

LESSON PLAN

Myth: Jews Have Too Much Power

Compelling Question: How does the myth that Jews have too much power 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 Jews have too much power.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the definitions of antisemitism, myth and trope and their connection.
- Students will examine the myth that Jews have too much power.
- Students will analyze the impact of contemporary and historical examples of the antisemitic myth that Jews have too much power.
- 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 Power](#)
- [Myth: Jews Have Too Much Power 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 that Jews have too much power. 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 inherently disloyal or more loyal to each other or to the State of Israel than to other institutions or nations where they live. 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 Have Too Much Power" Handout**.
2. Instruct students to read the handout about the Myth of Power 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 have too much power has been repeatedly used by groups in different time periods and parts of the world?
 - The myth of Jewish power alleges to 'punch up' and makes Jews all-powerful and therefore impossible to defend. How does this myth work differently than manifestations of hate for other targeted groups?
 - **See it**
 - How does the myth that Jews have too much power 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 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?
 - What are the challenges of combating a myth around power? How can a community prove they are less powerful than they seem?
 - How does understanding antisemitic myths help to combat other forms of hate and bias?
 - How can the myth of Jewish power, if believed, make it more difficult to recognize and combat antisemitism?
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 power, 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

- [Unpacking Kanye West's Antisemitic Remarks](#)
- [The Resilience of Antisemitism: The Lies of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#)

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
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.
Writing
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.
Speaking and Listening
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.
Language
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.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

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

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 Have Too Much Power

Know It

Conspiracy theory is at the core of antisemitism, manifesting as the belief that Jews have excessive power, usually undeserved, or do not deserve to have power, regardless of what values they may stand for. Jews who pursue or occupy leadership roles in elected office, business or other stations of public life often are viewed as conspiratorial, rather than commended for their dedication in concerns of the collective. The myth of excessive Jewish power also relies on false historical claims of Jews controlling global affairs. Jews are cast as manipulative and conniving schemers who work in the shadows to advance an evil agenda. Antisemitic claims are framed as radical expositions of the “truth” that there is a Jewish plot to take over the world.

Antisemitic conspiracy theories blame social ills on baseless notions about Jewish power. The Rothschild family, for example, has been targeted with conspiracy theories after their Frankfurt bank grew to prominence in 19th-century Europe. These misguided condemnations have had less to do with the family or its behavior than with millennia-old stereotypes of Jews as disloyal, greedy abusers of power. In 1846, for instance, a political pamphlet circulated across Europe, falsely alleging that a patriarch of the Rothschild family used insider knowledge to profit from the Napoleonic wars. The pamphlet was pseudonymously authored by “Satan.” In America, the Rothschilds have been blamed for instigating the Civil War, plotting to assassinate Abraham Lincoln (and later John F. Kennedy) and controlling the economy and even the weather.

The intentional publication of an elaborate hoax titled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the early 20th century is one of the most disturbing examples of antisemitism’s use in conspiracy theories. Likely fabricated and disseminated by the Russian Czarist intelligence services and secret police, *The Protocols* was purported to be leaked minutes from a secret meeting of the First Zionist Congress. *The Protocols* falsely “revealed” a purported Jewish plan for global domination. No such meeting had ever occurred, and the document was pure fiction. Nevertheless, *The Protocols* attracted much attention, and it was translated into multiple languages and disseminated around the world. *The Protocols* were exposed as a hoax in 1921 when the text was proved to have been plagiarized from a French satirical novel with no mention of the Jewish people.

Despite being exposed as a fabrication, the antisemitic myths promoted by *The Protocols* have endured. *The Protocols* were at the heart of Nazi Germany’s antisemitic ideology. In later years, vicious Soviet antisemitic propaganda under Stalin and others echoed the conspiracy mythology of *The Protocols*. Today, *The Protocols* remains widely read and accepted as fact in certain parts of the world. Language and conspiracy theories from *The Protocols* can still be found in social media posts, newspapers and in the remarks of public figures and elected officials.

Despite Jews making up about 0.2% of the world’s population, this myth that Jews have too much power has led to antisemitic tropes centered on fantastical ideas of Jewish control of global affairs, Hollywood, the media, and financial markets.

Reflection

1. What information about this antisemitic myth surprised you?
2. Why do you think the myth that Jews have too much power 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

Three years before he became the leader of the United Kingdom's Labour Party, British politician Jeremy Corbyn voiced support for an artist whose mural depicted, in a style reminiscent of Nazi propaganda, "hook-nosed" caricatures of Jewish bankers playing Monopoly on the bare backs of workers. Corbyn consoled the artist on Facebook after the mural was set to be removed: "You are in good company. Rockefeller [sic] destroyed Diego Viera's [sic] mural because it includes a picture of Lenin."	Individuals associated with the Goyim Defense League (GDL), a network of antisemitic provocateurs, distributed antisemitic propaganda on numerous occasions in cities across the U.S. in 2021, claiming that "every single aspect of the Covid agenda is Jewish" and naming several Jewish federal health officials and pharmaceutical company executives.
"...they manage the media, the finances and have hidden the truth from the world." <i>— President of the Palestinian Federation in Chile, an umbrella organization representing the country's Palestinian population, May 22, 2021</i>	"90% of Black people in entertainment — from sports, to music, to acting — are in some way tied into Jewish businesspeople...there's a Jewish person right there controlling the country, the Jewish people controlling who gets the best video or not, controlling what the media says about me." <i>— Ye (Kanye West) on the "Lex Fridman Podcast," October 24, 2022</i>
 A German propaganda cartoon from around 1938 warning of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. <i>Image Credit: Josef (Seppia), Octopus with Star of David encompassing a globe (c. 1938), cartoon, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum</i>	 The white supremacist shooter who killed 11 Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018 accused President Trump's Jewish advisors of causing the caravan of Central American migrants to move toward the US-Mexico border. <i>Image Credit: Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks</i>

Reflection

1. How does the myth that Jews have too much power 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

At times, this myth is invoked unintentionally. Some might not realize the historical roots of such antisemitic conspiracies. Such ignorance is one of the reasons we must educate ourselves and each other about harmful social myths. We also can take action to show where we stand. When alt right trolls took to targeting Jewish users on Twitter by adding three parentheses around their names to suggest an “echo,” or reverberation of Jewish power and destruction, some non-Jewish Twitter users placed triple parentheses around their own names in acts of solidarity.

The great irony of the myth about Jewish power is that, historically, Jews have had very little influence or control over even their own fate. There is a difference between cultivating the resilience, discipline and drive necessary to survive adversity and lusting after power over others. The pogroms of the 19th century and the genocide of the Holocaust in the 20th century are just two tragic reminders from recent history of the powerlessness that Jews ultimately have experienced at the hands of despotic and murderous regimes.

Jews are not monolithic. They do not act as one to advance a unified agenda. Their interests are diverse, as are their identities.

Reflection

1. How does this myth contribute to antisemitic attitudes today?
2. What information helps you reject this myth?
3. How might this antisemitic myth mask systemic problems in our society?