



TEACHER'S GUIDE

# *Glossary of Places*

THE JEWISH FOUNDATION *for the righteous*

## How Was it Possible?

A HOLOCAUST CURRICULUM FOR AND BY TEACHERS™

## Glossary of Places

### A

**Auschwitz:** Opened in 1940 near the city of Kraków in German-occupied southwestern Poland as a **concentration camp** for Polish political prisoners, Auschwitz became the largest concentration camp and **death camp** in German-occupied Europe. Between 1941 and 1943, under the direction of **Rudolf Höss**, two additional camps were built near the original camp. The first, the death camp known as “**Birkenau**” (or “Auschwitz II”), became the site of four large gas chambers and **crematoria**. The second, known as “Monowitz” (or “Auschwitz III”), employed prisoners as slave laborers in factories run by the German industrial firms of I.G. Farben, Krupp, and Siemens. In January 1945, nearly 60,000 prisoners were forced to evacuate by the **SS** in **death marches** from Auschwitz ahead of the advancing Soviet troops. Recent research of the total number of people killed at Auschwitz estimates the number at 1,100,000, of whom one million were Jews.

(N.B. For many reasons, it is difficult to determine the exact figures when arriving at the number of people murdered in the camps. The figures for the number of deaths listed in this and all following concentration camp entries in the Glossary of Places have been carefully researched and reflect the most current information available.)

### B

**Babyn Yar (Babi Yar):** Ravine on the edge of the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, where, over the two-day period of September 29 and 30, 1941, more than 33,771 Jewish men, women, and children were murdered in mass shootings conducted by *Einsatzgruppen* and Ukrainian collaborators. Later massacres of Jews, **Roma/Sinti** and Soviet prisoners brought the total number of victims at the site to nearly 100,000. In 1961 Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko commemorated Babi Yar in a poem that the composer Dmitri Shostakovich later set to music in his Thirteenth Symphony.

**Belzec:** One of the three **Operation Reinhard death camps**, it was located in German-occupied southeastern Poland and began regular gassing operations in March 1942. Transports to the camp stopped by the end of 1942, by which time the murder of most of the Jews and **Roma/Sinti** of southern Poland had been practically completed. The camp was closed, and its traces removed early in 1943. Approximately 434,500 Jews and an undetermined number of Poles and Roma/Sinti were murdered at Belzec.

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- Bergen-Belsen:** **Concentration camp** established in 1943 near the city of Hanover in northern Germany. Prior to 1943, the camp served as a POW camp. The massive overcrowding of inmates too sick to work and of prisoners arriving from camps in the East toward the end of the war left a facility designed to hold a few thousand people with an inmate population of more than 60,000. By the time the British army liberated the camp in April 1945, more than 36,000 prisoners had died of disease and starvation, most between May 1943 and April 15, 1945. After the camp was liberated, more than 13,000 former prisoners, too sick to recover, died. It is estimated that a total of 50,000 people died in Bergen-Belsen.
- Birkenau:** See **Auschwitz**.
- Buchenwald:** Established near the city of Weimar in 1937, it was one of the largest **concentration camps** in prewar Germany. Originally holding German political prisoners, **Roma/Sinti** and “**asocials**,” during the war its inmate population grew vastly to include Polish and Soviet prisoners of war, additional political prisoners and, in the war’s last year, Jewish prisoners from concentration camps in the East. Inmates worked for the arms factories just outside the camp, and many lived and worked in its over 100 satellite camps. Buchenwald was liberated in April 1945. Of the approximately 250,000 prisoners that came through Buchenwald and its subcamps, it has been estimated that at least 56,000 died.

## C

- Chelmno:** Located in western Poland, it was the first **death camp** to begin regular mass killings and the only one to use mobile **gas vans** for this purpose. Killing operations began there in December 1941. Victims were brought to the village of Chelmno (known in German as Kulmhof), loaded into vans in which they were gassed by carbon monoxide, and then their corpses immediately driven to nearby forests for burial in mass graves. Approximately 167,000 Jews were murdered at Chelmno. It is estimated that some 5,000 Poles and **Roma/Sinti** were also killed there; bringing to 172,000 persons murdered at Chelmno.
- Concentration Camps:** See Glossary of Terms. Also, see Glossary of Places under specific camps (e.g., **Auschwitz**).

## D

- Dachau:** The first major **concentration camp** in **Nazi** Germany, it was established in March 1933 on the border of the village of Dachau, near Munich. The American army liberated the camp on April 29, 1945. More than 200,000 prisoners were imprisoned at Dachau during its occupation from 1933 to 1945. Since prisoners who were taken to Dachau for execution were not registered into the camp, it is difficult to determine the number of prisoners who died at Dachau.

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**Drancy:** Prison and transit camp in the Paris suburb of that name, established by the Germans in August 1941 and run by French police until the Germans assumed control of the camp in July 1943. Of the approximately 70,000 Jews assembled here, most of whom were foreign Jews living in France, some 64,000 were deported between June 1942 and July 1944, primarily to **Auschwitz**.

### F

**Flossenbürg:** **Concentration camp** built in 1938 in northeastern Bavaria near the Czech border. During World War II, Flossenbürg's expanding prisoner population of Eastern European POW's and Western European resistance fighters was used as slave labor in the manufacture of weapons. Near the war's end the camp and its extensive system of subcamps were filled with prisoners evacuated from camps in the East. From April 15 – 20, 1945, more than sixteen thousand prisoners left Flossenbürg on a **death march**. It is estimated that 7,000 died en route. Those left behind were liberated by American troops on April 23. Some 30,000 of Flossenbürg's approximately 97,000 registered prisoners died.

### G

**General Government:** The area of Poland officially called by **Nazi** Germany the "General Government of the Occupied Polish Territories," it was made up of all of German-occupied Poland except for the western regions incorporated into the **Reich**. It included the districts of Radom, Warsaw, Lublin, Kraków, and, after the summer of 1941, Galicia. Under the rule of Nazi Governor-General **Hans Frank**, the General Government's human, agricultural and industrial resources were used for Germany's benefit.

**Ghetto:** See Glossary of Terms. Also, see Glossary of Places for specific ghettos (e.g., **Warsaw ghetto**).

**Gross-Rosen:** **Concentration camp** in Lower Silesia (Germany) near the Polish border; established in 1940 as a subcamp of **Sachsenhausen**, it became an independent camp in May 1941. Enlarged between 1942 and 1944, with subcamps of its own built by Jewish slave laborers from the East, Gross-Rosen was unusual among concentration camps in Germany in having a majority of Jewish prisoners. In late 1944 prisoners removed from camps in the path of the advancing Soviet army in the East caused overcrowding at Gross-Rosen, which was evacuated in turn in February 1945. By the end of the war, out of its approximately 125,000 registered prisoners, about 40,000 had died.



## Glossary of Places

### K

**Kovno ghetto:** In early July 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* began murdering Jews in several forts around Kovno, Lithuania. In July and August 1941, the remaining approximately 35,000 Jews were forced into the Kovno ghetto. The ghetto was comprised of an area of small houses with no running water and was divided into two sections. The ghetto was sealed on August 15, 1941. The Germans reduced the size of the ghetto multiple times. Jews in the Kovno ghetto were used for forced labor outside of the ghetto. On October 4, 1941, part of the ghetto was liquidated, and those inhabitants were murdered. In fall of 1943, the ghetto was turned into the Kauen concentration camp, and many Jews were sent to subcamps. On July 8, 1944, most of the remaining Jews were sent to **Dachau** concentration camp in Germany. The camp was liberated by the Soviet army on August 1, 1944.

### L

**Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon:** The secluded mountain village in south-central France whose population, led by the community's Protestant minister, Pastor André Trocmé, and his wife Magda, at the risk of their lives, saved between 3,000 and 5,000 Jews from 1941 to 1944.

**Łódź ghetto:** The second largest **ghetto** in Poland (after the **Warsaw ghetto**), established in early 1940 in the industrial city of Łódź (renamed Litzmannstadt when it was annexed by the Germans into the Reich). Located in western Poland, the ghetto existed until the summer of 1944, longer than any other large ghetto. **Chaim Rumkowski**, the head of its *Judenrat*, turned the ghetto into a massive supply of forced labor, putting the ghetto population to work in the many factories, especially textile mills, run by the *Judenrat* for the Germans, thereby hoping to convince them to spare the lives of those in the ghetto. Nevertheless, more than 70,000 of the Łódź ghetto's 210,000 Jews were **deported** to **Chelmno** between December 1941 and September 1942. Although deportations then stopped until the ghetto's liquidation, more than 44,000 ghetto inhabitants died of malnutrition and disease. When it was liquidated in August 1944, most of its remaining 65,000 Jews were deported to **Chelmno** and **Auschwitz**, with the rest sent to **concentration camps** in Germany.

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### M

- Majdanek:** Both a **concentration camp** and a **death camp**, it was established in Lublin, German-occupied Poland in October 1941 to hold Soviet prisoners of war. Its total number of nearly 250,000 inmates by the time the camp was evacuated in July 1944 came to include other categories of prisoners from many different countries, including Poles and Jews. Although they were a minority of Majdanek's victims, almost all of the Jewish inmates were shot in November 1943 as part of **Operation Harvest Festival**. It has been estimated that between 95,000 and 130,000 prisoners died in the Majdanek system, the majority of whom were Jews.
- Mauthausen:** A **concentration camp** built next to a stone quarry near Linz, Austria, it opened in August 1938, originally to hold German and Austrian political prisoners. Eventually almost 200,000 prisoners from many countries came through Mauthausen, of which approximately 95,000 perished (including some 14,000 Jews) as a result of its exceptionally brutal conditions.
- Mechelen:** The Mechelen transit camp in Belgium was created in the summer of 1942. The first Jews arrived in the camp on July 27, 1942. Between August 1942 and July 1944, 25,257 Jews were deported from Mechelen to German-occupied Poland, mostly to **Auschwitz**. Mechelen, which was the largest transit camp in Belgium, was closed in September 1944 as **Allied** forces approached.

### N

- Neuengamme:** **Concentration camp** near Hamburg opened in December 1938 as a satellite of **Sachsenhausen**, it became an autonomous camp in 1940 that evolved into a central source of slave labor for the **SS** and other German industries, with subcamps throughout northwestern Germany. Jewish prisoners evacuated from camps in the East began arriving in 1944. Neuengamme was evacuated in April 1945. About half of the approximately 106,000 prisoners sent to the camp died.

### P

- Pithiviers:** Internment camp opened by the German authorities at Pithiviers in occupied France in May 1941, to incarcerate both French Jews and foreign Jews residing in France. Most Jews who were interned in Pithiviers were later deported to Auschwitz.
- Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia:** After Germany took over the **Sudetenland**, what remained of Bohemia and Moravia in western Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany and joined to the **Reich** as a territory in March 1939, in violation of the **Munich Pact**.

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### R

- Ravensbrück:** A **concentration camp** for women that opened about fifty-five miles north of Berlin in May 1939. Later joined with a camp for men and one for children, and eventually linked with numerous subcamps, an estimated 132,000 women, 20,000 men, and 1,000 young people from over 20 countries, and more than 15,000 Jews and 6,000 **Roma/Sinti**, were inmates there. Ravensbrück also became a training camp for some 3,500 female **SS** staff, who went on to serve at various camps. Over 20,000 of Ravensbrück's prisoners died. Tens of thousands died from starvation, disease, and "medical experiments" conducted there, others by shooting, **deportation** to **Auschwitz** or to **euthanasia** facilities. In the final months of the camp's existence, when it was a destination for prisoners from camps in the East, nearly 6,000 prisoners died in the camp's newly constructed gas chambers. Over 2,000 prisoners who remained in Ravensbrück following its evacuation by the Germans in March 1945, were liberated by the Soviet army when it captured the camp on April 30, 1945.
- Reich:** German word for "Empire," the word was used by Germans to refer to their country.
- Rhineland:** German territory west of the Rhine River bordering France and Belgium which, under the terms of the **Treaty of Versailles**, was established as a demilitarized zone after World War I. It was remilitarized in March 1936, when **Adolf Hitler** rejected the treaty and sent German troops to occupy the Rhineland, with no response from the victorious World War I powers.

### S

- Sachsenhausen:** **Concentration camp** opened in 1936 in Oranienburg, about fifteen miles north of Berlin. Approximately 6,000 Jews were sent to Sachsenhausen after the **Kristallnacht pogrom**. Between 1936 and 1945, about 200,000 people, including Soviet POW's, Poles, Jews, **Roma/Sinti**, and others, were imprisoned there. Mass executions of prisoners, first by shooting, and then in the camp's gas chamber, began in 1941. It has been estimated that by the end of the war, between 30,000 and 50,000 people were killed at this camp. Soviet troops liberated Sachsenhausen on April 22, 1945.
- Sobibór:** Along with **Belzec** and **Treblinka**, one of the three **Operation Reinhard death camps** created to kill all the Jews of the **General Government**. Located in German-occupied southeastern Poland, it operated between May 1942 and October 1943, and was the site of the murder of 167,000 Jews. A prisoner revolt broke out on October 14, 1943, during which several **SS** and Ukrainian camp guards were killed, and 300 inmates escaped, most of whom were recaptured or killed by local Poles. The inmates who did not escape from the camp during the revolt were killed and the camp destroyed by the Germans in November 1943.

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**Stutthof:** **Concentration camp** established, originally as a civilian internment camp, in September 1939 near Danzig (today Gdansk), Poland. Until 1943 most of its prisoners were non-Jews from German-occupied countries, followed in 1943 by Jews from Warsaw and Bialystok and, by mid-1944, mostly by Jewish women. Prisoners were murdered in the camp's gas chamber, as well as by shooting and lethal injection. Of the approximately 110,000 inmates registered at Stutthof by the time it was liquidated, about 65,000 died either at the camp or on the **death march** to the West following the camp's evacuation.

**Sudetenland:** Area of western and northern Czechoslovakia heavily populated by *Volksdeutsche* (approximately 3,000,000) that was given to Germany by the **Munich Pact** and taken over by the **Nazis** in October 1938.

### T

**Theresienstadt or Terezin:** German name for the Czech town of Terezin. In 1941 the Germans established Theresienstadt as a **ghetto**, initially for the Jews of the **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**, but eventually for Jews from all of Central and Western Europe. Described in German propaganda as a “model ghetto” for “privileged” Jews, Theresienstadt was “beautified” by the Germans to trick Red Cross representatives making a tour of the ghetto in June 1944 and to make a propaganda film showing it as a pleasant Jewish destination. Theresienstadt also served as a transit camp. Of the approximately 140,000 Jews sent to Theresienstadt, only 17,000 remained in the camp when the Soviet army liberated it in May 1945. The rest had died there from starvation or disease, or had been **deported** to the East, where most died in the ghettos and **death camps** in German-occupied Poland.

**Treblinka:** Opened in July 1942 as part of **Operation Reinhard**, this **death camp** was located approximately 80 miles northeast of Warsaw, in German-occupied Poland. Its victims were primarily Jews from the **ghettos** of central Poland, particularly Warsaw. A small group of **Roma/Sinti** and Poles were also sent there. A prisoner revolt broke out in Treblinka in August 1943, but only a few of the prisoners who had managed to escape from the camp into the surrounding forests avoided capture. Before it was shut down and destroyed in the fall of 1943, approximately 925,000 victims, the majority of whom were Jews, were murdered in its gas chamber.

### U

**Umschlagplatz:** See Glossary of Terms.



## Glossary of Places

### V

***Vélodrome d'hiver***  
**(*Vél d'hiv*):**

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 were deported to Auschwitz.

**Vichy or**  
**Vichy France:**

The name by which the collaborationist government of France that assumed power upon France's surrender to Germany in June 1940 came to be known. Its name derives from the spa town of Vichy in south central France, where it had its capital. Under the leadership of French World War I hero **Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain**, Vichy France cooperated with German authorities in persecuting Jews in France. The Vichy government adopted its own anti-Jewish laws, its own **aryanization** program, interned Jews, especially foreign Jews, in prison and **labor camps**, and, beginning in the summer of 1942, assisted in the "**Final Solution**" by helping to round up and **deport** Jews to the East. About 77,000 Jews from France, primarily foreign born, died in the **Holocaust**, most at **Auschwitz**.

**Vilna:**

The capital of Lithuania. Jews settled in Vilna (today Vilnius) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was called the Jerusalem of the North, reflecting both its rabbinic scholars and its stature in the Jewish world. Vilna continued to be a center of Jewish life in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries where an autonomous **Yiddish** culture flourished. On the eve of World War II, there were over 55,000 Jews in Vilna, 25% of its population. The **ghetto** was well-organized with a choir, theater, soup kitchen, newspaper and schools. The Lithuanian Jewish community was one of the first on which the "**Final Solution**" was carried out and was one of the most severely affected. Even before the **Vilna ghetto** was established, mass murders took place in the Ponar Forest outside of the city. In September 1943, the Germans carried out a series of **Aktions** in the Vilna ghetto in which many people were deported to **Sobibór**. By the end of the war, a few thousand Vilna Jews had survived.

**Vilna ghetto:**

See **Vilna**.

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### W

**Warsaw ghetto:** Established in October 1940 in Poland's former capital city and home of Europe's largest Jewish community, the **ghetto** in Warsaw contained up to 400,000 people when sealed in a space equal to 2.4% of the city's area. Polish Jews as well as Jews from Germany and other German-occupied countries and several thousand **Roma/Sinti**, comprised the ghetto's population. The mortality rate within the ghetto averaged 4,000 to 5,000 per month. Life in the Warsaw ghetto was documented in a secret archive code-named **Oneg Shabbat**, which was organized by the historian **Emanuel Ringelblum**. **Adam Czerniaków** headed the ghetto's **Judenrat** until July 23, 1942, when, in despair at his inability to stop mass **deportations** from the ghetto, he committed suicide. In the three months between July and October 1942, approximately 265,000 Jews were sent to the **death camp** at **Treblinka**. The ghetto was finally destroyed in May 1943 upon the conclusion of the **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**.

**Westerbork:** **Transit camp** in northeastern Holland from which approximately 100,000 of the Netherlands' 140,000 Jews were deported to **Auschwitz**, **Sobibór**, **Theresienstadt** and **Bergen-Belsen**. It was liberated in the spring of 1945.

### Y

**Yad Vashem:** Established by Israel's parliament, the *Knesset*, in 1952 and known in English as the "The World **Holocaust** Remembrance Center," Yad Vashem is Israel's national memorial institution for the commemoration and study of the Holocaust. Its archive, museum and memorial are located in Jerusalem. In addition, Yad Vashem honors the "**Righteous Among the Nations**," non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.