

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, antisemitism, Nazi laws and regulations against Jews, etc)



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Assignment sheet, GROUP 1

Your task is to learn more about diverse attempts to make sense of "the turbulent present" in Germany, in 1938.

Explore four stories presented on the website, dated: March 11; May 22; November 7; May 13; July 23.

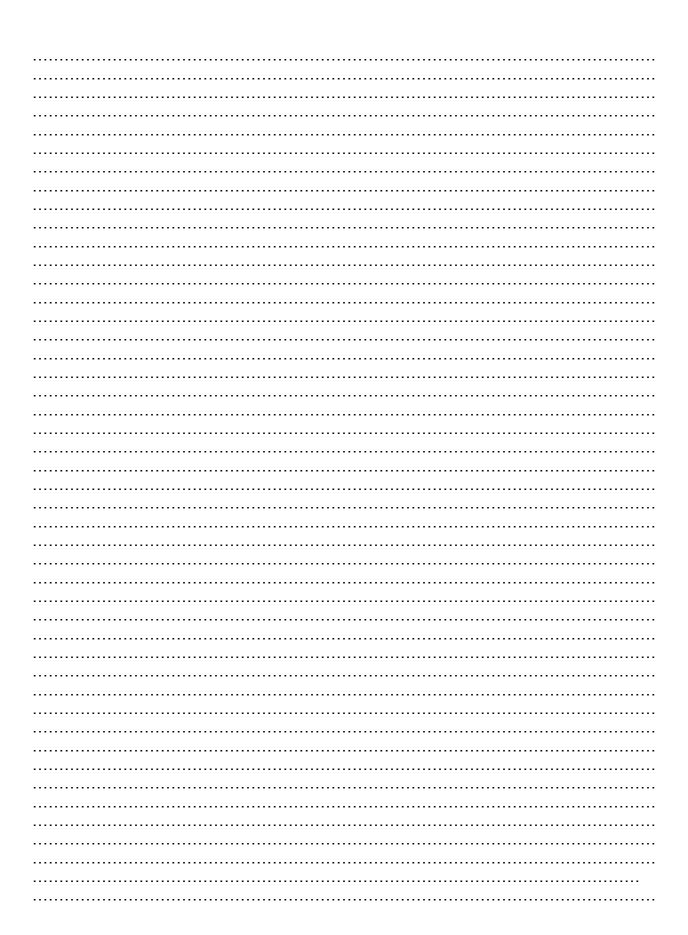
- Write down the name/age/location and the type of document presented on the day (sometimes there won't be specific names to write down).
- Describe briefly the situation that the document illustrates.
- Adolf Markus talks about the "calm before the storm" and Frank Shurman mentions a "desperate position." How do you understand these expressions? What do they tell us about their Jewish authors' emotions and concerns?

Write down at least three questions you have about the stories you have just

studied. What would you like to learn more about them? What information do you

How do diaries add to our understanding of history?

need	d to better understand them?





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Assignment sheet, GROUP 2

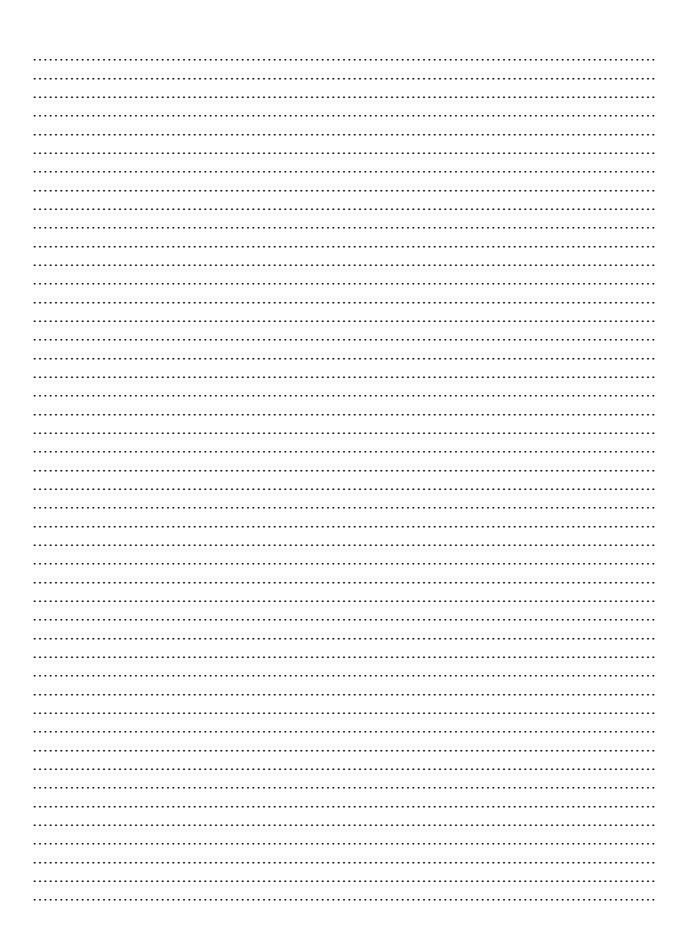
Your task is to learn more about the rising anti-Semitism in Germany, in 1938. Explore four stories presented on the website, dated: January 12; May 1; August 28; November 11.

- Write down the name/age/location and the type of document presented on the day (sometimes there won't be specific names to write down).
- Describe briefly the situation that the document illustrates.
- How does each entry help us better understand different faces of antisemitism in Germany of 1938? Write down examples and comment on them.
- Discuss in your group: was the Bar Kochba club a sign of hope or despair for teenagers at the time? Explain your opinion.

Write down at least three questions you have about the stories you have just

studied. What would you like to learn more about them? What information do you

need to	better understand them?





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Assignment sheet, GROUP 3

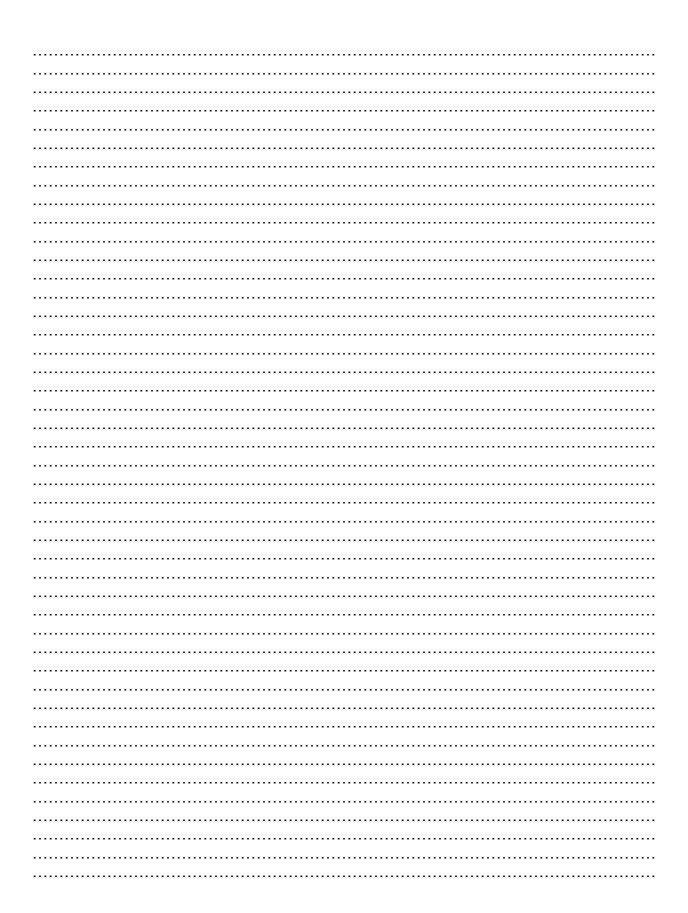
Your task is to learn more about the situation of young Jews in Germany, in 1938. Explore four stories presented on the website, dated: January 12; September 4; November 20; August 28; December 27.

- Write down the name/age/location and the type of document presented on the day (sometimes there won't be specific names to write down).
- Describe briefly the situation that the document illustrates.
- How is Herbert addressing his parents? Is he trying to show his maturity or vulnerability? Why?
- What have you learned about the everyday challenges young Jews were facing in Germany in 1938?
- How did the turbulent political situation affect schoolmates? How did it affect families? Provide other examples from the website.

Write down at least three questions you have about the stories you have just

studied. What would you like to learn more about them? What information do you

	need to	o better ι	understan	d them?	nem?						
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Assignment sheet, GROUP 4

Your task is to learn more about the Jewish attempts to flee Germany, in 1938. Explore four stories presented on the website, dated: January 12; June 16; October 30; December 10; April 22; June 4.

- Write down the name/age/location and the type of document presented on the day (sometimes there won't be specific names to write down).
- Describe briefly the situation that the document illustrates.
- What were some of the procedures involved to enable Jews to flee Germany?
 Name those you have learned about so far and/or by exploring the 1938Projektorg torg website.
- What consequences did this situation have for families? Explain, using examples from the from the website entries you have studied.
- Discuss in your group: was Erika's letter an act of courage or an inappropriate move? Or something else? Explain your opinion.

Write down at least three questions you have about the stories you have just

studied. What would you like to learn more about them? What information do you

need	d to be	etter u	nderst	and the	d them?						

