



LESSON PLAN: Nazi Antisemitic Ideology and Propaganda

- 1** Begin this lesson by having students brainstorm the meaning of the word “ideology” and share what they think constitutes an ideology (e.g., a pattern of beliefs; a way of thinking; a system of ideas that organizes one’s goals, expectations, and actions).
- 2** Distribute the **Nazi Ideology** handout and have students individually, in pairs, or in small groups cite textual evidence to support their responses to the following questions:
 - How did the Nazi ideology depict Jews?
 - Compare and contrast this text to **Summary of Antisemitism** handout. What new ideas appear in Hitler’s writings? What ideas reflect continuity with previous antisemitic thinking?
 - How do you think these ideas might have influenced people in Germany who were exposed to them?
- 3** Ask students to think about the term “propaganda” and share what they understand it to mean. [Optional: Have a volunteer read the definition of propaganda found in the **Glossary**.] Continue by having students post what they see as the distinction between “propaganda” and “ideology” (i.e., ideology is a system of ideas and principles on which a political or economic theory is based; propaganda is a tool or method used to disseminate such a system of ideas¹).
- 4** Introduce students to **H. Henry Sinason (bio)** and **Esther Clifford (bio)** and have students watch the two clips of testimonies. Follow with a discussion, using the questions below.
 - H. Henry Sinason discusses how many of his former friends became part of the Hitler Youth movement. Why do you think the children were receptive to joining such a movement?
 - What changes does Henry describe? What is the process he describes? What do you think influenced this process of change?
 - What were some of the visual images that Esther Clifford talks about seeing on her way to school? What effect did seeing such things have on her?

¹ *Der Stürmer* is probably the most infamous antisemitic newspaper in history. For twenty-two years, beginning in May 1923, every weekly issue denounced Jews in crude, vicious, and vivid ways. The paper’s publisher and editor was Julius Streicher, a virulent antisemite and senior member of the Nazi Party. Streicher’s goal was to capture the attention of the masses; therefore, he wrote in a way that the masses could understand, in a style that was simple and easy to comprehend. By 1925, Streicher realized that a cartoon or photograph could be absorbed even faster than a simply written article. He hired the cartoonist Philipp Rupprecht (pen name Fips), who went on to draw thousands of vivid and revolting anti-Jewish caricatures for *Der Stürmer*.

5 On the board or on chart paper, write the heading “How does propaganda work?” and then write the following list:

- Repeats the same information over and over
- Often twists and exploits the truth
- Appeals to people’s emotions
- Gives the illusion that most people agree with the message
- Talks to people in their own language
- Uses accessible media (e.g., newspaper, radio)

6 Have students suggest examples of propaganda that they have seen and explain which of the techniques listed above was/were used. They might want to consider advertisements, political campaigns, social movements, and so forth in their examples.

7 Continue the discussion about propaganda by asking the following:

- What are the possible effects of propaganda?
- Can one become critical toward propaganda? Why or why not?

8 Display and review together as a whole group some of the **examples of Nazi propaganda**². Have students consider some or all of the questions below, depending on which document they are analyzing.

- What statement is this photograph or caricature making?
- How is the example exploiting the already existing antisemitic attitudes in Germany?
- How is the example attempting to further isolate Jews from the rest of the population?
- Which of the propaganda methods (listed on the board or on chart paper) apply to this photograph or caricature?
- What is the irony of the photograph of the German woman reading the sign saying to beware of Jewish propaganda?
- In what ways do the caricatures and photographs depict the ideas expressed in Nazi ideology?
- Why did the Nazis use a variety of methods to spread their ideology?

² In some cases, at the bottom of the document there is an explanation. Allow time for students to analyze what they are seeing before providing them with this information.

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After reviewing several examples, have a general discussion using the following questions:

- How would you characterize Nazi propaganda?
- Do you think that some people recognized that what they were seeing and hearing was propaganda? If they did, why do you think they still believed it?
- Why do you think that many of the German people did not see Nazi propaganda as negative? (e.g., it was pro-Aryan so it reinforced their self-concept)
- How can a person be tempted to believe in propaganda?
- What is dehumanization?
- What are some examples of ways that the Nazis dehumanized Jews in their propaganda?
- How did the dehumanization of Jews make them an easy target for abuse?
- What other groups of people have been dehumanized in history? What was the purpose or goal behind such dehumanization? What methods were used? What has been the result?

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Close the lesson by having students discuss specific examples of national and international events that demonstrate that antisemitism³ and propaganda are still part of contemporary society.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 60-90 MINUTES

³ Additional information and resources on the topic of antisemitism can be found in the Contemporary Antisemitism unit.