



## LESSON PLAN: Nazi Antisemitic Ideology and Propaganda

### INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, students define ideology and propaganda and explore the ways in which Nazi ideology both reflected historic antisemitism and created new forms of antisemitic hate. Students investigate primary and secondary source material about Nazi ideology and analyze visual examples of Nazi propaganda to deepen their understanding of how these techniques were deployed. Students view visual history testimonies to learn about the personal impact of propaganda.

### PART 1: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA?

Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.

**1** The handout, *How are Ideology and Propaganda Related?*, is distributed. The class reviews the definitions of ideology and propaganda together. In pairs or small groups, students complete the handout, listing examples and exploring the relationship between the two concepts. The class then reconvenes to review their conclusions. The idea that propaganda is a vehicle for disseminating ideology is emphasized, and the following characteristics of propaganda are shared to help students understand how it influences members of a society.

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

**2** Students remain in their groups and examine the map, *Jewish Communities in Europe before the Nazis Rise to Power*. They chart their observations as illustrated below.

What information do I observe on the map?	What conclusions can I draw about the ability of the Nazis to spread anti-Jewish propaganda	What questions do I still have after analyzing the map?

**3** The class reconvenes and discusses the inferences they made as well as any outstanding questions. The following ideas are highlighted:

- Jewish people represented a very small percentage of the population in European countries – the odds were that most people in those countries had never met a Jew.
- It's easier to believe propaganda about people with whom you have limited or no experience.
- The Nazis used propaganda to incite antisemitism so that even people who would have had no reason to hate Jewish people began to believe the poisonous ideas about them.

- Even people who should have known better – like H. Henry’s friends and Margaret’s teammates – were influenced by the stereotypes and false ideas spread by the Nazis.

**4** Students continue to investigate the nature of Nazi ideology and propaganda by consulting at least two of the sources below. In small groups, they record examples of ideology and propaganda, and consider how the Nazis made use of historical antisemitism and also created new forms of antisemitism.

SOURCES

- **Nazi Ideology** handout
- **Echoes & Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust** (1933-1938)
- **Video Toolbox** on Antisemitism (5:29-12:07)

**OPTIONAL:** Students can also revisit the final section of the *Summary of Antisemitism* handout from the previous lesson.

**5** In their groups or as a whole class, students discuss the following questions:

- How did Hitler’s writings reflect previous antisemitic stereotypes? What new ideas appear in his writings?
- How did Nazi ideology build on older and well-known antisemitic stereotypes and religious hatred from the past? Why might the Nazis have done this, and why might this have been particularly effective?
- How did the Nazis create new forms of antisemitism? How did they persuade and compel the German people to accept these forms of antisemitism?

**6** Students watch testimony clips of two individuals who convey how Nazi ideology and propaganda manifested in Germany and affected their lives: **Judith Becker (bio)** and **H. Henry Sinason (bio)** As they watch the clips, students take notes on the *Testimony Reflections* handout, found at the beginning of this unit, and continue to note examples of ideology and propaganda.

**7** After viewing the testimony clips, students journal and/or participate in a whole group discussion in response to some of the following questions:

- Why did the Nazis form the Hitler Youth and target young people with their ideology? Why were many youth receptive to these messages? What pressures might those who resisted these messages have faced?
- What does the story Judith Becker shares reveal about Nazi ideology?
- What is your reaction to the principal in Judith’s story, who is personally supportive of Felix but ultimately asks him to leave the school? What pressures did he face? What choices did he have in this situation?
- How did Nazi ideology and propaganda affect H. Henry Sinason? How did these forces creep into and invade the everyday lives of Jewish people?

**PART 2: HOW DID ANTISEMITIC IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA MANIFEST IN NAZI GERMANY?**

*Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.*

**8** Seven examples of Nazi propaganda are displayed around the room. Individually or in pairs, students take a “gallery walk” and visit each example for a short amount of time (images can be viewed in any order). At each station, students chart their answers to the following questions:

	How does the image reflect Nazi ideology?	Does the image make use of old or new forms of antisemitism? Explain.	How does the image serve to isolate Jews from other Germans?	What methods of propaganda are being used?
Image 1				
Image 2				

**9** After completing the gallery walk, students stand near one image that they found to be a particularly effective example of propaganda’s ability to manipulate others. They write why they chose that image on a sticky note and place it near the image. The group that has gathered at each image talks about their responses. The class discusses some of the following questions as time allows.

- Do you think people were able to recognize this propaganda as false? Among those who did, what might they have been thinking and feeling at the time?
- How did the propaganda and stereotypes used by the Nazis dehumanize Jews? What might have been the effects of such dehumanization for both individuals and Jewish communities in Germany?
- Why do you think few people spoke out against anti-Jewish propaganda?
- Can you think of examples of societies today in which it is dangerous to criticize government propaganda?

**10** Students watch a testimony clip of an individual who shares how she was affected by Nazi propaganda: **Esther Clifford (bio)**. As they watch the clip, students take notes on the **Testimony Reflections** handout, found at the beginning of this unit. After viewing, they discuss the following:

- What were some of the visual images that Esther Clifford talks about seeing on her way to school? What aspects of Nazi ideology did they reflect?
- What effect did seeing this propaganda have on Esther? How did it make her feel to see members of her community engaging with it?
- Thinking back to the testimonies of H. Henry and Henry, how were they impacted by propaganda spreading in their communities?
- Esther comments that “By the time I got to school, I couldn’t learn.” What examples of prejudice are you aware of today that might prevent students from learning in school?

**11** As a summative task, students create a “3 x 3” journal addressing the unit essential question, “How do ideologies circulate within societies and influence individuals and groups?” The journal is a grid that includes three facets of Nazi ideology in the first column, and examples of propaganda used to disseminate it in the other columns. As an extra challenge, students can be asked to include at least one example of ideology that exploited historical antisemitism and one that represented a new idea. Students should include evidence from lesson sources to support their ideas. The journal can be adapted to be shorter (“2 x 2”) or longer (“4 x 4”) depending on time available and student needs<sup>1</sup>.

**ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 120 MINUTES**

<sup>1</sup> *NOTE: This lesson focuses on historical antisemitism, but students should be reminded that antisemitism is not just a problem of the past. The Echoes & Reflections unit on **Contemporary Antisemitism** introduces students to present-day forms of antisemitism and how to respond to antisemitism and other forms of hate in their communities.*