



CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

“Rising antisemitism is rarely the lone or the last expression of intolerance in a society.”

–SAMANTHA POWER, ACADEMIC, AUTHOR, AND DIPLOMAT

PREPARING TO TEACH THIS UNIT

Below is information to keep in mind when using this lesson. This material is intended to help teachers consider the complexities of teaching contemporary antisemitism and to deliver accurate and sensitive instruction.

- This unit is comprised of three lessons, each divided into two to three parts. Though the lessons build sequentially, it is possible to use select parts or exercises that fit each educator’s instructional needs and time constraints. Within each part of the lesson, teachers are also advised to choose the number and types of sources and tasks that are most appropriate for their students.
- The lessons are designed using an inquiry format, with an essential question posed at the beginning and supporting questions offered in each section to frame student thinking. As students work through each part, they consult relevant sources, complete formative performance tasks, and then a summative assessment that asks them to construct a response to the essential question using evidence to support their claims and viewpoints.
- When teaching about contemporary antisemitism, it is essential to introduce students to the historical context behind this ‘longest hatred.’ Historical Antisemitism, Unit II, is a necessary prerequisite because it provides important context to understanding the long history of antisemitism and its classic tropes and delves into related concepts of propaganda, stereotypes, and scapegoating.
- When discussing stereotypes with students, there is always the risk of introducing them to generalizations that they did not know before. Special care should be taken to reinforce the idea that while stereotypes and myths are easy to believe that does not make them true. It is also important to create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions about the origins of specific stereotypes and why certain stereotypes continue to be believed. When discussing these issues with students, be cautious of the effect this discussion might have on them.
- This unit introduces students to these topics and their relationship to antisemitism and other forms of prejudice. These themes—though important to unpack—can be frightening and confusing for students, and should be presented and contextualized in developmentally appropriate ways.

- It is possible that students may witness an antisemitic incident in their own communities or schools, read or hear about an incident in the news or on social media, or may even be a victim of antisemitism themselves, but may not understand the source or impact of the act—they may even think that such words or actions are “no big deal.” This material provides teachers and their students with an opportunity to explore the complex phenomenon of contemporary antisemitism as well as options to respond and take action to prevent it as they consider the importance of doing so.
- While this unit is specific to contemporary antisemitism, the material provides a springboard for discussion about prejudice and bias against other groups and the harm to individuals and society when such attitudes go unchecked. Students should be encouraged to discuss the role and responsibility of individuals to recognize and interrupt bias no matter what group is being targeted.
- In advance of discussing the topics covered in this unit, teachers should think about whether they have any students in their class who are Jewish. Some students might feel relieved to discuss a topic that is relevant to their lives while others might feel awkward or embarrassed. This does not mean that teachers should not discuss the topic; however, be careful not to point out who is Jewish or put specific students on the spot to speak for Jewish people or about antisemitism. Consider talking with the students or their families in advance.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The lessons in this unit increase students’ awareness that antisemitism did not end after the Holocaust and provide them with opportunities to learn about the persistence of antisemitism in its contemporary forms. Students investigate the ways in which old ideas about Jews and Judaism have given rise to new expressions of antisemitism and consider the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression. In addition, students are introduced to individuals who refuse to be bystanders to bigotry as they explore the responsibility of all members of society to respond to and prevent antisemitism and all forms of hate.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is antisemitism and how has this form of hatred endured into the contemporary era?
- How has antisemitism morphed in the contemporary era?
- What can we do to make a difference in the face of antisemitism and other forms of hate?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define and identify examples of historical and contemporary 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.
- Describe how classic forms of antisemitism have influenced and find expression in the new antisemitism.

- Explain how antisemitism may sometimes be related to white nationalism.
- Identify the features of the “new antisemitism,” including Holocaust denial and distortion and demonization of Israel.
- Reflect on the skills and dispositions needed to respond effectively to antisemitism and other forms of bias.
- Identify specific actions that they can take in their daily lives to combat hate.
- Communicate their ideas about how different forms of prejudice are interconnected.
- Construct evidence-based arguments on the features of contemporary antisemitism.

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

The following materials are provided to support classroom instruction:

1. **Learn and Confirm Chart**—Similar to a KWL chart, a tool to help students track ongoing learning throughout the unit
2. **Evidence Based Writing Rubric**—Guidelines that can be adapted and used for assessing student writing assignments
3. **Additional Resources**—Further reading and sources of information for educator