

History Unfolded: Teacher Guide

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

You may use one or more of the following student activities with your students. Each short activity is themed and can be used individually or in conjunction with the other activities or related resources. The three activities and extensions are designed for **secondary students**.

In-depth lesson plans exploring the Black press, Spanish-language newspapers, and youth responses to the Holocaust can be found [here](#).

BACKGROUND: WHAT IS HISTORY UNFOLDED?

History Unfolded is a database of over 50,000 articles from newspapers in the United States. Articles are about Holocaust-era events and were published between 1933 and 1946.

Students and adult volunteers found and submitted these articles, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum approved them for inclusion.

The database is not comprehensive, and the number of articles uploaded vary by state and by region. Due to copyright restrictions or the quality of uploaded images, some articles may not be accessible. However, tens of thousands of articles are available for educational use, including some with a downloadable high-quality full page.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

DEFINITION OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945 across Europe and North Africa. The height of the persecution and murder occurred during the context of the Second World War; by the end of the war in 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had killed nearly two out of every three European Jews. The Nazis believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that Jews, deemed inferior, were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community.

While Jews were the primary victims, this genocide occurred in the context of Nazi persecution and murder of other groups for their perceived racial or biological inferiority: Roma; people with disabilities; some of the Slavic peoples (especially Poles and Russians), and Black people. Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, or behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, men accused of "homosexuality" and people that the regime identified as "asocials" and "professional criminals."

For additional information, read the "[Introduction to the Holocaust](#)" article. If students are in need of an introductory lesson on the Holocaust, please review the [Getting Started Guide](#).

GUIDING QUESTION

How do historical newspapers as primary sources help us better understand what information Americans could have known about the Holocaust?

History Unfolded: Teacher Guide

ACTIVITY #1: INTRODUCTION TO ARTICLE ANALYSIS

APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES

OBJECTIVE: Students will analyze a primary source newspaper article from 1933.

ASK STUDENTS TO:

1. Read and review [how to read a historical newspaper](#).
2. Read [this May 10, 1933 Asbury Park Press article](#) on the historical event [German Students, Nazis Stage Nationwide Book Burnings](#).
3. [Answer a series of questions on the article analysis worksheet](#).
4. Have students answer the guiding question as a class discussion, in small groups, or individually: How do historical newspapers as primary sources help us better understand what information Americans could have known about the Holocaust?

Optional modification: You or students may select other [readable articles on the History Unfolded website](#) for analysis. You or students may filter the search results by state and/or historical event to narrow the results. There are a range of Holocaust-era events between 1933 and 1946. Some events reflected socio-economic and political pressures that influenced American responses to the Holocaust, such as the threat of war, isolationism, antisemitism, and racism.

ACTIVITY #2: EXPLORING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES

OBJECTIVE: Students will consider historical context when analyzing primary sources to better understand history.

You may wish to define historical context before students begin the activity. Historical context is the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a specific time and place. Without understanding historical context, a person might interpret past events only based on today's conditions, which could lead to misunderstanding the facts and drawing incorrect conclusions.

ASK STUDENTS TO:

1. Read and review [how to read a historical newspaper](#).
2. Download the [full newspaper page](#) from the *Daily Argus-Leader* printed on November 10, 1938.
3. [Use a worksheet](#) to analyze the *Daily Argus-Leader* page and assess how events in the United States may have influenced Americans' reactions to news about *Kristallnacht* as the violence was reported in local newspapers.
4. Have students answer the guiding question as a class discussion, in small groups, or individually: How do historical newspapers as primary sources help us better understand what information Americans could have known about the Holocaust?

Teacher Note: This activity could be done with other historical events. Other recommended events to consider are:

- [Nazis Boycott Jewish Businesses \(April 1, 1933\)](#)

History Unfolded: Teacher Guide

- [Nazi Plan to Kill All Jews Confirmed \(November 24, 1942\)](#)
- [Eisenhower Asks Congress and Press to Witness Nazi Horrors \(April 19, 1945\)](#)

The History Unfolded database includes many articles for which downloadable full-page scans are available, particularly for events that were widely reported. To find full-page scans, click on one of the three links above in the bulleted list. After reviewing the information and determining whether you would like to incorporate this historical event into your classroom, click the “View Newspaper Articles” box on the next page. On the results page, check the box “Gannett full page downloadable” under the “Type of Newspaper” filter on the left side of the screen. This will ensure that students can download a good-resolution full page for the articles on the topic you choose.

ACTIVITY #3: COMPARING TWO NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES; 40 MINUTES WITH OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE: Students will compare how multiple newspapers reported on the same event of the Holocaust.

ASK STUDENTS TO:

1. Read and review [how to read historical newspapers](#).
2. Read an overview of [the first public reports of the Final Solution](#) in the United States. [To learn more about how news of the “Final Solution” reached American newspapers, see [this Holocaust Encyclopedia article](#).]
3. Read an article from the November 24, 1942 issue of the [News-Leader of Staunton, Virginia](#), and the [Daily Advertiser of Lafayette, Louisiana](#).
4. Answer questions about the nature of reporting in each newspaper [on this worksheet](#). Optional: Have students write their own headline based on the AP story from each newspaper article.
5. Have students answer the guiding question as a class discussion, in small groups, or individually: how do historical newspapers as primary sources help us better understand what information Americans could have known about the Holocaust?

RESEARCH EXTENSION

Ask students to use the [History Unfolded newspaper archives search](#) and secondary source material, such as the [Americans and the Holocaust online exhibition](#) and [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#), to make a historical argument about how the US press reported on the Holocaust. You may have students record their historical arguments in the form of an essay, video, presentation, or another format.

Example of historical arguments include:

- While many local newspapers in the United States did print stories about the Nazi persecution of Jews while it was taking place, newspapers often featured other stories more prominently.
- While many local newspapers in the United States did print stories about the Nazi persecution of Jews, a number of papers seemed to question the accuracy of such reports.

History Unfolded: Teacher Guide

Historical context resources for students:

- *Holocaust Encyclopedia* article, "[The United States and the Holocaust](#)"
- *Holocaust Encyclopedia* article, "[How did the United States government and American people respond to Nazism?](#)"
- Video, [American Newsreels](#)

Potential research questions for students:

- How do historical newspapers as primary sources help us better understand American responses to the Holocaust?
- What could the American people have known about the events of the Holocaust while it was taking place? When and how was information about the Holocaust reported?
- How did Americans view their role in the world when facing the threat of war in the late 1930s?
- How might a government and its citizens receive and respond to information about mass atrocity?