

Analyzing the Holocaust through the Pyramid of Hate

"Auschwitz did not fall suddenly from the skies, it was all tiny steps..." Holocaust survivor Marian Turcki

Subject: History/Social Studies, English Language Arts

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

Introduction:

In this lesson, students will analyze how the Nazi regime used the escalation of hate as well as public policy to normalize terror and legalize oppression. Using the Pyramid of Hate as a framework, students will analyze the actions and policies the Nazi regime used from 1933-1945 to isolate and demonize Jews, creating the conditions that led to genocide.

Essential Questions:

How were Jews isolated, demonized, and eventually murdered by the Nazi regime?
What is the danger for any society when the escalation of prejudices is unchecked?
What is the role of individuals and groups in preventing societal structures from being weaponized against marginalized communities?

Educational Outcomes:

Students will identify the policies and actions that the Nazi regime used to isolate and demonize the Jewish people.

Students will understand how oppressive regimes use prejudice to create fear and societal structures to target and isolate marginalized groups.

Students will identify ways in which individuals and groups can interrupt the escalation of hate and discrimination within a given society.

Teacher Preparation:

If you have not yet done so, introduce the [Pyramid of Hate](#) either through class discussion or the [Pyramid of Hate Lesson Plan](#).

Materials:

Internet access

[Echoes and Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust](#)

[Pyramid of Hate and the Holocaust](#) Handout

Procedure:

Step 1 Review of the Pyramid of Hate

- Discuss and review the [Pyramid of Hate](#) with students, focusing on current and historical examples for each of the five layers and their interrelationships. Students should have a basic understanding of each layer.

Step 2 Analyzing Nazi Actions and Policies

- Explain to students that they will be using the Pyramid of Hate as a framework to analyze how the Nazi regime isolated and demonized Jewish people in Germany and created the conditions that made the Holocaust possible.
- Remind students that while antisemitism had been a problem throughout Europe for centuries, the Nazi regime was able to escalate and mobilize that hate toward murder. They will be investigating how the Nazis were able to normalize the discrimination and terror that led to genocide.
- In pairs or individually, have students identify 2-3 events or policies from 1933-1945 in Germany and German-occupied Europe from the [Echoes and Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust](#) that illustrate each of the layers of the Pyramid of Hate.
 - This could be done using this [handout](#) or by having students draw the Pyramid of Hate with each layer on a large piece of chart paper and write their responses on this sheet.
- Ask students to answer the following Reflection Questions:
 - Look at the examples you used; how did the Nazis isolate, demonize, and eventually murder 6 million Jews in Europe?
 - What is the danger for any society when the escalation of prejudices is unchecked?
 - What can individuals and groups do to prevent societal structures from being weaponized against marginalized communities?
- Discuss the student's responses as a class.
- Make sure to emphasize to the students that genocide is a process that begins with allowing prejudices and biased attitudes to become normalized within a society. Once these types of attitudes are normalized, even if we as individuals do not hold them or accept them, people in positions of power can implement laws and policies based on these attitudes that exclude and marginalize people.

Definitions:

Genocide: the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of a racial, ethnic, religious, or national group. (For the full legal definition of genocide, see the [United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#))

Antisemitism: prejudice or hatred against Jewish people, often leading to discrimination or mistreatment based on their religion, ethnicity, or culture

Weaponize: to turn something into a weapon

Societal Structures: the organized systems and rules in a society that shape how people live, work, and interact with each other

Marginalized Communities: groups of people who are often left out of, or treated unfairly by society

Prejudices: unfair judgments or opinions people have about others without knowing them well

Demonize: to unfairly make someone or something seem really bad or evil