

SCHINDLER'S LIST



Lesson 8 (SOCIAL STUDIES)

Antisemitism Today

Enduring Understandings

- Contemporary antisemitism is on the rise and takes on many forms.
- Small acts of antisemitism are becoming normalized, potentially leading to larger acts.
- Contemporary antisemitism is often connected to other forms of oppression, such as bigotry, discrimination, and hate.
- There is a direct connection between antisemitism and white supremacy.
- All people have a stake in reducing antisemitism.

Essential Questions

- What is antisemitism, and what does it look like today?
- What methods do antisemitic groups and their leaders use?
- How do recent antisemitic attacks compare to attacks before and after the Holocaust?
- Why are antisemitism and related forms of oppression a concern for all people?
- How can individuals monitor and stand up to antisemitism?

Notes to the Teacher

Topics covered: Attacks at synagogues and Jewish community centers. Vandalism of Jewish cemeteries. Holocaust denial. White supremacy. Hate crimes.

Hate crimes and hate speech toward marginalized groups often rise in response to global crises and conflicts. In the United States, clear examples of this can be seen over the last 25 years. For example, Islamophobia increased significantly following the events of September 11th in 2001, and incidents of both Islamophobia and antisemitism increased in response to the 2023 war in Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Regarding antisemitic incidents specifically, since late 2013, antisemitic incidents have risen significantly in the United States. This runs counter to an earlier trend that had seen American antisemitism decline since the 1960s. Today's young people are at an intersection of these two divergent trends, and their efforts and involvement will help determine what happens next — will the current rise in antisemitism continue, or will the nation return to the path it had been on for decades?

In this lesson, students will examine older and more contemporary forms of antisemitism.

In Part 1 of the lesson, students will view a short video from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum entitled “What is Antisemitism?” It can be viewed directly at <https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism/explained>. This video will give students a solid understanding of the many forms of antisemitism, including seemingly harmless jokes and stereotypes. A background source you may find useful is the U.S. State Department page on antisemitism at <https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/>. A reliable source for a history of antisemitism is “Antisemitism Throughout Time” from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eo31GAKfHc>.



In Part 2, students will view news reports of four contemporary incidents of antisemitism in the United States:

- Charlottesville, Virginia: <https://www.today.com/video/charlottesville-fact-check-were-bothsides-to-blame-for-violence-1025759299536?v=railb&>. On August 11, 2017, the world watched as torch-wielding Americans marched through the University of Virginia's campus chanting "Jews will not replace us" and "Blood and soil" in scenes eerily similar to Nazi rallies of the 1930s. When it was over, three Americans had been killed. Heather Heyer was murdered by a white supremacist who drove a car into a crowd of counter-protesters, and two Virginia State Police officers died in a helicopter crash while providing security and law enforcement.
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcqc8E8rj6E>. On October 27, 2018, 11 Jewish worshippers were killed when a lone gunman opened fire inside a synagogue. Six worshippers were wounded, including Holocaust survivors. The gunman had posted numerous antisemitic comments online prior to the attack.
- Jersey City, New Jersey: <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/shooters-who-killed-4-jersey-city-market-appeared-highly-trained-n1101161>. On December 10, 2019, two assailants killed three people at a kosher grocery store. They also wounded three others, including two police officers. One of the assailants had a history of posting antisemitic messages on social media. Evidence indicated that the attacks were acts of hate and domestic terrorism.
- Colleyville, Texas: <https://www.fox4news.com/news/colleyville-synagogue-hostage-crisis-was-a-hate-crime-and-act-of-terrorism-fbi-says>. On January 15, 2022, a gunman entered the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue.

A livestream of the service caught some of the gunman's words as he demanded the release of a Pakistani national who was serving time in a Texas prison. Four hostages were taken, including the synagogue's rabbi. After a 10-hour standoff with local, state, and federal authorities, the hostage-taker died in a shooting in the synagogue after a tactical team from the Federal Bureau of Investigation rushed in. All four hostages escaped unharmed.

In Part 3 of the lesson, students will examine FBI crime statistics and incident analysis data regarding hate crimes in the United States, including religious-based hate crimes. We have provided below additional databases, websites, and other resources tracking antisemitism in the United States and globally. Students could be broken into groups with each group looking at a different resource/site. Then, students could present that site's findings to the class, and the class, as a whole, could compare and contrast findings.

Finally, students will summarize the details of the four contemporary incidents of antisemitism that they studied earlier and will examine how antisemitism is related to white supremacy. Students will then write an essay on what can and should be done about antisemitism in the United States. As a possible extension of the lesson, students can consider taking action against antisemitism in a number of different projects.

Additional resources that might be valuable for this lesson include:

- American Jewish Committee State of American Incidents of Antisemitism: <https://www.ajc.org/news/the-state-of-antisemitism-in-america-2022-insights-and-analysis> (This report is based on polling done within the Jewish community.)
- Antiracism Education: <https://libguides.library.cpp.edu/c.php?g=1047593&p=7636457>



- Antisemitism on University Campuses: <https://amchainitiative.org/search-by-incident#incident/display-by-date/>
- Hate Crime Case Examples, Updated as of August 2023: <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crimes-case-examples>
- Index with comprehensive listing (and links) of organizations (in the U.S. and globally) that track antisemitic incidents: <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Appendix.pdf>. This would be a great resource for comparative activities in the classroom.

An Important Note Concerning Sensitive Subjects

You should review the entire lesson before presenting it in the classroom. Please note that the nature of this lesson will be troubling for some students and classes. Feel free to adapt materials and procedures as needed to fit your students, school, and community. Here is [a link](#) to detailed guidelines from Journeys in Film on facilitating group discussions on sensitive topics. These guidelines will help you establish an open atmosphere for a free exchange of ideas and opinions and a process for a successful experience.

Common Core Standards addressed by this lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Duration of Lesson

Three or four class periods, depending on period length and teacher preference. Each of the three activities can be presented as stand-alone activities to accommodate student abilities and available class time.

Assessments

Class discussions
Completion of handouts
Final essay

Materials

Copies of **Handout 1: Antisemitism Today: Response Journal**
Copies of **Handout 2: An Audit of Hate Crimes in the United States**
Copies of **Handout 3: White Supremacy and Antisemitism**
Computers with internet access
A method of projecting web-based videos
A chalkboard, whiteboard, or smartboard with usable writing implements

Procedure

Part 1: What Is Antisemitism?

1. Tell students that in this lesson they will investigate past and current examples of antisemitism and look at ways in which they can respond to it.
2. Distribute copies of **Handout 1: Antisemitism Today: Response Journal**. Ask students to answer Question 1 identifying specific examples of antisemitic policies and actions in Nazi Germany that came before the concentration camps. You may have them work individually, with a partner, or in small groups.
3. Write a list of the students' examples on the board. Leave this list up for later reference. *(Possible answers may include: seizure of property and events of Kristallnacht; forcing Jews to wear yellow stars and live in ghettos; enacting various policies, including the Nuremberg Laws, which deprived Jews of German citizenship and banned any marriages between Jews and people of "German blood"; and holding public rallies and marches aimed at promoting antisemitic views.)*
4. After the class list is complete, ask students which of these policies and actions they think are still used by antisemitic groups and individuals today.
5. Go over the Question 2 response prompts on the handout. Ask the students to keep the prompts in mind as they watch the video.
6. Show the short video from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at <https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism/explained> to broaden your students' understanding of antisemitism today. You may show it more than once if you sense that this is necessary.

7. After the video, allow time for students to respond to the questions in class discussion, either as a whole class or in small groups. Once this discussion is complete, have students write their answers for Question 2 on the handout.

(Possible answers: Antisemitism is prejudice against or hatred of Jews. Examples of past and present antisemitism are demonstrations, violence, assault, and killings. Antisemitism in social media includes: depicting a Jew with exaggerated, grotesque features, anti-Jewish comments and hateful hashtags, defacing school buildings and similar activities. Sometimes, antisemitic comments can sound complimentary but really perpetuate a stereotype. Similarity to Nazi Germany before the Holocaust: Nazi persecution began with words. Why it's important to address all forms of antisemitism: When repeated over and over, and not questioned, stereotypes can be accepted as truth.)

8. Ask students if they have ever personally experienced or witnessed antisemitism. (This will depend on the makeup and maturity of the class and the judgment of the teacher. If this discussion isn't appropriate in a given setting, skip this step and continue with the activity.)

Part 2: Recent Examples of Antisemitism

1. Ask students what they know about the four incidents of antisemitism listed in Question 3 of the handout:

- the “Unite the Right” white supremacists march in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017
- the 2018 attack on a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- the 2019 attack on a kosher grocery store in Jersey City, New Jersey
- the 2022 hostage taking at Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas

(Answers will vary, but they should include the fact that in these events the attackers purposely attacked Jews.)

2. Divide the class into four jigsaw groups. Assign each group to view one of the videos about one of these incidents of antisemitism. Review the question prompts the students will address, saving the final question for the second half of the activity.

3. Have each group view its assigned video segment. Allow time for students to share with the group what they saw and review the questions, then write their responses in section 4 of the handout.

4. To complete the jigsaw activity, reconvene the class and divide students into new groups with at least one student from each of the four original groups in each new group. Have students share their findings from their respective video segments.

Part 3: An Audit of Hate Crimes in the United States

1. Distribute **Handout 2: An Audit of Hate Crimes in the United States**. Have students look at the [FBI's Crime Data Explorer](#) and the [FBI 2022 Hate Crime Statistics Resource](#).

Students should focus on the data regarding hate crimes as well as the methodology used to collect this data. In small groups or in response journals, students should reflect on the data they see here and on the methodology used to acquire this data. Alternatively or in addition, students can explore the [FBI's Hate Crime Examples Listing](#). With this resource, students can see the range of hate crimes committed and the motivations behind them, which include antisemitism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

2. Give students sufficient time to read and answer the questions on **Handout 2**.
3. Ask: Why do you think race is the largest category of hate crimes?
4. Ask: Why do you think religion is the second largest category of hate crimes?
5. Ask: Were you surprised that crimes against persons are more common than vandalism?
6. Ask: Why do you think "intimidation" is the most common type of hate crime offense? What is the purpose of intimidation?
7. Given the methodology used, what do you think the accuracy is of the data? *(Answer note for teachers: The data on these two key websites comes from information collected by law enforcement agencies, but given the nature of hate crimes it is likely that incidents would be underreported as many individuals, especially from systemically oppressed groups, may not feel comfortable reporting to law enforcement in their communities.)*

8. Using the [FBI Crime Data Explorer](#), have students compare the 2022 data to previous years. Have them estimate if the year they pick will include more incidents or fewer. Encourage them to consider why the results vary from year to year and why some years are higher than others. *(This answer will depend on the students' predictions and the state in which they live.)*

Part 4: White Supremacy

1. Review the information at the beginning of **Handout 3** with students. Be sure that they understand the definition of the term and the way that it is manifested in contemporary society.
2. Divide students into small groups. Have students summarize the four antisemitic incidents they explored in **Handout 1**. Follow the "5 Ws and H" method (*who, what, when, where, why, and how*). They don't have to go into detail on each one; it is sufficient just to provide an overview.
3. Then have the groups discuss and take notes on the questions **Handout 3**. If more space is needed, students can write on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Have students write an essay on their thoughts about what can and should be done about antisemitism in the United States. They can include information from their discussion above and any other part of this lesson.

Extension Activities

If time allows and there is interest from your students, you can suggest that they consider one of the following activities to take action against antisemitism:

- Organize an assembly or class-level meetings in school to present information on antisemitism and other types of hate speech or actions targeting other groups. You could include information from this lesson and recent local or national events. Encourage participants to come up with ideas about what can be done to fight bias and guarantee social justice to all groups. As a follow-up, write a letter to your school newspaper, school board, local politicians, or the local newspaper in which you summarize the ideas expressed by participants at the assembly.
- In small groups or as a class, have students create a social media campaign against prejudice and hate speech.
- Join local, state, or national organizations that combat prejudice, hate speech, etc. Plan a fundraising event at school to support their work. Some possibilities are:
 - o Facing History and Ourselves
<https://www.facinghistory.org>
 - o Southern Poverty Law Center
<https://www.splcenter.org/>
 - o United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
<https://www.ushmm.org/>
 - o American Civil Liberties Union
<https://www.aclu.org/>

1. List specific examples of antisemitism in Nazi Germany before the establishment of concentration camps. Consider what you saw in *Schindler's List* as well as your other studies of the Holocaust.
2. Go to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum video about antisemitism: <https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism/explained>. (A transcript is also available.) After viewing the video, write a response to each of the following questions:
 - (a) What is antisemitism?
 - (b) What were some of the examples of past and present antisemitism in the video?

- (c) How are the examples from social media a form of antisemitism?
- (d) How are these examples similar to what happened in Nazi Germany before the Holocaust?
- (e) Why is it important that all forms of antisemitism be treated as a threat to a democratic society?

3. In your group, view your assigned video from the list below:

Group A: The “Unite the Right” white supremacists march in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017: <https://www.today.com/video/charlottesville-fact-check-were-bothsides-to-blame-for-violence-1025759299536?v=railb&>

Group B: The 2018 attack on a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcqc8E8rj6E>

Group C: The 2019 attack on a kosher grocery store in Jersey City, New Jersey: <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/shooters-who-killed-4-jersey-city-market-appeared-highly-trained-n1101161>

Group D: The 2022 hostage taking at Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas: <https://www.fox4news.com/news/colleyville-synagogue-hostage-crisis-was-a-hate-crime-and-act-of-terrorism-fbi-says>



4. With your group, write a response to the following prompts. If you need more space, use the back of this sheet or additional paper.

- (a) What happened in this event? Describe what led to the event, details of the event, and the outcome.

- (b) How did you feel when you heard about this event?

- (c) How was your event similar to the events shown in *Schindler's List* and other events of the Holocaust? How was it different?

- (d) How does this event demonstrate antisemitism?

- (e) Domestic terrorism is the unlawful use of violence or threats against the civilian population or government by an individual or group operating within the same country with the goal of furthering political, social, or ideological objectives. How are these events examples of domestic terrorism?

Conclusion

What do these events show about the state of antisemitism in the United States?

1. Before looking at the two government websites, estimate the total number of hate crimes you think were reported to law enforcement in 2022.
2. Go to the [FBI Hate Crime Statistics data on the U.S. Department of Justice site](#).
 - (a) Summarize the data reflected on this site.
 - (b) Looking at the various tables and data on the site, please share any findings that surprised you.

3. Go to the [FBI Crime Data Explorer](#).

- (a) Summarize the data reflected on this site.
- (b) Look at the offense types. Explore why you think intimidation and vandalism/property damage are the most common offense types.
- (c) Look at the bias type. Why do you think this site says Anti-Jewish rather than antisemitic? Which term do you think should be used? What else sticks out to you regarding bias type?

- [illegible]

Handout 3

White Supremacy and Antisemitism

In the aftermath of the recent events you have studied, there have been many public conversations about racism, antisemitism, white supremacy, and the First Amendment.

White Supremacy is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and “undeserving.” ([Dismantling Racism Web Workbook](#) via [Racial Equity Tools](#))

White supremacy perpetuated African American slavery in the thirteen colonies and the United States for almost 250 years; it was the foundation of the Confederacy. Today, this belief goes beyond simple racism or bigotry. Most contemporary white supremacists believe that action is needed to “save” the white race. Lynchings, hate crimes, racial slurs, swastikas, and burning crosses are overt acts and symbols of white supremacy. However, implicit forms of racism, such as racial profiling, employment and housing discrimination, voter suppression, and Confederate monuments, create a culture that can give rise to white supremacy.

Directions: In your group, review the four antisemitic incidents you explored in **Handout 1**. Follow the “5 Ws and H” method (*who, what, when, where, why, and how*). You don’t have to describe each in detail; just provide an overview. Then discuss the following questions and take notes on points raised in the discussion. Use additional paper if necessary.

- (a) Slavery ended in 1865 with the surrender of the Confederacy. A century later, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were passed in an attempt to guarantee equality. Why then has the idea of white supremacy continued into the present day?

- (b) Racism, antisemitism, and white supremacy are all interrelated. What are the connections between them?

- (c) Why do you think antisemitic incidents are still occurring today?

- (d) How did you feel after reading about the antisemitic incidents in this lesson? Did you talk about them with your friends or family? What was their response?

- (e) How should mass media (newspapers, television, etc.) cover antisemitic incidents?

Assignment

Write an essay describing what can and should be done about antisemitism in the United States.

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