

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Rotation: \_\_\_\_\_

Annotate the following article.

- Highlight the main idea/most important sentence of each paragraph **with a highlighter**
- underline interesting information & KEY DATES & NAMES
- circle and define unknown or higher level vocab (minimum of 4 altogether)
- write personal responses and/or analysis of info in margins (minimum of 3 per page)
- summarize the article at the end

## JEWS AND BLACKS IN GERMANY AND AMERICA

by Steve Hochstadt

Published in the Jacksonville Journal-Courier, February 23, 2016: HISTORY NEWS NETWORK



Last week I was telling my college class about what the Nazis did to Jews after Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. After becoming nearly equal citizens over a hundred years of gradual emancipation, everything Jews had gained was suddenly taken away.

The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service took away thousands of jobs. The Nürnberg Laws took away their citizenship and forbade sex and marriage between Jews and other Germans. Thousands of petty local laws prevented Jews from visiting libraries, swimming in pools, or walking through parks. Jews were kicked out of private clubs and associations of all kinds. In the German mind, Jews were physically and morally inferior beings. Every once in a while, a gang of local Nazis would murder a Jew. There were enough individual cases across the country to let Jews know their lives were always threatened.

In 1938 the Nazis pushed much further. They arrested tens of thousands of Jews in November during Kristallnacht. They destroyed or confiscated commercial and personal property worth millions. Hundreds of Jews died that night and hundreds more died soon after arriving in concentration camps. Not yet mass shootings and industrialized murder, but that was only a year away.





My students had already read about those years and seen some documents describing these actions. I wanted them to get a better sense of what this meant, so I asked them to compare the way Jews were treated by Nazis in 1937, before Kristallnacht, and the way blacks were treated by whites in the US at the same time. That was uncomfortable.

Local, state and federal Jim Crow laws and rules denied to blacks entry to public and private places. Blacks were excluded from professional and skilled jobs in government and in the private sector. Most blacks in America could not vote or go to school with whites. Interracial relationships were illegal in most states, based on so-called anti-miscegenation laws. In the white American mind, blacks were physically and morally inferior beings.

The occasional public murder of black men, scattered across the country, served to threaten all black lives. Over 60 African Americans were lynched during the years 1933-1937, similar to the number of Nazi murders of Jews in those years.



Jewish and black paths to these depressing, sometimes deadly situations were different. Just before the Nazis took power, Jews in Germany were freer than ever before. No discriminatory laws in the very democratic Weimar Republic hemmed them in. Most were comfortably middle class, some traveled in elite circles. Then the Nazis took everything away. Jewish life in Germany in the mid-1930s was worse than anything any Jew could remember.

African Americans had a much harder history of slavery, partial emancipation and continued segregation. Only a tiny number could escape generations of poverty. Occasionally, racial hatred boiled over into massive white riots against their black neighbors in which property and lives were destroyed. In 1919, white mobs in 26 cities

attacked black people and property across the country from Chicago to Texas, Nebraska to Washington DC, killing over 100 African Americans and destroying thousands of homes and businesses. Nothing like that had happened to Jews in Germany since the Middle Ages.

By 1937, racial violence against black Americans had diminished. But they were no better off than Jews in Nazi Germany. Then the paths diverged. Within a few year most European Jews were dead. American blacks saw some early glimpses of what equality might look like when they arrived in Europe to rescue the few Jewish survivors. But the fact remains, for my students and for all Americans, that the early years of Nazi persecution put Jews into a similar position as blacks in America.

That's hard to swallow. America, the land of the free, treating its minorities as brutally as the Nazis? Today's oldest Americans lived through a time when blacks here were treated like the Nazis treated Jews. Long after the world recognized the deadly consequences of racial discrimination and hatred in the wake of the Holocaust, America's laws and institutions continued to brutalize black citizens.



Despite having been introduced to the Holocaust in high school, my students are still shocked at the depth of Nazi inhumanity. We should all be shocked at the inhumanity of our own history.

Summary of main idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_