

LESSON: History Unfolded Youth Responses

GRADE LEVEL: Adaptable for grades 7–12

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary

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

This is a *thematic* lesson that builds on fundamental knowledge and provides in-depth exploration of a topic.

Note: An in-depth background knowledge of the Holocaust is not necessary for this lesson.

RATIONALE

This lesson will examine youth responses in the U.S. to the Holocaust in order to enhance understanding of how and why the Holocaust happened and the role of media at the time. Through a case study of American news coverage of the Nazi persecution of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, students will learn what information some college and university newspapers at the time reported about the Nazi persecution of Jews, as well as some ways students responded to news of the Holocaust. Students will use what they learn about news during the 1930s and 1940s to think critically about news in their world today.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How was news about the Holocaust reported in college newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s?
- How did students respond to information about the Holocaust?
- Has the availability and reliability of news changed or remained the same over time?
- What similarities and differences do you see between how Americans got their news in the 1930s and 1940s and how they get their news today?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students understand:

- How Americans in the 1930s and 1940s received their news
- Information about the Holocaust including the April 1933 Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses, the debate whether to send a US team to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, *Kristallnacht*, and the public confirmation of the Final Solution
- How news about the Holocaust was reported in college newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s, and how some students responded

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze news sources from various time periods
- Synthesize similarities and differences between news coverage during the 1930s and 1940s and today
- Cite examples of student activism in response to the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust

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TEACHER PREPARATION

- Review the [Americans and the Holocaust online exhibition](#) or specific exhibition sections about news coverage in the United States:
 - [Nazism in the News](#)
 - [US News about the Evian Conference](#)
 - [US News about Kristallnacht](#)
 - [US News about the mass murder of Jews](#)
- *Holocaust Encyclopedia* article [Nazi Boycott of Jewish Businesses](#)
- Articles from [Primary Source Packet](#)
- An in-depth background knowledge of the Holocaust is not necessary for this lesson. If you would like to review the history of the Holocaust with your students, please see the Museum's [foundational resources page for educators](#).

MODIFICATIONS

- This lesson can be conducted using all digital resources or with physical handouts and print outs of the newspaper articles.
- Newspaper headlines and article text may be read aloud.

LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS

- The primary source analysis is designed for students to read three primary sources. The number of primary sources can be increased or decreased to accommodate students and as time permits. Students may be given a choice of which of the 5 sources to read.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

PART ONE: DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING NEWS

DEFINING NEWS

1. First, students should consider the news they receive today.

ASK THE STUDENTS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Where do you get your news?
- What do you consider to be news?

A [word cloud](#), [Padlet](#), or [Nearpod](#) can be used to show responses.

2. Possible discussion points related to questions above.
 - News can be defined as recounting significant recent events and information. Opinion pieces generally consist of reactions and responses to significant recent events and information.

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- News today comes in the form of print journalism (newspapers, magazines), television and online streaming, smartphone apps, social media, radio, podcasts, websites, and first-hand accounts from others in personal interactions.
3. Students will then study print media culture in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Have students read the [handout about how Americans in the 1930s and 1940s received their news](#). [*Teacher note:* tell students to disregard the questions on page two of the [handout](#).] Students may respond to the following questions in a variety of formats.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- How did Americans encounter news in the 1930s and 1940s?
- What were front-page headlines intended to do?
- Why did Americans at the time generally read similar versions of news stories?
- Why didn't most people argue for US action in response to the news from Europe?
- How is news coverage from the time similar and different to news coverage today? (This question may be particularly well suited for a T chart, with similarities on the left, differences on the right, and a vertical line separating the two columns.)

Possible discussion points for class conversation/T chart:

- Some people still get news from the radio today. People then and today often read similar versions of the same story. Wire service organizations like the Associated Press are still highly influential.
- News in the 1930s and 1940s had fewer pictures, and the pictures were in black and white. In order to watch the news, you had to go to a movie theater. More people received their news from print media. While some people had access to a morning and evening newspaper, news was not updated and available 24/7.
- While professional journalists and newscasters still deliver a lot of news today, much of the news today comes from opinion analysts, political talk show commentators, comedians, and talk show hosts, etc. Many people also receive their news from influencers on social media and individuals who share information they have heard (through social media, websites, blogs, etc.)
- The quality of a news source in the past and now can be influenced by factors such as the number and reliability of sources (how accurate and dependable the information is), whether the sharer of the news witnessed the events, the credibility or expertise of individuals interviewed, whether the sharer of the news accurately conveys the information from sources, whether there is attention given to other perspectives or viewpoints on the events, and more.
- News outlets in the past and today sometimes under-represent or misrepresent stories, either accidentally or intentionally excluding certain voices or accounts.

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PART TWO: CASE STUDY OF HOW YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVED THEIR NEWS ABOUT THE NAZI PERSECUTION OF JEWS

1. Students will be reading headlines from college newspapers in late March and early April 1933, shortly after the Nazis came to power in Germany. Tell students that at this point, the Nazis have not set up death camps, and they have not yet implemented a plan to kill all of Europe's Jews. Share [information](#) about the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses or have them read it on their own.
2. As a class, review the historical background about the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses:
 - Why did international Jewish organizations and the press in the United States urge a boycott of German goods in March 1933?
 - What did the Nazis do in response to the planned boycott of German goods? Who did they blame for the anti-German tone of the international press?
3. Working in groups, pairs, or individually, have students view the [slides](#) and read the newspaper headlines one at a time. All of the headlines were published in college newspapers in the United States. As students read, they complete their [Student Headlines Organizer](#).

MODIFICATIONS

- Students who need a read-aloud of the headlines may make use of the text in the chart below.
- Have students look at the entire articles instead of just the headlines.

After time to read and discuss, students report their answers from the organizer. This can be interactive using Padlet or Google Classroom, or chart paper/markers.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- If you were a reader, and only read headline 1 or 2, how would your perception of the news compare if you had read only headlines 3 and 5? What if you had read them all?
- Why do you think headlines 3 and 5 are different from headlines 1 and 2 in the perspective of the Nazi persecution of Jews?
- As a reader, what strategies can you take in order to determine the accuracy of news headlines, both in the past and today? [Teachers may wish to introduce and discuss the “CRAAP test rubric” (Currency,

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Relevance/Reliability, Author, Audience, Purpose/Point of View), which can be found online.]

- Are you fully informed by reading just a headline?

COLLEGE NEWSPAPERS AND YOUTH RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

1. In this section of the lesson, students will explore some of the reactions students had to the reports of Nazi persecution of Jews and others in the period 1933 to 1945.
2. The activity is designed for students to read three articles in the [Primary Source Packet](#). Additional articles are available at the end of the packet. The articles all show information about the Nazi threat and in most cases, responses to the threat by students.
3. Students work in groups, pairs, or individually, and complete the [Worksheet: Primary Source Analysis](#) as they read the sources.

MODIFICATIONS

- The number of articles students read can be increased or decreased as necessary.
 - Examples of responses may need to be given ahead of time to frame student reading (such as for younger students)
4. Discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- a. What do the sources reveal about the information some students had about the Nazi persecution of Jews?
 - i. *Students at various universities could have known about the Nazi rise to power, reports of mistreatment against Jews, the pogroms of Kristallnacht, and the Nazi plan to exterminate entire groups of people.*
- b. How do you think the reader would have assessed the quality, credibility, and reliability of each news source?
 - i. *Students at the time may have compared what they read in the newspapers to what they have read or heard in other sources, such as radio, news reels, fellow students, professors, and people returning from trips to Europe. Students may know the student journalists writing for the paper and have an idea of the general reliability of the paper's reporting.*
- c. What are some examples of responses students took to this information?
 - i. *Some students recommended a boycott of German goods or a boycott of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin in response to the Nazi mistreatment of Jews, while others thought the victories of Black and Jewish athletes in the Olympics would prove Nazi racial theories were wrong. Some students wrote letters to the editor or*

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organized petitions and protest movements. Some students were writers of the school paper who wrote about a possible Nazi takeover of the United States to both inform and potentially persuade readers.

- d. What did the students who wrote these articles hope to achieve?
 - i. *They may have wanted to show support for people in the community, alert other students and the community to what was going on, and/or influence public policy.*
- e. What limitations might the students have experienced?
 - i. *Students were not always in a position to make an immediate, significant difference or outcome. Just because a student may have had something to say, does not mean that the student was able to change the world. However, taking action may have helped people understand and make a difference. Trying and not having a lot of success (not seeing the fruits of labor) still could result in potential long-term outcomes. Attempting to do the right thing is important, even if a positive outcome or tangible results is not guaranteed.*
- f. Think back on the similarities and differences between how Americans got their news in the 1930s and 1940s and how they get their news today. How has our ability to access news changed? In what ways does this present new challenges or concerns?
 - i. *In the 1930s and 1940s, fewer individuals in society in general, and young people in particular, had a chance to make and share news on the scale possible today. Since newspapers, magazines, radio, and newsreels carried a large portion of the news then, individuals who did not either work for news outlets or have the opportunity to contribute to them might not have heard the information. Almost all news about foreign affairs came via a handful of wire services (like the Associated Press or United Press). As a result, no matter where people lived, they were likely to get a similar version of news reports as people in other parts of the country. Today, especially through social media, individuals with internet access can record and share news by taking a video, posting online, or reposting. It can be a challenge though in that there are few safeguards to ensure that the information is accurate or reliable.*

CONCLUSION

As an exit card or journal entry, have students individually write answers to some or all of the lesson's essential questions:

1. How was news about the Holocaust reported in college newspapers in the 1930s and 1940s?
2. How did students respond to the information they had available in the 1930s and 1940s?
3. In what ways do you see students responding to information today?

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ASSESSMENT

Student exit cards can be collected and assessed.

EXTENSIONS

1. Ask students to explore headlines about a current event topic from a number of different media outlets. This may include outlets from different political leanings and/or outlets from different formats, such as a traditional newspaper versus a Facebook link headline. Then, ask students to analyze the headlines for meaning, discuss how they are similar and different, and to hypothesize the reasons for those differences. Ask students to determine what they think is actually going on based on the headlines. You may curate the headlines in advance to ensure the assignment stays focused.
2. Have students identify and research college or high school newspapers near them. A growing number of college newspapers are digitized. Check with university and high school librarians to locate them. [A preliminary list of known university newspapers can be found on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's History Unfolded website.](#) Students can upload relevant, new findings to History Unfolded, and discuss how local reporting compares to some of the reporting from this lesson.
 - a. Tips: Daily newspapers that subscribed to a wire service were much more likely to report on foreign events. Most college newspapers at the time were not dailies, and may not have subscribed to a wire service organization.
 - b. Consider asking students to look at History Unfolded event topics likely to be relevant to students and reported on, such as:
 - i. [Amateur Athletic Union Says "Yes" to Berlin Olympics](#)
 - ii. [Anti-Jewish Riots Convulse German Reich \(*Kristallnacht*\)](#)
 - iii. [President Roosevelt Signs Selective Training and Service Act](#)
 - iv. [Eisenhower Asks Congress and Press to Witness Nazi Horrors](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ["How Did Young Americans Respond to the Nazi Threat"](#) from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Stay Connected Facebook Live Series