



MEDIA LITERACY: ANALYZING PROPAGANDA THE HOLOCAUST AS A CASE STUDY

TARGET AUDIENCE: GRADES 8-12

ESTIMATED TIME OF LESSON: 150 MINUTES

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is (and is not) propaganda?
- What is the connection between ideology and propaganda?
- What did it look like in media form in Nazi Germany?
- What was the Nazi-controlled media's role in fomenting antisemitism in prewar Europe?
- Why were the Nazis so successful in their propaganda efforts in general?
- What were the antisemitic tropes and stereotypes used in their propaganda? What images were used to "other" Jews? What messages were communicated?
- What was the impact of the anti-Jewish propaganda on Jewish and non-Jewish Germans?
- What is media literacy and what skills are used to critically analyze propaganda?

[CALIFORNIA COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED - CLICK HERE](#)

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define propaganda.
- Identify the connection between ideology and propaganda.
- List forms of media available in Nazi Germany/Nazi-occupied Europe and how the Nazis utilized these forms to foment antisemitism in pre-war Europe.
- Analyze the techniques and power of propaganda to better understand how it contributes to creating extreme marginalization of a group.
- Recognize antisemitic tropes and stereotypes and how they were manifested in Nazi propaganda.
- Reflect on the human impact of propaganda during the Holocaust.
- Evaluate why it is important to be media literate.

MATERIALS

- ["Model Settlement" Shots from *The Fuhrer Gives the Jews a City*](#)
- [Map of Theresienstadt/Terezin's Location](#)
- Appendix A: About Theresienstadt/Terezin

- [Eric Nash Testimony](#)
- Appendix B: About Eric Nash
- [Jewish Communities Before the Nazi Rise to Power](#)
- Margaret Lambert [Biography: Clip #1](#) and [Clip #2](#)
- H. Henry Sinason [Biography: Clip #1](#) and [Clip #2](#)
- [Definition of Antisemitism Handout](#)
- [Summary of Antisemitism Handout](#)
- [How are Ideology & Propaganda Related? Handout](#)
- [Nazi Propaganda Examples](#)
- [Nazi Propaganda Examples Graphic Organizer](#)
- Esther Clifford [Biography](#) & [Clip](#)

PROCEDURES

1

PART I (30 MINUTES)

Ask students if they can define the term, “media literacy.”

2

Students learn that media literacy is one of the foremost issues of our day. The National Association for Media Literacy Education defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication.” Media literacy skills help students to make sense of the pieces of information they receive throughout their day - on social media, advertisements, television and films. Throughout history, dictatorial regimes have manipulated the media to advance their agendas - the Nazis were no exception.

3

Students engage in an in-class or virtual gallery walk of images from the film, [The Fuhrer Gives the Jews a City](#). (Note: It is helpful to virtually view a platform such as Google Slides or if printed out, to remove the bottom text so students are not initially aware of the source of these images). After students review the images, ask them what stands out to them? How do the people in these images appear? What are your thoughts on the situation as it is presented?

4

Following this discussion, students learn that these are stills from a film created in Theresienstadt in June 1944. Further background can be shared about Theresienstadt from Appendix A.

5

Next, share with students that while this is a Nazi’s representation of the conditions of this “model settlement,” consider the perspective from one Jewish “inhabitant.” Introduce [Eric Nash](#) via his biography in Appendix B and play his testimony.

- Ask, how does Eric challenge the look and feel of the film?
- Share that the IRC gave its blessing, and the Nazis continued to operate and transport Jews in Theresienstadt to the killing centers until Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945. Theresienstadt was truly a propagandist’s dream.

6

This example demonstrates the power of propaganda, a critical tool of the Nazis during the Holocaust; the images seen will be revisited later in the training.

PART II (60 MINUTES)

7 Share with students that in order to better understand how the Nazis utilized propaganda, first it is important to understand antisemitism during the Nazi era. Begin by showing the map [Jewish Communities in Europe](#) before the Nazis Rise to Power. Ask students what they notice about the Jewish population in Germany, as well as the percentages of the total population that Jews represented in other countries.

8 Share that the Jewish community was not concentrated in one country but were all over Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean. Like any community in a country, the Jewish community was diverse, not only in terms of their country but also within the Jewish diaspora.

9 Explain that they will hear what life was like for one Jewish Germans prior to Hitler's rise to power. Introduce H. [Henry Sinason](#) (bio) [Clip #1](#) and/or [Margaret Lambert](#) (bio) [Clip #1](#). Upon playing testimonies, ask students to respond in a single word. Use this to hone in on words such as normal, everyday, human, German etc. Share that generally speaking, Jewish Germans were part of the German fabric of life, in citizenship, language, family connections and ancestry, culture, and values, i.e., "German first, Jewish second," said H. Henry. However, it cannot be denied that antisemitism continued to be a part of the Western Europe cultural ethos. It persisted, just not so openly and unapologetically.

10 Next, share testimonies of Henry [Clip #2](#) and/or Margaret [Clip #2](#) following Hitler's rise to power. Ask students what changes they notice both in the tone and content of their narratives? How do these testimonies show how antisemitism impacted Jewish and non-Jewish individuals?

11 Introduce the handout [Antisemitism](#), and read the first sentence aloud. Ask students why they think the definition includes the term "concept" and how [the map](#) can help explain this. After a few comments, explain or re-emphasize the following:

- Some may not have met someone who was Jewish, so they may have relied on what they heard, more often based on stereotypical ideas at best and malicious lies at worst. It is easier to hate a concept – especially one that is negative – a figment of one's imagination rather than a genuine interaction with someone who is Jewish.
- Referring [to the map](#) and focusing on Germany, given that (i) less than 1% of the German population was Jewish and that (ii) about 70% of the Jewish population were in urban areas, the likelihood that a non-Jewish German would engage with a Jewish German is small, especially outside urban areas.
- Given that antisemitism was (and still is) a part of the European ethos, hatred of Jews as a concept played a significant role in Germany, which Hitler and the Nazi Party was able to harness (negative stereotypes and myths) and contributed to the rise to Nazi Germany. In other words, unlike what some may believe, antisemitism was not the invention of the Nazis, but had its origins centuries before.

- 12** Introduce the handout [Summary of Antisemitism](#) and explain that it provides a brief overview of the history of antisemitism. Introduce the handout [Nazi Ideology](#) and explain that this includes excerpts of several of Hitler's books and speeches that reflect his ideology. (Note: If you wish to delve further into the connection between ideology and propaganda, you can utilize the handout: [How are ideology and propaganda related?](#))
- 13** Divide students into four groups and assign each group to one of the four sections: Early Christianity, Middle Ages, 19th Century, and Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Instruct them to do the following:
- Write on top the chart paper their assigned period of time, e.g., Early Christianity, and below that, write the key stereotypical tropes that emerged in those periods on chart paper, from *Summary of Antisemitism*.
 - Read through the handout [Nazi Ideology](#) and underline or highlight his words, phrases or sentences that reflect the antisemitic ideas explained in their assigned section of the *Summary of Antisemitism*.
- 14** Reconvene the groups and ask the groups assigned to the Early Christianity, Middle Ages, and 19th Century texts, to present (a) the antisemitic ideas in their section, and (b) where it shows up in Hitler's writings and speeches.
- 15** Ask the group assigned to the Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party text, "What does he and the Nazi Party introduce that is new to antisemitism, and how does he talk about it in the handout [Nazi Ideology](#)?"
- 16** Lead a larger discussion using the question, "What is your take-away from examining Nazi ideology using a historical antisemitism lens?"

PART III (60 MINUTES)

- 17** Provide students with the definition of propaganda: *False or partly false information intended to shape people's opinion and action that fulfills the propagandist's intent.*
- Break it down into its three parts:
 - "False or partly false information": Propaganda include half-truths or lies, aiming to deceive.
 - "Shape people's opinions and actions": Part of the goal is to influence what and how people think about issues (belief), and therefore take action based on their opinions and attitudes.
 - "Fulfills propagandist's intent": The ultimate goal is not information sharing for mutual understanding, but a specific way of believing and acting to achieve the propagandists' intent, regardless of the audience's needs. This is about acceptance of the ideology itself, and bypassing critical thinking.
- 18** Share with students that propaganda ultimately uses four techniques. It:
- Activates strong emotion
 - Appeals to audience needs and values
 - Simplifies information and ideas
 - Attacks opponents

19 Tell students that they will be studying propaganda that was used by the Nazis during the 1930s. From the 1920s onward, the Nazi Party targeted German Youth as an attractive audience to target, as they cultivated them into Nazi supporters to build the future Germany and strengthen the Aryan race. By the time they become young adults, their allegiance was to the Nazi Party and its ideology, and therefore they were more willing to dehumanize and murder Jews. In addition to compulsory membership to the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, children were also inculcated through formal schooling, games, toys, and antisemitic children's books. Today, students will focus on *The Poisonous Mushroom* (*Der Giftpilz* in German), written by Ernst Hiemer and published by the virulent antisemite Julius Streicher in 1938.

20 Explain to students that they will examine [The Poisonous Mushroom](#) using the five images in the handout, *Nazi Propaganda Examples*. They will complete their analysis using the [Nazi Propaganda Examples Graphic Organizer](#).

21 Ask students to engage in a Small Group discussion with one or more of the examples. They should discuss:

- What is the image trying to make you feel?
- How is this propaganda?
- What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention?
- What lifestyles, values, and points of views are represented?
- How might different people interpret the message?
- What is omitted from the message?
- What propaganda technique is being used (evoke emotions, simplify ideas, respond to the audience's needs, attack opponents)?
- What is the antisemitic messages, and what is it based on? What is the intended change of attitude or behavior hoped?

22 Students should be brought back together to share a summary from their small group discussion. To close, ask 1-2 students to share which picture they find most disturbing or problematic, and why.

23 As a summative task, students watch the testimony of Esther Clifford ([Biography](#) & [Clip](#).) After introducing Esther, share her testimony and ask students to reflect out loud or via an exit ticket about the impact of propaganda on human beings.

NOTES FOR DIFFERENTIATION

- Videos are short and designed to be played multiple times to assist with student understanding. Captions can be engaged as an additional strategy.
- The lesson includes audio-visual testimony, images and text. Instead of exploring each piece as a whole class, students can also be split into groups with assets assigned to align with students' preferred learning style. Students can share out to class or jigsaw content to further whole class understanding.

- Additional assets can be gleaned from [Echoes & Reflections Unit II: Antisemitism](#) to provide additional options for differentiation.

GLOSSARY Echoes & Reflections has an extensive glossary available [at this link](#).

ASSESSMENTS

Formative Assessments

- Class Discussions
- Summary of Antisemitism Chart Activity
- Small Group Discussion/Jigsaw of Propaganda

REFERENCES

- Echoes & Reflections. (2024, April 26). *Unit XII Teaching About Genocide* <https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-12/?state=open#content>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2024, May 31). *Theresienstadt* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt>
- Yad Vashem (2024, May 31). *Theresienstadt* <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/ghettos/theresienstadt.html> and/or
- Yad Vashem (2024, May 31). *Video Artists of Terezin: Guidelines for Educators* youtu.be/78BEdjJbgGA (0:00 – 1:54)
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2024, May 31). *Red Cross Visit to Theresienstadt* <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt-red-cross-visit?series=18010>

APPENDIX A: ABOUT TEREZIN & THE IRC VISIT IN JUNE 1944

- Starting in June 1942, Nazis Germany deported Jewish Germans and Austrians to the camp- ghetto Terezin (Czech), also known as Theresienstadt (German). (Show map @ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/map/major-ghettos-in-occupied-europe>). Their targets were older adults (65 and older); World War I veterans who were either severely disabled due to war wounds or awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class and above; and those of prominence, especially artists, musicians, and other cultural figures.
- By this point, the Reich’s justification for deporting the Jewish to the East was for work. Given the incongruity of deporting older adults and wounded veterans to work, the Nazis promoted Terezin/Theresienstadt as a “spa town” where they could retire in safety.
- Additionally, in anticipation of questions and concerns about disappearances of prominent public figures, the Reich assigned Terezin/Theresienstadt as their place of “residence” as well.
- In addition to Jews from Germany and Austria, there were small groups of Jews in German-occupied countries who were also deported to Terezin/Theresienstadt , including those from Denmark.

- In October 1943, Danish leaders insisted that the Danish Red Cross visit the deportees to gather firsthand information on their treatment in Theresienstadt. The Nazis authorized a visit for representatives of the International Red Cross and the Danish Red Cross for June 23, 1944.
- When the Red Cross arrived at Terezin/Theresienstadt in June 1944, they saw a model settlement and an active cultural life, from cafes and banks to soccer games and operatic performances. The images shared are not from the visit, but are screenshots of a film that was produced in the wake of this successful visit.

APPENDIX B

Eric Nash (née Nasch) was born on July 28, 1910, in Holešov, a city in the Austrian-Hungarian empire. His family moved to Vienna, Austria, and Eric went to medical school. He later moved to Czechoslovakia, and after the German occupation, he served as a doctor for Jewish workers in Brno. Eric married and had a son. His family was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, and they were later deported to Auschwitz. Eric's wife and son were murdered, but Eric was transferred to a labor camp. He was liberated on May 2, 1945, at a satellite camp of Dachau. He immigrated to the United States and remarried. At the time of this interview, he had two children and four grandchildren. The interview was conducted on March 26, 1995, in Forest Hills, New York.



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College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
9. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

9. Draw evidence from literary and/or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. Knowledge of Language
3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

College and Career Standards for English Language Arts/History & Social Sciences

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.