

## Challenging Holocaust Misconceptions

**Ashkenazi** – refers to the Jewish tradition of Eastern Europe .

**Antisemitism**—hatred of Jews based upon a false belief that they are a different race to Aryan's.

**Aryan**—a term used to describe people of Indo-European heritage.

**Orthodox** – traditional stream of Judaism that believes the Torah was derived from God. Men and women sit separately in the synagogue; services are entirely in Hebrew; only men can become rabbis.

**Reform** – modern movement of Judaism originating in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany. Men and women sit together in the synagogue; services are often a mixture of the local language and Hebrew; both men and women can become rabbis.

**Sephardic** – refers to the Jewish tradition of those who came originally from Spain and Portugal.

**Shtetl** – a Yiddish word for small town, usually applied to towns in Poland with a large Jewish population.

**Shul** – Yiddish word for synagogue, from the German word for school.

**Yiddish** – language spoken by many orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe, a combination of medieval German and Hebrew, written in Hebrew script.

As you work through the unit, you need to ensure you fully understand each of the following:

- *Who were the Jewish people of Europe before WWII?*
- *Why Jews? What is antisemitism?*
- *What was the Holocaust?*
- *Who were the other victims of Nazi persecution?*
- *Why didn't the Jews fight back? —why it is important to tell the story of resistance.*
- *Being human—who were the perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders and resisters?*
- *What does it mean to survive the Holocaust?*

Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe's Jews. This systematic and planned attempt to murder European Jewry is known as the Holocaust (The *Shoah* in Hebrew).

From the time they assumed power in 1933, the Nazis used propaganda, persecution, and legislation to deny human and civil rights to Jews. They used centuries of antisemitism as their foundation. By the end of the Holocaust, six million Jewish men, women and children had perished in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration camps and extermination camps.

*Holocaust Memorial Day Trust*

### Key questions

When did the Holocaust happen? **It started in 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union and ended in 1945.**

What percentage of the German population were Jewish in 1933? **Less than 1%**

What were Nazi ghettos? **Parts of towns and cities where Jews were forced to live**

How many Jews in Europe were killed? **Approximately 6 million**

Which country did most murdered Jews come from? **Poland**

In which country did most killings take place? **Poland**

What percentage of Jewish children were murdered? **About 90%**

What happened when the British government found out about the Holocaust? **They decided they would punish the killers after the war had ended.**

Who were the Einsatzgruppen? **Specialist killing units made up of police and SS troops who murdered Jews, Roma & Sinti (travellers) and political opponents.**

What happened to soldiers who refused an instruction to kill? **They were excused and given another duty**