



1938—A Turning Point in Time: Exploring Microhistories to Understand Persecution and Displacement

The activity is intended for students grades 10 and up, but it can be modified by limiting/modifying tasks in the handout.

Duration: All three parts will take more than 120 minutes, so it is advisable to divide the activity into smaller units that could be addressed weekly, depending on the needs of the group. For example, the part regarding primary and secondary sources can certainly be developed as a separate, “sequel-like” class.

A pre-activity (e.g. browsing the 1938Projekt website) could be assigned as a homework.

This activity can be used as:

- an introduction to and contextualization of the situation of Jews in Germany before the Holocaust;
- as a context for studying refugees, displacement, and migrations, using example of German-speaking Jews in 1930s;
- as an introductory exercise to explore a) primary and secondary sources, their potentials and limitations, and b) microhistory and its role in studying crucial historical phenomena.

Description:

Introduce the Leo Baeck Institute’s online project: “1938Projekt. Posts from the Past.” Take some time to have students explore both the website and the posts presented on social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook). What would be their preferable form of browsing?

Part 1: a jigsaw scavenger hunt

Divide the class into four groups (if you prefer to expand the contexts you can add tasks/sets of dates to study and thus increase the number of groups). Have the groups work together on their tasks, as per the handouts.

Let each group know that they will be presenting their findings to others. It is their task to make sure that they share their knowledge with their peers — that they are each others’ teachers. What should they focus on? How should they ensure they are understood?

Part 2: presentations, peer-learning

Have each group present their findings. Depending on the time and format of the class, have students present a) only their analysis of the sources, b) the analysis and the

summary of their brief discussions, or c) the analysis, the summary, and the presentation of questions they had.

Alternatively, you can use students' analyses of the sources, and then moderate a discussion that would include all the threads the groups had studied, presenting them in the broader context of a) living under systemic persecution; b) becoming refugees.

Part 3: primary and secondary sources

Have students present their questions. Brainstorm with the class where can the answers to these question be found?

Introduce the notion of primary and secondary sources. Have students look for the answer to some of their questions online, and use their search results to discuss reliability of sources.

Homework:

You can assign a short essay addressing the questions discussed during the scavenger hunt.

You can have students prepare a mini-annotated bibliography of sources that would address the questions they had during the scavenger hunt.

You can assign an essay that may include additional examples from the website used to contextualize a chosen "Big History" event through the lenses of microhistorical narratives (Juni-Aktion, Nuremberg Laws, Anschluss, Kindertransport, displacement, anti-semitism, Nazi laws and regulations against Jews, etc)







