

# Pre-Lesson

*The ethnic killing of Jews between 1939 and 1945 is a dark page in modern man's history. It will serve as a reminder of how civilized humans were able to kill millions of people in order to promote self-proclaimed superiority.*

— Oskar Knoblauch



A German official supervises a deportation action in the Krakow ghetto. Jewish people assembled in a courtyard with their bundles await further instructions, circa 1942. Photo: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiwum Panstwowe w Krakowie.

# Pre-Lesson

**Lesson One: Introduction to Holocaust, WWII, and Oskar Knoblauch**  
**Lesson Two: Finish watching Oskar Knoblauch: Voice of Tolerance**  
**Duration: One to two class periods**

## Overview

It is important for students to have foundational knowledge of the Holocaust to reference throughout their reading. This pre-lesson will prepare students for historical content they will encounter in *A Boy’s Story, A Man’s Memory*. Students will create a K-W-L (Know-Want-Learn) chart<sup>5</sup> to gauge prior knowledge and spark curiosity. After students share what they know, discuss together as a class what they are curious to learn. Below is an outline of important information about the Holocaust that you may include in your discussion. Finally, students will watch Oskar’s presentation, *Voice of Tolerance*, to complete “What I learned.” The video is 80 minutes and may take two class periods. Another optional extension is to read *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* by Eve Bunting. This 32-page short story is an easy children’s book with a powerful message about the consequences of being a bystander.

When asked what they know about the Holocaust, many students immediately think of death camps and victims with tattooed numbers on their arms. It may come as a surprise that not all concentration camp prisoners were tattooed. The system of tattooing victims took place only at the Auschwitz camp complex.<sup>6</sup> Also, the Nazis established between 1,200 and 1,500 camps in occupied countries. There were many different types of camps and sub-camps, including concentration camps (detention centers), forced-labor camps (brutal use of slave labor to support the Nazi regime), transit camps (holding places usually before deportation to death camps), prisoner-of-war camps (for Allied prisoners of war), and death camps.<sup>7</sup> Oskar’s story includes concentration, forced-labor, and death camps. He also talks about life in a Jewish ghetto and a rare experience inside a Nazi headquarters.

The Nazis believed that Germans belonged to a “superior” race.<sup>8</sup> When the National Socialist German Workers’ Party came into power in January 1933, one of its tenets was to require German citizenship by blood and that no Jewish people could be a member of the nation.<sup>9</sup> They used propaganda to systematically target and persecute those of the Jewish faith as a threat to Germany. Additionally, the Nazi regime targeted anyone they considered “inferior,” including individuals with mental or physical disabilities, people of color, homosexuals, and groups with certain political or ideological views.<sup>10</sup>

It should be clarified that the autobiography students will be reading is a primary source written by someone who experienced events of World War II and the Holocaust. Oskar’s story, however, is only one point of view. Individual experiences varied greatly. Students may be familiar with the story of Anne Frank or former Nazi Party member Oskar Schindler. Each are mentioned in *A Boy’s Story, A Man’s Memory*. These examples, as well as Oskar’s story, are just a few individuals out of millions who experienced this time of inhumane atrocities and mass slaughter. Each person’s experience and struggle to survive was as unique as the individual. In the end, approximately 6 million Jewish people lost their lives in the Holocaust, as well as millions more Soviet civilians, prisoners of war, and others that the Nazis determined undesirable.<sup>11</sup>

## Purpose

The goal of this lesson is to gauge students’ prior understanding and establish foundational knowledge of World War II and the Holocaust in order to spark inquiry and prepare students for reading Section 1, chapters 1–3.



Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and articulate their understanding of and points of inquiry around World War II and the Holocaust.
- Locate Germany and Poland on a map.

Materials

- Map of Europe prior to World War II.
- White board and/or large poster board.
- Paper and pencil for each student.
- Oskar Knoblauch’s video, *[Voice of Tolerance](#)* ([VoiceOfTolerance.com/speaking-engagements](#)).

Activities

Prior to class:

- Post the map of pre-WWII Europe somewhere prominent in the room.
- Create a Word Wall by identifying a large space where vocabulary throughout the unit can be easily written and referenced.
- Draw a K-W-L chart on the board.

What I Know (think I know)	What I Want to Know
What I Learned	

Lesson One

Duration: 40 minutes

- As you take attendance, instruct students to copy the K-W-L template on the board.
- Introduce *A Boy’s Story, A Man’s Memory: Remembering the Holocaust 1933–1945*.  
*Over the next several weeks, we will be reading an autobiography written by a Holocaust survivor. What do you know about World War II and the Holocaust?*  
*Take one minute to quietly think about what you know about the Holocaust and WWII. Write your thoughts on your paper under the “What I Know” column.*
- Use your preferred method to pair up students.  
*In the next two minutes, take turns telling your partner what you know about the Holocaust.*
- Ask each group to share something that they know about WWII and the Holocaust and write it on the board.
- Instruct students to take a minute to think to themselves about what they would like to learn about WWII and Holocaust.  
*Write your thoughts under the “What I Want to Know” column.*  
*In the next two minutes, take turns telling your partner what you know about the Holocaust.*
- Ask each group to share something that they would like to know about WWII and the Holocaust and write it on the board.
- Introduce Oskar’s video presentation, *Voice of Tolerance*. You may use information provided in the **Lesson Overview**.
- Instruct students to write down at least three things that they learn while watching *Voice of Tolerance*.
- Watch *Oskar Knoblauch: Voice of Tolerance* (84 minutes).
- The video of Oskar’s presentation will take you to the end of the class period.

Lesson Two

Duration: 40 minutes

- As you take attendance, instruct students to take out their K-W-L charts.
- Finish watching *Oskar Knoblauch: Voice of Tolerance*.

Reflection

The video of Oskar’s presentation will take you to the end of the class period. Ask students to be ready to share what they learned for the next class.