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# Introduction

## Warsaw and the Jewish Resistance

Even as the forces of Germany swept eastward across Poland in September 1939, the Nazis began to carry out the first stages of Hitler's "Final Solution" — the complete extermination of Europe's Jews.

A key element in the planned genocide was the forcing of Jews into walled-off ghettos in various cities in Eastern Europe. The largest of these ghettos was the one in Warsaw. There, about 450,000 Jews were driven brutally into a tiny, 100-block area. Crowding into rundown apartment buildings at an average of six or seven to a room, the Ghetto's residents soon began to endure a life of sheer misery. But Hitler's goal was not merely to oppress these people — it was to destroy them. Beginning in July 1942, thousands daily were shipped to Treblinka and death.

The Nazis expected a docile population to go quietly to its destruction, but they were in for a surprise. In an act of unimaginable courage and enormous dignity, the residents of the Warsaw Ghetto decided to fight back, knowing full well they faced all but certain death.

The story of their heroic stand is presented here through twelve visual displays. These visual primary sources focus on several key aspects of this tragic but inspiring event. The visuals are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **The Nazi Storm**

The illustrations here focus on the traumatic worldwide impact of the outbreak of the war and the cover that war gave Hitler to begin a massive relocation of Jews into ghettos in preparation for the "Final Solution."

### **Living and Dying in the Ghetto**

The Jews forced into Hitler's walled-in ghettos tried to make the best of a terrible situation. Starvation, disease and senseless brutality were the daily experience of people who awaited a terrible fate with what seemed at times to be complete docility.

### **"Our Hour Had Come"**

Starting in July 1942, the Nazis began to deport thousands daily to the gas chambers of Treblinka. From 450,000 residents, the Ghetto was down to 40,000 or 50,000 by the end of the year. While Nazi thugs patrolled the Ghetto, many Jews risked their lives to organize resistance groups that would fight back. The illustrations here focus on how they did it.

### **"To Die with Honor"**

On April 19, 1943, SS General Stroop led several thousand troops in an action to deport all remaining Ghetto residents. The stiff resistance these forces met took them by surprise. What Stroop expected to accomplish in three days actually took 20 — and it required the total destruction of the Ghetto. Even after that, a few brave souls fought on for weeks from hiding places in the sewers and the rubble.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Most textbooks today are full of colorful visuals. But all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. But only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**CD-ROM WITH IMAGES** The ImageXaminer allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions. The CD-ROM also includes a folder containing all of the discussion questions and follow-up questions in pdf format. All of the images are also in pdf format, should you wish to create overhead transparencies.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS FOR EACH ILLUSTRATION**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while viewing the images in the ImageXaminer. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments, while others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better understand the nature of Adolf Hitler's Nazi dictatorship.
  2. Students will better understand what the Jewish ghettos set up by the Nazis were like and how they were controlled.
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# The Nazi Storm

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933. His Nazi movement triumphed by appealing to the anger of Germans over their nation's defeat in World War I. In the 1930s, the misery of the Great Depression added to this sense of bitterness, leading millions of Germans to long for an all-powerful leader to restore Germany's greatness. By 1938, Hitler had fully rearmed Germany and had begun his conquest of Europe. As his troops marched into one nation after another, citizens of those nations, such as the woman on the right, could only gaze in helpless terror at their new Nazi masters.

**Illustration 2**

In appealing to Germans, Hitler also played on the bitter hatred many of them felt for Jews. In the '30s, Nazi anti-Semitism led to discrimination and violence against Germany's Jews. But with World War II, the Nazis had a chance to carry out their real goal — the complete extermination of the Jewish people throughout Europe and the world. As phase one of this plan, Jews were rounded up and forced into tiny ghettos in all the lands conquered by the Nazis. World War II in Europe began with Hitler's sudden invasion of Poland in 1939, and Poland had a huge share of Europe's Jews. In this photo, Jews are being forced into the largest of Poland's ghettos, the Warsaw Ghetto.

**Illustration 3**

At gun point, Jews had to give up their jobs, their homes and most of their belongings as they were herded into ghettos. In these cramped quarters, they crowded six or seven people to a room in tiny rundown flats. Life soon became intolerable. Adding to the misery was the unbearable cruelty of Nazi soldiers who would beat or shoot Jews in the streets for any reason — or no reason at all. But the Nazis were also clever in their cruelty. They knew the ghetto would be easier to control if Jews were seen as controlling it. Therefore, a Jewish Council, or *Judenrat*, was often put in charge of each ghetto. And this group of Jewish officials was told to organize its own Jewish police force to keep order. Here a Jewish policeman and a German soldier together direct traffic from one part of the Lodz ghetto to another. The sign reads "Jewish residential area, entrance is forbidden."

# Illustration 1



The National Archives



The National Archives

## ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. In the 1930s, a terrifying dictator rose to power in a key nation in Europe. On the left, some of that dictator's supporters can be seen watching a military parade in that country. Can you name the dictator and the nation he led?
2. What shows that the people in the crowd are probably enthusiastic supporters of Adolf Hitler?
3. Hitler came to power promising to make Germany great again. He played on Germans' anger over the way recent events had limited Germany's strength and pride. Can you explain what events these were? What else in the 1930s added to the anger of Germans and led them to support Hitler?
4. In the late 1930s, Hitler began taking over one country after another in Europe. The photo on the right shows a woman watching Nazis soldiers march into her own country, Czechoslovakia. What makes this photo such an effective way to portray the tragic nature of Hitler and the Nazi movement?

## ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small Group Activity: It is 1938, and you are editors of a major American newspaper. The photo above of the woman in Czechoslovakia has just come across the "news wire." Design an entire front page of your paper for this day, using this photo as the focus of the page. Write news stories to go with the photo. Make your newspaper as realistic-looking as possible. Be sure your stories are as accurate as possible. To give you an idea of what newspapers in the 1930s looked like ask your school or public librarian for help, or look through the library or local bookstores for books that feature famous newspaper front pages from history.
2. Why were Hitler's Nazis able to win such strong support among millions of Germans? One factor may have been their effective use of "visual propaganda" in the form of posters, cartoons, photos, colorful outdoor rallies, film, etc. In your library, look through illustrated histories of the time. Photocopy or bring to class 10 images to help you illustrate a talk on the power of propaganda in Hitler's totalitarian regime.