



LESSON 1: The Enduring Problem of Antisemitism

Once I thought that antisemitism had ended; today it is clear to me that it will probably never end.

–ELI WIESEL, HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 160 – 170 MINUTES

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, learners are provided an opportunity to understand that antisemitism did not end after the Holocaust. Students define and identify examples of antisemitism using their own experiences as well as official sources. Through readings, videos, and an analysis of primary source material, they identify the connecting themes of antisemitism and discover the ways in which age-old, pernicious beliefs about Jews have persisted into the modern era and morphed into contemporary expressions of anti-Jewish hatred.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What is antisemitism and how has this form of hatred endured into the contemporary era?

OBJECTIVES

Students will -

- Define and identify examples of antisemitism.
- Analyze historical and contemporary instances of antisemitism in order to understand how antisemitism has morphed in the modern era.
- Demonstrate the scope and scale of antisemitism in today's world.
- Construct an evidence-based argument regarding the enduring nature of antisemitism.

PROCEDURES

PART 1: What is antisemitism and how is it a form of hate?

Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 50 MINUTES

- 1** Help students develop a framework for learning about contemporary antisemitism by defining the term. Have students turn and talk to a partner about what the term antisemitism means to them. Distribute or display the handout, **Antisemitism**, and discuss together, noting similarities to or differences from students' personal definitions.
- 2** Post the quote at the top of this lesson from scholar and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel: "Once I thought that antisemitism had ended; today it is clear to me that it will probably never end." Ask students to react to the quote. Highlight that antisemitism has existed for millennia and is still prevalent today, which is why it is referred to as the "longest hatred." Explain that we use the term contemporary antisemitism to describe this form of hatred in today's world, and that it both reflects old hatreds and expresses itself in new and problematic forms. Invite students to share examples of antisemitism that they are aware of in their own communities or on a national or international level. If students have ever encountered words or actions that they would describe as antisemitic, have them explain what happened and how they and/or others responded.

3 Tell students that during this lesson, they will investigate the ways in which antisemitism manifests in the world today. Individually or in pairs, assign students to read the **Introduction to Contemporary Antisemitism** handout, highlighting key ideas and noting any questions that come up for them. When they are done, gather the class to answer students' questions and clarify concepts as needed.

4 Show students the short video, **Antisemitism after the Holocaust**, in which Professor Alvin Rosenfeld of Indiana University discusses the persistence of antisemitism. Then, after introducing students to **Erica Van Adelsberg (bio)** and **Anneliese Nossbaum (bio)**, watch their testimonies.

Discuss some of the following questions with students:

- Why did many think antisemitism would fade away after the Holocaust? Why do you think it has endured?
- What illustration of contemporary antisemitism does Anneliese provide? What other examples are you aware of in your own communities that show the destructive impact of antisemitism?
- Alvin points to the need to better understand the “sources and agents” of contemporary antisemitism. What can we do to better understand where this form of hate is coming from and why?
- Erica says that we must “come to a feeling that there is something more for us to do.” Have you experienced this feeling in response to antisemitism or other forms of hate? What does it compel you to do?

PART 2: How has antisemitism been expressed over time?

Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 50 - 60 MINUTES

5 Show students the brief video, **The Nature of Antisemitism**, in which Professor Peter Hayes of Northwestern University discusses whether antisemitism has unique characteristics that distinguish it from other prejudices. Discuss the following:

- What are the historic roots of antisemitism?
- How is antisemitism like a superstition?
- According to Professor Hayes, what makes antisemitism distinct from other forms of hate?
- What does Hayes mean when he says that antisemitism keeps “morphing and shapeshifting”? Can you think of an example of how antisemitism has morphed in today's world?

6 Distribute the handout, **The Through Lines of Antisemitism**, and review with students. Explain that they will take notes as they investigate sources exploring the common or connecting themes of antisemitism in different places and time periods. Divide the class into small groups and give each a sheet of chart paper and markers. Have groups replicate the chart from the handout on the large paper.

- Part 1 – Historical Survey: Assign small groups to each review at least one of the five sources in the handout, **Expressions of Antisemitism Over Time**, which track some of the ways antisemitism has manifested over the past century. Have them add notes to their chart as they review.
- Part 2 – Contemporary Examples: Assign small groups to review at least one statement and one visual from the **Antisemitic Words and Images** handout, which focuses on modern-day examples of antisemitism. Have them add notes to their chart, paying attention to the ways in which the contemporary manifestations are similar to and distinct from the historical case studies.

7 When groups have completed their review, have them post their charts so that their notes are visible to the whole class. Ask for volunteers to share back or highlight significant facts or ideas from the sources. Discuss some of the following questions:

- What stereotypes and prejudices about Jewish people have endured over time?
- Are you surprised these prejudices and stereotypes still exist? Why?
- What similarities and differences did you notice between earlier and more recent examples of antisemitism?
- What do you think are some of the characteristic features of contemporary antisemitism?

PART 3: What is the scope and scale of antisemitism in today’s world?

Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 60 MINUTES

8 Tell students that they will next investigate the scope and scale of antisemitism in the modern world. Ask for students to define these terms. (Scope is the extent or range of something; scale is the size of something.)

9 Explain to students that they will consult one to two sources and create a graph or graphic representation depicting one facet of antisemitism in the United States or globally, such as:

- A comparison of attitudes toward Jews across several countries
- The number of hate crimes in the U.S. motivated by bias against different religions
- A comparison of hate crimes in the U.S. across different categories (e.g., race gender, religion)
- Knowledge of and attitudes about the Holocaust
- Types of antisemitic incidents in the U.S.

10 Divide the class into small groups and distribute the handout, **The Scope and Scale of Antisemitism**. Depending on the needs of learners, you may assign each group a specific source to review or allow them to select. Provide students access to laptops or tablets in order to view sources.

11 When students have completed their graphs or graphic representations, have them post their work around the room and take a silent gallery walk. Post the questions below for students to reflect on while walking. Discuss them as a class following the gallery walk.

- What specific facts are striking to you about the scope and scale of antisemitism?
- Why do you believe antisemitism continues to grow so many decades after the Holocaust?

12 As a summative assessment for this lesson, have students develop a one-minute news segment that addresses the essential question, focusing particularly on the ways in which antisemitism has taken shape in the modern era. Students should use relevant evidence from the sources in this lesson and communicate specific themes and contexts related to contemporary antisemitism. Have them give the segment a title that reflects their understanding of the ideas explored in this lesson. Have students deliver the segments to the class as time allows and collect their work in order to check for comprehension of lesson concepts.