Who is Responsible? An analysis of the Holocaust

How did the Holocaust happen? How could a well-educated society like Germany perpetrate a Holocaust? How could other countries allow the murder of six million people? Who is most responsible for Hitler coming to power? How much responsibility do other religious groups bear? What about the men who rounded up the Jews from their homes? Who wrote the laws that mandated the formation of the ghettos and how much responsibility do they have for the Holocaust? When was the decision made to exterminate the Jews and when did other countries become aware of the policy? Should the people who voted for the Hitler’s political party be held responsible? To what extent is this tragedy the result of one man? You will be formulating your own answers to these questions in this three part project.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Part 1: Research and Presentation: 40 points  due __________________________________

- You and a group of three other students will be assigned one of nine people or groups who may bear responsibility for the Holocaust. Consider yourself a member of a “think tank” charged with providing analysis and information so that others may use it to formulate and support their own ideas about the level of responsibility your assigned person or group had in carrying out the Holocaust. In addition to using excerpts from Night, you must find historic evidence relating to your group. For example, you could find out what the Catholic Church was doing to protect Jews in a given country. Conversely you might find quotes from an authoritative source that states that the Catholic Church could have done more to protect or save Jews. Each member of your group must contribute at least two compelling pieces of evidence. Remember that your goal is to help them assess responsibility for the Holocaust.

- The next step is to present the information to the class so they can determine the level of responsibility for each of the nine people or groups. You may use Power Point, the Wiki, a Prezi or handouts to complete this step. If you feel that your assigned person or group bears a great deal of responsibility that should be clear. Be passionate and emphatic. If, on the other hand you found evidence that is ambiguous, that should also be made clear to the class. Remember that your goal is to help them assess responsibility for the Holocaust.

Part 2: The Socratic/Debate  20 points due _________________________________________

- You will take part in a Socratic seminar in order to better analyze the responsibility of the nine groups after listening to the research presentations. This will provide you with diverse opinions and reasoning that may influence your assessment of responsibility. As you listen you will be taking notes to help you write part three of this project. Prepare for the Socratic by coming to class with a list of the three people or groups you feel are most responsible for the Holocaust. You should also be prepared to defend or refute the level of responsibility the group you researched bears. You might also consider questions such as these:
  o Why didn’t the townspeople listen to Moshe? Why did the Jews hold onto their illusions for so long?
  o Describe and analyze Wiesel’s changing views on God throughout the book.
  o Was Madame Schachter crazy or was she able to predict what was going to happen to the Jews?
  o What was the overall mood of the story? What caused you to feel this way (choose some specific evidence to support yourself).
  o Is Night the best title for the book? Why or why not?

- Following the Socratic the class will create a pie chart which includes the percentage of responsibility for all nine people or groups.
Part 3: Reflection

50 points due __________________________________________

- You will be writing your analysis and reflection as the culminating piece of this project.
  - First you will rank all nine from most to least responsible
  - Next you will write an analysis of the three most responsible from your list using specific evidence from history or Night that you conducted or that you heard or read during the research presentations. Write about 200 words for each of the three.
  - Additionally you must include the effect of the Socratic. Did it change your mind about your top three choices? What did you hear that was unexpected? Did you disagree with someone’s interpretation of the book or evidence?
  - Finally you must comment about someone else’s reflection. Consider making this you final paragraph or using it to support your reasoning; it must however, be in the body of your reflection. Do not add comments to someone’s reflection.