

## Essential Questions for SB664\*

**School districts must provide instruction about the Holocaust and genocide.**

**(a) Prepare students to confront the immorality of the Holocaust, genocide and other acts of mass violence and to reflect on the causes of related historical events;**

1. Why and how do we study hard histories? What do we do with the histories we inherit? How does learning about history educate us about our responsibilities today?
2. What were the historical conditions and key markers in the process of the Holocaust, genocide and other acts of mass violence?
  - a. Why do societies/governments commit genocide?
  - b. How can economic hardship/competition for resources contribute to the process of genocide?
  - c. What role does religion play in the process of genocide?
3. How do ideas of morality change or shift over time, place, culture, religion, etc.?
  - a. What happens when an individual's morals contradict society's or vice versa?
  - b. How does the society (culture) that we live in shape our morality?

**(b) Develop students' respect for cultural diversity and help students gain insight into the importance of the protection of international human rights for all people;**

1. What are universal human rights?
  - a. What rights should every individual be entitled to? How do people value/respect the rights of others?
2. How do modern governments promote cultural diversity? How have governments/institutions reduced tensions in multicultural societies?
  - a. What must individuals do and value in order to bring about respect for cultural diversity?
3. What responsibility do people and governments have for protecting the rights of their citizens compared to people in other nation-states?
  - a. Under what conditions will/have governments intervene(d) to stop a genocide in another nation-state? Responsibility to Protect (R2P)?
  - b. What causes governments to ignore human rights and human rights violations?

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\* This document is intended to assist 6-12 teachers in addressing the requirements of SB 664 "The Teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides." The Core Concepts are directly from the Oregon Revised Statute ([329](#)). The essential questions were created by the educators at the Oregon Jewish Museum and the Oregon Department of Education for potential use in the classroom. The 2026 Social Science standards will include new standards in support of Holocaust and genocide education.

**(c) Promote students' understanding of how the Holocaust contributed to the need for the term "genocide" and led to international legislation that recognized genocide as a crime;**

1. What are the origins of the term "genocide?" How did the Holocaust contribute to the development of the Genocide Convention?
  - a. How can defining new words help us understand difficult problems in the world? What is the role of language in helping us understand difficult problems in the world?
  - b. How do words with agreed upon definitions inform our responses to genocides, mass murders, and mass violence events?
2. Examine the process of how the United Nations (UN) agreed upon the legal definition. What was problematic about the process? What actions are obligated by the UN during times of genocide?
  - a. What are the benefits and limitations of having a legal definition of genocide? How could the definition be strengthened? How would you rewrite the definition?
  - b. Why have many governments maintained reservations to the UN Genocide Convention?
3. When has the term genocide been discussed since the adoption of the Convention?
  - a. What is the distinction between physical and cultural genocide?
  - b. Is colonialism inherently genocidal?

**(d) Stimulate students' reflection on the roles and responsibilities of citizens in democratic societies to combat misinformation, indifference, and discrimination through tools of resistance such as protest, reform and celebration;**

1. What can citizens and residents who are non-citizens in a democracy do to combat misinformation, indifference, and discrimination at home or abroad?
  - a. How do people develop and use critical thinking skills to identify misinformation, indifference, and discrimination?
  - b. How do opportunities to combat misinformation, indifference, and discrimination differ for people based on age, gender, skin tone, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, resources available, freedom, immigration status, etc.?
2. How do fears, both real and imagined, shape the way we as individuals and citizens define our nation's obligation to human rights?
  - a. Why do minorities need protections in democratic societies?
3. To what extent is it the responsibility of an individual to challenge the rules and norms of society if one perceives injustice?
  - a. What are different tools people can use to challenge injustice? When, why, and how can each tool be effective?

**(e) Provide students with opportunities to contextualize and analyze patterns of human behavior by individuals and groups who belong in one or more categories, including perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, victim, and rescuer;**

1. In what ways do people create “in” and “out” groups? What happens to the way a society defines “we” and “they” in the midst of times of uncertainty, chaos, and violence?
  - a. How are hatred and indifference part of the same spectrum in times of mass violence or genocide?
2. What contexts contribute to the ways in which humans behave? Why and how did people participate or become complicit in genocide and acts of mass violence?
  - a. How does ideology influence a person’s behavior and actions?
  - b. What role does power play in one’s options or choices?
  - c. What are choiceless choices?
3. How can the role of perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, and rescuer be fluid? How can a person move from one role to another, or be in multiple roles at the same time?
  - a. How are the impacts of perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders, rescuers different when played by an authority figure or when those behaviors become official government acts?

**(f) Enable students to understand the ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping;**

1. How can the study of genocide and mass violence advance the understanding of the impact of human rights violations on societies today? In particular, what can it tell us about the relationship between stereotypes, prejudices, scapegoating, discrimination, persecution, and genocide?
2. How might a person’s individual experiences impact their understanding of prejudice, racism, stereotyping?
3. How do prejudice, racism, and stereotyping shape and impact communities? How do prejudice, racism, and stereotyping limit a person’s or group’s opportunities?
  - a. How, when or why does stereotyping escalate to prejudice? How, when or why does prejudice escalate into racism? How, when or why does racism escalate into violence?
  - b. What are effective methods or tools to confront prejudice, racism, and stereotyping?

**(g) Preserve the memories of survivors of genocide and provide opportunities for students to discuss and honor survivors’ cultural legacies;**

1. Why is it important to remember the past? What are the consequences of not remembering?
  - a. Why and how do societies remember and memorialize events and people?
  - b. How do we use memories and memorials to influence or change the course of actions or events in the present and future?

- c. How do cultural influences shape our memory of the past and/or view of the present?
- 2. How do we recognize and value the range of survivor and victim experiences?

**(h) Provide students with a foundation for examining the history of discrimination in this state; and**

1. How did discrimination shape the founding of Oregon? In what ways has discriminatory practices remained the same, changed, or adapted over time?
  - a. In what ways did Oregon's laws create "in" groups and "out" groups? How did this contribute to discriminatory practices?
2. What methods, tools, or actions have been taken and continue to be used to try and resist discriminatory practices and policies?
3. Who has access and opportunity to reform discriminatory practices and policies?

**(i) Explore the various mechanisms of transitional and restorative justice that help humanity move forward in the aftermath of genocide.**

1. What is justice? How is justice applied in the aftermath of genocide and mass violence? How can we know whether or not justice has been achieved?
2. How are different types of justice, such as punitive or restorative, useful in attempting to heal the wounds of mass violence and genocide?
  - a. What role, if any, do vengeance and forgiveness play in seeking justice after mass atrocities?
  - b. What can individuals or nations do to repair, rebuild, and restore their societies after war, genocide, and mass violence? What happens when a country, organization, society, etc. doesn't acknowledge their past wrongdoings?
3. Should other countries have the responsibility to bring justice to those whose own country is unwilling or unable to do so? Should the modern generations have the responsibility to bring justice to those who escape it?