



TERRORIST ATTACK IN PARIS AND SCAPEGOATING

On Friday, November 13, coordinated shootings and explosions rocked Paris late in the evening, killing 130 people and leaving another 351 injured, 99 of them critically. The majority of the victims were killed at the Bataclan concert hall. There, attackers opened fire on concertgoers and took more than 100 people hostage, according to police. Police later stormed the Bataclan and ended the hostage situation. At the same time, there were three suicide bombings near the Stade de France, a soccer stadium near Paris, as well as another suicide bomb and mass shootings in other places in Paris. Seven of the eight attackers died, six of whom detonated explosive suicide vests. Six days later, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a 28-year-old Belgian terrorist and the suspected “mastermind” of the attacks, was among those killed in a police raid in a suburb of Paris. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks, citing France's "crusader campaign," referencing the country's role in air strikes against the group in Syria and Iraq. There have been a wide variety of responses to the attacks from international leaders, U.S. legislators and the public at large. Some have responded by scapegoating Syrian refugees as well as people who are Muslim.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the Paris attacks and understand the ways in which Muslim people and Syrian refugees are being scapegoated as a result of the terrorist attacks.

See these additional ADL resources: [Refugee Crisis in Europe: How Should the World Respond?](#) (grades 9-12 lesson plan) [Empowering Children in the Aftermath of Hate, Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories About Bias and Injustice](#), [ADL to U.S. Governors: Reconsider Position on Refusing Refugees](#) (press release) and [Anti-Refugee Sentiment Reaches New High After Paris Attacks](#) (blog).

Grade Level: grades 7-12

Time: 45 minutes

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn what happened in the Paris terrorist attacks and what has taken place since the attacks on November 13, 2015.
- Students will reflect upon how stereotypes and scapegoating of Syrian refugees and Muslim people have been part of the reaction.
- Students will explore how social media can be used to dispel stereotypes and discourage scapegoating.

Compelling Question: How and why does scapegoating happen when a tragic event takes place?

Material:

- [Background Information](#) (one copy for each student)
- [After Paris Attacks, Vilifying Refugees](#) (one copy for each student)

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's ["Glossary of Education Terms."](#))

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| • betrayal | • Muslim | • resettlement |
| • discrimination | • obligation | • scapegoating |
| • fearmongering | • persecution | • terrorism |
| • impulsive | • prejudice | • vetting |
| • Islamophobia | • propaganda | • victim |
| • morally | • refugees | • villifying |

Note to Teacher: As this lesson explores how both Muslim people and Syrian refugees are being scapegoated after the terrorist attacks in Paris, it is important to reflect on and consider that you may have students in your classroom who are Muslim or students who are refugees or immigrants. Be prepared and sensitive to those students, taking into consideration the extent to which they are a minority or majority of your classroom and plan accordingly. Students who identify with the topic personally will likely have a range of thoughts and feelings about discussing the topic: relief, embarrassment, annoyance, pride or nothing at all. Be careful not to put students in the position of being the "authority" or main possessor of knowledge on the topic.

INFORMATION SHARING

1. Ask students: *Does anyone know what happened in Paris on Friday, November 13, that's been in the news?* Have students share what they know and what questions they have.
2. Share the following information about what we know so far about the Paris attacks and their aftermath, either by summarizing for your students or having them read the [Background Information](#) aloud.
 - On Friday, November 13, a set of shootings and explosions hit Paris late in the evening, killing at least 130 people, most of whom died at the Bataclan concert hall. After the shooting attack at the concert hall, attackers took more 100 people hostage there, according to police. Police later stormed the Bataclan and ended the hostage situation. Another 351 were injured, 99 of them critically. Explosions were reported near the Stade de France, a soccer stadium near Paris, as was another explosion and shootings inside the city itself.

Seven of the eight attackers died, six of whom detonated explosive suicide vests. Six days later, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a 28-year-old Belgian terrorist and the suspected "mastermind" of the attacks, was among those killed in a police raid in a suburb of Paris. So far, all of the attackers have been identified as French or Belgian nationals.

- ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks, citing France's "crusader campaign" in a reference to the country's role in air strikes against the group in Syria and Iraq. ISIS is the self-proclaimed "Islamic State" which began making news in 2014 when it conquered territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings. The group has attracted support elsewhere in the world as well and a U.S.-led coalition has vowed to destroy it. (If you want to explain more about ISIS to your students, you may choose to show this *New York Times* short video: [The Evolution of ISIS](#).)
- There is no way to justify or rationalize terrorism. Terrorist groups use violence against civilians in an attempt to achieve political ends. Some examples of terrorist attacks in the United States motivated by Islamic extremist ideology include [September 11](#) and the [Boston Marathon Bombing Attack](#) in 2013. For more information, see ADL's [International Extremism and Terrorism](#).
- French President François Hollande promised a "merciless" response, and world leaders vowed to stand by France. A few days after the attack, France bombed the Syrian city of Raqqa, its most aggressive strike against ISIS. The U.S. military and intelligence agencies provided information to help French warplanes bomb these ISIS targets.
- In the wake of the terrorist attacks, more than half of all United States Governors (31 in total so far) have stated they will not accept Syrian refugees into their states or called on the president to seal the borders to refugees, issuing statements that they will bar Syrian refugees from settling in their states and citing fears that violent extremists would masquerade as refugees in order to get into the U.S. States do not have the legal authority to bar refugees from settling within their states but they can ask the State Department not to send refugees there. Several months ago during the height of the refugee crisis in Europe, the Obama administration had agreed to take in an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees.
- Evidence collected so far suggests that refugees were not involved in carrying out the attacks and in fact, all of the Paris attackers have been identified as European nationals. The U.S. refugee resettlement program vets each person it admits through rigorous background checks that have a nearly flawless record at keeping terrorists out. Kathy Newland of the [Migration Policy Institute](#) stated: "The United States has resettled 784,000 refugees since September 11, 2001. In those 14 years, exactly three resettled refugees have been arrested for planning terrorist activities—and it is worth noting two were not planning an attack in the United States and the plans of the third were barely credible." It is interesting to note that France President Francois Hollande will keep its commitment that "30,000 refugees will be welcomed over the next two years."
- Vetting refugees in the U.S. involves an extensive 18-to 24-month (on average) process that includes biometric and biographic tests, database checks, interviews and other vetting procedures by a number of U.S. security agencies.
- Since the attacks, there has been an increase in anti-Muslim rhetoric, threats, attacks and hate crimes directed at the U.S. Muslim community; this is coming from the general public, elected officials and even presidential candidates. There have been at least a dozen serious incidents reported threatening Muslims in this country since the Paris attacks including threats to "shoot up" and/or bomb Mosques, acts of vandalism, shots fired and more. Many Islamic communities across the U.S. have condemned the attacks, stating that the vast majority of Muslims exist peacefully within American society. For more information, see [Here's A List Of Anti-Muslim Acts Reported In The U.S. Since The Paris Attacks](#).

3. Engage students in a discussion by asking:

- What did you learn that you didn't know before?

- How do you feel about what you heard?
- How do you think the world should respond to the attacks in France?
- What do you think about some of the anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiment?
- What other questions do you have?

THE AFTERMATH: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCAPEGOATING?

1. Write (or say aloud) the following sentences:

- A. All teenagers steal from stores (shoplift).
- B. I don't like teenagers.
- C. I don't allow teenagers in my store.

2. Briefly review the definitions of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination and ask students: *Which one of these is stereotyping? Which one is prejudice? And which statement is discrimination?*

The definitions and answers are as follows:

Stereotype: An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. (Statement A)

Prejudice: Prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes. (Statement B)

Discrimination: The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many arenas, including employment, education, housing, banking and political rights. (Statement C)

3. After students have correctly identified each of the statements above, add a fourth statement as follows:

- Teenagers are the reason why prices are so high.

4. Engage students in a brief discussion about the statement by asking these questions:

- What is the underlying assumption in this statement? (e.g. teenagers are to blame for high prices.)
- How would you determine if this information is accurate?
- What are some other possible reasons why prices might be high?
- Do you think it is fair to blame teenagers for high prices without more factual information? Explain.
- How might stereotyping lead to blaming?

5. Write the word "scapegoating" on the board/smart board and ask students: *What is scapegoating?* Elicit and explain that scapegoating is defined as follows:

Blaming an individual or group for something based on that person's or group's identity when, in reality, the person or group is not responsible. Prejudicial thinking and discriminatory acts can lead to scapegoating.

Then ask students: *How are teenagers being used as scapegoats in the example above?*

6. Explain that scapegoating can take place in interpersonal relationships and can also happen on a larger scale with groups of people. Ask: *Can you think of a time in history when scapegoating was used?* Tell students that there are several examples of how scapegoating has taken place throughout history both in the United States and around the world. Among other things, groups of people have been blamed for economic problems, diseases, unemployment, illegal drug problems and wars.

Example 1: Japanese Internment Camps On December 7, 1941, Japanese aircraft attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. By the time the attack was over, a large part of the U.S. Naval Fleet in the Pacific Ocean was lost. The United States immediately declared war on Japan and entered World War II. Many people in the United States were angry and afraid. They began to worry that if the Japanese would attack Hawaii, they might also be able to attack other cities on the West Coast. Prejudice and discrimination against Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans did not start with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, however. In fact, Japanese Americans had faced discrimination in both employment and education since they began immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. military was able to pressure the government to suspend many Japanese Americans' Constitutional rights and required more than 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent to leave their homes and businesses and to live in internment camps.

*Example 2: The Holocaust While Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party did not invent anti-Semitism, it was central to their ideology. For the Nazis, Jewish people were the racial archenemy. They saw them as a demonic force that aspired to dominate the world and they believed that the Jews' victory would spell the end of the world. The Nazis believed that Jews were behind Bolshevism (Communism), exploitative capitalism and democracy, all of which supposedly threatened mankind. Nazi ideology also argued that Christianity had been weakened by Jewish ideas, such as that all human beings are created in the image of God. In short, they blamed Jews for all humanity's shortfalls and troubles. Not only did they believe that Jews had no place in a racially restructured Europe, they felt that they must put an end to the "Jewish menace" lest the Jews destroyed them.
(excerpted from the [Echoes and Reflections](#) curriculum guide)*

7. Ask students: *From what you have heard, read and learned about so far, in what ways is scapegoating happening as a result of the terrorist attacks in Paris?* Explain that during this period after the attacks, (1) Islam is being blamed for the attacks by conflating the Muslim religion with Islamic extremism and terrorism, and (2) the influx of refugees from Syria (where ISIS is located) into Europe is under suspicion and close scrutiny because the attacks happened in Europe by the Islamic State (ISIS). Explain that the refugees who are leaving Syria are leaving because of the violence, terrorism and persecution by ISIS.

READING ACTIVITY

1. Distribute a copy of the New York Times editorial [After Paris Attacks, Vilifying Refugees](#) to each student. Give students 10 minutes to read the article silently.
2. Have students turn and talk to the person sitting next to them, sharing their thoughts about the article.

3. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What is the point of view of the author of the editorial (New York Times Editorial Board)?
 - How do you know what their position is?
 - What are they trying to convey in the editorial?
 - What evidence and information did they provide to make their case?
 - What is meant by the statement: “Slamming the door in their faces would be a betrayal of our values.”?
 - Do you agree or disagree with the position of the editorial? Please explain.

CLOSING: SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Explain to students that after the attacks and the ensuing acts and expressions of anti-Muslim sentiment, Muslims around the world have taken to social media—and specifically Twitter—to condemn the attacks, show solidarity with France and dispel the stereotypes that equate being Muslim with terrorism.

If possible, project Twitter on the board/smart board and show tweets for these specific hashtags:

#IAmAMuslim

#TerrorismHasNoReligion

#MuslimsAreNotTerrorist

#NotInMyName

2. Ask students: *Why do you think people came up with these hashtags? What are the people trying to convey? What do you notice when you read the tweets?*
3. Explain that social media is being used as a tool to convey the message that not all Muslims are terrorists and in fact, religion has nothing to do with these attacks. As a closing activity to the lesson, have students write down one thing they can do (using social media) to share their points of view with their friends, family and followers. If time allows, they can share those with the class.

ADDITIONAL READING

- [Attacks in Paris](#) (New York Times)
- [Closing the Borders to Refugees: Wrong in the 1930s, and Wrong Today](#) (Huffington Post, November 20, 2015)
- [Here's a map of every state refusing to accept Syrian refugees](#) (Vox, November 18, 2015)
- ['Muslims Are Not Terrorist,' Terrorism Has No Religion' Twitter Hashtags Protest Religious Hate After Attacks](#) (Inquisitr, November 16, 2015)
- [Paris Attacks: Scapegoating French Muslims Plays into ISIS's Hands](#) (Newsweek, November 14, 2015)
- [Why It Takes Two Years for Syrian Refugees to Enter the U.S.](#) (New York Times, November 20, 2015)
- [Should Europe Shun Refugees After the Paris Attacks?](#) (New York Times, Room for Debate, November 16, 2015)

- [This Chart Is The Perfect Rebuttal To Governors Who Won't Take In Syrian Refugees](#) (Think Progress, November 17, 2015)
- [Watch: a 5-minute history of Syria's war and the rise of ISIS](#) (Vox, November 14, 2015)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 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.
Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.
Language
Standard 1: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- On Friday, November 13, a set of shootings and explosions hit Paris late in the evening, killing at least 130 people, most of whom died at the Bataclan concert hall. After the shooting attack at the concert hall, attackers took more 100 people hostage there, according to police. Police later stormed the Bataclan and ended the hostage situation. Another 351 were injured, 99 of them critically. Explosions were reported near the Stade de France, a soccer stadium near Paris, as was another explosion and shootings inside the city itself.

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