

Educational resources: Childhood in Nazi Germany

Information for teachers: this worksheet draws upon original primary sources from The Wiener Holocaust Library's archive to explore how the Nazis' affected the lives of young people in Nazi Germany.

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The Wiener Holocaust Library is the world's oldest archive of material on the Nazi era and The Holocaust. The Holocaust Explained is Library's educational website, designed for schools.

<https://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/> <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/>

Childhood in Nazi Germany Worksheet

Possible age groups: 13-18 year olds: (England and Wales) KS3, 4, 5

Relevant curricula (England and Wales): KS3 History; GCSE History Edexcel: Weimar and Nazi Germany 1918-1939; GCSE History OCR: Germany 1925-1955: The People and The State. Edexcel A-Level History - Germany and West Germany, 1918-89; OCR History Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany 1919-1963; AQA History: Democracy and Nazism: Germany 1918-1945.

Prior knowledge assumed: an understanding of the rise of the Nazis, Nazi racial beliefs and the concept of antisemitism.

Session aims: to use contemporary source material to assess how Nazi policies affected the lives of young people and what Nazi aims with respects to policy towards young people were.

Suggested activities: students should analyse the sources on their own or in pair or groups and explain what the sources can tell us about:

- 1) how Nazi policies affected the lives of young people
- 2) what Nazi aims with respects to young people were

Specific tasks/ questions about each source can be found throughout the worksheet. Students' answers could then be discussed and written up. Supplementary information about childhood in Nazi Germany could then be supplied to students.

Definitions of words in bold can be found in the **glossary** at the end of the worksheet.

Supplementary information for teachers about the sources and childhood in Nazi Germany can be found after the worksheet, as well as suggested answers to questions 1 and 2.

Worksheet: Childhood in Nazi Germany

Activities: analyse the sources and answer the questions throughout the worksheet. Once you have done this, consider what the sources can tell us about these two questions:

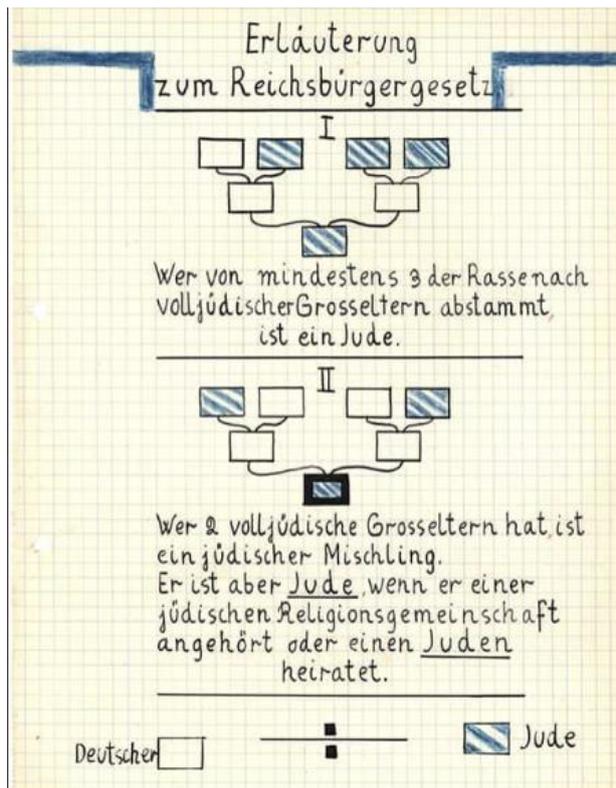
- 1) How did Nazi policies affected the lives of young people?
- 2) What were the aims of Nazi policies towards young people?

Education in Nazi Germany

Source A) Gerda Nabe's workbook

Below is a page from Gerda Nabe's school workbook, produced in Nazi Germany after 1935. Gerda Nabe was a schoolgirl in Nazi Germany.

- Without looking at the full translation of the information in the diagram (found below the source), can you work out what it is about? *Deutscher* means German, *Jude* means Jew.
- Now read the translation and consider: why do you think Gerda Nabe was asked to draw this diagram as part of her schoolwork in Nazi Germany?



Translation:

[Title] Explanation of the Reich Citizenship Law

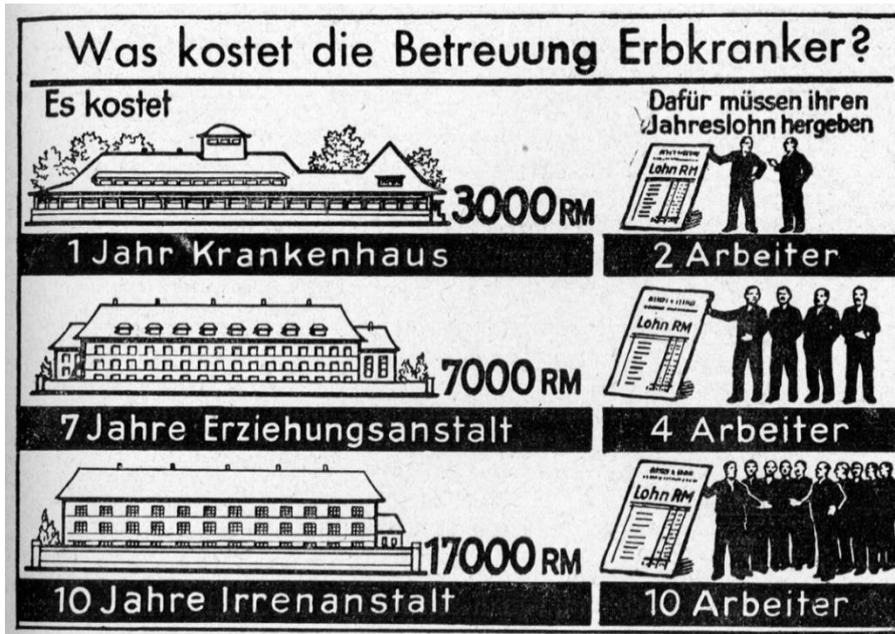
[First diagram] whoever has at least three full Jewish grandparents is a Jew.

[second diagram] Whoever has two fully Jewish grandparents is a Jewish Mischling [mixed Jew]. They are a Jew if they are part of a Jewish community or have married a Jew.

Source B) Maths Exercise from Nazi-era Text Book

Below is a Maths exercise from a school textbook from Nazi Germany.

- Without looking at the translation below, do you have any idea what the exercise is about?
- Now read the translation below and consider: why do you think this particular exercise appear in a school text book in Germany in the Nazi era?



Translation:

What is the cost of care for the hereditary sick?

It costs

The annual salary of:

3000RM [**Reichmarks**]

[for] 1 Year in a hospital

2 workers

7000RM

[for] 7 years in a special school

4 workers

17000RM

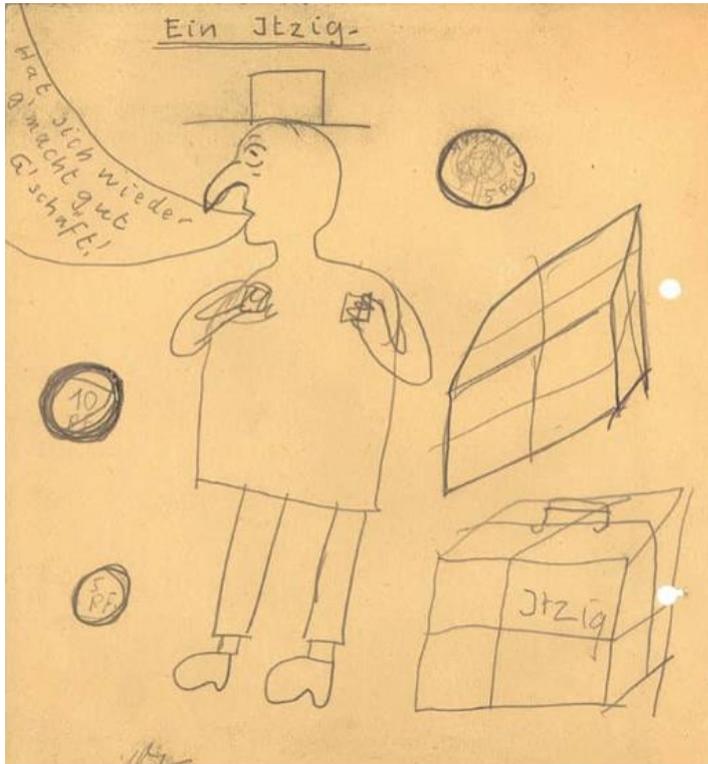
[for] 10 years in an asylum

10 workers

Source C) Antisemitic drawing by a child in Nazi Germany

This cartoon is headed 'Ein Itzig'. Itzig was a **derogatory** word for a Jew in Germany. The man in the cartoon is depicted in a **stereotypical** way. The caption coming out of the man's mouth says: 'I've made myself a good deal again!'

- Explain in what ways this cartoon is **antisemitic**
- What might the existence of this cartoon suggest about childhood/ children in Nazi Germany?



Activities for young people in Nazi Germany

- Look at sources D, E, F and G. What do they suggest about the activities that young people engaged in outside of school?
- What do you think the purposes of the Nazi Youth Organisations were?
- For what purpose (reason) do you think that these photographs and images were produced?
- Look at source H. What does it suggest about the experiences of children in Nazi Germany?

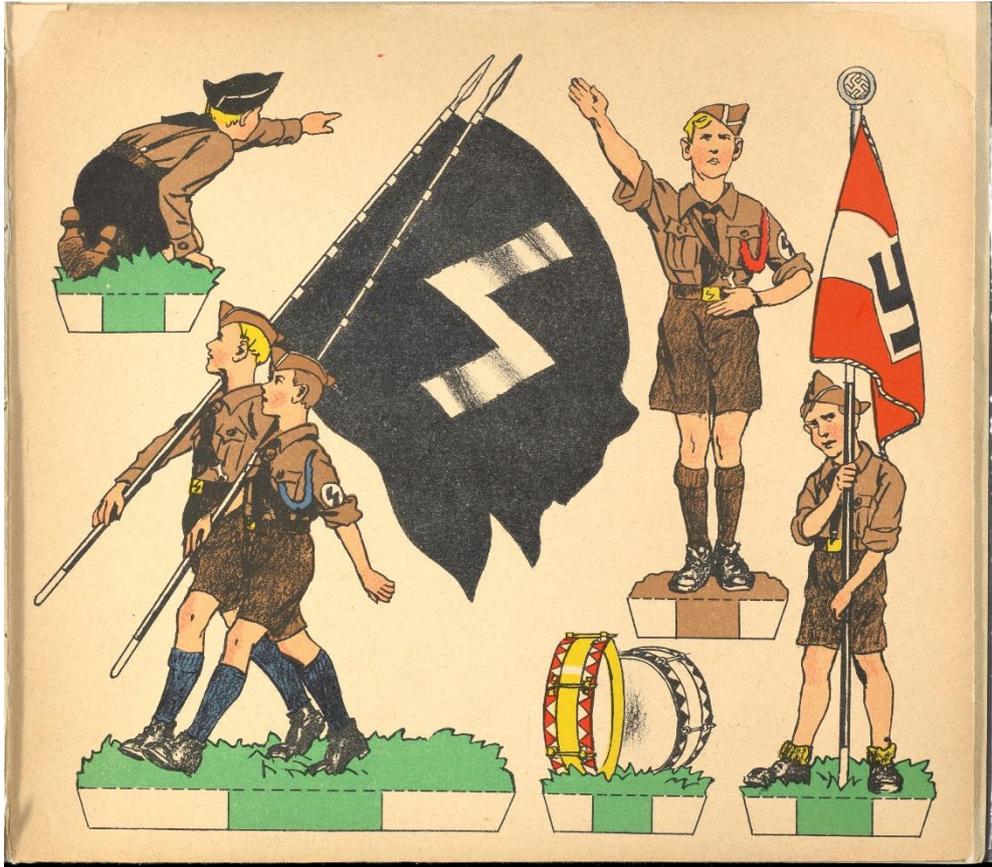
Source D) Photograph showing members of the *Bund Deutscher Madel* (The League of German Girls), a Nazi organisation for girls, performing acrobatics



Source E) Photograph showing members of Nazi boys' organisation *Hitler Jugend* (The Hitler Youth) marching.

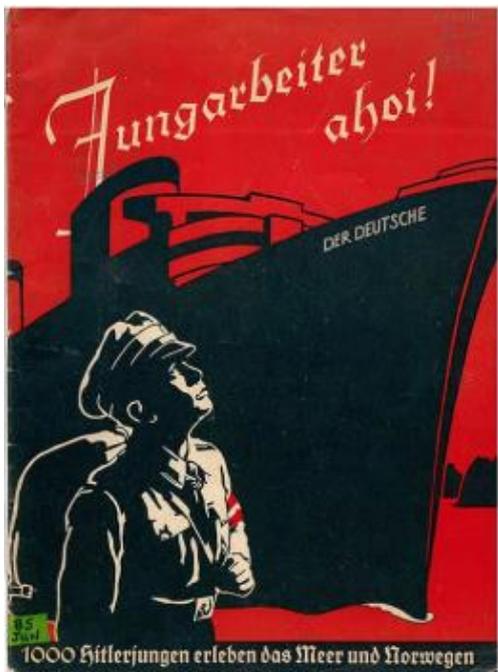


Source F) A page of a colouring book for young child about the Hitler Youth, produced in Germany in the 1930s.



Source G) This book is about a journey made by members of the Hitler Youth to Norway.

The title translates as 'Youth workers Ahoy! The subtitle says '1000 Hitler Youth experience the sea and Norway.'



Source H) A children's game produced in Nazi Germany.

The blocks can either be arranged to spell out 'Hitler' or can be arranged to form a **swastika**.



Glossary

Antisemitic - Hostility, prejudice, or discrimination towards Jews.

Derogatory - Something being belittling or disrespectful.

Mischling - A German word used in Nazi Germany to describe people who had both Jewish and 'Aryan' ancestry.

Reichmarks - The monetary currency of Germany from 1924 until 1948.

Stereotypical - Relating to a commonly held but extremely oversimplified idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Swastika - An ancient symbol used as the emblem of the Nazi Party. The swastika takes the form of a cross, with each arm bent halfway along at a right angle.

Teacher information

Possible answers to questions 1 and 2:

1) How the sources suggest Nazi policies affected the lives of young people

- Indoctrination: at school and at in leisure time (in books, games etc), Nazi ideology was promoted, including ideas about race, fitness and health; the roles of men and women (with boys being prepared for war, girls for domestic life); antisemitic ideas
- This affected the education children received: in schools, curricula, textbooks and activities were changed in order to reflect and promote Nazi ideas: for example, their racial and antisemitic ideas (you could ask students to consider how this undermined the quality of education)
- Nazi youth organisations organised a great many activities / meetings etc. This kept young people busy, and often out of their homes (you could ask students to consider what benefits this may have had for the Nazi regime).
- [If swing youth source included: not all young people were convinced by Nazi ideology – and some even resisted]

2) Nazi aims with respects to policy towards young people

- The Nazis sought to indoctrinate children into supporting Nazi ideology in order to create a generation of Nazi Germans and a pliable population
- The Nazis sought to prepare boys and girls for what they saw as their respective roles: war for boys, domestic life and motherhood for girls. Both girls and boys were trained to support the development of the master race.

Supplementary information

The sources

Source A) Gerda Nabe's diagram represents the Reich Citizenship Law, part of The Nuremberg Laws, which became law in Germany in 1935. The Nuremberg Laws removed German citizenship from Jews, defined who was Jewish, and banned intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. 'Mischling' – those of mixed Jewish and non-Jewish heritage -were also defined. Some 'Mischling' were fully subjected to Nazi oppression, others were more protected than those defined as fully Jewish.

Source B) Disabled people and those with hereditary sickness faced prejudice, discrimination, persecution and even murder in Nazi Germany. The Nazis believed that disabled people were not part of the German 'master race'. They believed that they were genetically 'impure', and a financial burden on the state. Ultimately, this view led to the murder of thousands of disabled people. The Nazis started their oppression of disabled people shortly after their rise to power. The Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, more commonly referred to as the Sterilisation Law, was passed on the 14 July 1933. This law named nine disabilities and forced anyone with them to be sterilised. These disabilities ranged from severe physical deformity to epilepsy, to chronic alcoholism. From autumn 1939, a 'euthanasia' programme, established to murder disabled people, was set up.

Source C) This cartoon was donated to The Wiener Holocaust Library. The only information that we have about it is that it was produced by 'Helmut's children' in Nazi Germany.

Sources D, E, F and G) All of the images were produced essentially as propaganda.

Childhood in Nazi Germany

Education

The Nazis aimed to indoctrinate the younger population was through reforming the education system.

They wanted to de-intellectualise learning: they did not want education to provoke people to ask questions or think for themselves. They believed this approach would instil obedience and belief in the Nazi worldview, creating the ideal future generation.

The Nazis first focused on changing what students learned. They changed the core curriculum to emphasise sports, history and racial 'science' (taught in Biology and in the new subject of Race Studies) as the most important subjects. In 1936, sport was taught for a minimum of two to three hours every school day. By 1938, this had been increased to five hours every day. Subjects such as religion became less important, and were eventually removed from the curriculum altogether.

The Nazis also adapted the sources of students' education. They introduced new textbooks which were often racist, and promoted ideas such the need for *Lebensraum*. Any textbooks used to educate students had to be approved by the party.

The Nazis also placed great emphasis on who the teachers were. Under the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service Act of 7 April 1933, just three months after Hitler became chancellor, all Jewish teachers, and teachers with undesirable political beliefs (such as communists), were dismissed.

This act also made membership of the Nazi Party compulsory for all teachers. The National Socialist Teachers League, created in 1929, became responsible for the control and education of teachers following the Nazi rise to power. All teachers were required to attend a one-month compulsory Nazi training course, which emphasised Nazi ideology and the importance of advocating the regime's ideas.

In 1933, in addition to the dismissal of teachers, a quota was imposed on schools and universities, so that they could only accept a certain number of Jewish students. In 1938, these students were banned from attending public schools and universities entirely.

Activities for Young People in Nazi Germany

The Nazis used children's leisure organisations to indoctrinate young people into National Socialist ideology.

The two main Nazi youth organisations were the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) and the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls). In 1936, membership of these groups became compulsory. Not everyone joined, however.

The Hitler Youth was for boys aged between ten and eighteen. By 1932, it had just over 100,000 members. By 1934, this number rose to over three and a half million.

The Hitler Youth took part in a range of activities, focusing on sports and physical ability. Examples of their activities include boxing and camping trips, instruction in National Socialist

ideology, such as antisemitism and commitment to Hitler, and military training, such as shooting: ultimately, the Nazis sought to train young men for war.

The League of German Girls was split into two divisions. The *Jungmädel* (Young Girls League) was for girls aged fourteen and under, and the *Glaube und Schönheit* (Faith and Beauty) was for young women aged seventeen to twenty-one.

The Young Girls League focused on similar activities to the Hitler Youth, with activities such as camping, sports, and instruction in National Socialist ideology. In contrast to the Hitler Youth, girls were also instructed in chores such as making beds, in line with the Nazis views on women's place in society.

The Faith and Beauty organisation followed a similar agenda, but also emphasised the Nazi ideal image of a woman.

All youth organisations under the Nazi Party were anti-intellectual. Whilst they did not replace school, they reduced the influence and importance of education to children.