

# What is Antisemitism?

Episode 7 • Featuring Noa Tishby | Middle School Lesson Plan (Grades 6–8) | 45 Minutes

<b>Subject</b>	Social Studies / World History / ELA	<b>Grade Level</b>	6–8
<b>Duration</b>	45 minutes	<b>Presenter</b>	Noa Tishby (video)
<b>Episode</b>	Episode 7: What is Antisemitism?	<b>Format</b>	Video + Discussion + Activity

## ■ California & Common Core Standards Alignment

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1	Cite specific textual/video evidence to support analysis.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2	Determine central ideas; provide accurate summary of primary/secondary sources.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4	Determine meaning of domain-specific vocabulary (antisemitism, diaspora, pogrom).
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7	Integrate visual information from video with print texts.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1	Engage in collaborative discussions; build on others' ideas.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.4	Present claims and findings using appropriate facts and relevant details.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.1	Write arguments to support claims with relevant evidence (exit ticket).
CA HSS 7.1 / 7.6	Analyze the influence of religion on the development of Western civilization; study medieval Europe.
CA HSS 10.5 / 10.8	Causes and consequences of WWI/WWII; the Holocaust and human rights.
CA CCSS History-Social Science	Analyze how prejudice and discrimination have affected individuals and groups in history.

## ■ Learning Objectives

- Define antisemitism accurately, including its etymology and history as a term.
- Explain why antisemitism is considered a 'shape-shifting' form of hatred.
- Trace the historical evolution of antisemitism from ancient times through the modern era.
- Connect the Holocaust to the long history of Jewish persecution — not as an isolated event.
- Analyze the 'canary in the coal mine' metaphor and explain its broader societal implications.
- Evaluate how stereotypes about Jews have been weaponized throughout history.
- Recognize examples of antisemitic rhetoric and distinguish it from legitimate criticism.

## ■ Materials & Supplies

### Required Materials

- Video: Episode 7 – 'What is Antisemitism?' featuring Noa Tishby (projected or individual devices)

- Student Viewing Guide handout (provided separately)
- Vocabulary Worksheet (provided separately)
- Map of the ancient Near East / Mediterranean world (printed or projected)
- Whiteboard or chart paper + markers
- Sticky notes (for movement activity — optional)
- Index cards (for exit ticket)
- Timer (for pacing)

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

0–5 min	<b>WARM-UP</b>	<p>Activate prior knowledge. Display on board: 'What does the word HATE mean? Can you think of a time in history when a whole group of people was hated just for who they were?' Students write a 3–4 sentence response on an index card. 2–3 volunteers share aloud. Teacher writes responses on board without evaluation — simply listing. Transition: 'Today we're going to look at the oldest and most shape-shifting form of group hatred in human history.'</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Keep responses on board — you'll return to them at the end. Do NOT use the word 'antisemitism' yet. Let Noa introduce it.</i></p>
5–18 min	<b>VIDEO VIEWING</b>	<p>Distribute Viewing Guide. Play Episode 7: 'What is Antisemitism?' (approx. 8–10 min). Students complete the guided notes section of their handout while watching. Noa Tishby's charismatic delivery will hold attention — allow students to experience the video without interruption. After video: 30-second silent processing time.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Preview the video yourself first. If your school has content restrictions, pre-screen for any images referenced in the script (Israelis/IDF depicted as monsters) and decide how you will handle that moment for your grade level. Brief pause and discussion is appropriate.</i></p>
18–25 min	<b>MAP ACTIVITY</b>	<p>Display or distribute map of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean. Students work in pairs: (1) Mark the location of ancient Israel/Jerusalem. (2) Draw arrows showing directions Jews were expelled/dispersed — to Babylon, Rome, Western Europe, Iberian Peninsula, Middle East. (3) Answer: 'Why does it matter WHERE Jewish communities ended up?' Share: 2 pairs share their maps and reasoning aloud.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: If individual maps aren't available, do this as a whole-class activity on a projected map. This is also a great movement moment — let students walk up to the board.</i></p>
25–33 min	<b>GROUP WORK</b>	<p>Divide class into 4 groups. Assign each group one era from the handout: (A) Ancient/Greco-Roman, (B) Medieval Europe, (C) Enlightenment/Scientific Racism, (D) Modern/Contemporary. Each group identifies: the form antisemitism took, one specific example from the video, and one stereotyped accusation used against Jews. Groups create a 3-line summary to share with the class.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Circulate actively. Listen for misconceptions — especially the idea that antisemitism is only about religion. Gently redirect: 'Noa said Jews were targeted for their religion, their ethnicity, their culture, AND their perceived influence. What does that tell us?'</i></p>

33–40 min	<b>GUIDED DISCUSSION</b>	<p>Bring the class back together. Use these discussion questions in sequence: 1. What does it mean to call antisemitism a 'shape-shifting conspiracy theory'? Can you give an example? 2. Noa describes antisemitism as a 'canary in the coal mine.' What does that metaphor mean? What is the 'dangerous gas' it warns about? 3. Jews have been accused of being too rich AND too poor, too religious AND too secular. What does that tell us about antisemitism? 4. Why isn't antisemitism just 'disliking Jewish people'? Why is it described as a form of racism?</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Don't rush to fill silence. Let students sit with hard questions. If discussion lags, have students turn and talk to a partner for 60 seconds, then share out.</i></p>
40–45 min	<b>EXIT TICKET</b>	<p>Individual written assessment. Students write on an index card: FRONT: In 2–3 sentences, explain what antisemitism is, using at least two vocabulary words from today. BACK: Why is antisemitism described as a 'canary in the coal mine'? What does that tell us about its danger — even to people who are NOT Jewish? Collect all cards before students leave.</p> <p>■ <i>Teacher Note: Review cards before next class. Sort into three piles: Got it / Mostly there / Needs reteaching. Use patterns to guide your next lesson's opening.</i></p>

### ■ Differentiation Strategies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-teach vocabulary (see worksheet) before the lesson</li> <li>• Provide bilingual glossary if available</li> <li>• Allow Viewing Guide with sentence frames</li> <li>• Partner with bilingual peer during group work</li> <li>• Accept responses in home language + English translation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add analysis question: "Compare how antisemitism in Medieval Europe and modern anti-Zionism use similar rhetorical strategies."</li> <li>• Research extension: Read one primary source (e.g., Nazi propaganda poster or medieval church decree)</li> <li>• Write a paragraph arguing whether the term "antisemitism" should be updated or replaced</li> <li>• Create a timeline connecting 5 eras of antisemitism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallery Walk option: Post the 4 group-work eras on walls; students rotate and annotate with sticky notes</li> <li>• Stand up/sit down during video for key terms (raise hand when you hear "diaspora")</li> <li>• Use whiteboards for exit ticket instead of index cards</li> <li>• Allow standing desk or movement breaks between activities</li> </ul>
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### ■ Optional Extensions & Enrichment

■ Music	■ Math / Science	■ Art
<p>Listen to "Strange Fruit" (Billie Holiday) or "Babi Yar" (Shostakovich Symphony No. 13). Discuss: How do composers and performers respond to persecution? Compare the emotional language of music to the factual language of history. Connection: Both address dehumanization of a minority group.</p>	<p>Data Activity: Research the Jewish population in Europe before and after WWII (1933 vs. 1945). Create a bar graph or pie chart showing the reduction by country. Calculate what percentage of European Jews were murdered. Discuss: What do statistics reveal that a narrative cannot? What do they hide?</p>	<p>Visual Analysis: Examine medieval anti-Jewish caricatures or Nazi-era propaganda posters (teacher-curated, age-appropriate). Identify artistic techniques used to dehumanize (exaggeration, symbolism, color). Students create a counter-image: a portrait of a Jewish person rendered with dignity and accuracy.</p>

### ■ Learning Extension (Homework / Next Class):

Read a first-person account: Select a brief excerpt from Elie Wiesel's *Night* (Ch. 1–2), or a survivor testimony from USC Shoah Foundation (available at [iwatch.usc.edu](http://iwatch.usc.edu)). Students write a one-page response: How does this

testimony connect to what Noa said about antisemitism being the 'culmination of a long history of dehumanization'?

## ■ Extended Teacher Notes

### ■ Noa Tishby as Presenter

Noa Tishby is an Israeli-American actress, author, and activist best known for her book 'Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth.' Her charismatic, direct delivery style is engaging for middle schoolers. Her credibility as an Israeli Jewish woman speaking about antisemitism adds authenticity. Brief bio on board optional.

### ■ Sensitive Content Alert

The script references images of Israelis and IDF soldiers depicted as monsters. Preview the video and decide whether to pause and discuss this moment directly, or simply continue. Either choice is pedagogically valid. Recommended: pause briefly and name it — 'This is an example of modern antisemitism Noa is describing, where the Jewish state is portrayed with the same monstrous imagery used against Jews in medieval times.'

### ■ The Word 'Antisemitism'

Students often ask why it's spelled as one unhyphenated word. Use this as a teachable moment: the unhyphenated spelling is intentional — it signals that this is a distinct, specific term referring only to hatred of Jews, not a compound word about all Semitic peoples. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) recommends this spelling.

### ■ Blood Libel Discussion

The blood libel accusation (1144, Norwich) is horrifying and still psychologically active in antisemitic propaganda. Middle schoolers can handle this with appropriate framing. Emphasize: this was a lie with zero evidence, yet it was believed for centuries and is still circulating online today. This is why media literacy matters.

### ■ Zionism Preview

Noa references Zionism briefly ('we'll get to that later'). Do not let this derail today's lesson. If students ask, a one-sentence response is sufficient: 'Zionism is the movement for Jewish self-determination in their ancestral homeland. We'll study that in a future lesson.'

### ■ Exit Ticket Usage

The exit ticket is formative, not summative. Use it to gauge whether students can define antisemitism accurately (not just as 'hating Jews' but as a shape-shifting conspiracy theory targeting Jewish people across religion, ethnicity, culture, and now national identity) and whether they grasp the 'canary' metaphor as a warning about broader societal breakdown.