

Lesson Plan – Legal Persecution from 1933–1939

Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 50 minutes

Overview:

From 1933, when Hitler and the Nazis took power in Germany, life became very difficult for Jews in Germany. A range of different laws limited Jews' participation in the social, economic, administrative and religious life of Germany. In 1935, the Nuremberg Race Laws defined Jews as a separate race (rather than, say, a religion or culture) and excluded them from German citizenship. In keeping with Nazi racial ideology, these laws also prevented Jews from marrying Aryans.

This lesson encourages students to engage with a range of different laws, and draw conclusions about the impact they had on Jews in Germany between 1933 and 1939.

Essential questions:

- How was the law used to target and victimise Jewish people?

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn the two main Nuremberg Laws.
- Students will learn about other laws affecting Jewish people in German in the 1930s.
- Students will consider the effect of these laws on Jewish people in Germany in the 1930s.

Key issues/concepts:

- Cause and effect
- Significance

Materials:

Handout – Antisemitic Law Cards – enough for one set per person, or one set per group. Cut out the individual cards to make a set.

Optional for 'CSI' task in Activity Two: Large sheets of cardboard, red string, scissors and sticky tape or glue.

White board and marker

Teaching notes:

Legal persecution was an early phase of the Holocaust, prior to ghettoisation and ultimately, the Final Solution. Students should understand how the period of anti-Jewish law-making sits within the broader context of the development of the Holocaust. Such development can roughly be summarised as the following stages:

1. Historical antisemitism in Europe
2. Legal Persecution
3. Ghettoisation
4. The Final Solution
5. Liberation, recovery and commemoration

Glossary:

- Nuremberg Laws
- Citizenship
- Kosher

Lesson Instructions

ONE – Thinking about Citizenship (10 minutes)

Teacher writes on the board (or simply asks): “What does it mean to be a citizen?”

Sub questions might include:

- What protections and benefits are citizens given?
- What do you lose if you are no longer a citizen?
- What should citizenship be based on?
- Should it be possible to take someone’s citizenship away for any reason?

Students write the following in their notes, under the heading ‘The Nuremberg Laws’:

- September and November 1935 - Reich Citizenship Law and Supplementary Decree – “A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich.”
- September 1935 – Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour – forbids marriage and sexual relationships between Jews and non-Jews. This is to prevent the Aryan German race from being ‘defiled’ with Jewish blood.

TWO – Anti-Semitic Laws (30 minutes)

Teacher distributes the **Handout – Antisemitic Law Cards**.

Teacher can choose to do some or all of the following activities:

- Students arrange the cards in date order. (Note that some are from outside the period 1933-1939.) Students state at which point they would have left Germany, if they were Jewish. This can lead to class discussion: why didn't all the Jews leave?
- Students arrange the cards in a pyramid – one card at the top, then two, then three. The arrangement criteria might be which laws are the most surprising or noteworthy, or which laws are the most difficult for Jewish people. Teacher asks students to explain their choices.
- Students classify the laws into groups according to the impact of each law: social, professional, cultural, financial, educational, other. Discuss how some laws fit in more than one classification e.g. if a law prevents a Jew from carrying out their profession, this is a professional loss, and it will have immediate financial effects.
- Students choose three ways to classify laws, and choose three cards to fit in each category. Then shuffle those nine cards and swap with another student, or group, without telling them the categories. The recipient student or group must try to find the connections between the cards, and arrange them into three groups of three. The pairs then discuss their thinking.
- 'CSI' task – Teacher distributes large cardboard sheets. Students use red string to make connections between laws. Label the connectors. Make as many as possible, so the cardboard sheet looks like a detective's board on a TV show.
- Research task – students choose three laws to research in more detail. They can arrange their notes under the headings, Context, Law, and Impact.

THREE – Summative writing task (10 minutes)

Here are three paragraph prompts, differentiated for different learners:

1. How did laws impact Jewish people in Germany, 1933-1939?
2. "The imposition of anti-Jewish laws was an early stage in the development of the Holocaust." Discuss.
3. "Without the anti-Jewish Laws of the 1930s, the perpetration of the Holocaust would not have been possible." Discuss.

Modifications:

Teachers can choose which tasks to offer in Activity Two.

Differentiated paragraph prompts are provided in Activity Three.

Additional Resources

Watch [this short video](#) about the Nuremberg Race Laws (2min 35sec).

Related lessons

Sydney Jewish Museum has developed lesson plans to support the teaching of a complete unit about the Holocaust. [Click here](#) to see all lesson plans, as well as a suggested unit plan.