

**WORLD WAR II (1939-  
1945): DRANCY  
CONCENTRATION  
CAMP**



# **WORLD WAR II (1939-1945): DRANCY CONCENTRATION CAMP**

## **Description**

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the German roundup and deportation of French Jews during the occupation and the role of the Drancy Internment Camp in the deportation process. Students will then take a position as to whether the French themselves must bear some responsibility for their role in the Holocaust.

## **Subjects**

World History  
European History

## **Grade Level**

11-12

## **Duration**

90 minutes

## **Tour Links**

- [Drancy Concentration Camp, Paris](#)
- [Memorial de la Shoah, Paris](#)

## **Essential Questions**

- What was the Drancy Concentration Camp? How was it involved in “solving” the Jewish Question in Occupied France after the Surrender of 1940?
- What role did the Vichy government and French officials have in the roundup of Jews in occupied France?

## Academic Summary

### **Directives for the Prosecution of Offences Committed within the Occupied Territories against the German State or the Occupying Power, 07 Dec 1941**

Within the occupied territories, communistic elements and other circles hostile to Germany have increased their efforts against the German State and the occupying powers since the Russian campaign started. The amount and the danger of these machinations oblige us to take severe measures as a deterrent. First of all the following directives are to be applied:

- I. Within the occupied territories, the adequate punishment for offences committed against the German State or the occupying power which endanger their security or a state of readiness is on principle the death penalty.
- II. The offences listed in paragraph I as a rule are to be dealt with in the occupied countries only if it is probable that sentence of death will be passed upon the offender, at least the principal offender, and if the trial and the execution can be completed in a very short time. Otherwise the offenders, at least the principal offenders, are to be taken to Germany.
- III. Prisoners taken to Germany are subjected to military procedure only if particular military interests require this. In case German or foreign authorities inquire about such prisoners, they are to be told that they were arrested, but that the proceedings do not allow any further information.
- IV. The Commanders in the occupied territories and the Court authorities within the framework of their jurisdiction, are personally responsible for the observance of this decree.
- V. The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces determines in which occupied territories this decree is to be applied. He is authorized to explain and to issue executive orders and supplements. The Reich Minister of Justice will issue executive orders within his own jurisdiction.

### **From a 1991 interview with Ernest Koenig, Drancy Inmate (originally from Czechoslovakia – was studying in Paris when war broke out)**

We were put into rooms which were full of rotten straw. It was rotting. It was wet and rotting, and there we were waiting, and, of course, uh, being very much concerned and preoccupied what's going to happen. It was a morbid situation already, you know, under the rotten straw and with children and, uh, old people and the complete, uh, the complete helplessness and the complete lack of, uh, of...we didn't know what's going to happen, to happen to us, but we knew, of course, we are now in the clutches of the German, and at night we heard sometimes shooting from other parts of the camp. We didn't know what it means. I remember I, I went to one of the barbed wires and saw, and tried to see whether I can get...can get out but it was out of question, and then after three or four days there, uh, we were ordered to go down...down...we, we, we were, we were upstairs, I remember. We had to go downstairs, you know, to the, to the platform and on the platform there was already the SS and with, with their customary politeness, shouting and beating and, and, uh, sending us into the...into the railroad cars.

### **From a 1989 interview with Leo Bretholz, Drancy Inmate (originally from Austria – arrested in Belgium in 1940)**

We arrived in Drancy and were checked in. The checking-in process in Drancy was...well, a first step in a, in a real dehumanization process.

Number one, when we arrived there, the faces that we saw, the...the eyes with queries in them, and a lot of questions, "Where are you coming from? How is it outside? What did you...what do you think?" and "What news do you have?" Everybody gathering about a new group of arrivals because they may, they may have something to convey and we went through a barrack process of checking in which would also mean taking your watch away, your rings, certain belongings, money. And another psychological ploy, giving you a receipt for the things that they took from you, with the admonition, "Don't lose that, because you will never get them back. That is your receipt that has a number on it." It had a number on it. Just imagine that.

Drancy was a complex that was built to be a military barracks facility. It was a multi-story complex almost like a stadium because it was round. But due to the war...beginning of the war...that building, that structure, was never finished. So the places...the rooms that they put us in were wide open...concrete floor with piping laying around and in...half-installed electrical wires, half installed plumbing, makeshift, and it was concrete. Windows...no, no windows...There were, there were no panes in the windows. It was just the opening where the windows were supposed to go in the frames later. That wasn't done so it was all open, breezy. And on this concrete, straw. Men, women, children together. Minimal facilities to wash, community...um, one trough-like...where you...where the water ran down from in trickle. Minimum toilet facilities. Watchtowers. Barbed wire. A suburb of Paris, close to, quote, "civilization." Um, minimal food distribution. That's where we were issued the Jewish star.

Jews had lived in France as far back as the 1st century CE, when it was the Roman province of Gaul, but their relationship with Christians was often rocky. France also had a long history of anti-Semitism. As Christianity became entrenched in the Frankish lands during the early medieval period, kings began to pass anti-Jewish laws. Nonetheless, over time a thriving Franco-Jewish community took hold, sometimes in spite of intense persecution (especially during the Crusader Ages and the Inquisition). Three different instances, Jews were officially expelled from French territory, only to be invited to return each time after a few years in exile. By the 19th century, however, a spirit of tolerance, born in the days of the French Revolution, began to prevail in France. Radical Jacobins during the revolution had recognized Judaism as "just another religion". Napoleon's rule had brought a sense of secularism France, and by the middle of the 19th century, Jews were granted French citizenship. In 1905 the increasingly secular French Republic had put an end to state supported Christianity. Life for Jews in France wasn't perfect. Anti-Semitism across the republic still led many French Jews to wonder about their status, but in the days before the Second World War, France looked like the place to be for many European Jews, especially those living in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1936, France even elected a Jewish Prime Minister. That all ended when the Germans came in 1940. Historians estimate that the number of Jews living in France when the Germans occupied the country in 1940 was approximately 350,000. About 200,000 of the Jews lived in Paris and its suburbs, including most of the foreign-born Jews (many of them weren't French citizens). As part of the surrender in 1940, Paris and all of Northern France came under direct German control. The new authorities in Paris were given clear directives from Berlin: control the French population, quell any resistance and enforce German laws. Included in this mandate was an order for dealing with the "Jewish Question" in France. Laws were quickly passed, each of which was progressively harsher in its treatment of Jewish citizens. Nazi officials confiscated the Drancy housing complex in northeastern Paris and turned

it into an internment center, first for prisoners and undesirables and later for Jews. On 20 Aug 1941, French police conducted raids in heavily Jewish neighborhoods in Paris, rounding up over 4000 and bringing them to Drancy. French police then enclosed the courtyard with barbed wire and the deportations east began soon after. Drancy was under the control of French police until 01 July 1943, when control passed directly to German authorities. Before the camp was liberated by Allied forces in August 1944, almost 68,000 Jews passed through Drancy (out of approximately 76,000 Jews deported from France). Most of the deportees from Drancy were shipped via cattle cars to Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland for “special treatment” (execution in the gas chamber), including men, women and children. The last transport left Drancy headed east to Buchenwald (in central Germany) less than a week before Paris was liberated. When the war ended, only 2500 were still alive.

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the German roundup and deportation of French Jews during the occupation and the role of the Drancy Internment Camp in the deportation process. Students will then take a position as to whether the French themselves must bear some responsibility for their role in the Holocaust.

## **Objectives**

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the German roundup and deportation of French Jews during the occupation.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the role of the Drancy Internment Camp in the deportation of French Jews during the German occupation.
3. Students will take a position as to whether they believe the French people must bear at least some responsibility for the deportation and extermination of Jews during the German occupation.

# Procedures

## I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Do average citizens bear any responsibility for the Holocaust? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

## II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Drancy Transit Camp and the French Holocaust (20 min)
- Videos – Drancy and the French Holocaust (20 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the sources and articles about the Holocaust in France and the Drancy Internment Camp, taking notes as necessary. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles at home to prepare for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Suggestion: AP/Advanced students should concentrate on primary sources.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: Holocaust in France and the Drancy Internment Camp (20 min)

## III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail the German roundup and deportation of French Jews during the occupation and the role of the Drancy Internment Camp in the deportation process.
- Secondary Assessment: In a persuasion essay, students will then take a position as to whether the French themselves must bear some responsibility for their role in the Holocaust.

# Extension

## **On tour: Drancy Concentration Camp, Paris**

While on tour, students in Paris can visit the site of the Drancy Concentration Camp, where they can see for themselves where the vast majority of French Jews passed through on their way to the extermination and concentration camps in Central and Eastern Europe. For decades, the French government refused to admit any responsibility for its role in the Holocaust, but in 1995 then President Jacques Chirac admitted that the French police had participated in the roundups. Today at Drancy there is a memorial to all French Jews deported during the Holocaust.

## **On tour: Shoah Memorial and Museum, Paris**

While on tour, students in Paris can visit the Shoah (Holocaust) Memorial and Museum, where they can see for themselves one of the most comprehensive exhibits on the Holocaust in Europe. The museum, which opened in 2005, contains a wall of over 76000 names (including 11000 children) who were deported from France during the German occupation. The memorial is on Rue Geoffroy-l'Asnier in the 4th arrondissement, and is open every day except Saturday and Jewish holidays. Admission to the museum is free of charge. A fee may be charged for specific educational activities. Free guided tours (in French) start at 3pm every Sunday. Guided tours in English are on the second Sunday of each month. Group guided tours are available as well. School groups are encouraged to make reservations for guided tours. Please see the website in the links section below.

# Web Links

## Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/parisround.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/parisround.html)  
A Description of the Paris Round-up of and of Life in the Drancy Camp (primary sources)
- <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/document/NIGHTFOG.htm>  
Night and Fog Decree: Directives for the prosecution of offences committed within the occupied territories against the German State or the occupying power, 07 Dec 1941 (primary source)
- [www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media\\_oi.php?ModuleId=10005429&MediaId=1123](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?ModuleId=10005429&MediaId=1123)  
Oral Histories: Drancy (primary sources) – oral / video primary sources from the US Holocaust Museum, including transcripts. Highly recommended for AP/Advanced students.
- [www.northeastern.edu/drancy/index.php](http://www.northeastern.edu/drancy/index.php)  
Children of Drancy (website) – website for a play on the Holocaust developed by the Theatre Department at Northeastern University. This site contains a wealth of information on Drancy and the play. A great place to start for all teachers and students.
- [www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/courses/life\\_ghettos/pdfs/reading5.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/courses/life_ghettos/pdfs/reading5.pdf)  
The Jews of France and the Statutes on Jews, 1940-1941 (academic article) – this article, by Renee Poznanski, the Yaakov and Poria Avnon Professor of Holocaust Studies in the Department of Politics and Government at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Israel), is long (about 30 pages), and is thus intended for serious AP/Advanced students and/or teachers who want to know more about the Holocaust in France.
- [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Drancy.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Drancy.html)  
Nazi Transit Camps: Drancy (website) – from the Jewish Virtual Library
- [www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005215](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005215)  
Drancy (website) – from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- <http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/resource/gallery/DRAN.htm>  
The Camp at Drancy (website) – from the Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust at the Univ. of South Florida
- <http://www.gvpt.umd.edu/lpbr/subpages/reviews/weisbergg.htm>  
Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France (academic paper) – 1996 article from Richard H. Weisberg, former profess of constitutional law from Yeshiva University (NY)
- [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/drancy\\_transit\\_camp.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/drancy_transit_camp.htm)  
Drancy Transit Camp (website) – from the History Learning Site (UK). This site contains basic and concise information on the camp, and is a great resource for all students.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/jewish\\_deportation\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/jewish_deportation_01.shtml)  
The Vichy Policy on Jewish Deportation (website) – from the BBC
- [www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/en/](http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/en/)  
Shoah Memorial (website) – Official website for the Shoah Memorial in Paris that contains a wealth of information for anyone researching or teaching the holocaust.
- [www.beverlygrammar.co.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Drancy.ppt](http://www.beverlygrammar.co.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Drancy.ppt)  
Drancy Transit Camp (PowerPoint)
- [www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in

Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqZ5Sm3vKtw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqZ5Sm3vKtw)  
Drancy to Auschwitz (video) – 2 minute excerpt from an interview with Holocaust survivor Pierre Berg
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3UM6uFWYxE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3UM6uFWYxE)  
Jews in France under the German Occupation (video) – this 6 minute video from Yad Vashem, the worldwide living memorial to the Holocaust based in Jerusalem, contains excerpts from French Holocaust survivors
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=etUPgnblBnA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etUPgnblBnA)  
Concentration camps in France (video) -- this 6 minute video from Yad Vashem, the worldwide living memorial to the Holocaust based in Jerusalem, contains excerpts from French Holocaust survivors

## Background Information

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drancy\\_internment\\_camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drancy_internment_camp)  
Drancy Internment Camp – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vel'\\_d'Hiv\\_Roundup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vel'_d'Hiv_Roundup)  
Vel d’Hiv Roundup – Wikipedia article on the raid and mass arrest of Parisian Jews on 16 and 17 July 1942.
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust\\_in\\_France#French\\_Jews\\_and\\_the\\_Holocaust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_in_France#French_Jews_and_the_Holocaust)  
Holocaust in France – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutes\\_on\\_Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statutes_on_Jews)  
Statutes on Jews – Wikipedia article on the discriminatory laws passed by the Vichy government in 1940-41
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/france/country\\_profile](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/france/country_profile)  
On the Road: France – from Passports Educational Travel

## Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/france/world-war-ii-fall-of-france-1940](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-fall-of-france-1940)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Fall of France 1940
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/france/world-war-ii-drancy-concentration-camp](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-drancy-concentration-camp)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Occupied France: Drancy Concentration Camp
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/germany/dachau-concentration-camp](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/dachau-concentration-camp)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Dachau Concentration Camp
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/poland/auschwitz](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/poland/auschwitz)  
Auschwitz
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/poland/oskar-schindler-and-the-list](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/poland/oskar-schindler-and-the-list)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Oskar Schindler: the List
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/thenetherlands/anne-frank-diary](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/thenetherlands/anne-frank-diary)  
Anne Frank: Lost Child of the Holocaust

## Key Terms

- Drancy Transit Camp
- Fall of France (1940)
- Holocaust
- Occupied France 1940-44
- Vichy France





