

## VIEWING GUIDE

# NAZI IDEOLOGY

### Definitions:

**Ideology:** A belief or set of ideas about how the world operates; sometimes referred to by the Nazis as Weltanschauung (worldview). [Adolf Hitler](#), the Führer (Leader) of the Nazi Party, helped to formulate and articulate the ideas that came to be known as Nazi ideology. Hitler believed that a person's characteristics, attitudes, abilities, and behavior were determined by their racial composition.

In Hitler's view, all groups, races, or peoples (he tended to use these terms interchangeably) carried biological and behavioral traits inherited from one generation to the next. No individual could overcome the qualities of their supposed race. All of human history could be explained by the struggle between “races.”

*More information:* [Nazi Racial Ideology](#)

**Race:** The categorization of people into supposedly distinct biological groups based on innate, inherited characteristics that a society deems to be significant. In the early 20th century, many believed that a person's race determined their behavior.

While science has shown that humans cannot be biologically separated into distinct races, racism (prejudice or hatred of groups based on supposed racial characteristics) remains a major worldwide problem.

*More information:* [Nazi Racism](#) [Nazi Racial Antisemitism](#)

**Lebensraum:** The desire for Lebensraum—or “living space”—motivated Nazi military conquest and [racial policy](#) and was a critical component of Nazi ideology.

*More information:* [Lebensraum](#)

**Eugenics:** Literally translated as “good birth,” eugenics was a pseudoscience popular in Europe, the United States, and Japan in the 1920s and 1930s. Those who believed in eugenics worked on structuring government policies to promote births among those regarded as fit and prevent births among those regarded as “unfit.”

Eugenic theories, also known as “racial hygiene,” influenced many of Nazi Germany's discriminatory policies. Today, eugenics has been proven false.

*More information:* [Eugenics](#) [The Biological State: Nazi Racial Hygiene](#)

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### Core Beliefs of Nazi Ideology:

- Collective survival of the [German people](#) (defined by the Nazis as part of the "Aryan" race)
- A hierarchy of value attached to ["races"](#)
- [Territorial Expansion](#)
- A Germany [without Jews](#)

### Questions to Consider:

1. How did the Nazis prioritize these goals?
2. How does this explanation of Nazi ideology help us understand how and why the Holocaust happened?
3. How will you incorporate these ideas into your current lessons or curricula?