



**HOLOCAUST MUSEUM LA
TEACHER GUIDE AND
STUDENT RESOURCES**

**Encountering and Combating
Antisemitism**

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Introduction

Objectives

The education philosophy of Holocaust Museum LA is to teach about the Holocaust through **oral history** and primary sources. This guide is intended to engage your students in this important history through Holocaust survivor testimony and historical context to understand the past and build a more dignified future. This lesson uses primary source material to define and contextualize antisemitism before, during, and after Holocaust. It encourages students to analyze various primary sources such as visual artifacts and newspapers to help them develop the necessary tools to identify and understand antisemitic tropes.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and contextualize antisemitic stereotypes and propaganda
- Understand the roots of antisemitic myths and how they relate to wider narratives and power structures
- Develop an understanding of what antisemitism is, its historical roots, and its various forms, including overt and subtle expressions. They should learn about the impact of antisemitism on individuals, communities, and societies.
- Acknowledge the presence of antisemitism in modern society and combat its growing normalization
- Strengthen critical thinking skills by introducing an inquiry-based learning method to students
- Learn how to approach and analyze primary sources such as images and quotes
- Reinforce the importance of using Holocaust education to inspire a more dignified and humane world
- Antisemitism began prior to the Holocaust and continued after

Essential Questions

What is antisemitism and how has this form of hatred endured into the contemporary era?

How does the Holocaust fit into the context of antisemitism?

How can we stop the growing normalization of antisemitic myths and stereotypes?

How can misinformation be countered in order to combat efforts to deny the Holocaust's occurrence?

What can we do to make a difference in the face of antisemitism and other forms of hate?

History of Holocaust Museum LA

Founded in 1961, Holocaust Museum LA is the first survivor-founded and oldest Holocaust museum in the nation and houses the West Coast's largest collection of Holocaust-era artifacts. The Museum continues the founding survivors' mission to commemorate those who perished, honor those who survived, educate future generations about the Holocaust, and inspire a more dignified and humane world.



The Museum teaches students and visitors – both on-site and online – the critical lessons and continued social relevance of the Holocaust through customized tours, artifact-rich exhibits, creative programs, and intergenerational conversations with Holocaust survivors. Admission is free for all students and youth 17 and under. The Museum also provides bus transportation grants for schools where field trips would otherwise be cost-prohibitive.

Learning from survivor testimony and the Museum's primary sources and educational programming empowers students and public visitors to speak out and stand up to hatred, bigotry, and antisemitism.

The Holocaust: An Overview

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic mass murder of those identified as Jewish perpetrated by Nazi Germany, its allies, and collaborators. From their initial rise to power, the Nazi Government worked to systematically marginalize, segregate, and dehumanize the Jewish population, along with other minority groups, which later manifested in **genocide**.

While the term “Holocaust” has come to denote the destruction and murder of Jewish communities by Nazi Germany and its allies, the original word holocaust stems from the Greek word for “burnt offering.” The term holocaust can also be found in the Biblical text Samuel 1: 7-9, where it refers to the consumption of a sacrifice by fire. The Hebrew word for the Holocaust is Shoah, which connotes a calamity, disaster, or destruction that cannot be fully described by human language.

A genocide is the deliberate and systematic attempted annihilation of a national, racial, ethnic, or religious group of people.

Life Before the Holocaust

For 2,000 years after the Jewish people lost their political independence in the Land of Israel, most Jews lived in diaspora as a minority group spread across the globe. In most cases, they maintained their religious practices and traditions, forming a rich culture in various empires, nations, and states they inhabited.

In 1933, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, comprising 1.7% of the total European population. This number represented more than 60% of the world's Jewish population at that time, estimated at 15.3 million. Most Jews in pre-war Europe resided in Eastern Europe, with the largest community in Poland, where Jewish communities settled in the 12th century. By 1933, the Jewish population in Poland numbered over three million and comprised roughly 10% of the total Polish population.

Jews throughout history faced persecution, discrimination, limited rights, and even death because of their identity. By the end of the 19th century, the majority of Jews living in Western and Central Europe were emancipated and subsequently granted equal rights. Post emancipation, Jews across Europe lived varied lifestyles. Some Jews continued to live in traditional religious communities, while others assimilated into the urban landscape. Jews had a variety of professions ranging from farmers to doctors, tailors to teachers, and other jobs common at the time. Like their fellow citizens, wealth varied a great deal between Jewish families.

The Rise of Nazism

From the end of World War I in 1919 to the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933, the German government was a democracy called the **Weimar Republic**. Despite economic challenges and the great depression, the Weimar Republic saw a period of

remarkable cultural and intellectual creativity and freedom, known as the Golden Twenties. Berlin became a vibrant center of artistic expression, with advancements in literature, theater, film, architecture, and science. As a fledgling democracy, there was also a shift to protect human rights and freedoms.

However, when World War I ended, the Germans were required to pay a large reparation sum to the victorious countries for the war's cost. This, and chronic political instability that arose during the Weimar Republic, plagued Germany in the 1920s and led to economic and social strife throughout the country, which was further exacerbated by the Great Depression. In 1921, the National Socialist German Workers Party, or **Nazi Party**, was founded. The party was explicitly anti-communist and anti-Marxist. It condemned the liberalism of the Weimar Republic and sought for a return to the "authenticity" of Germany. The party valued nationalism, "**Aryanism**," and a revival of **nativism**. The Nazi Party's popularity within German society varied through the 1920s, but they secured their position in government through a coalition in 1933.

On January 30th, 1933, Germany's President, Paul von Hindenburg, appointed Adolf Hitler to be the Chancellor of Germany, the second most powerful position in the country. Those who opposed Hitler believed that von Hindenburg's position and power would control and balance the government. Adolf Hitler's antisemitic ideology was apparent in his writing and speeches before his entrance into the German political sphere. In his infamous 1924 memoir, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes, "...No one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the devil, as the symbol of all evil, assumes the living shape of the Jew." In his public speeches, Adolf Hitler capitalized on Germany's unstable environment in the 1920s and 30s, blaming Germany's defeat and failing economy on Liberals, Marxists, and Jews. Hitler asserted his hatred of Jews, whom he considered a "foreign race," and proclaimed the supremacy of the "**Aryan race**" as well as a need for racial purity. Hitler and the Nazis found it imperative to reverse the decades of **emancipation** and **assimilation** by ostracizing Jews and other minority groups, thereby fulfilling their objective of creating a commanding, powerful, and "racially pure" German Empire.

The Outbreak of War and Genocide

On August 23rd, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a **Non-aggression Pact** (the **Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact**) that guaranteed neither country would attack the other and laid out the division of an occupied Poland. On September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and two days later, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, marking the beginning of World War II. The Polish army was defeated in less than a month, and Poland was partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union, as agreed upon in the Non-aggression Pact.

At the time of the invasion, there were roughly 3 million Polish Jews living in Poland. In response to the large number of Jews under their authority, the Nazis began a process of ghettoization, establishing the first **ghetto** in Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland in October 1939. Jews from smaller towns and villages were brought to more populated areas

where ghettos had been established, allowing the Nazis more control over the Jewish populations. Daily life in the ghettos was horrible. Families were crowded together in unsanitary apartments, food was limited, and diseases ran rampant. Starvation, inadequate health care, extreme overcrowding, deadly diseases such as dysentery and typhus, and severe weather caused hundreds of thousands of deaths.

In the spring of 1940, Germany began its assault on Western Europe, invading Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. In June 1940, France signed an armistice with Germany, allowing the German occupation of the northern half of the country, while the southern half of France remained under control of the collaborating Vichy government. The armistice remained until November 1942, when German troops invaded and occupied the area.

Germany broke the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact on June 22nd, 1941, with their invasion of the Soviet Union during **Operation Barbarossa**. Hitler and the Nazi elite viewed this war not only as a territorial battle between countries but as a racial war between the Aryans and those regarded as “subhuman.” Under the cover of war, the Nazis began a systematic mass murder of European Jews throughout Eastern Europe. Beginning in the summer of 1941, **Einsatzgruppen** (Mobile Killing Units) murdered those perceived to be racial or political enemies of Nazi Germany, including Jewish women and children.

As the **Wehrmacht** moved through eastern Europe, Einsatzgruppen units followed them, murdering over one million Jews. Although some Einsatzgruppen units used gas vans, the primary method of murder was mass shootings of victims into shallow, mass graves. Several reports demonstrated the psychological impact of the shootings on the soldiers themselves, which, in addition to the desire for a more streamlined and efficient method of murder, led the Germans to establish permanent **death camp** facilities – the first of which opened in Chelmno, Poland in December of 1941.

On January 20th, 1942, the chief of the Reich Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich, organized the **Wannsee Conference** to direct and coordinate the **“Final Solution to the Jewish Question”** – a euphemism for the systemic, deliberate physical annihilation of the Jewish Population. The fifteen mid-level officials in attendance represented the relevant government industries needed to smoothly organize this plan to systematically murder the European and West Asian Jewish populations. To implement the Final Solution, six death camps were expanded and built in different locations in Poland: Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek.

Jews were deported from the ghettos to transit camps and from there were sent to various **concentration camps**. Upon arrival at the death camps, prisoners were ordered to leave their belongings and strip off their clothes in preparation for showers. They were then assembled in large numbers in the gas chambers, where they were killed within minutes. It is estimated that, at the height of the **deportations**, up to 6,000 Jews were gassed each day in Auschwitz-Birkenau alone.

In 1942, the Allied governments learned of the murderous intentions of Nazi Germany and issued public condemnations. Despite these condemnations, 1942 was the deadliest year of the Holocaust, as approximately 2.7 million Jews were murdered that year, and the deportations and gassings continued.

Germany's invasion of its ally, Hungary, on March 19th, 1944, drastically changed the situation for Hungarian Jews. With the advancing Soviet Army on the Eastern Front and the military decline of the Third Reich, the Nazi Government focused its efforts on quickly deporting and gassing over 400,000 Hungarian Jews in the time between Hungary's invasion in 1944 and the end of World War II in 1945.

The Conclusion of the War

As the **Red Army** rapidly advanced on the Eastern Front, the Germans attempted to destroy evidence of mass murder. The Soviets liberated Auschwitz on January 27th, 1945. However, the Nazis had already bombed the gas chambers and forced the majority of Auschwitz prisoners out of the camp on a westward death march. Thus, Soviet soldiers found only several thousand prisoners when they entered the camp.

U.S. forces liberated Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany on April 11th, 1945; however, the Nazis had evacuated the camp a few days prior, and only 20,000 remaining prisoners were liberated. U.S. forces also liberated Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbürg, Dachau, and Mauthausen. More than 10,000 prisoners died from malnutrition or disease within a few weeks of liberation.

Liberators confronted unspeakable conditions in the Nazi camps, such as emaciated prisoners and piles of unburied corpses. Although rumors and information about the brutal mass murder were known as early as 1942, the full scope of the Nazi-perpetrated horrors were exposed to the world only after liberation. Disease was rampant in the camps, and many camp structures were burned to prevent the spread of epidemics. Survivors of the camps faced a long and difficult road to recovery. Many Survivors ended up in **Displaced Persons (DP) Camps** following liberation.

After Germany's surrender in 1945, the Allied forces held a series of military tribunals – **the Nuremberg trials** – to prosecute individuals involved in the political, military, judicial, and economic apparatus of Nazi Germany. Beginning on October 18th, 1945, with the indictment of 24 individuals and several organizations, the Nuremberg trials were the first act of legal justice for victims of the Nazi regime.

A milestone in contemporary international law, the Nuremberg trials were instrumental in establishing a legal precedent and a historic legacy of holding individual war criminals responsible for their crimes against humanity and in creating standards of human rights. The first Nuremberg trial indicted war criminals on four charges: participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace; planning, initiating, and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace; war crimes;

and crimes against humanity. Twelve of the defendants were sentenced to death, seven were sentenced to imprisonment, and three were found innocent and acquitted. The Nuremberg trials served as a model for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Geneva Convention (1949), and the International Criminal Court (1998).

Antisemitism: Then and Now

What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism is hostility toward or hatred of Jews as a religious, cultural, or ethnic group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination.

There has been a recent call and shift to remove the hyphen from the word antisemitism and lower the “s”, as “semites” is an obsolete term for describing an ethnic, cultural, or racial group (like Jews for example). Thus, the hyphen is to be removed as to not insinuate that Jews are semites. Nevertheless, antisemitism as a term means hatred of Jews.

What is Judaism?

Judaism is a monotheistic ethno-religion, traditionally believing in one god. Individuals may associate or identify with Judaism primarily through ethnic or cultural characteristics. In this sense, Judaism is more similar to a nationality than other religions.

Judaism is a very old religion, older than Christianity and Islam. It originated during the second millennium BCE in the part of the Levant known as the Land of Israel. Jewish ethnicity, nationhood, and religion are strongly interrelated, although its religious observance varies from strict to none.

The original name for the people we now call Jews was Hebrews. The word “Hebrew” (in Hebrew, “Ivri”) is first used in the Torah to describe Abraham, who is the biblical father of Jews. The word “Jew” (in Hebrew, “Yehudi”) is derived from Judah, which was the name of one of Jacob's twelve sons and a tribe.

Central to Jewish belief is the concept of covenant, a special relationship between God and the Jewish people, which is expressed through the Torah. Jewish traditional observance includes regular prayer, study of Torah and other Jewish texts, observance of the Sabbath and other holidays, and adherence to dietary laws (kashrut) and other religious practices. Jewish culture includes a rich tradition of literature, music, art, and cuisine that reflects the history and diversity of the Jewish people.

Jewish life is guided by its annual and life cycle calendars. The annual calendar is a semi-lunar, seasonal calendar with approximately 354 days in one year on a 12-month cycle, with an extra month (Adar II) added occasionally to compensate for the difference between the lunar and solar calendars.

Prior to the Holocaust, the global Jewish population reached a peak of 16.7 million, representing around 0.7% of the world's population. Today, it is around 0.2%.

Perpetual Antisemitic Myths and Tropes

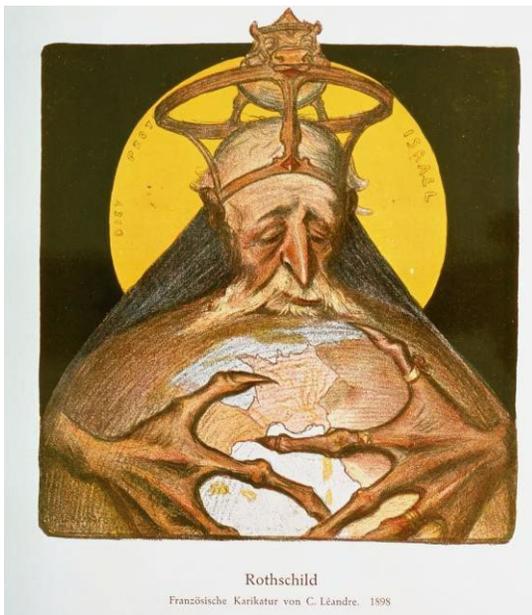
While the term “**antisemitism**” is relatively new, dating back to the 19th century, antisemitic ideas and violence have occurred for thousands of years.

Throughout history, Jews were often blamed for many social, economic, or political problems, serving as scapegoats. Over the centuries, prominent antisemitic tropes have been used to incite prejudice and violence against the Jewish people time and again.

These tropes, or negative **stereotypes**, are all unequivocally false; however, they are still used as **propaganda** today. It is not always easy to recognize and combat antisemitism.

The following section serves as a guide to identifying eight of the most common and dangerous conspiracy theories surrounding Jews. Understanding the roots of these antisemitic myths and how they relate to wider narratives is crucial to stopping their growing normalization.

Power



Antisemitic French political cartoon depicting a known Jewish businessman grabbing the world (1898)

One of the most pervasive antisemitic tropes is that Jews have too much power in society.

Despite accounting for approximately 0.2% of the world population, antisemites believe that Jews control the media, banks, government, and industry.

This myth of Jewish power traces back to medieval Europe and extends beyond reason. According to the trope, Jews are responsible for controlling world affairs – even the weather. It asserts that Jews are manipulative and conspiratorial schemers who want to further their own evil agenda.

Today, this hateful rhetoric is prevalent on social media and is especially dangerous when broadcasted by high-profile public figures. In 2018, Republican representative Majorie Taylor Green cited “secret jewish space lasers” for the cause of California wildfires, propagating the myth that Jews are responsible for natural catastrophes. Additionally, in 2022 musical artist Ye, formally known as Kanye West, perpetuated

antisemitic conspiracies of a “Jewish underground media mafia” that controls the entertainment industry.

Disloyalty

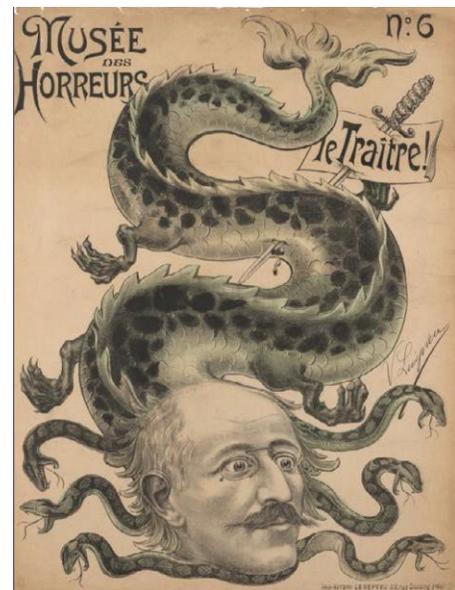
Another false trope is that Jews are inherently disloyal. The origin of this myth can be traced back to the New Testament of the Christian Bible when Judas is said to have betrayed Jesus.

Anti-Jewish laws and measures were enacted during the Middle Ages and **the Enlightenment Era** to prevent Jews from surpassing or deceiving the Christian majority. In communities around the world, Jews faced persecution and mistreatment because of the false view that they are inherently disloyal.

Here are some other historic examples:

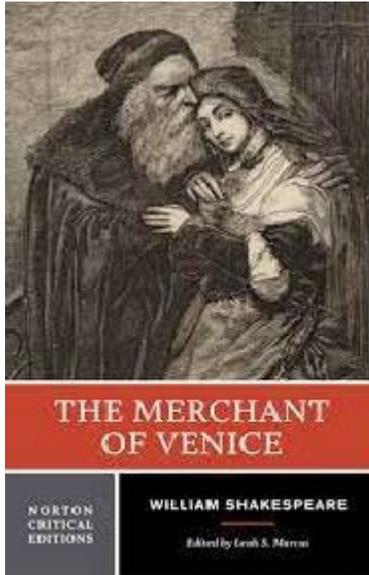
- In 1654, 23 Jewish refugees fled persecution in Dutch Brazil to New Amsterdam. There, New Amsterdam Governor Peter Stuyvesant tried to expel them from the colony, calling them a “deceitful race” that he hoped would not be allowed to “further infect and trouble” New Amsterdam.
- On December 17, 1862, Union General Ulysses S. Grant signed a discriminatory order to forcibly expel all American Jews from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi for the false belief that they were disloyal and profiteering
- In 1894, French Army Captain Alfred Dreyfus, despite evidence proving his innocence, was wrongfully accused and found guilty of treason. The fact that a thoroughly acculturated French Jew like Alfred Dreyfus, who had demonstrated his loyalty to the state and served in the military, could not receive a fair trial and instead became the victim of vehement antisemitism spoke to anti-Jewish tensions growing despite achieving equal rights.

Around the turn of the 20th century, “Jewish” became synonymous with the word “traitor.” They have been portrayed throughout history as wrongdoers who lack allegiance to any nation – only loyal to other Jews; governments often propagated the notion that citizens should be wary of Jews as they were disloyal of nation-states. Subsequently, the “stab in the back” myth refers to a historical conspiracy theory that claimed that Germany's defeat in World War I was not due to military reasons or shortcomings but rather the result of betrayal and subversion by various internal elements, particularly Jews.



A lithograph from the French antisemitic publication *Musée des Horreurs* depicting the head of Alfred Dreyfus on the body of a multi-headed serpent. There is a sword through his back with the label “Traitor” (1894)

Greed



The cover of William Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* (~1596) depicting antagonist Shylock, a greedy Jewish merchant

The myth that Jews are greedy originated in the Middle Ages and is, to this day, a prominent and problematic stereotype. During the Middle Ages, Jews were often prohibited from owning land, working in certain professions, and had restrictions placed on their economic activity. Subsequently, Jews were forced to be moneylenders or work with high interest crediting since Christians were not allowed to hold those types of professions. This dynamic between Christians and Jews led to tension and mistrust. Jews were often blamed for financial downturns, and Christians characterized them as stingy or hoarding wealth for themselves.

Even in modern times, Jews are seen as relentless in their pursuit of wealth and are consequently accused of controlling financial systems. For example, Jews have often been blamed for American economic crises spanning from the Great Depression to the 2008 recession.

Deicide

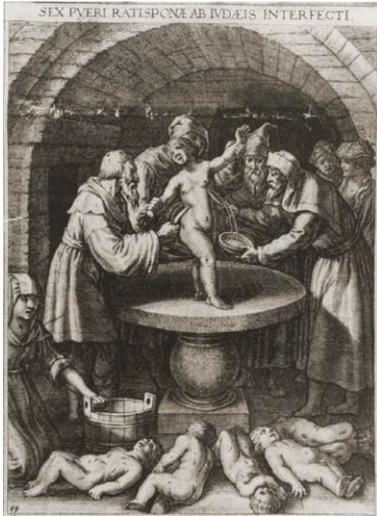


Modern-day protester with posters claiming deicide

Medieval antisemitism also manifested as Judeophobia, which stems from a fear of Jews for being culturally “other” than the mainstream European Christian community. This failure to understand Jews manifested in accusations of deicide – the belief that Jews killed Christ.

Although historians agree that these claims of deicide are baseless, many continue to assert this myth as a means of demonizing Jews. Myths of deicide have been used to justify violence and discrimination against Jews throughout history.

Blood Libel



Artistic depiction of children being murdered for their blood (Germany, 1938)

Blood libel refers to the myth that Jews murder Christian children in order to use their blood for religious rituals.

This myth originated in 12th century England after community members blamed and scapegoated Jews for the death of a young boy. This myth continued in the medieval era, expanding to allege that Jews use the blood of Christian children to perform religious rituals (that differed from Christian holiday celebrations), for example, to bake Passover *matzah* (a traditional unleavened bread eaten on the holiday of Passover). Even as recently as the early 20th century, Jews would be unjustly blamed and persecuted when Christian children went missing or were found injured or dead.

In Europe, these false allegations often led to **pogroms**, targeted riots, and attacks against Jews. Blood libel myths have been used to justify violence and discrimination against Jews time and again.

Diseased



Nazi propaganda depicting a rat with the face of a stereotypically Jewish man. The slogan reads: "Rats. Destroy them." (Denmark, 1940)

During the Middle Ages, another common trope was that Jews are vermin, dirty, and responsible for spreading diseases. Jews have often been scapegoated for causing health crises and epidemics.

On February 14, 1349, during the height of the Black Plague, the Jewish community of Strasbourg was rounded up, arrested, and condemned to death for allegedly conspiring against Christians and poisoning the well sources. Approximately 2,000 Jews were burned at the stake for these false allegations.

In Nazi Germany, propaganda blaming Jews for the spread of typhus and syphilis was disseminated throughout the country from classrooms to movie theaters. The Nazis used this trope to justify the isolation of Jews in **ghettos**, which in fact only increased the proliferation of the diseases. More recently, Jews were blamed for the spread of COVID-19.

In March 2023, a man shot two Jewish men leaving **synagogues** in Los Angeles, California because he believed that Jews were responsible for spreading COVID-19.

Denial



A tweet from 2021 denying the Holocaust

The “Ten Stages of Genocide” is a conceptual framework developed by Dr. Gregory H. Stanton to identify and understand the process through which **genocide** unfolds. This framework provides a useful tool for analyzing the progression of genocide and recognizing warning signs to prevent or intervene in such atrocities. Stanton identifies that the last stage of genocide is not systematic murder but **denial** of the crime altogether. Denial consists of a negation of the atrocities committed and efforts to conceal or distort evidence.

Perpetrators, or those sympathetic to them, often deny the existence of genocide, downplay the numbers, or shift blame onto the victims. Denial covers up the action, erasing not just the people but also the memory of what happened to them.

Although Germany admits to the Holocaust, there are various other forms of Holocaust denial. They range from denying elements of the Holocaust to denying that the Holocaust happened altogether. For example, denying that the Nazis used gas to kill Jews in **death camps** is ultimately Holocaust denial.

Propaganda and antisemitic rhetoric can lead to the significant effect of Holocaust denial. Dismissing or distorting the genocide of Jewish people is incredibly harmful to Jews who have painful memories of suffering. As a result, Holocaust denial has become another prominent antisemitic myth today.

Anti-Zionism



A viral meme that circulated online in 2017

Zionism is defined as the movement for Jewish self-determination in their ancestral homeland. It posits that Jews should have a place of refuge from the longstanding prejudice and endangerment they suffer as a minority culture – whether that be from European pogroms, Nazi Germany, or anti-Jewish laws imposed by the Soviet Union.

While criticism of the State of Israel is not in itself antisemitic, contemporary anti-Zionists often draw on and perpetuate previously mentioned antisemitic tropes.

Anti-Zionism not only downplays the history of Jewish nationhood and its connection to the land of Israel but, more than anything, demonizes Israel as uniquely evil among all other nations of the world.

Attacks on Jews, Zionism, and Israel are especially prevalent on college campuses. For example, on March 6, 2022, the SJP organization – Students for Justice in Palestine, an anti-Israel group – at the University of Wisconsin, Madison protested outside of the campus Hillel against its Birthright program – a program which offers a free trip to Israel for young Jewish students. SJP posted on social media claiming that “Birthright is propaganda that manipulated Jewish heritage and identity into support for the Israeli apartheid state.”

The following month, on April 13, 2022, Rutgers University Professor Noura Erakat delivered a lecture at the University of Illinois entitled “Zionism as Racism and Racial Discrimination.” In this lecture, Erakat expressed blatant anti-Zionism, including her support of military campaigns to end the existence of Israel. She also suggested that Zionism is a “bedfellow” of Nazism, displaying a complete disregard for the painful history of the Holocaust.

Nazi Antisemitism: History and Conceptualization

Nazi racism consisted of several elements, producing a specific form of Nazi antisemitism. Racism in Nazi Germany originated at the end of the 18th century in reaction to the emancipation and subsequent assimilation of German Jews, both of which were products of Enlightenment thinking; the awakening of ideas regarding fraternity, equality, and liberty characterized the Enlightenment period, resulting in the emancipation of Jews across Western Europe. However, this period also witnessed the development of nationalistic debates that were later used as a foundation for racism.

Racist notions in Europe flourished in the 19th century; Charles Darwin’s book *On the Origin of Species* was a scientific source frequently cited by Europeans who believed inferior races had to be eliminated through a race war. Nazi ideology borrowed many pre-existing concepts involving race, mankind, blood purity, power, and natural order; often, these concepts were unrelated, illogically connected, or even conflicting.

During the Crusades, between 1095 and 1291 CE, thousands of Jews were massacred or lost their homes and property. Spanish monarchs King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella expelled Jews who refused to convert during the 15th century Spanish Inquisition, in which a tribunal of the Roman Catholic Church tortured, imprisoned, and burned tens of thousands of Jews at the stake – all in the name of investigating “heresy” against the Church. Jews were considered to be on the fringes of society until the Enlightenment brought waves of reform and emancipation across Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Nevertheless, Jews in Eastern Europe continued to face antisemitic persecution that resulted in waves of pogroms.

In 1879, German journalist Wilhelm Marr coined the term “antisemitism,” which denotes a general hatred of Jews. When the term was first used, it was understood as prejudice against or hatred of Jews. However, Nazi ideology transformed the notion of antisemitism by propagating hatred of Jews based on a racial framework. The Nazis imposed discriminatory racial policies through ideology, propaganda, and laws.

Nazi Propaganda & Discrimination Against German Jews

Hitler’s Nazi party boasted ideals such as national pride, **nativism**, and **xenophobia** alongside its virulent anti-communist and antisemitic beliefs, all of which were portrayed as essential to the restoration of Aryan power. To spread these beliefs and ensure public approval, Hitler utilized **propaganda** through mass media. Hitler established the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which was led by Joseph Goebbels. Its purpose was to disseminate information through various forms of mass media. Racial superiority was central to these messages, and those that were not descendants of the pure Aryan race were demonized. A special focus of attack was the Jewish population, which was made to appear both inferior to Aryans and dangerous, leading to the German population’s gradual acceptance of increasingly antisemitic laws.

The Nazis successfully communicated their ideology through art, music, rallies, theater, films, books, radio, educational materials, and the press. The Nazis censored anything considered “un-German” and attempted to purge everything that went against Nazi ideology from society. Nazi propaganda targeted all age ranges, backgrounds, and demographics. Essential to the Nazi propaganda machine was public radio. To give the entire community an opportunity to own a new radio, the Nazis created an inexpensive radio called the Volksempfänger (“people’s radio”). They controlled the broadcasting on this radio to communicate directly into every home. During the war, it was illegal to listen to foreign news at home, and the **Gestapo**, the German secret police, arrested those discovered listening to BBC or radio broadcasting produced by Allied countries (enemies of the German state).

Nazi propaganda utilized negative stereotypes to propagate the idea of Jews as a detested “other.” Jews and other “non-Aryans” were depicted as dangerous enemies of Germany and were made to feel alienated and subhuman. Government-sponsored racist, antisemitic propaganda was extensively disseminated, denouncing Jews as “alien,” “parasites,” “vermin,” and “diseased.” For example, in 1941 in Nazi-occupied Poland, propaganda posters featuring slogans such as “Jews are lice” were publicly displayed. These posters included images of Jews with drawings of lice superimposed over their faces. These connections instinctively conjured the association between Jews and parasites. This hateful rhetoric impacted society enormously, creating an environment in which Jews were viewed as less human and less worthy of protection.

Here are some other prominent forms of Nazi propaganda and symbolism:

Swastika

From the Sanskrit word svastika, meaning “good fortune” or “well-being,” the swastika symbol has been used for over 5,000 years and remains a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions.

In 1920, Hitler designed a flag for the Nazi Party by the German Imperial flag (red, black, and white) making it not only the most recognizable icon of forceful symbol intended to elicit pride for “Aryan Jews and others deemed by Nazis to be enemies.”



Nazi postcard symbolizing the efforts of German nationalism under Hitler to connect the modern era to a glorious German past (Germany, 1930s)

Blood and Soil

Blood and Soil (“Blut und Boden”) was a Nazi rallying cry meant to evoke the notion of a “racially pure Aryan” people as well as their inalienable right to their land.

The concept was foundational to Nazi ideology, especially in the appeal to rural populations, as peasants were considered cultural heroes with strong “Aryan” stock. It was used as a tool to justify land seizures in eastern Europe, and to reinforce antisemitic tropes of Jewish nomadism and capitalism. The official policy furthered the propaganda that the decline of Germany’s rural class was because of Jews, who were often depicted in Nazi propaganda as greedy bankers, in contrast to the glorified, strong “Aryans” who worked the land. In the U.S., some right-wing nationalists use the slogan “Blood and Soil” to conflate “white blood,” European identity, and American soil.



Richard Walther Darré, Reich Minister of Food & Agriculture, speaking at mass rally for Nazi government officials (Germany, 1937)

SS Bolt & Skull and Crossbones

The SS was the major paramilitary organization and maintained the police state. Totenkopf (death's head) refers to the image of skull and crossbones, and in 1934, the SS adopted this specific image as a symbol. The SS branch that guarded the **concentration camps** adopted the name SS-Totenkopfverbände (the Death's Head Formations) after this symbol worn on their uniforms; known for their extreme brutality, they carried out numerous war crimes during WWII. Following the Holocaust, this antisemitic symbol is used as a hate symbol because of its importance to the SS.



SS Skull & Crossbones (Totenkopf) pin (Germany, 1930s)

Heil Hitler Salute

“Heil Hitler!” (Hail Hitler) and the Hitler salute – the right arm fully thrust forward with the palm facing downward – became legally obligatory in Germany with the rise of the Nazi Party. Based on a custom in ancient Rome, this greeting functioned as a display of loyalty and expression of allegiance. Though the gesture was made compulsory for everyone except specific groups, such as German Jews. Those who refused to greet people with a “Heil Hitler” were arrested for committing a crime. 88 remains a white supremacist numerical code for "Heil Hitler," as H is the eighth letter of the alphabet



Propaganda photograph displaying crowd engaging in a “heil Hitler” salute (Germany, 1930s)

Cult of Personality

Führer (“Leader”) was the title used by Hitler, and as early as July 1921, he declared his role to be the apex of the hierarchy of the Nazi Party. Through a carefully orchestrated public image, the Nazi Party deliberately cultivated the cult of Hitler as a mass phenomenon. Propagandists produced a tremendous number of media to depict Hitler him as a soldier at the ready, a father figure, and ultimately a messianic leader brought as a savior of a German nation.



Nazi propaganda portraying Hitler as a messianic figure leading the German people. The caption reads: Long live Germany! (1930s)

Antisemitic Legislation in Europe

Shortly after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, the Nazis gradually enacted antisemitic legislation to diminish the lives, humanity, and dignity of Jews and to further their exclusion from society. The first law of this nature was the Law for the Restoration of the

Professional Civil Service, which was enacted on April 7th, 1933. This law barred Jews from employed positions as civil servants. The subsequent laws in following months removed German Jews from practicing law and medicine and limited the number of Jewish students allowed in schools.

These laws created a hostile environment and made dehumanization and brutality acceptable in the public eye; even if Jews were not forbidden from attending school or university, they were still targeted for discrimination and subjected to humiliation. For example, by 1934, "Jewish students at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin had to come to terms with a wide yellow stripe stamped on their matriculation books."¹ This blatant identification facilitated antisemitism and, coupled with rules that required Jewish students to sit on separate benches or in the back of classrooms, resulted in a drop in matriculated Jewish students attending German universities from 3,950 in 1932 to 656 in 1934.

In April of 1933, the Nazis planned a nationwide **boycott** of Jewish businesses. However, the boycott ultimately failed to engage the public on a wide scale, signaling to the Nazi government that the larger population did not share in their same deep-seated antisemitic and hateful beliefs. The Nazis quickly focused on intense propaganda and did not stage another national boycott until 1938; by then, their ideology had permeated German society, and this boycott did not fail.

In May of 1933, a nationwide "**action** against the un-German spirit" was declared. This resulted in the destruction of all books, artwork, and media that was not in line with the ideologies of the Nazi Party, including pieces about Judaism, communism, liberal ideas, or any material that contested Nazi ideological beliefs. For example, the books of Sigmund Freud and Erich Maria Remarque were included in the massive burnings of all literature considered "un-German." The books of Helen Keller were burnt as well, as the Nazis believed that those with disabilities were "subhuman" and did not belong in Aryan society.

Life for German Jews became increasingly oppressive in Nazi Germany. Through violent acts and anti-Jewish laws, the Nazis created an environment of segregation and dehumanization. In reversing the previous decades of emancipation and assimilation, the Nazis worked to ostracize the Jewish population. Additionally, "ordinary Germans were invited to participate in and profit from the exclusion, expropriation, and expulsion of the unwanted Jews."²

In 1935, **the Nuremberg Laws** were passed. These laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship, forbade them from flying the national flag, and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of "German or German-related blood." Additional laws took away Jews' political and civil rights, including the right to vote and hold public office. The Nuremberg Laws became the ideological cornerstone for the

¹ Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 21.

² Nicosia and Scrase, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, 117.

National Socialists, and they were intended to protect the nation and individual Germans from perceived racial degeneration.

A turning point in Nazi Germany's persecution of their Jewish population was the horrifying and unprecedented violence of **Kristallnacht**, "the Night of Broken Glass." On November 9th and 10th of 1938, violent anti-Jewish pogroms took place throughout Germany and Austria. During this state-sponsored event, rioters destroyed 267 synagogues, looted over 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses, and murdered 91 Jews. As synagogues and Jewish property burned, fire departments were instructed not to assist unless the fires endangered Aryan buildings. Approximately 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and deported to Dachau, the first **concentration camp**, which was created in 1933 to detain political prisoners, and other camps including Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. Prisoners' release was contingent upon the presentation of large sums of money and papers produced by their families indicating that they would leave Germany or Austria.

Kristallnacht marked the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale. This unprecedented event signified the danger for Jews remaining in Germany. Many of the Jewish men who were able to return from the concentration camps were despondent and desperate to get their families out of the country.

In response to the brutality of Kristallnacht, several organizations worked together to bring Jewish children living under Nazi occupation to safety in England. Roughly 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, Austria, parts of Czechoslovakia, and parts of modern-day Poland were sent to England on **Kindertransports** ("children's transports"). The vast majority of the rescued children never saw their families again. The Kindertransports operated until the outbreak of war on September 1st, 1939.

The Role of the United States

In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act to set limits on immigrant visas issued to certain groups. These quotas were designed to limit the immigration of people considered "racially undesirable," including southern and eastern European Jews. The U.S. government made no exceptions for refugees escaping persecution and violence. The waiting lists for U.S. immigrant visas grew as hundreds of thousands of Jews attempted to flee; There was a ten-year waitlist before the war broke. During the 1930s and 1940s, the State Department tolerated nativist, xenophobic, and antisemitic attitudes and actions. US State Department Assistant Secretary, Breckinridge Long was personally antisemitic and unsympathetic to European refugees, especially Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Under his supervision, the Visa Division placed new restrictions even when it was clear that Jewish refugees were in grave danger.

The outbreak of war sparked the formation of new "nationalist" (a term used by former isolationists) organizations: Informed Voters of America, Americanism Defense League, and Americans for Peace-many of whose members called for death to Jews. In 1940, a

group of Yale students founded the America First Committee to oppose US intervention in the war, which grew to 800,000 members.

US published news and materials created to encourage Americans to support the war effort rarely mentioned the Nazi regime’s ongoing persecution and mass murder of Jews. Antisemitic, American propoganda presents FDR’s declaration of a state of emergency as the product of an international Jewish conspiracy to bring destruction upon America. United States, ca. 1938–41.



Among the antisemitic declarations on the caricature are:

"Jews Are The Cause of High Taxes - Slavery - Starvation and Death - - -"

"How long will the American people continue to tolerate this hysterical, desperate JEWISH PLOT, with their phony EMERGENCIES?"

"BREAK THE JEW CONTROL BEFORE OUR COUNTRY IS TOTALLY DESTROYED."

In mid 1942, news about **the “Final Solution”** reached Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress’s representative in Switzerland. Riegner attempted to alert the president of the World Jewish Congress, Rabbi Stephen Wise, in New York. The US State Department blocked the message, claiming that the murder of the Jews was a “war rumor.”

Soon after, however, Rabbi Wise received Riegner’s message from a contact in Great Britain. In late November 1942, just weeks after American and British troops began fighting the Germans and their allies in North Africa, Wise informed the US press that two million Jews already had been murdered as part of the Nazi regime’s genocidal plan. Antisemitism remained despite the reports of the Nazi plan to murder all Jews. In 1942, nearly half of Americans believed that Jews had “too much power and influence.”

Life After the Holocaust

Antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiment existed before the Holocaust and continue to exist today – even after World War II and the Nuremberg trials made the world aware of the dangers of inhumanity, intolerance, and hatred. After the war, many survivors,

unsure of what to do after liberation, returned home to find people living in their homes and using their possessions. Survivors were forced to buy back their own photographs of loved ones who had perished in the Holocaust. Tremendous antisemitism continued to permeate Eastern Europe following the war. In an extreme case, Polish civilians, soldiers, and police murdered 42 returning Holocaust survivors and injured 40 other Jewish survivors in the town of Kielce on July 4th, 1946. The Kielce **pogrom** was not an isolated incident, but instead served as a “symbol of the precarious state of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.”³

After the Holocaust, 75,000 of the Jewish survivors who encountered violence upon returning to their hometowns in Poland fled to Displaced Persons camps in Western Europe. Many survivors joined the Brihah movement, which arranged illegal immigration to the British Mandate of Palestine, because they felt that a Jewish homeland would be the only place where they could be safe and live without antisemitism. Thousands of survivors immigrated to Israel when it received its independence in 1948.

Modern Antisemitism

In modern times, antisemitism endures, and recently, antisemitism has been on the rise in America, Europe, and the Middle East. In some countries, antisemitism is spread by the government. For example, former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad publicly denied the Holocaust. In Europe, there has been a rise of far right-wing extremist political parties who view Jews as “others.” There have been several violent attacks on Jews in Europe recently, including the 2014 attack on a Jewish supermarket in Paris that left four dead and the shooting of a security guard at a Danish synagogue in 2015.

The United States has also seen a rise of anti-Jewish violence, including vandalism of Jewish synagogues, cemeteries, and on college campuses; a rise in anti-Jewish rhetoric on social media; and the largest antisemitic shooting at a synagogue. The Anti-Defamation League's recent audit reported a 34% increase in antisemitic incidents nationwide in 2021, averaging 7 antisemitic incidents each day. This is the highest number of recorded incidents since the ADL began tracking antisemitism in 1979. In the ADL's Global 100 survey, they reported that 1.09 billion people, or about 1/7 of the world's population, harbor antisemitic attitudes.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of recent antisemitic activity in the United States:

Synagogue Shootings

On October 27, 2018, 11 Jews were murdered at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. On January 15, 2022, a man took 4 people hostage in Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas because he believed in the antisemitic myth that Jews control the world.

³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “The Kielce Pogrom: A Blood Libel Massacre of Holocaust Survivors”, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-kielce-pogrom-a-blood-libel-massacre-of-holocaust-survivors>.

Los Angeles

In March 2023, a man shot two Jewish men in Los Angeles because he believed the antisemitic trope that Jews were responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at Cal State San Bernardino found that Los Angeles “recorded the most hate crimes of any U.S. city this century” in 2021 alone.

Charlottesville Rally

In August 2017, a white nationalist rally called “Unite The Right” protested the removal of a statue dedicated to Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia. The attendees chanted, “Jews will not replace us,” despite the fact that only about 2,000 Jews live in Charlottesville. The chant reflects the enduring racist myth that Jews and other minority groups plan to destroy “white Christian civilization” and hope to enact a “white genocide.”⁴

Celebrities & Social Media

Antisemitic rhetoric has increased on social media platforms such as Twitter. In 2022, rapper Kanye West posted that he wanted to go “death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE” and praised Adolf Hitler in an interview. The rise in antisemitic hate from prominent celebrity figures is extremely dangerous as it normalizes antisemitism in public discourse.

In order to fight the growing normalization of antisemitic language and violence, one must educate herself about the history of antisemitism and recognize its evolution in the modern era.

“Antisemitism exists in American society. White nationalists are tapping into it in order to build political power. It means we have to understand antisemitism, and one of the things we should understand about antisemitism is it doesn't just impact Jews. Non-Jews are just as vulnerable to the violence of antisemitism as the Jewish community.”

- **Eric Ward**, Southern Poverty Law Center and first U.S. recipient of the Civil Courage Prize

⁴ Sarna, Jonathan. “The Long, Ugly Antisemitic History of ‘Jews Will Not Replace Us.’” *The Jewish Experience*. Brandeis University, November 2021. <https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/jewish-america/2021/november/replacement-antisemitism-sarna.html>

Discussion Activities & Worksheets

Next up, you'll find some activities for students about the harm of stereotypes and the prevalence of antisemitic propaganda during World War II and in contemporary times.

Then, students can engage more deeply with the concept of Holocaust denial by exploring the Ten Stages of Genocide framework and watching a short film titled *History Lessons*, created by the Holocaust Museum LA.

Students will practice distinguishing fact from opinion in a lesson on **media literacy**.

Lastly, students can reflect on what it means to stand up against antisemitism and bigotry by engaging with some meaningful quotes from inspirational Holocaust-related figures.

The Harm of Stereotypes: Discussion Activity

Stereotypes are widely held beliefs or assumptions about a particular group of people based on their characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, or other attributes. These beliefs often oversimplify and generalize individuals within those groups, ignoring their unique qualities, abilities, and experiences.

It's important to challenge stereotypes, recognize individual differences, and promote a more inclusive and equitable society that values the diversity of human experiences and perspectives.

The following discussion questions are meant to help students think critically and analyze information surrounding stereotyping. They prompt students to reflect on the topic, consider different viewpoints, and evaluate evidence. This helps develop their ability to question, analyze, and make informed judgments, fostering intellectual growth and upstanders:

- 1. What is a stereotype?**
- 2. “All girls like pink. All boys like sports.” What is the operative word of these statements? Are these statements true? How could they be hurtful?**
- 3. How could stereotyping and racism lead to antisemitism and other forms of hate rhetoric? Have you seen examples of antisemitism, racism, or negative stereotyping in your own life?**
- 4. Have you ever heard a stereotype about a community or people you are part of? How did it make you feel?**
- 5. What can you do to prevent antisemitism or hatred of others? How can we combat hate and intolerance?**

Stereotypes: Worksheet



This image comes from a children's schoolbook, intended for elementary education (1936)

*The English translation of this book's title is **Trust No Fox in a Green Meadow and No Jew upon his Oath***

Describe both images. What do you notice about the two pictures? What do the men look like? What are their expressions? What do you think the intention of this image is? How do you think it would feel to be portrayed this way?

What sorts of traits are associated with each man? How can you recognize the way that stereotypes manifest in this representation of a German man and a Jewish man?

What effects could this image have on children who read this book in school? How could seeing this as an elementary school student play a role in exacerbating antisemitic violence against Jews?



*This advertisement for the German film **Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)** depicts a Jew with a stereotypical hooked nose, which has historically been used to foster a sense of disgust toward Jews.*

The distinctively big, hooked Jewish nose motif first emerged in the 12th and 13th centuries, as a hostile caricature of Jews as ugly, grotesque, and recognizable. The hooked Jewish nose remained a feature that has been caricatured, ridiculed, and manipulated in images and stories since the 12th century Whether it was Shakespeare's Shylock, Fitzgerald's Meyer in The Great Gatsby, or Nazi pseudo-science propaganda. The motif remains today.

Why do you think the title of this film is **The Eternal Jew**? What does this language tell people? How does the image support the intention?

How do you think seeing a film with this title would indoctrinate the public against Jews?

Identifying Propaganda: Worksheets

The following worksheets provide an opportunity for students to identify antisemitic tropes in both Nazi propaganda and contemporary media. They encourage students to reflect on how antisemitic myths functioned during the Holocaust and in the modern era. They can be used in Jigsaw learning exercises.

Worksheet 1



Nazi-era poster portraying a Jewish man lurking behind the British, American, and Soviet flags. The poster was printed in several languages and distributed in the occupied countries to promote the idea that Jews were manipulating the Allied Powers into waging war with Germany.

The caption reads: "Behind Enemy Powers: **The Jew.**"



Banner brandished at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in London on November 11, 2023

Describe the image on the left: What does the man look like? What is his expression? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this image represent? What is the intention of this image? What feelings or thoughts are the Nazis attempting to evoke in the population?

Now describe the image on the right: What is the message of the banner? What headlines, images, and symbols are used to express that message? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does the image represent? What is the intention of the banner? What feelings or thoughts are the creators attempting to evoke in the population?

What similarities do you notice between the Nazi-era propaganda and the banner image from 2023? What differences do you notice?

Who is the target audience of these images? What reactions do you think people would have? What harmful effects could these images have on society?

Worksheet 2



A Polish poster advertising an antisemitic propaganda pamphlet. The illustration is based on images from *Der Stürmer*, the German Nazi newspaper.

Title translated from Polish: **“The Mortal Enemy of Christianity”** (1943).



A viral meme that circulated on Reddit

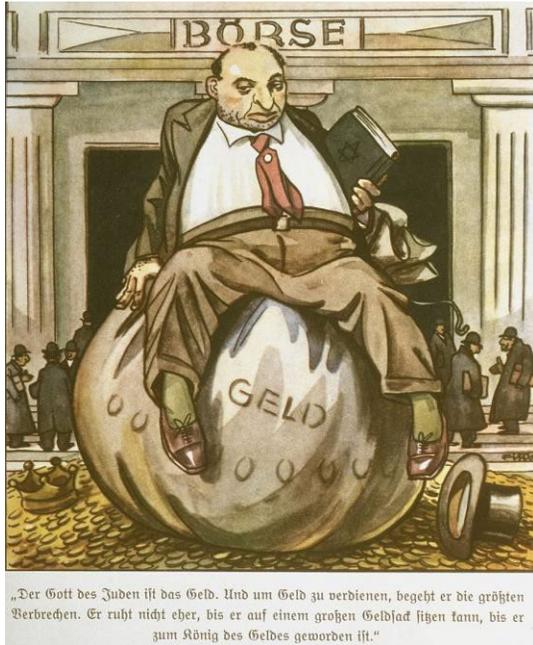
Describe the image on the left: What does the man look like? What is his expression? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this image represent? What is the intention of this image? What feelings or thoughts are the creators attempting to evoke in the population?

Now describe the image on the right: What is the message of this meme? Why do you think the creator used an image of Gru from *Despicable Me*? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does the meme invoke? What feelings or thoughts is the creator attempting to evoke in the population?

What similarities do you notice between the Nazi-era propaganda in Poland and the contemporary meme? What differences do you notice?

Who is the target audience of these images? What reactions do you think people would have? What harmful effects could these images have on society?

Worksheet 3



This image comes from a German children's book titled "Der Giftpilz" (The Poisonous Mushroom) (1935)

The caption reads: "Money is the god of the Jews. He commits the greatest crimes to earn money. He won't rest until he can sit on a great sack of money, until he has become king of money."

„Der Gott des Juden ist das Geld. Und um Geld zu verdienen, begeht er die größten Verbrechen. Er ruht nicht eher, bis er auf einem großen Gelbsack sitzen kann, bis er zum König des Geldes geworden ist.“



This meme has circulated on sites such as Reddit and 4chan

Describe the image on the left: What does the man look like? Why does he look that way, do you think? Where is he? How does the image relate to its caption? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this image represent? What feelings or thoughts are the Nazis attempting to evoke in the population?

Now describe the image on the right: What does the man look like? What is his expression? What is the message of this meme? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does the meme invoke? What feelings or thoughts is the creator attempting to evoke in the population?

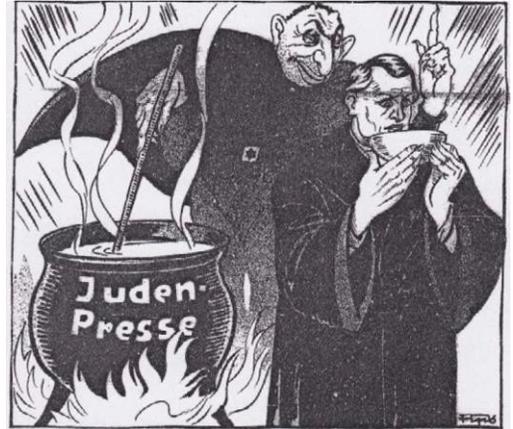
What similarities do you notice between the Nazi propaganda from the mid 20th century and the contemporary meme? What differences do you notice?

Who is the target audience of these images? What reactions do you think people would have? What harmful effects could these images have on society?

Worksheet 4



18th century painting in the Polish Sandomierz Cathedral featuring Jewish blood libel.

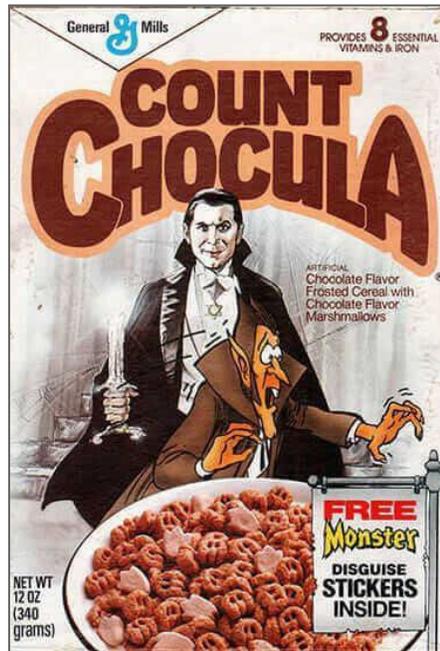


Nazi-era cartoon featuring a Jewish vampire feeding "Juden-Presse" (The Jewish Press) to an unsuspecting German victim

Describe the painting on the left: What's happening in the scene? How are the Jews being portrayed? What enduring antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this painting represent? What is the intention of this painting?

Describe the image on the right: What's happening in this image? How is the vampire portrayed? What antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this image represent? What feelings or thoughts are the Nazis attempting to evoke in the population?

Now take a look at this image of the cover of a popular cereal box released in 1987.



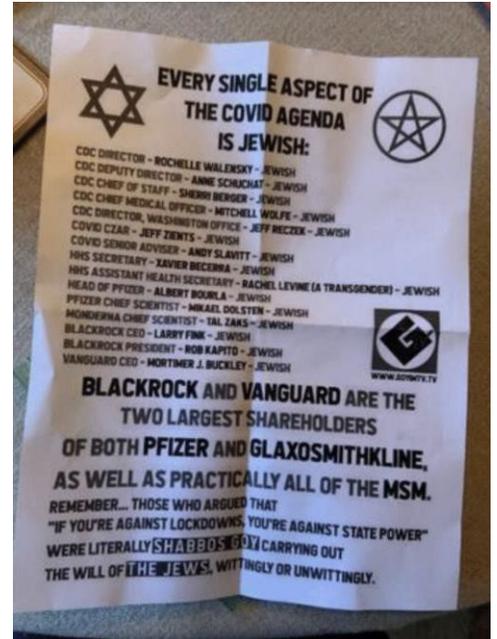
How does this cereal portray Count Chocula? How do you think the image of a vampire relates to antisemitic tropes? What is the connection between blood libel and vampires?

How do you think people would react to seeing this cereal box? Thinking about what you learned, what harmful effects could the portrayal of Jewish people as vampires have on society?

Worksheet 5



Nazi-era French poster that reads “Tuberculosis, syphilis, cancer are curable. You have to end the greatest catastrophe: The Jew.” A French doctor examines a parasite with stereotypically Jewish features under a microscope.



A flyer distributed by the antisemitic group GDL, blaming the Jews for the COVID-19 pandemic (2020)

Describe the image on the left: How does the image characterize Jewish people? What enduring antisemitic myths and stereotypes does this image represent? What is the intention of this image? What feelings or thoughts are the creators attempting to evoke in the population?

Now describe the image on the right: What “evidence” does the pamphlet use to express its message? What enduring antisemitic myths and stereotypes does the pamphlet represent? What is the intention of this pamphlet? What feelings or thoughts are the creators attempting to evoke in the population?

What similarities do you notice between the Nazi-era propaganda in France and the American pamphlet from 2020? What differences do you notice?

Who is the target audience of these images? What reactions do you think people would have? What harmful effects could these images have on society?

Recognizing Modern Antisemitism

What is anti-Zionism?

Zionism is the movement for self-determination and statehood of the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland, the land of Israel. Anti-Zionism rejects Israel as a legitimate community of nations and denies the right for Jews to self-determination in the land of Israel.

Anti-Zionism is distinct from criticism of the policies or actions of the government of Israel, in that it attacks the foundational legitimacy of Jewish self-determination and statehood.

Anti-Zionism is antisemitic, in intent or effect, as it invokes anti-Jewish tropes; is used to disenfranchise, demonize, disparage, or punish all Jews and/or those who feel a connection to Israel; exploits Jewish trauma by invoking the Holocaust in order to position Jews as akin to Nazis; or renders Jews less worthy of nationhood and self-determination than other peoples.

What is Israel?

The State of Israel is the only Jewish nation in the modern period, and the modern country is on land that has a lengthy Jewish history that dates from thousands of years ago. Israel is currently the only democracy in the middle east. Although it is the only country in the world with a Jewish majority, Israel is home to a diverse population including Jews, Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Bahai.

Is criticism of Israel antisemitic?

Generally, no. There is a wide range of views regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israel is a country like any other, with policies and laws that people agree and disagree with. We don't all need to agree on any given policy of the Israeli government, nor any critique.

However, criticism of Israel can be used as a cover for antisemitism. Examples of when such critiques cross into antisemitism include when Zionism (the movement for Jewish self-determination) is vilified, anti-Jewish tropes are used, Jews are held responsible for Israel's actions, or traditional antisemitic imagery or comparisons to Nazis is used.

Ask: Is the criticism of Israel constructive and want to better the multicultural democracy or is it destructive and want to call for the demise of the country and the people who call it home?

Recognizing Modern Antisemitism: Worksheet

Since the Hamas massacre of Israeli Civilians on Oct 7, 2023, reported incidents of antisemitic harassment, vandalism, and assault increased by 388% in the US according to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). While criticism of government policies is by no means antisemitic, equating the actions and policies of a particular sovereign nation with the Jewish people, and suggesting they are involved in global control and domination, perpetuates anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and tropes.

Allegations that Jews exercise influence over the media, financial institutions, and governments are part of enduring antisemitic tropes regarding clandestine Jewish power. These antisemitic stereotypes, as well as dangerous conspiracy theories about Jews, have been maliciously spread throughout the 20th century with tragic, murderous results.

The following examples highlight a fraction of the rise in antisemitic incidents that occurred globally in the wake of geo-politics of the Middle East. Antisemitism and anti-Jewish tropes have been used throughout history as a way to legitimize the persecution and murder of Jewish people. These tropes have been used in different forms and taken various shapes, but the underlying message they send is that Jewish people do not deserve to live in peace and safety.

Please reflect on the following examples of global antisemitic incidents that have occurred in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel. What do all of these examples have in common? Do you notice any of the previously discussed antisemitic tropes or myths?

Worksheet 1



Hannukah is a Jewish holiday, lasting eight days from the 25th day of Kislev (falling between November and December) that commemorates the rededication of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 165 BC after its desecration by the Syrians. Jews all over the world light a candelabra (called a Hanukkah or Menorah) in joyous celebration each night.

In Oakland, California, an 11-foot-tall Hanukkah menorah was broken and thrown into a lake. In New Haven, Connecticut, a Palestinian flag was planted in a publicly displayed menorah.

Based on what you learned, why do you think a protest over a foreign government's actions resulted in some people destroying Hannukah menorahs in the United States? Do you think it is fair to target Jewish religious practices in America because of what is happening in a foreign region?

During conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, social justice terminology, anti-Israel protests, and antisemitic incidents overlap and persist. What do you think people could do to change that from happening?

Worksheet 2



At Cornell University, a student threatened to stab Jewish students and 'shoot up' 104West!, Cornell's Kosher Dining Hall, in an online discussion forum.

Identify what is antisemitic. What does the term "rats" refer to? Why do you think the target is Jews?

Why do you think someone's feelings on foreign relations translate into threatening to attack a kosher dining hall in the U.S.?

Worksheet 3



On November 1, 2023, [a fire was set in the Jewish section of Vienna's central cemetery](#) and swastikas were sprayed on external walls. The last time this happened was almost 85 years ago to the day during the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom carried out by Nazi party members.

Consider the history of the Holocaust in Austria. Before the Holocaust, 4% of the Austrian population was Jewish. Today it is less than 0.1% of the population. What does this attack on a Jewish cemetery in Austria mean?

Why do you think a Jewish cemetery would be desecrated because of actions in international relations? Do you think this behavior is the correct thing to do? Explain why or why not.

Discussion Activity

Disinformation and misinformation are rampant on social media right now. If you care about peace and creating safe spaces for diverse minority groups, be careful about what you post or share online. The fear is not abstract for your Muslim and Jewish friends in America and around the world. Words can have real world consequences.

- 1. How do you learn about what's happening in your community, your country, and around the world?**
- 2. How do you get your news? (Do you get news from peers, parents, teachers, newspapers, or social media?)**
- 3. Do you use any strategies to make sure that the news you follow is reliable?**
- 4. How can you stay informed about the event, while at the same time ensuring that you are taking care of yourself and your peers?**
- 5. What questions should you consider before sharing news on social media or with friends?**

The Ten Stages of Genocide

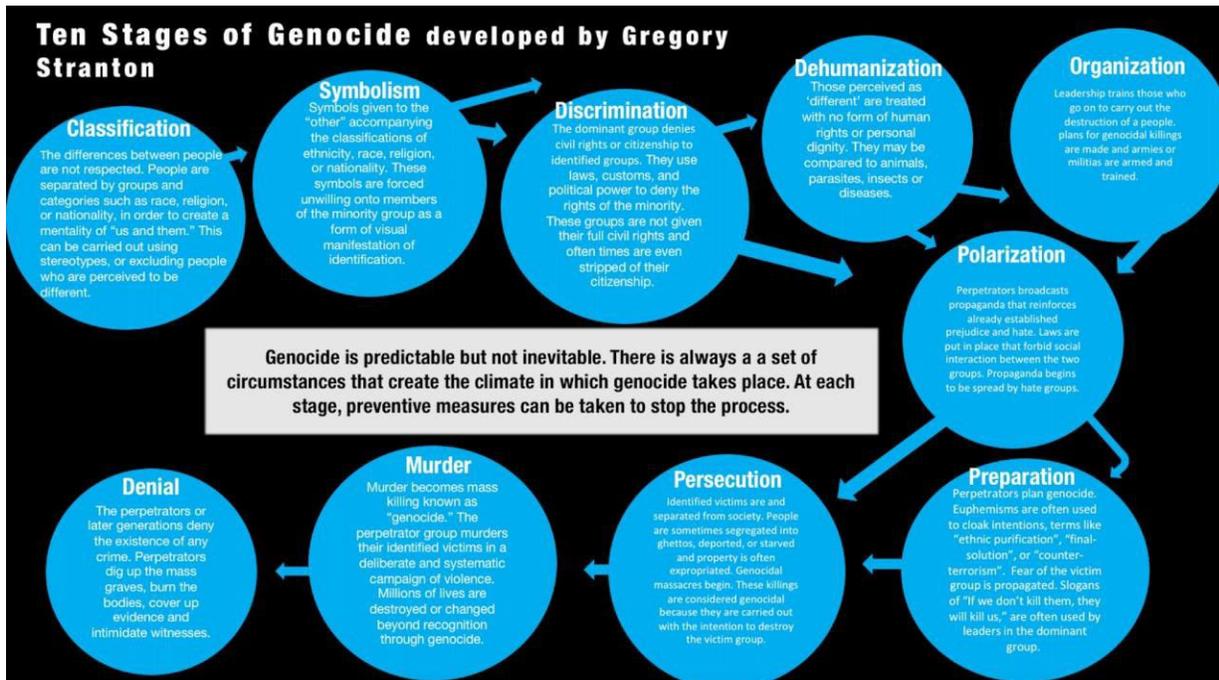
Studying genocide history is a difficult task to navigate for a multitude of reasons. Genocides have taken place in almost every crevice of the world in a host of different settings. The term “**genocide**” was collectively accepted, but not originally conceptualized, in the wake of the Holocaust.

Raphael Lemkin was a Polish Jewish Lawyer, who escaped from the Nazis to the United States where he coined the term “genocide” during the Holocaust. While in law school in the 1920s, Lemkin was horrified by, what we now know of as the Armenian Genocide and felt that if an individual can be held responsible for killing another individual, then a community should be held responsible for killing another community.

Discussion Activity 1

*The following activities that will help students understand the stages of genocide and the role of **denial** in the cycle of a genocide.*

- 1. When was this definition of genocide coined? Who coined it?**
- 2. What prompted this definition?**
- 3. What other genocides are you aware of?**
- 4. What can we do to prevent genocide or stop genocides?**



Discussion Activity 2

Explore the Ten Stages of Genocide chart. Then, discuss the following questions with a partner and jot down your thoughts.

1. Take a look at the 10 Stages of Genocide. Does anything surprise you?
2. How do the 10 Stages underscore the relationship between cause and effect?
3. What does genocide erase? What do the 10 Stages of Genocide tell us about how we can fight against its occurrence?

History Lessens: Short Film & Activity

Watch the **History Lessens** short film and answer the following questions. This activity can be completed individually or with a partner.

You can view the short film at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6Ri_tWDLLeU&t=13s

- 1. Why is it important to listen to Holocaust survivors while they are living? Why do you think it would be important to listen to Holocaust survivors after they pass away?**

- 2. What secondhand resources can we rely on to responsibly remember the past, and how do they differ from firsthand accounts from survivors?**

- 3. In what scenarios are there “two sides” to a story, and when is it clear that there is only one? What is that distinction?**

- 4. How was it possible for initial posts on social media to suddenly create such strong demands that society acknowledges “both sides” of the Holocaust? Who is responsible for information shared on social media?**

- 5. How would you describe the central message that this film tries to highlight if a friend asked you what it was about?**

Developing Media Literacy

The Ten Stages of Genocide Framework poses that the last stage of genocide is not systematic murder, but denial of the crime altogether. Consider that the removal of a group is not the final stage, but the covering up the action is, erasing not just the people, but the memory of what happened to them.

There are various forms of Holocaust denial. They range from denying that the Holocaust happened altogether, in addition to denying elements of the Holocaust. For example, denying that the Nazis used gas to kill Jews in death camps is ultimately Holocaust denial.

Holocaust denial is one possible and significant effect that the rhetoric in these examples of propaganda can cause, as dismissing or distorting the genocide of the Jewish people is incredibly harmful to Jews who have painful memories of suffering.

In the **History Lessens** film, we see intense debate emerge as people protest that they have the right to deny the Holocaust, which leads the government to pass legislation requiring that “both sides” of history be taught.

Developing Media Literacy: Worksheet

Next up, we have some questions to help students reflect on the nature of propaganda in contemporary media. This can be a solo activity, partner activity, or the questions can be divided in a Jigsaw learning exercise.

- 1. What is the difference between fact and opinion? Why is it important to understand this difference? For example: “Harry S. Truman was a president of the United States” vs. “Truman was one of the best presidents the United States has had.”**

- 2. What is the operative word in the sentence above about Harry Truman? What’s the difference between the two sentences? Which is a fact and which is an opinion?**

- 3. What does it mean to be an ethical consumer of media? How do you think today's world has changed this/ Has today's world made it easier or harder to be an ethical consumer of media, in your opinion?**

- 4. How do you ensure that you are consuming both reliable and differently positioned sources?**

- 5. At what point do you decide you've read or learned enough to make an informed opinion on whether you've heard the entire story?**

- 6. How do you discern between truth and propaganda?**

- 7. What "evidence" do deniers either use or counter to espouse conspiracies that the Holocaust did not happen?**

- 8. How would you go about stopping rhetoric of denial and misinformation in its tracks?**

- 9. How would you encourage others to take a stand against denial and misinformation?**

Quote Analysis: Worksheets

These worksheets provide an opportunity for students to reflect on the importance of standing up in the face of antisemitism, racism, and bigotry.

Worksheet 1

*Read this quote from German Lutheran Pastor **Martin Niemöller** (1892-1984) and discuss with a partner:*

First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

- Martin Niemöller, 1946

What is Niemöller trying to express through this quote? How did the persecution of the Holocaust affect communities in Germany other than the Jews?

Why is it important to stand up for others? Why is it important to combat antisemitism even if you, yourself, are not Jewish?

Worksheet 2

Take a look at these quotes from **Hermine “Miep” Gies** (1909-2010), one of the Dutch citizens who tried to help hide Anne Frank and her family hide during the Holocaust:



“But even an ordinary secretary or a housewife or a teenager can, within their own small ways, turn on a small light in a dark room.”

“Any attempt at action is better than inaction. An attempt can go wrong, but inaction inevitably results in failure.”

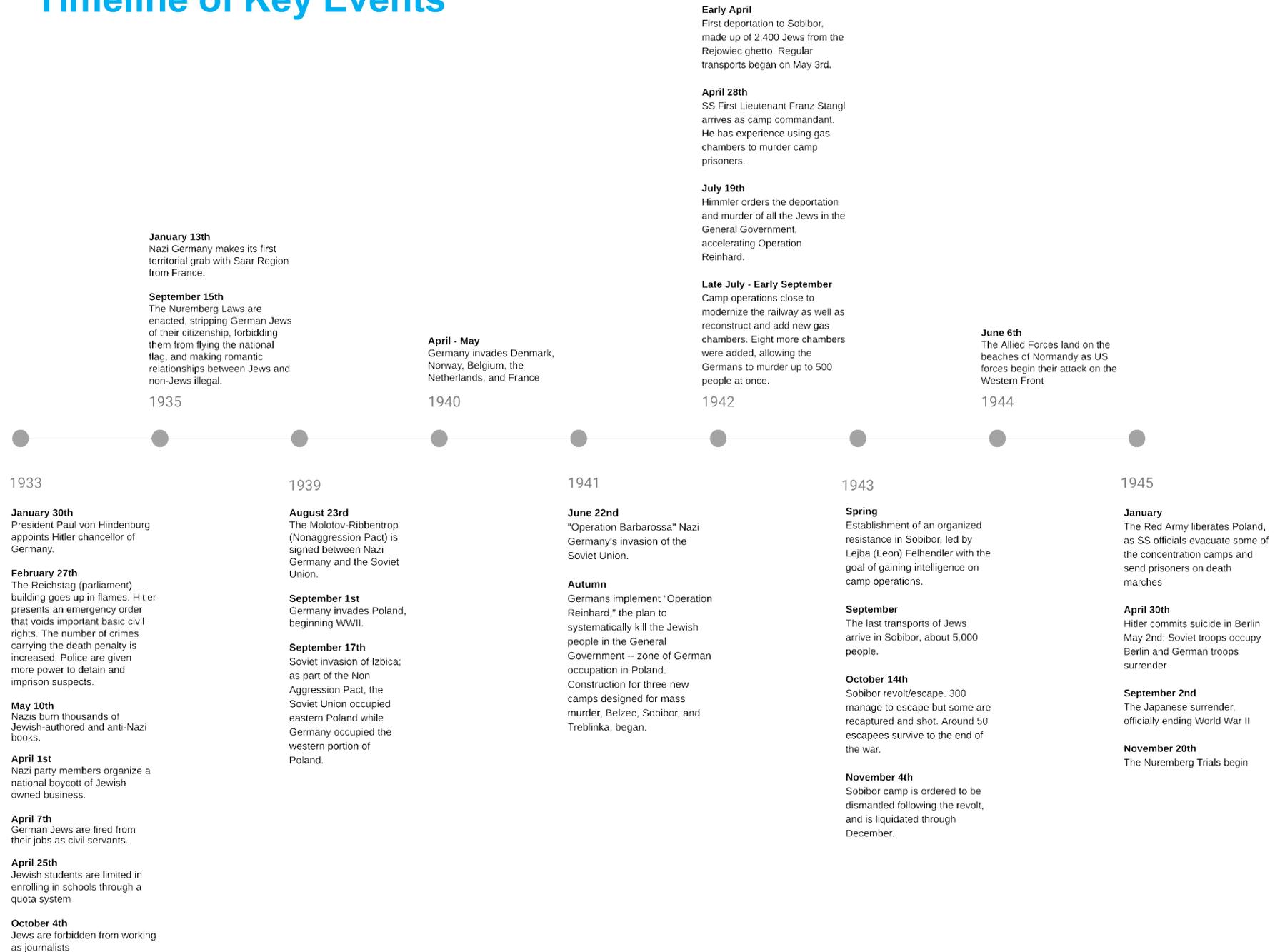
“I don’t like being called a hero because no one should ever think you have to be special to help others.”

“We did our duty as human beings: helping people in need.”

Consider the quotations above. What is Gies’s message about the importance of helping others? What does Gies mean by turning on “a small light” in “a dark room”?

Which quote is your favorite? Explain why it resonates with you.

Timeline of Key Events



Glossary

Aktion (Action): German word meaning “campaign” or “mission.” Used by Nazi officials for the purposes of deportation or execution of Jews.

Antisemitic/Antisemitism: Hostility toward or hatred of Jews as a religious or ethnic group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination.

Aryan/Aryanism: The term the Nazis developed to identify the “pure, German race.” The term was used to describe non-Jewish objects and belongings such as “aryan homes” and “aryan papers.” Identification papers at that time were required to state a person’s identity as a Jew or non-Jew. For Jewish people to have “aryan papers” meant that they were in possession of false identity papers that did not label them as Jewish. People were required to always carry identification papers and often had to present them to Nazi officials, Gestapo, and police. If identification papers appeared to be questionable, the person could be arrested, interrogated, beaten, or sent to a concentration camp.

Aryanization: The expropriation and plundering of Jewish property by German authorities and their transfer to “aryan” ownership.

Assimilation: The process by which a person or group of people adapt to another culture’s way of living and are absorbed into the dominant culture of society. Following emancipation, Jews, particularly in cities, often culturally assimilated into the way of life and traditions of the dominant groups around them.

Boycott: Social protest against a group of people or organization, many times aligning with certain ideals.

Child Survivor: A Child Survivor is an individual who was under the age of 18 either at the start or end of the Holocaust and survived under extraordinary circumstances.

Concentration Camp: Concentration camps served many different functions, but they were all part of the overarching objective to murder the European Jewish community. Concentration camps included transit camps, forced labor camps, and death camps. These were places of intense dehumanization, mistreatment, and death. Historians estimate that there were over 40,000 Ghettos and Camps across Europe.

Death Camp: The Nazis established 6 death camps, all of which were in Poland (Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau). People were murdered at all camps, but at death camps, people were taken en masse straight from arrival to be murdered.

Deportation: Forced transfer of Jews to ghettos, concentration camps, or killing centers. When being deported long distances, Jews were generally forced into cattle cars without food, water, proper ventilation, or toilets.

Displaced Persons (DP) Camps: A temporary facility for Survivors after the war, mainly established in Germany, Italy, and Austria. These camps were intended to help former prisoners of concentration camps by providing aid, food, medicine, or a place to live. DP camps are where Survivors began to rebuild their lives.

Einsatzgruppen: Mobile killing units. These SS units (divided into four groups: A, B, C, and D) followed the advancing German Army during Operation Barbarossa. With the assistance of auxiliary units and the Wehrmacht (Nazi Germany's army), these killing squads systematically murdered Jewish populations across Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Emancipation: Freeing a group of people that have been restricted socially and legally by the ruling class. Early European countries to grant emancipations were France (1791), Greece (1830), and Great Britain (1858). Despite Jews receiving civil equality in these countries, antisemitism and discrimination remained rampant in many parts of Europe.

The Enlightenment Era: Throughout the 18th century, a development of intellectual and philosophical ideas swept through Europe, creating spaces of dialogue that eventually led to changes in government, religion, and ideals.

The “Final Solution” (Endlösung): A euphemism for the extermination of the Jewish people.

Genocide: Coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, the term describes the deliberate and systematic attempted to destroy the existence of a group of people, often a national, racial, ethnic or religious group.

Gestapo: The Nazi Secret State Police. Established in Prussia in 1933, its power spread throughout Germany after 1936, when it was incorporated into the SS. In German-occupied territories Gestapo held the role of “political police,” arresting actual and perceived enemies of the Nazis without judicial review.

Ghetto: The term "ghetto" has roots in 16th Century Venice, Italy when the closed Jewish Quarter of the city, called the Geto Nuovo (New Foundry) was established in 1516. “Geto” became the foundation for the term “ghetto.” When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, approximately 3 million Jews lived in Poland. The Nazis began plans for the ghettoization of Polish Jews shortly after.

Interwar Period: The period of general peace between the conclusion of the First World War (1918) and the beginning of the Second World War (1939).

Kindertransport: After Kristallnacht in November of 1938, 10,000 Jewish children from the ages of 2 to 17 were allowed into the United Kingdom to escape the increasing violence. Children were sent alone to Great Britain and placed in family homes or orphanages. Most never saw their parents again.

Kristallnacht: Usually referred to as the "Night of Broken Glass." It is the name given to the violent anti-Jewish pogrom of November 9th and 10th, 1938. Instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and the SA (Nazi Storm Troopers), the pogrom occurred throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia.

Media literacy: The ability to access and analyze media messages as well as create, reflect, and take action, using the power of information and communication to make a difference in the world.

Nativism: Policies that prioritize the interests of native-born citizens as opposed to immigrants.

Nazi Party: Byname of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP). The Nazi Party was founded in 1919 and was taken over by Adolf Hitler in 1920-1921. The party was focused on strong nationalistic ideology with antisemitic rhetoric. Following the failed Nazi coup in 1923, the party had about 55,000 members. However, with growing unemployment and poverty in Germany, Hitler manipulated people's plight for his own political gain. He became Chancellor ten years later and governed by totalitarian methods until the end of World War II in 1945.

The Non-aggression Pact/Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact: The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also known as the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact), passed on August 23rd, 1939, and stipulated neutrality between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany while also secretly dividing the territories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland between the two countries. In September of 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia began occupation of their decided-upon territories (see Map #2 in the Artifact-Based Inquiry Worksheets). On June 22nd, 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, breaking the Non-aggression Pact, and invading the Soviet Union and land previously under Soviet occupation.

The Nuremberg Laws: The Nuremberg Laws (or Nuremberg Race Laws) defined German citizens as people "of German or related blood." Although Judaism is a religion and a culture, the Nazis defined Jews as a separate race. German Jews who had lived in Germany for generations lost their citizenship, were denied basic rights, and prohibited from marrying or having relationships with German non-Jews.

The Nuremberg Trials: The first International War Crimes Tribunal. Judges from the Allied powers (United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) presided over the Nuremberg Trials in 1945 and 1946, where 22 top officials from the Nazi party were tried for crimes against humanity. Twelve of them were sentenced to death for playing a direct role in the mass murder.

Operation Barbarossa: German code name for the attack and invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. This operation created a two-front war for the Germans to fight and increased the number of Jews under German control. With the launch of Operation Barbarossa, and under the cover of war, the Nazi's systematic mass murder of European Jews began.

Oral History: Stories or histories told by a person who experienced an event or time period first-hand.

Pogrom: The organized destruction of a certain group of people. Used to describe acts of violence and persecution against Jews throughout history. The word is derived from Russian, implying "havoc" and "to harm." Pogroms were carried out throughout the late 19th and early 20th century in Eastern Europe, inciting an influx of Jewish immigrants to Western European countries and America.

Propaganda: The deliberate spreading of ideas, ideology, or information with the purpose of manipulating public opinion to gain support for one's own cause or to discourage support for another.

Red Army: The military army of the Soviet Union.

Scapegoat: An individual or group unfairly blamed for problems not of their making.

Star of David (Magen David or Jewish Star): A symbol often used by Zionists before World War II. The Nazis utilized it to identify Jews, often requiring Jews in different countries under their occupation to wear a yellow or blue Jewish star on their clothes when in public. The implication of this was to identify, humiliate, and publicly shame Jewish communities and individuals.

Stereotype: A simplistic, firmly held belief about individual characteristics generalized to all people within that group.

Synagogue: Jewish religious house of worship.

Wannsee Conference: On January 20th, 1942, fifteen bureaucratic Nazi Party and German officials met to discuss the logistics of what they called "the Final Solution to the Jewish Question," the code name for the plan to murder 11 million European Jews. SS Officer Reinhard Heydrich led the meeting.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: During Passover in 1943, the remaining Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto learned that they were all to be deported to death camps. For almost a year, underground organizations made up of about 800 ghetto inhabitants had been preparing for the final deportations by stockpiling weapons and explosives. From April 19th to May 16th of 1943, Nazi soldiers and policemen fought with the ghetto's resistance fighters, ultimately burning the ghetto to the ground. This was the largest and

most successful uprising in any ghetto during the Holocaust and demonstrated the Jewish people's continued will and fight to live.

Wehrmacht: Nazi Germany's unified armed forces. Soldiers invaded countries and coordinated with the SS in regards to the implementation of the Final Solution.

The Weimar Republic: Parliamentary democracy established in Germany from 1919 to 1933, following the collapse of Imperial Germany and preceding Nazi rule.

World War I: Also known as "The Great War" for its extreme destruction and introduction of modern weapons, such as the machine gun and lethal gas. Occurred from 1914 to 1918 and was won by the Allies – Russia, France and Great Britain (later joined by the US and Japan) – and lost by Germany and Austria-Hungary. Per the Treaty of Versailles, Germany paid reparations to the victorious Allies, lost territory and colonies, and was forced to accept complete blame for the war. This, coupled with the Great Depression, led to economic devastation as well as humiliation throughout Germany.

Xenophobia: The irrational and intense fear or dislike of foreign people.

Additional Resources

To answer some FAQs about Antisemitism, check out the American Jewish Committee's **10 Tough Questions on Antisemitism Explained** (2022)

<https://www.ajc.org/news/10-tough-questions-on-antisemitism-explained>

To learn more about how the Nazis used symbols of hate to support their racist ideology, promote antisemitism, and ostracize the Jewish population, check out this presentation by the Vice President of Education & Exhibits at HMLA, Jordanna Gessler:

Symbols of Hate: Nazi Terror and Deception

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-nwa8YfEfE>

The Anti-Defamation Leagues' **Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era** provides historical context for prevalent antisemitic myths, contemporary examples of antisemitism, and resources to address hate:

Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era

<https://antisemitism.adl.org/>

The Philadelphia Holocaust Remembrance Foundation/Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza created a comprehensive educational resource page for their social media campaign: **Antisemitism Explained**

<https://www.philaholocaustmemorial.org/antisemitism-explained/>