

Teachers' Notes

Using documentary

Newsreel film

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Antisemitism

Hungarian antisemitism

Towards the Holocaust

Hungary: brief history

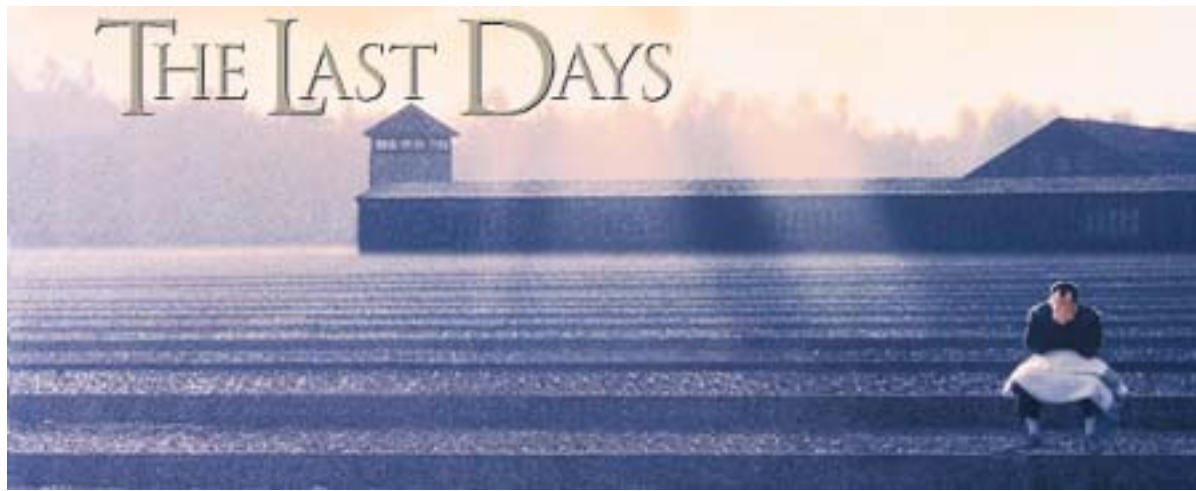
Hungary & WWII

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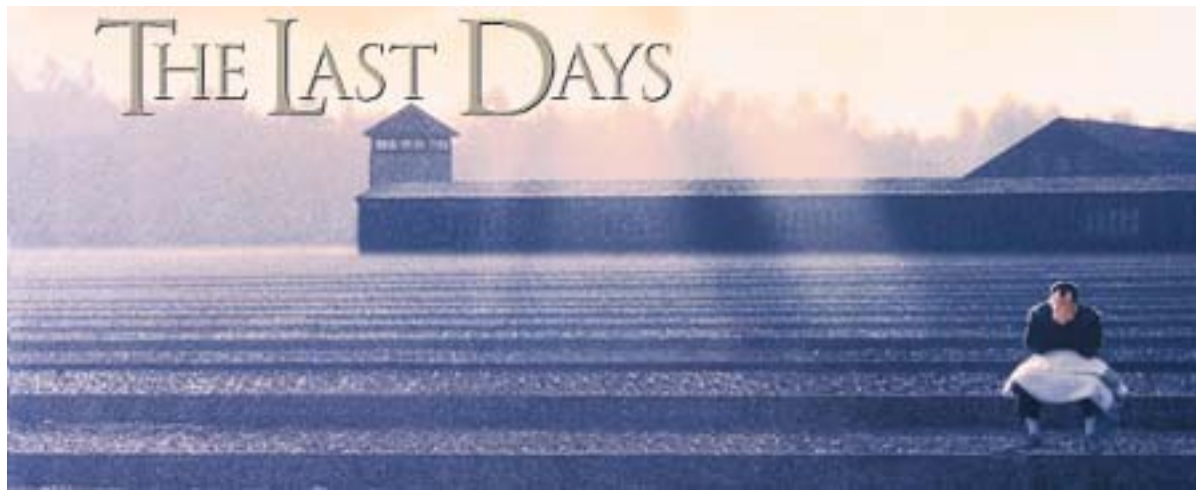
TEACHERS' NOTES

This resource, based on Film Education's study guide *The Last Days*, is suitable for GCSE and A Level students of History, Media Studies and PSE as well as students of Standard Grade and Higher History or Higher Media Studies. It will examine the history of Hungarian Jewry both before and during the Holocaust, and the use of documentary film and testimony as historical resources.



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DOCUMENTARY FILM AS A HISTORICAL RESOURCE

TESTIMONY

"For me, one of the most valuable lessons to be found in *The Last Days* and in all of the Holocaust survivor testimonies gathered by the Shoah Foundation is that these terrible experiences happened to real, individual people, not just to faceless millions, and that the same thing could happen to me, to you, to your neighbour, to anybody. That's why the lessons to be found in survivor testimony are so valuable - and that's why I started the Shoah Foundation."
Steven Spielberg on *The Last Days*

The Last Days is a feature-length documentary which, through the testimonies of six survivors of the Holocaust, looks at the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Second World War. At the end of the twentieth century, many of us increasingly learn about history through film, either feature film or documentary. For example, Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* raised awareness of the Holocaust for millions of cinema-goers around the world. The issue of feature film and history has been looked at in Film Education's web resource *The Holocaust On Film*. Taking as its basis Spielberg's latest film, the feature-length documentary *The Last Days*, this web resource will primarily concentrate on documentary film and its use as a historical resource.



TASK

"In pairs, discuss what insights the documentary film can offer the history student? How can we judge its reliability as a piece of historical evidence? How does it differ from other types of film, such as newsreels and feature film?"

Documentary film is a secondary historical source. It is a construct of the

film maker, naturally reflecting his or her own version of events.

Documentary films typically consist of a variety of primary source material, such as photographs, film-footage, newsreel and testimony. The Last Days is a film from The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. This foundation aims to film and preserve eyewitness testimonies of Holocaust survivors, enabling future generations to learn the lessons of this devastating period in human history directly from the eyewitnesses. To date, the foundation has collected over 50,000 testimonies. The Last Days has edited several of these testimonies together to form a coherent, 90 minute feature film. But how reliable is it as a historical source? Can we look at it alone, or when studying a subject such as the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust do we need to consult other sources?

The film The Last Days presents us with the testimonies of six Holocaust survivors who tell us, in their own words, the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Second World War. Additionally the partial testimony of Doctor Münch, a German doctor who worked in Auschwitz and who, after the war was acquitted by the War Crimes tribunal because he had helped to save some Jews is included. The film therefore offers the audience a number of personal testimonies on the fate of Hungarian Jewry, their lives pre-war and their experiences in the death camps.

It is important to remember that the eyewitness accounts that we are shown in The Last Days merely give us a glimpse of the horror that happened to ordinary people. Testimony is a very important primary historical resource. However, the historian will use testimony as only a part of their overall approach to any historical subject.

TASKS

- "If, as a historian, you were writing about the Holocaust, what other sources do you think you would use in addition to testimony?"
- Are each of the types of sources that you have named as straightforward as they seem? Should the historian take them at face value or should they ask particular questions of each source?
- Try to remember the testimony of the German, Doctor Münch. He tells us that he helped to save some Jews in Auschwitz. The fact that he worked in Auschwitz raises a number of issues about what testimony may not have been included. What additional questions might you want to put to Doctor Münch?

These stories offer different perspectives on the Holocaust. When consulting historical sources as a whole it is important to consider not only the information that they may include, but also what a source such as testimony may leave out. Remember that testimony alone may not give us the full political and social picture of an event. Testimony offers us a personal reaction to events and should be studied in conjunction with other sources.

- "Try to recall the testimonies shown in The Last Days. What do they tell you about the different lives these people led? Do they tell you anything about pre-war Hungarian culture? Do they tell you anything about how

the Jews fitted into Hungarian life?

POINTS OF VIEW

It has been said that the historian has an obligation to relate all known evidence to his theme including contradictory views. Therefore the historian has to present as many views of a particular event or subject as possible before making any judgements. Can a film maker present many points of view?



Think about the film that you have seen. What other 'points of view' do we see? How does this affect our understanding of what is happening in the story? How does the inclusion of the testimony of Doctor Müunch, the German doctor from Auschwitz affect the way in which we understand the other testimonies?

TASKS

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

- What are the typical sources, both primary and secondary, that a historian would consult?
- Is what we read in history books or see in films, whether they be feature, newsreel or documentary, always 'true'?
- How can we discover what really happened in the past?
- Do we have to think about what happened in the past?
- Do we have to ask other questions about the events?
- When we talk about the past are we talking about events, individuals or a combination of both?
- Is it important to think about who wrote the history books, or who made the films? If so, why?

The above tasks all raise questions about the nature of 'truth' in a historical source. Consider this idea in relation to film as a possible way of looking at events and individuals in history.

In talking about film we have subdivided this source into three areas:

- Documentary films
- Newsreel footage
- Feature films

What 'truths' might each of these types of film offer the historian? Is it necessary to divide the films into separate categories at all? If so, why? In your opinion do the different types of film treat events differently? Are

any of the sources without bias?

THE FILM MAKER AND THE HISTORIAN

TASKS

The film maker and the historian frequently have different motives and ambitions. In pairs, discuss the following questions:

- What are the essential practises and intentions of a working historian?
- What are the essential practises and intentions of a feature film maker, of a documentary film maker, and of a newsreel editor/director?
- How do the practises of the film maker relate to that of the historian?



When looking at film as a possible source of historical information we need to devise a series of questions that will help us to understand its relevance to a study of history. A good starting point for this is to think about what questions we need to ask of any historical source.

- In pairs, try to think of as many questions as possible that you should ask of historical sources before you think of using them as evidence. For example, you might want to know what period the source comes from and who the author is.
- Think of how documentary films might be used as historical evidence. Imagine that you are a British film maker making a film about a subject such as the D-Day Landings. Now imagine that you are a German documentary film maker making a film about the same subject. How might the two films differ?

When a historian starts to write a book or an article where do they look for their information? Do documentary film makers consult the same sources? Think about the sources available such as:

Photographs - newspapers - journals - diaries - novels - paintings - oral testimony - written testimony - television footage - radio broadcast - news footage - artefacts

TASKS

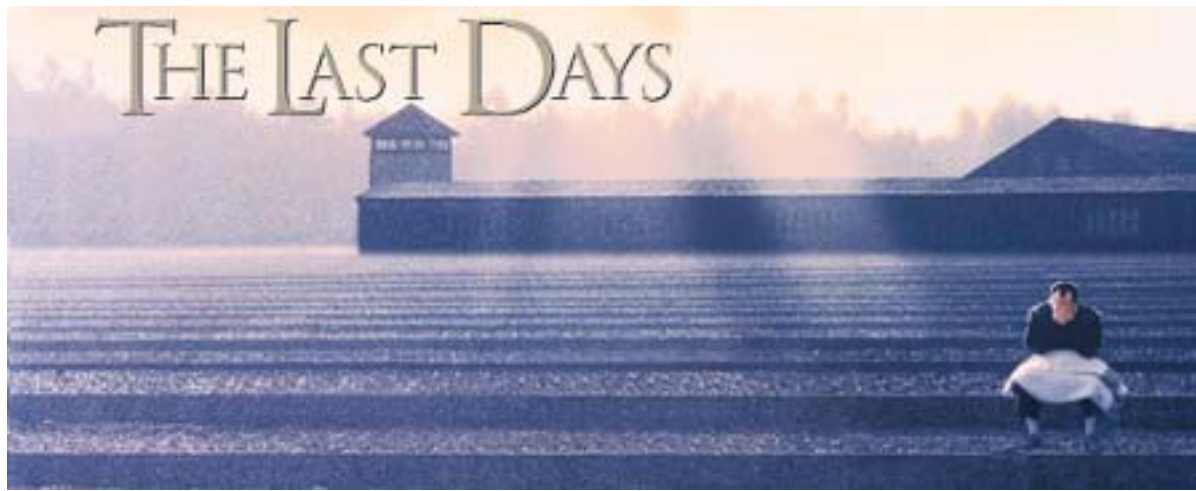
- Are all of the above sources reliable, offering unbiased information?
- Should the historian take these sources at face value or should he/she dig deeper, looking to corroborate each source with more information?
- In your experience, which of the above sources do you think are the least reliable, and which the most reliable? Give reasons for your

answers.

Consider the oral testimony that we were presented with in the film *The Last Days*. Here we see six survivors of the Holocaust, as well as one Nazi, Doctor Münch, give their accounts of events. Testimony is an extremely valuable source of information for both the historian and the film maker. How have the producers of *The Last Days* presented the history of the suffering of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust? Have they used any sources other than testimony?

TASK

Imagine that you are a documentary film maker and you want to make a film about a particular period/event/subject in history (one that you are studying now). What questions would you want to ask the history consultant employed on your film production? What would you want them to tell you about that particular subject? What information and key elements would you, as a film maker, require?



NEWSREEL FILM

Every shot of a feature film is laboriously constructed. The director can therefore re-shoot a particular scene any number of times until they are satisfied.

Newsreels are different. The camera operator has to grab a shot whenever he or she sees an event happening - there is rarely an opportunity for another attempt.

Newsreel footage can therefore be used as primary source material, taking certain provisos into consideration. However, we need to think carefully about how they presented what was happening at the time, in the same way in which we should question the news that we see on television every day.

The French film maker, Jean Luc Godard, has said that "film is not the representation of reality, it is the reality of the representation". The 'reality' of the feature film is highly constructed. By this we mean that the feature film director will have carefully chosen where to put the camera, how the scene will look, where the actors will stand and how one shot will be linked to another in the narrative. The director constructs the reality that we see. Is the same true of newsreels and documentaries?

We need to ask questions not only about what is being shown but also about what is not being shown. Newsreels are not simply pictures - they are a carefully constructed series of images (montage) which are accompanied by a voice-over and music. It is important to remember that sound and the ways in which the images are edited together can affect our understanding of what the newsreels are showing us.

The Hungarian-born film critic Béla Balázs says this about newsreels: "Single pictures are mere reality. Only the montage turns them into either truths or falsehoods. Herein lies the immense responsibility devolving on the newsreel. Their convincing power is in the fact that the spectator feels that he is an eyewitness. The shot is accepted as fact, a presentation of conclusive proof, although of course it is not by accident that the camera comes to a halt in front of one particular object and not another."

Source: Béla Balázs, 'Theory of the Film', Dennis Dobson Ltd., London

1952. First published Moscow 1945

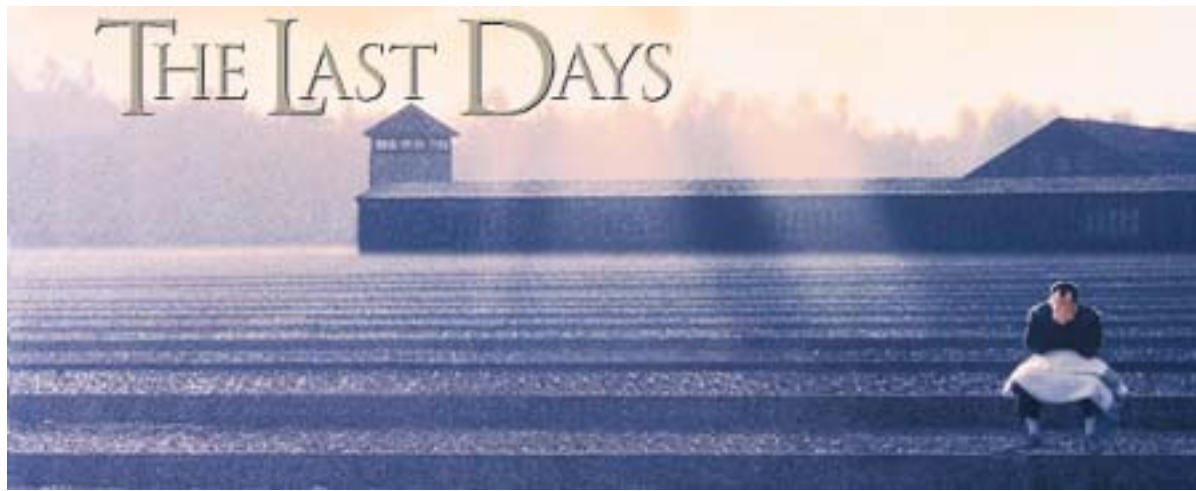
TASKS

- Does Balázs think that the newsreel simply shows us what is happening?
- Why does Balázs feel that the newsreel has a responsibility to its audience?
- What is the power of the newsreel for the audience?
- What does it make the audience feel?
- How do you think that a newsreel can be either true or false?

Documentary film frequently incorporates newsreel footage as illustrative material. Historical documentaries are shown on television all the time.

TASKS

- Next time you watch a documentary, consider the different materials that the film maker has chosen to use. For example, how does he/she use testimony, newsreel footage, photographs etc. to give a sense of the history of the period?
- Do you think that documentaries are as carefully constructed as feature films? If so, are each constructed in different ways? Do we always need to consider who the film maker is, and what his or her point of view?



FILM AND AUDIENCE

Every film that is made, be it feature, newsreel or documentary, can be looked at from three different perspectives. Yet it is important to remember that these three perspectives are all interrelated.

Firstly we need to consider the producers of the film.

- What ideas did they have in making the film?
- How did they give us an idea of what the film would be about?
- How did they expect us to understand what is happening in the film?
- How did they get the film made?

Then there is the film itself.

- How is it constructed?
- What is its relationship to other films that we may have seen?
- How does it embody both the producers' ideas and also the audiences' possible ideas about what it is trying to convey?
- What is the film's relationship to different worlds beyond film?
- How do the messages that it gives relate to other media and other experiences of both the producers and also the audience?

Finally, there is the audience for the film.

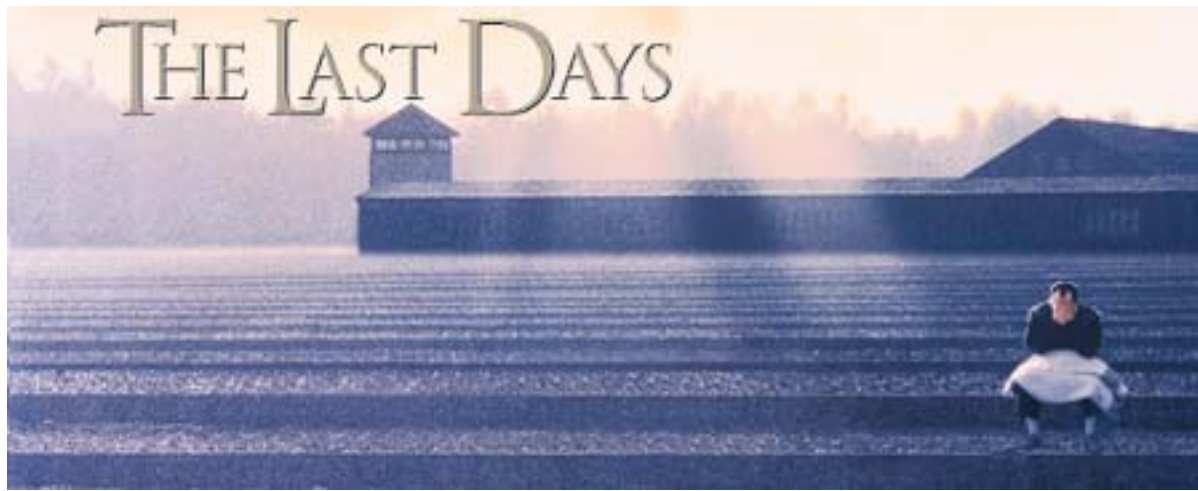
- How will they understand what is happening in the film?
- Will they relate it to other films which might fit into the genre of the specific film?
- What will their expectations of the film be?
- Will an audience return to see the same types (genres) of film over and over again?

Try to answer these questions in relation to The Last Days.

Because everything relates to the film itself, let us start by considering what you expect from a film? Taking The Last Days as your model, write a list of all the things that you would expect from a documentary film. It might be that you write down points such as '...it will be informative...', '...it will tell the truth more than a feature film...', or '...it will rely primarily on the use of photographs and film footage...' Think of as many things as you can.

The Last Days presents us with only a tiny part of the history of the

Holocaust. How are we, as the audience, left to 'fill in the gaps'? Are we expected to know the background to the events that we are shown? How do our own preconceptions shape the ways in which we understand the film?



DOCUMENTARY

The Last Days is from a specific genre - the documentary - and we need to consider what we mean by this. Probably the best way to do this is to consider documentary film in relation to two other types of film - the feature film and the newsreel/factual footage.



Choose three films in the different genres. Using the chart below, try to say what each is, what it is trying to achieve and then explain how this is different to the other types of film. How is each constructed to appeal to an audience? And what conventions do each follow?

FILM TITLE	FEATURE FILM	NEWSREEL FACTUAL FOOTAGE	DOCUMENTARY
Description			
Intention			
Construction			
Conventions			

If a historian, therefore, looks at a documentary film or television programme, how should they question what they see?

Do we assume that a documentary film will always tell the truth?

The key question to ask of such films, if we are looking at them from a historical point of view is - How do they choose to represent what has happened?

The Last Days does not simply show us the survivors talking. What else is shown in the film? Why have the film makers decided to use other sources apart from just the testimonies?

What effect on the audience do these additional illustrations and parts of the story of the lives of the survivors have?

Historical films have always attracted film makers, yet producing historical films holds certain problems for the film maker. Similarly films hold problems for the historian. Even documentary films have to be treated carefully. Look at the ways in which you have defined a documentary film above. Do you think that a documentary film will always tell the truth? Think about the subject of the Holocaust. Imagine two documentary films about a concentration camp - one made by Jews and one made by the Nazis. How would they be different? What sort of language would each use? What would be the different 'truths' that each would be trying to put across? What would each documentary be trying to persuade its audience to believe?

"WHO CAN TELL THE STORY?"

The enormity of the events of the Holocaust raises a number of issues. What words and images can show what happened? Who has the right to tell the stories and what obligation is the eyewitness/historian under both to the dead and also to the survivors? What ways can be used to tell the story of these events?

One point to bear in mind is the ways in which films are constructed. We expect them to tell us a story and to conclude that story, tying up all of the loose threads which have been wound together in the narrative. Films are very good at showing 'how' events happened, but often fail to address 'why'. With an issue such as the Holocaust, even from such a distance of time, can we ever truly understand why the Holocaust happened?

Finally, how can any medium come to terms with the very enormity of six million people being killed because of the religion that they were born into? Six million people who can never tell their stories?



ANTI SEMITISM

Jesus then said to the Jews... "You are of your father the devil..."
(John 8: 31-44)

... God has shown the Church in her enemies the Jews the grace of His compassion, since, as saith the apostle, "their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles". And therefore he has not slain them.
(Saint Augustine (354-430 AD), Bishop of Hippo)

Their synagogues are pigsties, they ought to be burned... they live by evil and plunder, they are wicked beasts that ought to be driven out like mad dogs... May (we) all be free of this insufferable devilish burden - the Jews.
(Martin Luther - 1483-1546)

There is no stopping them... Are there no clear signs that the twilight of the Jews is setting in? No. Jewry's control of society and politics, as well as its practical domination of religious and ecclesiastical thought, is still in the prime of its development, heading towards the realisation of Jehovah's promise; "I will hand all peoples over to thee."
(Wilhelm Marr, German journalist - 1818-1904)

This world wide Jewish conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development...has been steadily growing.
(Illustrated Sunday Herald, 1920)

The end is not only the end of the freedom of the peoples oppressed by the Jew, but also the end of this parasite upon the nations. After the death of his victim, the vampire sooner or later dies too.
(Adolf Hitler, extract from Mein Kampf - 1889-1945)



The Last Days examines the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust through the eyes of people who each had very different experiences, political and religious views. What they share in common, however, is the fact that they suffered because they were of Jewish birth. How do we attempt to understand Jew hatred, or to give it its modern term, antisemitism?

The above quotations span nearly 2,000 years, yet all point to the fact that antisemitism was certainly not a new idea when Hitler came to power in 1933. Prior to Nazism, however, there had been no systematic attempt at the total annihilation of the Jews. The historian Raul Hilberg has described the treatment of the Jews as follows:

Since the fourth century after Christ there have been three anti-Jewish policies: conversion, expulsion and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second.

Why has this hatred of the Jews existed for so long? Why should any one group be singled out for the brutal extermination of which we get a glimpse of in the film *The Last Days*?

One of the contributing factors to modern antisemitism may be found in the anti-Judaism in Christian theology, in the gospels themselves and in the teachings of the Church Fathers. The rise of Christianity followed in the wake of the Jews' expulsion from their ancient homeland Judea by the Romans and the expansion of the Diaspora. The subsequent history of the Jewish people would be marked, particularly after the Crusades, by persecution, expulsion, ghettoisation and murder.

TASKS

1. What does 'Diaspora' mean in the context of Jewish history?
2. What were the Crusades?
3. What is a ghetto? When was the first one established, where and for whom?
4. Find out what is a blood libel. When was the first one and how many can you discover in the twentieth century?
5. What is meant by the term 'prejudice'? Can you think of any modern examples?

Your work on the above areas should give you the sense that antisemitism was not simply confined to Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, but was rife throughout Europe and across many centuries.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were marked by a major change in thought in the western world - the rise of the Enlightenment and the beginnings of freedom of thought, both secular and religious led to some changes in attitudes towards the Jews.

Following the French Revolution of 1789, in 1791 the 40,000 Jews of France were emancipated. By 1871 all the Jews of Europe were granted citizenship and equality before the law. In Hungary this occurred in 1867

The Jews, a small minority in every European country, disproportionately achieved success in commerce, politics, the professions and the arts, often pioneering revolutionary developments in their own spheres. The majority of Jews, grateful for emancipation, gave their loyalty to their nation state. However, their success aroused envy and fear from many people who still saw them as outsiders. In 1879 the racist German journalist Wilhelm Marr defined the term 'antisemitism' and by the 1880's it had become a political movement in many European countries, including Hungary. Jew hatred had changed shape; it was no longer merely religious but now also racial. This fitted in to developing ideologies of race that were increasingly becoming a major feature of western society.

The influence of Jews from different countries such as Rothschild, Karl Marx, Freud, Trotsky, Bela Kun and Rosa Luxemburg, all of whom held diverse views, led to fantastical and unfounded accusations such as a Jewish world conspiracy.

The social, political and economic upheaval of many European states in the inter-war period led to Jews being held responsible for the problems of society. The prominence of Jews in left wing and radical political parties made the situation more difficult. In Hungary Bela Kun and many other leaders of the 1919 revolution were of Jewish birth, a fact which transformed the attitude of many Hungarians to the Jewish Community. In Germany the Nazi party, which was formed in 1920, had antisemitism at the very core of its political programme. When Hitler was elected to power in 1933 the Nazis began the social, political and economic removal of the Jews from German society and tragically their attempted elimination from European society.

TASKS



1. What was the Enlightenment? What was its effect on European thought and philosophy? Discover the names of the major thinkers attached to the movement.
2. Look up the meaning of the word 'emancipation'. Can you find out where it comes from?
3. Can you think of any other nation which has attempted to exclude a group of their own citizens from society.



HUNGARIAN JEWS, ANTISEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

During the 'Golden Age' of Hungarian Jewry between 1867 and 1914, the Jews were the most urban and literate element in Hungarian society, playing a key role in the economic modernisation of the country. They were loyal, patriotic citizens who fully identified with ethnic Magyars.

Despite the existence of an antisemitic movement since the 1880s, Jews continued to prosper and enjoy the protection of the government. In Budapest there were more than 200,000 Jews by 1900 (nearly a quarter of the population) and by 1914 there were 910,000 Jews living in Hungary as a whole, making up 5 per cent of the total population.

Before 1918, Greater Hungary was a multi-ethnic society within a larger multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the Jews fulfilled the role of a missing middle class. After 1918 however, with the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the minorities disappeared as they were annexed by neighbouring states; but the Jews remained as a highly visible minority of close to half a million people. Hungarian antisemitism in the 1920s and 1930s became much stronger because of increased unemployment, the competition for scarce resources and the popular feeling that Jews were undesirable competitors for the emerging Hungarian middle classes. The old ruling élites, which before the First World War had a close business relationship with the wealthier sections of the Jewish community, retained these ties but were much more reserved after the shock of the Communist Revolution of 1918-1919, in which Jews were especially prominent. Hungarian Jewish assimilation however was very extensive, intermarriage rates were high and secularism was strong in the Jewish community. In these respects Hungarian Jews resembled German and Austrian Jewry.

TASK

1. What is a Magyar?
2. What is a scapegoat? Can you find out the origins of the term and how it manifests itself in today's society?

In May 1938 the number of Jews allowed to continue working in their professions was drastically reduced, and was even further restricted in May

1939 as they were increasingly excluded from their role in Hungarian society. In addition Jews were now identified in racial, not religious terms, and the new government legislation was as severe as any to be found in Eastern Europe.

In the winter of 1939-1940 a unique labour service system was instituted for Hungarian Jewish men of military age. Close to 42,000 Jews perished in these units prior to the German occupation of Hungary in 1944. 17,000 Jews, who were not Hungarian born, were deported in July and August 1941. and murdered by the Nazis. In February 1942 another 1,000 Jews were murdered by the Hungarian military.

Nevertheless, although subjected to increasingly stringent racist laws, the majority of the Jewish community remained unharmed until the German invasion.

Prime Minister Miklos Kallay's government had constantly rejected the Nazis demands to implement the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. However, with the German invasion of March 1944 Adolf Eichmann and a team of experts on 'the Jewish Question' came to Budapest.

TASK

1. Find out about the career of Adolf Eichmann and what happened to him after the war.
2. Do you think that people, guilty of mass murder, should be brought to justice even many years after the event?

The Hungarian regime now adopted many anti-Jewish decrees. On April 15, 1944 the Hungarian Institute for the Research into the Jewish Question was established. More and more antisemitic articles were published in the state-controlled Hungarian Press. Anti-Jewish decrees allowed for the ghettoisation and deportation of the Hungarian Jewish community. After April 1944 they were forced to wear the yellow star, which made them easy targets for antisemitism. Jewish property, both commercial and personal was taken by the government. The Jews of Carpathian Ruthenia and north east Hungary were ordered into ghettos on the first day of Passover, April 16th. Over 434,000 Jews were deported, mostly from the countryside, to Auschwitz. The deportations took place between May 15th and July 9th 1944 from 55 major ghettos and concentration centres, in 147 trains composed of sealed freight cars. Despite the fact that the majority of Jews in occupied Europe had already been murdered and many different groups had knowledge of this, Hungarian Jewry were not warned of the fate awaiting them; the majority of Hungarian Jews were murdered shortly after their arrival in Auschwitz.

TASKS

1. One of the witnesses in The Last Days discusses the question of knowledge of the death camps. Can you understand why many of Hungary's Jews failed to believe what was awaiting them?
2. A Holocaust historian has said that the murder of six million of Europe's Jews can be seen as either a warning or as a precedent. From your

knowledge of the post-war world and current events, what conclusions can you draw?

3. The media is an influential force in all our lives and is used as a major tool of propaganda. What do we mean by media? What do we mean by propaganda? Can you think of any specific examples?

On July 7, Horthy called for a halt to the deportations but the majority of Hungarian Jews outside of Budapest, the capital, had by now been sent to their deaths. On October 15, when the Arrow Cross Party came to power, thousands of Jews, mainly women, were forced marched to Austria to build defences for the city of Vienna. During the reign of terror the Arrow Cross murdered thousands of Jews in Budapest by shooting them and throwing them into the Danube river.



During the Soviet siege of Budapest 70,000 Jews were ordered into a special ghetto where thousands died of ill treatment, hunger and cold. The final total of casualties of the Hungarian Jewish community was 564,500, including 63,000 who had died before the German occupation.

By the time of the Hungarian deportations Germany was obviously losing the war. Why was it that they diverted men and resources to the murder of Jews instead of concentrating on the war against the Allies.

2. The story of The Last Days is told through eyewitness accounts. Did they come from different areas of Hungary? How did their lifestyles differ?

3. The murder of a large number of Hungarian Jews happened when the war was nearly over. The Allies were well aware of the fate of European Jewry. Find out if there were any serious government attempts to try and save them.

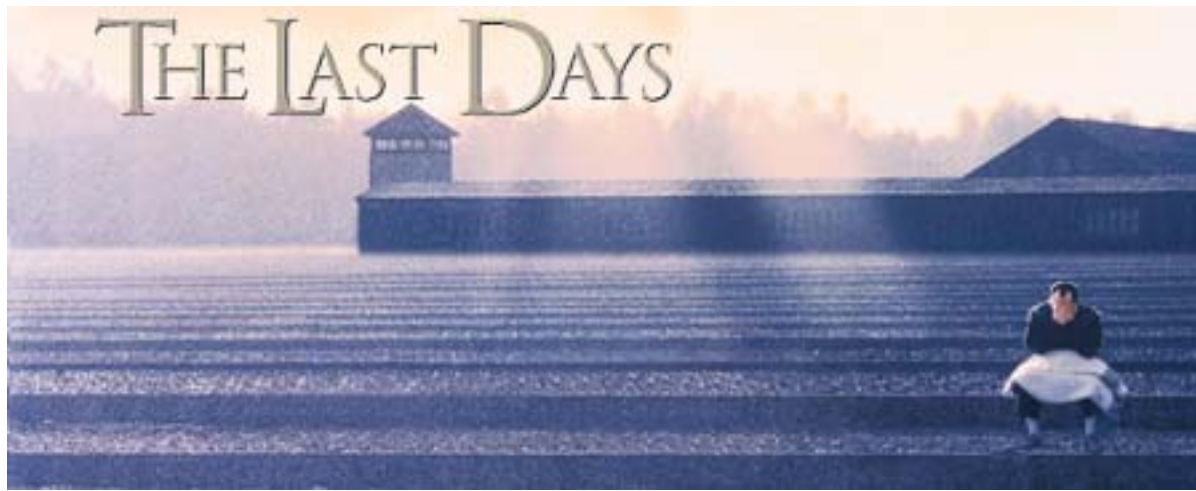
RESISTANCE AND RESCUE

The appalling horror of the Arrow Cross period was thrown into sharp relief by the actions of a small group of people. Many young Zionist pioneers saved lives by forging documents which gave Hungarian Jews safe passage into neutral countries; they also smuggled food into the ghettos. Two extraordinary men, the Swedish Raoul Wallenberg and the Swiss Carl Lutz managed to save thousands of people by arranging visas to their respective neutral countries.



TASKS

1. Find out what happened to Raoul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz after the war.
2. Consider what is meant by the term 'resistance'. One example of extraordinary physical resistance was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Find out all you can about it and if possible, two other examples of physical resistance.
3. Once you have studied physical resistance, think about other ways in which people can resist. Find out all you can about the story of Rabbi Leo Baeck.



THE MOVE TOWARDS THE HOLOCAUST

On January 30th, 1939, six years after taking power, Adolf Hitler made a prophetic speech in the German Reichstag (Parliament):

"If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevisation of the earth and thus the victory of Jewry but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

From our work on the history of Hungarian Jewry we have seen that as a community they survived relatively intact until as late as 1944. By this time however, the majority of Europe's Jews had been murdered.



Extreme antisemitism was central to Nazi ideology. However, although the Jews had been persecuted since Hitler came to power in 1933, it was only with the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. (Operation Barbarossa) that a 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' was sought in earnest, as a further 2,000,000 Jews came under Nazi rule.

TASKS

Find out all you can about the following:

- The Nuremberg Laws
- Kristalnacht
- Jewish emigration from Germany 1930-1939

Following Himmler's orders, mobile killing units known as Einsatzgruppen followed in the footsteps of the German army, killing Jews by shooting. In many cases the local populations were the Nazis' enthusiastic helpers in their destruction of the Jewish communities. More than one million people were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen during this first stage of the "Final

Solution". Communist officials and partisans were also amongst the victims.

TASKS

Look at the two sources below:

SOURCE A

'Members of the Police were, with a few exceptions, quite happy to take part in the shooting of Jews. They had a ball! Obviously they won't say that today. Nobody failed to turn up ... I want to repeat that people today give a false impression when they say that the actions against the Jews were carried out unwillingly. There was great hatred against the Jews; it was revenge, and they wanted money and gold. Don't let's kid ourselves, there was always something up for grabs during the Jewish actions. Everywhere you went there was something for the asking. The poor Jews were brought in, the rich Jews were fetched and their homes were scoured.' Polish Police official, Krakow District 1941.

SOURCE B

'All the men coped with the tough physical stress well. No less considerable were the extreme psychological demands made on them by the large number of liquidations. The morale and self possession of the men was kept up by personally reminding them constantly of the political necessity of what they were doing'. Day book of the Einsatzgruppe One, 31. July 1.941.

TASKS

1. What similarities and what differences can you see in the two sources' attitudes towards the Jews?
2. Examine Source B carefully. Racism and antisemitism were at the core of Nazi ideology. With this in mind, how do you think that the men carrying out the killings had been taught to view the Jews? Do you think that they saw them as less than human?
3. What does the [Wannsee Document](#) tell you about the Nazis proposed treatment of the Jews of Europe?

A new stage in industrialised mass murder was entered into with the establishment of death camps in Poland, beginning with Chelmno in December 1941. This was quickly followed by the establishment of the death camps at Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek.

You may wish to refer to Film Education's web resource [The Holocaust on Film](#) for further information about the history of the Holocaust.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUNGARY

Hungary is a nation in central Europe part of which fell under the rule of the Austrian Hapsburgs in 1526 Buda, the ancient capital was finally taken from the Turks in 1686 It was only in the first decades of the nineteenth century that Hungary began to modernise and to liberalise the constitution. Hungary was a melting pot of different nationalities: Magyars, Romanians, Slovaks, Germans, Croats, Serbs, Ukrainians, Slovenes and Jews. In 1867 the Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary was established which continued intact up until the end of the First World War (1914-1918).

After the defeat of Austro-Hungary at the end of the First World War the Treaty of Trianon, finalised on June 4, 1920, deprived Hungary of two thirds of her territory and 60 per cent of her population. Hungarian nationalism, as a result of the traumatic humiliation of this treaty, became much more exclusivist, ethnically oriented and radically antisemitic in comparison with its more liberal image before 1914. The previous year a Communist revolution, led by Bela Kun, had seized power. After 133 days the revolution collapsed and following a period of terror, Admiral Miklos Horthy took power.

TASKS

1. Following on from the Communist revolution in Russia in October 1917, find out how many other Communist revolutions took place throughout Europe. How many succeeded?
2. Find a map of Europe before the First World War and look at the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. How do the borders compare to the Hungary created with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920? What feelings do you think these massive changes may have provoked amongst the Hungarian population?
3. How many new countries, known as the Successor States, emerged out of the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

Hungary suffered massive territorial and population losses as a result of the Treaty of Trianon. Much of her industrial heartland was lost and this led to economic instability and political and social unrest. In October 1929

the Wall Street Crash led to economic crisis throughout Europe and America. This was all the more acute in countries such as Hungary and Germany. It led many people to seek extreme solutions and was a factor in the rise of semi-fascist political groups in Hungary.

In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The humiliating defeat of Germany at the end of the First World War, the harsh Treaty of Versailles and the ensuing economic crisis was one of the factors in the Nazi rise to power. Hitler was determined to regain Germany's territories and national pride. This found echoes in the Hungarian situation and many members of Horthy's right-wing government wanted an alliance with Germany. In addition Germany provided a market for Hungarian agricultural goods, which led to a strong trading alliance by the mid 1930s.

In 1937 Horthy offered the Nazis political support in return for Germany facilitating the return of Hungarian territory lost at the end of the First World War. The Munich Agreement of 1938, which led to the break-up of Czechoslovakia, resulted in Hungary re-gaining some of her former territories.

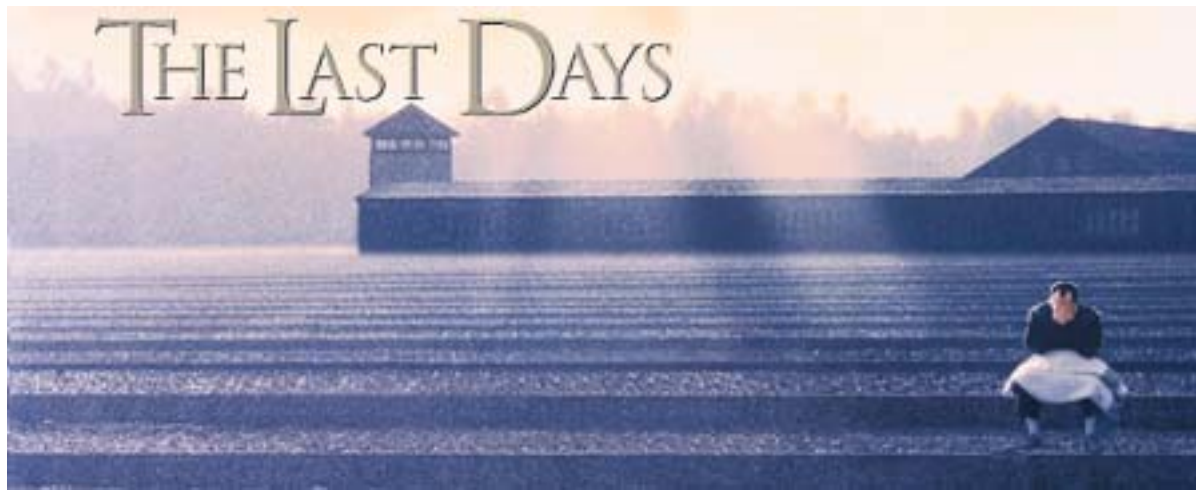
TASK

Discuss Britain's role in the Munich Agreement of 1938. How was it received in Britain and what implications did it have for Europe?

On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland, which led to Britain and France declaring war. Despite the strong ties between Germany and Hungary, a certain sympathy for the plight of Poland led to more than 100,000 refugees being taken in by the Hungarian government.

TASKS

1. The issue of refugees is important today. Find out the British government's current legislation on refugees.
2. Do you think that nations have a moral duty to take in citizens of another country who are being physically persecuted in their own countries?
3. Find out about the Evian Conference of 1938. What implications did this have for the Jews of Europe? In your opinion have similar situations arisen since?



HUNGARY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Nazi success in the early stages of the war confirmed the belief of many Hungarian politicians that they should co-operate with Germany. During the inter-war period one of Hungary's main aims was for the return of Transylvania, whose population was about 33 per cent Hungarian. In August 1940 Germany and Italy signed an agreement known as the Second Vienna Award, which resulted in Hungary repossessing Northern Transylvania and its 2,500,000 inhabitants.

On October 10, 1940 Hungary joined the tripartite pact which bound Germany, Italy and Japan. This resulted in the growth of Nazism in Hungary and the release from prison of Ferenc Szalasi, the leader of the fascist Arrow Cross Party.

On June 26, 1941, Hungary joined Romania and Slovakia in fighting with Hitler against the Soviet Union. In December 1941 Hungary declared war on America, which led to a reciprocal act of war from the American government.

Hungary was increasingly becoming a satellite of Germany and in January 1942 sent troops to support the German war effort against the Soviet Union.

TASKS

1. When was the Arrow Cross Party founded and what was its programme? What similarities, if any, can you find with the Nazi Party?
2. Find out when Germany invaded Russia and discuss its implications for the Jews.

At the beginning of 1943 the Axis powers were defeated at Stalingrad and Voronezh by the Soviet Union. Over 150,000 Hungarian Soldiers lost their lives and it was at this point that Prime Minister Kallay, anticipating that Germany would lose the war, attempted to extricate Hungary from the alliance.

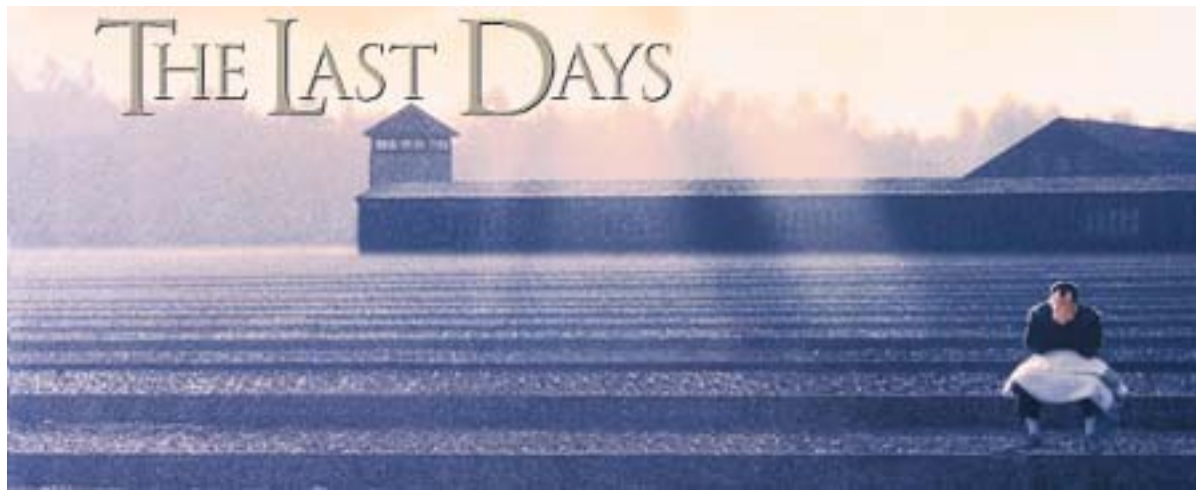
Various attempts failed and on March 19, 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary; the relatively moderate prime minister Kallay was replaced by

the pro-Nazi former ambassador to Berlin, Dome Sztojay.

All anti-Nazi parties and politicians were eliminated and 300,000 soldiers were mobilised to fight the Soviet Army, who were less than 62 miles from the Hungarian border.

Horthy continued to attempt to extricate Hungary from the alliance with Germany. As a counter measure, in October 1944 the Arrow Cross leader, Szalasi, was placed in power by the Nazis. Szalasi's regime was characterised by a reign of terror. Hungarian resources were ruthlessly exploited by Germany and a scorched earth policy was pursued.

By the end of November 1944 the Soviets had succeeded in capturing two thirds of Hungarian territory. Hungarian resistance grew but the terror of the Arrow Cross led to mass executions and many political prisoners being sent to German concentration camps. By April 4, 1945 however, the last German soldiers had been driven out of Hungary by the Russians.



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