



STATE OF DECEPTION

THE POWER OF
NAZI PROPAGANDA

Redefining How We Teach Propaganda



LESSON 1 EXTENSION

UNITED STATES
MEMORIAL
**HOLOCAUST
MUSEUM** ushmm.org

LESSON 1 EXTENSION

LESSON OVERVIEW

This extension of Lesson 1 is designed to further prepare your students for a visit to *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*. Going beyond Lesson 1, this extension will use films to immerse students in the history of the Holocaust, providing background and context that will help them to understand the role of propaganda in the broader history. The film examines the three unique contexts in which Nazi propaganda operated (democracy, dictatorship, war). The lesson explores how conditions in each context affected the propaganda messages disseminated by the Nazis and public reaction to those messages. Teachers will model important visual and media literacy skills for students in order to prepare them to critically analyze the content they will see the exhibition.

LESSON RATIONALE

When analyzing propaganda it is important to look beyond the techniques and examine what was happening in society to understand why certain messages resonated. It is important for students to not just be able to identify propaganda, but to have the skills necessary to discern what makes a message effective. By examining the conditions in German society leading up to and during the Holocaust, students can gain an understanding of the factors that made Nazi propaganda messages both effective and dangerous in three distinct contexts: democracy, dictatorship, and war.

TIME

One Class Period

MATERIALS

Extension 1.1 *The Path to Nazi Genocide* film
(available at www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide)
Extension 1.2–4 Film Worksheets
Extension 1.5 Film Teacher’s Guide
Extension 1.6 Timeline
Extension 1.7 Propaganda Presentation
Extension 1.8 Diagram Worksheets
Extension 1.9 Diagram Teacher’s Guide

PROCEDURE

Before Class:

1. Download *The Path to Nazi Genocide*.
2. Make copies of the [Extension 1.2–4 Film Worksheets](#)
3. Make copies of the [Extension 1.8 Diagram Worksheets](#) or project them so the entire class can view together using the [Extension 1.7 Propaganda Presentation](#).
4. Print out and assemble the [Extension 1.6 Timeline](#) on a classroom wall.

During Class:

1. Have students watch the film and complete [Extension 1.2–4 Film Worksheets](#) that correspond to each segment of the film.
2. Prompt students to look for key concepts in the following segment of the film:
 - **Aftermath of World War I and the Rise of Nazism: 1918–1933** (corresponds to exhibition **Section I: Selling Nazism in a Democracy, 1918–1933**)
 - **Building a “National Community”: 1933–1936 and From Citizens to Outcasts: 1933–1938** (corresponds to exhibition **Section II: Propaganda and Persecution in a Dictatorship, 1933–1939**)
 - **World War II and the Holocaust: 1939–1945** (corresponds to exhibition **Section III: Propaganda For War and Mass Murder, 1939–1945**)
3. Lead a discussion about the film using the [Extension 1.5 Film Guide](#).
 - What were the key events in each context?
 - What were the emotional responses of people to these events?
 - What propaganda messages did you see in each context?
 - What were the different types of media used?
4. Model for students how to unpack the three posters from the [Extension 1.9 Diagram Teacher’s Guide](#). Using the questions from the guide, point out the visual elements of the posters that allude to the audience and how the posters play on the fears, grievances, and emotions in each historical context explored in the film.
 - **Ask students about how the message is communicated:** How are color, line graphics, depictions of people, words, and symbols used in this example to communicate a message? What is the message?

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- **Ask students about the importance of context:** Given the hopes, fears, and grievances present in society at the time, why might this message have been powerful?
 - **Ask students about the intended audience:** Who is the target audience? What about this message would be appealing to this group? What reactions might different audiences have had? Could people access and express alternative viewpoints?
 - **Ask questions about the propagandist:** Who created this? What did they hope the audience would think, feel, and do?
 - **Ask students about the impact this message could have on society:** What were the consequences of this propaganda?
5. As a class, summarize the contextual factors that influenced the impact of propaganda during each period and how they are reflected in the three posters.
- The timeline can act as a reference point to highlight key events during the period they are examining.
 - Reinforce key points about the factors that make propaganda effective in each context.

I. DEMOCRACY

The Nazis used broad, emotional appeals offering simple solutions to Germany's grave problems to win popular support. Their propaganda often downplayed more radical aspects of their agenda. Because of the challenges German society faced, it became more vulnerable to extreme messages. In this context, it was essential for citizens to critically examine the Nazis' aims. It illustrates why media literacy is so important in democracies.

II. DICTATORSHIP

The Nazis used propaganda to consolidate their power, fulfill their vision for a "national community," and persecute Jews and others perceived to be enemies of the state. Within months of Hitler becoming chancellor, the Nazi regime destroyed the country's free press. The Propaganda Ministry took control of virtually all media. The Nazis promoted their success and created an exclusive "national community" based on race. Propaganda played on existing negative stereotypes and denounced Jews as an "alien," "parasitic" presence responsible for Germany's cultural, political, and economic "degeneration."

III. WAR

Propaganda became an integral weapon in Hitler's military strategy. Propaganda was used to persuade Germans to support the war by disguising military aggression as defensive and necessary. Nazi propagandists prepared Germans to accept increased hardships at home during war time and to shut their eyes to the brutalities against the peoples of occupied territories. Propaganda sought to provoke hatred of Germany's Jews by transforming their popular perception from ordinary neighbor into internal enemy guilty of betraying Germany from within.

6. Transition to Exhibition Visit

Prompt students to consider the role of propaganda in the history of the Holocaust. What were the messages and how did they help the Nazis to advance their agenda, win public support, promote racist ideas, and create a climate of indifference?

The exhibition is in four color-coded sections (Lesson 1 Extension Teacher's PowerPoint Presentation).

Section I: Selling Nazism in a Democracy, 1918–1933 (red)

Section II: Propaganda and Persecution in a Dictatorship, 1933–1939 (yellow)

Section III: Propaganda For War and Mass Murder, 1939–1945 (blue)

Section IV: Propaganda on Trial, 1945–1948 (green)

Emphasize that students should look for unexpected ways that propaganda was disseminated by the Nazis (e.g., rallies, flags, banners, signs, posters, music, radio programs, buttons and uniforms, books, etc.).

Tell them that when they visit the exhibit, they should notice which context they are in—democracy, dictatorship, and war—and think about the power of citizens to respond differently in each section.

Prompt students to identify examples of propaganda that were effective and consider why those messages were successful. Prompt them to identify examples that did not work and consider why they failed to achieve their aims. They can look for these examples in pairs while they are in the exhibit.

Tell them that they will go on a texting tour in the exhibition, *Mind Over Media*, hosted by Holocaust survivor Margit Meissner. So remember to bring cell phones!