

GERMANS IN AMERICA

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LESSONS FOR PROGRAM 4 OF 4: *A PEOPLE DISAPPEARS*

FOR SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS

GRADES 6 - 12

ROBERT JERVIS
JOANN PREWITT

PROVIDED BY THE
TRANSATLANTIC OUTREACH PROGRAM
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The Transatlantic Outreach Program is dedicated to providing Social Studies educators with global understanding from an international perspective using Modern Germany as the basis for comparison and contrast. To learn more, please visit TOP online at www.goethe.de/top.

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INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT MATERIAL

Teaching to the National Standards

National Standards define the big ideas in social studies. They focus on what every student should know in social studies by the time they leave a particular grade level. Essential questions are derived from the standards and are used to focus instruction in the classroom on the national standards

It is important to review these national standards and the essential questions with students prior to viewing the video program. Explain to them that this video program will give them a better understanding of these important concepts and ideas in social studies:

World History Standard

Standard 4: The Causes and Global Consequences of World War II

- ▶ *Explain the ideologies of fascism and Nazism and analyze how authoritarian regimes seized power and gained mass support in Germany.*
- ▶ *Analyze the legacy of World War I, the Depression, and ethnic and ideological conflicts as underlying causes of World War II.*
- ▶ *Compare the ideologies, policies, and government methods of 20th century totalitarian regimes with those of contemporary democracies.*

Instructional Strategies

There are three essential questions for each program. Each essential question constitutes a lesson.

Discussion questions support each of the essential questions. The scaffolding of the discussion questions promotes higher order thinking – moving students from the gathering of information, to extending and refining knowledge, to applying the knowledge in a new setting.

These questions should be put on the board, viewed on a transparency, or displayed on chart paper prior to showing the video. They should be used as the basis for discussions following the viewing of the video program.

Each lesson consists of three strategies. Scaffolding is also used for the instructional strategies to enhance student thinking.

- ▶ **Strategy one** focuses on the content of the video program. Students are learning content and gathering information.
- ▶ **Strategy two** has students thinking about what they have learned by using the content to extend and refine their thinking.
- ▶ **Strategy three** helps the students demonstrate understanding by applying this information in a meaningful way or in a new setting.

At the end of the third lesson is information about aligning formative and summative assessments to the lesson. A sample assessment is provided for each strategy of the third lesson.

INTRODUCTION

The successful application of the following lessons depends on teachers and students viewing *Germans in America, Program 4: A People Disappears*

The embedded video clips are designed to focus lesson-specific strategies and in no way serve as a substitute for viewing the video program in its entirety.

The DVD for this program is available for purchase online at www.etvstore.org

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

Learn how and why this important ethnic group “Americanized” their names and tried to suppress their identity. Learn about the struggle for cultural survival and how immigrants dealt with the “melting pot.”

INTRODUCTION



“A PEOPLE DISAPPEARS”

Germany, 1937

During the decade of the 1930's, thousands of Germans were fleeing Nazi persecution. For a variety of reasons their reception in the United States was mixed. For example, many Americans recalled the horrors of World War I and still harbored resentment toward Germany.

However, over time this hostility has turned to friendship as we reflect on our German heritage and the contributions German-Americans have made to our way of life.

A People Disappears

Lesson 1



? ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

Why did the policies of Nazism force a mass migration of Germans from their homeland?

- ✎ Why did Max Ebel fear that his life was in danger and choose to flee to the United States?
- ✎ Why did the highly educated and successful Nathorffs leave their medical positions and flee to the United States and an uncertain future?
- ✎ Why did the policies of the Nazi party include encouraging people like Max Ebel and the Nathorffs to migrate? What would happen to these people if they did not migrate to other countries?
- ✎ Why was Nazi Germany willing to lose some of its most educated and cultured citizens to immigration? What policies drove them to this decision?

A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 1

STRATEGY ONE: GATHERING INFORMATION ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

This video program traces the lives of people who have been forced to flee Germany prior to World War II. To better understand the reasons why people would give up life in their homeland to face an uncertain future in the United States, it is important to understand the conditions in Germany at the time. To do this, we need to first activate our prior knowledge and then do some research prior to viewing the video.

It is important to think about what you already know about a topic. We do this all the time when we are reading a book. We relate what we are reading to something we already know. We use this same skill when viewing a video. As we view the video program, we access this background knowledge to help make the video more understandable.

To help students activate prior knowledge it is necessary to recall what they already know and do some additional research. In this way, much of what is seen in the video will have increased meaning for the students.

Put the essential question and the discussion questions on the board or on a transparency. Review these questions with the class.

Have the students work in small groups using prior knowledge to respond to the questions. Then provide them with the written summary of the video. Have them continue their discussions using this new information.

A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 1



Have the students make a list of questions that occur to them as they are discussing the discussion questions and reading the summary of the video. Discuss these questions as a total class and summarize the questions on the board. Have the students go to the following web site to find information to more fully answer these questions:

<http://worldwar2database.com/html/nazis.htm>

Summarize the background information the students now have about Nazi Germany prior to World War II and then have them view the video. Use these two purpose questions to focus their attention on the video:

- ▶ Why did Max Ebel feel that he had to flee Nazi Germany?
- ▶ Why were the policies of Nazi Germany so threatening to Hertha Nathorff and her husband?

After the viewing the video, use the two purpose questions to initiate the discussion. Review key segments of the video by using the streaming videos on page 4.

Summarize the discussion by referring to the first essential question on the board:

? Why did the policies of Nazism force a mass migration of Germans from their homeland?

A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 1



Click the photo to play the video clip: The plight of Max Ebel. (Approximate duration: 2 minutes. The WMV video will open in a new window.)



Click the photo to play the video clip: The plight of Hertha Nathorff. (Approximate duration: 2 minutes. The WMV video will open in a new window.)



A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 2

STRATEGY TWO: GATHERING INFORMATION QUESTIONING THE SOURCE/THINKING ABOUT THE VIDEO

Questioning the source is a protocol of inquiries that students can make about a source of information. In this case, the strategy will help students think beyond the video and consider the bigger picture of what was happening in Germany at the time. They are also extending their thinking to include the intent of the filmmakers.

Have the students reflect on what they have just seen. Have them focus specifically on the reasons Max Ebel and Hertha Nathorff fled Germany.

Pose the following questions to extend their thinking:

- ▶ What is the primary message the filmmakers are trying to convey to us?
- ▶ Why is it important for people to understand what was happening in Germany at the time?
- ▶ Is the format of using two distinctly different case studies effective in delivering this message?
- ▶ Why were **two** case studies necessary to convey a more accurate picture of pre-war Germany?

Students will work in groups of four or five students. Each group will be designated as Max Ebel or Hertha Nathorff. Each group will create a time line of the significant events in the life of their assigned individual.

The groups will report out and create a class time line for Max Ebel and for Hertha Nathorff.

Students will discuss these questions:

- ▶ In what ways did their lives make them a target for Nazi persecution?
- ▶ In what ways were their lives similar? How were they different?

A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 2



Pose these questions:

Why was Nazi Germany willing to lose some of its most educated and cultured citizens to immigration? What policies in Nazi Germany drove them to this decision?

A People Disappears

Lesson 1

Strategy 3

STRATEGY THREE: APPLICATION A PRODUCT STRATEGY

Product strategies cause students to think about, apply, and expand key understandings. When students have to produce a product they think about what they know, they reflect on the significance of what they have learned, and then they demonstrate understanding by creating a product to demonstrate this understanding.

Pose a situation for the students to think about. For example:

You are a newspaper editor living in New York in the 1930's. You have heard stories like the ones being told by Max Ebel and Hertha Nathorff. You are disturbed by what you are hearing and find it hard to believe that a government would treat its own people that way.

You have decided to use what you learned from these stories to write an editorial about what is happening in Germany. In your editorial you plan to:

- ▶ Describe conditions in Nazi Germany as told to you by people like Max Ebel and Hertha Nathorff.
- ▶ Speculate on what people in the United States could do to help change the policy of the Nazi German government.

As students review the video to get more information for this editorial, pose the following question to them:

- ▶ Did the United States and the American people actually do enough to challenge the Nazi German government to change its policy and to help those impacted by these policies?
- ▶ Why or why not?

A People Disappears

Lesson 2



? ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

Why are immigrants often viewed with suspicion and hostility?

- ✎ What kind of reception did Max Ebel and Hertha Nathorff receive when they arrived in New York? Why were they treated better than most of the other people arriving on the same ship?
- ✎ Why was Max Ebel singled out for observation and eventual internment after joining the army?
- ✎ What kind of treatment did Hertha Nathorff receive in America that made her feel insulted and humiliated?
- ✎ What were some of the underlying causes for treating newly arriving immigrants from Germany with hostility and suspicion?
- ✎ How did the depression make the situation worse for newly arriving immigrants from Germany?
- ✎ How did the propaganda campaign from World War I continue to make life difficult for newly arriving Germans?
- ✎ Why didn't the fact that many of the newly arriving Germans were Jews fleeing persecution at the hands of the Nazis make their reception in the United States more welcomed?
- ✎ Are you proud of the way newly arriving immigrants from Germany were treated by the American people? Why or why not? What can you do about it today?

A People Disappears

Lesson 2

Strategy 1

STRATEGY ONE: GATHERING INFORMATION LIBRARY MEDIA/COMPUTER RESEARCH

Despite a history of providing sanctuary to persecuted peoples, the United States grappled with many issues during the 1930's that made staying true to this legacy difficult, among them wide-spread anti-Semitism, xenophobia, isolationism, and a sustained economic depression. Unfortunately for those fleeing from Nazi persecution, these issues greatly impacted this nation's refugee policy, resulting in tighter restrictions and limited quotas at a time when open doors might have saved lives.

Over the years, scholarly investigation into the American reaction to the Holocaust has raised a number of questions, such as: What did America know? What did government officials and civilians do with this knowledge? Could more have been done? Scholars have gauged America's culpability through the government's restrictive immigration measures, its indifference to reported atrocities, and its sluggish efforts to save European Jews. Debates have sparked over key events, including the St. Louis tragedy, the establishment of the War Refugee Board, the role of the American Jewish community, the media's coverage of Nazi violence, and the proposed, but abandoned, bombing of Auschwitz. The topic continues to evolve with the introduction of new documentation and revised hypotheses.

http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/bibliography/index.php?content=us_holocaust



Gather books from your library or other sources and create a display table. Entitle the display: "Why didn't the government of the United States and the American people do more to offer a welcome to those being persecuted by Nazi Germany?"

Use web sites like the one mentioned above as a starting point for finding the titles of books related to this topic.

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Lesson 2

Strategy 1



Have several students go online to find summaries such as the one cited above. Make copies of these summaries to distribute to the class.

Click the photo to play the video clip: Life in the USA for Hertha and Max. (Approximate duration: 4 minutes. The WMV video will open in a new window.)

Have the students work in small groups to use these resources to read about why the United States was generally slow in reacting to the plight of the German refugees. Use the following purpose question for their reading:

- ▶ Why didn't the government of the United States and the American people do more to offer a welcome to those being persecuted by Nazi Germany?

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Lesson 2

Strategy 2

STRATEGY TWO: EXTENDING & REFINING INFORMATION JURISPRUDENTIAL APPROACH TO TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

Ethnic background, religion, socio-economic concerns, and political beliefs all play a role in how we judge people and situations. The jurisprudential approach to dealing with controversial issues helps students become more skillful in analyzing these issues. The approach is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Controversy over public issues is inevitable because different people have different views of the world.
- ▶ Social values often conflict causing suspicion and hostility among different groups of people.

When trying to understand why people act the way they do it is necessary to take a more analytic perspective. This includes:

- ▶ Being aware of differing points of view or frames of reference.
- ▶ Knowledge of how language can be used to either cloud an issue or clarify it. This involves being aware of the meaning or words, how some words have emotional attachments and how the same words may have different meanings for different people.
- ▶ Knowledge of how to determine fact from propaganda or opinion.
- ▶ Knowledge of how values can inflame an issue.

Have the students review the information they have gathered. Have them relate this information to their research question.

- ▶ Why did the government of the United States and the American people not do more to offer a welcome to those being persecuted by Nazi Germany?



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Lesson 2

Strategy 2



Have the students organize their information so that they can see the different points of view on the key issues. Use the following chart to help students organize their thinking:

PERSPECTIVE

Issues	American Point of View	German Point of View
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression: Competition for jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing a highly skilled workforce • Desire to work hard to succeed
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strange customs and traditions • Desire to see immigrants become part of the “great melting pot” • Image of Germans instilled from the propaganda of World War I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to hold on to customs and traditions of the homeland • Highly educated and cultured – willing to use these skills in their new homeland
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic tradition but elements of intolerance • Strict immigration laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autocratic tradition-but a love for democracy and freedom • Fleeing from Nazi policies and persecution

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Strategy 2



Have the students review the video. Use these discussion questions now to help them focus on areas of conflict:

- ▶ Why were elements of German culture viewed with suspicion?
- ▶ Why was there a conflict between the German desire for freedom and democracy and their more autocratic political systems? Why was it difficult for Americans to reconcile these differences?
- ▶ How did American intolerance of others conflict with their democratic ideals and their tradition of opening their doors to immigrants from all parts of the world?

Now, focus the discussion on the video on page 14:

- ▶ Why was Hertha Nathorff disappointed that her skills and education were not recognized and utilized in the United States?
- ▶ Why did Hertha Nathorff feel depressed and humiliated in her new homeland?
- ▶ Why was Max Ebel unable to serve his new country in the armed services? Why was he interned instead?

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Strategy 2



Click the photo to play the video clip: Reflecting on life in America. (Approximate duration: 3 minutes. The WMV video will open in a new window.)

Why do Max and Hertha have different perspectives about their experience in America?

Does taking a more analytical perspective help to understand why people act the way they do? Can understanding why people act the way they do help them to be more accepting of others?

A People Disappears

Lesson 2

Strategy 3

STRATEGY THREE: APPLICATION CASE STUDY: DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Hertha Nathorff ended her life in poverty. She became a recluse and never fully participated in American society. In the course of her life in this country, she faced intolerance, suspicion, hostility and disappointment. She was never able to resume her life as a doctor and had to work in the shadow of her husband who had passed the exams to continue his work as a doctor. She never fully realized the “American dream”.

Have the students draw some conclusions about how her life might have been changed if the circumstances had been different.

- ▶ How would her experience have been different if she had been more warmly received in this country and been offered an opportunity to continue her work as a doctor? How would this have benefited both her and her newly adopted country?

Max Ebel fled to this country because of a hatred for the Nazis and what they were doing to his homeland. He was ready to work hard and improve himself and become a good American citizen. Instead, he was treated with suspicion and arrested and forced to spend the war as a prisoner instead of as an American soldier fighting for freedom. He was eventually cleared of the charges against him. He used his experiences in the interment camps and with the Native Americans to become an advocate for Native American rights. After the war, Max Ebel settled in New Hampshire and is still living there today.

Have the students draw some conclusions about how Max Ebel’s experiences were turned to his advantage and how he used these experiences to become part of the “American dream”.

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Lesson 2

Strategy 3



Drawing Conclusions: Can Americans learn from these experiences as we encounter new waves of immigrants?

- ▶ Are we faced with similar issues?
- ▶ What are there differences?

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? ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How can a global crisis sometimes have positive benefits for those involved?

- ✦ What was the level of education of many German immigrants fleeing to the United States?
- ✦ How was this immigration different from previous waves of immigration to this country?
- ✦ How did the Nazi treatment of its own people contribute to greater tolerance towards others by the American people?
- ✦ How were Americans able to take advantage of the massive influx of scientists and other highly talented people from Germany?
- ✦ Do you think America would have been better served if it had extended a warm welcome to these immigrants from the beginning?

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Lesson 3

Strategy 1

STRATEGY ONE: GATHERING INFORMATION USING BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) Jewish German-born writer and political philosopher. She held professorships at Berkeley, Princeton, and Chicago. One of her best-known works was *Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951. Her work was heavily influenced by the German philosophers Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, with whom she had studied in Germany. After leaving Germany in 1933 she fled to Paris, but in 1941 she and her new second husband Heinrich Blücher arrived in New York, where Arendt wrote for the German-language newspaper *Aufbau*.

http://german.about.com/library/blfam_geramABC.htm



Have the students identify famous German immigrants to the United States mentioned in the video. Have them go online to find additional information about them.

Click the photo to play the video clip: Famous Germans flee Nazi Germany. (Approximate duration: 1 minute. The WMV video will open in a new window.)



**PROGRAM
FOUR**

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Lesson 3

Strategy 1



Use the web site on page 18 to find other famous German immigrants. Have the class work in teams. Assign a part of the alphabet to each team and have them search for German immigrants who fled to the United States during the 1930's and 1940's. Have each team compile five index cards providing biographical information on German-Americans of interest to them.

Have each team present their information to the class.

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Lesson 3

Strategy 2



STRATEGY TWO: EXTENDING & REFINING INFORMATION CLASSIFYING

Have the students review their information about famous German immigrants. Have them use the chart below to classify these German immigrants. Have students list the name of the German immigrant and then describe the contribution s/he made to American life.

GERMAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN SOCIETY

Arts	Science	Education	Politics	Economics

**PROGRAM
FOUR**

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Lesson 3

Strategy 2



Click the photo to play the video clip: Steinway builds gliders during the war. (Approximate duration: 3 minutes. The WMV video will open in a new window.)

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Lesson 3

Strategy 3

STRATEGY THREE: APPLICATION OBSERVATION/INTERVIEWS

Have the students do online research or research at the library on the history of their own community. Have them note traditions and customs that have been maintained over time and changes that have occurred to keep up with the times.

Have them conduct interviews with older people in the community to explore the various ethnic backgrounds that make up their community.

- ▶ What are the major nationalities represented in their community?
- ▶ What traditions and customs do they still hold onto?

Is German culture represented in your community? What evidence supports this? Can any of the community members trace their ancestry to the 1930's and the flight from Nazi persecution?

Pose the following questions as a culminating activity:

- ▶ How do communities change while still retaining some of the elements of a distinctive culture?



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Scaffolding the discussion questions and scaffolding the strategies for this video program is important for helping students develop higher order thinking skills. Therefore, the assessment samples demonstrate “assessment for learning” by scaffolding the assessments and allowing the students to demonstrate both knowledge of content and understanding of the essential/discussion question.

Scaffolding assessments means that the depth of knowledge of the questions will align with the depth of knowledge level of the strategy.

Strategy One is gathering information. Therefore, Level One assessments deal with the recall of information.

Strategy Two is extending and refining information. Therefore, Level Two assessments involve the processing and organizing of information. For example, items might deal with:

- ▶ Cause and effect
- ▶ Similarities and differences
- ▶ Comparing data on charts and graphs
- ▶ Determining reasons
- ▶ Collecting and charting information from maps

Strategy Three is application. Therefore, Level Three assessments demonstrate understanding through application and use. Assessments at level three determine if students can apply understanding and might include:

- ▶ Analysis of change
- ▶ Application of concept in different contexts
- ▶ Drawing conclusions
- ▶ Proposing and evaluating solutions

Note: There are a variety of ways of posing formative assessments. Selected response items are used here for convenience. Three examples are given to illustrate the scaffolding of the questions. Teachers may want to develop additional questions on their own.

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Formative Assessments (Examples):

Level One

Which socio-economic group was more common among the German immigrants to America in the 1930s than in earlier waves of immigrants?

- A. Poor farmers
- B. Skilled craftsmen
- C. Wealthy intellectuals
- D. Uneducated sailors

Level Two

How did the talent and expertise of the German immigrants of the 1930's affect the United States?

- A. The number of unemployed workers rose
- B. The quality of products and services improved
- C. The number of inventions and patents dropped
- D. The frequency of union strikes decreased

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Level Three

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The summative assessment provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding of the essential question.

? Essential Question: How can a global crisis sometimes have positive benefits for those involved?

Now that you have seen how the policies of the Nazi led to a mass migration of Germans who feared for their lives and included many who were contributing much to German society, you are ready to assess the extent of this loss to Germany and the gain to the United States.

In 1942 the Manhattan Engineer Project was set up in the United States under the command of Brigadier General **Leslie Groves**. Scientists recruited to produce an atom bomb included **Robert Oppenheimer** (USA), **David Bohm** (USA), **Leo Szilard** (Hungary), **Eugene Wigner** (Hungary), **Rudolf Peierls** (Germany), **Otto Frisch** (Germany), **Felix Bloch** (Switzerland), **Niels Bohr** (Denmark), **James Franck** (Germany), **James Chadwick** (Britain), **Emilio Segre** (Italy), **Enrico Fermi** (Italy), **Klaus Fuchs** (Germany) and **Edward Teller** (Hungary).

Click the “[i](#)” at left to read about the Germans and others who were part of the Manhattan Engineer Project.

A People Disappears



You are a member of an awards committee charged with honoring those who helped to develop our atomic capability prior to the end of World War II. You are surprised to find that it was an international effort because of those who came to this country and made a new home here.

Use the above site to make a list of the members of the Manhattan Engineer Project. Briefly research their contributions and decide what you will say at the awards ceremony about each of the Germans on the list. When preparing your notes be sure to think about:

- ▶ When and why they came to this country?
- ▶ How did they contribute to the project?

Make a judgment about whether you think the project could have succeeded without the combined efforts of the German-Americans. Support your judgment with specific details.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

These lessons use ideas from research-based best practices, such as:
Dimensions of Learning (R. Marzano)
Backward Design (J. McTighe & G. Wiggins).