

Topic 2: The Holocaust

Candidates will study the following content and the differing interpretations that historians have produced, with a particular focus on the over-arching key question, 'Why did the Holocaust occur?'

Content

This topic covers the following events and developments:

- The background of European and German anti-Semitism and racist theories
 - Nazi anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews, 1933–41
 - The impact of war on Nazi policy towards the Jews
 - Ghettoisation and Jewish responses to the Holocaust
- The development of Nazi extermination policies towards Jews and other minorities
 - Contemporary reactions to the Holocaust

Key approaches

Candidates should explore the following issues through the interpretations and approaches of different historians:

- How far was the Holocaust a consequence of racist ideas which existed before the Nazis?
- The Intentionalist approach and the role of Hitler: was the Holocaust planned in advance by Hitler?
 - The Structuralist approach: how far did the nature of the Nazi state determine how the Holocaust developed?
 - The Functionalist approach: how far did contingent factors such as war determine how the Holocaust developed.
- Synthesis interpretations which aim to reconcile the Intentionalist and Functionalist viewpoints
- Perpetrators: who carried out the Holocaust, and why? Was murderous behavior the exception or were many involved? Why did non-Germans participate in the killings?
- Victims: How far did Jews resist the Holocaust, and how can resistance be defined? Did men and women experience the Holocaust in different ways. Should definitions of the Holocaust include victims other than Jews?
 - Bystanders: How did the USA and Britain respond to the Holocaust at the time?