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The Holocaust

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources
World History Series

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	iv
Lecture Notes	S1
Student Handouts	H1
<u>Culminating Activities</u>	
Image Analysis Worksheet	1
Contextual Analysis Worksheet	3

Introduction

Primary sources are the building blocks of history. Using these sources to introduce students to historical periods offers students the opportunity to become historians themselves—to analyze the evidence, form hypotheses, and learn how to support arguments based on evidence. They learn what it means to interpret the past in ways that provide meaning for the present. Textual primary sources can often be difficult for students to engage with because they are often couched in unfamiliar language from a different historical era. Visual primary sources can prove more appealing and accessible to students, and they also involve different types of “reading” skills.

How to Use This Product

This PowerPoint® presentation is designed to walk students through the process of primary source interpretation. Slides help to focus students’ attention and train them how to “read” visual primary sources. Targeted questions and enlarged insets from images help to train students to see deeper into the historical record, to uncover evidence that, though plainly before their eyes, is not always obvious at first glance.

Let Us Know What You Think

At Social Studies School Service, we always strive to provide the best supplemental curriculum materials at a superior value. If you have feedback that could help us improve this product, requests for other titles in this series, or stories of how it has helped your students, please let us know. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
Social Studies School Service



The Holocaust



Table of Contents



- Antisemitism
- The Nuremberg Laws
- The “Final Solution”
- The Ghettos
- Death Camps

Antisemitism

Historic:

- Religious—Jews blamed for death of Jesus; stereotype of the “wandering Jew”
- Economic—Jews accused of economic exploitation
- Social—Jews viewed as outsiders, suffering expulsions, discriminatory laws, confinement to ghettos

Modern:

- *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—purports a worldwide Jewish conspiracy
- Political—Jews accused of spreading Marxism
- Racial—Nazi racial ideology promoted the idea that Jews are a separate race “polluting” the German *Volk*

Early Christian teaching demonized Jews as Christ killers who were collectively and eternally cursed for denying Jesus and who deserved to suffer. The stereotype of the “wandering Jew” became common in both European literature and popular legend, reinforcing beliefs that Jews were rootless, stateless, foreign aliens. It also confirmed long-held religious beliefs about the culpability of Jews in the death of Jesus and the obstinacy of Jews in refusing to acknowledge by conversion the supremacy of Christianity. Thus, according to the stereotype, the medieval “wandering Jew” was condemned to a life of roaming the earth until Judgment Day. Also in the early Middle Ages, church decrees required Jews to wear special yellow markings. Accusations of ritual murder and desecration of the host (communion wafer) were used as excuses for destroying Jewish property and lives. Barred in most parts of Europe from owning land or joining guilds, Jews became merchants and moneylenders, professions that gave rise to a kind of economic antisemitism: the Jew as usurer.

In the 19th century, the old antisemitic beliefs based on myth and superstition were superseded by new myths. This period also witnessed the beginnings of racial antisemitism influenced by nationalism and social Darwinism. Other accusations against Jews were fueled by publications such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which alleged plans for Jewish world economic and political domination. This publication, exposed as a hoax by tsarist secret police, continues to have a place in the annals of contemporary antisemitism. The social and political unrest in industrializing Europe gave rise to the accusation that Jews were at the core of Marxist and socialist unrest. Jews in the early 20th century were disparaged incongruously as both capitalist exploiters and Marxist revolutionaries. Nazi racial ideology propagated the pseudoscientific belief that the Jews were a separate, inferior, even subhuman race which “polluted” the German *Volk* and needed to be eliminated.

Nazi Antisemitic Propaganda

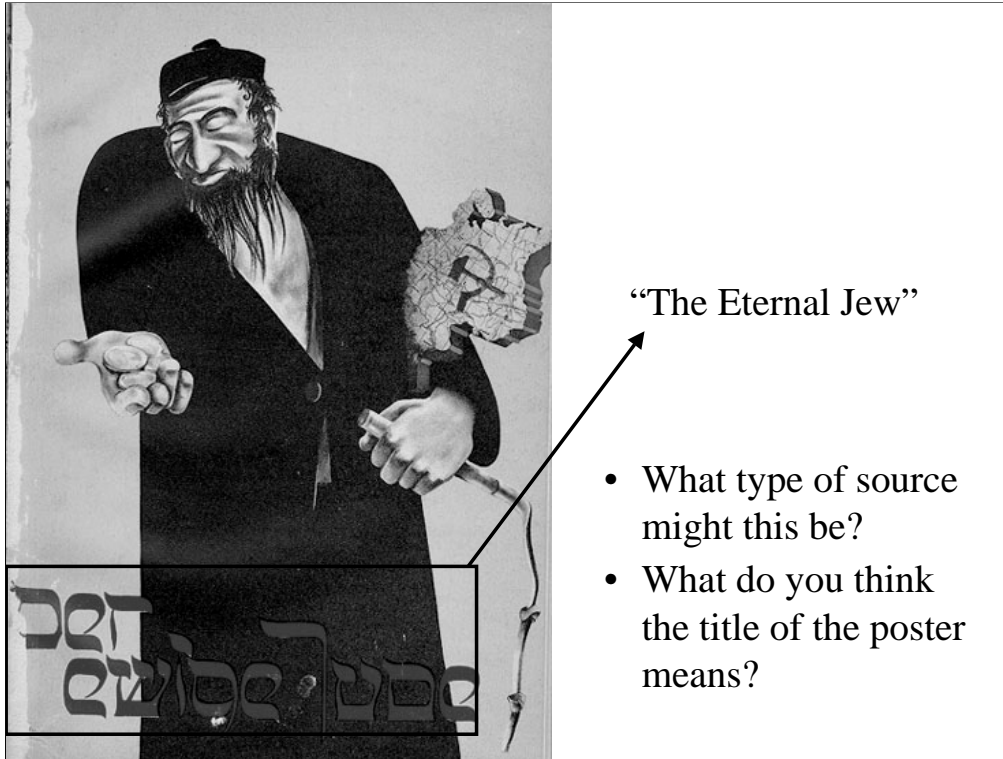
- Demonized Jews
- Perpetuated stereotypes
- Reinforced Nazi racial ideology
- Encouraged viewing Jews as “alien”
- Engendered fear and paranoia

The Nazi state had a dedicated and relentless propaganda apparatus headed by Joseph Goebbels which disseminated and attempted to engender support for its discriminatory policies. Much of the propaganda concentrated on demonizing Jews and reinforcing stereotypes of Jews as economically exploitive foreigners who also spread the “evils” of Marxism and communism. Since most of Germany’s Jews were well assimilated and indistinguishable from the rest of the German population, the Nazis focused a great deal of propaganda on reinforcing their own racial antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish appearance and behavior.



Antisemitic Propaganda

Give students approximately one minute to view this slide.



This is a poster for a 1937 antisemitic museum exhibition intended to offer “scientific proof” of the inferiority of Jews. The title “*Der ewige Jude*” literally means “The Eternal Jew.” Some translate it as “The Wandering Jew.” The decision to use the word *ewige*—meaning eternal or everlasting—rather than *wandernd* (“wandering”) emphasizes the eternal “curse” of the Jews. Also, the font used in the title deliberately mimics and mocks Hebrew text.