



Ethnic Studies Lesson 6C: Jewish Americans and Anti-Semitism

TOPIC:

JEWISH AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

1. Identity
2. History and Movement
4. Social Movements and Equity

Values and Principles:

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
3. Center and place high value on the precolonial ancestral knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native People/s and people of color and groups that are typically marginalized in society.
5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, and imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):

Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)

Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text, identifying important issues or problems the author addresses. (RI.11-12.6)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text. (RI.11-12.4)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):

History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)

Investigate and recognize the historical patterns of anti-Semitism, including the origins, methods, and consequences of discrimination, persecution, and violence against Jewish communities. (11.3)

Lesson Purpose

Students will become aware of dangerous and pervasive anti-Semitic tropes that have been used throughout history.

Essential Questions

How have anti-Semitic tropes been used throughout history to discriminate against and terrorize Jews?

How has life changed for Jewish Americans in the United States over the last 350 years?

Materials

[Anti-Defamation League: Antisemitic Attitudes in the USA](#)

[Anti-Defamation League: Antisemitism Uncovered](#)

[Myth: Jews Have Too Much Power](#)

[Myth: Jews Are Disloyal](#)

[Myth: Jews Are Greedy](#)

[Myth: Jews Killed Jesus](#)

[Myth: Jews Use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals](#)

[Myth: The Holocaust Didn't Happen](#)

[Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel Is Never Antisemitic](#)

[Unit 6 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

anti-Semitism

tropes

stereotype

Holocaust

propaganda

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask how racism has shown itself in other units that have been studied in this class. Remind students also that Jews can come from many different areas of the world and that Jewish identity is

based on a mix of religious, ethnic, and cultural factors. Bigotry against Jewish people is generally called anti-Semitism.

- As a class, use popcorn, round robin, or other group reading strategy to read [Anti-Defamation League: Antisemitic Attitudes in the USA](#). As students read, have them take notes on what common stereotypes or tropes have historically been used against the Jews. Students should note how the country of Israel is often held to a higher moral standard than other autonomous countries. Students should also recognize that criticizing Israel's government is different from anti-Zionism. Students should be able to comment on how attempting to discredit Israel can be a form of anti-Semitism.
- When students have completed their notes, they should pair with other students and compare notes. As a class, discuss their notes. Students should notice that the poll will come out again in 2024, and it will be interesting to see how the numbers compare to this last poll.

Step 2:

- Break students into six groups and have students research each of the historical stereotypes used in anti-Semitism. Have students read and watch [Anti-Defamation League: Antisemitism Uncovered](#). The clickable links to the six tropes are at the top of the page and halfway down the page under Antisemitic Myths. Students should create a T-chart poster that lists the stereotypes on the left and the arguments against the stereotype on the right. Students can do additional reading and watch the inserted, short videos.
 - [Myth: Jews Have Too Much Power](#)
 - [Myth: Jews Are Disloyal](#)
 - [Myth: Jews Are Greedy](#)
 - [Myth: Jews Killed Jesus](#)
 - [Myth: Jews Use Christian Blood for Religious Rituals](#)
 - [Myth: The Holocaust Didn't Happen](#)
- When students have completed their posters, have them go around the room gallery style and put their sticky note questions on the posters. Have student groups share their posters to the class. Have the class watch the following video (2 minutes, 27 seconds) and help to take class notes on a final T-chart as a class. How can anti-Zionism be a form of anti-Semitism?
 - [Myth: Anti-Zionism or Criticism of Israel Is Never Antisemitic](#)

Step 3:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "How have anti-Semitic tropes been used throughout history to discriminate against and terrorize Jews?" Also ask this unit's question, "How has life changed for Jewish Americans over the last 350 years?" Make note of what was learned on this unit's KWL chart—along with additional questions.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits and for homework, have students read Anti-Defamation League, "Learn to Never Forget," as well as Pew Research Center, "What Americans Know About the Holocaust." While reading, students should take notes in order to rate their understanding of the Holocaust on a scale from 1 to 5. Students can choose to create a rating scale for future classes with suggestions for improving their ranking or work on a plan to increase their own understanding. These options should be delivered in a long paragraph. Students can use the following resources to develop their plan for continued learning:

- [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Learn About the Holocaust](#)
- [Jewish Book Council: Holocaust Books for Young Adults](#)
- [Anti-Defamation League: Books Matter: Children's & Young Adult Literature](#)

Additional Readings and Resources

[Anti-Defamation League: Learn to Never Forget](#) as well as [Pew Research Center: What Americans Know About the Holocaust](#)

Dinnerstein, Leonard. *The Leo Frank Case*. University of Georgia Press, 1987.

Evers, Williamson M. "Recommended Readings on Anti-Semitism." Independent Institute. <https://www.independent.org/issues/article.asp?id=13206>

Friedman, Daniel. "Antiracism, Anti-Semitism, and the False Problem of Jewish Success." *Quillette*, October 25, 2020. <https://quillette.com/2020/10/25/antiracism-anti-semitism-and-the-false-problem-of-jewish-success/>

Ginsberg, Benjamin. *The New American Anti-Semitism*. Independent Institute, 2024.

[Nexus Project: The Nexus Document](#)

Okrent, Daniel. *The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants Out of America*. Scribner's, 2019.

Primary sources on Tom Watson and the Leo Frank case: <https://archive.org/details/AgrarianRebel1938BiographyOfTomWatson> and <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9213>

Saunders, Daniel G. "The Nazis Weren't 'White Supremacists' and Why It Matters." *The Times of Israel*, June 3, 2024. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-nazis-werent-white-supremacists-and-why-it-matters/>

Sowell, Thomas. "Are Jews Generic?" In *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*. Encounter Books, 2005, 65-110.

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 69-99.

[Stand With Us: Nexus Definition of Antisemitism](#)

Woodward, C. Vann. *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*. 1938.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 6A: KWL Chart

KNOW	WONDER	LEARNED
<p><i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i></p>	<p><i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i></p>	<p><i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i></p>