

Parent / Guardian Letter

Episode 7: What is Antisemitism? | Grades 9–12

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Our class is continuing its video lesson series examining Jewish history, identity, and the Jewish people's role in world history. This unit integrates meaningfully with our study of world history, government, civil rights, and — where applicable — ethnic studies.

Our upcoming lesson focuses on **Episode 7: What is Antisemitism?** — presented by **Noa Tishby**, an Israeli-American actress, author, and former Israeli Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism. In this video, Noa provides a historically rigorous, intellectually engaging explanation of antisemitism: its origins as a term, its historical evolution across millennia, how it has adapted to different eras, and why understanding it matters to democratic societies as a whole.

What Your Student Will Learn

- The etymology and historical coinage of the term 'antisemitism' (Wilhelm Marr, 1879)
- The distinction between religious, racial, and political antisemitism — and how each emerged
- Historical examples including the Greco-Roman period, the Medieval blood libel, the Enlightenment, and the Holocaust
- How pseudo-scientific racism in the 18th–19th centuries contributed to the Holocaust
- The 'canary in the coal mine' thesis: antisemitism as an early warning of democratic breakdown
- Why antisemitism is classified as a conspiracy theory and systemic ideology, not merely prejudice
- How to analyze rhetorical strategies in persuasive media (ethos, logos, pathos, metaphor)

Academic Standards & Legal Context

This lesson aligns with California History-Social Science Standards (10.5, 10.8, 12.2), Common Core ELA standards for grades 9–12 (analysis, argumentation, evidence-based writing), and California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. It also aligns with **California AB 715** (the Antisemitism Awareness Act), which requires schools to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism in nondiscrimination enforcement. Teaching students to understand and recognize antisemitism is not only appropriate — it is increasingly required by law.

Content Notes for Parents

This lesson addresses serious historical content, including: the medieval blood libel accusation and its consequences, violent pogroms, the Holocaust, and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. All content is presented with appropriate historical context and analytical frameworks. High school students are expected to engage critically with difficult material — this lesson is designed to develop that capacity.

The lesson also briefly raises the topic of Israel and Zionism as a contemporary manifestation of antisemitism — per the video script, this is not the lesson's focus and will be addressed more fully in a subsequent lesson. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and analyze arguments, not to adopt

predetermined conclusions.

How You Can Support Learning at Home

We encourage you to discuss this lesson with your student. Some conversation starters:

- ◆ 'What does 'shape-shifting' mean when applied to antisemitism? What examples did you learn about?'
- ◆ 'Why does Noa Tishby say antisemitism is the canary in the coal mine for democracy?'
- ◆ 'What's the difference between religious and racial antisemitism? Why does that distinction matter?'
- ◆ 'If you or your family has any experience with antisemitism or with Jewish history, would you be comfortable sharing it?'

Thank you for your partnership in your student's education. If you have questions, concerns, or resources you'd like to share with our class, please reach out.

Respectfully,

Classroom Teacher

✂ **Please return this slip by:** _____

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

■ I have read and understood the parent letter about Episode 7: What is Antisemitism?

■ I have questions or concerns. Please contact me at: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____