

LESSON PLAN

Myth: Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic

How does the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic fuel antisemitic attitudes and behaviors?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-1	2-6	50-60 minutes	Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language.
7-8	9-12		

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this series of lessons, students will examine seven of the most common antisemitic myths. For each myth, students will use ADL's *Antisemitism Uncovered* resource to examine its history and historical context. Students will analyze historical and contemporary examples of each myth to understand its impact of antisemitism on the Jewish community and society at large. This lesson will examine the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the definitions of antisemitism, myth and trope and their connection.
- Students will examine the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic.
- Students will analyze the impact of contemporary and historical examples of the antisemitic myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic.
- Students will recognize the connection between antisemitism and other forms of hate, bias and oppression.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- [Definitions: Antisemitism, Myth and Stereotype Handout](#) (one copy for each student)*
- [Antisemitism Uncovered Video: Myth that Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic](#)
- [Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic Handout](#) (one copy for each student)

**This handout is only required if the class will be using Information Sharing: What is Antisemitism, Myth and Stereotype?*

PROCEDURES

[This lesson is part of a unit exploring the different antisemitic myths that repeatedly show up in society. Begin with this introductory section if this is students' first lesson of the series; if students have already experienced this section during another lesson of this series, skip to the next section "Reflect on Prior Learning".]



Web Related Connections

LESSON PLANS

[Historical Antisemitism](#)

[Contemporary Antisemitism](#)

[Pyramid of Hate Minilesson](#)

[Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols](#)

[One-Day Lesson Plan: Responding to an Antisemitic Incident](#)

[Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist](#)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

[Antisemitism: What do Educators Need to Know](#)

[Online Courses](#)

STUDENT LEARNING

[Introduction to Contemporary Antisemitism](#)

[Student Digital Activities](#)

Other Resources:

[Antisemitic Attitudes in America in 2024](#)

[Video Toolbox: Antisemitism](#)

[Antisemitism in the Classroom](#)

[9 Ways for Teaching Jewish American Heritage Month](#)

[Conversations that Matter: Understanding and Discussing Antisemitism with Young People](#)

Information Sharing: What is Antisemitism, Myth and Stereotype? (20 minutes)

1. Inform the students that today's discussion will be about antisemitism and how myths and stereotypes about Jewish people fuel this form of bias and oppression. To activate students' thinking, ask:
 - Why do people share false information?
 - Where do stereotypes and myths come from?
2. Distribute the [handout with the definitions of antisemitism, myth and stereotype](#).
3. Instruct students to read the definitions and to annotate them by marking significant words or phrases in the definition by underlining, circling, or a dot; and to use a question mark for any part of the definition they're unsure about.
4. Discuss the definition with students. Invite students to share out the parts of the definition they marked and elaborate on their meaning and to ask questions about the definition. Ask students to consider what aspects of the definition they find most useful or clarifying and which parts of the definition they find challenging or confusing.

[Teacher should model writing out these notes/questions/etc. around the definition.]

5. Display the following statement and ask the students to analyze it:

Antisemitism relies on applying simple, false explanations to complex social problems. These explanations are often myths and stereotypes about the Jewish people fueled by false or warped interpretations of Jewish identity, culture, religion, and history. In nearly every generation, centuries-old antisemitic stereotypes and myths are recycled.

6. Instruct the students to answer the following:
 - What do you know about Jewish people and Jewish identity? Where does most of your information about and exposure to Jewish people/Jewish identity come from?
 - Why do false stereotypes persist from generation to generation?

[Note: It is important to note that students don't need to offer a "right" answer. This question is meant to activate and prime the discovery aspect of this learning experience]

[Begin with this section if this is not students' first lesson of the "Antisemitism Uncovered" Series.]

Information Sharing: Reflect on Prior Learning (10 minutes)

1. Invite students to share what they remember from their prior lessons about antisemitic myths.

Video Viewing (15 minutes)

1. Inform the students that they are now going to watch a [short video](#) from ADL's Antisemitism Uncovered series about the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic. They will be asked to discuss the following questions:
 - What surprised you about this myth?
 - In your opinion, what is the impact of this myth?
 - Where do you see this myth being played out today?

[Sample Script: As antisemitism in the present draws inspiration from ideas of the past, exploring the historical origins of these antisemitic myths is the first step toward understanding and addressing antisemitism. In this video, part of a series produced by the ADL called Antisemitism Uncovered, we will examine the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic. After the video is over, partner with someone next to you to discuss what we watched. While you are watching, please write down your answer to the first question: What are your thoughts and feelings while you watch this video?]

2. Turn and Talk: Have students pair up with another student near them and invite them to discuss the reflection questions above.
3. Bring the students back together and debrief the reflection questions as a group.

Reading Activity (20 minutes)

1. Break students into small groups and pass out the **“Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic” Handout**.
2. Instruct students to read the handout about the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic and the three sections: Know It, See It and Address It. Students should discuss the reflection questions in each section:
 - **Know it**
 - Why do you think the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic has been repeatedly used by groups in different time periods and parts of the world?
 - When is criticism of Israel legitimate? When does it become antisemitic?
 - **See it**
 - How does the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic manifest in these examples?
 - What is the impact of these examples on the Jewish community and society at large?
 - Which expressions of this myth are the most mundane or least likely to get noticed? Which are the most extreme or violent?
 - **Address it**
 - How does this myth contribute to antisemitic attitudes today?
 - What information helps you reject this myth?
 - Why is it important to name and understand the distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitic criticism of Israel?
3. Bring the students back together and debrief with the following reflection questions as a group.
 - Why do you think Jewish people are repeatedly misrepresented or distorted in society, now and in the past?
 - Why do you think this idea has persisted from generation to generation?
 - What lesson are you taking away from this learning experience?

Closing (5 minutes)

Have students consider what they learned over the course of this lesson on anti-Zionism, reflecting on the impact of this myth and how it connects to antisemitism. Ask each student to identify and share aloud one thing that they learned today because of the lesson. [This activity can be used via digital tool such as [Google Jamboard](#) or [Mentimeter](#)]

🔗 **Additional Reading and Resources**

- [10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)
- [Questions, Complexities and Context: Insights into Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)
- [What is... Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, Anti-Israel Bias](#)
- [Case Studies of Antisemitism Related to Israel](#)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
<p>Reading</p> <p>R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p> <p>R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</p> <p>R3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</p> <p>R7: Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).</p>
<p>Writing</p> <p>W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</p> <p>W8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.</p> <p>W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p>
<p>Speaking and Listening</p> <p>SL1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on grade 6-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p> <p>SL2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.</p> <p>SL4: Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.</p>
<p>Language</p> <p>L3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.</p> <p>L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6-12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>L6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p>

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
<p>Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.</p>
<p>Self-Management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.</p>
<p>Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.</p>

Definitions of Antisemitism, Myth and Stereotype

Antisemitism

The marginalization and/or oppression of people who are Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel.

Myth

An unfounded or false notion that becomes a popular belief or tradition in society.

Stereotype

An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences.

Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel is Never Antisemitic

Know It

Criticism of Israel is not in and of itself antisemitic. But much of contemporary anti-Zionism, or the delegitimization of Israel and its supporters, draws on and perpetuates antisemitic tropes.

Some background: Zionism – the movement for Jewish self-determination and statehood, reflects the millennial longing of Jews to return to their ancestral homeland in the land of Israel. Zion is a biblical term used interchangeably with Jerusalem. This longing to “return to Zion” has been a tenet of Jewish tradition since the Romans destroyed the Jewish Second Temple in 70 CE and dispossessed the Jews of their sovereignty over the region. Modern Zionism emerged in the 19th century in response to a long history of anti-Jewish animus across Europe, including periods of anti-Jewish violence and intense persecution. While there had always been a Jewish presence in the land of Israel, by the time of the First Zionist Congress in 1897, Jews had already been returning to the then-Ottoman-ruled territory of Palestine to escape resurgences of anti-Jewish conditions in Europe and to fulfill the enduring dream of homecoming.

Zionism is a big tent movement that includes progressive Jews, conservative Jews, apolitical Jews and non-Jews who believe in and support the right of the State of Israel to exist as a Jewish homeland. There are Zionists who are critical of Israeli policies, just as there are Zionists who rarely voice disagreement with the Israeli government. There are diverse views among Zionists about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and about how to promote peace or support for a two-state solution. But the bottom line is that the vast majority of Jews around the world feel a connection or kinship with Israel, whether or not they explicitly identify as Zionists, or whatever their position on specific Israeli government policies, and believe in Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state.

Anti-Zionism downplays the history of Jewish nationhood and its connection to the land of Israel, the importance of the land of Israel to Jews throughout history and the aspirations that never disappeared from Jewish ritual, culture, thought and belief since the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. More than anything, anti-Zionism and extreme criticism of Israel frequently demonizes the State of Israel as uniquely evil among all the nations of the world. Anti-Zionist activists frequently deny Israel’s right to protect itself from populations that have actively sought its physical destruction, magnify every mistake and wrongful act possibly associated with the country and strip these of all context. In current forms, we often see such assertions in present-day Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns, whereby Zionism and the existence of the Jewish state are all too often accused of being akin to other forms of hate such as racism or sexism. Often these critiques project the historical sins and stereotypes once held against Jews onto the Jewish state or “Zionists.”

Consciously or not, among today’s anti-Zionist leaders, and those who engage in harsh delegitimization of Israel, are individuals who often use age-old anti-Jewish rhetoric and false stereotypes in their charges against Zionism and Israel; for example, invoking dual loyalty, conspiracies of Jewish/Zionist power over a country’s policies and using classical antisemitic imagery to characterize Israelis, among others. Some anti-Israel activists blame the Jewish community collectively for alleged Israeli policies, which is also antisemitic.

Anti-Zionist activists frequently denounce the Jewish sovereignty anywhere in the Land of Israel, even the idea of Israel existing side-by-side with an independent Palestinian state. Often anti-Zionists do not scrutinize other nations or movements for nationhood to the same degree. Israel is regarded simply as an illegitimate state, founded on a lie. In recent years, many anti-Zionist activists have even sought to normalize the exclusion of Jews en-masse from social justice and political movements unrelated to Israel unless they proactively denounce Israeli policies and/or Zionism.

Reflection

1. What information about this antisemitic myth surprised you?
2. Why do you think the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic has been repeatedly used by different groups in different time periods and parts of the world?
3. After watching and reading about it, what do you think is the impact of this myth?

See It

<p>In December 2018, U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene shared a video on her Facebook page with a British antisemite explaining that “Zionist supremacists have schemed to promote immigration and miscegenation.”</p>	<p>In November 2019, when the University of Toronto’s Graduate Student Union refused to support a Hillel campaign to make kosher food available on campus, the GSU’s spokesman refused, saying they could not cooperate with Hillel given its “pro-Israel” activities, thus conflating Jewish students’ religious needs with the policies of the Israeli government.</p>
<p>In 2021, Jewish people dining at a restaurant in Los Angeles were targeted by a group of pro-Palestinian men driving past in vehicles. The men started screaming “death to Jews,” “Israel kills children,” and “free Palestine.” After asking the patrons if anyone was Jewish, a brawl erupted when two diners said they were Jewish.</p>	<p>“For decades now, Americans have allowed the Jews to drag them into one war after another, all of which were fought with Israel’s interests in mind. The Israelis and their Jewish supporters are eager to hold America’s coat while we beat up Israel’s enemies.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">— E. Michael Jones Conservative Catholic antisemitic ideologue August 2022 UNZ Review Article</p>
<div data-bbox="305 1453 703 1753" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>On October 3, 2022 Ayatollah Khamenei posted the above on Twitter.</p> <p>Image Credit: ADL Staff</p>	<div data-bbox="857 1453 1161 1864" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>On June 28, 2021, former US Congresswoman and conspiracy theorist Cynthia MicKinney posted the above on X.</p> <p>Image Credit: ADL Staff</p>

Reflection

1. How does the myth that anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel is never antisemitic manifest in these examples?
2. What is the impact of these examples on the Jewish community and society at large?
3. Choose one example. Who is the target audience for the example? Why?

Address It

It is possible to have legitimate criticisms of Israel, or of any state or government, without subscribing to an ideology that demonizes or threatens the state's existence and vilifies its supporters. One can promote Palestinian rights and nationhood without denying that same right to Israel – a consistent Jewish refuge from antisemitism – or denigrating Zionism, the historically-rooted right to Jewish self-determination in their ancestral homeland Israel. Regardless of perspective on Israel, Jews are entitled to live free from antisemitism.

It's important to look at the motives and intents of people criticizing Israel. Do they believe in the right of the Jewish people – like all people – to self-determination? Do they recognize the nearly 4,000-year connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel? Do they accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel – or are they amenable to its destruction? Do they make fact-based arguments to criticize specific policies or instead demonize the entire country, its citizens, and its supporters? Ask yourself these questions the next time you see a poster on a college campus or receive an invitation to protest or read an opinion piece.

Israeli policies and leadership may be criticized just as in the case of any other country. However, when that ostensible “criticism” opposes the existence of the Jewish state, negates the legitimacy of Zionism, and ostracizes Zionists, holds all Jews or Judaism responsible for Israel's perceived actions or uses age-old anti-Jewish conspiracies and stereotypes, it is antisemitism.

Reflection

1. How does this myth contribute to antisemitic attitudes today?
2. What information helps you reject this myth?