

LESSON

2

THIEVES, RESCUERS AND STOLEN GOODS – NAZI BOOK THEFT

This in-depth unit turns its attention to book looting under the Nazi regime. We will analyse specific examples and elaborate on the historical contexts.

LIBRARY
OF
LOST
BOOKS

LESSON 2 - OVERVIEW

LEARNING GOALS

Familiarise pupils with the background of Nazi book theft

↗ Investigate perpetrators, victims, and motives.

Enhance research skills:

↗ Use digital resources for gathering information and analysing different perspectives.

Promote empathy and ethical awareness:

↗ Develop empathy through reflection on moral dilemmas and decisions people had to make in extreme historical situations.

METHODS AND PROCESS

1. Research

↗ Participants select a historical figure and independently conduct research, primarily using resources from the online exhibition.

2. Developing questions:

↗ Based on their research findings, pupils develop questions to ask the figure they have selected.

3. Interview role-playing exercise:

↗ Pupils conduct fictional interviews in assigned roles, using the prepared questions. These interviews are recorded using smartphone cameras.

4. Presentation

↗ All recorded interviews are presented to the group.

MATERIALS TO USE

DIGITAL DEVICES FOR RESEARCH AND RECORDING INTERVIEWS:

Pupils will need smartphones or tablets to conduct research and record their interviews

HEADPHONES:

The pupils will need headphones because part of the exhibition is in audiobook format.

WORKSHEET FOR PUPILS

Below, you will find a worksheet for each of the pupils' three options.

LESSON 2 – INTRO

EXPLANATIONS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This in-depth unit turns its attention to book looting under the Nazi regime. We will analyse specific examples and elaborate on the historical contexts. The aim is to develop an understanding of what books meant to people at the time and the role book theft played in people's persecution by the Nazis.

The participating pupils select one of three historical figures to research using the online materials from our exhibition. They then work in groups to develop short, fictional interviews. Together, they decide who will take the role of the interviewer and who will play the interviewed historical figure, as well as what questions to ask. Through this role-playing exercise, pupils apply the knowledge they have researched in an engaging and realistic way. This approach helps participating pupils to cultivate a deep understanding of the intricate dynamics between the theft, loss and rescue of books during the Nazi era.

There are three figures available to choose from, each illustrating different dimensions of the systematic looting of books by the Nazis: one of the most important government agencies that carried out the theft, a persecuted individual who rescued books from being stolen, and another persecuted individual whose collections were targeted by the theft.



LESSON 2 – INTRO

EXPLANATIONS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

OPTION 1

THE REICH SECURITY MAIN OFFICE

The Reich Security Main Office (known by its German abbreviation, RSHA) was established in 1939 as the central agency overseeing both the SS and the German police. It unified various German police authorities and intelligence services and played a key role in implementing the Nazis' programmes of racist and political persecution. In addition to suppressing political opponents and carrying out the Holocaust, the RSHA also oversaw the systematic theft of art and cultural assets. This Nazi book theft served the aim of confiscating cultural heritage, especially from Jewish communities and individuals, before either using it for the Nazi regime's purposes or else destroying it.

OPTION 2

ALEXANDER GUTTMANN'S RESCUE OPERATION

Alexander Guttman, a lecturer in Talmud studies at the Institute, was confronted with the challenge of preserving valuable cultural assets during the Nazi persecution. To protect the Institute's sixty most valuable books from the Nazis, he hid them among the books in his private library and took them all out of the country to the United States. After arriving in the US, however, he kept the books in his own collection. Years later, they appeared in an auction catalogue and were eventually purchased by the Judaica Conservancy Foundation, which had been specifically founded to make its collections accessible to the public. Guttman's story illustrates the complex moral dilemmas many persecuted individuals faced during the Nazi era and highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage in times of persecution and war.

OPTION 3

LEO BAECK, THE BOOK LOVER

Leo Baeck, a passionate book lover, lived through the loss of two important libraries during the Nazi persecution. Not only was his private collection taken from him, that contained books from his father, friends and colleagues, making it a unique collection that was both a crucial resource for his work and of immense personal significance to him. He also experienced the loss of the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies' library, which had been invaluable to him since he was a student himself, as he could not afford his own books at that time. Even as a lecturer at the Institute, the library was of great importance to him. He donated books to it, helped build the collection and had regular discussions with the staff. After the war, he was deeply involved in the recovery and preservation of the remaining holdings of the Institute's library.

LESSON 2 – WORKSHEET

OPTION 1 REICH MAIN SECURITY OFFICE

ON YOUR BOOKS, GET SET, EXPLORE!

↗ **Research on the Reich Security Main Office (known by its German abbreviation, RSHA):** Investigate the RSHA and its role in the Nazi book theft. Use materials from the Library of Lost Books and the QR codes provided.

↗ **Interview questions:** Develop questions for a fictional interview with an RSHA employee. You can create your own questions and/or use our suggestions.

↗ **Role-playing interview:** Carry out a role-playing exercise in which one of you is the interviewer and another plays an RSHA staff member. Use the prepared questions and record the interview with your smartphone.

↗ **Presentation:** Show your interview to the group and discuss what you have found.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FOR AN RSHA EMPLOYEE:

- What was your role in book theft at the Reich Security Main Office?
- How did you steal the books? In general, what types of books were they?
- Who were the stolen books' owners and what happened to them?
- What did you do with the books after you stole them?
- Why was the book theft part of your work under the Nazis?

MATERIAL



To chapter 2 of
the exhibition

LESSON 2 – WORKSHEET

OPTION 2 ALEXANDER GUTTMANN'S RESCUE OPERATION

➤ **Research Alexander Guttman:** Look into Alexander Guttman and his role in rescuing books from the Institute's library. Use materials from the Library of Lost Books and the QR codes provided.

➤ **Interview questions:** Develop questions for a fictional interview with Alexander Guttman. You can create your own questions and/or use our suggestions.

➤ **Role-playing interview:** Carry out a role-playing exercise where one of you is the interviewer and another plays Alexander Guttman. Use the prepared questions and record the interview with your smartphone.

➤ **Presentation:** Show your interview to the group and discuss what you have found.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FOR ALEXANDER GUTTMANN:

- Mr Guttman, could you explain why you decided to save these books?
- How exactly did the rescued books make their way to the US?
- What happened to the books after you brought them to the US?
- In 1984, there was a legal dispute over these books. Can you tell us who was involved and what the dispute was about?
- How was the legal dispute over the books eventually resolved?

MATERIAL



To Alexander Guttman's rescue operation, Part 1



To Alexander Guttman's rescue operation, Part 2



To Alexander Guttman in the Reading Room

LESSON 2 – WORKSHEET

OPTION 3 IN LEO BAECK'S SHOES

↗ **Research Leo Baeck:** Look into Leo Baeck and the importance of books to him. Use materials from the Library of Lost Books and the QR codes provided.

↗ **Interview questions:** Develop questions for a fictional interview with Leo Baeck. You can create your own questions and/or use our suggestions.

↗ **Role-playing interview:** Carry out a role-playing exercise where one of you is the interviewer and another person plays Leo Baeck. Use the prepared questions and record the interview with your smartphone.

↗ **Presentation:** Show your interview to the group and discuss what you have found.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FOR LEO BAECK:

- Mr Baeck, could you tell us about the two libraries that are of special significance to you?
- What importance do books hold in your life, both personally and professionally?
- What happened to your books during the Nazi persecution?
- What efforts did you make after the war to recover your lost books?
- Some would say, 'They're just books! Are they really that important?' In your opinion, what is the role of books for the identity and culture of a person or community?

MATERIAL



To Leo Baeck in the Reading Room



To chapter 2:
The Book Theft



To chapter 3:
Postwar Salvaging Efforts