

YOUTH RESISTANCE TO THE NAZIS



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Lesson Summary

In this session students will be introduced to two youth movements who stood up to the Nazi regime, the White Rose movement and the Edelweiss Pirates. They will consider what life was like for young people under Hitler's rule, and the differences and similarities between these movements.

Learning Objectives

- To understand how the Nazi regime wanted to organise young people.
- To learn about two of the youth groups who resisted Nazi rule- the White Rose and the Edelweiss Pirates, along with figures from each.
- To think about the different ways that people resisted Nazism, both by organising against the regime, and rebelling against its ideas.
- To question why people resisted, and whether their resistance can be seen as successful.

United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Peace, Justice, and strong institutions

Curriculum Links

- History KS 3-4

British Council Core Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Imagination
- Collaboration and Communication
- Citizenship

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Activity One: Overview

Requires: Slides 2 to 7

No preparation required in advance

- Run through the slideshow giving an overview of conditions for young people under the Nazis and those who resisted it (slides 2 to 7).

Activity Two: Edelweiss Pirates

Requires: Worksheet Sources 1 and 2, Slide 8

Preparation: Ensure that enough worksheets are printed for all students

- Split the students into small groups of 3-4.
- Ask different students to read aloud the Edelweiss Pirate song (source 1) and the obituary of Jean Jülich, (source 2),
- put the questions from slide 8 on the board.
- Have them discuss the questions in their small groups.
- After discussions in the small groups have quietened down, bring the students back together to have the groups share their answers.

Activity Three: Sophie Scholl and the White Rose

Requires: Worksheet Sources 3 and 4, Slide 9

Preparation: Ensure that enough copies of the worksheet are printed for all students

- Ask students in their small groups to take it in turns reading aloud the extracts of Sophie Scholl's interrogation, brief biography, and the extracts from the White Rose leaflet (sources 3 and 4 on the worksheet) to the rest of the group. Encourage them to underline key words and phrases that they think are important.
- Put the questions on slide 9 on the board and go through each with the whole group.



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Activity Four: Risk and the Value of Resistance

Requires: Worksheet Source 5

- Ask students to read the quote from Lillian Garrett-Groag, a playwright who wrote a play about the activities of The White Rose, contained in source 5.
- Ask students the following questions:
 - How does reading this quote make you feel?
 - Do you agree with Lillian? Was it right to resist the Nazi regime in this way?
- Do you think the members of the White Rose were aware of the risks they were taking?

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Source 1

An anti-Nazi song that Edelweiss Pirates would sing while hiking

**Hark the hearty fellow sing!
Strum the banjo, pluck that string!
And the lasses all join in.
We're going to get rid of Hitler,
and he can't do a thing.
Hitler's power may lay us low,
and keep us locked in chains.
But we will smash the chains one day.
We'll be free again
We march by the banks of Ruhr and
Rhine
and smash the Hitler Youth in twain.
Our song is freedom, love, and life,
We're Pirates of the Edelweiss.**

From: Youth Activism: An International Encyclopedia, Volume 1:A-J, ed. Lonnie R. Sherrod (Greenwood Press)



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Source 2

This is the obituary of Jean Jülich, an Edelweiss Pirate member who passed away in 2011

Jean Jülich, who has died in his native Cologne aged 82, was one of the last surviving Edelweiss Pirates, the working class German teenagers who ran wild in the ruins of the city during the last years of the Third Reich. By 1944 as many as five thousand tearaways were living as outlaws in Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt and in the heavily bombed cities of the Rhine and Ruhr valleys. Known sometimes as Navajos, Ruhrpiraten, Harlem-Club or even Meuten [wolf packs], they were usually under military age and had evaded the compulsory Hitler youth organisations.

Boys and girls wore long hair, short shorts and distinctive checked shirts decorated by a small badge or pin in the shape of the edelweiss flower.

Jean Jülich tramped the hills south of Bonn with his guitar, singing at their secret meetings. He had lived with his grandparents from the age of seven, after seeing his communist father badly beaten by SS men and jailed for high treason. In a deserted bomb-disposal bunker, the Navajo group... supplied... food and shelter to runaway forced labourers, concentration camp escapees, fugitive Jews and German army deserters. They attacked Hitler Youth patrols, derailed ammunition trains, catapulted bricks through the roof of a munitions factory and sabotaged machinery.

Their plan to blow up the Gestapo headquarters in Cologne, using detonators extracted from unexploded British bombs, was discovered after a 24-year-old Edelweiss Pirate had shot dead a Nazi informer.

Jülich was arrested at the age of 15, held in solitary confinement without trial and tortured for four months. His 16-year-old friend, Barthel Schink, was hanged with 11 other Pirates on a public gallows at Ehrenfeld railway station, without trial...

Jülich survived a year of beatings, starvation and typhus in a concentration camp until liberated by American tanks in 1945.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/jean-j-lich-one-of-the-edelweiss-pirates-who-resisted-the-nazis-6259542.html>



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Source 3

Extracts from White Rose Leaflets

"Since the conquest of Poland **three hundred thousand** Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way. Here we see the most frightful crime against human dignity, a crime that is unparalleled in the whole of history. For Jews, too, are human beings ... and a crime of this dimension has been perpetrated against human beings" - **Leaflet 2**

"**Sabotage** in armament plants and war industries, sabotage at all gatherings, rallies, public ceremonies, and organisations of the National Socialist Party. Obstruction of the smooth functioning of the war machine... **Sabotage** in all the areas of science and scholarship which further the continuation of the war - whether in universities, technical schools, laboratories, research institutes, or technical bureaus...

Our present "state" is the dictatorship of evil. "Oh, we've known that for a long time," I hear you object, "and it isn't necessary to bring that to our attention again." But, I ask you, if you know that, why do you not bestir yourselves, why do you allow these men who are in power to rob you step by step, openly and in secret, of one domain of your rights after another, until one day nothing, nothing at all will be left but a... system presided over by criminals and drunks? Is your spirit already so crushed by abuse that you forget it is your right - or rather, your **moral duty** - to eliminate this system?" -

Leaflet 3

"We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!" - **Leaflet 4**



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Source 4

Sophie Scholl's interrogation by the Gestapo

(Sophie Scholl was one of the leading figures of the White Rose group. She had initially been an enthusiastic member of the League of German Girls, but became disillusioned after her Jewish friends were kicked out of school and teachers who she admired were fired. Her and her brother Hans set up a youth group similar to the Edelweiss Pirates in the days before WWII, landing them in trouble. During the war they established the White Rose, which aimed to encourage German people to bring down the Nazi government, end the persecution of Jewish people, and bring back freedom of speech. She wrote some of the leaflets and helped to distribute them. She was caught throwing leaflets out of the window of the University of Munich in February 1943, and was executed shortly after. She was 22 years old when she was killed. Her memory has inspired many people - lots of German schools are named after her, and her life has been the subject of films, books, plays, and songs)

I attended League of German Girls meetings fairly regularly. However, I will admit with regards to this that the last 2 years that I belonged to the League of German Girls, **I did not do so whole-heartedly**. Initially my antipathy could be traced back to the fact that I found the meetings boring and felt that they were incorrect...

The **reasons** behind my... alienation from the League of German Girls... have as primary basis the fact that my sister Inge, and my brothers Hans and Werner were arrested in the autumn of 1938 by officials of the Secret State Police [Gestapo]... They were kept in custody for several days or weeks. I am still of the opinion even now that the proceedings against us as well as against other children in Ulm were completely unjustified.

...I would like to add as an additional and (in the end) the most important reason for my antipathy to the movement: **I perceive the intellectual freedom** of people to be limited in such a manner as contradicts everything inside of me. In summary, I would like to state that **I personally would like to have nothing to do with National Socialism**.

<https://whiterosehistory.com/1943/02/18/first-interrogation-of-sophie-scholl/>



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Source 5

A Quote from Lillian Garrett-Groag, a playwright who wrote a play about the activities of The White Rose

“It is possibly the most spectacular moment of resistance that I can think of in the 20th Century... The fact that five little kids, in the mouth of the wolf, where it really counted, had the tremendous courage to do what they did, is spectacular to me. I know that the world is better for them having been there, but I don't know why.”

Quoted in *Newsday* (22 February 1993)



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