

No Place for Hate[®] Activity Library

Personal Identity through the Lens of the Holocaust:

What Rights Are Most Important to Me?

Lesson Plan and Overview

Echoes & Reflections Lesson Plans: [Antisemitism](#), [Nazi Germany](#)

This activity will focus on personal rights and identity through visual history testimony from a Holocaust survivor. **Prerequisite for this activity:** An introduction in Holocaust education and the basic events of the Second World War are required for ensuring that students have the background knowledge they need. In addition, this should not be the first time students learn about the Holocaust. Providing preparation and context regarding traumatic historical events and concepts is critical. If ideas are needed for this prerequisite, refer to the Optional Prerequisite Activity section below.

Studying the rise of the Nazi Party requires students to reflect on the importance of preserving and protecting democratic values and institutions and consider their role as a responsible citizen in that process. The breakdown of democracy in Germany between 1933 and 1939 led to the unfolding of anti-Jewish policies. These policies, legislation and propaganda induced terror in Germany and isolated German Jewry from German society. In this activity, students will focus on one primary source—survivor testimony—to better understand the ways that anti-Jewish policies impacted the identity of German Jews, stripping them of their rights. Through the lens of the Holocaust, students will consider the rights that they have, and consider how losing those freedoms might impact their personal identities.

Grade Level

Grades 9–12

Learning Objectives

- Students will consider the importance of protecting democratic values and institutions, and their role as responsible citizens in this process.
- Students will identify the historical events that allowed for a dramatic change in social policies in Germany between 1933 and 1939.
- Students will consider the importance of their own rights and examine how the Jewish population of Germany experienced the erosion of these rights.

Materials Needed

Echoes & Reflections [Unit II: Antisemitism](#), [Unit III: Nazi Germany](#):

- [Antisemitism Definition](#)
- [Map of Prewar Jewish Communities](#)
- [What Rights are Most Important to Me?](#)
- [Margaret Lambert Testimony Clip I](#)
- [Margaret Lambert Testimony Clip II](#)

Words You Might Use

Antisemitism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people who are Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel. *(During the Holocaust, Nazi antisemitism was racial in nature, based on the erroneous belief that Jews are a race. Jews were viewed as racially inferior to Aryans and destructive of the world order.)*

Hate: An extreme dislike for something, someone or a group. If that hate is based on an aspect of someone's identity (e.g., race, religion, gender, gender expression/identity, ability, sexual orientation, etc.) it can result in interpersonal bias, discrimination, hate incidents, hate crimes and/or involvement in an organized hate group.

Boycott: To abstain from using, buying, or dealing with a business as an expression of protest or disfavor or as a means of coercion.

Discrimination: The denial of justice, resources and fair treatment of individuals and groups (often based on social identity), through employment, education, housing, banking, political rights, etc. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking. Discrimination can be legally sanctioned (de jure) or can exist despite nondiscrimination laws or policies in place (de facto).

Optional Prerequisite Activity

If students have not already been introduced to the Holocaust, this optional activity can be done in advance of the core activity to provide important and necessary context.

First, define antisemitism with students using the definition above and the [Map of Prewar Jewish Communities](#). Emphasize the low percentage compared to the general population and guide students' understanding of how antisemitism is based in marginalization, bias and oppression as concepts. Discuss how most people who would be galvanized against the Jewish community during that time might never have even met a Jewish person.

Strengthen students' understanding by using the map and definition, and asking them to connect to other groups for whom bias and oppression are directed 'conceptually' or by people who have never met another individual from a given group. Lead a large-group discussion around stereotypes, conceptual hatred, and marginalization.

Explain that contrary to what some may think, antisemitism wasn't a new idea during the time of Nazi Germany. Rather, antisemitism has a long history—some refer to it as “the longest hatred.” Nazi Germany used this long history to stoke hatred among non-Jewish Germans.

Core Activity

Share with students that antisemitism in Europe did not begin with the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. Long-standing antisemitic beliefs contributed to Nazi ideology and informed the creation of the discriminatory laws and restrictions put in place that were used to control and alienate the Jewish population.

Introduce students to the testimony of Holocaust survivor [Margaret Lambert](#) by reading her short bio. Share that Margaret talks about what her life was like before 1933. Explain to students that as they watch this testimony, they should keep two questions in mind:

- How do Margaret's emotions come across? What about her physical affect (facial expressions, tone of voice, body language) tells you this?
- What do you learn about Jewish German life before 1933?

[Play Margaret's clip](#). Consider doing a [See-Think-Wonder](#) activity for her testimony. Emphasize body language, facial expression, tone of voice, and how she expresses her emotions. Ask what they learned about her identity and values [non-practicing Jew, a woman who likes sports, seen as “freaky” as she calls it—challenging gender norms, didn't really experience antisemitism, only Jew in her class.] while watching her testimony.

Engage students in a discussion, eliciting from them specific reference points for Margaret's emotions, physical body language, gestures, and tone of voice about how Margaret appeared to be upbeat, bright, and how she didn't experience antisemitism in a major way. Elicit from students who Margaret was before the Holocaust took place. Emphasize the phrase, “until a certain time” as you continue to the next part of the activity.

[Play the second clip of Margaret's testimony](#). Again, ask students what they saw in her physical appearance and how she expresses her emotions. Emphasize body language, tone of voice, facial expressions

and other ways she expresses feelings. Connect to her emotions by asking, “How does she feel after ‘losing’ her rights? What rights specifically does she discuss?”

Transition to the handout, [What Rights are Most Important to Me](#) in the Nazi Germany Unit. Ask participants to quickly brainstorm what are some examples of their rights today, or alternatively, give some quick examples. Instruct participants to complete the handout by identifying the top three rights that are most important to them, and rank them in order. Have students share their ideas in small groups.

Lead a discussion about students’ choices and the enormous impact that losing those rights might have on an individual’s identity by asking the following questions:

- What did you notice in listening to students’ top three rights?
- How would you feel if you didn’t have those rights or if you lost them?
- How does this connect to issues in the news and current events?

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

All students will engage in discussions about identity and human rights. By listening to personal narratives from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses, students learn about and explore various aspects of identity, human rights, and personal responsibility. This will enhance students’ understanding about the impact of discrimination and lack of one’s rights that are based on identity groups.

Virtual Variation

The resources required for this activity are available to view or download on echoesandreflections.org and the activity, in its entirety, can be added to online classrooms. If implementing virtually, we recommend that this activity be administered in a webinar delivery platform, such as Zoom or Google Classroom, to optimize the interactive elements of this activity, using large and small group discussions, polling, break-out rooms, and chat box.