



AMERICANS

AND THE HOLOCAUST

TEACHER GUIDE
INTERPRETING NEWS
OF WORLD EVENTS
1933–1938

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

WILLIAM LEVINE FAMILY INSTITUTE
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

ushmm.org/americans

INTERPRETING NEWS OF WORLD EVENTS 1933–1938

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

Cover photo: A newly freed prisoner of the Buchenwald concentration camp made this flag and gave it to Sergeant Donald Hall in 1945. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum collection, gift of the family of Donald J. Hall*

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

- E) 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

- 11.5 Students analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural developments of the 1920s
 - 3. 18th Amendment (Prohibition), 4. Changing role of women, 6. Growth and effects of radio and movies, diffusion of popular culture, 7. Mass production, growth of cities, etc.
- 11.6 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)

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)

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

MOVE TO BREAK PARLEY ON NEW NRA IS SPIKED

"Liar" Healed as Berry Prohibits Talks at Conference

DEFIES CHALLENGER TO 'COME AND FIGHT'

On-Drive Industrialists and Labor to Get Together at Round Tables

The Supreme Court today has ruled against the industrialists in their attempt to break the parley on the new National Recovery Act. The court's decision is a blow to the industrialists and a victory for the labor union movement.

SAWYER QUITS GOVERNOR RACE

Withdraws as Dovey Opponent in May Primary

GIVES HIS REASON AS "VERY PERSONAL"

Wishes and Young Fathel Into Lighthead as Likely Candidates

Gov. Sawyer today announced his withdrawal from the race for governor in the May primary. He cited "very personal" reasons for his decision.

PEACE OR WAR UP TO DUCE

Speeches Address Give No Light on Answer to Power Tactics

Speeches given by Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler today gave no clear indication of their answers to the question of world peace or war.

Women's Club Leaders Back Voting Machines for County

Say Devices Simplify Voting, Speed Up Results, Remove Suspicion of "Croskandness"

Women's club leaders in the county today backed the use of voting machines, claiming they would simplify the voting process and speed up the counting of ballots.

Don't Overlook These Christmas Specials

Volves Like These Can Be Found Daily in the Ward-Ade

- SECRET JERSEY \$7.95
- COFFEE TARIUM \$4.95
- WAGONS \$4.95
- Two Three Two—Need All Set Add

Fly to Swedish Santa Claus



Swedish Santa Claus is expected to arrive in Youngstown today on a special flight. The Santa Claus is a young woman dressed in a traditional Swedish Santa Claus costume.

U. S. TAKES LEAD IN MOVE TO CUT WORLD'S NAVIES

Urges 20 Per Cent Reduction in Treaty Tonnage

JAPAN STANDS FIRM IN DEMANDING EGGS

Bolivia Opens Meet with Its Against World Naval Race

The United States today took the lead in a move to reduce the world's navies by 20 percent under the terms of the 1921 naval treaty.

GUARD MOTHER AS BABE DIES

Policewomen on Duty at Home as Poison Kills Infant

A young mother today was charged with the death of her infant child, who died of poisoning while she was on duty as a police officer.

TORCH SLAYER TRIAL OPENS

Begin Selecting Jury—Warren Court Room Crowded

The trial of the man charged with the slaying of a young woman today opened in a crowded courtroom. The jury selection process is under way.

I SLAIN IN GUN BATTLE ON BUS

Policeman, Kills Man After He Threatens to Slay His Ex-Wife

A police officer today shot and killed a man who threatened to slay his ex-wife. The incident occurred on a city bus.

Can a Woman Love Twice?

Can a woman's heart be divided between two men? This is the question raised by the case of a woman who claims to have loved two men at the same time.

Mrs. Roosevelt Again Heads 10 Most Outstanding Women

Judge Allen and Anne Lindbergh Are Included by Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt

Mrs. Roosevelt today again headed the list of the 10 most outstanding women in the world, as chosen by Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt.

Man May Lose an Eye

A man today may lose an eye if he does not get medical attention immediately. He was injured in an accident at work.

Secret Wife

A man today may lose an eye if he does not get medical attention immediately. He was injured in an accident at work.

Single Word, "Denied," Seals Kidnap's Fate

By EDWIN D. WATNEY

Washington, Dec. 8.—Robert Lee, the son of a man whose abduction was denied by Bruce Edward Thompson today when the Thompsons refused to release his son.

Olympic Boycott Beaten In Fiery A. A. U. Battle

Congress Adopted an Anti-Nazi Law Fight to Bar Athletes from Berlin—Association President Resigns

The American Amateur Athletic Union today defeated the Olympic boycott in a fiery battle with the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

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Policewomen on Duty at Home as Poison Kills Infant

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Vindicator

Witnessed Banishing



The man in the photograph today witnessed the banishing of a person from the community. The event was held in a public square.

JEWISH DRIVE PASSES QUOTA

Workers Report 1,200 Pledges, Total Over \$10,000 Goal

FEDERATION WILL HAVE QUARTERS

Points to Move Charge of Office; Export to Increase Pledges

The Jewish drive today passed the quota of 1,200 pledges, with a total amount raised in excess of \$10,000.

S-T'S 4TH STACK MAY BE REBUILT

\$200,000 Job Would Put Furnace, Dues 8 Years, Back in Commission

The fourth stack of the S-T plant today may be rebuilt, at a cost of \$200,000. This would allow the furnace to be put back in commission.

Cars Deregulated on N. Y. C.

Foreign Trains Deported

Cars in New York City today were deregulated, and foreign trains were deported from the city.

Davies Expected To Refuse Post

It is expected today that Davies will refuse the post of ambassador to a certain country. The news is based on reports from the State Department.

In Today's Vindicator

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