

LESSON: Nazi Racism

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary Level

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary

TIME REQUIRED: 120 Minutes (can be divided into multiple class periods)

This is a *foundational* lesson that introduces key concepts and information to students.

RATIONALE

Nazi ideology was racist. To critically analyze actions taken by Nazi Germany and its collaborators and to understand how and why the Holocaust happened, it is essential to understand the concept of racism, and, particularly, Nazi racial antisemitism.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is race?
- What is racism?
- What is Nazi racism?
- What role did racism play in the Holocaust?
- What specific actions during the Holocaust can be categorized as racist or antisemitic?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students understand:

- The definitions of race and racism
- Nazi Germany's use of pseudo-science to justify racism
- Race is a cultural construct rather than a biological fact
- How antisemitic and racist ideas and actions profoundly shaped the events of the Holocaust
- How to recognize and think critically about racist ideas in society today

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Read secondary source USHMM *Holocaust Encyclopedia* articles:
 - [Nazi Racism: An Overview](#)
 - [Nazi Racism](#)
 - [Racism: In-Depth](#)
 - [Eugenics](#)
 - [Antisemitism in History](#)
 - [Victims of the Nazi Era](#)
- Organise [three stations](#) or groups for research.

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- Explore the PBS website [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#). This site supports the video series that explores myths and misconceptions about race and features an explanation of the myth of biological races. Part one: [The Difference Between Us](#) is especially useful.
- Read [Five Things Everyone Should Know About Race](#) from PBS' *Race: The Power of an Illusion* website.
- Take time to reflect about yourself and your classroom.
 - 1. What are the various races or cultures represented in your classroom?
 - 2. What challenges or insights may they each have with a conversation about race and racism?
 - 3. In what ways can you encourage open and safe dialogue for your students?
- Conversations about race are challenging and require trust, accurate information, and a willingness to recognize personal biases. For additional support, read "[Talking about Race](#)" produced by the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

MATERIALS

- Internet access for video screenings and USHMM source materials
- At least three computers for station research or pre-print the station materials
- Printed [definition cards](#)
- At least three different versions of dictionaries
- [Pseudo word cloud](#)
- [Five Things Everyone Should Know About Race](#) handout
- [KWL chart](#)
- Transcripts: [Path to Nazi Genocide](#) and [Confronting Hatred](#)

MODIFICATIONS

Technology and teaching strategies are suggested in the instructional sequence, however, **the lesson is intentionally flexible to allow for individual teacher modifications to achieve the educational outcomes.**

MODIFICATIONS FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

- Share the opening video clips.
- Share the definition cards, *Five Things*, and summary of race as slides.
- Provide appropriate forum for online discussion feedback.
- Share online group research with students, and students share their findings online. Conclude by sharing podcast clips either with the entire class or assign different clips to groups.
- An online discussion or presentation can be used to share discussion answers.

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LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS

- Dictionary selections geared toward reading proficiencies or include first language choices
- Additional terms can be definitional work
- Additional time spent defining pseudo and the concept of synonyms
- Close definitional reading of the definition of science
- *The Path to Nazi Genocide* clip is available in 10 languages, subtitled, and features a transcript.
- Define primary and secondary sources
- The article [Nazi Racism](#) is geared to middle school students
- Podcast episodes have transcripts

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

WARM UP

1. Begin by viewing historical film clips. The first clip¹ is home film footage from a [Jewish family](#) and the second clip² is home film footage from a [non-Jewish German family](#). **Do not share this information at this point in the lesson.** Instead, **ask students to look for what is similar in these films to videos made of friends or family on their own phones. What is different?**
2. After viewing the first clip ask students to share their reactions to the prompt. Possible answers include: Similar to today: [activities](#), [families](#), [seasons](#). What things are different: [clothing](#), [cars](#).
3. Next, show the second film clip. Again, ask students to look **for what seems familiar in these videos? What parts of the videos seem different than today?**

After watching the second clip, ask students to again share their observations and ask: **Is the second clip similar to the first one? Are they more alike than different?** Similarities include [activities](#), [seasons](#), and [the physical appearances of the individuals in both films](#). The films are very similar.

4. Say: **We’re going to examine a concept that was central to Nazi ideology, a concept that defined the people we saw in the first video clips as “racially” separate from those in the second set of clips.**

DEFINING RACE AND RACISM

1. Divide students into groups or pairs. Distribute and read the first [definition card](#) which defines [ideology](#), [racists](#), and [race](#).

¹ German family in city, riverboat tour. Film | Accession Number: 2016.568 | RG Number: RG-60.1953 | Film ID: 4258 Date: 1938-1939.

² Prewar Czech Jewish life in Prague and Southern Bohemia. Film | Accession Number: 2004.7.2 | RG Number: RG-60.4055 | Film ID: 2681 Home movies of the Lederer and Bruck families.. Date: 1939-1940.

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2. In groups, pairs, or individually students work to define the yellow highlighted words. After the group defines the word, they use dictionaries to check their definitions. ***Note:** this activity can be omitted or expanded.
3. After 5 minutes come together and have students briefly share:
 - How their definitions of highlighted words were similar/different to the dictionary.
 - If defining the highlighted words increased their understanding of the definitions of ideology, racists, and race.

DEFINING PSEUDO AND SCIENCE

1. Say: **Now that we have definitions of racists and race, let's examine the pseudo science behind beliefs that human behavior is biologically determined. What does pseudo mean?** Project or distribute a [word cloud with synonyms of pseudo](#), or use the dictionaries to create your own classroom word cloud.
2. Distribute and read definition card two which defines **pseudo** and **science**. Note: Students can repeat the definitional activity used with the first definition cards for these terms if necessary.
3. Check for understanding of the concept of pseudoscience. Answer questions or clear misconceptions before proceeding. Note: Students can repeat the definitional activity used with the first definition cards for these terms as well.

SUMMARIZING KEY FACTS ABOUT RACE

1. Distribute [Five Things Everyone Should Know About Race](#). Project and read together. **It is vital for students to understand that the “science” that supports racism is patently false.**
2. Discuss as a class **Five Things** and how it aligns or contradicts what they have learned or always believed about race. A [modified KWL chart](#) is one useful framework for this discussion: Students share *what they knew*, *what they learned*, and *what they still have questions* about (KLW). Did they discover something they thought to be true to be false? Did they find evidence to support something they already believed?
3. State: **Despite the fact that the science behind the concept of race isn't valid, the impacts of racism are very real.**

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DEFINING RACISM AND ANTISEMITISM

1. Distribute and read the [third definition card](#) which defines Nazi theories of race, antisemitism, and racial antisemitism. If necessary, students can unpack these definitions as modeled above: individually, in pairs, or as a class, using dictionaries for assistance.
2. Watch this clip from [Chapter 2 of Path to Nazi Genocide](#). While viewing the film ([transcript here](#)), ask students to look for information to add to the definition of **racial antisemitism**.
3. After viewing, discuss the definitions as a class.

GROUP RESEARCH

1. [Divide students into three groups](#) to work on three different collections of secondary source *Holocaust Encyclopedia* articles, primary source artifacts, and personal stories. Each collection, or station, has unique questions.

Depending on class size you can create more than one set of the stations, or assign groups parts of the work. Take time before the class to organize the group work to meet the needs of your students and your classroom.

- In-depth directions are on the Student Interactive Tools Sheets, customized for each group:
 - [Group 1](#)
 - [Group 2](#)
 - [Group 3](#)
 - Encourage students to use dictionaries to define unfamiliar words.
 - Using these sources, the group will answer their unique questions.
2. After ample time for group work, the groups will report to the class and discuss the questions by sharing their completed interactive tool. Sharing options include:
 - Using a document projector to project student interactive tools
 - Students recreate the tool on large chart paper
 - Padlet
 - Students create powerpoint or google slides of the information on their tools

After the presentations ask: **Prior to this work did you consider the Nazis to be racists?** Discuss.

3. Introduce the assessment: using the ARE method (Assertion, reasoning, evidence) students answer the question: **What evidence did you find that classifies Nazi ideology as racist?**

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Brainstorm as a class to prepare for the assignment. This question can be the basis for a short answer, essay, or another project that can assess student understanding.

ANALYZING RACISM TODAY

1. Listen to the Public Radio Special [Confronting Hatred 70 Years after the Holocaust](#) produced in conjunction with the USHMM. Distribute the [transcript](#) for students to follow. There are three clips. Play all three, or select one that works best for your class.
2. Afterward, discuss together the following questions that relate to the podcast and build on all previous work in the lesson. Note: These questions can also be used for a written or project-based assessment, in groups or individually.

- Sometimes people claim something as “**scientific**” to make it sound legitimate, even if it is patently false. Why is the legitimizing stamp of science so important?
- How can racism help keep a party or political group in power?
- Despite overwhelming scientific data to the contrary, many people still believe in the superiority of certain races. Why might individuals hold onto a belief that has been discredited because it’s not factually true? How might they change their minds?
- What information do racists use to justify their beliefs? How can radical beliefs, like these, be challenged and countered?

3. Return to the first film clips. The first set of clips are films from Jewish families. The second set of clips are non-Jewish German families. Both films are from the same time. Share this information and replay the clips.

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CONCLUSION

ASSESSMENT

- In a short answer, essay question, or thesis anchoring another project, students use the ARE method (assertion, reasoning, evidence) to answer: **What evidence did you find that classifies Nazis as racist?**
- Definition work, group work, and/or Podcast questions assessed.
- Students write a definition for **racists** and **race** in their own words, based on their historical investigation of Nazi racism.
- Return to [KLW chart](#) and students investigate unanswered questions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Nazism and Jim Crow: USHMM teaching resources
- Further research on the individuals in the film clips that introduce the lesson
 - [Lesson plan](#) to support historical film footage viewing
 - Holocaust Encyclopedia links to support films
 - [Auschwitz](#)
 - [Theresienstadt](#)
 - [Hidden Children](#)
 - [The Netherlands](#)
- The complete [Confronting Hatred](#) podcast
- [On Being podcast](#) produced in cooperation with the USHMM: *Befriending Radical Disagreement*.
- [The Gene : An Intimate History and Eugenics - How Can We Avoid the Mistakes of the Past?](#)
- Further research on Anthony Acevedo
 - <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn42965>
 - 5:20 -- segregated schooling
 - 7:45 -- segregated swimming pools in Pasadena ends at 8:40
 - 10:40 to 12:23 -- deportation to Mexico, "repatriation" of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans
 - <https://www.history.com/news/great-depression-repatriation-drives-mexico-deportation>