

# THE NAZI OLYMPICS BERLIN 1936

Teacher Guide



UNITED STATES  
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Through its traveling exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936*, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum presents an in-depth examination of the controversies, achievements, and consequences related to America's participation in the 1936 Summer Olympics held in Berlin, Germany.

The Nazi regime viewed the Olympic Games as an opportunity to impress foreign spectators and journalists by carefully orchestrating the appearance of a peaceful and tolerant Germany. In the years immediately preceding the 1936 Olympics, however, many foreign government and community leaders became increasingly critical of German government-sponsored antisemitism and contempt for fair sporting practices. Opposition to holding the Games in Nazi Germany gained support in many countries, particularly in the United States, where opponents of the Nazis called for a boycott. Ultimately, the proposed boycott was rejected. Instead, the Games went on and were an unprecedented public relations success for Germany.

The information in this packet is designed to help students in grades 7–12 understand the historical context of the 1936 Olympics and critically examine the American boycott debate. In addition to background materials, the packet includes:

- ▶ Pre-visit lesson — helps students prepare to visit the exhibition by examining reproductions of photographs and documents displayed in the exhibition and discussing questions related to historical content.
- ▶ On-site activities — help students focus on the American boycott debate and dilemmas faced by individuals and policy makers before and during the 1936 Olympics.
- ▶ Post-visit lesson — helps students review the information they learned during their visit and to articulate their opinions about the decision to send a United States team to the Berlin Olympics.

The materials in this packet are ideally used in conjunction with a visit to the traveling exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936*, but may be used independently of the exhibition as the basis for classroom instruction. You are welcome to visit the online version of the exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's homepage <<http://www.ushmm.org>>.

We thank you in advance for visiting the exhibition, using these educational materials, and sharing your thoughts about them through the enclosed evaluation. Should you have any questions about this packet, or if you would like to discuss its relevance to your curriculum, please contact the Museum's Resource Center for Educators in the Division of Education at (202) 488-2661 or <[education@ushmm.org](mailto:education@ushmm.org)>.

## CONTENTS

Exhibition Information . . . . .	1
Exhibition Themes . . . . .	4
Pre-visit Lesson Plan . . . . .	6
Historical Background . . . . .	8
Interpreting Images . . . . .	10
On-Site Activities . . . . .	11
Exhibition Worksheet . . . . .	13
Post-visit Lesson Plan . . . . .	14
Glossary . . . . .	16
Bibliography . . . . .	19

## INSERTS

- Chronology Poster
- Exhibition Brochure
- Eight Exhibition Cards
- Evaluation



Spectators in the Olympic stadium give the Nazi salute at the opening ceremonies of the Olympics in Berlin, Germany. (August 1, 1936) *National Archives and Records Administration*

cover: The last of 3,000 runners that carried the Olympic torch from Olympia, Greece to Berlin, Germany. The lighting of the Olympic flame in the Lustgarten in Berlin officially started the 11th Summer Olympic Games. (August 1, 1936) *National Archives and Records Administration*

## EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

Using historical photographs, written documents, film footage, and athlete testimonies, *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* chronicles the Nazi rise to power in Germany, the Nazification of German sport, the Olympic boycott controversy in the United States, the Olympic Games themselves, and their aftermath. Visitors to the exhibition learn that a beautified Berlin and extravagant Olympic pageantry were only facades designed to distract and seduce the international community. The Nazis exploited the Games as part of a propaganda effort to dispel international concerns about Germany's planned remilitarization program, and to mask the German government's policies of discrimination and persecution, which had begun shortly after Hitler's ascension to power in 1933.



Poster announcing a regional festival of the German *Reich* Calisthenics League in Leipzig, Germany. (July 1935)



Gretel Bergmann competes in the high jump during a pre-Olympic competition in Stuttgart, Germany where she equalled the German women's record of 5'3". (ca. 1935-36)

The exhibition features the stories of athletes who boycotted or were barred from the Games as well as those who participated in them. News articles and headlines of the period expose the racism and anti-semitism of the Nazi regime, particularly in their coverage of Nazi reaction to the victories of track star Jesse Owens and other African Americans as well as the exclusion of German Jewish high jumper Gretel Bergmann from Olympic competition.

The exhibition concludes with a sobering historical perspective: during the months before and after the 1936 Olympic Games, the Nazis toned down their anti-Jewish campaign for reasons of foreign policy and image. In the 15 months after the Games, Germany initiated its plans for expansion and the Nazi regime intensified its persecution of Jews and others it deemed "enemies of the State." Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, and by November of that year, Jews in Germany and Austria were subjected to the terror, mass destruction, and widespread arrests of a state-sponsored antisemitic pogrom known as *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of Broken Glass"). With Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, World War II began. Using the war as justification, the Nazi leadership perpetrated the genocide of European Jewry known as the Holocaust. The last images in the exhibition are of Olympic athletes who died in the Holocaust.

*THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* is organized into five sections, beginning with Hitler's rise to power in Germany and ending with the aftermath of the Olympics and the onset of the Holocaust and World War II. The exhibition's five sections are:

1. NAZI GERMANY, 1933–36
  - Police State
  - Antisemitism and Racism
2. NAZIFICATION OF SPORT
  - Sport and Race
  - Sport as Military Training
  - Indoctrination of Youth
  - Government Control of Sports and the Olympics
  - Exclusion of Jews and other "enemies of the State"
3. THE BOYCOTT DEBATE
  - African American Responses
  - Jewish American Responses
  - World Responses
4. THE NAZI OLYMPICS
  - The Winter Olympics and Reoccupation of the Rhineland
  - Nazi Propaganda and the Facade of Hospitality
  - Success of African American Athletes
  - Jewish Athletes and the Games
5. AFTERMATH
  - After the Games—Hitler's Plans for the Olympics
  - Continuing Persecution of German Jews
  - World War II and the Holocaust

### GUIDELINES FOR AN EXHIBITION VISIT

We encourage teachers to visit *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* prior to the class trip, so that they are familiar with the exhibition contents and the physical environment. We strongly recommend that you provide your students with a pre-visit orientation to familiarize them, in advance of their visit, with the exhibition's space and thematic organization. This orientation will enrich the students' experience of the exhibition and help focus their attention on particular issues, themes, and historical personalities presented in the exhibition.

Because the exhibition follows a chronological narrative, visitors are expected to proceed through the exhibition from beginning to end. This may make it difficult to divide students into groups to explore particular sections. It would be preferable for small groups of students to tour the exhibition sequentially.

Interspersed throughout the exhibition are video monitors showing historical film footage. At the end of the exhibition, there are additional video monitors, each displaying the testimonies of four athletes. The film footage and athlete testimonies shown on video monitors each run approximately four minutes in length. You and your students should plan to spend one to one-and-a-half hours overall viewing the exhibition.

## USING THIS EDUCATIONAL PACKET

This packet includes a recommended pre-visit lesson plan, on-site activities, and a post-visit lesson plan, all of which refer to Exhibition Cards. These cards present historical photographs and documents, as well as cartoons, artwork, and posters from *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* exhibition.

The images on the Exhibition Cards were intended to influence people's opinions. A sheet entitled Interpreting Images is enclosed as part of the pre-visit lesson plan to help students analyze the imagery on the Exhibition Cards. Any card may be used individually to focus student discussion on one or more of four themes as outlined in this packet. The four themes are: racism and discrimination, propaganda, fair play, and decision making. Used together, the cards provide a framework for discussing the overriding question of whether the United States should have sent an Olympic team to Berlin in 1936.

While several of the on-site activities may be used independently of the pre-visit and post-visit lessons, the lessons and activities in this packet have been designed to complement one another, and the pre-visit lesson is a prerequisite for the post-visit lesson.

In the pre-visit lesson, students examine several reproductions of photographs and documents displayed in the exhibition, and practice critical viewing skills in preparation for their visit to the exhibition. The lesson introduces students to several of the themes that are prominent in the exhibition: racism and discrimination, propaganda, fair play, and decision making.

The on-site activities help students focus on the American boycott debate by investigating how the exhibition uses visual evidence and personal stories to illustrate the dilemmas faced by individuals and policy makers before and during the 1936 Olympics.

In the post-visit lesson, students use information gained from their visit to the exhibition to form their own opinions, and to debate the decision of the American Olympic Committee and Amateur Athletic Union to send a United States team to the Berlin Olympics. Final homework assignments include analyzing American opinions about the Berlin Olympics in the context of American responses to other events in prewar Nazi Germany.

Definitions of words printed in bold type in the Historical Background Sheet and the Exhibition Cards can be found in the Glossary.

### INTEGRATING THEMES FROM THE EXHIBITION INTO CURRICULA

Units of study centered on a visit to *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* can be integrated into a number of existing courses, including United States History, World History, World Cultures, Government, Contemporary World Problems, and Art. Below are suggestions for integrating the four primary themes from the exhibition into curricula.

After visiting the exhibition, help students consider the implications of this history by organizing classroom discussion and/or homework assignments around any of these four themes—racism and discrimination, propaganda, fair play, and decision making. Under each thematic heading are questions that you can use for discussion and/or written assignments. These questions may be used to enhance the lesson plans in this packet, or they may be used separately.

#### Racism and Discrimination

- ▶ What kinds of changes did the Nazi government implement between 1933 and 1936 that specifically reflected a state endorsement of racism and discrimination?
- ▶ How did totalitarianism, antisemitism, and racism affect sports in Germany in the 1930s?
- ▶ How were American attitudes toward participation in the 1936 Olympics affected by awareness of Nazi antisemitism and racial discrimination?
- ▶ Why did some U.S. athletes boycott and others choose to participate in the Games?
- ▶ What are “Jim Crow” laws? Is there evidence that racism, antisemitism, and discriminatory practices in the United States affected American opinions about (and responses to) U.S. participation in the 1936 Olympics?

#### Propaganda

- ▶ What evidence is there that the German government used the 1936 Olympic Games as a propaganda vehicle to garner domestic support and international acceptance? Did the effort succeed?
- ▶ Specifically, what means did the Germans use to deceive the world during the Olympics? What were they hiding?
- ▶ How did the Nazis link the Olympics to their theory of a “master race?” What symbols and characterizations did the Nazis use in propaganda, posters, and cartoons to express this connection?

### Fair Play

- ▶ How did Nazi antisemitic policies affect the administration of German sports facilities? What was the impact on Jewish participation in German sports and Olympic competition?
- ▶ Why did a number of African American newspapers take the editorial position that it would be hypocritical for the United States to boycott the Berlin Olympics in the name of “fair play?”
- ▶ What purposes do physical education and sports serve in a democratic society? Are the purposes of physical education and sports different in a totalitarian society? What do sports prepare citizens for in either type of society?
- ▶ Is it possible to separate sports from politics? Should they be separated?

### Decision Making

- ▶ Why did the United States participate in the Games despite diplomatic warnings and widespread domestic public opposition to holding the Games in Berlin?
- ▶ What factors influenced individual and group decisions about whether to boycott the Games? Delineate the different responses of representative groups, including the Amateur Athletic Union, the American Olympic Committee, the U.S. government, American Jewish athletes, African American athletes, and the press.
- ▶ What role did American attitudes about discrimination and intolerance play in the debate over U.S. participation in the Berlin Olympics?
- ▶ What decisions did individual athletes make? What factors do they identify as influencing their decisions?
- ▶ How did the threat of an international boycott of the Games affect German Olympic and government officials? What decisions did the German government make as a consequence?
- ▶ In the end, do you think the American Olympic Committee made the right decision by sending American athletes to the Games?

## LEARNING TO ANALYZE AN IMAGE

Grade Level: Middle School, High School

### Introduction

Prior to visiting the exhibition, it would be advisable for students to have some familiarity with both Holocaust history<sup>1</sup> and the history of the modern Olympic Games<sup>2</sup>. The Historical Background sheet in this packet provides a general overview of the historical and social backdrop of the 1936 Games, which will enable students to examine more thoroughly the Games themselves as a case study in American responses to Nazi racist, militaristic, and totalitarian policies during the 1930s. Students also will be in a better position to critically evaluate the many factors that influenced individual, group, and government attitudes toward events unfolding in Germany.

The photographs and illustrations displayed in *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* are key to students' understanding of the history chronicled in the exhibition. An ability to analyze images and gather information from them will be critical to a successful student visit. In this pre-visit lesson plan, students are asked to study selected images from the exhibition in an effort to introduce the basic history and to exercise the skill of "looking critically" at historical imagery.

### Objectives

- ▶ To provide an historical context for the Nazi Olympics exhibition.
- ▶ To learn and practice the skill of extracting information from a photograph, document, or work of art.

### Materials

Historical Background sheet  
Interpreting Images sheet  
Exhibition Cards  
Glossary

1 An historical summary of the Holocaust is available, free of charge, as part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's publication entitled *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*. Contact the Museum's Education Resource Center at: (202) 488-2661; FAX (202) 488-6137; e-mail: <education@ushmm.org>; 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, D.C. 20024-2126.

2 For a history of the Olympics, see: Guttmann, Allen. *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992).



### Teacher Preparation

- ▶ Make one copy of the Interpreting Images sheet for each student group or prepare as a transparency to project in front of the class.
- ▶ Make one copy of the Historical Background sheet for each student.
- ▶ Make one copy of the Glossary for each student group.
- ▶ The day before the pre-visit lesson, assign the Historical Background sheet as homework reading.

### Instruction (45 minutes)

- ▶ Ask students to summarize the Historical Background sheet that they read for homework. Explain that they will examine images from the exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* in preparation for the class trip.
- ▶ Using Exhibition Card 3 with the cartoon entitled “His Entry Blank,” show students what you will be asking them to do, by leading the class in an interpretation of the image. Ask relevant questions from the Interpreting Images sheet, which help to elucidate the meaning of this cartoon. Then discuss the quotations on the back of the card.
- ▶ Divide the class into four to eight groups (depending upon how many Exhibition Cards you decide to use and the number of students in the class). Hand out copies of the Interpreting Images sheet (or project it on a large screen), and supply each group with one of the Exhibition Cards.
- ▶ Direct students in each group to carefully examine the image on the card and to answer as many questions from the Interpreting Images sheet as apply to that image. Then encourage students to read the back of the card and discuss as a group possible answers to the question at the top. Ask one student in each group to write down interpretations and important points raised during the group’s discussion of the image. Ask each group to appoint a representative who will report the group’s findings back to the rest of the class.
- ▶ After the group discussions have ended, ask each group’s representative to report back to the class as a whole. If a group’s interpretations generate questions from other students in the class, write them on the blackboard and encourage students to write them down on paper and search for answers during the visit to the exhibition.
- ▶ End the class with a quick overview of what to expect during the trip to the exhibition. Explain to students how they are expected to spend their time in the exhibition, and remind them to bring writing instruments and paper.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



USHMM Photo Archives

Adolf Hitler reviews 35,000 Storm Troopers (*Sturmabteilung-SA*), members of the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing. (February 20, 1936)

On May 13, 1931, the International Olympic Committee awarded the 1936 Summer Olympics to the city of Berlin, Germany. The choice signaled Germany's return to the world community after defeat in World War I. Two years later, Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany and quickly turned the nation's fragile democracy into a one party dictatorship. Police rounded up thousands of political opponents, and detained them without trial in concentration camps and other places of detention.

Antisemitism and racism pervaded the Nazi worldview. In speeches, Hitler emphasized racial purity and the superiority of the "Germanic race"—the so-called "Aryan master race." As part of the drive to "purify" and strengthen the German population, a 1933 law permitted physicians to perform forced sterilizations of psychiatric patients and congenitally handicapped persons, Roma (Gypsies), and persons of color residing in Germany.

Jews were a primary target of Nazi hatred. After the Nazis secured power, their campaign against Jews included physical assault, economic boycotts, the expulsion of Jews from professions and the civil service, the exclusion of Jews from movie theaters and recreational facilities, and laws against intermarriage and sexual relations with "Aryans." The Nazi government used sports as part of its drive to strengthen the "Aryan race," to exercise political control over its citizens, and to prepare German youth for war. "Non-Aryans" — Jewish or part-Jewish and Roma athletes — were systematically excluded from German sports facilities and associations. They were restricted to marginal training facilities of their own, thus severely limiting their opportunities to compete.

Soon after Hitler took power in 1933, observers in the United States and other western democracies questioned the morality of supporting Olympic Games hosted by the Nazi regime. Responding to reports of the persecution of Jewish athletes in 1933, Avery Brundage, president of the American Olympic Committee, stated: "The very foundation of the modern Olympic revival will be undermined if individual countries are allowed to restrict participation by reason of class, creed, or race." Brundage, like many others in the Olympics movement, initially considered moving the Games from Germany. However, following a brief inspection tour of German sports facilities in 1934, carefully orchestrated by German officials to project an image that Germany was employing fair practices in regard to sports, Brundage changed his position and stated publicly that Jewish athletes were apparently being treated fairly and that the Games should go on as planned.

National Archives and Records Administration



Posters in New York City announce a public meeting to support the Olympics boycott. The meeting was sponsored by the Committee on Fair Play in Sports. (November, 1935)

Many American newspaper editors and anti-Nazi groups, led by Jeremiah Mahoney, president of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), were unwilling to be deceived by Nazi Germany's hollow pledges and lies regarding German Jewish athletes. But a determined Avery Brundage maneuvered the AAU to a very close vote in favor of sending an American team to Berlin. In the end, Mahoney's boycott effort failed.



The official poster for the 1936 Summer Olympic Games shows an Olympian rising above Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate. (1936)

Forty-nine teams from around the world, including the United States, competed in the 1936 Games, more than in any previous Olympics.

The Olympic Games were an ideal setting for the Nazi propaganda effort, which was unsurpassed at staging elaborate public spectacles and rallies. Choreographed pageantry, record-breaking athletic feats, and warm German hospitality made the 1936 Olympic Games memorable for athletes and spectators. However, behind the facade of internationalism and peace was a ruthless dictatorship dedicated to racist nationalism. It persecuted its enemies and rearmed for war, with the stated objective of acquiring new territories — “living space” for the “Aryan master race.”

After the 1936 Olympics ended, Hitler and the Nazis continued their plans for German expansion and world supremacy, which included their

intention to remain the permanent hosts of all future Olympic Games. In 1938, Germany incorporated Austria into the *Reich* and intensified the anti-Jewish campaign. On November 9–10, 1938 — *Kristallnacht* (“The Night of Broken Glass”) — rioters burned hundreds of synagogues, vandalized and looted Jewish businesses and homes, and killed dozens of Jews. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Within just three years after the Berlin Olympiad, the “hospitable” host of the 1936 Games had unleashed World War II. The war resulted in untold destruction and provided Nazi Germany with a framework of “national emergency” within which to justify and perpetrate a genocide, the Holocaust.



An aerial view of the Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II) camp barracks. (after January 27, 1945)

## INTERPRETING IMAGES

## How to Look at Works of Art

*Describe the people portrayed.* If there are depictions of people in the artwork, can you identify who they are and what they are doing? How are they dressed? How old do they appear to be? Who is the main focus of the artwork? Are there differences in people's sizes and appearances? How is each person portrayed?

*Look for symbols.* Do you recognize any symbols in this image? What do they represent? Are they used to convey a message in this image?

*Look for inscriptions.* What is the main message of the text? Does the text appear official or informal? Are the words handwritten or printed? How does the text relate to any illustrations in the image? (NOTE: German and English sometimes have words that are related or sound similar to one another. If there is German writing in the image, look carefully at the words; even though the text is written in German, do some of the words look like English words that you recognize?)

## How to Look at Historical Photographs

*Describe the people portrayed.* Who are they and what are they doing? How are they dressed? How old do they appear to be? Does it seem as if they are aware that a photograph is being taken?

*Describe the setting.* Are there objects or buildings in the photograph? Is an event taking place? Does the photograph seem spontaneous or posed? Read the caption to discover when and where the photograph was taken.

*Consider the eye of the photographer.* Even photographic images that appear to be spontaneous are predetermined by the photographer, who makes decisions about what will be framed within the camera's lens. Can you tell anything about the perspective of the photographer by what has been included or omitted in the photograph?

## How to Look at Textual Documents

*Analyze the words.* Read the document carefully. Does the text appear official or informal? Is the document handwritten or printed? Who produced the document? What appears to be the purpose of the document; could it possibly have more than one purpose?

When interpreting any image, ask:  
What does the image represent to you? What does the image tell you about the United States or Germany during the 1930s? What questions does it raise about the 1936 Olympics?

(Hint: The clues are in the details.)

## EXAMINE THE DOCUMENTATION

The following activities will help to focus your students' viewing experience in the exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936*. Each activity involves a structured on-site component that can be followed by a homework assignment or an oral report to be presented during the post-visit class. Select the activity that best fits your curriculum.

Encourage students to take adequate time in viewing the first section of the exhibition entitled "Nazi Germany, 1933–1936." This introductory section establishes the historical background for the 1936 Games. Students who carefully consider the information presented in this section will better understand the context in which the American boycott debate over participation in the Berlin Olympics took place.

1. NOTE: This on-site activity is a prerequisite for the recommended post-visit debate activity described on pages 14 and 15.

In the exhibition: Ask students to compile a list of specific photographs, film footage, or newspaper headlines from the exhibition that support arguments on either side of the boycott debate. (They should use the Exhibition Worksheet for this assignment.) If desired, direct their search by asking them to choose images or documents that reflect the perspective of specific groups involved in the boycott debate, such as African American athletes, Jewish American athletes, the American Olympic Committee and Avery Brundage, the American Athletic Union and Jeremiah Mahoney.

Homework: Ask students to write an essay about, or present an oral report on the factors that influenced various American opinions about boycotting the 1936 Olympics.

2. In the exhibition: Distribute Exhibition Cards to students prior to their entry into the exhibition. Ask students to gather information from the exhibition that addresses the question at the top of their Exhibition Cards.

Homework: Have students consider if the information they have gathered in the exhibition supports one side of the boycott debate or the other. They should be prepared to explain their answers either in writing or as part of an oral report.

3. In the exhibition: The exhibition introduces several athletes and their eyewitness testimonies. Ask students to search for specific examples of choices made by individual athletes in their attempts to resolve the dilemma of participation in the 1936 Olympic Games. Athletes who appear more than once in the exhibition include Gustov Flatow, Marty Glickman, Milton Green, Margaret Lambert (Gretel Bergmann), Johann Trollmann, and John Woodruff.

Homework: Ask students to describe (in writing or in a post-visit class discussion) a specific athlete's role in the story of the 1936 Olympics. Topics to cover include whether or not an athlete participated in the Games, the sport represented by that athlete, and an explanation of the following: why that athlete chose to participate or not (if known and if there was a choice), what happened to that athlete before and during the Games, and what happened to that athlete following the Games (if known).

4. In the exhibition: Ask students to look for and locate the image on the Exhibition Card he or she studied in the pre-visit activity. How does the placement of the image in the exhibition affect one's interpretation of it? Students should examine the other images and text surrounding the image and consider how their initial interpretation of the image on the card is either reinforced or altered by the way it is presented in the exhibition.

Homework: Ask students to explain (in writing or in a post-visit class discussion) how their initial analysis of a particular image from the exhibition was either reinforced or refuted by its portrayal in the exhibition.

EXHIBITION WORKSHEET

Find at least three pieces of documentation in the exhibition that support the idea of a U.S. boycott of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and three pieces that support U.S. participation in the Games. Documentation may include any of the media in the exhibition, such as photographs, newspaper headlines or articles, artwork, archival documents, exhibition text, and athlete testimonies. Use the space below to record your findings.

U.S. Should Boycott

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Should Participate

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

List the names of individuals or organizations that supported or opposed boycotting the 1936 Olympic Games.

U.S. Should Boycott

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Should Participate

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

## FORMULATE OPINIONS AND DEBATE THE U.S. BOYCOTT DECISION

Grade Level: Middle School, High School

### Introduction

Having learned the skill of looking critically at historical images and documents in order to “read” them for content<sup>3</sup> and having visited the exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936*, students can now apply historical perspectives and information gleaned from the exhibition in an exchange of ideas. They are ready to debate the subject of American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games. This activity has been designed to reinforce students’ understanding of the many positions taken and the various factors affecting decision making in the boycott debate.

### Objectives

- To clarify how racism, discrimination, propaganda, and concepts of fair play had an impact on the 1936 Berlin Olympics.
- To identify and analyze factors that influenced American decision making in the 1936 Olympics boycott debate.
- To assess what students have learned from their visit to the exhibition.

### Materials

Exhibition Cards  
Chronology Poster  
Glossary

### Preparation

- Display the Chronology Poster in the classroom.
- Make three sets of photocopies of all eight Exhibition Cards.

### Instruction (45 minutes)

Invite or assign students to gather in one of three groups: (1) those who agree with the U.S. decision to participate in the Games, (2) those who think the U.S. should have boycotted the Games, and (3) those who are not sure.

Provide each group with photocopies of all eight of the Exhibition Cards. Ask students to use their completed Exhibition Worksheets to discuss what they learned in the exhibition about the different sides of the debate. With groups 1 and 2, ask students to choose the Exhibition Cards that support their group’s viewpoint,

<sup>3</sup> The pre-visit lesson and on-site activity #1 are prerequisites for this post-visit lesson.



whether for or against the U.S. boycott. With the group that is unsure, ask students to develop questions based on the exhibition's different sources of documentation in order to challenge the other two groups on their viewpoints. Encourage students to consult the Chronology Poster for a review of the historical context. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for these group activities and discussions.

Clearly state the rules of the debate. Begin the debate by asking a representative from group 1 to present a summary of its position. Follow this by asking a representative from group 2 and group 3 to do the same. Continue in a point-counterpoint manner. In the debate, students should:

- ▶ Cite arguments from the boycott debate as understood from the exhibition.
- ▶ Identify factors that influenced the decisions of athletes and others.
- ▶ Refer to the major figures in the exhibition who most closely represented their own views.

After the debate, discuss the events in Germany and Europe that followed the 1936 Olympics. What happened to particular athletes highlighted in the exhibition?

### SUGGESTED HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

15

Grade Level: Middle School, High School

Ask students to write an essay, using documentation displayed in the exhibition and arguments presented in the classroom debate, designed to persuade others to agree with their opinions about the U.S. decision to participate in the 1936 Olympic Games. Essays should address the themes of racism, discrimination, propaganda, fair play, and decision making.<sup>4</sup>

Grade Level: High School

Ask students to research other examples of American responses to events in Nazi Germany before World War II. Events to consider for research include the Nazi book burnings (May 1933), passage of the Nuremberg Laws (September 1935), German refugees and the Evian conference (July 1938), and *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of Broken Glass") (November 9–10, 1938).<sup>5</sup>

Have students consider the following questions when pursuing their research: How were American opinions and actions during the Olympic boycott debate similar to or different from other examples of American responses to Nazi racist policies, political oppression, and aggression before World War II? Was there a consistent pattern to U.S. responses?

<sup>4</sup> See the section of this packet entitled "Exhibition Themes: Integrating Themes From the Exhibition Into Curricula" on page 4 for questions associated with these themes.

<sup>5</sup> Bibliographic resources include Lipstadt, Deborah. *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986) and Morse, Arthur D. *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Overlook Press, 1985). For a more complete list of resources including an annotated bibliographic and videographic listing, see *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.).

**Amateur Athletic Union (AAU):** Organization of amateur athletes in the United States. Headed by Judge Jeremiah Mahoney, the AAU supported an American boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games.

**American Olympic Committee (AOC):** Private institution responsible for coordinating American participation in the Olympic Games. Headed by Avery Brundage, the AOC supported sending an American team to the 1936 Olympic Games.

**Antisemitism:** Prejudice or discrimination against Jews.

**Aryan:** Originally, a linguistic term for peoples speaking the languages of Europe and India. The Nazis misappropriated the term and used it to refer to the racial lineage of "true ethnic Germans" and other so-called "Germanic" peoples such as the Dutch and the Danes. They proclaimed the "Aryan race" superior to all other racial groups. The Nazis considered people of Germanic background to be the best example of Aryans. For the Nazis, the ideal Aryan was blond, blue eyed, and tall.

**Boycott:** The refusal to buy a product or attend an event in the hopes of affecting political, social, or economic change.

**Brundage, Avery (1887–1975):** President of the American Olympic Committee (AOC) who fought to send a U.S. team to the 1936 Olympics, claiming: "The Olympic Games belong to the athletes and not to the politicians."

**Communist:** A person affiliated with a movement advocating the violent overthrow of capitalism in order to establish a political and economic system of society where there is government ownership rather than private ownership of land, factories, and other economic resources. Two major goals of this system are that each member work for the common benefit according to his or her capacity and be compensated according to

his or her needs. The German Communist movement had its political expression in the German Communist Party. During the 1930s and 1940s, Communists were in political opposition to Nazis and became a target of Nazi persecution.

**Concentration Camps:** In German, *Konzentrationslager*. German authorities constructed prison camps to hold Jews, Roma (Gypsies), political and religious opponents of the Nazis, resisters, homosexuals, and others considered to be "enemies of the State." Before the end of World War II, between 30 and 40 major concentration camps with hundreds of satellite camps had been created across German-occupied Europe. In addition to camps officially designated as concentration camps, German authorities created thousands of other forced-detention facilities, including labor camps, transit camps, killing centers, and prisoner of war camps.

**Dictatorship:** Government rule by a single person; antidemocratic, and usually characterized by brutality and lack of freedom.

**Discrimination:** Actions against an individual or group because of prejudice. Discrimination can be the result of laws, government actions, or the social behavior of fellow citizens.

**Ghetto:** As it relates to the Holocaust, "ghetto" refers to an area of a city or town, usually the poorest, where the Germans confined the Jewish population. Before the end of World War II, the Germans established hundreds of ghettos in the countries they occupied. Ghettos were usually surrounded by barbed wire or walls to "seal in" the Jews. Overcrowded living conditions, a starvation diet, disease, forced labor, and terror characterized much of the ghetto inhabitants' experiences. The death rate within ghettos was often accelerated as a result of such circumstances. The Germans eventually liquidated the ghettos by deporting the Jews to concentration camps and killing centers or by killing them on the spot.

Goebbels, Paul Joseph (1897–1945): Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany, who was close to Hitler. Although Hitler opposed the internationalist spirit of the Olympics, Goebbels convinced him that hosting the games in Germany provided an unparalleled propaganda opportunity. At the end of the war, Goebbels and his wife took their own lives and those of their six children.

Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945): Nazi party leader, 1919–1945, *Führer* (“leader”) and *Reich* Chancellor 1933–1945. Hitler committed suicide in a bunker in Berlin as the Soviet Army was conquering the city in April 1945.

Hitler Youth: In German, *Hitlerjugend*. The Nazi youth movement. The Hitler Youth included a variety of youth groups for both boys and girls ranging in age from 10–18. By 1935, 60 percent of Germany’s youth were members. The Hitler Youth organization followed the military pattern including squads, platoons, and companies. Activities of Hitler Youth members stressed physical work, discipline, and action at the expense of intellectual development. Male members of the Hitler Youth were issued uniforms and bayonets. Girls were trained to be obedient, dutiful, self-sacrificing, and disciplined wives and mothers. Most of their time was taken up with sports, the remainder with learning Nazi ideology.

Holocaust: Literally, the word “holocaust” means a massive devastation or destruction, especially by fire, a burnt sacrifice. The word “Holocaust” refers to the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry and other victims by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims — approximately six million men, women, and children were murdered. Roma (Gypsies), the handicapped, and Slavic peoples also were targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons.

Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

International Olympic Committee (IOC): Founded by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1894. The IOC is the official body that oversees the Olympic Games. In 1931, the IOC awarded the 1936 Olympic Games to Berlin, Germany. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the IOC considered moving the Games from Nazi Germany, but decided to continue as planned. Because of his vocal protests calling for an international boycott of the 1936 Olympics, an American representative, Ernest Lee Jahncke, was forced out of the IOC in 1935.

Jews: People whose religion is Judaism or who identify themselves as Jews. The central tenet of Judaism is the belief in one God, and the primary religious texts of Judaism are the Torah (five books of Moses) and the Talmud. Jews were the primary victims of the Holocaust—approximately six million were killed.

“Jim Crow”: Discriminatory laws that segregated African Americans from the white American population primarily in the southern United States between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century. These laws barred African American from access to employment and public places such as restaurants, hotels, and other facilities. In the South especially, African Americans lived in fear of racially motivated violence. “Jim Crow” also served to relegate African Americans to the status of second-class citizens, effectively preventing them from participating in the political process and often denying them the right to vote.

**Killing Centers:** In German, *Vernichtungslager* (“extermination camps”). Nazi camps, equipped with gassing facilities, for mass murder of Jews and others. Five killing centers were located in German-occupied Poland at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Up to 2,700,000 Jews were murdered at these five camps, as were tens of thousands of Roma (Gypsies), Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, and others.

**Mahoney, Jeremiah (1878–1970):** Judge Mahoney, president of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), led efforts to boycott the 1936 Olympics through his Committee on Fair Play in Sports. Mahoney was one of a number of Catholic leaders who supported a boycott.

**Nazi:** Short term for a member of the National Socialist German Workers Party, a right-wing, nationalistic, antisemitic political party formed in 1919 and headed by Adolf Hitler from 1921 to 1945. The Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933 and, backed by a significant percentage of the German population at large, embarked on a course that led to the Holocaust and World War II.

**Pogrom:** Short-term mob violence, often with the support of local authorities, against a minority group — especially Jews.

**Propaganda:** Publicity intended to spread ideas or information that will persuade or convince people of something. Propaganda is designed to present complex issues as simple matters that can be summed up in a few points and are often illustrated by slogans or powerful images that are easy to remember. It is one sided and usually distorts the truth.

**Racism:** Belief in the superiority of a particular “race” or the theory that human abilities are determined by race. Hitler and other Nazi leaders viewed Jews not as a religious group, but as an inferior “race,” which “lived off” the other races and weakened them. Prior to and during the 1936 Olympics, the Nazis used sports to glorify their image of a superior “Aryan race.”

**Reich:** German word for “empire.”

**Rhineland:** Demilitarized zone in Germany that victorious powers established after World War I as a buffer between Germany and France.

**Roma (Gypsies):** Nomadic people believed to have come originally from northwest India. Traveling mostly in small caravans, Roma first appeared in western Europe in the 1400s and eventually spread to every country of Europe. Prejudices against Roma were and remain widespread. Approximately 220,000 to 500,000 Roma are believed to have died in Nazi concentration camps, killing centers, and in mass shootings.

**Roosevelt, Franklin Delano (1882–1945):** Thirty-second President of the United States, serving from 1933–1945. At no time did President Roosevelt become involved in the Olympics boycott issue, despite warnings from high-level American diplomats regarding Nazi exploitation of the Olympics as propaganda. Roosevelt continued a 40-year tradition in which the American Olympic Committee operated independently of government influence.

**Totalitarian:** A form of government in which no rival parties or loyalties are permitted, usually demanding total submission of the individual to the requirements of the state.

## THE NAZI OLYMPICS

NOTE: *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* exhibition brochure found in this packet includes a larger bibliography of books and articles on the 1936 Olympic Games and related topics.

Bachrach, Susan. *The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1999). Similar to *Tell Them We Remember*, this book, to be published in 1999, tells the story of the Holocaust as presented in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibition *THE NAZI OLYMPICS Berlin 1936* using short segments illustrated by images taken from the exhibition. [Middle school level]

Rurup, Reinhard, ed. *1936 The Olympic Games and National Socialism*. (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1996). Through a comprehensive text, historical photographs, and reproductions of posters and artwork, the Topography of Terror Museum in Berlin documents the 1936 Olympics beginning with an overview of the modern Olympic movement and ending with the aftermath of the 1936 Games. The book's text is in both German and English. [High school and adult level]

## AMERICAN RESPONSES TO NAZI PERSECUTIONS IN THE 1930s

Lipstadt, Deborah. *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986). Why did one out of every three Americans polled in 1943 dismiss as propaganda reports of atrocities against European Jews? Why were reports given by Auschwitz escapees in 1944 viewed with skepticism by major newspapers? Lipstadt raises these questions and others in this book on how the American news media reported (or ignored) the Nazi persecution and genocide of European Jewry. An entire chapter is devoted to the Nazi Olympics and the press reaction. [High school and adult level]

Morse, Arthur D. *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Overlook Press, 1985). The term "American apathy" that Morse uses in his title refers less to the American public than to the United States government. Using primary source materials, Morse details the process by which the government responded, or failed to respond, to the Nazi genocide. A chapter is devoted to American responses to the Nazi Olympics. [High school and adult level]

## THE HOLOCAUST

NOTE: A more comprehensive bibliography of resources for teaching about the Holocaust is available in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum publication *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*. Contact the Museum's Education Resource Center at (202) 488-2661; Fax (202) 488-6137; e-mail: <education@ushmm.org>; 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, D.C. 20024-2126.

Bachrach, Susan. *Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994). Bachrach tells the story of the Holocaust as presented in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in brief, thematic segments illustrated by artifacts and historical photographs. Sidebars tell the personal stories of more than 20 young people of various social and religious backgrounds and nationalities who suffered or died during the Holocaust. [Middle school level]

Bauer, Yehuda, and Nili Keren. *A History of the Holocaust*. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982). Broader in scope than the title indicates, this work examines the origins of antisemitism and Nazism as well as the history of Jewish-German relationships. Bauer also arranges material on the Holocaust by individual country, which is useful for following events as they affected each occupied nation and for demonstrating the scope of the Holocaust. One of the most readable general histories for high school students. [High school and adult level]

Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1993). As indicated by the title, the book tells the story of the Holocaust as presented in the Museum. It includes more than 200 photos from the Museum's archives and artifact collection and many eyewitness accounts from the Museum's oral and video history collections. The three parts of the book, which correspond to the three floors of the exhibition, cover the rise of the Nazis to power; the ghettos and camps; and rescue, resistance, and the postwar period. [High school and adult level]

Hilberg, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985) [student text]. This edition of Hilberg's classic work is an abridgment of the original, three-volume edition also published by Holmes & Meier in 1985. The focus here is on the Nazis and their destruction process, from the concentration of the Jews in ghettos to the killing operations of the mobile units and the death camps. This essential history is recommended for more advanced students. [High school and adult level]

Spielvogel, Jackson J. *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996). A good general history of the Nazi regime with a chapter on the Holocaust, Spielvogel's book gives appropriate attention to the key issues and historical events of the era. It includes a preliminary bibliography chapter by chapter for those who wish to read further on any given issue. [High school and adult level]

#### ORAL HISTORY TAPES AND TRANSCRIPTS

This teacher guide features excerpts from four oral history testimonies shown in the exhibition. Copies of tape(s) and/or transcript(s) of the full oral history interviews can be obtained from the Museum's Archives reference desk. Call (202) 488-6113 or e-mail <archives@ushmm.org>. For each hour of videotape, the cost for duplication is \$32. For a transcript, the cost is 30¢ per page. Use the following catalogue numbers when ordering:

Marty Glickman: RG-50.429\*0004  
Milton Green: RG-50.429\*0001

Margaret Lambert: RG-50.429\*0005  
John Woodruff: RG-50.429\*0002



