**Assignment Brief**

*The Holocaust*

The Holocaust is suited to asking - as the author Primo Levi did *If This be a Man* - what allows humans to descend into barbarism? The Holocaust is at the centre of twentieth century history. It distinguishes itself from even the brutalities of Stalin’s Russia and the Gulags in that the Third Reich opted to organise and implement the murder of Jewish people throughout occupied Europe for no other reason that their race. As a subject of history, it allows us to investigate what went so horrifically wrong in a country of high culture, high modernity and supposedly ‘civilised’ European way of life.

Why did so very few of the Jews’ fellow citizens stand up for their rights? How could an ultra-racist murderous minority in the Nazi leadership bring about a policy of mass murder couched in bureaucratic language and a pseudo-scientific ideology? All these themes, and the role of the Führer, Adolf Hitler, are treaded in all their essential details in texts written for A-level and beyond. There are also warnings from Europe’s recent history in the study of the Holocaust. For example, how should we treat minorities in our own communities today? And how should we understand those with different view and cultures from our own? If to teach is to learn, as one wise saying goes, then to learn is to question. And no subject is so crucial in understanding our recent past as the Holocaust.

Understanding the value of studying the Holocaust would represent a very timely choice of topic for an extended project.

**Contacts**

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