

Lesson Plan – Nazi Propaganda

Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 50 minutes

Overview:

Nazi propaganda played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and consolidating power in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. This lesson will explore the techniques and messages used in Nazi propaganda, to understand how it influenced society and contributed to the Holocaust. Students will be encouraged to consider the forces of propaganda in their own lives, so that they consume information with an awareness of origin and purpose.

Essential questions:

- What is propaganda?
- What were the core features of Nazi propaganda?

Learning objectives:

- Students will understand the nature of propaganda.
- Students will recognise the key features of Nazi propaganda.
- Students will have an increased awareness of the nature of the information they consume.

Key issues/concepts:

- Cause and effect
- Perspectives
- Significance
- Contestability

Materials:

[Handout – Nazi Propaganda](#)

[Worksheet – Nazi Propaganda](#)

Teaching notes:

It is important that students understand the unreliable nature of propaganda. Teachers must be very clear that many of the assertions in these propaganda images are untrue.

The most important element of Activity Three is the discussion after each prompt question.

Glossary:

- Propaganda
- Cult of Personality
- Swastika
- Hitler Youth
- Aryan

Lesson Instructions

Pre-Lesson

If you have chosen to display large versions of the propaganda images in the classroom, do so before the lesson begins.

ONE – What is Propaganda? (5 minutes)

Teacher writes on the board: Propaganda is information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view. (*Definition from Oxford Languages*)

Class discussion to establish the most important words in that definition (teacher underlines them on the board as the conversation progresses): information, biased, misleading, promote.

Students either copy the definition into their notes, or rewrite a definition in their own words.

TWO – Core Features of Nazi Propaganda (30 minutes)

Teacher distributes the **Handout – Nazi Propaganda**.

Students take 5 minutes to quietly look through the sources.

Teacher leads discussion, using these questions. (The questions are also available as the **Worksheet – Nazi Propaganda**):

1. Iconography
 - a. How often do you see flags?
 - b. What flags are they?
 - c. What does this tell you about Nazi propaganda?
2. Messaging
 - a. What is the message of Source 6?
 - b. Do you see similar messages repeated in any other sources?
 - c. What techniques are being used to represent these messages?
 - d. What is the message of Source 4?
 - e. Using your analysis so far, complete these sentences:
 A positive message of Nazi propaganda was _____.
 A negative message of Nazi Propaganda was _____.
3. Cult of Personality
 - a. Look at Sources 2 and 5. Compare and contrast the depictions of Hitler.
4. Audience
 - a. What is the audience for Source 3, a and b?
 - b. Why do you think Nazi propaganda targeted this audience?
 - c. Consider Sources 7, 9 and 10. What audiences do these examples of propaganda target?
 - d. Having looked at all the sources, what conclusion can you draw about the audience for Nazi propaganda?
5. Women and Families
 - a. Consider the magazine covers in Source 7. What is the purpose of these publications?
 - b. What do they reveal about Nazi ideology?
6. Race ideology
 - a. How would you describe the figure in Source 1?
 - b. Do you see similar people in other Sources?
 - c. What does this suggest about Nazi ideology?
7. Media
 - a. How many different types of media can you identify? Eg poster, newspaper
 - b. What does this reveal about Nazi propaganda?
8. Is there anything else you would like to note about any of the sources?

9. Having looked at all the propaganda, what role do you think it played in the rise of the Nazi Party?

Extension question: Assess the value and limitations of the Extra Source for a historian studying propaganda during the Reich.

THREE – Application to Students’ Lives (10 minutes)

Teacher allocates one side of the room to be ‘very true’, and one side of the room to be ‘not at all true’. (See note under ‘Modifications’, below, if there is insufficient space in the classroom.)

Teacher offers the following prompts, and students position themselves in the room along the continuum between ‘very true’ and ‘not at all true’. After every student is positioned, teacher questions two or three students about their reasoning and thoughts.

NB This activity works best if students are not allowed to stand right in the middle – they should be encouraged to pick a side.

The prompts are:

- I experience propaganda in my everyday life.
- I consume information from social media.
- I consume information from traditional news sources, like newspapers and TV news.
- I always check the background of the creator of the information I consume.
- I am aware of how the information I receive online is tailored through algorithms.
- Most of the information I receive is from people who have the same beliefs as me.
- I have bought something online because I saw an influencer talk about it.
- I regularly fact check information.

FINISHING UP

As an exit activity, or for homework, students complete the sentence: “Today I learned that the key elements of Nazi propaganda include...”

For a longer homework exercise, students create an infographic outlining the elements of Nazi propaganda.

Modifications:

Activity Two: Teachers may print the Handout for each student, or print sets to be shared within groups. Alternatively, teachers may print large versions of each source, and display them on the walls of the classroom. If teachers would prefer not to print, images can be displayed or distributed electronically.

Activity Three: If there is not enough room for students to physically move around the room, they can do the activity from their seat, using a five-finger scale, where they all show a number of fingers in response to each question: 0 fingers for 'not at all true' and 5 fingers for 'very true'.

Related lessons

Before this lesson, we recommend you begin the unit with our lesson called 'Introduction to the Holocaust'. You can [click here](#) to access that lesson plan, as well lessons about other relevant topics. After this lesson, we recommend you teach about Legal Persecution under the Reich.

You can also [click here](#) to see a suggested plan for teaching a full unit about the Holocaust.