

2.3 HOLOCAUST MEMORIALIZATION IN GERMANY

How do memorials and monuments help us understand history?

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| <p>C3 Framework Indicator</p> | <p>D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.</p> <p>D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.</p> <p>D2.His.6.6-8. Analyze how people’s perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.</p> | |
| <p>Staging the Compelling Question</p> | <p>Throughout Germany, memorials have been built to honor the victims of the Holocaust. In this inquiry, students will reflect on how the memory of history is shaped and influenced through the examination of six Holocaust memorials located in Berlin, Germany.</p> | |
| <p>Supporting Question 1</p> | <p>Supporting Question 2</p> | <p>Supporting Question 3</p> |
| <p>What is a monument or memorial?</p> | <p>How do Germany’s Holocaust memorials reflect and preserve the memory of the Holocaust?</p> | <p>How have the design and purpose of memorials changed?</p> |
| <p>Formative Performance Task</p> | <p>Formative Performance Task</p> | <p>Formative Performance Task</p> |
| <p>Students will individually define “what is a memorial.” Then as a class, develop a working definition.</p> | <p>Using the resources and guidelines listed, each group will research the assigned Holocaust memorial located in Berlin, Germany, and create a presentation to share with classmates on the significance of the memorial in Holocaust remembrance.</p> | <p>Students in pairs or small groups will select a memorial examined in Formative Performance Task 2 and, using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast its design with that of a traditional monument located in their community or state.</p> |
| <p>Featured Sources</p> | <p>Featured Sources</p> | <p>Featured Sources</p> |
| <p>Source A: Introductory Question students responses</p> <p>Source B: Chart paper</p> | <p>Source A: Handout 2.3.1</p> | <p>Source A: Memorial list from Formative Performance Task 2</p> |
| <p>Summative Performance Task</p> | <p>Argument: Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question, using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical or contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.</p> <p>Extension: Explores how Germans have attempted to “come to terms with the past” (<i>Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung</i>) through a series of quotes from a lecture by Dr. Susan Neiman, Director of the Einstein Forum in Berlin.</p> | |
| <p>Taking Informed Action</p> | <p>Understand: In many towns and cities across the United States and Canada, there are monuments and memorials erected by past generations to commemorate a historical event or recognize an individual or group.</p> <p>Assess: Work with the local historical society to compile a list of the memorials and monuments in your community, the reason for their existence, and their location.</p> <p>Act: Create a presentation to share with classmates and/or community groups.</p> | |

❓ COMPELLING QUESTION

- How do memorials and monuments help us understand history?

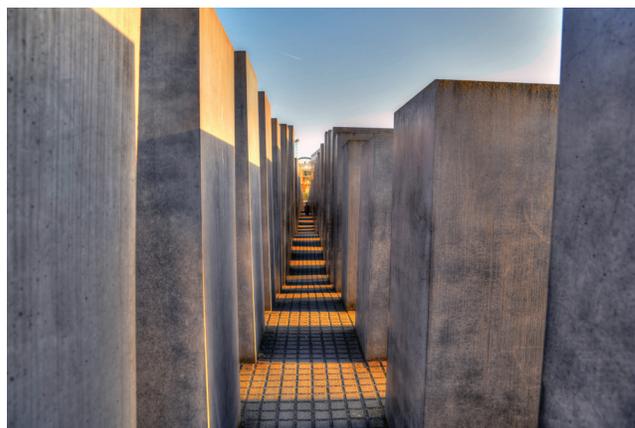
INQUIRY OVERVIEW

Throughout Germany, memorials have been built to honor the victims of the Holocaust atrocities. In this inquiry students will reflect on how the memory of history is shaped and influenced through the examination of six Holocaust memorials located in Berlin, Germany.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

This inquiry requires students to have a background in the Holocaust prior to completing.

One way people remember the past is by building monuments. Monuments act as bridges to the past, reflecting a society's collective memory. The Holocaust presents a challenge to memorialization. As James Young wrote in the *Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, "Holocaust remembrance does not exist in isolation, but rather within the preexisting contexts of different places and peoples, and, invariably, there is a potential impact on remembrance."¹ Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Berlin has seen the construction of many new memorials to the Holocaust.



There are many ways in which individuals, groups, and nations, in Germany and around the world, have confronted the memory of the Holocaust. Some countries, including Germany and France, have made Holocaust denial a crime, punishable by a fine and imprisonment. Governments have also encouraged or mandated education about the Holocaust. German schools are required to teach their students about the Nazi era and the Holocaust, and in addition to classroom learning, most German students visit either a concentration camp or a Holocaust memorial.

Another way that communities around the world have remembered the Holocaust is through building memorials and monuments. These buildings are created for many reasons: to preserve the past, to honor heroes, to commemorate tragedies, and to inspire action or reflection. These monuments raise questions about appropriate ways to study and remember the Holocaust. To what extent can any memorial help us truly understand the experiences of victims of the Holocaust? How can we symbolize the vast number of victims while still honoring each unique life that was lost—the school child, the aunt, the tailor, the physicist, the sister? Who should decide how the Holocaust is represented and remembered—what symbols are used, what facts are presented, and whose stories are told?²

From the large memorial dedicated to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin to the smaller monuments and tributes in former Jewish neighborhoods in German cities and towns, memorials to honor those who perished during the Holocaust abound. Others commemorate the experiences of other groups such as homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, the disabled, and other persecuted groups.

1 Young, James Edward/Biagell, Matthew/Golan, Romy. *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*. (1994, January 1). [Prestel, New York].

2 How Should We Remember? (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior/how-should-we-remember>.

The following Holocaust memorials are presented in this inquiry:

Bebelplatz, “The Empty Library”: This memorial shows what is missing. It is located underground directly under the *Bebelplatz*, a public square in the central Mitte district of Berlin, almost out of sight, with no books, just empty white shelves. What was lost and burned were the books by those the Nazis ostracized and persecuted, who had to leave the country and whose stories were no longer allowed to be told. Symbolically, the underground bookshelves have space for around 20,000 books, as a reminder of the 20,000 books that went up in flames here on May 10, 1933, at the behest of the Nazis.

Gleis 17 Memorial: Located at the Berlin-Grunewald S-Bahn station, the *Gleis 17* memorial commemorates the deportations of Berlin Jews to ghettos and extermination camps in the east conducted by the *Deutsche Reichsbahn* between autumn 1941 and spring 1942.

Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under the National Socialist Regime: The memorial located south of the *Reichstag* and near the Brandenburg Gate consists of a dark, circular pool of water at the center of which there is a triangular stone. The triangular shape of the stone is in reference to the badges that had to be worn by concentration camp prisoners. The stone is retractable and a fresh flower is placed upon it daily. Around the edge of the pool is the poem *Auschwitz* by Roma poet Santino Spinelli.

Orte des Erinnerns: Places of Remembrance: This memorial consists of eighty signs attached to lamp posts in the Bavarian Quarter of Berlin. Each has one of the many Nazi rules and regulations that Jews were required to follow from 1933 to 1945.

Stolpersteine (stumbling stones): This memorial comprises small bronze plaques (3.9 in) placed in the sidewalk in front of the last known residences of Jews and other Holocaust victims. Below each, there is a name, a date of birth, and a date of deportation to a camp, followed by the fate of the individual, usually “murdered,” and the location if different from the place of deportation.

Trains to Life – Trains to Death Memorial: An almost life-size sculpture of children that stands directly adjacent to the *Friedrichstraße* station, consisting of seven boys and girls who represent the Jewish children of the 1930s. The arrangement of the group reflects the contrasting fate of the children in the Nazi era. Five figures look to one side, symbolizing the suffering of those deported to concentration camps to meet an early demise. Two figures, however, gaze in the other direction. They represent those Jewish children whose lives were saved by the *Kindertransport* to England. More than two million children lost their lives from 1933 to 1945 through the tyranny of the Nazis.

Note: Throughout this inquiry, the terms *memorial* and *monument* are used more or less interchangeably.

 **TIME:** Three to four 45-minute classes

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

- Holocaust Memorials Research (**Handout 2.3.1**)
- *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* (**Handout 2.3.2**)
- Apperly, E. (2019, March 29). Travel – The Holocaust Memorial of 70,000 Stones. <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20190328-the-holocaust-memorial-of-70000-stones>.
- College of Arts & Sciences WSU. (2021, February 23). *Working Through the Past: German Efforts to Face their Nazi History* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s96u51XKKXM>.
- The Empty Library. (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved February 17, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Empty_Library.
- Genocide of European Roma and Sinti. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2021, from <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/genocide-of-european-roma-gypsies-1939-1945>.
- How Should We Remember? (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior/how-should-we-remember>.
- Seemann, U. (n.d.). Book Burning Memorial. Retrieved February 17, 2021, from <https://www.memorialmuseums.org/denkmaeler/view/1417/Book-Burning-Memorial>.



www.goethe.de/
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- *Gleis 17 Memorial*. Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.memorialmuseums.org/denkmaeler/view/338/Gleis-17-Memorial---Berlin-Grunewald>.
- Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under the National Socialist Regime. Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.memorialmuseums.org/denkmaeler/view/1482/Memorial-to-the-Sinti-and-Roma-of-Europe-Murdered-Under-the-National-Socialist-Regime>.
- *Orte des Erinnerns*. Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.memorialmuseums.org/eng/denkmaeler/view/336/Orte-des-Erinnerns---Denkmal-im-Bayerischen-Viertel>.
- Trains to Life – Trains to Death Memorial. Retrieved February 11, 2021, from <https://www.memorialmuseums.org/denkmaeler/view/1484/Trains-to-Life---Trains-to-Death>.
- Stolperstein. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2021, from <https://stolperstein.eu/en>.
- Tofani, F. (2020, October 6). Platform 17 Memorial at Berlin-Grunewald Station. <https://fotostrasse.com/platform-17-memorial/#>.
- Yvonne. (2015, June 15). Places of Remembrance – A Memorial in Berlin. Just Travelers [blog]. Retrieved February 17, 2021, from <https://www.justtravelous.com/en/2011/11/orte-des-erinnerns-places-of-remembrance-mahnmal-memorial-bayerisches-viertel-berlin/>.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

Ask students: What memorials or monuments are you familiar with? (in their neighborhood or elsewhere in the city, country, or world) Record student responses for use in **Formative Performance Task 1**.

❓ SUPPORTING QUESTION 1

What is a monument or memorial?

► Formative Performance Task

Hang pieces of chart paper around the room with one of the following questions on each.

- What is a memorial or a monument? What do monuments or memorials look like? Why do individuals or groups construct memorials? What events and people do we commemorate with memorials?

Direct students to walk around the room and record their responses to the posted questions. If students discover that another student has already responded as they would have, then direct students to place a check mark next to the response.

Upon completion of this task, discuss the responses and refer to the memorials listed in the **Introductory Question**. In small groups or pairs, have students create a definition of memorials or monuments. Then as a class, develop a working definition.

► Resources

- **Introductory Question** student responses
- Chart paper

❓ SUPPORTING QUESTION 2

How do Germany's Holocaust memorials reflect and preserve the memory of the Holocaust?

► Formative Performance Task

Divide the class into six groups. Assign each group one of the following Holocaust memorials located in Berlin, Germany:

- *Bebelplatz*, "The Empty Library"
- *Gleis 17 Memorial*
- Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under the National Socialist Regime

- *Orte des Erinnerns*: Places of Remembrance
- *Stolpersteine*
- Trains to Life – Trains to Death Memorial

Using the resources and guidelines listed in **Handout 2.3.1**, each group should research the assigned memorial and create a presentation (format to be determined by each group or the teacher) to share with classmates the significance of the memorial in Holocaust remembrance.

Discuss: How do these memorials change the working definition developed in **Formative Performance Task 1**?

► **Resource**

- Holocaust Memorials Research (**Handout 2.3.1**)

❓ SUPPORTING QUESTION 3

How have the design and purpose of memorials changed?

► **Formative Performance Task**

Note: Monuments are intentional and purposeful creations designed to provide a bridge to the past, to lives, and to events. Traditional monuments focus on courage in war or battle or on an individual who made a difference in society. Since memorials reflect the memorial designer’s own time and place, the concept of memorialization has become more abstract over the past few decades.

Ask student pairs to select a memorial examined in **Formative Performance Task 2** and, using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast its design with that of a traditional monument (e.g., war memorial statue, famous person or event memorial) located in their community or state.

As a class, discuss how the two designs are similar and how they are different. Which do students prefer? A realistic memorial or an abstract one? Explain why.

► **Resource**

- Memorial list from **Formative Performance Task 2**

☑️ SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK

How do memorials and monuments help us understand history?

Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

⊕ EXTENSION (OPTIONAL) TASK

The German term *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*, which literally translates to “confrontation/reappraisal of the past,” has become a key concept in post-1945 German culture, and describes the way in which Germans discuss and confront their history.

The German *Langenscheidt* dictionary defines *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* as “the process of coming to terms with the past/working through the past.” In Germany, the term refers to embarrassment about and often remorse for Germans’ complicity in the war crimes of the *Wehrmacht*, the Holocaust, and related events of the early and mid-twentieth century, including World War II.³

3 *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. (2021, March 21). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vergangenheitsbew%C3%A4ltigung>.

Handout 2.3.2 explores how Germans have attempted to “come to terms with the past” through a series of quotes from a lecture by Dr. Susan Neiman, Director of the Einstein Forum in Berlin. Using the quotes and what you have learned in this inquiry, discuss how Germany’s path to coming to terms with the past can be applied to America’s current debate about memorialization.

► **Resource**

- *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* (**Handout 2.3.2**)

★ **TAKING INFORMED ACTION**

Understand: In many towns and cities across the United States and Canada, there are monuments and memorials erected by past generations to commemorate a historical event or recognize an individual or group.

Assess: Work with the local historical society to compile a list of the memorials and monuments in your community, the reason for their existence, and their location.

Act: Create a presentation to share with classmates and/or community groups.

CONCEPTS LIST

- Memorialization Roma
- Memorial Sinti
- Monument Concentration camp
- Collective memory Auschwitz
- *Kindertransport*
- Abstract
- *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*