



**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS
COLLABORATIVE FOR
HOLOCAUST AND
GENOCIDE EDUCATION**

Room 4: Eugenics, Antisemitic Propaganda

Audience: Grades 6 - 8

Time: 45-60 Minutes

Student Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

1. Analyze propaganda materials using specific criteria (source, purpose, audience, and techniques) to identify methods of manipulation and persuasion.
2. Evaluate the historical impact of Nazi propaganda and eugenics ideology by examining primary source materials and explaining how these influenced public opinion in Nazi Germany.
3. Connect historical propaganda techniques to modern media by comparing examples from Nazi Germany to contemporary forms of manipulation and misinformation.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by creating a written reflection that explains how propaganda can be used to dehumanize groups and the importance of maintaining ethical judgment.

Aligned Standards (California Common Core)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

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Context:

In room 4, students will view three interconnected historical phenomena: eugenics, antisemitism, and propaganda.

As students navigate through this room, they will encounter historical images, documents, and multimedia presentations that reveal how pseudoscientific theories, religious prejudice, and manipulative communication techniques converged during the Holocaust.

Propaganda has been a powerful political tool used by governments throughout history, with particularly notorious examples from the Soviet regime under Stalin and Nazi Germany under Hitler. These regimes employed various methods of disseminating propaganda biased and misleading information, including literary works, state-run newspapers, flyers, negative caricatures, radio, movies, and television. In modern times, similar tactics have evolved to include manipulative memes, social media trolls, and false news articles. A prime example of propaganda's destructive power was antisemitic propaganda, most infamously exemplified by "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a fabricated text describing a supposed Jewish plan for global domination. The Nazis systematically targeted children and young people, using everything from children's books and board games to pseudo-documentaries to spread hateful stereotypes and dehumanizing rhetoric.

The Nazi ideology of eugenics was fundamental to their propaganda and racial policies, based on a pseudoscientific concept of a hierarchical racial system. They believed in breeding a "master race" deemed superior to other races, with racial categorization based on skin color and skull measurements. This ideology was integrated into mainstream German society through what they called "racial hygiene," which included horrific practices such as sterilization and euthanasia programs targeting those considered "unworthy" of life or reproduction. By the 1930s, educational materials and children's books were actively used to condition youth to accept these racist ideologies, teaching about the supposed superiority of the Aryan race and placing the groundwork for the atrocities that would follow. The propaganda consistently depicted targeted groups, particularly Jews, as subhuman, comparing them to insects, vermin, or disease-carriers to justify systematic discrimination and violence.

Thinking Strategies

These thinking strategies are crucial for critically analyzing propaganda and understanding the historical context of eugenics. By evaluating the source, identifying persuasive techniques, and analyzing visual elements, students can uncover the underlying messages and biases embedded within propaganda. Critical thinking and questioning allow students to challenge assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and assess the potential consequences of such ideologies. Historical contextualization provides a broader understanding of the social, political, and economic factors that contributed to the rise of eugenics, enabling students to recognize the dangers of discriminatory and harmful beliefs. Ultimately, these strategies empower students to become informed and discerning citizens, capable of recognizing and resisting manipulative tactics and promoting a more just and equitable society.

Source Evaluation:

- Who created it? What is their background, biases, and potential motives?
- Why was it created? What is the intended purpose or goal of the propaganda?
- For whom was it created? Who is the target audience, and how does the message appeal to them?

Identifying Persuasive Techniques:

- Emotional Appeal: Does the propaganda evoke strong emotions like fear, anger, or patriotism?
- Bandwagon: Does it encourage the audience to conform to a popular opinion or trend?
- Stereotyping: Does it simplify complex issues by categorizing people or groups?

Analyzing Visual Elements:

- Symbolism: What do symbols or images represent, and what messages do they convey?
- Body Language and Facial Expressions: What do the body language and facial expressions of people in the image suggest?
- Layout and Design: How does the overall layout and design contribute to the message?

Critical Thinking and Questioning:

- What is the main argument or claim? Is it supported by evidence?

- What are the underlying assumptions or biases? How do these influence the message?
- Are there alternative perspectives or interpretations?

Historical Contextualization:

- How does the propaganda reflect the social, political, and economic conditions of the time?
- What were the historical events or movements that led to the development of eugenics?
- What were the ethical implications of eugenics, and how did it contribute to human rights abuses?

Glossary:

Key Terms

- **Propaganda:** Biased, misleading, and often deceptive information used to promote a particular political cause or point of view, designed to influence specific populations' beliefs or actions.
- **Antisemitism:** Prejudice, discrimination, or hatred directed specifically against Jewish people, often manifested through stereotypes, false narratives, and systematic discrimination.
- **Eugenics:** A pseudoscientific ideology claiming that selective breeding of humans can improve the genetic quality of the human population, typically by promoting reproduction of people with supposedly "desirable" hereditary traits and preventing reproduction of those considered "undesirable."
- **Racial Hygiene:** A Nazi-era term referring to the practice of selective breeding and elimination of populations deemed "inferior" based on racist pseudoscientific theories of racial hierarchy.
- **Scapegoating:** The practice of blaming a specific group of people for broader societal problems, often used as a manipulative propaganda technique to redirect blame and foster hatred.
- **Stereotyping:** Overgeneralized and simplified beliefs about a particular group of people, typically used to reduce complex human characteristics to a few exaggerated or negative traits.
- **Caricature:** An exaggerated representation of a person or group, often used in propaganda to ridicule or dehumanize targeted populations.
- **Pseudo-documentary:** A fabricated film or media presentation that mimics the style of a documentary but presents false or misleading information as fact.

- **Degenerate:** In propaganda contexts, a term used to describe groups or cultural expressions deemed inferior or harmful according to discriminatory ideological standards.
- **Hoax:** A deliberately fabricated falsehood intended to deceive people, often used to spread misinformation or promote harmful ideological narratives.

Timeline

The Nazi regime's rise to power was significantly aided by a sophisticated propaganda machine and a deeply rooted belief in eugenics. Below is a timeline highlighting key events and developments:

Late 19th and Early 20th Century: The Rise of Eugenics

- Late 19th Century: The concept of eugenics, the belief in improving the genetic quality of a population, gains traction in many Western countries, including Germany.
- Early 20th Century: Eugenics became a popular idea in Germany, with many scientists and intellectuals advocating for selective breeding to create a "superior race."

The Nazi Era: Propaganda and Eugenics in Action

- 1920s:
 - Rise of the Nazi Party: The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, emerges and begins to promote a racist ideology that emphasizes the superiority of the Aryan race.
 - Propaganda Techniques: The Nazis utilize various propaganda techniques, such as rallies, posters, and films, to spread their message and mobilize the population.
- 1933-1939:
 - Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring: This law allows for the forced sterilization of individuals deemed "genetically unfit," including people with mental and physical disabilities, as well as those with certain hereditary diseases.
 - Racial Hygiene: The Nazis implement strict racial hygiene policies, promoting marriage and procreation among "racially pure" individuals and discouraging relationships between "Aryans" and "non-Aryans."
 - Antisemitic Propaganda: The Nazis intensify their antisemitic propaganda, portraying Jews as a threat to the German people and the Aryan race.

- 1939-1945:
 - The Holocaust: The culmination of Nazi racial ideology and eugenics is the Holocaust, the systematic genocide of millions of Jews, as well as Romani people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others deemed "undesirable."
 - Medical Experiments: Nazi doctors conduct horrific medical experiments on concentration camp prisoners, often resulting in death or severe injury.

Materials:

1. [Read about the museum](#)
2. [Access to virtual museum Room 4](#)
3. [Google Slides presentation](#)
4. [Propaganda Analysis Worksheet](#) (Handout 1)
5. [Historical Propaganda Posters from Room #4](#)
6. [Modern Advertisement Examples](#)
7. [Group Presentation Rubric](#)
8. [Reflective Writing Assignment Guidelines](#)
9. Access to online resources (linked in the lesson below):
 - USHMM website
 - National Geographic Education Resources
 - Facing History and Ourselves materials
 - Anne Frank House Educational Materials

Differentiation:

- Provide key terms with visual aids
- Use graphic organizers for propaganda analysis
- Allow use of bilingual dictionaries
- Pair with proficient English speakers for group work
- Break down complex tasks into smaller steps
- Provide modified reading materials at appropriate levels
- Offer multiple modes of expression (verbal, written, artistic)
- Allow extended time for assignments
- Use scaffolded worksheets
- Assign additional primary source analysis
- Encourage independent research on specific propaganda campaigns
- Provide opportunities for deeper historical analysis
- Create comparative studies between historical and modern propaganda

Assessment (Teacher Choice):

- Exit tickets checking understanding of key concepts
- Class discussions using provided discussion questions
- Propaganda Analysis Project (individual or group):
 - Identifying techniques in modern media
 - Making historical connections
 - Presenting findings to class

Lesson/Activity:

Pre-Lesson Activity: Analyze Modern Propaganda:

Analyze Advertisements: Show students a few modern advertisements and discuss the techniques used to persuade viewers.

Identify Persuasive Techniques: Introduce common propaganda techniques such as:

- Bandwagon: "Everyone's doing it!"
- Testimonial: "Celebrity endorsement"
- Plain Folks: "Just like you and me"
- Snob Appeal: "Be part of the elite"
- Card Stacking: "One-sided information"
- Name-Calling: "Negative labels"
- Glittering Generalities: "Vague, positive language"

Example: [Mind Over Media: Lesson Plans](#)

Related Literature and Media

"Exploring Nazi Propaganda" - [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

- Provides an accessible overview of propaganda techniques
- Designed for young students
- Focuses on historical context and critical thinking

"[The Power of Propaganda](#)" - National Geographic Education Resources

- Visual learning materials
- Explains how images and media can manipulate perceptions
- Age-appropriate language and analysis

"[Propaganda Techniques: Learning to Recognize Manipulation](#)" - Facing History and Ourselves:

- Interactive learning resources
- Teaches how to identify propaganda strategies
- Connects historical examples to modern media literacy

"[Understanding the Holocaust](#)" - Anne Frank House Educational Materials

- Comprehensive but age-appropriate overview
- Includes personal stories and historical context
- Focuses on human rights and understanding

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives:

1. Understand the concept of propaganda and its historical uses
2. Develop critical thinking skills to recognize manipulative messaging
3. Explore the ethical implications of propaganda
4. Discuss the importance of media literacy

Lesson Outline:

I. Introduction (15 minutes)

- Define propaganda
- Discuss how information can be manipulated
- Explain the difference between factual information and propaganda
- Key question: "How can we recognize when someone is trying to influence our thinking?"

II. Historical Context (20 minutes)

- Explore [Propaganda Techniques](#)
- Discuss specific examples:
 - ["The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"](#) hoax
 - [Propaganda: Hitler Youth](#)

III. Interactive Activity: Propaganda Analysis (25 minutes)

- Small group exercise: Analyze historical propaganda posters in Room #4 using the [propaganda analysis worksheet](#).
- Copy of [Propaganda Posters](#) from Room 4.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it wrong to judge people based on how they look or where they come from? How can we be kind to everyone?
2. How can we be smart about the information we see and hear? What makes a good detective of stories and news?
3. How do people sometimes try to convince others to believe something that might not be true? What can we do to think carefully?
4. How do the stories we read and watch help us understand different people? What makes a good story that helps us be kind?
5. Why is it important to listen to people who are different from us? How can we learn about others with an open mind?
6. Why is it good to learn about difficult things from the past, even when they make us feel uncomfortable?
7. How can we be good friends to people who might seem different from us?
8. What does it mean to be brave and stand up for what's right, even when it's hard?

Supplemental Resources

Group Presentation:

Propaganda Analysis Group Presentation Rubric

Content and Historical Accuracy (40 points)

- Comprehensive understanding of propaganda concept (0-10 points)
 - Clear definition
 - Historical context explained
 - Specific examples provided
- Depth of Propaganda Analysis (0-15 points)
 - Identifies specific propaganda techniques
 - Explains emotional manipulation strategies
 - Demonstrates critical thinking about historical messaging
- Accuracy of Historical Information (0-15 points)
 - Factual representations
 - Precise historical details
 - Credible sources cited

Presentation Skills (30 points)

- Clarity of Communication (0-10 points)
 - Clear, understandable language
 - Logical presentation flow

- Engaging delivery
- Visual Aids and Evidence (0-10 points)
 - High-quality visual examples
 - Well-designed slides/materials
 - Appropriate use of historical images
- Teamwork and Collaboration (0-10 points)
 - Equal participation
 - Smooth transitions between speakers
 - Demonstrated group preparation

Critical Thinking and Analysis (20 points)

- Comparative Analysis (0-10 points)
 - Connects historical propaganda to modern examples
 - Draws meaningful insights
 - Demonstrates nuanced understanding
- Ethical Reflection (0-10 points)
 - Discusses moral implications
 - Shows empathy and understanding
 - Reflects on human rights and dignity

Presentation Length and Format (10 points)

- Adheres to time guidelines (10-15 minutes)
- Professional presentation style
- Appropriate for grade level

Total Possible Points: 100

Reflective Writing Assignment:

Imagine you are a teenager living in Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Based on what you've learned about propaganda, write a personal reflection addressing the following questions:

1. How might you recognize that the information you're being taught is manipulative?
2. What moral courage would it take to question the propaganda you're surrounded by?

3. Reflect on how propaganda attempts to dehumanize entire groups of people. Why is it important to always see the humanity in others, even when you are told they are different from you?

Writing Guidelines:

- Write from a first-person perspective
- Be honest about the emotional and intellectual challenges
- Consider the psychological pressure of going against widespread societal beliefs
- Discuss the importance of critical thinking and individual moral choices
- Your reflection should be 2-3 paragraphs (approximately 350-500 words)

References

Books and Major Works:

Lifton, R. J. (1986). *The Nazi doctors: Medical killing and genocide in Hitler's Reich*. Basic Books.

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Online Educational Resources:

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Primary Historical Sources:

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. (1903). [Fabricated antisemitic text, historical reference material].

Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring. (1933). [Nazi Germany legislative document].