



LESSON PLAN: Examples of Antisemitism Today

- 1** Display the statement below and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Have students share their thoughts on the power of words (e.g., words can influence people; inspire positive change, have harmful consequences) and give examples of when words have been used with both positive and negative results. “Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity.” —Yehuda Berg, author
- 2** In addition to words, encourage students to consider how images that we see around us (e.g., magazine covers, posters, advertisements) can influence our perceptions and opinions. Have students share examples of images that they have seen across a variety of outlets (including social media) that they believe are either positive or negative.
- 3** Have students consider whether in a world where words and images can be conveyed to a large number of people easily and quickly through various media and social networks, if there is a greater responsibility than was needed in the past for people to be cautious with the messages and images they promote.
- 4** Before moving on to manifestations of contemporary antisemitism, remind students of the antisemitic words and images they studied when learning about propaganda used in Nazi Germany and how it affected the people who saw it (e.g., Esther Clifford’s memories of seeing antisemitic posters on her way to school shared in Antisemitism unit).
- 5** Explain to students that in this lesson they will look at how antisemitism manifests itself today and in order to understand the words and images they will study, they need to understand the primary ways that antisemitism is expressed. Display and review the **Types of Antisemitism** handout.
- 6** Explain to students that one of the complexities of contemporary antisemitism is that there is often a conflation of ideas centered around the denial and distortion of the Holocaust and opposition to Israel—sometimes its policies and sometimes its right to exist at all. Ask students to share what they know about Israel and what have been their sources of information. As a framework to help understand this issue, review and distribute the **When Does Criticism of Israel Become Antisemitism** handout with students.
- 7** Distribute the **A Brief History of Israel** handout and review together. Explain that this information will provide the necessary background information about the history and development of Israel and the context to understand some of the examples of contemporary antisemitism they will be asked to analyze.
- 8** Print and distribute the **Antisemitic Words and Images: Past and Present** handout. Review the directions at the top of the handout with the class. In small groups, have students read the statements and study the images and then answer the questions that follow.

9 Remind students that examples of antisemitism can be found in the news today and that individuals in the United States and around the world are feeling its impact. Before sharing and discussing the examples below, ask students to consider whether antisemitism is an issue that affects Jewish people only or if it is a broader matter that should concern everyone.

10 Distribute the **Examples of Contemporary Antisemitism** handout to students. Read the first example and then follow with the videos and discussion questions below.

- Watch the video “Countering Anti-Semitism in Denmark” by USC Shoah Foundation (sfi.usc.edu/video/countering-anti-semitism-denmark)
- Have students share both their reactions to the video as well as any questions they have about what they just watched.
- Watch the video from the BBC News of Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt reacting to the 2015 attacks in Copenhagen. (bbc.com/news/world-europe-31485644)
- What message does it send the world when Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the leader of Denmark, makes a statement to the international press about a crime in her country?
- What do you think Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt meant when she said, “Collectively and united we will remain who we are”?
- In the “Countering Anti-Semitism in Denmark” video, describe the range of responses that Mette Bentow and her daughter Hannah received after the shooting at the synagogue.
- How does Niddal El Jabri, leader of the Copenhagen Peace Ring, react to the shooting and what does he do in response? Do you agree with his message of optimism, that things can be made better? Why or why not?

11 Read the second example and have students look closely at the photos. Follow with a discussion using the questions below.

- What specific words and images in this example cross the line between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism?
- In what ways does this example meet the definition of the “new antisemitism”?
- Who is hurt by such a display of hateful messages and images?

12 Read the third example and conduct a discussion using the questions below.

- What is a “hate crime”? Do you think that “hate crimes” should carry stiffer sentences than other crimes? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, why do you think that the judge made a statement to Miller during the sentencing hearing and what was he trying to say?
- How was Judge Ryan’s statement similar to what Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt said

after her country faced violent antisemitic acts?

13 To close this part of the lesson, circle back to the question posed earlier and have students consider whether they think antisemitism is an issue that affects Jewish people only or if it is a broader matter that concerns everyone. Encourage them to support their position with examples from the material they have just studied.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 60-90 MINUTES