



**STATE OF
DECEPTION**
**THE POWER OF
NAZI PROPAGANDA**

Redefining How We Teach Propaganda



LESSON 4

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM ushmm.org

LESSON 4: Reflection and Discussion

Connecting Past and Present

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson asks students to reflect upon and discuss the themes and questions explored in *State of Deception*. A hands-on activity analyzing examples of propaganda from the exhibition synthesizes students' understanding of Nazi propaganda and provides an opportunity to practice critical analysis of messages. The lesson offers discussion prompts as a path for teachers to stimulate dialogue about the ways in which propaganda impacted history and continues to influence public discourse today.

LESSON RATIONALE

This lesson is an opportunity for students to dialogue and reflect on the ways in which propaganda affected society during the Holocaust and how it continues to affect people today. Students will be asked to connect their reflections and takeaways to the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society to respond to dangerous propaganda. Students will practice critical analysis of messages from *State of Deception* to reinforce media literacy skills.

TIME

One class period

MATERIALS

- 4.1 Bob Behr survivor testimony video (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEEuTEDfFqc>)
- 4.2 Timeline
- 4.3 Propaganda Presentation
- 4.4 Diagram Worksheet
- 4.5 Diagram Teacher's Guide

PROCEDURE

Before Class:

1. Make copies of **4.4 Diagram Worksheet** for class

During Class:

Optional:

1. **Watch 30-minute video featuring Holocaust survivor Bob Behr's testimony about growing up in Berlin, Germany, and his reflections on Nazi propaganda.** This will help to put the history presented in *State of Deception* into a personal context with anecdotes that reveal the impact of propaganda on young people during the Holocaust.
2. **Ask students for their reactions and impressions.**
 - How do Bob's anecdotes help students relate to the broader history explored in *State of Deception*?
 - What does Bob's testimony reveal about the impact of propaganda on young people in Nazi Germany? Why can propaganda have such a powerful impact on youth?

Discussion and Post-Visit Reflection

1. **Ask students to share recollections of what they saw in the exhibition.**
 - What is one artifact, poster, video, or photograph they saw in *State of Deception* that they are continuing to think about after the visit?
 - Why did it make an impression on them?
2. **Ask students to reflect on themes of the exhibition that can help them to relate to the experiences of youth in the history.**
 - How did new communication technologies amplify the Nazis' messages?
 - How and why were youth targeted by Nazi propaganda? Why were youth more vulnerable to propaganda messages?
3. **Other main themes and questions to discuss are:**
 - The prevalence of indifference and inaction by non-targeted individuals and groups.
 - The impact of exclusionary and hate propaganda on individuals.
 - The concepts of inclusion and exclusion (the appeal of belonging, the pain of exclusion).

LESSON 4: Reflection and Discussion

Connecting Past and Present

4. Ask students to share the connections they made between these themes and their lives today.

How do these themes and questions connect to their experiences?

5. Have students reflect on the following key questions about the impact of propaganda on societies and the possibility for response.

- What can we take away and apply when we encounter propaganda today?
- What makes communities vulnerable to extreme messages?
- How can we identify problematic propaganda as a “warning sign” of a potentially dangerous situation?
- What might be the consequences of propaganda unchecked? What can individuals in communities do to respond to problematic propaganda?

Critical Thinking and Synthesis Activity

1. Divide students into six groups. Assign each group an example of propaganda from the exhibit (using [4.4 Diagram Worksheets](#)).
2. Have students complete the visual analysis worksheet and diagram their example.
[4.3 Timeline](#) can be posted on wall as reference for context.

NOTE — If students did not complete [Lesson I Extension](#), the teacher will need to model for the class how to do the activity using examples from [Lesson I Extension Teacher’s Guide](#).

3. Project each example on the screen from [4.2 Propaganda Presentation](#).
4. Have students share out a summary of their responses to the piece of propaganda.

5. Using the [4.5 Diagram Teacher’s Guide](#), lead students through a discussion of the following questions.

- **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?
- **Ask students about the importance of context:** Given the hopes, fears, and grievances present in society at the time, why might this message have had power?
- **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?

6. Ask students to compare and contrast examples in each of the contexts (democracy, dictatorship, and war).

- What stands out about each example? What most captured their attention and why?
- When and why does propaganda become problematic in each context?
- What factors are necessary to consider in making that assessment?

Final Dialogue

1. Close by reflecting collectively on the final questions posed in the exhibition:
 - When is propaganda most dangerous?
 - What makes you vulnerable to propaganda?
 - How can you guard against propaganda?