**Analysis activity 4.2: The poisonous mushroom**

Read the following extract from *The Poisonous Mushroom* and answer the questions below.

*A mother and her young boy are gathering mushrooms in the German forest. The boy finds some poisonous ones. The mother explains that there are good mushrooms and poisonous ones, and, as they go home, says:*

*‘Look, Franz, human beings in this world are like the mushrooms in the forest. There are good mushrooms and there are good people. There are poisonous, bad mushrooms and there are bad people. And we have to be on our guard against bad people just as we have to be on guard against poisonous mushrooms. Do you understand that?’*

*‘Yes, mother,’ Franz replies. ‘I understand that in dealing with bad people trouble may arise, just as*

*when one eats a poisonous mushroom. One may even die!’*

**Source 4.21** The cover of *The Poisonous Mushroom*

*‘And do you know, too, who these bad men are, these poisonous mushrooms of mankind?’ the mother continued.*

*Franz slaps his chest in pride: ‘Of course I know, mother! They are the Jews! Our teacher has often told us about them.’*

*The mother praises her boy for his intelligence, and goes on to explain the different kinds of ‘poisonous’ Jews: the Jewish pedlar, the Jewish cattle-dealer, the Kosher butcher, the Jewish doctor, the baptised Jew, and so on.*

*‘However they disguise themselves, or however friendly they try to be, affirming a thousand times their good intentions to us, one must not believe them. Jews they are and Jews they remain. For our Volk they are poison.’*

*‘Like the poisonous mushroom!’ says Franz.*

*‘Yes, my child! Just as a single poisonous mushroom can kill a whole family, so a solitary Jew can destroy a whole village, a whole city, even an entire Volk.’*

*Franz has understood.*

*‘Tell me, mother, do all non-Jews know that the Jew is as dangerous as a poisonous mushroom?’*

*Mother shakes her head.*

*‘Unfortunately not, my child. There are millions of non-Jews who do not yet know the Jews. So we have to enlighten people and warn them against the Jews. Our young people, too, must be warned. Our boys and girls must learn to know the Jew. They must learn that the Jew is the most dangerous poison mushroom in existence. Just as poisonous mushrooms spring up everywhere, so the Jew is found in every country in the world. Just as poisonous mushrooms often lead to the most dreadful calamity, so the Jew is the cause of misery and distress, illness and death.’*

The author then concludes this story by pointing out the ‘moral’:

*German youth must learn to recognise the Jewish poison-mushroom. They must learn what a danger the Jew is for the German Volk and for the whole world. They must learn that the Jewish problem involves the destiny of us all.*

*The following tales tell the truth about the Jewish poison-mushroom. They show the many shapes the Jew assumes. They show the depravity and baseness of the Jewish race. They show the Jew for what he really is:*

*The Devil in human form.*

1. How does the author use mushrooms to explain differences between Germans and Jews?

1. List three separate words that portray the Jews in a negative light (for example, ‘poisonous’).

1. How does the story claim that Jews disguise themselves as part of everyday life?

1. What does the story claim is the danger of one Jew?

1. What do non-Jews need to know to protect themselves?

1. Summarise the story in two sentences of your own words for someone who has not read it.

1. In your opinion, is this story a good example of propaganda? Explain your answer using examples from the story.