

Goethe Institut  
Trans-Atlantic Outreach Program Lesson Plan

Buchenwald and the Holocaust

**General Introduction:**

Studying genocides in the last century and beyond is of critical importance in developing students' moral sensibilities and realities about the human capacity to do evil. The goal is for students to develop their own sense of responsibility to mankind in the prevention of genocides today and in the future. The rationale for devoting precious instructional time to these topics is that by better understanding past human destruction students are empowered to better recognize and respond to world events in general and the extermination of a group of people in particular. It shows students the negative consequences of prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Ultimately, the study of the Holocaust helps students see the value of a multicultural society while at the same time encourages tolerance of those who are different than oneself.

Below are two lessons on the Holocaust. The first is a general introductory lesson on human rights which can serve as the first day of a unit or a series of lessons on the Holocaust. The second is a specific lesson on life at Buchenwald Concentration Camp during the genocide.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLOCAUST: WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?**

### **Aim:**

What are human rights and why are they essential?

### **Motivation:**

Which is a stronger influencer: peer pressure or a personal desire to achieve a goal?  
Why?

### **Instructional Materials:**

“Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

### **Content/Transitions:**

1. Discussion of Motivation.
2. Students will interpret the following Pakistani quote, regarding women: “A woman is like a pair of shoes – you can change her anytime.” -Rashid Rehman, a human rights lawyer in Multan.
3. Class share of students’ responses.
4. Mini-lesson: The Human Rights Movement.
  - a. In 1948, the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly after the Holocaust, the Nuremberg war crime trials, the Bataan Death March, and the detonation of the atomic bomb.
  - b. The “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” is the first multinational declaration mentioning human rights that was implemented in order to make society more unbiased and fair to its citizens.
5. Students will analyze the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

### **Pivotal Question:**

How does the presence of human rights affect our lives?

**Conclusion:**

The “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” is meant to preserve the rights of members of society. These human rights are held by every person, even though many of these ideals have been violated throughout history.

**Homework:**

Select an article (one that we didn’t discuss in class) from the “Declaration of Human Rights.” Explain how your life would be altered if this article had never been set into effect.

# ***THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS***

From the United Nations (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>)

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

## ***PREAMBLE***

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

**Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS** as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to

promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

***Article 1.***

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

***Article 2.***

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

***Article 3.***

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

***Article 4.***

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

***Article 5.***

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

***Article 6.***

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

***Article 7.***

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

***Article 8.***

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

***Article 9.***

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

***Article 10.***

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

***Article 11.***

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

***Article 12.***

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

***Article 13.***

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

***Article 14.***

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

***Article 15.***

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

***Article 16.***

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

***Article 17.***

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

***Article 18.***

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

***Article 19.***

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

***Article 20.***

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

***Article 21.***

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

***Article 22.***

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

***Article 23.***

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

***Article 24.***

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

***Article 25.***

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical



care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

***Article 26.***

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

***Article 27.***

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

***Article 28.***

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

***Article 29.***

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due

recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

***Article 30.***

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

## PLANET BUCHENWALD

### **Aim:**

What was life like at Buchenwald from the perspective of the victims?

### **Motivation:**

Students will list all of the activities of their typical day including washing, going to the bathroom, eating, working, etc. Teacher will review several student answers.

### **Content/Transitions:**

1. Teacher will hand out the reading entitled “A Normal Day at a Concentration Camp.” This will be read out loud and students will be given time to answer the questions. Teacher will review student answers to the following:
  - A. What things do you control in a normal day? What does the girl control?
  - B. What is controlled or determined by others during your day? What is controlled or determined by others in the girl’s day?
  - C. What do you do with your “free” time? What did the girl do with her “free” time?
  - D. At what point in your day did your activities differ from the girl in the story?
2. Teacher will then give a brief introduction to Buchenwald (background, location, etc.).
3. He or she will then place several images on the overhead to show keys parts of the concentration camp. The images include the entrance gate, clock, killing mechanisms, etc. Teacher will discuss the function for each part, being sure to point out the systematic nature of activity at Buchenwald.
4. Students will watch a short video of Elie Wiesel’s speech with Angela Merkel at Buchenwald: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJueEdd5eBc>

**Conclusion:** Students will be asked to write a paragraph about why it is important to remember what happened at Buchenwald? Why is it a memorial today? How is it an important historical source? If time does not permit the completion of this assignment, it will be finished for homework.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

## A “NORMAL” DAY IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP BASED ON TESTIMONIES FROM SURVIVORS

(Reading from materials given out by the Nassau County Holocaust Memorial Museum)

As a 15-year-old girl, you have survived the selection on the platform. You are alone- packed into a barracks with hundreds of others but with no one from your family. You share your “bunk” with three bunkmates. The word “bunkmates” is not exactly correct-there are three other frightened, emaciated victims who share the wooden board of which you sleep.

4 a.m.: Appel or role call. Fall out, with only a prisoner’s striped uniform and a pair of wooden shoes, into the biting zero-degree cold. Stand. One hour passes and a Kapo, a prisoner who is in charge of the barracks, calls numbers. Your number is called. All must wait because one person is not present. Fifteen minutes later, the body is dragged to its place. Even the dead must report. The Kapo yells his count to the SS guard: “All present or accounted for! One hundred ninety-four are standing, five are in the sick barrack, one is dead.”

“Coffee”- dark water- and a slice of coarse bread are given to you as you stand in line. No one has been allowed to use the latrines. Three hours have passed, some people have urinated on themselves; finally, you are allowed to line up for the latrines. You are given three minutes in the large with a mud floor and a series of cement slabs with holes in them. A prisoner is given a whip with which she beats women who take too long. An older woman confides to you that prisoners are found dead here each morning - suicides or drowned in excrement by someone else. The smell is overpowering, and you feel the urge to vomit. Yet, such smells are no longer new to you: the stench in the cattle car, the sickening odor of the smoke from the chimneys, the body smells of the prisoners crammed into the barracks and now this latrine smell. The older woman tells you that almost all the women have ceased menstruating-either from fear, malnutrition or disease.

Again the Appelplatz (role call place), where you see women being beaten for “slacking.” You are chosen for a work detail at the Brezhinka, the mountain of clothing collected from victims, most of whom were gassed upon their arrival. Your job is to sort the clothing. You are lucky - one can “organize,” that is, steal extra clothes from here. Should you be caught, you will probably be beaten, or worse. As you work, you watch trains arrive, the chimneys of the crematoria belching flames, the lines of people at the gas chamber, the dogs barking, women crying, children screaming and SS men shouting commands.

At noon, you are given “coffee” and another slice of bread with margarine. Ten minutes to eat. Back to work. In the distance, you see men carrying cement blocks from one place to another. Later, they are made to carry them back. Every so often you hear gunshots. Everyone around you has the stench of death, disease and excrement. All are crawling with lice. The sky is gray, trees glisten with snow, icicles form on the barracks and on the barbed wire fences.

While you work at the Brezhinka, you suddenly find a familiar sweater, your mother’s, and a pair of shoes-your sister’s. They are dead, you know that now. You

cannot stop to mourn or think of them. Guards are watching. You tear the sweater to pieces. It is a small act of defiance of sabotage.

All prisoners move as if in a fog. Some are beaten, some are hung, shot or tortured-they seem to show no emotion because of their starved, semi-hypnotized condition. By 6 p.m., your head swims- malnutrition, grief, fear, pain, thirst-all take their toll.

Another Appel. Nineteen people have died from your group-a small number for this day-in the bitter cold.

After the final 'meal,' which consists of one slice of bread, you return to the barracks. People stare blankly. The Kapo grabs a young girl and beats her until blood pours from her head-the girl has not performed some simple task to the Kapo's satisfaction. She moans on the wooden floor. No one moves. The Kapo swears at the prisoners and storms into her room at the end of the barracks.

You lay on your board with two other girls (the third has not returned) thinking of your mother and sister in your kitchen at home and fall asleep.

Questions:

1. What things do you control in a normal day? What does the girl control?
2. What is controlled or determined by others during your day? What is controlled or determined by others in the girl's day?
3. What do you do with your "free" time? What did the girl do with her "free" time?
4. At what point in your day did your activities differ from the girl in the story?

## ENTRANCE TO BUCHENWALD



## CREMATORIA AT BUCHENWALD





## MEMORIAL TO BLOCK 22 – JEWISH BARRACK





## BARBED WIRE WITH CREMATORIUM

