

Contemporary Antisemitism

Understanding & Identifying Hate

Time: 90 - 120 minutes

Audience: 9-12th grade

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Understand that antisemitism began prior to the Holocaust and continues to the present day.
- Describe the varying forms contemporary antisemitism takes today.
- Explain how antisemitism shows up in the community around them.

Aligned Standards

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1a-b; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1a-b;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Context

This lesson is designed for students that have already been exposed to the [Holocaust](#) and classrooms with strong learning [contracts](#). Although students may find it helpful to understand the history of European antisemitism prior to beginning this lesson, it is not required.

For a list of common terms used within this lesson, go to the glossary at the end of the lesson.

Materials Needed

- [Google Slides](#)
- [Station Activity](#)
- [Station Activity: Student Handout](#)
- [Article: The New Antisemitism & The Three Ds](#)
- [Student Assignment](#)

Lesson/Activity

This lesson has been designed for in-person learning but has modifications for **virtual learning** noted in bold throughout the lesson. Please note, due to the challenging themes of hatred and discrimination that this lesson focuses on, it is recommended that students receive a trigger warning about the challenging nature of the subject, frame the lesson as a continuing conversation, and remind students of their options if they feel they need to take a break.

1. This lesson begins with direct instruction centered around [Google Slides](#), and subsequently, uses those slides to guide the [Station Activity](#), and reading of [Article: The New Antisemitism & The Three Ds](#), finishing in the [Student Assignment](#). Before beginning this lesson, decide how you will be leading the Station Activity and prepare the materials and classroom space accordingly. *Skip to step 5 to read suggested approaches.*

Virtual? This direct instruction could be completed in a flipped-classroom approach, having students interact with a pre-recorded lecture on a platform such as EdPuzzle.

2. **Transition to slide 1.** After opening the slides, begin by telling the students they will be learning about contemporary antisemitism. By the time they come out of the lesson, they will be able to

understand (1) what antisemitism is, (2) the forms it takes today, and (3) its relevance in the world/community around them.

3. **Transition to slide 2.** Ask students the following questions: *What is Antisemitism? And Why is it Antisemitism NOT Anti-Semitism?* Provide the direction that they will have a few minutes to think, write, and discuss with a peer prior to coming back to the full class.

Teaching Tip! Use a well known song to time the think-write-pair share, it will be an audio indicator of the time and students will be able to hear when the song is coming to a close, preparing themselves for a transition with the transition of the music.

As students come back together, compile a list about what students think they know about antisemitism on the board. Ultimately, guide the conversation to establish two main ideas:

- *The term antisemitism is meant to describe the hatred or prejudice against Jews.*

This is how Wilhelm Marr meant it when he coined the term in 1879 in reference to gaining support for his opposition against Jews in Germany. Marr believed Jews belonging to an inferior "Semitic" race; however, Semitic refers to a group of languages spoken (i.e. Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Amharic, etc), not a racial category. If you use a hyphen (Anti-Semitism), you are referring to hatred against people who speak Semitic languages, not the racialized version of antisemitism which shows hatred and prejudice against Jews.

- *There is a long history of hatred and prejudice against Jews.*

It first started with Anti-Judaism, or prejudice against Jews, which dates back to early Christianity. The followers of Jesus, in order to set themselves apart from their own Jewish origins, began to cast surrounding Jews in a negative light. Several passages in the New Testament associate Jews with the killing of Christ; these textual markers became the basis for hateful stereotypes that proliferated and served as a source of violence throughout early and medieval Europe. When the concept of "race" developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, a new form of antisemitism arose in addition to older forms of religious hatred. This new, race-based hatred grouped people together based on their biology, or blood. It erroneously suggested that some groups, including Jews, were biologically inferior to other peoples.

4. **Transition to slide 3.** It is a common misconception that antisemitism began with the Holocaust and only existed during those horrifying years of history. *This is false.*

Antisemitism is very relevant to today, and is a common form of hate that often shows up alongside racism and other forms of oppression, like xenophobia or islamophobia.

Tell the students you will be exploring this further through a short video, called "Antisemitism Today" created by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. While they watch, students should be thinking about antisemitism's relevance today with the prompt: *What are two (2) examples of antisemitism in contemporary or current contexts?*

As the video finishes, give the students time to think, write, share with a peer before sharing out in the whole class setting examples seen. Students might bring up the following examples referenced:

- Antisemitism not being perpetrated by governments as seen in the Holocaust, but now, by individuals,
 - Islamist Extremism targeting Jewish institutions throughout Europe (Belgium and France are the two examples shown),
 - Far-right extremism in Europe and the United States is increasing and no longer being seen on the fringe of society,
 - Antisemitism being used to delegitimize Israel, going beyond political disagreement and critique,
 - And/or Commonly seen in the Middle East, Holocaust Denial being used to deny the mass murder of Jewish people.
5. **Transition to slide 4.** The examples in the video show contemporary antisemitism in action. It is also important to understand the forms contemporary antisemitism takes overall to be better able to identify it.

Students will be engaging in a station activity to do so. They will need access to the [Station Activity](#), [Station Activity: Student Handout](#) to use as a notetaking guide, and their phones to scan the QR codes embedded in the activity.

Teaching Tip! If you have the space to create physical stations for students to move from station to station, it will engage the kinesthetic learners in the room while providing content and processing breaks students may need when handling this sensitive topic.

Before placing students in their stations, explain that they will need 10-15 minutes to complete each station. Each station will prompt them to (1) read the information included as a primer, (2) scan a QR code to dive deeper into the topic, and then, (3) discuss a guiding question. They should be prepared to discuss all four stations when they return to the whole group setting.

Virtual? Instead of having the students “visit” each station solo, break the students up into 4 breakout rooms, assigning each room to 1 station. Give the students 10-15 minutes to review the station. Then, have the students create a brief presentation in 30-45 minutes to present to their peers which teaches the information learned, aligning to their essential question. As they present, make links between the themes and engage in class discussion.

6. **Transition to slide 5.** As you bring students back from the station activity, frame the debrief of the stations with a question: *What is contemporary antisemitism?*

Review each of the four stations by their guiding question (listed below), bringing students back to that overarching question each time and adding to their definition of antisemitism at the start of the class.

<p>Station 1: Holocaust Denial, Distortion & Misuse</p> <p><i>How is Holocaust Denial and Distortion used today to subvert or undermine facts and promote antisemitism?</i></p>	<p>Station 2: Rise in Hate & Decline of Safety</p> <p><i>Why do you think the hate incident statistics seen above and antisemitic incidents like the Unite the Right Rally lead to fear amongst the Jewish American community?</i></p>	<p>Station 3: Celebrity & Online Platforms</p> <p><i>How have Ye's antisemitic social media posts been dangerous in the spread of hate?</i></p>	<p>Station 4: COVID-19 & Conspiracy Theories</p> <p><i>How have conspiracy theories led to an increase in hate and antisemitism?</i></p>
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As you debrief station 2, play the Southern Poverty Law's clip of the Unite the Right Rally embedded in the slides, having students take note of what they hear and/or see, and subsequently prompting them with the question: *how does seeing this change or inform your view on what you learned in station 2?*

Emphasize the use of patterns and phrases, coded messages, fear, and intimidation in the example.

- Transition to Slide 7.** As seen in the examples through the stations, contemporary antisemitism combines many different forms of hate to promote prejudice and discrimination against Jews. It attacks Jews based on race, religion, culture, and symbol. Israel encompasses all four of those categories of attack.

The Israeli nation is an important state for all Jews and holds spiritual, cultural, and political significance to Jews worldwide (Naftalin-Kelman & Katz, 2021). And like any other state (or nation), Israel receives critique. However, some critiques go well beyond the boundary of criticism and into antisemitism. *How can you tell the difference between critique and antisemitism when speaking about Israel?*

Invite your students to answer this question by reading an article from our partners at Echoes & Reflections, [Article: The New Antisemitism & The Three Ds](#).

As you debrief, make sure to emphasize the main idea (see box below).

<p><i>Demonization:</i> When Israel and its government are made to seem entirely evil. Equating it/them with demonic figures, making comparisons to Nazis, or completely scapegoating the nation into the sole cause of all</p>	<p><i>Double Standards:</i> When critique of Israel is applied selectively and unfairly so only Israel is singled out when looking at immoral behaviors. When the United Nations studies human rights abuses in Israel without looking at China or other members</p>	<p><i>Delegitimization:</i> When Israel's right to exist is fundamentally questioned or denied. Very few other nations have such far reaching dissent even though others were founded on lands that many folks were living. The United States, for example, is not</p>
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issues in the Middle East, is considered demonization.

within is a double standard.

delegitimized when looking at its founding.

8. **Transition to slide 8.** With the students understanding what contemporary antisemitism is and the 5 main forms it is seen within the world around them, tell the students that you are going to ask them to apply everything they learned before being asked to do so in the student assignment.

Play the video [Deconstructing Antisemitic Memes](#) from our partners at Facing History and Ourselves. After watching ask the students to reflect on the following three questions:

- *How is contemporary antisemitism reflected in the memes?*
- *What is the harm in the messages these memes promote?*

After engaging in a debrief discussion with your students, invite students to explore contemporary antisemitism in the world around them further by completing the student assignment.

9. **Transition to slide 9.** The [Student Assignment](#) asks students to use the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) H.E.A.T. Map to understand incidents of hate in the state around them, crafting a paragraph response with a claim, evidence, and reasoning to the following question: *How does your chosen incident align with the contemporary forms of antisemitism seen in the lesson?*

Teaching Tip! Use this assignment as a jumping off point for the next lesson or a discussion board to continue the conversation and deepen understanding about contemporary antisemitism's relevance today.

Next Steps? History comes alive through primary sources like those seen in this lesson. To learn about incorporating archival materials into your curriculum or bringing a survivor of genocide to your classroom through our [Speaker's Bureau Program](#), contact the JFCS Holocaust Center (holocaustcenter@ifcs.org).

Since the terrorist attack by Hamas into Israel on October 7, 2023 and the subsequent Israel - Hamas War, the world has seen a sharp rise in contemporary antisemitism like the ones covered in this lesson alongside other forms of hate. Go to [this list of resources on addressing the Israel-Hamas War](#) to gain additional tools in addressing it in your classroom, including a visual on identifying and confronting antisemitism.

Additionally, our colleagues at Facing History and Ourselves developed [Standing Up to Hatred and Intolerance](#) to help teachers feel confident in addressing today's global challenges focused on current events including the refugee crisis and contemporary antisemitism. We recommend utilizing their resources to dive into topics like this further.

Supplemental Resources

- To enhance this lesson with oral testimony about contemporary antisemitism, visit our colleagues at the USC Shoah Foundation's Institute for Visual History and Education. Their [Countering Antisemitism Through Testimony Program](#) has compiled 67 testimonies to address contemporary experiences of antisemitism from witnesses of violent events, to victims of antisemitism, and even those whose beliefs and attitudes related to antisemitism have evolved over time, examining this form of hatred from a variety of perspectives.
- To learn more about the "[Ancient Roots of Anti-Judaism](#)" go to Facing History and Ourselves for a quick 11 minute primer video. Facing History also has other Antisemitism-based lesson plans that span centuries to get to contemporary Antisemitism focused on in the lesson.
- To access lesson plans about the [History of European Antisemitism](#) or [Jewish Americans](#), visit our colleagues at the Institute of Curriculum Services (ICS).

Glossary

Antisemitism: Beginning in ancient times and continuing to the present day, this is the name for the hatred or prejudice against Jewish people as a group for being Jewish.

Hamas: Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist terrorist organization based in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Holocaust Denial: A contemporary form of antisemitism with the distinct goal of getting people to believe the Holocaust did not happen. It is directly going against evidence to create new and untrue facts.

Holocaust Distortion: Seen in many forms, this contemporary form of antisemitism tries to get people to excuse or minimize the Holocaust and its relevance today. This is often seen through the gross minimization of the number of victims of the Holocaust, removal of context from statistical values or other forms of evidence, and **Misuse** of Holocaust related imagery.

Eugenics: A discredited pseudoscientific study or practice of improving the human race through selective reproduction of desirable traits that were used as justification to racially oppress different groups throughout the 20th century.

Misuse: A form of **Holocaust Distortion** in which one uses widely recognized imagery of symbols, physical objects, or places of the Holocaust to attack Jews or Jewish institutions and/or symbolize evil to advance a political agenda or compare to minor offense(s).

Palestinian Islamic Jihad: A radical Islamist terrorist organization with the goal of violent destruction of the state of Israel, and like Hamas it frequently attacks Israeli civilians in pursuit of that goal.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP): is a Syria-based terrorist group focused on destroying Israel and removing Western influences from the Middle East.

Race: A social construct society uses to place individuals into categories based on physical characteristics.

Racism: The hatred or prejudice against a person based on their race.

Social Media: Online platforms used to create, share, and/or exchange information in networks, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Discord, Snapchat.

White Nationalism: A form of white supremacy that defines nation-states using white racial identity and promotes the interests of whites at the expense of others.

Xenophobia: The strong prejudice, dislike, and sometimes fear, of people from other countries, usually applied to immigrants and nativist policies.

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Antisemitic flyers found on Pacific Avenue in the Pacific Heights neighborhood in San Francisco, CA, January 24, 2022. Courtesy of Liz Kruetz via ABC News.

Antisemitism today [Video]. April 6, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3FYR8lmXz4> Copyright United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Bias Motivations. Hate Crime Statistics, 2020. Copyright of Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Deconstructing Antisemitic Memes [Video].

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Holocaust denial, Explained [Video]. October 19, 2016. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Jewish Population of Europe in 1933: Population Data by Country. Copyright of US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Man in “Camp Auschwitz” Sweatshirt at the Capitol Insurrection. Washington, D.C. January 6, 2021. Courtesy of NBC News.

The New Antisemitism and the Three Ds. 2020. Copyright of Echoes & Reflections.

Site Teens wouldn’t want to live without 2021. The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens, 2021. Copyright of Common Sense.

The symbol used to define the Rise Above Movement (or RAM), January 22, 2018. Courtesy of Anti-Defamation League.

Twitter Post from Politican Patrick Little. New York, NY. August 7, 2018. Courtesy of Anti-Defamation League.

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