

LESSON: Overview of the Holocaust (4-Day)

PACKET 3

Instructions: Examine the sources in this packet and answer the following questions.

- Which aspect of the Holocaust do these sources best represent?
 - Antisemitic Propaganda
 - Exclusion and Legal Discrimination
 - Physical Separation and Ghettos
 - Theft and Confiscation of Property
 - Deportation
 - Concentration Camps and Forced Labor
 - Mass Killing
- What do these primary sources reveal about the ways that ordinary people were active participants or passive witnesses to persecution and even murder during the Holocaust?

Testimony from Chaim Engel

[Chaim Engel](#)

Transcript

“We arrived in the morning at Sobibór, and uh, so, they opened the, the trains and they all unloaded us with screaming, and...with people with whips and...Anyway, they unloaded us and they put us on two lines, and I was with my brother in the front of the line, and uh, they picked out from this transport 18 people. Now, I happened to be one of the 18 for no reason. He asked me, uh, "Where do you come from?" I said, "I come from Lodz," but that doesn't really mean anything, they just picked 18 people, they probably needed for some people to work there, and uh, they went, the rest of the transport went, as usual to the gas chambers, what we didn't know yet what happened, and us, they brought to the quarters of the others, other inmates lived there. And the same afternoon, they brought us to work, and the work was to separate the clothes from the people who had just came and were gassed. We, when we came together with the other inmates, they told us what's going on here, that the people get all killed, we didn't know when we arrived, uh, later they told us, and uh, that they, the people get all gassed. At that time was still, uh, they didn't bury, they didn't burn yet, later, a little later, started to be, to burn the, the, the bodies. So, but, us they took to work, and we had to separate these clothes of these people. In these clothes, I found my brother's

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clothes and pictures, I have a few of them, and that's the way my, my brother died, and I later met in the inmates, some people, where they came originally from the place where I lived in Poland, after the war, ----- the war, and, uh, I found some people what they knew my father, and my father came there a few months before me there, so he died there too. And uh, uh, you can imagine, you come and, although we hear it a lot, talking about they killed the people, but it was so incomprehensible, we never believed it really happened. We always thought, "Well, it's just, you just wouldn't, couldn't believe it. It was so, so unacceptable to think that that is true, that I really didn't believe it till I really saw it what happened."

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Interview with Chaim Engel, February 12, 1992, RG-50.042.0009

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Photograph



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Sharon Paquette

German soldiers of the Waffen-SS and the Reich Labor Service look on as a member of the Einsatzgruppe [a German mobile killing squad] prepares to shoot a Ukrainian Jew kneeling on the edge of a mass grave filled with corpses. [This photograph](#) was taken between 1941 and 1943 in Vinnitsa, Ukraine.

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Photograph



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem (Public Domain)

In [this photograph](#), Jews from Subcarpathian Rus [an area of eastern Europe in present-day western Ukraine] undergo a selection on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. German SS-officers separated the newly arrived prisoners into people who they felt were capable of forced labor, and those who they felt were not, including the elderly, women, and children. The people categorized as “incapable of work” were murdered in gas chambers within hours.

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Artifact



From the Collections of the State Museum at Majdanek in Lublin, Poland

This is [a canister](#) of Zyklon-B, the name of a product consisting of chalky pellets that became a deadly gas when exposed to air. It was normally used as an insecticide, but SS officers used it to murder human beings at Auschwitz and other Nazi camps. Some officials from the companies that manufactured, distributed, and sold Zyklon-B to the Nazi-SS were put on trial after the war for their collaboration, including the director of the German chemical company “Degesch,” which manufactured this canister.