

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
- English
- Citizenship
- Personal, Social and Health Education

British Council Core Skills

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

NB: Most of the images in the slideshow have entered public domain. Those that have not have their credits beneath.



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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 living under the Nazi regime in the 1930's and 1940's 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

- 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.
- Ask them to underline any words or phrases that they are unsure of and discuss the questions in their small groups.
- 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

- Ask students in their small groups to take it in turns reading aloud the extracts of Sophie Scholl's interrogation and brief biography (source 3, on the worksheet) to the rest of the group. Encourage them to underline key words and phrases that they are unsure about or 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 4*

- 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 and discuss 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?

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Design memorials for Sophie Scholl, or other brave young people from organisations such as The Edelweiss Pirates and The White Rose who lost their lives helping others in times of conflict. Take photographs of your designs and exchange with your partner school.

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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.**

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

* Twain – is an old-fashioned word meaning cut in two parts



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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 in Germany aged 82, was one of the last surviving Edelweiss Pirates, the German teenagers who ran wild in the ruins of the city during the last years of the Second World War.. By 1944 as many as five thousand young people were living 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 had long hair, short shorts and distinctive checked shirts decorated by a small badge or pin in the shape of the edelweiss flower.

Jean Jülich walked 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 treason. In a deserted bomb-disposal bunker, the 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.

Jülich was arrested at the age of 15, held in solitary confinement without trial and tortured for four months.

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

Sophie Scholl's interrogation by the Gestapo

Sophie Scholl was one of the leading figures of the White Rose group. She and her brother Hans set up a youth group similar to the Edelweiss Pirates in the days before WWII.. 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 wholeheartedly**. 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 were completely unjustified.

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



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Source 4

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)



THANKS TO FUNDERS AND PARTNERS:



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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