

LESSON PLAN

Myth: Jews Use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals

How does the myth that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals 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 Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the definitions of antisemitism, myth and trope and their connection.
- Students will examine the myth that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals.
- Students will analyze the impact of contemporary and historical examples of the antisemitic myth of the Blood Libel.
- 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 Blood Libel](#)
- [Myth: Jews use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals](#) (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 of blood libel. 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 of blood libel. 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 Use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals” Handout**.
2. Instruct students to read the handout about the myth of blood libel 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 use Christian blood for religious rituals has been repeatedly used by groups in different time periods and parts of the world?
 - **See it**
 - How does the myth that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals 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?
3. Bring the students back together and debrief with the following reflection questions as a group.
 - How might this myth impact the relationship between Christian and Jewish communities?
 - Why do you think Jewish people are repeatedly misrepresented or distorted in society, now and in the past?
 - What lesson are you taking away from this learning experience?
 - 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 this lesson on the myth of blood libel, 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**

- [Blood Libel Accusations Resurface in the Wake of October 7](#)
- [Blood Libel on Wheels: Anti-Israel Activists Using Billboard Truck to Share Antisemitic Messages](#)

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>R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.</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: Jews Use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals

Know It

A major theme in antisemitic thought and propaganda is the blood libel, the myth that Jews murder non-Jews, especially non-Jewish children, to use their blood to perform religious rituals. The word libel describes published false statements about a person or group. Even though Jewish religious law forbids the consumption of any blood, human or animal, accusations of ritual murder served to dehumanize Jews and justify their persecution. Several popes have rejected the claim of the blood libel as baseless, and no historical or religious truth supports such accusations, yet the concept was used to justify the pillaging, torture, burning and expulsion of countless Jewish people. Most prevalent in the medieval and early modern period, this peculiar accusation has plagued Jewish people for centuries.

The origins of the blood libel – also known as the ritual murder charge – date back to the Middle Ages. The first accusation against Jews for allegedly killing Christian children emerged in 12th-century England following the death of a boy named William in Norwich. Years later, a monk, Thomas of Monmouth blamed local Jews for the boy's murder, accusing them of killing William in a perverse re-enactment of Jesus's crucifixion. The accusation then transformed into blood libel in the 13th century on the continent when a blood motif was added. At that time, Jews were accused of killing Christian children to obtain their blood. In the medieval and early modern eras, many Christians believed that Jews needed Christian blood to bake their Passover matzah (unleavened bread), and even drank it as a medicine. By the 16th century, blood libel rumors reached Christian communities in Aleppo, Syria and remained present into the mid-18th century.

In modern times, the blood libel maintained its importance. For example, in 1840, following the disappearance of an Italian friar and his servant while traveling in Damascus, Syria, local Christians and the French consul accused the town's Jews of kidnapping the two men to use their blood for Passover. The authorities arrested and tortured several Jews, killing two of them in the process, and took 63 Jewish children hostage in attempts to force confessions. Eventually, the Ottoman sultan denounced the accusation of ritual murder, but these events—which came to be known as the “Damascus Affair” –increased the prominence of the blood libel within the cultural imagination of the Middle East. Ritual murder accusations continued to be made against Jews in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt throughout the 19th century.

In the early 20th century, these accusations continued when a Russian Jew named Menachem Mendel Beilis was falsely accused of ritually murdering a young boy in Kiev. Respected Russian intellectuals testified against Beilis at the sensational trial, alleging that it was common practice among Jews to kill Christians for their blood. The trial revealed the depths of antisemitism in Russia. Although not as common, there have been instances of the Blood Libel charge in the United States as well. In 1928, a four-year-old girl went missing in the small town of Massena, NY. A rumor that Jews had kidnapped and killed her as part of a religious ritual quickly gained traction, leading police to question local Jewish leaders and the town's rabbi in connection with the disappearance. The girl was later found alive and unharmed.

In the years preceding the Holocaust, Nazi propagandists used the blood libel to make the case that Jews were a menace to German society. The Nazi tabloid *Der Stürmer* devoted an issue to the blood libel and accusations of a Jewish plan to murder non-Jews. Though robust condemnations of this were immediately

issued, this sort of propaganda still made its mark on receptive antisemites. The blood libel remained a powerful call to antisemitic violence even after the Holocaust. In 1946, an accusation of the blood libel incited a vicious attack on Jews in Poland, which resulted in the death of dozens of Jews and forced many more to flee.

In recent decades, we have seen the myth of blood libel wielded as a political tool. Some anti-Zionist cartoons and publications have also incorporated the blood libel myth, with imagery of Israeli leaders drinking Palestinians' blood or eating Palestinian children. There have also been false accusations leveled at the Israeli army that they harvest the organs of dead Palestinians, which is another manifestation of the blood libel myth.

Reflection

1. What information about this antisemitic myth surprised you?
2. Why do you think the myth that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals 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

In a February 2022 video posted on Bitchute, “Street Evangelist” and antisemitic provocateur Brother Nathanael states that the war in Ukraine is based on Jews’ “lust for murder and blood,” and “the blood of Ukrainian, American and European NATO soldiers” would have “curative power for Jewry” that “puts the Jews on top.” Later in the video, Brother Nathanael names Jews who work in the Biden Administration to claim that the “Jewish blood ritual is the center of U.S. foreign policy” for “Jew-led America,” and that the war is being fought because “only the dried blood of Orthodox Christian Russian soldiers will nourish the blood cult of yet another bloody Passover.” This received 28,000 views.

“Does Obama in fact know the relationship, for example, between ‘Passover’ and ‘Christian blood’..?! Or ‘Passover’ and ‘Jewish blood rituals?!’ Much of the chatter and gossip about historical Jewish blood rituals in Europe are real and not fake as they claim; the Jews used the blood of Christians in the Jewish Passover.” – MIFTAH, a Palestinian nonprofit, in an article posted on their website in 2013. The organization later retracted this claim and apologized.

“Child murder is among the most favored rituals of the ‘Israel has the right to defend itself’ death cult.” – Canadian Journalist, Aaron Maté on X, December 10, 2023. This post received 229,300 views.

“You are not forgotten Simon of Trent, the horror that you and countless children have endured at the hands of the Jews will never be forgiven.” – Mass shooter at a synagogue in Poway, CA in April 2019. This sentence, from his manifesto, refers to a blood libel allegation from the 15th century.



Front page of the most popular issue ever of the Nazi publication, Der Stürmer, with a reprint of a medieval depiction of a purported ritual murder committed by Jews.

Image Credit: USHMM, Front page of the most popular issue ever of the Nazi publication, Der Stürmer, with a reprint of a medieval depiction of a purported ritual murder committed by Jews.



A 1493 woodcut of the story of Simon of Trent (1472-1475), an Italian child whose death was blamed on the leaders of the city’s Jewish community (on the Jews).

Image Credit: Wolgemut, Michel and Pleydenwurff, Wilhelm, Martyrdom of Simon von Trent (1493), woodcut, Hartmann Schedels Weltchronik (Nuremberg World Chronicle), Katz Ehrenthal Collection, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Reflection

1. How does the myth that Jews use Christian blood for religious rituals 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

Ignorance and hateful biases allow dangerous myths like the blood libel to persist even today. Characterizing Jewish people as innately and particularly bloodthirsty and/or predatory towards non-Jewish children continues to be used to justify anti-Jewish attitudes, campaigns, and policies. These accusations continue to endanger Jewish communities when individuals, such as the synagogue shooter in Poway, are inspired by these myths to commit acts of violence.

References to the blood libel and other accusations of ritual murder must be taken seriously and challenged in order to dissipate this toxic myth.

Reflection

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