

## Lesson Plan 3 - Antisemitism

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### **Course: Jewish History - The Holocaust**

#### **Lesson 1: Introduction: Life before the war & Understanding Antisemitism**

1) Students will watch the following silent video footage taken of a shtetl in Europe pre-WWII

<https://youtu.be/lcofKMRwRzw>

- Students will be given 2-3 minutes to write down their impressions/thoughts of what they saw (questions they had, noticing, wonderings, etc...)
- Students will share out and discuss.

**Question for students:** Why watch this before learning about the Holocaust?

(Teacher will try to elicit that in order to understand what was lost, we need to know what existed and what the Holocaust destroyed.)

**Question for students:** What is antisemitism?

(Student answers will vary)

Teacher: How does Rabbi Sacks define antisemitism?

**Source 1:** Rabbi Sacks: “The Mutating Virus: Understanding Antisemitism,” Keynote Speech in the European Parliament, September 2016

“Antisemitism is not about Jews. It is about anti-Semites. It is about people who cannot accept responsibility for their own failures and have instead to blame someone else. Historically, if you were a Christian at the time of the Crusades, or a German after the First World War, and saw that the world hadn’t turned out the way you believed it would, you blamed the Jews...”

“...let me define antisemitism. Not liking Jews is not antisemitism. We all have people we don’t like. That’s OK; that’s human; it isn’t dangerous. Second, criticising Israel is not antisemitism. I was recently talking to some schoolchildren and they asked me: is criticising Israel antisemitism? I said “No” and I explained the difference. I asked them, “Do you believe you have a right to criticise the British government?” They all put up their hands. Then I asked, “Which of you believes that Britain has no right to exist?” No one put up their hands. “Now you know the difference,” I said, and they all did.

Antisemitism means denying the right of Jews to exist collectively as Jews with the same rights as everyone else. It takes different forms in different ages. In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated because of their religion. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century they

were hated because of their race. Today they are hated because of their nation state, the state of Israel.”

Students will read the quote and discuss the meaning in class discussion or small groups.

2) Students will work on a class KWL chart to share what they know or have learned about the Holocaust, what they wonder about it and what questions they have and hope to get answers to. Review

### **Lesson 2: Introduction: Antisemitism**

1) Students will be placed into 4 groups and each group given a different image to study with a short caption explaining it. They will discuss amongst themselves and then jot down what they notice, conclusions they come to and questions they have.

- The image of Jews being marched out of the Warsaw ghetto
- Kristalnacht photo
- 1942 deportation to Treblinka
- 1946 Polish pogrom

Source: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-timeline-of-the-holocaust/>

2) The website above will be reviewed and the pictures explained in the context of the chronology of the Holocaust.

3) Students will read the following quote:

**Source 2:** Rabbi Sacks: “I remember visiting Auschwitz, walking through the gates with their chilling inscription, ‘Work makes you free’, and feeling the chill winds of Hell. It was a numbing experience. There were no words you could say. It was not until I entered one of the blocks where there was nothing but an old recording of the Jewish memorial prayer for the dead that I broke down and cried. It was then that I realised that prayer makes grief articulate. It gives us the words when there are no words. It gives sacred space to the tears that otherwise would have nowhere to go.”

*The Power of Ideas*, p. 81

**Question for students:** What is Rabbi Sacks saying about words?

- The words above the gates of Auschwitz
- “no words you could say”
- the words of Kaddish
- “prayer...gives us the words when there are no words.”

Discuss the insufficiency of words to convey meaning about experiences when survivors tried to talk. Examples: Aharon Appelfeld writing in Hebrew (a concise language), Elie Wiesel refusing to write until he was convinced in early 1950s and didn't publish until 1955, Paul Celan - <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/11/23/how-paul-celan-reconceived-language-for-a-post-holocaust-world>

video of survivors explaining why they didn't or couldn't speak about it:

<https://www.britannica.com/video/175117/survivors-decisions-Holocaust-experiences-video-Why-They>

- awareness of how impossible it felt for survivors to share their stories.
- how some survivors were silent for many years
- some survivors expressed their experiences in art (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/artists-responses-to-the-holocaust>)
- vocabulary of Holocaust being almost a separate language