

Lesson

Duration:

Two 50-minute class periods

Learn the History: Propaganda in Dawid Rubinowicz's and Moshe Flinker's Diaries

Learning Objectives

In this lesson students consider the specific ways in which Nazi propaganda depicted Jews. They also look at its immediate effect on Dawid Rubinowicz and Moshe Flinker as they recount it in their respective diaries. Educators and students are encouraged to read the introductions in *Salvaged Pages* to Dawid Rubinowicz's diary (pages 271–76) and Moshe Flinker's diary (pages 90–98) before beginning the lesson. These provide valuable information about the writers' lives and a historical context for a reading of the diary.

Overview

This lesson was initially drafted by Holocaust educators Lisa Bauman and Bonnie Sussman.

Core diary entries from *Salvaged Pages* used in this lesson: [Dawid Rubinowicz, February 12, 1942](#); [Moshe Flinker, December 14, midnight \(1942\)](#)

The Nazis used propaganda to further their antisemitic and racist ideological goals. Through film, newspaper, posters, children's books and more, they sought to intensify existing antisemitic stereotypes. They sought as well to justify the persecution of the Jews of Europe. Propaganda held an especially important role for the Nazis because public support for their policy was essential for its successful implementation.

Dawid Rubinowicz, writing during the German occupation of Poland, recounts his experience confronting an antisemitic propaganda poster. Moshe Flinker, living in German-occupied Amsterdam, writes of going to view an antisemitic movie. Their entries encourage discussion about the specific ways that the Nazis propagated hateful images of Jews and how these images affected them personally. They also talk about how this affected the Jewish and non-Jewish population in their communities.

Focus Questions

- What is propaganda?
- What is the difference between propaganda and information?
- How did the Nazis use propaganda? What goals did propaganda aim to support?
- What do Dawid Rubinowicz and Moshe Flinker describe feeling when they encounter Nazi propaganda?

Activities

Opener: Defining Propaganda

Begin by asking students to share their definitions of propaganda and come to a working definition as a class.

Discuss with students the following questions:

- What are the differences between propaganda and information or advertising?
- Can propaganda be used in a positive way? How can it be used for a negative purpose?

Main Activity: Nazi Propaganda

Discuss the general characteristics of propaganda with the class. Then describe ways in which Nazi propaganda must be understood within the context of its time and the extreme consequences of its messages.

If the class has already engaged in a study of Nazi Germany and their use of propaganda, ask students to share their thoughts about how the Nazis used propaganda. If Nazi propaganda is a new topic, you may find it helpful to have students read [the definition of propaganda from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) online exhibition on the topic.

You may also choose to share the following descriptions of Nazi propaganda:

Nazi propaganda spread insults and lies about Jews in an attempt to humiliate and isolate them. It served to remind them that they were alone in their suffering and should not hope to receive help from their non-Jewish neighbors.¹

In occupied Poland, the Germans ordered Jews to move into specially demarcated areas, usually the poorest sections of towns and cities. Nazi Propaganda supported the policy of confining Jews to such ghettos by portraying them as a health threat requiring quarantine. German educational films depicted 'the Jew' as a carrier of lice and typhus. In Warsaw and elsewhere, German officials used hateful images of Jews to justify their forced relocation into ghettos, which soon became overcrowded and the very breeding grounds for the contagious diseases the Germans sought to combat.²

Read [Dawid Rubinowicz's Diary Entry on Nazi Propaganda, February 12, 1942](#). Discuss how Dawid recounts the effect of propaganda in his life. What passages in this entry support this description? Discuss his use of the word *shame* in this context. What is the connection between propaganda and shame?

View the [Antisemitic Nazi Propaganda Poster](#) below.

Respond to the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What images are used?
- What is your interpretation of this poster?
- What questions does this poster provoke?
- What are the connections between the imagery used and the text on the poster?

Diarist Moshe Flinker also wrote about Nazi propaganda. Read Moshe Flinker's Diary Entry on [Antisemitic Propaganda Film, December 14, 1942](#) and describe Moshe's reaction and analysis of the film. What sentences in this entry stand out? How does he explain his understanding of the role and relationship between propaganda and Nazi ideology?

View the Poster for Propaganda Film "Jud Süß" below.

Analyze the image with the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What images are used?
- What is your interpretation of this poster?
- What questions does this poster provoke?

Citations

1 [Dawid Rubinowicz: February 12, 1942](#), Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida, last accessed on August 24, 2015.

2 Stephan Luckert and Susan Bachrach. *The State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 2009), 119, 123.

Assessment

Comparison of Nazi Propaganda

Have students write an essay comparing and contrasting how Dawid Rubinowicz and Moshe Flinker wrote about and experienced antisemitic propaganda. Students should expand upon the following questions:

- What are the similarities and differences between how Dawid wrote about Nazi propaganda and how Moshe recorded his thoughts and feelings?
- Consider the context in which each diarist recorded their experience with Nazi propaganda. In what ways might their context have affected how they experienced the hateful messages of Nazi propaganda? What evidence can be found in their diaries to support your claim?