

NAME: _____ BLOCK: _____

DATE: _____

D.I.S.C. ASSIGNMENT:**"HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS"?****D.I.S.C. QUESTION**

Did the masses of “ordinary Germans” approve of the mass murder of Jews and act as willing participators in the Holocaust?

“The language to describe the Holocaust does not exist. The more I study the less I understand.”

– Elie Weisel (Nobel Peace Prize winner, author and Holocaust survivor)

“We do not like the Jews as a rule; it is therefore not easy for us to apply to them as well the general love of humankind.”

– German Protestant theologian and pastor

INTRODUCTION:

Over fifty years have passed since the fall of 1946, when the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg made its final judgments regarding the crimes against humanity perpetrated during the Second World War. Prominent among the charges were those related to the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” today known as “The Holocaust.” Why, after all this time, is the Holocaust still studied? One key reason, though certainly not the only, is that there is still an incomplete understanding of the causes of the Holocaust. David Goldhagen, a Harvard professor, published a book called Hitler's Willing Executioners. In it, he endorses a position-not new, but recently popular-that the Holocaust had its roots in the German National Spirit, or *Volkgeist*. He argues that by far the most important reason that the German people complied with the wishes of the Nazi party in this area was the shared belief that it was



necessary for the Jews to be eliminated, for the good of Germany and the world. His arguments have caused tremendous controversy and elicited a great deal of criticism from those trying to determine why the Holocaust happened?

Scholars seemingly agree that thousands upon thousands of ordinary Germans participated in the Holocaust or at least were indifferent. Traditional views blame Nazi ideology, the Nazi state, and wartime conditions arguing that ordinary Germans had little alternative, were forced to participate, or were merely following orders they could not disobey. On the other hand, there are those like Goldhagen that see the roots of genocide in the German people themselves, not the conditions of Nazi Germany. Overall, the most important question is: How could the Holocaust have happened?

TASKS:

1. Carefully read the enclosed documents and sources, and answer the questions that accompany them.
 2. Consider the DISC question as you read, then collect evidence on the Data Collection Chart in support of a position you think is best supported by the evidence provided.
 3. Come prepared to debate and discuss the question in class and then write your final conclusion on this issue after considering different perspectives.
-

Secondary sources: The following sources outline some of the key arguments and positions taken by Holocaust scholars and researchers.

SOURCE A Excerpt from an essay by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (1998). Goldhagen's international best-selling book, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust has caused tremendous controversy since its first publication in 1996. In his book, Goldhagen, a Harvard University professor, claims Germans were culturally anti-Jewish – a by-product of the traditions since Martin Luther and, more recently, the German Nationalism of the 19th Century. One of the key reasons the Nazis came to power, Goldhagen declares, was Hitler's own burning hatred of the Jews that was attractive to the masses of Germans. With these unabashed anti-Semites in power, the Holocaust was inevitable. The German people would not, indeed could not, stop it from happening. They were as committed to Jew-hating as the fanatical Nazi leadership, just unwilling to admit it openly. Traditional views of the Holocaust blame Nazism for the Holocaust. Goldhagen's Jewish father, also a history professor, was selected by the Nazis for extermination, but managed to survive.

...For what developments would a comprehensive explanation of the Holocaust have to account? For the extermination of the Jews to occur, four principal things were necessary:

1. The Nazis - that is, the leadership, specifically Hitler - had to decide to undertake the extermination.
2. They had to gain control over the Jews, namely over the territory in which they resided.
3. They had to organize the extermination and devote to it sufficient resources.
4. They had to induce a large number of people to carry out the killings.

My explanation - which is new to the scholarly literature on the perpetrators - is that the perpetrators, "ordinary Germans," were animated [motivated] by anti-Semitism by a particular type of anti-Semitism that led them to conclude that the Jews ought to die. The perpetrators' beliefs, ...though obviously not the sole source, was...a most significant and indispensable source of the perpetrators' actions and must be at the center of any explanation of them. Simply put, the perpetrators, having consulted their own convictions and morality and having judged the mass annihilation of Jews to be right, did not want to say "no"...

...Why until recently were there almost no studies...of the perpetrators [those who participated in the extermination of the Jews] – namely of those who killed Jews, guarded the camps and ghettos, and deported them to their deaths – to be found among the tens of thousands of books written about the Holocaust, despite the wealth of evidence that had long been available? [Previous theories explaining the Holocaust] have rendered them [the participants] puppet-like actors, mere pawns whose inner world need not be investigated. It denies the moral agency [ability to make decisions] and assent of the perpetrators and holds that they were compelled to act by forces external to them, such as terror, bureaucratic structures and modes of behaving, the logic of the system, or social psychological pressure...

...in the last couple of years, a [great number] of scholars and commentators have adopted positions which would make the perpetrators of the Holocaust the only perpetrators of genocide who believed that their victims did not deserve to die, indeed that their victims were innocent. This strange view seems still stranger given that given that many of the German perpetrators knew explicitly that they had a choice not to kill, and that no German perpetrator was ever killed, sent to a concentration camp, jailed, or punished in any serious way for refusing to kill Jews. That it was possible for many perpetrators to avoid killing Jews, and that some of them availed themselves of this possibility, became already known at the Nuremberg trials. The related, stunning fact that not a single German perpetrator was ever seriously punished for refusing to kill Jews has been known since 1967... Is it of so little importance that men and women who knew that they could avoid killing children would choose to destroy them anyway – that is not even worth mentioning this information? Acknowledging these facts would have shaken the foundations of the paradigm [hypothesis; perspective] to which many scholars are wedded, namely that the perpetrators were compelled by external forces to act against their will...

...when these writers depict and analyze the events of the Holocaust and particularly when they analyze the motives of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, it has been the unspoken practice of so many scholars to all but ignore, and certainly not use, victims' accounts of the perpetrators' actions and the victims' understanding of the perpetrators' actions toward them... The accounts of the survivors afford a more transparent, more spacious window to the Nazi inferno than the often beclouded and distorting postwar testimony of the perpetrators, in order to escape punishment, frequently lie... Who would expect to learn from the perpetrators or from contemporaneous [from that time] German documents a full and accurate account of the texture and details of the Holocaust, of the daily living and dying, of the treatment of the prisoners by the German overlords, including their frequent gratuitous [unwarranted] brutality, of the social life of the inmates, their thoughts and feelings, their suffering and agony? Where can we more fully learn about the character of the perpetrators' actions – the degree to which the perpetrators tortured, brutalized, beat, degraded, and mocked the victims – about the perpetrators' demeanour and attitudes, about whether they acted zealously or reluctantly, about whether they expressed hatred for the victims, and gain insight into the perpetrators' willingness and motivation? The answer is obvious: from the victims.

...Victims' accounts [contradict] the conventional paradigm and the scholarly theories about the perpetrators that have held sway, namely that the perpetrators either explicitly disapproved or at least did not approve of the mass slaughter of the Jews and other victims. The victims know differently. They have testified again and again... Germans' cruelty towards Jews, as the victims (and also some of the perpetrators after the war) reveal, was voluntary, widespread, sustained, inventive, and gleeful. Such gratuitous cruelty could have been produced only by people who approved of what they were doing. The vast corpus of victims' testimony substantiates [supports] the conclusion that ordinary Germans degraded, brutalized, and killed Jews willingly because of their hatred of Jews. So profound and near universal was the anti-Semitism during the Nazi period that to the Jewish victims it appeared as if its hold on Germans could be captured and conveyed only in organic terms... Once activated, the Germans' profound hatred of the Jews, which had in the 1930s by necessity lain relatively dormant, so possessed them, that it appeared to have exuded from every pore...

...The old paradigm consists of abstract, faceless structures and institutions (bureaucracy, the greatly exaggerated "terror apparatus" that was supposedly directed at ordinary Germans, the SS, the Nazi Party, the gas chambers) and allegedly irresistible external forces (totalitarian terror, the exigencies [pressures] of war social-psychological pressure). This paradigm effaces [wipes out] the human actors and their capacity to judge what they were doing and to make moral choices... All of this implies that any people from any era with any set of beliefs about Jews (even non-anti-Semites) would have acted in exactly the same manner as the perpetrators, with the same brutality, zeal and [diabolical] laughter. This is being challenged by a view that recognizes that the Holocaust was brought about by human beings who had beliefs about what they were doing, beliefs which they developed within a highly specific historical context [German culture and traditions], and who made choices about how to act... The human beings are finally at the center of the discussion. The heretofore dominant question of "What compelled them to act against their will?" is being replaced by the question of "Why did these people choose to act in the ways that they did?"

As a result, powerful myths are crumbling; ...the myth that the peoples in different occupied countries did not do more to thwart the Germans or less to help in the killing of Jews merely because of their fear of the occupying Germans; the official Allied government myths that they could not reasonably have attempted to do much more to save the victims; the myth that those who [acquired] Jewish property, including art, generally did so innocently; the myth that the perpetrators, by and large, disapproved of what they were doing but were coerced [forced], were blindly obedient, or were pressured to act as they did; and the three related myths that the German people more broadly (all the exceptions notwithstanding) did not know that their countrymen were killing Jews en masse, did not

support the Nazi regime even though its many brutal policies (forced sterilization, so-called “euthanasia,” the violent persecution of Jews and others, the reintroduction of slavery into the European continent) were widely known, and did not approve of the general eliminationist persecution of the Jews...

...It would be beneficial if certain basics could become widely accepted... They include:

1. The discarding of the [stereotype] of individual Germans as having had no views of their own about the rightness of what they were doing, which included slaughtering children... The same applies to the peoples of other countries where the Germans found many willing helpers...
2. The rejection of the myth that the large scale, mass killing of Jews remained unknown to the broader German public. Germans themselves are now becoming more candid [open]: 27% of those who were at least 14 years old at the end of the war now admit that they knew the extermination of Jews was taking place...
3. The acknowledgement that Germans who were not members of specifically targeted groups (Jews; gays; gypsies; the mentally infirm; the Communist and Social Democratic leadership) were so terrorised as the totalitarian model [suggests]... The comparative question of why Germans expresses different degrees of dissent and opposition to different policies, yet virtually no principled dissent against the eliminationist persecution of the Jews, becomes central... If the vast majority of the German people had genuinely been opposed to the radical eliminationist persecution of the Jews, then Hitler would have never been able to pursue it as he did.
4. The adoption of a comparative perspective on genocide, so that those who study the Holocaust do not adopt practices or causal claims that are at odds with how we study and what we know of analogous [similar; related] phenomena... A major research project might be undertaken using all available evidence to catalogue what is known of the backgrounds, actions, and attitudes of every perpetrator in every ghetto, camp, and other institutions of killing... so that a general portrait and systematic analysis of them can be composed.
5. The recognition that the Holocaust had both universal and particular [specific to Germany] elements. Its universal aspect is that all people have the capacity to dehumanize groups of others so intensely that their hatred can impel them to commit genocide... The universal capacity to hate does not mean that all people actually do hate and hate all others in the same way, or that all hatreds will motivate people to treat the objects of their aggression similarly. Real existing hatreds, as opposed to the capacity to hate, are primarily [specific to a society and time].

The Holocaust is not “beyond human comprehension.” In principle, it is as explicable as every other genocide. No one says that the Rwandan or Cambodian genocide cannot be explained. What so many people simply do not want to accept is that... the German perpetrators were like the perpetrators of other mass slaughters: the vast majority of these Germans were also willing executioners. That people automatically accept these facts about non-Jewish victims of genocide and about African or Asian perpetrators but not about Jews and “civilized” white Christian Europeans is disturbing. Does anyone think for a moment that the Turkish, Hutu, or Serbian perpetrators did not believe that slaughtering Armenians, Tutsis, or Muslims was right?

SOURCE B Excerpt from R. J. Evans, Rereading German History (1997). This historian has well summarized Goldhagen’s controversial thesis.

Goldhagen’s argument... is that Germans killed millions of Jews during the Second World War not because they were forced to, nor because German traditions of obedience enabled a handful of fanatics at the top to do whatever they liked, nor because they were succumbing to peer-group pressure from their comrades-in-arms, nor because they were ambitious careerists, nor because they were acting like cogs in a machine. Least of all did they carry out extermination of the Jews because they faced death themselves if they refused to obey the order to do so. Goldhagen argues that Germans killed Jews in their millions because they enjoyed doing it, and they enjoyed doing it because their minds and emotions were eaten up by a murderous, all consuming hatred of the Jews that had been pervasive [widespread] in German political culture for decades, even centuries past. Ultimately, says Goldhagen, it is this history of genocidal anti-Semitism that explains the German mass murder of Europe’s Jews.

1. Explain why Goldhagen's thesis (Sources A and B) might be so controversial?

2. What is Goldhagen's criticism of other Holocaust researchers?

3. What appear to be the strengths and limitations of Goldhagen's position on explaining the root causes of the Holocaust?

SOURCE C Excerpt from Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men? A Reply to the Critics* (1998). The author responds to Goldhagen's criticism of his work published in an earlier book. Browning states that anti-Semitism may have been widespread in pre-Nazi Germany, but it was not the major ideology of most German citizens. Instead, there are a variety of factors that were responsible for making ordinary Germans into willing killers.

The argument of my critics...rests upon their assertion of a unique and particular German anti-Semitism...that "cultural conditioning" shaped "specifically German behavioural modes"... "Daniel Goldhagen, the most severe critic of what he called my "essentially situational" explanation, put the matter pointedly...[Ordinary] Germans were "believers in the justice of the murder of the Jews." In their "inflamed imaginations," destruction of the Jews "was a redemptive act."

...A large number of other scholars, however, have not shared this view... Kershaw argues that anti-Semitism was not a major factor in attracting support for Hitler and the Nazis... Moreover, in the electoral breakout phase of 1929-33, and indeed up to 1939, Hitler rarely spoke in public about the Jewish question... Kershaw concludes that "anti-Semitism cannot ... be allocated to a decisive role in bringing Hitler to power, though ... it did not do anything to hinder his rapidly growing popularity"... [Kershaw and like-minded historians make] a distinction between a minority of party activists, for whom anti-Semitism was an urgent priority, and the bulk of the German population, for whom it was not... The vast majority accepted the legal measures of the regime, which ended emancipation [freedom] and drove the Jews from public positions in 1933, socially ostracised the Jews in 1935 [drove them into ghettos], and completed the expropriation [takeover] of their property in 1938-39. Yet this same majority was critical of the hooliganistic violence of party radicals toward the same German Jews whose legal persecution they approved. The boycott of 1933, the vandalistic outbreaks of 1935, and above all the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938 produced a negative response among the German population... Above all, they [several historians] agree that the fanatical anti-Semitism of the party "true believers" was not identical to the anti-Semitic attitudes of the general population and the anti-Semitic priorities and genocidal commitment of the regime were not shared by ordinary Germans... Kershaw summarized his position in the memorable phrase that "the road to Auschwitz was built by hatred, but paved with indifference." The general conclusions of Kershaw, Kulka and Bankier –based on

years of research and a wide array of empirical evidence – stand in stark contrast to the Goldhagen image of the entire German population “deranged” by a delusional mass psychosis and in the grips of a “hallucinatory, lethal view of the Jews.”...

...it should be noted that German executioners were capable of killing millions of non-Jews targeted by the Nazi regime. Beginning in 1939, systematic and large-scale mass murder was initiated against the German handicapped and Polish intelligentsia. More than 3,000,000 Soviet prisoners of war perished from hunger, exposure, disease and outright execution... Tens of thousands fell victim to horrendous reprisal measures [retaliation for attacks on German troops]. Additionally, the Nazis included Gypsies [nomadic peoples in Romania and other parts of Eastern Europe] in their genocidal assault. Clearly, something more than singular German anti-Semitism is needed to explain perpetrator behaviour which the regime could find executioners to murder millions of non-Jewish victims... If tens of thousands of local policemen in Belorussia and the Ukraine – taken as needed by the Germans, who were desperate for help and offered a variety of inducements – basically performed the same duties and behaved in the same way as their German counterparts in Poland, then the [Goldhagen argument] likewise fails... The preponderance of evidence suggests that in trying to understand the vast majority of the perpetrators, we are dealing not with “ordinary Germans” but rather with “ordinary men.”

4. What problems does Browning have with Goldhagen’s position on the role of “ordinary Germans” in the Holocaust?

5. How does Browning support his argument?

SOURCE D Excerpt from D. Bankier, *German Public Awareness of the Final Solution*, in The Final Solution (1996).

The view... that very little was known about the extermination at the time, or that only unsubstantial rumours about the Jew’s fate circulated in Germany, is untenable... On the basis of the available evidence it is equally untenable that the German people failed to comprehend the significance of the Nazis’ genocidal policy... The awareness of the extermination shaped the public’s reactions to the regime’s political stimuli and ... affected its interpretations of wartime reality.

SOURCE E Excerpt from I. Kershaw, *German Popular Opinion during the Final Solution* in Comprehending the Holocaust (1988).

The fairly widespread knowledge of the mass shootings of the Jews was... compatible with a spectrum of responses ranging from overt approval to blank condemnation, and above all with an apathetic [uncaring; insensitive] shrug of the shoulders, the feeling of impotence, or the turning of the face from unpalatable [unacceptable; revolting] truths.

Much suggests, in fact that this type of reaction – that is non-reaction – was the most commonplace of all. If one term above all sums up the behavioural response of the German people to the persecution of the Jews, it is: passivity [indifference]. The passivity was constant [consistent] with a number of differing internalised attitudes toward Jews.

Most obviously, it corresponded to latent [hidden] anti-semitism, and arguably, to a mentality of ‘moral indifference’. It also mirrored apathy... and a willingness to accept uncritically the state’s right to take radical action against its ‘enemies’. Above all... passivity... was a reflection of a prevailing lack of interest in the Jewish question... At the time that Jews were being murdered in their millions, the vast majority of Germans had plenty of other things on their mind.

SOURCE F Excerpt from M. Housden, Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich (1996).

In the context of a society in which racism formed a background feature of everyday life, very many ordinary Germans indeed played small parts in making a fundamentally flawed system function. Accepting that concrete individual actions always reflect a mixture of motives, during peacetime conformity took the form of both passive acceptance of, and active support for, racial policies and actions which stopped short of the wholesale violence of “Crystal Night”. With the nation at war; escalating racial policy grew into something people learned to live with; it was to most people a source of indifference. If their job dictated some sort of collaboration in the implementation of racial policy, by and large they conformed to the demand. Naturally there were exceptions to the rule ... But the impression lingers, as Willy Brandt [Chancellor of West Germany from 1969-74] has said, that far too few people made conscious choices to oppose this particular form of evil. It became normal to conform to highly abnormal expectations.

6. In what ways do Sources D, E and F corroborate or contradict Goldhagen’s thesis ?

SOURCE G Excerpt from Joshua D. Franklin, Ouchita Baptist University (1998) *What Caused the Holocaust?* The author outlines the key positions in the Functionalist-Intentionalist debate on the origins of the Nazis’ “Final Solution.”

...Once people with these beliefs [anti-Semitism] came to power, it was only a matter of time before they took some action. Soon after taking control of Germany, the Nazis passed the first anti-Jewish laws to begin "Germanizing" the Reich. As the Nazis saw at each step that their policies were not "working," they passed a new and harsher set of laws or, as the war began, gave orders which were more extreme... The official goal was instead deportation or emigration, with segregation in a ghetto or reservation as only temporarily viable. The ghetto policies in German-controlled areas, the deportation scheme, and the proposed "world ghetto" solution amounted to forms of quarantine. Nazi ideology presented all Jews as some sort of very dangerous sentient disease, and only by separation from them would humanity be able to survive. These solutions were a way to effectively eliminate the Jews without having to deal with the problems of physically killing them.

However, the Nazis destroyed many of the records from their rule, and it is unclear whether or not there was a formal prewar plan to systematically kill the Jews once it became possible. Historians of the Holocaust divide into two camps, called **Functionalists** and **Intentionalists**. Intentionalists are those who hold that it was the Nazi "intention" to kill Jews according to a prewar plan. Functionalists are those who believe the Holocaust came about because of extreme wartime conditions and decentralized decision-making (that is, as a "function" of the war).

It is also important to understand that no copy of any Hitler order to physically kill all Jews is available, though one may, of course, have been destroyed or lost... The Führer may have been unclear on his wishes, at least prior to 1941 and perhaps even afterward, or he may have personally ordered the Final Solution.

The Intentionalists base their arguments on the voluminous Nazi propaganda and Hitler's prewar speeches. They see a complete plan that was implemented in steps so as to make it feasible. An anniversary speech given to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, is one of the most famous of Hitler's prewar speeches used to verify this position. In it, Hitler declares, "Today I want once more to be a prophet: If international finance Jewry in and outside Europe succeeds in plunging the peoples into another world war, then the end result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and the consequent victory of Jewry but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

The Second World War soon happened, and two-thirds of the Jews in Europe died. Such evidence seems to lend credibility to the Intentionalist argument.

This contention that a systematic plan was responsible for the Holocaust also has significant ethical ramifications. It makes the individual perpetrators less accountable (though of course not innocent), and instead puts more blame on the core responsible for the plan. For example, the American prosecution in their case at the Nuremberg trials used a form of the Intentionalist argument. Thus they largely indicted [charged] leaders and organizations—such as the Gestapo and SS—and not the great mass of individuals who performed the deeds. Since then, many accused of war crimes have claimed (some successfully) that they only participated in murderous actions because they had orders from high above which left them little room for choice.

The testimony of various third-echelon Nazi functionaries, such as Rudolph Höess, the Commandant at Auschwitz, also supports this position. In his testimony at Nuremberg, he states: "In view of all these doubts I had, the only one and decisive argument [to continue carrying these actions] was the strict order and the reason given for it by Reichsführer Himmler..." Höess claimed Himmler had earlier told him that it was absolutely necessary to kill all Jews, including women and children, because otherwise "the Jews will later on destroy the German people."

How then can anyone claim, as Functionalists do, that the Nazis did not intend to kill the Jews from the start? The Functionalists assert that the Holocaust is best understood as having happened through "improvisation, rather than deliberate planning." The historical evidence shows only that Hitler certainly hated and wanted to get rid of all the Jews. As Yehuda Bauer notes, however, "Throughout their rule, the Nazis advocated two alternative solutions, sometimes one to the exclusion of the other, sometimes both simultaneously: expulsion or sale of Jews, and mass murder... In other words, although the possibility of murder was inherent in Nazi ideology, there were, apparently, alternatives."

The Nazis certainly employed alternatives to killing. Jewish emigration was not prohibited until 23 October 1941, more than two years after the beginning of the war, and before this time Jews were forced to emigrate in many cases. Until the end of 1940 the Gestapo even supported illegal Jewish emigration to Palestine, and approximately 10,000 arrived. Also the term "final solution" may have first appeared in June 1940 in the context of a 'territorial final solution' (territoriale Endlösung), and clearly linked to evolving schemes for massive forced emigration of Jews to the island of Madagascar.

From the ethical perspective, if the Holocaust arose through wartime "improvisation" rather than a Hitlerite plan, there are obviously a far greater number of responsible individuals. Again, it of course does not absolve leaders like Hitler, Himmler, or Göring who may have come to the Final Solution plan in desperation or even just watched the killing unfold, but it is the difference in culpability between premeditated murder and impulsive killing. Though both of these options clearly place an enormous amount of guilt on those responsible, it also calls into question the viability of some war-crime defendants' claim that the Nazi leadership "made them do it." Unfortunately, no one can resolve the Intentionalist-Functionalist Debate with our current available facts and understanding of them.

The story of the Holocaust is one "involving several thousand Germans trying to find and kill several million Jews dispersed among approximately 300 million non-Jews." These few Germans caused the Holocaust, but it is a grievous tragedy that the inaction of the vast majority of Europeans resulted as it did. Of course, as Michael Marrus reasons in his book [The Holocaust in History](#), "If the Holocaust was indeed unprecedented, . . . then it is also true that people had no experience upon which to base their understanding at the time, and no reliable guides for action." However, as Christian ethicist David Gushee has said, the inaction of the majority is still a "shattering moral failure." Perhaps understanding the true causes will also help prevent this in the future.

7. Using Source G, explain which position is stronger – the *functionalists* or *intentionalists*?

SOURCE H Excerpt from William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (1959). The author describes the role of German corporations in the Holocaust.

The Zyklon-B crystals that killed the victims in the first place were furnished by two German firms which had acquired the patent from I. G. Farben. These were Tesch and Stabenow of Hamburg, and Degesch of Dessau, the former supplying two tons of the cyanide crystals a month and the latter three quarters of a ton. The bills of lading for the deliveries showed up at Nuremberg.

The directors of both concerns contended that they had sold their product merely for fumigation purposes and were unaware that lethal use had been made/of it, but this defence did not hold up. Letters were found from Tesch and Stabenow offering not only to supply the gas crystals but also the ventilating and heating equipment for extermination chambers. Besides, the inimitable Hoess, who once he started 'to confess went the limit, testified that the directors of the Tesch company could not have helped knowing how their product was being used since they furnished enough to exterminate a couple of million people. A British military court was convinced of this at the trial of the two partners, Bruno Tesch and Karl Weinbacher, who were sentenced to death in 1946 and hanged. The director of the second firm, Dr Gerhard Peters of Degesch of Dessau, got off more lightly. A German court sentenced him to five years' imprisonment.

Before the postwar trials in Germany it had been generally believed that the mass killings were exclusively the work of a relatively few fanatical S.S. leaders. But the records of the courts leave no doubt of the complicity of a number of German businessmen, not only the Krupps and the directors of the I. G. Farben chemical trust but smaller entrepreneurs who outwardly must have seemed to be the most prosaic and decent of men, pillars - like good business men everywhere - of their communities.

8. Does Source H support or contradict Goldhagen's position?

Primary sources related to the Jewish Holocaust and German anti-Semitism.

SOURCE I Excerpt from Martin Luther, On the Jews and their Lies (1543). Some historians have traced anti-Semitism in Germany to the time of Martin Luther during the Reformation period. Luther, initially convinced that the logic of his theological reforms would lead to the mass conversion of Jews, was later frustrated by their resistance to Christianity. The Lutheran Church was an influential force in German society and politics in the following centuries.

...I had made up my mind to write no more either about the Jews or against them. But since I learned that these miserable and accursed people do not cease to lure to themselves even us, that is, the Christians, I have published this little book, so that I might be found among those who opposed such poisonous activities of the Jews who warned the Christians to be on their guard against them...

...[The Jews are a] base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth...

SOURCE J Poem by Martin Niemoller, German Protestant pastor (1892-1984). Niemoller, a German naval officer during World War I, initially supported the Nazis, but later was arrested for preaching against their ideology. He was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp until its liberation by American forces in 1945.

*They came for the Communists, and I didn't object –
For I wasn't a Communist;
They came for the Socialists, and I didn't object –
For I wasn't a Socialist;
They came for the labor leaders, and I didn't object –
For I wasn't a labor leader;
They came for the Jews, and I didn't object –
For I wasn't a Jew;
Then they came for me –
And there was no one left to object.*

SOURCE K Excerpt from the second *White Rose* leaflet published in 1942. Its authors: Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst, Kurt Huber, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graf, were executed in 1943 for publishing and distributing leaflets hostile to the government of Adolf Hitler.

It is impossible to engage in intellectual discourse with National Socialism because it is not an intellectually defensible program. It is false to speak of a National Socialist philosophy, for if there were such an entity, one would have to try by means of analysis and discussion either to prove its validity or to combat it. In actuality, however, we face a totally different situation. At its very inception this movement depended on the deception and betrayal of one's fellow man; even at that time it was inwardly corrupt and could support itself only by constant lies. After all, Hitler states in an early edition of "his" book (a book written in the worst German I have ever read, in spite of the fact that it has been elevated to the position of the Bible in this nation of poets and thinkers); "It is unbelievable, to what extent one must betray a people in order to rule."

We do not want to discuss here the question of the Jews, no do we want in this leaflet to compose a defence or apology. No, only by way of example do we want to cite the fact that since the conquest of Poland three hundred thousand Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way. Here we see the most frightful crime against human dignity, a crime that is unparalleled in the whole of history.

9. Explain whether Source J and Source K support the position that ordinary Germans either did not know about the persecution of Jews, or did not possess the ability to protest and resist?

SOURCE L Excerpt from testimony of a German policeman (1961).

I believed the propaganda that all Jews were criminals and sub-humans and that they were the cause of Germany's decline after the First World War. The thought that one should disobey or evade the order to participate in the extermination of the Jews did not therefore enter into my mind at all.

SOURCE M Excerpt from testimony of a Rudolf Höess at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal (1946). Hoess, a member of the SS, was the architect and Kommandant of the death camp Auschwitz.

It was something already taken for granted that that the Jews were to blame for everything... It was not just the newspapers like *Der Steürmer* [Nazi propaganda paper] but it was everything we ever heard. Even our military and ideological training took for granted that we had to protect Germany from the Jews... We were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking, that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody and somebody else would have done just as well if I hadn't... I really never gave much thought to whether it was right or wrong. It just seemed a necessity.

SOURCE N At his trial, Nazi party member Hans Frank was asked by Alfred Seidal if he had "participated in the annihilation of the Jews?" (18th April, 1946). Frank was found guilty and executed in 1946.

I say "yes;" and the reason why I say "yes" is because, having lived through the 5 months of this trial, and particularly after having heard the testimony of, the witness Hoess, my conscience does not allow me to throw the responsibility solely on these minor people. I myself have never installed an extermination camp for Jews, or promoted the existence of such camps; but if Adolf Hitler personally has laid that dreadful responsibility on his people, then it is mine too, for we have fought against Jewry for years; and we have indulged in the most horrible utterances. My own diary bears witness against me. Therefore, it is no more than my duty to answer your question in this connection with "yes." A thousand years will pass and still this guilt of Germany will not have been erased.

10. What do Sources L, M and N reveal about the motivations of German participation in the Holocaust?

SOURCE O Excerpt from American journalist, Westbrook Pegler, *Suffer Little Children* (1936).

The German child who is a Jew is compelled to listen to the most unspeakable vilification of his parents, and the child's first attempts at spelling out public notices on the billboards will inform him that he is not a human being, like other children, but a beast whose parents were not human beings, either, but loathsome animals.

If the child lives in a country town where there are not sufficient Jewish children to warrant the establishment of a ghetto school in which to segregate little Jews, then the torture of the victim is even more artistic. In that case the child may be compelled to sit in the classroom and pay attention while the teacher explains that little Isadore or Rosie is a vile creature, a species of vermin and a menace to the German nation. If the teacher so desires, the Jewish child may be dismissed from the room during the lecture, in which case the Aryan children, with the characteristic

cruelty of children plus the sadistic delight in the infliction of pain which is now being fostered in young Nazis, will catch the young Jew after class and tell Isadore or Rosie what the teacher said.

If the radio is turned on in the home of a Jewish family the children will hear an orator somewhere in Berlin or Munich explaining that their parents are beasts and that they are little beasts themselves. A lone Jewish child in a small community must play alone, for the true Nazi children, of course, will not admit him to their company, and a Gentile child with pity in his heart would be afraid to offer the victim any sympathy. He would be ostracized. And then, of course, it is fair sport for the Nazi children to kick and beat and throw rocks at the little Jews, because that is preliminary training for one of the highest functions of Nazi citizenship and manhood in days to come.

SOURCE P Excerpt from David Buffum, American Consul in Leipzig (November, 1938), describing *Kristallnacht* in November, 1938.

The shattering of shop windows, looting of stores and dwellings of Jews took place in the early hours of 10 November 1938, and was hailed in the Nazi press as a "spontaneous wave of righteous indignation throughout Germany, as a result of the cowardly Jewish murder of Third Secretary von Rath in the German Embassy in Paris." So far as a very high percentage of the German populace is concerned, a state of popular indignation that would spontaneously lead to such excesses, can be considered non-existent. On the contrary, in viewing the ruins all of the local crowds observed were obviously benumbed over what had happened and aghast over the unprecedented fury of Nazi acts that had been or were taking place with bewildering rapidity.

In one of the Jewish sections an 18 year old boy was hurled from a three-story window to land with both legs broken on a street littered with burning beds. The main streets of the city were a positive litter of shattered plate glass. All of the synagogues were irreparably gutted by flames. One of the largest clothing stores was destroyed. No attempts on the part of the fire brigade were made to extinguish the fire. It is extremely difficult to believe, but the owners of the clothing store were actually charged with setting the fire and on that basis were dragged from their beds at 6 a.m. and clapped into prison and many male German Jews have been sent to concentration camps.

11. According to Sources O and P, did ordinary Germans approve of and support persecution of the Jews in Germany?

SOURCE Q Excerpt from Gisella Perl, *I Was a Doctor at Auschwitz* (1984). The author was employed as a physician at Auschwitz. After the war she published a book on her experiences.

...The doctors of the hospital were sent for. The sight which greeted us "when we entered Block VII is one never to be forgotten. From the cages along the walls about six hundred panic-stricken, trembling young women were looking at us with silent pleading in their eyes. The other hundred were lying on the ground, pale, faint, bleeding. Their pulse was almost inaudible, their breathing strained and deep rivers of blood were flowing around their bodies. Big, strong SS men were going from one to the other sticking tremendous needles into their veins and robbing their undernourished, emaciated bodies of their last drop of blood. The German army needed blood plasma! The guinea pigs of Auschwitz were just the people to furnish that plasma. Rassenschande or contamination with "inferior Jewish blood" was forgotten. We were too "inferior" to live, but not too inferior to keep the German army alive with our blood. Besides, nobody would know. The blood donors, along with the other prisoners of Auschwitz would never

live to tell their tale. By the end of the war fat wheat would grow out of their ashes and the soap made of their bodies would be used to wash the laundry of the returning German heroes...

SOURCE R Excerpt from Italian writer, Primo Levi, who was a survivor of Auschwitz (1956).

Perhaps one cannot, what is more, must not, understand what happened, because to understand is almost to justify... No normal human being will ever be able to identify with Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, Eichmann and endless others... We cannot understand [Nazi hatred] but we can and must understand from where it springs and we must be on our guard... Everybody must know or remember that when Hitler or Mussolini spoke in public, there were believed, applauded, admired, followed, and adored like Gods... We must remember that the faithful followers... were not born torturers, were not (with a few exceptions) monsters; there were ordinary men.

12. What do the testimonies of the survivors of the Holocaust in Source Q and R tell us about their victimizers' motivations?

SOURCE S Photo: A German mass rally in 1935 featuring anti-Semitic speeches and slogans stating: "The Jews are our misfortune" and "Women and girls, the Jews are your ruin."



SOURCE T Statistics of Jewish deaths in each European country.



NAME: _____ BLOCK: _____

DATE: _____

DATA COLLECTION CHART: *To be completed before the discussion/debate.*

D.I.S.C. QUESTION: Did the masses of “ordinary Germans” approve of the mass murder of Jews and act as willing participators in the Holocaust?

- Yes
- No

SOURCE / AUTHOR	EVIDENCE & INTERPRETATION Collect and list points from the sources that may help formulate a position on this question. Use quotes, paraphrases and explanations or descriptions of the sources to strengthen your argument and to refer to during our class debate and discussion.

ADD ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

ASSESSMENT & PARTICIPATION**PREPARATION & CONCLUSION: (teacher assessment)**

- Tasks are completed in full before the class discussion.
- Answers to document questions are accurate.
- Shows evidence of a variety of sources being used to determine a position.
- Shows evidence of careful reading and analysis of sources.
- Shows evidence of careful selection and detail in evidence collection.
- Shows evidence of critical thinking about the issue or problem.
- Conclusions are well-reasoned.

20-18 = outstanding ▪ 17-15 = achieved expectations
14-11 = minimum achievement ▪ 10-0 = not achieved/incomplete

___ /20

PARTICIPATION: (self assessment)

- Shows evidence of active, respectful listening. Is engaged in the discussion.
- Makes his/her position clear by sharing 1-2 comments during the discussion.
- Uses examples and evidence to support comments. Avoids vague or hypothetical comments.
- Shares well-reasoned points. Makes specific counter-points to other students' ideas.

10-9 = outstanding ▪ 8.5-7.5 = achieved expectations
7-6 = minimum achievement ▪ 5-0 = not achieved/incomplete

___ /10