AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST

TEACHER GUIDE
INTERPRETING NEWS OF WORLD EVENTS 1933–1938
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OVERVIEW

By examining news coverage around three key events related to the early warning signs of the Holocaust, students will learn that information about the Nazi persecution of European Jews was available to the public. They will also consider the question of what other issues or events were competing for Americans’ attention and concern at the same time. Despite the many issues that were on their minds during the period 1933–1938, some Americans took actions to help persecuted Jews abroad, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

This lesson explores the following questions:
- How did Americans learn about the Nazi persecution of Jews in Europe in the context of other international, national, and local news stories? How did they make sense of these events?

HISTORY KEY QUESTIONS EXPLORED
1. What information about the Nazi persecution of Jews was being reported in the news media throughout the United States?
2. What else was being covered in the news and competing for the public’s attention during this period?
3. How did Americans respond to this knowledge? What impact did these actions have?
4. How might competing issues have influenced the willingness of the American public to respond to the early persecution of Jews in Europe?

HISTORY LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1. Students will learn that information about the persecution of European Jews was available in newspapers throughout the United States.
2. Students will understand that competing concerns influenced the willingness of the American people to respond to this persecution.
3. Some Americans took actions in an effort to help persecuted Jews abroad, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

ELA/MEDIA LITERACY KEY QUESTIONS EXPLORED
1. What influences the interpretation of events in newspapers?
2. How do topics in the news become meaningful to readers?
3. How is the significance of events communicated to the public?
4. How do individual readers decide which news stories are more important than others?

Time
1–2 class periods
PROCEDURE

Introduction/Context
- Teachers may wish to read the Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia article, *The United States and the Nazi Threat: 1933–37* as preparation for this lesson.
- Ask students to recall events and trends occurring during the years surrounding 1933. Possible answers include: the Great Depression, prohibition, isolationism, aftermath of World War I, fears of communism, anti-immigrant sentiment, racism.
- If needed, review the introductory slides, which set the context for that period in the United States and in Germany.
- Ask students, “What do you think Americans knew about what was happening in Nazi Germany at this time?”

Reading and Analyzing Historical Newspapers
- Using the sample newspaper, demonstrate to the class how to analyze the newspaper, identify the article relevant to the events of the Holocaust, and answer the questions in the worksheet.
- Split the class into groups of 2–3 students.
- Distribute one newspaper front page and the lesson worksheet to each group.
- Students survey and analyze their group’s newspaper and complete the worksheet. Students discuss the differences in their interpretations of the newspaper and work them out to draw conclusions as a group.
- Students are asked to answer the following questions:
  - Which of the news stories covered that day would a reader be most concerned about? Why?
  - What does the article on this front page reveal about the information Americans had about the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany?
  - In light of all of the issues of the day and what you know about this time period, how might readers have reacted to this story?

Presentation and Discussion
- In chronological order by event (boycott/Nuremberg Laws/Olympics), ask groups to present their newspaper front page and their analysis to the class.
  Possible discussion questions:
  - Do you agree or disagree with this group’s conclusions? Why/why not?
  - What are the similarities and differences in how the events of the Holocaust were covered in the newspapers? How might the similarities and differences have impacted the reader’s concern about these events?
- As the presentations on each event conclude, ask the class to consider the provided case studies that show how some Americans responded to that event. You can select 1–2 examples from the collection of materials provided to best suit your class.
  Possible discussion questions:
  - Why do you think these people decided to take this action?
  - Do you think these actions had an impact? Why or why not?
- Follow this process for each event, alternating presentations of the newspaper with examples of actual responses to that event.
OPTIONAL EXTENSION

Connecting the Past to the Present

Look at the front page of a recent newspaper. What article are you most drawn to and why? What topics do you follow most closely? Which do you neglect? How does looking at historical examples shed light on the challenges we might face in motivating the public to respond to threats to people abroad today?

STANDARDS MET

AP US History

- In the 1930s, while many Americans were concerned about the rise of fascism and totalitarianism, most opposed taking military action against the aggression of Nazi Germany and Japan until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drew the United States into World War II.

US History State Standards

- Students analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural developments of the 1920s
- Students analyze the different explanations of the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the Federal government.
  - 1. Monetary issues/Federal Reserve established, 3. Discuss the human toll of the Depression, 4. Effects and controversies arising from New Deal economic policies and expanded role of federal government in society and the economy, 5. Advances and retreats of organized labor

Common Core Standards

- RL/RI.X.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- RL/RI.X.6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- RL/RI.X.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- W.X.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- W.X.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- SL.X.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL.X.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
About the Nazis’ Boycott of Jewish Businesses

SUMMARY
In the first nationwide, planned action against Jews, Nazis boycotted Jewish businesses and professionals throughout Germany.

In March 1933, the SA (Storm Troopers) attacked Jewish-owned department stores in German cities in an attempt to segregate Jews from the rest of society. Local police, not yet under Nazi control, unsuccessfully attempted to stop the attacks. Members of the SA continued the rampage and entered courtrooms, dragging Jewish lawyers and judges into the streets where they are subjected to humiliating public acts. International Jewish organizations and the press, which urged a boycott of German goods, publicized these attacks. In response, the Nazis organized the April 1, 1933, nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses in Germany, blaming Jews for the anti-German tone of the international press.

On the day of the boycott, Storm Troopers (Sturmabteilung; SA) stood menacingly in front of Jewish-owned department stores and retail establishments, and the offices of professionals such as doctors and lawyers. The Star of David was painted in yellow and black across thousands of doors and windows, with accompanying antisemitic slogans. Signs were posted saying, “Don’t Buy from Jews” and “The Jews Are Our Misfortune.” In some towns, the SA marched through streets singing anti-Jewish slogans and party songs. Throughout Germany, acts of violence against individual Jews and Jewish property occurred; the police intervened only rarely.

The official boycott began at 10 a.m. and ended at midnight. Although the national boycott operation, organized by local Nazi party chiefs, lasted only one day and was ignored by many individual Germans who continued to shop in Jewish-owned stores, it marked the beginning of a nationwide campaign by the Nazi party against the entire German Jewish population. A week later, on April 7, 1933, the German government enacted the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which restricted employment in the civil service to Aryans. Jewish government workers, including teachers in public schools and universities, were fired. Similar laws were passed in the following weeks affecting Jewish lawyers and doctors.

LEARN MORE
Boycott of Jewish Businesses (Encyclopedia Article)
Salt Lake Telegram, April 1, 1933
About the Announcement of the Nuremberg Race Laws

SUMMARY

At their annual party rally, Nazi leaders announced new laws that defined Jews as a “race” and stripped them of basic citizenship rights.

The German government decreed the Nuremberg Race Laws (Reich Citizenship Law and Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor) on September 15, 1935. The laws were passed during a special session of the Nazi-controlled Reichstag at the party’s rally in Nuremberg, Germany.

These laws institutionalized many of the racial theories underpinning Nazi ideology and provided the legal framework for the systematic persecution of Jews in Germany. The laws excluded Jews from Reich citizenship and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of “German or German-related blood.” Ordinances supporting these laws deprived German Jews of their right to participate in the political process, including by voting or running for public office.

These laws represented a major shift from traditional antisemitism, which defined Jews by religious belief, to a conception of Jews as members of a race, defined by blood and by lineage. For this reason, the Nuremberg Race Laws did not identify a “Jew” as someone with particular religious convictions, but instead as someone with three or four Jewish grandparents. Many Germans who had not practiced Judaism or who had not done so for years found themselves caught in the grip of Nazi terror. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity could be defined as Jews.

On November 14, 1935, the first supplemental decree of the Nuremberg Laws extended the prohibition to marriage or sexual relations between people who could produce “racially suspect” offspring. A week later, the Minister of the Interior interpreted this to mean relations between “those of German or related blood” and Roma (Gypsies), blacks, or their offspring.

LEARN MORE

Nuremberg Race Laws: Background (Encyclopedia Article)
The Nuremberg Race Laws (The Holocaust: A Learning Site for Students)
Anti-Jewish Legislation in Pre-War Germany (Encyclopedia Article)
Racism (Encyclopedia Article)
BOYCOTT PLANS MAPPED AT GENEVA

Long’s Aide Charges District Attorney With Plot

CLASH OCCURS AS CORONER REOPENS LOUISIANA PROBE

More Given Reheat Pigeon An Assailant Smith As Mahalab Sees

DRAMATIC SCENES TAKE PLACE AT INVESTIGATION

Detective Captured, Fush Cut to Mouth Upon Receiving Hospital

APPROVAL OF CASH BONUS PREDICTED BY VAN ZANDT

U.S. Congressman, Chairman of Post Office Organization States Annual Enlargement of New Orleans

COURT ASKED BY U.S. NOT TO ACT ON GUUFFY SUIT

Attorneys Urged Dismissal of Hearings Legal Challenge On Coal Measure

LEGISLATION ATTACHED BY WEST VIRGINIA REP.

Committee Must Have Time To Work Out New Pulp On Mine Waste

PAIR FREED ON BOND IN PROBE OF ACTRESS’ DEATH

ECONOMIC ACTION VIEWED LIKELY IF Duce STARTS WAR

More Taken Up by Members of League of Nations by Reich Colonial

SMALL COUNTRIES WARN AGAINST AFRICAN DRIVE

Prussian, Nazi, African States and Nazi Germany Annexes As Opposed to conquest

VESSELS OF WAR SLIP QUIETLY OUT OF BRITISH PORT

Many of Fleet Moving From Portland, New York to Mediterranean

HAILIL SELASSIE LIKELY TO ISSUE WAR CALL SOON

ITALIAN SUBMARINE INDIA BOUND Puts Out To Sancronit For Protection In Port of Tripoli

DETENTION GETS SIX MONTHS ON PERJURY COUNT

Line To Key West May Be Abandoned

Hitler Relegates Jews To Their Medieval Status

Nazi Forces Pass New Anti-Semitic Laws, Proclaim Serbs As The Reich’s National Race

CINITY BALLOTTING DUE TO EXCEED TOTAL OF 2,000

Papal Nuncio Speaks Of World Peace in Update from Rome

PAPER MILL REMAINS DUE TO STORE
DEATHS OF 9 INTENSIFY SAFETY CAMPAIGN

ASks Conference To Prevent War

With Five State Presidents Plagued by War Risks

POLAND AND PUSSY IN MIST

Thrusted Italian-Balkan Conflict to South China, India

CUBA: Nationalist Movement Takes a Step Forward

The Wallflower

The wallflower, once a symbol of feminine beauty, now a victim of destruction.

FOURTEEN DEAD IN FIGHT ON BATTLESHIP

Aboard the ship, a battle rages amidst the chaos of war.

THE WALL FLOWER

HUSBAND IS HELD IN MURDER CASE

The husband is arrested in connection with the murder of his wife.

YUGOSLAVIA: Slovak Government Rejects

The government's stance on the situation in Slovakia.

AMERICANS IN EUROPE

Chinese Government's Proposal for Peace

The Chinese government's proposal for peace.

AMERICAN AND THE HOLOCAUST

Indianapolis News, September 16, 1936
About the Debate to Send the US Team to the Berlin Olympics

After months of public debate about whether the United States should send a team to the “Nazi Olympics,” the Amateur Athletic Union narrowly voted against a boycott of the games.

SUMMARY

In 1931, the International Olympic Committee awarded the 1936 Summer Olympics to Berlin. Soon after Hitler took power in 1933, observers in the United States and other western democracies questioned the morality of supporting Olympic Games hosted by the Nazi regime.

Responding to reports of the persecution of Jewish athletes in 1933, Avery Brundage, president of the American Olympic Committee (AOC), like many others in the Olympic movement, initially considered moving the games from Germany. However, after a brief and tightly managed inspection of German sports facilities in 1934, Brundage stated publicly that Jewish athletes were being treated fairly and that the games should go on as planned.

Judge Jeremiah Mahoney, president of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), led efforts to boycott the 1936 Olympics, pointing out that Germany had broken Olympic rules forbidding discrimination based on race and religion. New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, New York Governor Al Smith, and Massachusetts Governor James Curley also opposed sending a team to Berlin. The Catholic journal the Commonweal (November 8, 1935) advised boycotting an Olympics that would set the seal of approval on radically anti-Christian Nazi doctrines.

However, a Brundage maneuvered the AAU to a close vote in favor of sending an American team to Berlin, and once the AAU of the United States voted for participation in December 1935, other countries fell in line and the wider boycott movement failed.

On August 1, 1936, Hitler opened the XIth Olympiad. The games were a propaganda success for the Nazi government. Adolf Hitler’s Nazi dictatorship camouflaged its racist, militaristic character and exploited the games to bedazzle many foreign spectators and journalists with an image of a peaceful, tolerant Germany. As post-Olympics reports were filed, Hitler pressed on with grandiose plans for German expansion. Nazi persecution of Jews resumed.

LEARN MORE

Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936 (Online Exhibition)
The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936 (Encyclopedia Article)
The Movement to Boycott the Berlin Olympics of 1936 (Encyclopedia Article)
The Nazi Olympics: African American Voices and “Jim Crow” America (Encyclopedia Article)
1936: Key Dates (Encyclopedia Article)
Hauptmann Loses in Supreme Court

Youngstown Vindicator, December 9, 1935
The Healdsburg Tribune

MAJOR ISSUES FLOWED IN 1935 FOR CONGRESS
Session Begins Jan. 3. May Adjourn by End of May

J. F. SHIVER, WELL KNOWN IN COUNTY, PASSES
Wax Rancher Fifty Years in This Valley

ITALY MASSES BIG FLEET IN RED SEA AREA
Most Powerful Ever Massed in East Waters

TOWNSEND STILL HOPES TO ELECT NEXT PRESIDENT

INTERNATIONAL ARMED ENTHUSIASTS ARE WITH GERMANY

CLOVERDALE TO HAVE OPENING OF CITY HALL

LAVAL WINS IN POLITICAL TEST BY CLOSE VOTE

Healdsburg Tribune, December 28, 1935
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