

TEACHER GUIDE: Exploring State of Deception

GRADE LEVEL: Adaptable for grades 7–12

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary

TIME REQUIRED: Approximately 60–75 minutes (extensions available)

RATIONALE

This lesson is an opportunity for students to discuss and reflect on how propaganda affected society during the Holocaust and how it continues to impact people today. Students will be asked to connect these reflections to their own roles and responsibilities in a democratic society. This lesson explores the online exhibition *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* and also offers a variety of extensions exploring artifacts, images and testimony.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did propaganda help the Nazis advance their political, racial, and ultimately genocidal goals?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students understand:

- The definitions of propaganda, fact, opinion, and belief
- Common techniques of propaganda
- Factors that influence the success of propaganda (audience receptivity, choice of message and means of communication, the context in which it is spread)
- That propaganda was an essential tool used by the Nazi Party to win votes in a democratic Germany, to win support for their vision of a “National Community,” and to create a climate of indifference (or even support) as Jews experienced persecution, segregation, deportation, and eventually genocide

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Explore [State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda](#) online exhibition. The exhibition covers the role of propaganda in four distinct contexts and periods:
 - Selling Nazism in a Democracy (1918-1933)
 - The Weapons of Dictatorship: Terror and Propaganda (1933-1939)
 - Domestic Propaganda in Wartime (1939-1945)
 - Purging Germany of Nazi Propaganda (1945-1948)
- Read Holocaust Encyclopedia article [Nazi Propaganda](#) and [special series](#) (optional)
- Distribute [graphic organizers](#) to students.
- Optional: For students who need additional background information on the Holocaust, view “[The Holocaust](#)” animated map or assign a reading of the “[Introduction to the Holocaust](#)” article.

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LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The lesson is intentionally flexible to allow for individual teacher modifications to achieve the educational outcomes. Technology and teaching strategies are suggested in the instructional sequence; please use other options if they support the learning needs of your students. Consider utilizing graphic organizers, note-taking strategies, reading choices, and online engagement tools.

Educators may choose to use learner variability modifications specific to this lesson:

- Teachers can provide students with choices as to how they access information throughout lessons, i.e., read print alone, read print with a partner, read along while the teacher reads aloud, etc.
- Define terms that would clarify understanding for students.
- Use online discussion or engagement tools that work best in your classroom, such as Padlet.
- Reference the [Glossary](#) in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* for definitional support.
- Incorporate strategies such as think-pair-share and jigsaw to enhance student engagement.
- For additional accessibility, students can view similar content from the online exhibition in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* series "[Nazi Propaganda](#)" (available in multiple languages) or the *State of Deception* [Poster Set](#)

PART ONE: INTRODUCING PROPAGANDA AND EXPLORING THE ONLINE EXHIBITION IN GROUPS (30-45 MINUTES)

INTRODUCING PROPAGANDA

1. Ask students to define the term **propaganda**

ASK THE STUDENTS

- What is propaganda? How would you define it?
- Where do you see propaganda in your own lives?

Provide the Museum's definition of propaganda:

- Propaganda is biased information designed to shape public opinion and behavior. Its power depends on the following:
 - message
 - technique
 - means of communication
 - environment
 - audience receptivity
- The last two points are essential for propaganda to be successful. What people are experiencing during a particular time makes them more receptive to a specific message. Propaganda only works when the audience is already receptive to the message.

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- Propaganda uses one or more common techniques:
 - Uses truths, half-truths, or lies
 - Omits information selectively
 - Simplifies complex issues or ideas
 - Plays on emotions
 - Advertises a cause
 - Attacks opponents
 - Targets desired audiences

Optional: Students begin a [KWL chart](#) answering the question “What was the role of Nazi propaganda during the Holocaust?” before the lesson begins.

2. Ask students to explain the differences between belief, opinion, and fact. Responses can be recorded.

3. Share the definitions:

Definitions

- A **fact** is verifiable. We can determine whether it is true by researching the evidence.
- An **opinion** is a judgment based on facts, an honest attempt to draw a reasonable conclusion from factual evidence.
- Unlike an opinion, a **belief** is a conviction based on cultural or personal faith, morality, or values.

4. Ask students which of these three (belief, opinion, fact) propaganda is the best at expressing.

5. Explain that this lesson will explore **how propaganda helped the Nazis to advance their political, racial, and ultimately genocidal goals**. We will see how propaganda was a critical tool for the Nazis and how their messages, means of communication, and the context in which the messages were spread were essential to the effectiveness of their propaganda.

Optional: Students continue their [KWL chart](#) by answering the question “What was the role of Nazi propaganda during the Holocaust?”

EXPLORING THE ONLINE EXHIBITION IN GROUPS

6. Inform students that the class will now explore the online exhibition, [State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda](#), in four groups. Each group is responsible for research focused on propaganda’s role in one of the four time periods.
 - Selling Nazism in a Democracy (1918-1933)
 - The Weapons of Dictatorship: Terror and Propaganda (1933-1939)
 - Domestic Propaganda in Wartime (1939-1945)

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- Purging Germany of Nazi Propaganda (1945-1948)
7. Students use their [graphic organizers](#) to research answers to the key questions using information and examples of propaganda from the exhibition. Instruct students to read their entire assigned section, examining images and reading text, before responding to questions on their graphic organizer.
 - What form of government was in power? What was happening in Germany at the time (politically, socially, economically)? Was there free speech or opportunities to express dissenting viewpoints?
 - What was the range of messages spread through Nazi propaganda? What types of communication were used?
 - How did the context, or what was going on in Germany at the time, influence propaganda messages and the ways in which they resonated with German citizens?
 - What do you think the possible consequences are for this example of propaganda?
 8. After reading, groups will discuss the propaganda in their section and answer the key questions. They should prepare a summary of their section to share with the rest of the class.

PART TWO: SHARING AND DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)

Sharing and Synthesis

9. Students share what they learned from the online exhibition with the other groups. This can be done as a jigsaw or as groups reporting to the whole class. Students should share examples of propaganda from their exhibition section to illustrate what they learned about the Nazis' messages, vehicles of communication, and the context in which messages were spread.

Discussion

10. Either back in small groups or a whole class discussion, return to the key questions. Compare and contrast conclusions drawn about each period. Consider the following additional questions:
 - What examples of propaganda made the strongest impression on you and why?
 - What did you notice about the Nazis' messages and how they changed over time? How did people's ability to access and express opposing points of view change over time?
 - How did the impact of technology change the way information was spread?
 - How and why were youth targeted by Nazi propaganda? Why might youth have been more vulnerable to Nazi messages?
 - Propaganda operates very differently in our context today. We live in a nation governed by the First Amendment, and technology has made each individual's ability to reach and influence others more powerful. What does this mean for your ability to identify propaganda and navigate this environment?

Optional: Students finish their [KWL chart](#) by answering the question, "What was the role of Nazi propaganda during the Holocaust?" Hold a class discussion based on their responses in the KWL chart.

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CONCLUSION

ASSESSMENT

Return to this essential question and reflect on some additional themes raised by the exhibition.

- How did propaganda help the Nazis advance their political, racial, and ultimately genocidal goals?

Reflection (discussion or writing assignment)

Students may reflect on one or more of the questions below, using both historical content discovered in the online exhibition and their own lived experiences and observations about the use of propaganda.

- How did Nazi propaganda create a climate of indifference to the plight of the Jewish people?
- How do the themes and questions connect to your experiences with propaganda?
- 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 harmful propaganda unchecked? What can individuals in communities do to respond to problematic propaganda?
- Propaganda operates very differently in our context today. We live in a nation governed by the First Amendment, and technology has made each individual’s ability to reach and influence others more powerful. What does this mean for your ability to identify propaganda and navigate this environment?

EXTENSION OPTIONS

Artifact Analysis

Begin with an introductory discussion about the significance of artifacts in understanding history. Explain: Material culture is evidence of human experience. Examples include photographs, written documents, letters, diaries, clothing, jewelry, toys, etc. Historical artifacts are an example of material culture that can deepen our understanding of personal experiences.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- What special objects do people save and why?
- What kinds of objects are in museums?
- Why would a museum keep an ordinary object?

Next, students review the selected artifact from the State of Deception online exhibition, [German Radio: The People’s Receiver](#). As a class or in groups, discuss with students how the meaning of an object can change over time.

Students examine the artifact and record answers on the [handout](#). Students discuss in small groups and share or discuss the following questions as a class: (optional: students can answer on page 2 of the handout)

- How might the meaning of this object change over time?
 - What do you think this object meant to the original owner?

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- Why might the original owner have kept this object later?
- Why is this object something important to keep in a museum now?
- How does this artifact deepen our understanding of individual experiences during the Holocaust?

Conclude by asking: How does this object deepen our understanding of propaganda during the Holocaust?

Propaganda Poster Analysis

Provide students with the [Propaganda Analysis handout](#) and access to the State of Deception Online Exhibition. Students can select propaganda posters on the handout to analyze and answer questions based on the following facets of propaganda: Message, Context, Audience, Creator, and Consequences.

Testimony Analysis

Before or during class, students watch a 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 the *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* into a personal context. Bob's anecdotes reveal the impact of propaganda on young people during the Holocaust.

After watching the video, ask students for their reactions and impressions.

- How do Bob's stories relate to the broader history presented in the exhibition?
- What examples does Bob give to show that his family felt they were part of the national community?
- 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?
- What are your takeaways from watching the video and exploring the exhibition?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Nazi Propaganda [Bibliography](#)

State of Deception [Poster Set](#)

Holocaust Encyclopedia [articles](#) on Propaganda