

FINAL ACCOUNT

EDUCATOR GUIDE



Educator Guide

In 2008, British filmmaker Luke Holland began interviewing Germans and Austrians who were witnesses from the Third Reich perpetrators' side. More than ten years later, he created the documentary "*Final Account*," composed of a selection from the more than 250 interviews he had conducted. The son of a Jewish refugee from Vienna and a descendant of Jews killed by the Nazis, Holland struggled with the question of how and why ordinary people actively supported a regime that committed genocide. "*Final Account*" was his final film; sadly, Holland passed away in June 2020. "*Final Account*" does not aim to retell the history of the Nazi era, but rather to depict how these people relate to this history and reflect on their own role more than 60 years later. Thus it is a film not about history only but also about dealing with this history today.

This Guide contains materials built around clips from the documentary as well as clips of survivor testimonies and support educators who plan to screen and discuss the documentary in their courses or lessons. The materials target senior high school and university students. Watching and discussing the film requires some prior knowledge about the Nazis, their organizations, and their crimes. (Basic information can be found in the literature that is listed below under *Resources for Exploring the Historical Background*.)

In addition to the teaching materials in this Educator Guide, a short Discussion Guide about *Final Account* is accessible [here](#).



The **Educator Guide** is organized into the following structure:

- I. a short **introduction** to using clips from perpetrator interviews and clips from survivor testimonies
- II. **lessons** built around clips from the documentary
 1. Dealing with Guilt
 2. Who can be Called a Perpetrator?
 3. Countering Nazi Ideology and Nostalgia
- III. immersive **digital activity** on the IWitness platform Education and Nazi Propaganda



In Final Account people recall their youth trying to explain how they were motivated to join the Nazi movement and support its regime. Education and propaganda impacted their development and seriously affected the Jews living under Nazi rule. The activity about the impact of Nazi education and propaganda on Jewish and non-Jewish Germans takes a clip from the documentary as the starting point and uses a number of survivor testimony clips and other sources to unpack the topic.

The learning experiences above together with the [specially curated clips](#) from the documentary and [survivor testimonies](#) link to themes and topics connected to the question of responsibility, complicity, guilt, Nazi ideology, education, and propaganda.

Resources for Exploring the Historical Background

Internet Resources

- [Hitler Youth](#)
- [Indoctrinating Youth](#)
- [Napola: Adolf Hitler Visits the National Political Educational Institute \[Napola\] in Graz \(April 1941\)](#)
- [Waffen-SS](#)
- [SS-Totenkopfverbände \[SS-Death's Head units\]](#)
- [Encyclopedia of camps and ghettos Vol I, Part A, pp. 184 - 187](#)

Books

- **Hitler Youth** by Michael H. Kater
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004
- **Waffen-SS: Hitler's Army at War**
by Adrian Gilbert
New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2019
- **The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS**
by Heinz Höhne
London: Penguin Books, 2000

I. Using clips from survivor testimonies and/or clips from perpetrator interviews

Survivor testimonies and the interviews with former perpetrators featured in *Final Account* were recorded in similar settings, using the same technologies of cameras and microphones. However, viewers should listen to these two different types of interviews very differently. The motivations of survivors giving testimony is inherently different from the motivations of perpetrators recounting their pasts; in turn, our motivations as listeners differ when we hear these two types of interviews as well.

Below is a list of some basic questions about the reasons why educators, learners and researchers listen to survivor testimonies as opposed to why they listen to interviews with former Nazi perpetrators. The questions listed, although the list is non-exhaustive, aim to unpack these motivations from multiple angles.

Why do educators, learners and researchers listen to survivor testimonies?

- to get a vivid impression of historical situations and events as described in their recollections
- to learn about the specific experiences of individuals
- to learn about how individuals remember specific events
- to get a differentiated picture of events and behaviors through various memories
- to be informed about Jewish responses to persecution
- to be aware of the limited scope of action of the persecuted people and the various ways they acted within those constraints
- to learn about the behavior and actions of people surrounding those persecuted, and how these actions were perceived by them
- to be informed about conditions and coincidences, but also personal characteristics and abilities that enabled the interviewee to survive
- to understand the way of thinking, the behavior and decisions of the persecuted, within the context of their life stories and the broader historical events that shaped them
- to become aware of the burden of having experienced humiliation, persecution and extreme atrocities
- to comprehend the way they coped with their experiences and losses

- to learn about their conclusions and advice
- to corroborate or question existing records of certain historical events
- to collect information about historical events that cannot otherwise be reconstructed and documented without the testimony

Why do educators, learners and researchers listen to interviews with former Nazi perpetrators?

- to learn what motivated them to join Nazi organizations
- to be informed about ideological and mental dispositions that drew them to Nazi ideology and politics
- to study the impact of propaganda
- to be aware of conditions and influences that prompted them to participate in the Nazi regime and its crimes
- to examine the decisions they made in situations that offered them alternative options
- to gain insights into the functioning of the Nazi system and the role of individuals in this system
- to assess how much room they had for action, and whether and how they used it
- to analyze how Nazi ideology does or does not impact their talking and thinking decades later, at the time of interview
- to learn how, at the time of interview, they perceive their attitudes, decisions and deeds when they were part of the Nazi system
- to analyze their statements regarding their own role
- to critically analyze any attempts to whitewash Nazi crimes or put them into perspective with apologetic intentions
- to be informed whether and to what extent their Nazi career impacted their lives after the war.

Educators should consider the above questions and be very clear about their goals when using survivor testimonies or perpetrator interviews or both. They also must make these goals transparent for the learners.

II. Lessons built around clips from the documentary

1. Dealing with Guilt

- Age Group: 9th grade - University

In this lesson, students will watch a clip from the documentary film *Final Account*. They will hear from Karl-Heinz Lipok, who joined the SS-Totenkopfverbände (Death's Head Unit) at the age of 16, and then served as a guard at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Oranienburg, Germany. Lipok recalls specific experiences in the camp and reflects about complicity, perpetration and guilt. Students will analyze the clip, and assess whether Lipok honestly confronted his past, or not.



2. Who can be Called a Perpetrator?

- Age Group: University

In this lesson, students will watch and analyze a clip from the documentary film *Final Account*. They will analyze statements from former Nazi supporters, focusing on the terms and phrases they use. Additionally, they will study and discuss the attempt of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers to distinguish between different concepts of guilt and will relate the statements of the interviewees to his scheme of distinction. They will discuss the relevance of confronting guilt when societies must come to terms with mass atrocities in their past.



3. Countering Nazi Ideology and Nostalgia

- Age Group: University

In this lesson, students will interpret a clip from the documentary film *Final Account*. In the clip, a former member of the Waffen-SS, Hans Werk, takes part in a discussion with students at the House of the Wannsee Conference. Hans, who was very disappointed by the German defeat in World War II, changed his views in the early 1950s, and is now deeply ashamed of his former enthusiasm for National Socialism and his SS-membership. In the discussion, he is confronted by a boy who openly expresses Neo-Nazi views. Students will analyze and assess argumentation strategies of the antagonists and will create guidelines detailing how to counter Nazi ideology.



III. IWitness Activity

Education and Nazi Propaganda

- **Age Group: 12th grade - University**

In this activity, students will learn about the impact that Nazi education and propaganda had on Jewish and non-Jewish Germans.

They will work with images, documents, survivor testimonies and a clip from the documentary, Final Account. Students will gain insights on how the Nazis used youth organizations to serve their political goals. They will also learn how the Jews were targeted by hateful propaganda and suffered from defamation and discrimination. Finally, they will use what they have learned to develop and discuss ideas regarding the impact of contemporary propaganda against minorities; they will develop ideas how it can be neutralized through understanding its mechanisms and intentions and through defending the rights of groups that are victims of defamation.

