

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

November 5, 2015

Article: “A Look Inside Rodger & Hammerstein’s The Sound of Music: Nazi Youth: a looming threat in Germany and Austria”

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Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the images. What do you think is happening in the black and white photograph? What do you already know about Nazis and the Holocaust? What do you expect to learn in this article?

Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

embodied

anti-Semitic

ideology

indoctrination

migratory

extracurricular

resilience

militarism

mandatory

depicting

propaganda

infiltration

regimes

Comprehension:

1. Was the teen postman Rolf Gruber a real character?
2. What was the state of Germany after World War I?
3. How did Hitler use the already existing anti-Semitic attitudes to advance his ideals?
4. What youth organization did Hitler form in 1920?
5. In what ways was Wandervögel similar to youth scouting troops of today?
6. How did the name and activities of Wandervögel change in 1926?
7. In what year was participation in Hitler Youth made mandatory?
8. How were German teachers targeted by the Nazis?
9. How were classroom materials changed to advance Nazi ideals?
10. Why were the works of writers including Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway banned?
11. What Nazi Youth organizations existed for girls?

Post-Reading:

Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:

“Until Germany’s surrender in 1945, boys and girls from ages 6 to 18 participated in the following Nazi youth organizations: . . . The following year, Allied occupation authorities required young Germans to undergo a “de-Nazification” process and training in democracy designed to counter the effects of twelve years of Nazi propaganda.”

What are the differences between the four Nazi youth organizations? How did the activities differ by gender and age? How were these practices furthered by Nazi propaganda in schools? What lessons and practices did the “de-Nazification” process include? Why was this process so important?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

“After World War I, Hitler played on already existing anti-Semitic attitudes present in Germany and promoted Jews as the cause of all of Germany’s problems after World War I. After Germany lost the war, the country was in a severe depression and socially crippled. Jews were blamed and the idea of creating a strong German people won people over. Nazi ideology identified groups of people as ‘dangerous’ and ‘unworthy of life.’ These groups were targeted to be removed from German society.”

Research the effects on Europe, specifically Germany, after World War I. Summarize the depression and state of being “socially crippled” experienced by Germany. How did this state translate to Hitler’s ability to blame Jews and win over the German people? If you were a student growing up in the 1920s after WWI, how do you think you would have experienced the Nazi idealism? How do you think your family would have responded? What can we learn from this time in history?

Comprehension Question Answers:

1. No. Rolf Gruber was a fictional character created to portray a profile of Nazi youth.
2. Germany was in a severe depression and socially crippled.
3. Hitler played on already existing anti-Semitic attitudes present in Germany and promoted Jews as the cause of all of Germany's problems after World War I. Jews were blamed and the idea of creating a strong German people won people over.
4. In 1920, Hitler formed the Youth League of the National Socialist Workers' Party based on the ideals of another German youth group, Wandervögel.
5. Wandervögel believed in the importance of a connection to nature. Members wore shorts and hiking boots, sang German folk songs around the campfire.
6. The group was renamed Hitler Youth and was expanded to include both classroom and extracurricular activities such as camping. In addition to participation in outdoor activities, boys were taught the importance of resilience, obedience and militarism and gradually devotion to Hitler, racism and antisemitism with the ultimate goal being boys' service as soldiers in the Storm Trooper Nazi Party.
7. Participation in Hitler Youth was made mandatory in 1939.
8. Beginning in 1933, teachers who were Jewish or considered "politically unreliable" were removed from classrooms. By 1936, 97 percent of teachers had joined the National Socialist Teachers League.
9. Textbooks were replaced with those that pushed Nazi ideals. Even young children were given picture storybooks depicting Jews as less than human and immoral. Propaganda books for older students further promoted racism and antisemitism as well as the importance of boys' roles as Nazi soldiers.
10. These writers were either Jewish or their work was viewed as "different."
11. Young Maidens (Jungmadel) and League of German Girls/Maidens (Deutscher Madel) were the two Nazi youth organizations for girls.