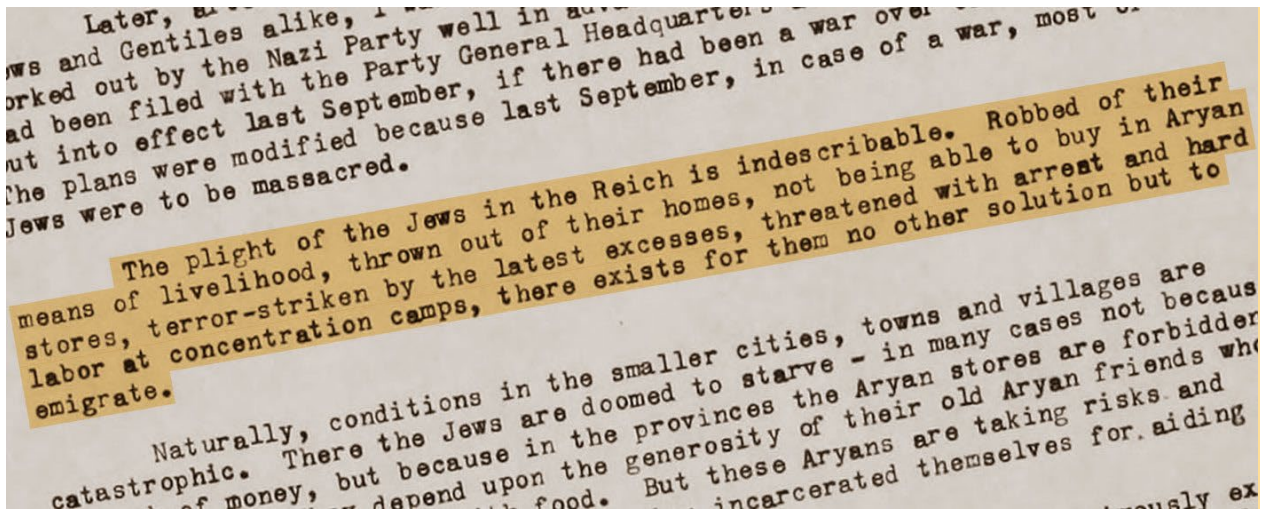


*Students will investigate how Jewish communities used information sharing as a form of resistance to growing anti-Semitism in the late 1930s.*



[original, p. 1] "The plight of the Jews in the Reich is indescribable. Robbed of their means of livelihood, thrown out of their homes, not being able to buy in Aryan stores, terror-stricken [original spelling] by the latest excesses, threatened with arrest and hard labor at concentration camps, there exists for them no other solution but to emigrate."

### QUESTION EXAMINED

***How did Jewish communities in Germany and around the world use information sharing as a form of resistance in the late 1930's?***

**THEMES** Anti-Semitism, Resistance, Communication, Persecution, Immigration, Displacement, Refugees, the Media, Politics, Current Affairs

### Subject

Social Studies  
History

### Grades

8-12 (can be adapted)

### Author

Maeve PFEIFER

## RESOURCES INCLUDED


### FOR TEACHERS

- Context for this lesson
- Tips for Using This Resource
- Key Terms / Vocabulary
- Focus Questions
- Big Understandings
- Teaching Point
- Objectives
- Materials
- Procedure

### FOR STUDENTS

- Source Analysis Sheet
- Primary Sources (1938Projekt online)

*Cover image: American  
Joint Distribution  
Committee's emissary to  
Germany, George  
Roobey's Report, p.1,  
Box 1, folder 1, George  
Roobey Collection  
AR-6550*

**EXTERNAL  LINKS**

[About the Leo Baeck Institute & the 1938Projekt](#)

[Key Dates: Jews Under the Nazi Regime 1933–1939](#)

**CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON**

A common question about Hitler’s rise to power and the escalation of violence against Jewish people in Germany is, *how much did the rest of the world know?* Like most things in history, the answer is more complicated than simply, “they knew” or “they did not know.”

Many German and Austrian Jews were actively looking to escape Europe in 1938. This was only possible through obtaining affidavits from people around the world. They looked for long lost relatives or even strangers to claim them as relatives, in order to gain a visa and ticket out of Europe. In the words of George Rooby, who traveled to Germany on behalf of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)\* to investigate events there in 1938, “the only hope to escape the violence was immigration.” As a member of the JDC, Rooby was able to travel more freely through major areas. In his travels he detailed the worsening conditions for Jews in Germany.

Anti-Semitism was not unique to Germany. Nativist tendencies and race-based immigration laws in many powerful nations led to small quotas of Jewish refugees accepted in other countries. Though many countries did accept some Jewish refugees, most had strict requirements for entry. Financial status and other forms of political and economic privilege were major factors in one’s ability to gain a visa and escape Germany.

Meanwhile, Jews who had been able to escape were establishing new communities and news publications in places like Shanghai, China. There they made a point to detail immigration laws in countries around the world including China and the United States. Jewish communities across the globe created newspapers, telegraph agencies, and community organizations which served the purpose of gathering and sharing information. These news sources documented the rise of violence in Germany as well as world-wide anti-immigrant laws and quotas in order to protect German and Austrian Jews and to help inform them with the information they needed to flee.

In this lesson, students will explore a variety of primary source documents in order to piece together an understanding of the ways in which Jewish people attempted to alert the rest of the world, as well as each other, to their plight and to gain assistance on the eve of genocide.

\*The JDC still exists as a Jewish Relief Agency, with offices in New York City

## TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE

### 1938Projekt WEBSITE

For this lesson, students will examine artifacts posted on the [1938 Projekt website](#). The 1938 Projekt was created by the Leo Baeck Institute in 2018, eighty years after the events of 1938, to address the question of how one grasps the mixture of horror and shock felt by targeted populations under the Nazi regime. The Institute's answer was to look at the letters, diaries, and photographs saved by German and Austrian Jews and their families. Using documents from the Leo Baeck archives and those of several partner institutions, the Leo Baeck Institute - New York | Berlin updated the site with personal stories - one for each day in 1938, corresponding to the dates of the 2018 calendar year. These materials illustrate the range of reactions and emotions that individuals and families had as they struggled to escape Germany and Austria in order to survive. In addition, significant world events are described alongside the calendar entries to provide a broad context for the individual stories.

**Before teaching this lesson, take some time to familiarize yourself with the site's layout.**

#### To begin:

1. Explore the [1938Projekt website](#) by scrolling through daily entries within each month to gain a chronological understanding of the events revealed through artifacts on the site.
2. Follow the hyperlinked dates in the list of artifacts included in this lesson. This will lead you to more in-depth information about the artifacts themselves and the people who created them.
3. [Keyword search on the 1938 Projekt website](#) to find artifacts or themes that connect to particular topics, places, and individuals.

## KEY TERMS / VOCABULARY

Adversity	Difficulties, or discrimination.
Affidavit	A written statement that can be used in court, in this case as documentation to gain a visa.
Anti-Semitism	Hatred of and discrimination against people of the Jewish faith, often based on a classification of Jews a not just a religious but also a racial and ethnic group.
Diaspora	The spread of people outside of their original homeland, in this case the spread of the Jewish peoples around the world as a result of persecution.
Oppression	Discrimination over a prolonged period of time, often based on a key part of an individual or group's identity, either real or constructed by society.
Resistance	Fighting back against something and refusing to give in to a set of rules, laws, expectations, or treatment, it can be violent or non-violent.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

**Who is responsible for the protection of refugees and those under attack from their own government?**

**How can communities build safety in times of extreme adversity?**

**In what ways is information/knowledge a tool against oppression?**

## BIG UNDERSTANDINGS

1. Anti-Semitism existed beyond Germany in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many countries created quotas and limited immigration of Jewish refugees into their countries. A refugee's wealth was often a major factor. Many countries did not admit immigrants who might be an economic burden and who would be dependent upon the government for assistance.
2. Jewish communities around the world created ways of informing each other about the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich in Germany in 1938. This was often directly related to the existence of anti-Semitism around the world. Strong communities built protections from anti-Semitism in places like the United States and England where there was religious freedom.
3. Jewish communities created newspapers, telegraph agencies, and community organizations which served the purpose of gathering information about the rise of violence in Germany as well as anti-immigrant laws and quotas around the world in order to inform and protect Jews in Germany and to help inform people with the information they needed to flee Germany.

## TEACHING POINT

In response to rising anti-Semitism in Germany and around the world in 1938, Jewish communities around the globe used communication networks as a means of resistance. The information they shared was meant to increase awareness and safety for Jews around the world as the Nazi regime's power took hold in Germany and Austria.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will build contextual understanding by reading about the steps it took to gain a visa in order to flee Germany.
2. Students will use maps, statistics and primary sources in order to build an understanding of how many Jewish refugees were allowed into different countries around the world.
3. Students will examine a variety of primary source documents in order to understand how Jewish communities used the spread of information as a form of resistance and protection.
4. Students will collect their findings in a graphic organizer that will aid in building both historical literacy and understanding of the content.
5. Students will share out their findings and make connections to today.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Article** explaining visa process in the United States
- **Map** of global Jewish refugee statistics
- **Primary source: Jewish Telegraph Agency, Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1938**
- **Primary source set:**
  - a. **Jewish Telegraph Agency, Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1938**
  - b. **Jewish Telegraph Agency, Sunday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1938**
  - c. **Shanghai Jewish Chronicle (starting on p.19) October 22, 1939**
  - d. **Letter regarding visa request from Department of State, Washington DC, November 17<sup>th</sup> 1938**
  - e. **George Rooby “Report on Trip to Germany” (p. 2-8)  
American Joint Distribution Committee**

## PROCEDURE

Note: This lesson is meant to be taught over three 50-60 min class periods but can be shortened into one class period if necessary. The extension lesson can be used to turn it into four to five lessons.

### WARM-UP

Note: If you are teaching this in one 50-60 min class period you can shorten the discussion time but make sure to include this section to build empathy and connection to the content.

### MINI LESSON

5-10 min (spend more time modeling the website with the students if you are doing a full 3-day lesson.)

In this lesson, students will examine the following question:

How did Jewish communities in Germany and around the world use information sharing as a form of resistance in the late 1930's?

Have students answer the following prompt in their notebooks or on a separate sheet of paper:

***Make a list of the times in your life when communication with others has been very important. Explain why communication was more important at those times than others.***

Have students share out their ideas in a class discussion. Consider the following for the discussion:

- Check what students are writing, some might share or think of things that they might not feel safe sharing in front of a larger group.
- Consider asking a few students to strategically share out their responses.
- Keep in mind this activity will hopefully bring up discussion that builds empathy and connects to the need for communication during times of struggle, distress, and/or misinformation.

Explain that students will be investigating how, in a time of growing violence and oppression, Jewish communities around the world used different forms of communication to spread information.

Share all or part of the historical background provided in the **Context for this Lesson** section above.

Explain that students will spend the rest of the lesson investigating the ways Jewish people created and utilized communication networks. Explain that being a historian is like being a detective, their job will be to use primary sources to put together the story of what happened during this time period and to understand the motivations of those in power and those who had their power taken from them.



## PROCEDURE, cont.

### MINI LESSON, cont.

Show students Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education [map](#) that shows the countries where Jewish refugees settled leading up to 1938. *Hint: Use your web browser's language settings to translate this page into English.* Have students share out their observations from the map. If they are struggling to interpret the information you can model some examples of observations for them.

#### Map Guiding Questions:

- Investigate the map key, what does it teach you?
- What countries stand out to you who accepted Jewish refugees?
- Does anything shock you?
- What countries had the biggest difference between the number of new immigrants before and after the Nazi regime came to power?
- Does it seem like most refugees made it out of Germany or not? What evidence do you have for that?

### ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

*Note: If you only have one day for this lesson, you can skip this step, but if students need additional guidance and support, this step cannot be skipped.*

Use the [League of Nations report](#) by Sir Neill Malcom, the High Commissioner for German Refugees as an anchor text to model how students can use their Source Analysis Sheet to collect information. Explain how an anchor text can help students understand both historical content and how to approach other sources in the same format.

#### Steps for Modeling

*(If you have access to computers it is ideal to do this online and model on a smartboard)*

1. Show students the webpage and click on the magnifying glass icon to open the source document on a full screen.
2. Show them the Source Analysis Sheet and go over it with them, explain that they will have to complete one for each document.
3. Read over the description, explain how as a secondary source it can help to build some background information that the historian/author who created the 1938 Projekt finds important for us to know.
4. Read the excerpt from the document aloud with the students (you can read it or have students read parts). Pause at key points and ask students if there is information that they could fill into their note charts. Have students explain their thinking to model to other students. If they are struggling, model a piece of information that could fit into their notes.

## PROCEDURE, cont.

*Divide students into small groups to analyze primary sources. Explain that students will now engage in small group station work to tackle some more difficult primary sources.*

### GROUP WORK

*Will take about one class period to complete and then another class period to wrap up.*

#### Procedure

1. Create **groups of 5 students**, preferably groups with varying skill sets so groups are equitable.
2. Make sure all students have a fresh Source Analysis Sheet for their new source.
3. Create **5 stations** around the room, **one station per source**. Explain that the sources go up in difficulty 1(easiest) 5(most difficult.) Each student in the group will choose a different station to visit. Tell students they should decide as a group who will visit each station. If they need it you can give students a brief description of the source for each station before they choose.
4. Have students go to the station they chose and create a game plan for how they will approach the source with the other people who chose the same source as them.
5. Give them the remainder of the time to complete their station work and fill in their Source Analysis Sheets. Encourage them to look through the other pages in the sources if they finish early.
6. Circulate and check on student progress and provide support if necessary.
7. Have students return to their original group to share their findings. You can have them fill out a new Source Analysis Sheet for each document or just have them share out and hear the description. *\*It is preferable that they have a Source Analysis Sheet for each document if this is part of a larger unit.*

## PROCEDURE, cont.

### WRAP UP

#### Wrap Up Part 1: Oral

Put the essential question: How did Jewish communities in Germany and around the world use information sharing as a form of resistance in the late 1930's? in a place where everyone can see it and have a class discussion using their notes to answer the questions. You can run this like a Socratic Seminar or do a regular class discussion.

#### Extension

Circle back to the original question that opened the lesson and ask students a push question if students have background knowledge on current event issues regarding refugees or the role social media plays in modern grass-roots movements:

***How is social media or other forms of communication used today to create networks of communication for groups of people who are under threat?***

#### Wrap Up Part 2: Written

If this is part of a larger unit, it would benefit students to have an opportunity to write about their new knowledge. Have students write a short response (1-2 paragraphs, longer for high school students) using their notes, to answer the essential question above.

One possible extension to this lesson that could help build empathy and make connections between the past and present would be to have students investigate case studies of the role social media and/or the media played in modern political and social upheaval. Explore the ways in which communities of people who had been oppressed and experienced violence have created networks to share communication as a form of protection and resistance. Explore ways community-based and localized social media posts are used and how they are often at odds with information from larger media outlets and government officials.

Some potential topics to have students investigate/make connections to:

- Dakota Access Pipeline and other Water Protector Protests
- Arab Spring
- Separation and incarceration of families at the Mexican/U.S. border
- Black Lives Matter protests

## HANDOUT

## SOURCE ANALYSIS SHEET



## SOURCING

Author

*Who created this source? What do we know about this person or organization?*

Audience

*For whom was the source created?*

Purpose

*Why was this source created when it was?*

## CONTEXT

Time Period

*What was going on at the time of the source? At the place?*

## CLOSE READING

Main Idea

*What is the main idea of the source? How do we know? Include a quote.*

Analysis

*What are the ways this information would be useful? To whom? How?*