

LESSON PLAN

Myth: Jews are Greedy

Compelling Question: How does the myth that Jews are greedy 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 the Jewish People are greedy or fixated on wealth.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the definitions of antisemitism, myth and trope and their connection.
- Students will examine the myth that the Jewish people greedy or fixated on wealth.
- Students will analyze the impact of contemporary and historical examples of the antisemitic myth that Jews are greedy.
- 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 of Greed](#)
- [Myth: Jews are Greedy Handout](#) (ADL)

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

PROCEDURE

[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 of greed. 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 the Jewish people are greedy or fixated on wealth. 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: Jews are Greedy” Handout**.
2. Instruct students to read the handout about the Myth of Greed 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 Jews are greedy has been repeatedly used by different groups in different time periods and parts of the world?
 - **See it**
 - How does the myth that Jews are greedy manifest in these examples?
 - Which expressions of this myth are the most mundane or least likely to get noticed? Which are the most extreme or violent?
 - What are some common pop culture references that draw on the myth that all Jews are greedy? Consider movies and young adult fiction.
 - What is the impact of these examples on the Jewish community and society at large?
 - **Address it**
 - How does this myth contribute to antisemitic attitudes today?
 - What information helps you reject this myth?
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?
 - How does understanding antisemitic myths help to combat other forms of hate and bias?
4. [Optional] Instruct students to complete a journal entry reflecting on their observations and experiences to turn in during the next class.

Closing (5 minutes)



Have students consider what they learned over the course of the lesson on the myth of greed, 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



- [Jewish “Control” of the Federal Reserve: A Classic Antisemitic Myth](#)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
<p>Reading</p> <p>R1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. R2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. R3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes). R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings. R7: Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.</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. W8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources. 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. 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. 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. 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 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: Jews are Greedy

Know It

One of the most prominent and persistent stereotypes about Jews is that they are greedy, seeking to enrich themselves by any means. They are seen both as relentless in the pursuit of wealth and as stingy and fixated on maintaining it. The stereotype of Jewish greed grew to prominence in the Middle Ages when Jews were frequently associated with money. In medieval Europe, Jewish people typically had restrictions placed on their economic activity and were sometimes prohibited from owning land. For many Jews, the only option available to earn a living in such circumstances was through high-interest crediting, a role for which Christian rulers sometimes recruited Jewish people, as Christians were prohibited from it. This made for a complicated and tense dynamic between Jewish and Christian society that lasted well beyond medieval times. It made it easy for leaders to position Jews as the cause of the common people's problems. It also compounded the perception among some Christian theologians of Jews as immoral and devoid of virtue.

Jews were often made the villains in literature and art of the time, reflecting a widespread depiction of Jews as unscrupulous, money-hungry and working against the interest of the honest citizen. A famous character in literary history is Shylock, the greedy Jewish money lender in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Eventually this stereotype worked its way into modern vernacular: "To Jew someone down" became a common expression meaning to bargain unscrupulously for a lower price.



Some Jews continue to be stereotyped as corrupted by money and are often accused of hoarding wealth

that they use to bribe people in power. Some continue to assert the false belief that the Jews pull the strings of the world's financial markets. There are numerous conspiracy theories, many centered around the Rothschild family, about Jewish control of the economy and important economic institutions like the U.S. Federal Reserve and the International Monetary Fund. Underpinning such belief is the idea that Jews are driven by access to money and control over it.

Reflection

1. What information about this antisemitic myth surprised you?
2. Why do you think the myth that Jews are greedy 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 2004, clothing and home goods retailer Urban Outfitters, released a T-shirt with the words “Everyone Loves a Jewish Girl” surrounded by images of shopping bags and dollar signs.</p>	<p>On September 8, 2017, a Jewish family was kidnapped, assaulted and robbed in Seine-Saint-Denis in France. Convinced that they had money, the assailants told them: “You Jews have money, we have nothing. You Jews are spoiled by the earth, and we are left behind [...] You are Jews, you are rich, you have money, we take from you to give to others.”</p>
<p>“Charitable giving is a way for rich people to amass money—power—and then grant it as they see fit personally, enriching their allies, and bypassing much-needed resource redistribution. The concentration of wealth in New England demonstrates the importance of combating zionism[sic] locally.”</p> <p>— <i>The Mapping Project, an anonymous anti-Zionist project that alleges to map ties between Jewish institutions and real or perceived injustices towards the Palestinians. “Boston’s Zionist NGO Circuit,” June 2022</i></p>	<p>“The war in Jewkraine is all about the \$\$\$. Follow the money. Us tax payers are funding the rebuilding of infrastructure [sic] and real estate for the jews. They bought for pennies on the dollar. They need more land. Israel our greatest ally thanks you once again American patriots.”</p> <p>— <i>GhostEzra, prominent QAnon Telegram Channel September 24, 2022</i></p>
 <p>Poster for a 1937 art exhibition, “The Eternal Jew,” in Munich, Germany.</p> <p><i>Image Credit: Staluter, Hans, The Eternal Jew (1937), poster, Galerie Bilderwelt/Bridgeman Images</i></p>	 <p>Detail from “The Way Of The Red Sea Is A Way Of Blood,” a 1944 Italian poster depicting grinning Jewish bankers carrying money bags past dead soldiers.</p> <p><i>Image Credit: Artist unknown, The Way Of The Red Sea Is A Way Of Blood (1944), poster, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum</i></p>

Reflection

1. How does the myth that Jews are greedy 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

The truth is that Jews, like all other people, exist across the spectrum of socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, wealthy Jewish individuals and families are often identified by their Jewishness rather than other qualities or circumstances that are shared among other non-Jewish wealthy households. Economic inequalities are caused by a number of factors, but this myth reduces a complex problem to an oversimplified one. The myth of Jewish greed is often used as justification to seek revenge against the Jews for economic problems, which poses a disproportionate threat to low-income Jewish communities.

Keeping these truths in mind, we must remember that even when it's intended as a compliment, statements like "Jews are good with money" or all "Jews are well-off" contribute to a dangerous stereotype and gives permission to assign blame to Jewish people for a range of economic grievances.

Reflection

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