

Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages

Christian Anti-Semitism: Read the following for several stereotyped images of Jews which you will discover in Nazi Antisemitism: Throughout the Middle Ages, and not only during times of plague, Christians showed hostility toward Jews. Biblical texts blaming the crucifixion on the Jews were used to fan anti-Semitic hatred and violence, particularly the traditional readings from the Gospel of John on Good Friday. In many areas Jews were forced to wear distinctive dress and permitted to live only in certain cities, in a designated section, the ghetto or Judenstrasse (Street of the Jews). Many ghettos became overcrowded because they were not allowed to buy more property, no matter how much the population grew. Ghettos were often locked at night, a confinement that made it easy to rape and kill Jews during riots. So many Jewish women were raped during anti-Jewish riots that Jewish communities had to decide whether the half-Jewish children born as a result were to be considered Jewish or not. This was a factor in deciding that Jewishness was inherited from the mother, not the father. Jews had been specifically invited into countries in Europe to handle interest-bearing loans, which were considered usury, a practice prohibited to Christians by the church's interpretation of Deuteronomy 23: 19-20. Besides being available for banking, many Jews were skilled goldsmiths and jewelry makers who found plenty of appreciative customers. Yet England banished its Jews in 1290, and France in 1306, 1322, and again in 1394. Although they kept returning, Jews were increasingly given the choice of accepting Christianity or banishment. In Spain, massacres in 1391 forced many Jews to accept Christianity, at least in name. After many violent attacks, all Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. Some found a quick exit by sailing with Columbus. Others went to Poland or to Palestine. One of the most common stereotypes of the Jews in the Middle Ages--that of the Jew as devil or as a group of people who consorted with the devil. Go to the following web site for a visual image of this: [the devil \(http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/eng_captions/08-3.html\)](http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/eng_captions/08-3.html) It is important to note that, according to the Nazi objective of dehumanizing the Jew, the devil is a very convenient image of comparison to the Jew. The Jew is portrayed as an inhuman monster who victimizes helpless Germans. In the virulently weekly newspaper, "Der Sturmer," Germans were exposed to many horrible images which associated the Jews with the devil. One image from the newspaper follows. [Sturmer \(http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/sturmer.htm\)](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/sturmer.htm) Then click on the picture with the title "unfruitful." No where is this association of Jew and devil more evident than in a variety of Nazi children's books which were published as a means of warning young Germans of the ever-present Jewish threat. One of the most popular of these books was Der Giftpilz (translated as either the Toadstool or the Poisonous Mushroom) We will discuss this book again when we study Nazi education. One of the stories in the book concludes with the following poem: A devil goes through the land, It's the Jew, well known to us As a murderer of peoples, A race defiler, a child's horror In all lands!

Corrupting our youth stands him in good stead. He wants all people dead. tay away from every Jew, And happiness will come to you! Another example: The Nazis brought the devil of the middle ages right into the homes of the Germans living under Nazi rule. The following example comes from a chapter in the Children's book, The Poisonous Mushroom." (See ahead under several document sections which discuss in more detail this virulently anti-Semitic book) From a Jew's face The wicked Devil speaks to us, The Devil who, in every country, Is known as an evil plague. Would we from the Jew be free, Again be cheerful and happy, Then must youth fight with us To get rid of the Jewish Devil. One of the images which are included in the book is that of a lecherous physician waiting to treat a blond blue eyed Aryan girl. The implication: he will defile the German race by seducing her. Stereotypes of the Jew were combined. Thus we find images, for example in the newspaper, Der Sturmer, which show the Jew using his wealth to seduce Aryan woman. click on the site and then go to the picture entitled "Legion of shame"[Sturmer](#)