilities of individuals in societies

### **Resources and Handouts: Specific Resources**

- ◆ *Nuremberg Examination of the USHMM website* worksheet
- ◆ Handout from [www.law.umkc.edu](http://www.law.umkc.edu) *The Subsequent Nuremberg Trials: An Overview*

### **Resources and Handouts: Materials for Students**

- ◆ Assignment sheet *Nuremberg Examination of the USHMM website*
- ◆ Computers with Internet Access
  - <http://www.ushmm.org/research/doctors/>
  - <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/subsequenttrials.html>

# Evaluating Holocaust-Related Websites

Adapted from materials prepared by David Klevan, USHMM

*Identify the source and assess its credibility.*

Recognize the domain name of the site.

- .gov is U.S. government
- .mil is U.S. military
- .edu is an accredited post-secondary educational institution
- .com is a commercial, for-profit entity
- .org is a non-commercial, non-profit entity
- .net is a computer network, particularly and Internet-related network
- .int is an international organization
- .il, .de, .at, .ca, etc. are country identifiers; frequently preceded by .co  
(.il is Israel for instance)

Be aware that many colleges and universities restrict server space to professors and students but that some do not. Some allow alumni and others to use their server. Also be aware of the fact that there is often a difference between the quality of student-based and professor-based products.

While “.gov” domain type denotes the information contained in the site is a product of a U.S. government office remember that some sources may have their own agenda. Usually, however, they are of high quality and less likely to be suspect.

Ask these questions about who produced the site.

- Is it clear who is sponsoring the page? Is there a link to another page describing the purpose of the sponsor?
- Is there a way of verifying the “legitimacy” of the sponsor (phone number, address, etc.)? *An email address is not enough.*
- Is it clear who wrote the page?
- Is the author a professional or an amateur (educational degrees etc.)?
- If the author is a professional, does he/she have a connection to the Holocaust? Does this connection qualify one as an authority on the Holocaust?
- Is it possible the author is qualified in some aspects of the Holocaust and not in others?
- REMEMBER – Anyone can publish on-line. ANYONE.

Conduct a preliminary overview of the site.

- Does the page display poorly?
- Are there spelling errors or grammatical errors? Is the page poorly written?
- Does the author use excessive profanity?
- Is the material current? Are there dates indicating when the material was written or posted?

Since the Web is “world wide” some sites may have been written by authors unfamiliar with the English language so some spelling and grammatical errors may exist.

Review the site for accuracy – factual errors and sources of data.

- Does the author define “Holocaust”?
- Are there glaring incorrect statements, citations, etc.?
- Does the text include footnotes, photo captions, etc. that can be used to verify information?
- If material is translated, is a source of the translation cited?
- Does the site include links to other sites? If so evaluate that data independently. Check the URL to see if you are still in the same site.

Check for bias and comprehensiveness of data.

- Is the site or author affiliated with a political party, interest group, professional or governmental agency?
- Does the site have a stated mission?
- What is the purpose of the site (entertainment, marketing, etc.)?
- Does the author use persuasive language? Does he/she use precise language or does he/she generalize, exaggerate, or use extreme language?
- Do the background images or graphics display bias? Are graphs and charts clearly and properly labeled?
- How comprehensive is the historical presentation? Does the author emphasize a particular event, experience, or theme?
- How thorough is the documentation? Are primary sources utilized?

**What is an Authoritative Source with Accurate Information?**

Generally speaking, the following characteristics are indicators of higher overall reliability and validity.

- National Museums and Memorials
- Government Institutions
- Primary Source Documentation, particularly postwar court exhibits with certified translations
- Materials excerpted from or written by prominent historians in the field: Yehuda Bauer, Israel Gutman, Raul Hilberg, Christopher Browning (among others)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluating Holocaust-related Websites  
assignment sheet**

Search engine used \_\_\_\_\_

List the first ten sites located from your search.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Select 5 of the above sites. Write the URL on the line provided. Examine them carefully using the attached criteria. Write your findings below. Be prepared to defend your findings.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

What further questions do you have?

## Nuremberg Film review

Having watched the film *Nuremberg*, write a 1-2 page review of the film discussing the accuracy of the film. As a basis for determining accuracy you may use original transcript documents found online, the transcripts from Interrogations by Richard Overy, transcripts from The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials, by Taylor, The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials, and the oral histories found in Witness to Nuremberg by Bruce A. Stave and Michele Palmer.

## Nuremberg The case against the defendant

Select a defendant from the *Alphabetical List of Persons*. Examine some of the documents available that served as evidence against him.

- ◆ What are the charges against the defendant?
- ◆ Based on the documents you examined, are there other crimes that could have been brought against the defendant?

Complete ONE of the following exercises.

1. Construct a case against the defendant. Write a short 2-3 minute opening statement. Prepare an outline of the case you would present against the defendant citing the evidence you would use. (This is not to be a *copy* of the original trial transcripts, rather a case written by you using *other* documents that will serve as evidence against the defendant.)
  
2. You are a journalist charged with reporting the trial proceedings against one of the defendants. Write a three-part column or radio broadcast covering the case against the defendant and the findings of the tribunal.