

GUIDELINE FOR THE FACILITATOR

Facing the Glass Booth - The Eichmann Trial



RATIONAL

Adolf Eichmann's trial began on April 11, 1961, in Jerusalem. The prosecutor was Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General. The indictment included 15 counts, among them: crimes against the Jewish people and crimes against humanity. To all the charges, Eichmann replied: 'In the spirit of the indictment - not guilty'. In his opening statement, Hausner said: "To this day, and certainly in the days to come, people will ask themselves: 'But how could this happen?'"

The trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the main perpetrators during the Holocaust, raises questions and dilemmas on topics regarding morality, obedience, responsibility, evil and the danger of authority. Who was Adolf Eichmann: A small clerk? An ideologist? A representation of the 'Banality of Evil'? [1] What is the relevance of that trial to our lives today?

GOALS

- Educating young individuals on the Eichmann trial that took place in Jerusalem in 1961.
- Analyzing the Eichmann trial from the perspective of those who were present in the courtroom, as well as delving in to his own line of defense.
- Examining the prosecutors' question, which is still relevant today: 'But how could this happen? How was this possible at the dawn of the 20th century?'



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Background

SS Lieutenant-Colonel who was Chief of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo during World War II and implemented the "Final Solution", which aimed at the total extermination of European Jewry. In 1934, he joined the Nazi Security Service (SD), later on he became the official responsible for the "Jewish question" at the Berlin head office. After the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, he became the head of the "Office for Jewish [Forced] Emigration" in Vienna. The Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942, consolidated Eichmann's position as the "Jewish specialist" of the S.S and Reinhard Heydrich entrusted him with implementing the "Final Solution." Under Eichmann's supervision, large-scale deportations began almost immediately to extermination camps. Towards the end of the war, Eichmann played a leading role in the deportation of the Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz Birkenau.

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Part 1

Exploring the "Facing the Glass Booth" Exhibition: Reflecting on the Adolf Eichmann Trial

Join us in this workshop as we delve into the Adolf Eichmann trial, which took place in Jerusalem, Israel in 1961 and is featured in the permanent exhibition at the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum.

What are your initial thoughts on Eichmann and his trial?

During his opening statement, Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General of Israel at the time, posed the following question:

"Days will come and people will ask themselves: But how could this have happened? How was this possible in the middle of the 20th century?"

What are your reflections on this thought-provoking question?



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Exploring the Original Glass Booth from Adolf Eichmann's Trial

In slide 4, we can see the original glass booth where Adolf Eichmann sat during his trial, which is now housed in the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel [2].

Take a closer look at the booth and the defendant's chair.

Reflect on who Eichmann was and whether he was an ordinary person like us.

Part 2

As Eichmann's trial was underway, courtroom observers tried to decipher his personality. In the following video presentation (Slide 6), we'll hear from four journalists who covered the trial. Each journalist had a distinct impression of Eichmann, despite all being present in the same courtroom. After watching the video, scan the QR code on the next slide and jot down a quote that resonates with you. Later, we'll discuss these quotes as a group.

During the trial, Eichmann and his defense attorney, Robert Servatius, repeatedly argued that Eichmann was "only following orders."

We'll examine this line of defense and explore some of Eichmann's statements during his interrogations. Finally, select one of Eichmann's statements and share your thoughts on the left side of the screen (Slide 9).



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Part 3

Exploring Adolf Eichmann and the Nature of Evil

Adolf Eichmann is a complex historical figure. Was he a fanatic, a psychopath, or simply an "ordinary man"[3]? In 1964, Leonard Cohen published a poem titled "All There is to Know About Adolph Eichmann," which can be found on Slide 10. This poem raises some questions:

1. What are the implications of this poem, and do you agree with them? Please explain.
2. Under what circumstances do ordinary individuals may become capable of committing acts of mass murder?

2. Following the trial, the Israeli police donated the glass booth to the museum as a token of appreciation for the assistance provided by the museum's archive.

3. Referring to an Expression from the Book "Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland" by Professor Christopher Browning, 1998.

One of the most poignant testimonies during the trial was delivered by Yehiel Dinor [4]. A moment of high drama occurred when he fainted and collapsed towards the end of his testimony.

To gain insight into his perspective, watch a portion of his testimony from the trial (Slide 10). During his testimony, Dinor characterized Auschwitz as another planet, separate from Earth. Why do you think he did so, and could this be problematic? If so, how?

In later years, Dinor expressed regret over his statement, "Auschwitz is another planet," which had gained popularity as a common saying. (Refer to the left side of the screen for his statement.)

If Auschwitz is, in fact, a part of our world and a reflection of human potential, what does that say to us? What warning signs must we heed?



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Summary

Reflecting on the Eichmann Trial: A warning sign from the Past

Our main objective in this workshop was to examine the Eichmann trial and its significance as a cautionary tale from history. We believe that human nature is not fixed and that individuals are capable of both profound goodness and unfathomable evil. The Holocaust serves as a clear reminder that ordinary people, like us, have the capacity to perpetrate horrific acts.

Our aim is to deepen the understanding of the human potential for racism, evil and mass murder, and to facilitate that knowledge as a warning for the future. From the lowest point in human history, we want to inspire the participants to embrace values of humanism, empathy and social involvement.



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4. Yehiel Dinor, a Holocaust survivor, gained fame as a writer for his literature that centered around his experiences during the Holocaust.