

Countering Antisemitism

Recommended to be paired with [Countering Islamophobia](#)

Overview

This lesson helps students explore, confront and deconstruct stereotypes targeted at Jewish people. Students will learn about the impact of antisemitism and create a campaign countering antisemitism to display in school.

Grade Level

9-12

Time

Total: 70 minutes, plus optional time for assessment

Warm up activity (20 minutes), discussion part 1 (30 minutes), discussion part 2 (20 minutes), optional assessment (varies)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- analyze myths and misconceptions about Jewish people.
- explain the meaning of antisemitism and its effects.
- create a campaign countering antisemitism to display in school.

New Jersey Content Standards

9.4.2.GCA.1: Articulate the role of culture in everyday life by describing one's own culture and comparing it to the cultures of other individuals (e.g., 1.5.2.C2a, 7.1.NL.IPERS.5, 7.1.NL.IPERS.6).

9.4.5.GCA.1: Analyze how culture shapes individual and community perspectives and points of view (e.g., 1.1.5.C2a, RL.5.9, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.8).

9.4.8.GCA.1: Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect (e.g., 1.5.8.C1a).

9.4.8.GCA.2: Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.

9.4.12.GCA.1: Collaborate with individuals to analyze a variety of potential solutions to climate change effects and determine why some solutions (e.g., political, economic, cultural) may work better than others (e.g., SL.11-12.1., HS-ETS1-1, HS-ETS1-2, HS-ETS1-4, 6.3.12.GeoGI.1, 7.1.IH.IPERS.6, 7.1.IL.IPERS.7, 8.2.12.ETW.3).

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5

Resources Needed

- Internet access
- Student devices with internet access
- Instructor device with internet and projector access
- Poster making supplies, audio and video recording equipment, and other materials for assessment activities

Warm Up Activity

1. Begin your work by discussing stereotypes. As a class, define the term. Then identify some stereotypes that you sometimes experience because you are a student. For example, do people sometimes make assumptions about you based on your age or the school you attend? What is wrong about those assumptions? Generalize from your discussion by answering the question: What makes stereotypes destructive?
2. Divide the class into small groups to explore the handout [Antisemitic Stereotypes](#). Have a group member read aloud the first misconception. Have each group member take a turn answering these questions: Have you heard this stereotype before? Did you believe it? Then have the same group member read the explanation on the handout of what makes the misconception inaccurate. Consider the other stereotypes one at a time, following the same procedure. When your group has debunked all four stereotypes, formulate a group statement that completes this prompt: *In this activity about stereotypes, we learned _____*. Have each group share its statement.
3. Ask students, “What happens when stereotypes and prejudice go unchecked?” Students may describe the negative consequences without explicitly using the terms discrimination, oppression, and antisemitism. Introduce the following terms and definitions in the discussion.

discrimination [dih-skrim-uh-ney-shuh n] (*noun*) the treatment of a person or a group of people as less worthy than other people, often because of traits such as race, gender, religion, ethnicity, ability or sexual orientation

Judaism [joo-dee-iz-uhm] (*noun*) the religious faith of Jews, based on the precepts of the Old Testament and in the teachings and commentaries of the rabbis as found in a religious text called the Talmud

Antisemitism [an-tee-sem-i-tiz-uhm] (*noun*) discrimination against or prejudice or hostility toward Jews

oppression [uh-presh-uh n] (*noun*) the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel or unjust manner

stereotype [ster-ee-uh-tahyp] (*noun*) An oversimplified or biased characterization of a group or a “typical” individual member of a group

Discussion: General Antisemitism

1. Show a photo of an [antisemitic flier](#). What is the message of the flier? What does it mean? This flier was distributed in major cities in the U.S. by an antisemitic group called the Goyim Defense League. (Goyim is a Hebrew and Yiddish word used by Jewish people to refer to non-Jewish people.)
2. Share images of the [billboards](#) created by Jewish artists for the artist collective For Freedom. How do these billboards fight antisemitism?
3. Show the video “[Explaining Holocaust Denial](#).” Ask students to reflect on why it’s important to confront Holocaust denial and guide conversation to the points raised in the notes on the video (when one group is targeted, all people are vulnerable; intentionally denying or distorting the historical record threatens communal understanding of how to safeguard democracy and individual rights).

Discussion: Antisemitism Today

1. Let students know that antisemitic incidents are on the rise since the events of October 7. While the events of October 7 are not the focus of this lesson, it is important to acknowledge the impact that these events have had on Jewish people in the United States. Ask students if they are familiar with any of these incidents. (Examples may include [the defacement of a synagogue in Seattle](#) and [a menorah in Juno Beach, Florida](#), [the cancellation of a public Hanukkah celebration in Virginia](#), and [shots fired at a synagogue in Albany](#).)
2. Ask students to reflect on the misconceptions and stereotypes explored in the warm up activity. Are any of those indicated in the incidents that students listed?
3. Share with students that there has been a great deal of debate about whether critiques of the state of Israel are antisemitic. Provide the text of [House Resolution 894](#), a recent bill introduced by Jewish representatives Max Miller and David Kustoff to the House of Representatives that argues these critiques are antisemitic, and “[A Dangerous Conflation](#),” a statement from a collective of Jewish writers, that argues that these critiques are not antisemitic. Ask students to reflect on these sources. What is each of their arguments? Are there any overlaps between what the House Representatives and

writers are saying? Students do not need to come to a conclusion about which statement is correct; simply introduce them to this debate.

4. Ask students to think about the ways that they have seen individuals counteract antisemitism (for example, the billboard art).

Assessment (Optional)

1. Ask students to develop an [ad campaign](#) that counters the antisemitic ideas they observed in the lesson. The campaign can include posters, public service announcements and radio commercials. Display posters around campus and allow students to show PSAs to the student body.
2. When the campaign is finished, use journal writing or Talking Circles to facilitate student reflection. Some suggested reflection questions:
 - What did you learn from the PSAs and posters you observed? Which was your favorite? What were its strengths? Why was it effective?
 - What did you learn from this experience? What about the process stands out for you?
 - How does your campaign against antisemitism relate back to the stories we heard in our antisemitism lesson?

Connecting Islamophobia and Antisemitism

Share with students [that researchers have found](#) that both Islamophobic and antisemitic hate crimes tend to be perpetrated by the same extremist communities, and that individuals with Islamophobic views also tend to hold antisemitic views. Ask students to reflect on whether there overlaps between the Islamophobic and antisemitic stereotypes or incidents covered in these lessons, if they have also completed the Countering Antisemitism lesson.

Next, share [this article](#) about an interfaith group that came together to paint a mural over antisemitic vandalism on a synagogue in Seattle. Ask students to discuss why interfaith solidarity is particularly important in light of current events, and reflect on how they can support these efforts.