



ROBERT H. JACKSON AT NUREMBERG

Lesson Plan for Grades 6-12

Teacher Resource: Brief Overview of The Nuremberg Trials

Overview:

The Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946) were a series of military tribunals held after World War II to prosecute key leaders of Nazi Germany for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. These trials marked the first time in history that an international court held state leaders accountable under a shared legal framework.

Key Facts:

- Location: Nuremberg, Germany
- Court: International Military Tribunal (IMT), composed of judges from the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and France
- Defendants: 24 top Nazi officials, including Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, and Joachim von Ribbentrop
- Charges:
 - Crimes against peace – planning and waging aggressive war
 - War crimes – violations of the laws and customs of war
 - Crimes against humanity – mass murder, enslavement, deportation, and persecution of civilians
 - Conspiracy to commit those crimes

Significance:

- Established the principle that individuals, including heads of state and military leaders, could be held personally responsible for international crimes.
- Set precedent for later international courts, including the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Promoted the idea that “following orders” is not a sufficient defense for committing atrocities.
- Reinforced the importance of fair trials and due process, even for the most notorious criminals.

Robert H. Jackson’s Role:

As Chief U.S. Prosecutor, Jackson presented the case against Nazi leaders, framing the trial as a historic test of law and morality. His opening statement emphasized the need for justice, fairness, and accountability, leaving a lasting mark on international law.