

## Unit 5 / Lesson 5.2 / Overview

### Unit 5: Jews in the Nazi Grip

#### Lesson 5.2: Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip

##### Background:

In each country occupied by the Germans, the Germans and their collaborators took away the rights of Jews and isolated them from the economic, political, and cultural life of society. The Germans and their collaborators based their actions on a set of ideas that defined the Jews as an inferior race who posed a serious threat to society and who needed to be isolated, removed, and finally, annihilated. In Germany, the rights of the Jews were slowly taken away in a series of steps over several years. Elsewhere, such as in Poland, the persecution, isolation, and removal of the Jews from society was quick and immediate. In each country the Germans occupied, Jews were identified, and with the exception of Denmark, were forced to wear badges or armbands displaying a Star of David. Their property, businesses, and jobs were taken away; they were isolated from the non-Jewish population, and they were deported and murdered. The Germans and their collaborators used different ways of removing Jews from society as persecution became more intense. In Western Europe, Jews were often arrested and deported to transit camps or other holding centers. In Eastern Europe, for example in Poland, Jews were forced to leave their homes and move into ghettos (small sections of cities and towns where they were imprisoned and kept apart from the non-Jewish population). In both Western and Eastern Europe, Jews were then sent to killing centers and death camps.

**Video Running Time: 11:27**

##### Goal:

Analyze how the Germans, as they occupied more territory in Western Europe, steadily increased their persecution of Jews and intent to kill all European Jews by deporting them to death camps in the East.

##### Essential Questions:

- How did segregation and isolation of Jews in Western Europe compare to Eastern Europe?
- How did Jews balance life and terror in this period of Nazi occupation?

##### Learning Goals:

- Students will recognize that camps and ghettos were used to segregate and isolate the Jews.
- Students will recognize that Jews tried to balance life and terror.
- Students will explain that, having had their property and businesses seized, Jews were not able to support themselves or escape.
- Students will be able to recognize that the end goal of transit camps was deportation to the East.

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### **Success Criteria:**

- Students will explain how Jews tried to have a “normal” life.
- Students will articulate that without resources and employment, people could not obtain food or medicine, resulting in illness and death.
- Students will explain the pattern that emerged after the occupation of France, the Netherlands, and Belgium.
- Students will explain life in transit camps, including what people lacked, their fears, and the purpose of the camps.

### **Topics For Further Discussion:**

- How did the death toll of Jews compare among the Western European countries?
- Why did Nazi Germany treat the occupied Western European countries differently than they did countries in Eastern Europe?

### **Recommended Background Reading from How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader**

#### **Unit 5 – Lesson 5.2**

##### **Chapter 5**

- Introduction to **Chapter 5: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

## Unit 5 / Lesson 5.2 / Video Note-taking Guide

### Unit 5: Jews in the Nazi Grip

#### Lesson 5.2: Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip

Question	
What happened to the Jews in Western European countries after they were occupied by the Germans?	
What was the goal of seizing Jewish property and businesses?	
How were transit camps like ghettos?	
When Jewish communities in France were ordered to prepare deportation lists, which Jews were often placed first on the list?	
Describe what was one of the most infamous roundups of French Jews	
How were the events for Jews in the Netherlands parallel to the events in France?	
Where were Anne Frank and her family initially deported?	

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Why was the number of Dutch Jews murdered during the Holocaust so high?	
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### Answer Key

Question	Possible Answers
What happened to the Jews in Western European countries after they were occupied by the Germans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jews were segregated and isolated</li> <li>• Wearing Jewish stars required</li> <li>• Jews were impoverished</li> <li>• Deportation to killing centers and camps</li> <li>• Anti-Jewish decrees were issued</li> </ul> (Slide 2, 3, 4)
What was the goal of seizing Jewish property and businesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Germans to enrich themselves</li> <li>• Jewish communities became impoverished</li> </ul> (Slide 4, 5)
How were transit camps like ghettos?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocated and isolated Jews</li> <li>• Controlled and organized Jewish population prior to transportation to the east</li> <li>• Life was harsh and punishing</li> <li>• Food scarce</li> <li>• No medicine</li> <li>• Fear of deportation</li> </ul> (Slide 5)
When Jewish communities in France were ordered to prepare deportation lists, which Jews were often placed first on the list?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign-born Jews</li> <li>• Followed by native-born French Jews</li> </ul> (Side 6)
Describe what was one of the most infamous roundups of French Jews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 16, 1942 – <i>Vél d'Hiv Aktion</i></li> <li>• 4,000 French police rounded up over 13,000 Jews of foreign nationality</li> <li>• Majority would be deported to Auschwitz</li> </ul> (Slide 8)
How were the events for Jews in the Netherlands parallel to the events in France?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jews were relocated to a central location, Amsterdam</li> <li>• Deported to transit camp, most to Westerbork</li> <li>• Deported to the East, primarily to Auschwitz or Sobibór</li> </ul> (Slide 10, 11)
Where were Anne Frank and her family initially deported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Westerbork</li> </ul> (Side 11)

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Why was the number of Dutch Jews murdered during the Holocaust so high?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly efficient Dutch governmental bureaucracy</li><li>• Dutch kept meticulous records of its citizens categorized by religion, making the names and addresses of Dutch Jews accessible</li><li>• The Netherlands is very flat and unforested, providing few places to hide (Slide 13)</li></ul>
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### **Unit 5: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

#### **Lesson 5.2: Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

##### **Slide 1 – Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

Welcome to Lesson 5.2 of *How Was it Possible? A Holocaust Curriculum For and By Teachers™*, from The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. This presentation will give you an overview of “Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip.” This lesson was prepared by Logan Greene, who teaches social studies and English language arts at Hoover City Schools outside of Birmingham, Alabama.

##### **Slide 2 – Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

As we begin our exploration of Jews in the Nazi grip in Western Europe, this photograph evokes a theme central to this topic, the segregation and isolation of Jews. Herman de Leeuw and Annie Pais pose with members of their wedding party shortly after the ceremony; however, despite the happy occasion, we see the mandatory Jewish stars sewn onto the clothing in the wedding portrait, a legal requirement from April 1942.

##### **Slide 3 – France, The Netherlands, and Belgium**

We will begin by examining the Western European countries of France, the Netherlands, and Belgium

##### **Slide 4 – France, The Netherlands, and Belgium – Jewish Life**

When Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933, many German Jews began emigrating west. Sadly, this led to only temporary relief and safety.

In 1940, the German forces quickly overran the western countries. This included France, whose defense was expected to be as strong as it was in World War I.

With the arrival of German occupation, anti-Jewish decrees were quickly issued, and Jews were removed from Western European society. With the exception of Denmark, Jews living in the occupied countries of Western Europe, were required to wear the yellow Star of David on clothing at all times, including wedding attire, as seen in this photograph. This is the wedding of Salomon Schrijver and Flora Mendels in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam. Salomon Schrijver and his wife were deported to Westerbork, and from there, to Sobibór, where they were killed on July 9, 1943.

German officials and their collaborators seized Jewish properties and businesses in an effort to enrich themselves and impoverish the Jews and isolate them from their non-Jewish neighbors.

##### **Slide 5 – France, The Netherlands, and Belgium – Jewish Life**

The seizing of property and businesses left the Jewish communities in occupied Western Europe impoverished.



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Students were removed from their schools and universities, further isolating them from society and life in the wider community. This affected both native-born Jews and Jews who had immigrated to Western Europe from other countries.

Not long after the occupation began, the Germans started deportations to the eastern territories. Unlike in the East, where the Germans primarily relocated and isolated Jews in ghettos, in Western Europe the Germans used a system of transit camps to control and organize the Jewish populations prior to their transportation to the East. Life in transit camps was harsh and punishing; food was scarce, there was almost no medicine, and there was constant fear of deportation. Time in a transit camp could be as varied as a short stay of a few days or weeks, to as long as spending years in confinement.

In this photograph, we see women prisoners behind barbed wire in the Gurs transit camp in France.

### **Slide 6 – France**

After France's defeat in June 1940, the Germans partitioned France into two zones.

The Germans occupied the northern and western zone, which included Paris. The nominally independent southern zone of Vichy France was a puppet state headed by Marshal Philippe Pétain.

Deportations of France's Jews would begin, first with foreign-born Jews, followed by native-born French Jews.

In this photograph, we can see an early transport of foreign-born Jews being deported from France, escorted by French guards.

### **Slide 7 – France, 1940 – 1944**

The map shows the division of France into the occupied northern zone and the southern Vichy territory. Special attention should be directed to the location of transit camps at Pithiviers and Drancy, both of which were close to the city of Paris.

### **Slide 8 – Roundups and *Vél d'Hiv*, Paris**

One of the most infamous roundups of French Jews occurred in Paris in July of 1942, at the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, or *Vél d'Hiv*, an indoor bicycle stadium. 4,000 French police rounded up over 13,000 foreign-born Jews and brought them to the massive velodrome in Paris, as it was one of the only buildings large enough to accommodate such a large number of people. The vast majority would be deported to Auschwitz.

Rachel Polakiewicz was a Polish Jew who had escaped to France, but was rounded up in the infamous *Vél d'Hiv Aktion*; here is her description of it in a letter to her neighbors, a Jewish family called the Sebbanes, who were native-born French Jews and not part of this round up.



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“Dear All, A few words to tell you that we are all in the *Vél d’Hiv*, including Mrs. Zonszajn. We are all sitting around on the benches, like at a show, except that we are the entertainers. Superfluous to say that it’s overcrowded. We are all in an unenviable situation. It is mayhem here, and that’s an understatement, with all these children, some get lost, some are sick, and we can hardly hear each other.”

### **Slide 9 – Transit Camps in France**

In the summer of 1942, in conjunction with the Paris roundup at the *Vél d’Hiv*, other roundups and deportations took place. Those deported were sent to Gurs, Drancy, Rivesaltes, Pithiviers, and several other smaller camps.

Jacques Zonszajn, a friend of Rachel Polakiewicz, wrote to the Sebbanes from the Pithiviers Internment Camp, seen here, “We are in a sad situation. Mother, Mrs. Wartski have been sent to an unknown destination, the same as Mrs. Polakiewicz and her family. Leon who remained has also left. We sleep on straw.”

In this photograph, you see a French policeman guarding Jews imprisoned at Pithiviers.

These camps were established to streamline and facilitate the deportation of French and foreign-born Jews to the East, specifically to Auschwitz. Of the thousands of Jews in France eventually deported, one third were French citizens.

### **Slide 10 – The Netherlands**

While the Germans were deporting Jews from France, parallel events took place in the Netherlands, which had surrendered to the Germans in May 1940.

Beginning in 1942, the Jewish population of the rural Netherlands was relocated to Amsterdam, for centralized organization, and to await future deportation.

Here we see the large sign signifying the entrance to the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam. Even though the Nazis did not establish ghettos in the West, they did establish a specific area of Amsterdam to concentrate the Jewish population.

By July 1942, mass deportations were taking place, primarily to Sobibór and Auschwitz.

### **Slide 11 – Westerbork Transit Camp**

The primary transit camp in the Netherlands was the massive Westerbork Transit camp.

Over 100,000 Jews spent time at Westerbork, with the vast majority eventually going to Auschwitz, or to the Sobibór death camp.

Of the more than 100,000 Jews who set foot in Westerbork, only 5,000 survived the war.

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While most of the Jews deported to Westerbork only spent weeks or months in the transit camp, including Anne Frank and her family after their capture at the Secret Annex, a small number, around 2,000, spent years in the camp.

In this photograph, we see Dutch Jews from Hooghalen on route to Westerbork.

### **Slide 12 – Belgium**

Belgium followed a similar path to France and the Netherlands. Belgium had surrendered on May 28, 1940, but deportations did not start until 1942. In the summer of 1942, Jews in Belgium were rounded up and deported to the East.

As in France, Belgium operated numerous transit camps to facilitate this round up and deportation, primarily to Auschwitz.

The transit camps in Belgium at Breendonk and Mechelen handled the vast majority of the Jews in Belgium, and as can be seen in this photograph, the barracks were spartan and devoid of any comfort, save a single small stove.

### **Slide 13 – Jewish Death Toll**

Dutch Jews fared considerably worse than Jews in other German-occupied Western countries, with 75% of the pre-war Dutch Jewish population murdered by the Germans. There were several reasons for this. One reason was the highly efficient Dutch governmental bureaucracy, which kept meticulous records of its citizens categorized by religion; thus, the names and addresses of most of the Dutch Jews were easily accessible. In addition, the Netherlands is a very flat and relatively unforested, open landscape with few places to hide.

77,000 Jews deported from France were murdered, primarily in Auschwitz, a third of them being French citizens, and two-thirds being foreign-born Jews who had immigrated to France before the war.

The vast majority of the Jews deported from Belgium were foreign-born; of these, 23,000 were murdered.

### **Slide 14 – Summary – Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip**

In summary, with the German occupation of France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, a pattern emerged common to all three countries.

Jews were removed from society and persecuted immediately after the country's surrender in the summer of 1940, with deportations to the East beginning in 1942.

The overwhelming majority of Jews in Western Europe deported to the East were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

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Thank you for joining us today as we learned about “Western Europe: Jews in the Nazi Grip.” Please continue your educational journey with us. This concludes our presentation of Lesson 5.2 from *How Was it Possible? A Holocaust Curriculum For and By Teachers™*. On behalf of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, thank you.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Circle the correct answers below.

1. How were transit camps in the West like ghettos in the East?
  - a. Harsh and punishing
  - b. Medicine was readily available
  - c. Allowed Jews more freedom while waiting for housing
  - d. Food was available
2. Why were transit camps established?
  - a. As killing centers
  - b. To take care of the children
  - c. To streamline and facilitate the deportation of Jews to camps and killing centers
  - d. To prevent Jews from getting sick prior to deportation
3. When the French were ordered to create deportation lists for the Germans, who were usually the first to be included on the list?
  - a. Children
  - b. Foreign born Jews
  - c. The elderly
  - d. The chronically ill
4. What did the Nazis do when they occupied Western Europe?
  - a. Kept Jews in their communities so people could watch them
  - b. Issued anti-Jewish decrees quickly
  - c. Kept students in schools and universities so they knew where they were
  - d. Allowed Jewish properties and businesses to keep working as long as a non-Jew worked there
5. Which of the following was not a goal of the Nazis regarding Western Europe?
  - a. Segregation and isolation of Jews
  - b. Daily terrorization of the Jews in Western Europe
  - c. The wearing of Jewish stars became a legal requirement
  - d. To bring together the Jews so they could have their own society in Western Europe

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#### Lesson Quiz with Answers Highlighted and Bolded

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#### Link to Google Form Quiz (Instructions Available in the Appendix)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dwN8h49kMN3hw8mT2CgYJ43W78mP6YtZMKMaVeP3yI/copy>

## Unit 5 / Lesson 5.2 / Image Sources

### Unit 5: Jews in the Nazi Grip

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**Slide 1** - Yevgeny Khaldei via Getty Images

**Slide 2** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Samuel (Schrijver) Schryver

**Slide 3** - The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

**Slide 4** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Samuel (Schrijver) Schryver

**Slide 5** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hans Landesberg

**Slide 6** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld (Beate Klarsfeld Foundation)

**Slide 7** - The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

**Slide 8** - Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Exhibition: Letters to 43 Vieille du Temple Street, Vel d'Hiv, Paris, France, 16 July 1942

**Slide 9 (Quote)** - Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Exhibition: Letters to 43 Vieille du Temple Street, Pithiviers France, 14 August 1942

**Slide 9** - Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-B09949 / Fotograf(in): o.Ang,

<https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=Bild 183-B09949>

**Slide 10** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Samuel (Schrijver) Schryver

**Slide 11** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Trudi Gidan

**Slide 12** - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Kathleen Fedrow

**Slide 13** - The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous