

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

GRADE LEVEL: Adaptable for grades 7–12

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary, English as a Second Language

TIME REQUIRED: Approximately 110 minutes (extensions available)

This is a *thematic* lesson that builds on fundamental knowledge and provides in-depth exploration of a topic.

RATIONALE

By focusing on how Spanish language newspapers in Texas, California, and Puerto Rico reported on the voyage of the *St. Louis*, students will connect Holocaust history to American history and develop primary and secondary source reading and analysis skills in Spanish. Students will also develop media literacy skills that will prepare them to analyze and respond to news today.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How can journalism shape public knowledge of and responses to events in the world around them?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students understand:

- How to read a newspaper from the 1930s
- How reporting can differ across news outlets
- How Spanish-language newspapers reported on the *St. Louis*
- Various factors that shaped how governments and individuals in the United States and Cuba responded to the *St. Louis* in 1939
- How to use secondary sources to more fully understand and contextualize the information in a primary source

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Teachers may need to set up computers for students to use when analyzing newspapers and a screen if they wish to show the video *Path to Nazi Genocide*. [English](#) [Spanish](#)
(Note: This film contains difficult subject matter and imagery. Some segments may not be appropriate for younger audiences.)
- Teachers should have a basic familiarity with the Holocaust generally and the voyage of the *St. Louis* specifically. Teachers can use the resources below for their own background or to share directly with students.

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

- If students have not otherwise been introduced to the Holocaust in class, teachers should spend class time prior to this lesson to give students background information about the Holocaust and the refugee crisis of the 1930s.
- Teachers are also encouraged to create a list of vocabulary words in the primary and secondary source reading that the students may struggle with. Teachers may want to share these words, (and possibly their definitions), with students before they begin their source reading.

Additional background material on the Holocaust and the refugee crisis:

- *Holocaust Encyclopedia Article: Introduction to the Holocaust:* Available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).
- *Timeline 1933 to 1939:* Available in [Spanish](#). Similar version available in [English](#).
- *Animated map showing the Holocaust in context with Nazi Germany's territorial gains and losses:* Available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).
- *Holocaust Encyclopedia Article: Refugees from 1933 to 1952.* Available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

MATERIALS

- Computer Interactive: [How to Read Old Newspapers](#) (English)
- [How Americans Got Their News](#) (English)
- [Newspaper articles in Spanish](#) (3)
 - The lesson includes the English translations of the three primary source newspaper articles in Spanish.
- Article Analysis Worksheet for Students [Spanish](#) [English](#)
- Secondary Source Worksheet for Students [Spanish](#) [English](#)
- Internet-enabled computers

MODIFICATIONS

Technology and teaching strategies are suggested in the instructional sequence, however, the lesson is intentionally flexible to allow for individual teacher modifications to achieve the desired educational outcomes.

Teachers can choose a different topic to research instead of the *St. Louis*. The [History Unfolded](#) website has articles in Spanish on other Holocaust-related topics, such as *Kristallnacht*.

If students find it challenging to understand how to read an old newspaper, particularly in Spanish, the teacher may wish to use class time to model how to identify the parts of a newspaper using one of the articles in the packet.

MODIFICATIONS FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

- Share the video, handout and article links directly with students.
- Provide appropriate means for students to complete workshops and conduct discussion online.

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS

- Key definitions displayed on a [word wall](#)
- Offer audio version or [text to speech](#) options for research articles
- English language resources and newspaper submissions in English.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

WARM UP: INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO NEWSPAPERS

1. Review with students how Americans got their news and how to read a newspaper from the 1930s. Students can do the following individually, in small groups, or as a class:
 - a. Read the [How Americans Got Their News](#) handout
 - b. Explore using computers the various parts of a newspaper via the [How to Read Old Newspapers](#) graphic

BACKGROUND ON THE *ST. LOUIS* AND OTHER REFUGEE SHIPS

2. Ask students the following questions to answer based on their current knowledge:

ASK THE STUDENTS

- Could ships carrying Jewish refugees come to the United States between 1938 and 1941?
- Compared to the other ships, what was different about the journey of the *St. Louis* passengers?

Play video [Refugee Ships at Sea](#) and reassess student responses based on new information.

Note: Show the first 3 minutes and 30 seconds of the video. Full video is 7 minutes and 49 seconds and also appropriate if time allows.

PRIMARY SOURCE READING SMALL GROUP WORK

3. Begin with an exercise to assess students' assumptions about news coverage of the refugee crisis of the 1930s. Ask students: Do you think Spanish-language newspapers in the United States reported on the voyage of the *St. Louis*? Why or why not?

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

Option: students may first record their predictions on a message board such as [Padlet](#) and then discuss as a whole class.

4. In groups, students read two different articles about the voyage of the *St. Louis* in the sheet [Newspaper Primary Source Handout](#). Students may take turns reading the articles aloud or read them silently, depending on class goals. For each article, students complete their [Article Analysis worksheet](#).
 - i. El Heraldo de Brownsville June 2, 1939 (Spanish language version in Brownsville, TX; no identified byline)
 - ii. El Mundo June 2, 1939 (Spanish language newspaper in San Juan, Puerto Rico; UP byline)
 - iii. La Opinion June 2, 1939 (Spanish language newspaper in Los Angeles, CA; UP byline)

Differentiation: Students with greater readiness may read and analyze all three articles. English language students who need additional support in reading Spanish may use the English translation of the articles.

ARTICLE COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

5. Have a student share a summary of what one of the articles states about the *St. Louis* and its passengers. Have a student do this for each article the class looked at.
 - a. Discuss how each article is similar and different. For example, pay attention to what page the stories are on, where stories are on the page, how big the stories are, what the headline is.
 - b. Look at other articles published on the page. What other stories were reported on during this day?
 - c. How does the reporting differ across news outlets?
 - d. Discuss how the presentation of the news (placement on page, page number, headline size, font, etc.) may have influenced what readers knew about the *St. Louis* and how/whether they reacted to this story.

SECONDARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

6. Brief class discussion: Students use their organizers to answer the following: What questions did the newspaper articles raise for you? What questions did the articles not answer?
 - a. Tell students that since the primary source newspaper articles only provide a snapshot of the *St. Louis* voyage on June 2, 1939, students can find the answers to their questions with secondary source materials. They will use the *Voyage of the St. Louis* animated map ([in Spanish](#) and [in English](#)) and the Holocaust Encyclopedia article “The Voyage of the *St. Louis*” ([in Spanish](#) and [in English](#)) to learn more about the ship’s journey. They will also learn how and why the Cuban and US governments responded the way they did. Students answer the following questions below on their [secondary](#)

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

[source worksheet](#).

- i. What factors contributed to Cuba's reluctance to admit the refugees on the *St. Louis*?
- ii. In his negotiations with Lawrence Berenson, Cuban President Bru offered to admit the passengers of the *St. Louis* if the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) did what? What ultimately happened with the negotiations in Cuba?
- iii. How did the United States government respond to the plight of the *St. Louis* passengers? What factors contributed towards the United States government's response to the *St. Louis*?
- iv. Where did the passengers on the *St. Louis* ultimately disembark? What organizations were able to negotiate for this to happen?

CONCLUSION

7. Exit ticket: Students write answers individually to one or both of the following questions. Check student responses for understanding.
 - a. **Primary source review:** What did you learn about Spanish-language press coverage of the *St. Louis* in June 1939? (For instance: Was it extensive coverage? Did it omit certain details? Did the coverage vary according to newspaper?) How did this compare to your initial assumptions?
 - b. **Secondary source review:** Think about the society and climate of the 1930s in the United States and Cuba. What motives, pressures, and fears in each country influenced each government's decision whether to support or not support assistance for the refugees of the *St. Louis*? Use the Holocaust Encyclopedia article "El Viaje del *St. Louis*" to help you answer this question.

EXTENSIONS

- Students can look through local newspaper archives on microfilm or digitized collections to explore whether:
 - a. *La Opinion* and *El Mundo* continued to cover the *St. Louis*.
 - b. their hometown newspapers reported on the voyage of the *St. Louis*.

The [History Unfolded website](#) has directions about how to conduct this research and share any findings with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

- Students can look through immigration ID cards [for a woman](#) and [her daughter](#), and [collections at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Spanish on the *St. Louis*](#), learning more about who the individuals were who were on the *St. Louis*.

LESSON: History Unfolded: Spanish Language Newspapers Coverage of the Holocaust

- Follow up this lesson with the “[Challenges of Escape, 1938-1941](#)” lesson plan that focuses on broader questions related to the Jewish refugee crisis in the 1930s and 40s.

ASSESSMENT

You may assess student learning by collecting and grading the article analysis organizer and/or responses to the “exit ticket” prompts