

Short Lesson 4: 'We knew nothing about what was going on'? (Part 2)

What does the evidence suggest that ordinary Germans knew about the Nazi concentration camps?

Lesson 4 overview



Hi there. In this 30-minute lesson you are going to;

- 4 a) Look at 2 more sources on the Nazi concentration camps website to find out what ordinary Germans knew about the camps, and complete a record card for each one. (15 mins.)

- 4 b) Write a paragraph in response to the question 'How much did ordinary Germans know about the concentration camps?' that uses some of the sources to support your conclusion. (10 mins.)

- 4 c) To take a short quiz to see what you have learned about what ordinary Germans knew about the concentration camps. (5 mins.)

Lesson 3 Historical key words

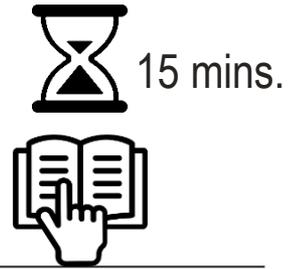
this may help when looking at historical sources this lesson



Helpful vocabulary for this is given at the end of this Powerpoint, on slides 17 and 18.

You will not necessarily use all the words given, but they are provided for help if you do.

4 a) Enquiry



You are going to continue to investigate the question
‘What did ordinary Germans know about the concentration camps?’

You have looked at 3 sources from the Nazi concentration camps website,
and now you are going to look at two additional ones.

4 a) Enquiry: Looking at evidence



You are going to read 2 pieces of evidence from the Nazi concentration camps website www.camps.bbk.ac.uk. For each one, complete a record card, which you will help you respond to the enquiry question. The cards are given to you in the next 2 slides.

- Click on the 'Documents' tab, or alternatively just click this icon
- Scroll down to the 10 documents in the 'Public' section
- Click on and read each of these 2, and complete a record card for each of them;



096 – Heinrich Himmler speaks In public about the camps, January 1939

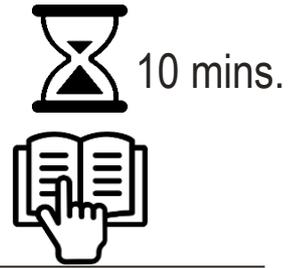
098 – Farmer Gretel Meier requests prisoners from Flossenbürg, 18 June 1942

What does the evidence suggest about the relationship between the wider German public and the Nazi concentration camps?

Date	Description	Evidence of the relationship between the wider German public and the Nazi concentration camps	Implications	Any further questions?
<p>June 1942</p>	<p>Local Profiteers</p>	<p><i>What does Gretel Meier ask of the Camp Commandant at Flossenburg, and why?</i></p>	<p><i>What does this say about what ordinary Germans knew? Were ordinary Germans in any way responsible for the camps?</i></p>	<p><i>If time you could look at some of the Films and Testimony on the website. e.g. the first 2 minutes of Christa M's testimony</i></p>

Your Name:

4 b) Answering the question



Now you're ready to answer the main enquiry question;

'What did ordinary Germans know about the concentration camps?'

The five sources that you've now looked at will help you do this.

The next slide will give you ideas and prompts about how you might a paragraph response to the question.

4 b) Answering the question



‘What did ordinary Germans know about the concentration camps?’

1) Mention 2-3 sources that you looked at. Explain where and when they come from, and how they help to answer the enquiry question.

For example, you could start by saying... *‘Document 98 was written on the 18th June, 1942 by Gretel Meier, a farmer. She is writing to the camp commandant at Flossenburg, asking if she can have some help from prisoners in the camp on the farm, as her husband is off fighting in the army. This shows that...’*

2) Overall, how would you now answer the enquiry question? Some Germans claimed ‘We knew nothing about what was going on.’ From what you have looked at, is this true?

(If you have time you could also mention the limits of the evidence: what else might it be useful to look at to answer the question more fully?)

4 c) End of lesson quiz



You will be given 3 pairs of statements to see how your knowledge and understanding of Nazi concentration camps is developing. One statement will be truer than the other. Decide which this might be, and why.

Use a pen and paper to record you answers.

At the end of the quiz are the answers. You can use this to see how you've done.

4 c) End of short lesson quiz

1 Some farmers requested help from inmates in local concentration camps to help with their farms during the war.

A This shows that some ordinary Germans who lived near camps knew about them and interacted with them.

B This shows that ordinary Germans living near camps didn't know they existed.

4 c) End of short lesson quiz

2 In a public speech in 1939, Himmler said that concentration camps were places that were both 'harsh' yet 'fair'

- A** This source needs to be treated with caution. As leader of the SS, Himmler will want to convince ordinary Germans that camps were a good thing, so he may not be telling the truth about them.
- B** This source can be trusted to give a true account to the German public of conditions in the camps.

4 c) End of lesson quiz

3 Our answers to questions about the past will partly depend on which historical sources we have looked at.

A. This isn't true. Just one source can usually tell us everything we need to know about what ordinary Germans knew about the camps.

B. This is true because by looking at a variety of sources we can try to understand different viewpoints and experiences better. Different Germans in different parts of the country may have had different experiences and levels of knowledge.

4 c) End of lesson quiz

4 There were a number of ordinary Germans who knew about the camps and what was happening in them.

- A.** If they knew what was happening and didn't do anything to stop them or protest, then they should bear some of the responsibility for them too.
- B.** Even if they knew what was going on in the camps and turned a blind eye to it, that doesn't mean they are in any way responsible.

4 c) End of lesson quiz

Answers

The following statements are true;

- A** This shows that some ordinary Germans who lived near camps knew about them and interacted with them.
- A** This source needs to be treated with caution. As leader of the SS, Himmler will want to convince ordinary Germans that camps were a good thing, so he may not be telling the truth about them.
- B.** This is true because by looking at a variety of sources we can try to understand different viewpoints and experiences better. Different Germans in different parts of the country may have had different experiences and levels of knowledge.
- A.** If they knew what was happening and didn't do anything to stop them or protest, then they should bear some of the responsibility for them too.

End of mini-lesson 4

Well done!

You have now completed the fourth of six short lessons about the Nazi concentration camps.

We look forward to seeing you soon for lesson 5, where you will be investigating 'What was Dachau?' using the Nazi concentration camps website.



Lesson 3 Historical key words

this may help when looking at historical sources this lesson

Auschwitz	The largest and deadliest concentration camp, located in Nazi-occupied Poland
Buchenwald	One of the first and largest concentration camps, established in 1937 near Weimar in Germany
concentration camp	SS camp used to confine and persecute Nazi prisoners
death march	A forced march from evacuated concentration camps to prevent prisoners from falling into Allied hands
Dachau	The first concentration camp opened by Himmler near Munich in 1933, originally set up for political prisoners
Dora	A concentration camp in central Germany, built in 1943 as a satellite camp of Buchenwald for the underground production of V2 rockets
Flossenbürg	A concentration camp built in 1938 by the SS near quarries in Bavaria, Germany
Himmler	Chief of the SS and German police who oversaw the Holocaust
Hitler Youth (HJ)	Nazi youth organisation, with compulsory membership for German boys and girls from 1939 onwards
Mauthausen	Concentration camp set up near quarries in Austria in 1938
satellite camps	Smaller <u>subcamps</u> for forced labour linked to the larger main concentration camps
SS	The SS (Schutzstaffel, or “Protection Squad”), a paramilitary Nazi formation, in charge of guarding the concentration camps
V2 rockets	The world’s first long range guided ballistic missile, used by Germany towards the end of the war
Zebras	Nickname given to prisoners on account of their striped uniforms



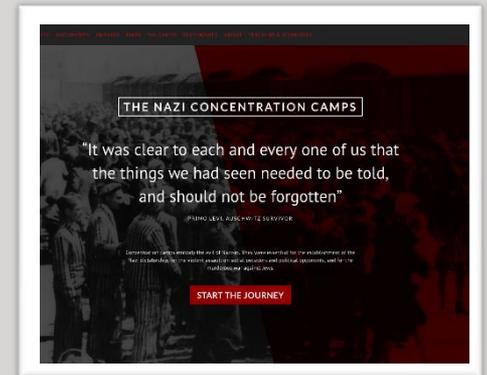
Lesson 3 General key words

this may help when looking at historical sources this lesson

apathetic	Not being interested in or caring about something (see indifference)
asocial	Living according to different rules; social outsiders
blaspheme	To speak badly about God or sacred things
collaboration	Working together
diligence	Being careful and thorough
discreet	Being careful about what you say to other people. Not saying too much
émigrés	People who have left their country to live in another one, often for political reasons
fugitive	An escaped prisoner
indifference	Not being interested in or caring about something (see apathetic)
inmates	Prisoners
massacre	The killing of a large number of often defenceless people
mendacious	Lying
parasite	Something that lives off something else; used as a propaganda term by the Nazis to denigrate the Jews and other social outsiders
propaganda	Misleading information used to persuade somebody
recidivist	A convicted criminal who keeps reoffending
remnant	Something 'left over'
sanatoria	Places to medically treat people with a chronic illness
sobriety	Not drinking alcohol
solidarity	People supporting each other and standing up for others
unpalatable	Difficult to put up with or accept
vagabond	A homeless person with no job

‘We knew nothing about what was going on’

What does the evidence suggest ordinary Germans knew about the Nazi concentration camps?



Centre for
Holocaust Education

Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL,

tel: +44(0)20 7612 6437 fax: +44(0)20 7612 6126 email: holocaust@ioe.ac.uk web: www.ioe.ac.uk/holocaust

The IOE's Centre for Holocaust Education is jointly funded by Pears Foundation and the Department for Education.