

# Antisemitism: A Story Through Passports

**Time: 45-60 minutes**

**Audience: 9-12th grade**

## Learning Targets

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify main ideas contributing to the development of the modern state, including nationalism and population control.
- Understand the meaning of the term “antisemitism” and what it looked like in Nazi Germany in the 1930s.
- Analyze primary documents from the 1930s and 1940s.
- Think critically about individual identity in relation to society; both past and present.

## Aligned Standards

C3: D3.3.6-8; D3.3.9-12

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2;

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9;

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

## Context

This lesson fits well inside of a World History classroom as students should be familiar with the history of World War I and the period in between the two world wars, 1914-1939. Specifically, they should have covered the transition between empire and successor states in East-Central Europe; the economic consequences of the Treaty of Versailles; and the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany.

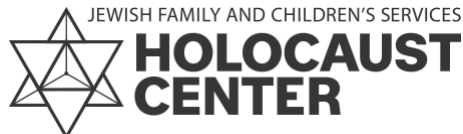
## Materials Needed

- [Google Slides](#)
- [Mandl Reading Activity](#)

## Lesson/Activity

This lesson has been designed for in-person learning but can easily be modified for virtual learning. Please note, due to the challenging themes of hatred and discrimination that this lesson focuses on, it is recommended that you give students a trigger warning about the challenging nature of the subject, frame the lesson as a continuing conversation, and remind students of their options if they feel they need to take a break.

1. Using the Google Slides as a guide, inform the students that you will be learning about antisemitism (the hatred of Jews) and why such hatred became widespread in Europe. You will end by focusing on one individual, but thousands of other Jews had similar stories.
2. Begin to dive into the ways that hatred of Jews manifested itself over time. For a long time, antisemitism was based on religious difference: in Europe, people hated Jews because they did not practice Christianity. In the 18th-19th centuries, antisemitism began to take another form: hatred based on race. The construct of “race” originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as European colonizers sought to exert power over those they conquered. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pseudoscientists (we call them that because their



science was false) falsely applied the ideas of Darwin to groups of people. They said (falsely) that some “races,” whom they defined along biological lines, were higher on an evolutionary scale than others. We can see these ideas articulated in “The Nazi Primer,” a book published in 1938 and written in English for American audiences. (Slide 1). Intended as an introduction to Nazism, it argued (falsely) that groups of people should be defined by the shape of their skulls, the color of their skin, and other biological features. Jews, along with other groups (people with disabilities, Roma, black people) were on the bottom of the Nazis’ “racial” hierarchy.

3. Passports became one of the tools the Nazis used to institutionalize antisemitism: under the Nazis, discrimination against Jews was legal, and hatred was becoming increasingly integrated into German governmental and social structures. Before you go on, prompt the students with a few questions (below) to brainstorm:

- When do you think passports were invented?
- Why did countries begin using passports?

4. As you begin diving deeper into the “why” highlight the fact that identity documents were used in a limited way since the 17th-18th century by states and economic elites as a way to control the movements of people. However, it was only during WWI and the “interwar period” that passports began developing and proliferating into what they are today.

**Did you know?** In World War I, European states became concerned about who was within their borders. People were suspicious. For example, those labeled as “foreigners” were thought to be carrying out espionage. States also wanted to prevent citizens from fleeing from a country they could be fighting for. With this in mind, individual states required everyone to have passports as a temporary means of tracking people. For example, by 1915, anyone who wished to enter or leave the German empire needed a passport, and a year later, anyone coming in or out needed a visa from German authorities. By 1919, Germany made the passport plus visa requirement permanent, requiring all “foreigners” and citizens alike to carry identification at all times.

5. This increase and change in the use of identity documents later became known as the “I. D. Revolution.” Asking every individual to carry identification required the development of state and local bureaucracy (eg. to print and issue passports), and a cadre of officials to enforce the I.D. requirement: locally, state-wide, and at the borders. Use the image of Jews receiving citizenship documents in late-nineteenth-century Romania (slide 3) as a way to flesh out with your students what this aspect of modernity required and might have looked like. Prompt the students with a few questions (below):

- What do you see in this picture?  
*As students are sharing, for context, it may be helpful to note that the Jewish men in this image are wearing traditional garb, their long robes reflecting a modesty in dress and their head coverings indicating an acknowledgment of a higher being.*

- Have you ever seen someone judge another, or judge a group of people, based on their clothing? What are the motivations behind such “othering”? What can we do to be more accepting and respectful of each other?  
*As students are sharing, for context, it may be helpful to note that the Jewish men in this image are lining up to receive citizenship documents for the first time. In the late nineteenth century, women (Jewish or otherwise) did not have the right to vote and would have not participated in this town’s political life.*
  - Imagine what it would look like if the Jews in this picture were joined by the rest of the townspeople, everyone lining up during World War I to obtain passports. Would the wooden town hall, or police station, in this town have been able to accommodate all the new requests?
  - What do modern states need in order to issue passports?
6. In order for large numbers of people to buy into the idea that they needed to carry passports, they had to buy into the concept of a “nation-state.” Review the concept of “nation-states” with your students: the idea, popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that the borders of a state should coincide with the dominant “nation” within it. A “nation” was a group of people with a common language, ethnicity, history, and land. Following the First World War, the multi-ethnic empires of East-Central Europe were carved up into “successor states,” defined according to the majority nationality within them: Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania. (slide 4). Allow students to process, prompting them with the questions below:
- What problems might arise when you try to divide up a diverse area into uniform groups of people?
  - How easy would it be for certain people to be viewed and treated as “others”?
  - How might passports have been used in this process?
7. To dive into the concept of state-sponsored labeling and othering, students will engage in a reading-based activity. (Slide 5) Prompt students to read the first two sections “What do we know about Max” and “What does it mean to be Jewish.”

**Teaching Tip!** To work on reading comprehension and differentiate for different style learners, debrief after each section to revisit the essential questions posed by having the students work in teams to answer them, sharing their responses within the whole class setting.

8. Engage in “Primary Source Activity 1” (Slide 6) by having the students review the passport in depth, answering the questions posed both on the slide and below:
- Find the red “J” on the passport above indicating the fact that Max is Jewish.
  - Find Max’s last name, “Mandl,” and the new name that the Nazis forced upon him: “Max Israel.”
  - Challenge: Based on what you know of history at the time, why do you think the Nazis passed these two laws in 1938 regarding Jewish passports?

**Teaching Tip!** As you dive deeper into this case study, students may ask you questions about Max Mandl that you do not know the answer to...great! Examining primary sources and asking questions means they are acting as historians would. You can tell them that sometimes historians are able to answer questions they have, and other times they can't. We invite those with further questions about the Max Mandl collection to contact us at [HolocaustCenter@jfcs.org](mailto:HolocaustCenter@jfcs.org).

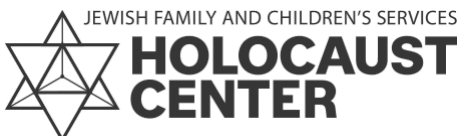
9. Following a debrief of those questions, transition the students to “Primary Source Activity 2” (Slide 7), which includes having the students read the two-paragraph primer prior to engaging in it, reviewing the passport, and answering the questions on the slide and below:
  - Find Max’s name, address, and his job on this document.
  - What do you think it means when it says Max’s nationality is “stateless.”
  - Challenge: Both Max’s German Passport from “Primary Source Activity 1” and his Shanghai ID document note that he is Jewish. What different tools do they use to convey this information?

As you debrief the questions with the students, it may be helpful to show Max’s geographical journey on a map (slide 8).

10. Provide closure to Max Mandl’s story by reviewing the last section, “What happened to Max Mandl,” with the class together (slide 9), noting that all of Max’s family members, including his mother and father (in the picture), were killed by Nazis. Although Max was able to survive, he was the only one in his family to do so.

**Teaching Tip!** Students often connect better to content when it applies to them and current times. With this in mind, if you have the time and want to expand this lesson to connect current events of injustice using identity documents, begin by asking the students an important question: *How are passports, or other identity documents, used today for discriminatory purposes?* As the students brainstorm and discuss, examples such as voter registration and immigration papers (i.e. residency cards, green cards, etc) will most likely come up as both have recently been used to limit access for marginalized and oppressed groups in the United States. Engage the students further by prompting them to conduct research on these examples of modern-day injustice, having them compare them to Max’s story.

**Next Steps?** History comes alive through primary sources like those seen in this lesson. To learn about other archival materials at the JFCS Holocaust Center, or to learn about bringing a Holocaust survivor to your classroom through our virtual Speaker’s Bureau Program, contact the JFCS Holocaust Center ([holocaustcenter@jfcs.org](mailto:holocaustcenter@jfcs.org)).



## References

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