



ANTISEMITISM

“Antisemitism had suddenly become very rampant...”

–H. Henry Sinason, *JEWISH SURVIVOR*

PREPARING TO TEACH THIS UNIT

The following points are intended to help educators consider the complexities of teaching about antisemitism, Nazi racial ideology, and propaganda, and to deliver accurate and sensitive instruction.

- 1** This unit has been designed to help teachers translate the abstract and interrelated ideas of *antisemitism, ideology, stereotypes, and propaganda* into active learning experiences, thereby creating frameworks for processing and organizing information that otherwise might be difficult for students to understand. For some students, it will be challenging to comprehend circumstances that are outside of their immediate environment or experiences, and for which they have little or no previous knowledge or background. There is also the possibility that students will be introduced to the concept of hatred against the cultural group with which they identify or to which they belong.
- 2** *Antisemitism* can be broadly defined as the hatred of Jews as a group or a concept, and it can take many explicit and subtle forms. Antisemitism did not begin when Adolf Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933. Antisemitism had long been entrenched in Germany and other European countries, as well as the United States. For many centuries, Jews had been the victims of widespread suspicion and hatred that had periodically led to violence, murder, and pogroms (organized violent attacks). By studying the roots of antisemitism and its various forms, students will better understand the historical context surrounding the rise of racial antisemitic ideology.
- 3** This lesson explores Nazi propaganda used to disseminate antisemitic ideology and stir hatred. Propaganda was an important tool of the Nazi Party both before and after it took power in Germany in 1933. Nazi propaganda took many forms, including books, posters, speeches, music, and even children’s games. This lesson aims to reinforce the idea that propaganda is manipulative and that no one is immune to it. Students are encouraged to consider how they might engage critically with propaganda, both historically and in contemporary societies.
- 4** Throughout the lesson, students will examine antisemitic texts and images, which were and still are dehumanizing. Often this dehumanization relies on the propagation of harmful stereotypes about Jewish people. While it is important for students to understand historical and contemporary antisemitism, it is imperative to contextualize stereotypical, antisemitic depictions in texts and images before introducing them to students, as well as to focus on the humanity of those targeted.
- 5** When discussing stereotypes, propaganda, and other expressions of hate, there is always the possibility of introducing students to generalizations with which they are not already familiar. Thus, special care should be taken when debriefing this lesson to reinforce the idea that, while some stereotypes may seem easy to believe, that does not make them true. It is also important to create an environment in which students feel comfortable asking questions about the origins of specific stereotypes and why they continue to be widely believed. When discussing these issues with students,

particularly if you have students who might be on the receiving end of the messages and impacts of such stereotypes, educators should be attuned to how these discussions may affect them.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, students learn about the origins of antisemitism and how this hatred was exploited by the Nazis during the 1920s and 1930s as part of their racist ideology. Students define the terms antisemitism and stereotype, review text and video sources, and create a timeline reflecting examples of antisemitism throughout history. Students then investigate how Nazi ideology created new forms of antisemitism, and analyze primary source material illustrating Nazi propaganda. Visual history testimonies are used throughout the lesson to deepen students' understanding of lesson themes.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is antisemitism, and what has been its effects on Jewish people and the societies in which they have lived?
- How do ideologies circulate within societies and influence individuals and groups?

OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Define and provide examples of historical antisemitism.
- Define and identify examples of stereotypes, including antisemitic stereotypes.
- Trace the origins of antisemitism and compare pre-Nazi antisemitism with Nazi racial ideology.
- Investigate how propaganda, based on ideology, is a means for inciting hate in a population.
- Describe and give examples of Nazi propaganda methods used to propagate antisemitism and isolate Jewish people.
- Analyze Holocaust survivor testimony as a primary source.