

# What is Antisemitism?

Episode 7 • Featuring Noa Tishby | High School Lesson Plan (Grades 9–12) | 45 Minutes

<b>Subject</b>	World History / Government / ELA / Ethnic Studies	<b>Grade Level</b>	9–12
<b>Duration</b>	45 minutes	<b>Presenter</b>	Noa Tishby (video)
<b>Episode</b>	Episode 7: What is Antisemitism?	<b>Format</b>	Video + Socratic Discussion + Analysis

## ■ California & Common Core Standards Alignment (Grades 9–12)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 / 11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual/media evidence to support analysis; distinguish what is explicitly stated from inferences.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 / 11-12.2	Determine central ideas of primary/secondary sources; provide accurate summaries that make clear the relationships among key details.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 / 11-12.6	Compare the point of view of two or more authors; evaluate the author's purpose and rhetorical choices.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8 / 11-12.8	Assess the extent to which reasoning and evidence support the author's claims; identify false reasoning and propaganda techniques.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in collaborative discussions; propel conversations by posing questions that probe reasoning and evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.1	Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and sufficient evidence; address counterclaims.
CA HSS 10.5 / 10.8	Causes and consequences of WWI and WWII; analyze the rise of totalitarianism; the Holocaust as culmination of racial antisemitism.
CA HSS 10.1 / 11.1	Democratic ideals; analyze how minority rights and democratic values interact; civil society obligations.
CA Gov/Civics 12.2	Analyze the origins and importance of civil rights and civil liberties; evaluate how societies protect — or fail to protect — minority groups.
CA Ethnic Studies (AB 101)	Examine how racism, prejudice, and discrimination have affected historically marginalized communities, including Jewish Americans.
IHRA Working Definition	California AB 715 requires schools to use IHRA's working definition of antisemitism in nondiscrimination enforcement.

## ■ Learning Objectives

- Analyze antisemitism as a shape-shifting ideological system, not merely a set of individual prejudices.

- Trace the historical evolution of antisemitism across distinct eras, identifying continuity and transformation.
- Evaluate the rhetorical and propagandistic strategies used to make Jew-hatred appear rational or scientific.
- Apply the concept of 'scapegoating' as a sociological mechanism and identify its patterns across history.
- Synthesize Noa Tishby's 'canary in the coal mine' argument and evaluate its validity as a democratic warning.
- Distinguish between religious, racial, and political antisemitism and explain how each emerged from its historical context.
- Construct a written argument using evidence from the video to explain why antisemitism matters to non-Jews.

## ■ Materials & Supplies

Required Materials	
• Video: Episode 7 – 'What is Antisemitism?' featuring Noa Tishby (projected or individual devices)	
• Student Analytical Viewing Guide handout (provided separately)	
• Vocabulary & Rhetorical Analysis Worksheet (provided separately)	
• Map of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa (printed or projected)	
• Whiteboard/chart paper for class-wide synthesis	
• Sticky notes in two colors (for Socratic seminar prep — optional)	
• Index cards (for exit ticket)	
• Optional: excerpts from Elie Wiesel's Night, IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, or Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism	

## ■ Step-by-Step Lesson Procedure (45 Minutes)

0–5 min	<b>WARM-UP</b>	<p>Display the following prompt — students write for 3 minutes without discussion: 'Throughout history, certain minority groups have been blamed for the problems of entire societies. Why do you think this happens? What conditions make scapegoating effective?' After writing, take 2–3 quick verbal responses. Do NOT say the word 'antisemitism' yet. Write student responses on the board and tell them: 'We'll return to these at the end of class.'</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: This prompt activates prior knowledge from any history course without presupposing Jewish content. Persian-Jewish students in particular may have powerful prior knowledge from family history — be prepared to honor that without putting anyone on the spot.</i></p>

5–18 min	<b>VIDEO</b>	<p>Distribute the Analytical Viewing Guide. Play Episode 7: 'What is Antisemitism?' (approx. 8–10 min). Students annotate their guide while watching — tracking claims, evidence, and rhetorical strategies. After the video: 60 seconds of silent writing. Then ask: 'What is one thing Noa said that surprised you, challenged you, or confirmed something you already believed?' 2–3 students share.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Noa Tishby is Israeli-American — charismatic, direct, and deliberately accessible. High schoolers respond well to her credibility as a witness, not just an educator. Brief bio on the board is worthwhile. Note: the video briefly references images of Israelis/IDF as monsters — pause at this moment and name it explicitly as a contemporary example of the blood libel stereotype updated for the modern era. This connects the historical to the current without derailing the lesson.</i></p>
18–25 min	<b>MAP ACTIVITY</b>	<p>Display or distribute a map of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Students work in pairs to complete the following analytical task: (1) Mark the location of ancient Israel/Judea and the Roman destruction of the Temple (70 AD). (2) Trace the major routes of Jewish dispersal: Babylonian exile, Roman diaspora, expulsion from Spain (1492), Eastern European migrations, 20th-century movements. (3) Answer the analysis question: 'What is the relationship between geography, minority status, and vulnerability to persecution? Use the Jewish diaspora as your case study.' Pairs share one insight with the class.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: High schoolers can handle a more complex map task than middle schoolers. Push them to see geography as a factor in historical vulnerability — this also connects to Ethnic Studies frameworks about displacement and diaspora.</i></p>
25–33 min	<b>GROUP ANALYSIS</b>	<p>Divide class into 4 groups. Each group analyzes one ERA using their viewing guide: Group A: Ancient / Greco-Roman antisemitism — What made Jewish monotheism threatening? Group B: Medieval Christian antisemitism — How did theological claims become instruments of violence? Group C: Enlightenment / Racial Pseudo-science — How did 'scientific' language disguise prejudice? Group D: Modern / Political antisemitism — How has Israel and Zionism become the new target? Each group must: (1) identify the ideological justification used, (2) name one specific propaganda technique (scapegoating, dehumanization, false attribution, pseudo-science), and (3) connect their era to a contemporary parallel they know of — from any group, not just Jews. Groups have 5 minutes; each presents in 30–45 seconds.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: The contemporary parallel task is the high school differentiator — it pushes students to transfer the analytical framework beyond Jewish history. Accept a wide range of answers (Jim Crow, anti-Asian COVID scapegoating, anti-Muslim rhetoric post-9/11, etc.).</i></p>
33–41 min	<b>SOCRATIC DISCUSSION</b>	<p>Use these questions as the arc of a Socratic seminar or structured discussion: <b>OPENING:</b> 'Noa calls antisemitism a shape-shifting conspiracy theory. What is a conspiracy theory? Why is that framing significant — and not just calling it prejudice?' <b>CORE:</b> 'Jews have been accused of being simultaneously too rich AND too poor, too powerful AND too weak, too capitalist AND too communist. What does this logical impossibility tell us about the nature of antisemitism as an ideology?' <b>CRITICAL:</b> 'Noa argues that the worst accusations of any era get applied to Jews. Today that includes racism, colonialism, and white supremacy. Is this a valid argument? What evidence would support or challenge it?' <b>SYNTHESIS:</b> 'Return to the warm-up: Does the canary in the coal mine metaphor answer your original question about why scapegoating is so effective? Why or why not?'</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Do NOT feel pressure to resolve the Israel/Zionism question today — Noa herself says 'we'll get to that later.' If students push, acknowledge it: 'That's a complex question that deserves its own lesson. For today, we're focusing on the historical pattern.'</i></p>

41–45 min	<b>EXIT TICKET</b>	<p>Individual written response on an index card: FRONT: In 3–4 sentences, argue why antisemitism should be understood as a systemic ideology rather than individual prejudice. Use at least two vocabulary terms. BACK: Noa says antisemitism is the 'canary in the coal mine' for democratic societies. Do you find this argument persuasive? Why or why not? Write one specific piece of evidence — from the video or your own knowledge — to support your position. Collect all cards.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: The back-of-card question assesses higher-order thinking (evaluation/argumentation) while the front assesses content comprehension. Sort into three piles after class to inform your next instructional move.</i></p>
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## ■ Differentiation Strategies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-teach Tier 3 vocabulary before class using the worksheet</li> <li>• Provide sentence frames for exit ticket: "Antisemitism is a systemic ideology because..."</li> <li>• Allow bilingual glossary or home-language notes</li> <li>• Pair with bilingual partner during group work</li> <li>• Accept partially bilingual responses — credit the thinking, not just the English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign pre-reading: IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism + one critique of it</li> <li>• Add analysis layer: Compare Noa Tishby's rhetorical strategy to an academic source (Hannah Arendt, Deborah Lipstadt)</li> <li>• Extended essay prompt: "Evaluate the IHRA definition as a policy tool: does it clarify or restrict?"</li> <li>• Socratic seminar leadership role: develop follow-up questions in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallery Walk for era analysis — post group work on walls, students rotate and annotate</li> <li>• Give students 2 sticky notes before Socratic seminar: one for a question, one for an evidence point — stand to share</li> <li>• Map activity at board rather than at desks</li> <li>• Standing option during video viewing</li> <li>• Allow walking brief between group work and discussion</li> </ul>
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## ■ Optional Extensions & Enrichment

■ Music	■ Math / Science	■ Art / Media
<p>Listen to Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13 "Babi Yar" (first movement). Discuss: How does Shostakovich use music to bear witness to the 1941 massacre of 33,771 Jews at Babi Yar, Ukraine? Why was this symphony banned by Soviet authorities? Connection: artistic resistance to state-sponsored antisemitism.</p>	<p>Statistical Analysis: Using pre- and post-WWII Jewish population data by country (available from Yad Vashem), calculate percentage losses by nation. Graph the results. Then: compare to current global Jewish population (~15 million) and the pre-Holocaust population (~18 million). What do the numbers reveal that a narrative cannot? What do they obscure?</p>	<p>Primary Source Visual Analysis: Examine two propaganda posters — one from Nazi Germany and one from contemporary anti-Israel media (teacher-curated). Identify: What visual stereotypes are shared? What rhetorical technique does each use? Write a 1-page comparative visual analysis using academic vocabulary from the lesson.</p>

### ■ Learning Extension (Homework / Multi-Day):

Assign the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism (freely available online) alongside one short critique of it. Students write a structured argument: Does the IHRA definition adequately capture what Noa Tishby describes as 'shape-shifting' antisemitism? Address both the definition's strengths and limitations. Minimum 400 words, MLA or Chicago citation format.

## ■ Extended Teacher Notes

### ■ About Noa Tishby

Noa Tishby is an Israeli-American actress, producer, and author of 'Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth' (2021). She served as Israel's first Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism and Delegitimization before resigning in 2022. Her presentation style is deliberately accessible — she's speaking to a general audience, not an academic one. High school students should understand this as a rhetorical choice, not a limitation. Her credibility as an Israeli Jewish woman who experienced antisemitism firsthand adds ethos the lesson should leverage.

### ■ The Israel/Zionism Moment

Noa deliberately defers the Zionism discussion ('we'll get to that later'). This is the right pedagogical move for this lesson. If students push — and they will — a one-sentence response is sufficient: 'We'll address that in a dedicated lesson. Today's focus is the historical pattern that makes that conversation necessary.' Do not let the current political context hijack the historical content.

### ■ Persian-Jewish Students

If you teach students from Persian-Jewish families, this content is not abstract to them. Families who fled Iran after 1979 experienced state-sponsored antisemitism in living memory. Do not call on students to speak for their communities, but do create space for those who choose to share. The history of Persian Jewry — including the Purim story, one of the oldest recorded antisemitic genocidal attempts — is deeply relevant here.

### ■ Racial vs. Religious Antisemitism

The shift from religious to racial antisemitism in the 18th-19th centuries is conceptually challenging. The key insight: conversion could escape religious antisemitism, but racial antisemitism made escape impossible. This is why the Nazis classified converts to Christianity as Jewish if they had Jewish grandparents. This distinction is crucial for understanding the Holocaust as something qualitatively different from earlier persecution.

### ■ The IDF/Israel Imagery Moment

The script references images of Israelis and IDF soldiers depicted as monsters appearing mid-video. Do not skip past this. Name it: 'What Noa is showing us here is the blood libel updated — instead of Jews drinking Christian blood, the Israeli military is depicted as a monster devouring civilians. The image changed; the structure of the accusation did not.' This is a teachable moment, not a distraction.

### ■ On the 'Canary' Argument

Noa's canary metaphor is historically well-supported. When the Weimar Republic failed to protect Jews, it was already surrendering to authoritarianism. In 14th-century Spain, targeting Jews preceded the Inquisition's broader persecution of conversos, Muslims, and dissenters. In Soviet Russia, antisemitism was a reliable indicator of totalitarian consolidation. Encourage students to evaluate this argument with evidence, not just accept it.