



Central Valley Holocaust Educators' Network
Laws and Decrees as an Instrument of Tyranny
On Tyranny Lesson Plan

Acknowledgement: *This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from the California Department of Education, Marin County Office of Education, and the State of California.*

California Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Informational Text

Reading Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

RL.8.1.. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL 8.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

8.2 Students analyze the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and compare the enumerated and implied powers of the federal government.

- 2. Analyze the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution and the success of each in implementing the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

- Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.



- Students construct various timelines of key events, people, and periods of the historical era they are studying.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.
- Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

Historical Interpretation

- Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
- Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.

CASEL (SEL Framework)

- Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.
 - Such as:
 - Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
 - Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
 - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
 - Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
 - Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school
 - Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
 - Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

Lesson Objectives/Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- ☐ Define terms: tyranny, oligarchy, fascism, communism, anticipatory, obedience, conformity, institutions, totalitarianism, propaganda.
- ☐ Explain/support whether the study of history is best viewed from which of these two lenses: "History does not repeat, but it does instruct," or "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
- ☐ Use textual evidence to support analysis of what the *On Tyranny* text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- ☐ Connect patterns of tyranny from the reign of King George III to that of other identified tyrants like Hitler.
- ☐ Recognize the patterns of a tyrannical government and the importance of a democratic society (ex: free press).
- ☐ Understand and interpret four of Timothy Snyder's 20 lessons: Do Not Obey in Advance, Defend Institutions, Believe in Truth, Be as Courageous as You Can.
- ☐ Understand how to analyze historical photos/text.
- ☐ Be able to identify dangerous language (propaganda)
- ☐ Students will identify the important roles we all share in protecting democracy

Materials

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BKxzUlk_BySCBW3iXQSzTApfGjGcpmFug9p7R7m6MmQ/edit?tab=t.0 (Teacher answer sheet)
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1apqAUylKWj2yUluiESsxb25LG33Q7au293dWViW-3yg/edit?tab=t.0> (Student worksheet for lesson)
- <https://timothysnyder.org/on-tyranny> (Text of On Tyranny by Timothy Snyder)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpCKkWMbmXU> (Fascism explained)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8gTqgaczTI (Communism explained)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1NdMJvGfPA>: (Video: Jews in Vienna Forced to Scrub Street from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p5ncULD22zXVQa9vVOJZgrXcl1MN1Ni_0IzRds1iYfA/edit?usp=sharing (What would you do?)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuMt8b4UrcI> (Milgram Experiment)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRcNq4OYTxE> (Start at 12:27 - 14:58) (The Path to Nazi Genocide)
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wKiRPtfcj9GspzHPqs61qRYDxjKIWAF4o5wRozrITs/edit?usp=sharing> (Defend Institutions T Chart)



- https://drive.google.com/file/d/12_9RmKz2mggdjwosuRI-lvL4wNM-WIN5/view?usp=drive_link (Poisonous Mushroom Text)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtpHX3nr7uE> (Propaganda Video for Kids)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXyi0IEBG7o> (What is Totalitarianism)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezvqlrs7Quc> (What is Totalitarianism? Totalitarianism Explained | Difference Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh1WQkZhFvk> (Fake News and the “Death of Truth”)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnFTsl-6--U> (CBS Kids: Can you Trust the News)
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y2kq45OVv8gPc5l3ze3Z-9JN1DmyPLMa69VSPvpeJyw/edit?usp=sharing> (How to Spot Fake News)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Exs1gVa1OeE> (“The Language of the Third Reich” By Victor Klemperer)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKVv8NH6YGk> (Ruby Bridges Fought Racism at 6 Years Old | Inspirational Documentary | Goalcast)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6by9NEhT9GM> (Malala Yousafzai, Activist | Biography)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTKgHhI7gs0> (The Life of Anne Frank)
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RTN9vn3TLtLswukL9QA-Th6ZFai3HLC8/view?usp=sharing> (Foldable final project)

Differentiation

English Learners

1. Use pairs or groups with English proficient students to help them access the materials/content.
2. Provide interpreted materials in the student’s first language.

Special Education

1. Provide scaffolds of materials and modification in accordance with their IEP.
2. Provide materials in a variety of modes: audio, visual, kinesthetic

Accelerated Learners

1. Accelerated learners can do the definitions on their own in class or for homework.

Lesson Plan

Prologue: History and Tyranny (pages 6-7)

1. Introduce students to terms: tyranny, oligarchy, fascism, communism
2. Showed videos to help illustrate terms:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpCKkWMbmXU> (Fascism explained)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8gTqgaczTI (Communism explained)
3. Completed Word Splash activity around COMMUNISM.
 - a. Have COMMUNISM written on a piece of copy paper in the middle of each table.
 - b. Each student in the group gets a different colored marker.
 - c. For 2 minutes they are to write whatever words come to mind when hearing the word COMMUNISM
 - d. Share out whole group on a large piece of poster paper or on the white board.
4. Read Prologue of *On Tyranny* by Timothy Snyder together. Can either have the author read it (<https://timothysnyder.org/on-tyranny>), share reading or teacher read.
5. Students will analyze the two ways of looking at history.
 - a. As Snyder believes: "History does not repeat, but it does instruct" or
 - b. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".
6. Students then move to the quote that best describes their belief in the importance of history study. Justify their choice. Discuss as a group. If students struggle with what to say, have a teacher model.
7. Have student answer follow-up questions on worksheet:
 - a. How does the author define tyranny?
 - b. Which historical period does Snyder think provides lessons to Americans seeking to improve our democracy?

Do Not Obey in Advance (Pages 8-12)

1. Start with video on Jews in Vienna Forced to Scrub Streets:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1NdMJvGfPA>
2. Ask students to look at the photo like a photographer before showing the full video.
 - a. What stands out?
 - b. Where do your eyes gravitate?
 - c. Who has the power in this picture?
 - d. What questions do you have?
3. Give definitions of anticipatory, obedience and conformity.



4. Have students complete the [obedience anticipation paper](#).
 - a. Answer moral dilemmas with agree, disagree, strongly agree, strongly disagree.
 - b. When the teacher reads examples out, have students go to one of the four corners.
 - c. Call on students to justify why they rated their answer the way they did.
5. Ask students: Look at the meanings of anticipatory and obedience. What do you think anticipatory obedience means?
6. Read **Do Not Obey in Advance**
7. Students answer: What examples of anticipatory obedience does Snyder cite from Germany and Austria in the 1930's?
8. Students answer: The Nazis persecuted Jews in the 1930's and 40's, unfairly blaming them for Germany's defeat in WW 1. Do you think that there are groups within the US that are being unfairly blamed for our nation's problems today?
9. Show Milgram Experiment video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuMt8b4UrcI>
10. Have students answer: What did Milgram hope to prove before he designed his experiment and what conclusions did Milgram reach after conducting his experiment in the United States?

Defend Institutions (pages 13-16)

1. Have students brainstorm on their worksheets what the definition of institution is. Share out to make a list on the board.
2. Give the definition being used: *an organization set up for a specific purpose, usually serving the public. Hospitals, churches, prisons, and schools can be institutions. The constitution and our government are also institutions.*
3. Watch and discuss Path to Nazi Genocide:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRcNq4OYTyE> (Start at 12:27 - 14:58)
4. Read Defend Institutions in *On Tyranny*
5. Students answer: What are examples of institutions Snyder highlights in this chapter?
6. Students answer: Snyder writes, "We tend to assume that institutions will automatically maintain themselves against even direct attacks." (page 23) Do you think any of our democratic institutions are currently under attack? Give examples and explain.
7. Students answer: What mistake did some Jews in Germany make about Hitler's rise to power in Germany early in 1933?
8. Snyder argues, "The mistake is to assume that rulers who came to power through institutions cannot change or destroy those very institutions – even when that is exactly what they have announced they will do."




- (page24) Brainstorm what the colonists did to protect their colonies and institutions from the king.
9. Have students complete [Defend Institutions T Chart](#)
 10. Highlight the list of what citizens can do to defend democratic institutions (the very things that protect citizens) from attack.

Believe in Truth (2 days)

1. Read the following: *"To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle. The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding light."*
2. Have students respond on their worksheets to, **"The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding light."** What does that mean in today's society? Discuss
3. Have students write the definition of Totalitarianism.
4. Show this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXYi0IEBG7o>
5. Answer the three things Totalitarian government's do (from the video):
 - a. Total Control
 - b. Cult of personality surround the leader
 - c. Use of ideology to justify state power.
6. For further discussion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezvqlrs7QuC>
7. Give definition of propaganda: a set of strategies used to influence people's opinions and beliefs to support a cause, idea, or product. It's often used to spread misinformation or to exaggerate a stereotype or basic truth
8. Show Propaganda video (what it is and how you can spot it): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtpHX3nr7uE>
9. Explain how *The Poisonous Mushroom* was used in schools
10. Read [the pdf version](#) on the document camera. Have students answer the following questions on their worksheets:
 - a. Why did the author, Ernest Hiemer, target young children as the audience for his book?
 - b. Why did Hiemer choose a mushroom/toadstool as his main metaphor?
 - c. What were Hiemer's arguments against the Jews? Was he effective in swaying people? Why or why not?
 - d. Where, in today's world, is there a similar kind of propaganda? Pick a specific incident and explain.
11. Explain: "The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding lights.
12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh1WQkZhFvk> (Fake News and the Death of Truth)
13. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnFTsl-6--U> (Can you Trust the News)

14. Show and discuss [How to Spot Fake News](#)
15. Explain how the Nazis used propaganda to persuade Germans to follow Hitler.
16. Show and discuss video on
 "The Language of the Third Reich" By Victor Klemperer

Be as courageous as you can

1. Student centered/discussion based lesson based on prior knowledge and experience.
2. **Preview the lesson by showing one of the following videos of courageous individuals:**
 -  Ruby Bridges Fought Racism at 6 Years Old | Inspirational Documentary | ...
 -  Malala Yousafzai, Activist | Biography
 -  The Life of Anne Frank | Biography
3. "If none of us is prepared to die for freedom, then all of us will die under tyranny." (page 107) Write about and then discuss the meaning of this sentence.
4. First read page 49-50: (story about Teresa Prekerowa) and then discuss the difference between "be courageous" and "be as courageous as you can." Students will then give examples of what this might look like for them.
5. Who in history or today do you view as courageous? Explain.
6. What are the different ways that you and your fellow students can show courage?

Assessment

1. Completion of activities/questions on four worksheets, Defend Institutions T Chart, Obedience Survey.
2. Participation in discussions

Summative Assessment

1. Completion of [Foldable](#) describing what was learned.

Glossary.

Tyranny

The cruel and unreasonable rule by a person or government

Oligarchy

A small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution, particularly financial



Fascism:

A system of government where one ruler has the political viewpoint that one's nation and race are superior to all others.

Communism

The idea that a class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs.

Anticipatory:

happening, performed, or felt in anticipation or waiting for something.

Obedience

Compliance with or follow an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority.

Conformity:

compliance with standards, rules, or laws. Doing what others do; following along

Institutions:

an organization set up for a specific purpose, usually serving the public. Hospitals, churches, prisons, and schools can be institutions. The constitution and our government are also institutions.

Totalitarianism

the type of government that attempts to assert **total control** over the public and private lives of its citizens

Propaganda

a set of strategies used to influence people's opinions and beliefs to support a cause, idea, or product. It's often used to spread misinformation or to exaggerate a stereotype or basic truth

Sources:

<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#responsible>

<https://www.daveforrest.net/veteranlessons/ontyrannyreading-guide.pdf>

<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/holocaust-lesson-plans/holocaust-timeline-activity>