

LESSON PLAN

Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist

Compelling Question: Why is there an increase in antisemitic incidents and what can we do about it?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-1	2-6	45 minutes	Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language.
7-8	9-12		

LESSON OVERVIEW

The surge of antisemitic incidents in the United States is alarming to many. Several reported incidents include graffiti using swastikas, bomb threats, vandalism and shootings, bomb threats targeting Jewish Community Centers (JCC) and Jewish institutions across the country.

Over the past 10 years, ADL has recorded a record number of antisemitic incidents across the U.S. Since 2015, incidents have surged to a record 893% increase across the country. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn about and reflect on current antisemitic incidents, understand how people and groups can make a difference, and explore the various ways different people and groups can act as allies, advocates and activists in order to enact change.

(Note to Teacher: It is important to consider that you may have students in your classroom who are Jewish. Be prepared and sensitive to those students, taking into account the extent to which they are a minority or majority of your classroom and plan accordingly. Some students who are Jewish may feel relieved and comfortable discussing these issues in class and others may feel nervous, uncomfortable or angry to be talking about a sensitive topic. You may want to talk with those students in advance and determine how they can discuss this topic while feeling comfortable and safe. Consider reflecting on this resource: [6 Tips for Supporting Jewish Students in the Classroom](#))

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will define and provide examples for incidents of antisemitism.
- Students will explore the different ways to be an ally, advocate and activist and what roles different people can play in making a difference.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- Read the lesson plan



Web Related Connections

LESSON PLANS

[Antisemitism Around the World: Global 100](#)

[Antisemitism After the Holocaust](#)

[Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols](#)

Other Resources:

[Awareness to Action](#)

[Antisemitism Today](#)

[6 Ways to Act as an Ally](#)

[Pyramid of Hate](#)

[Annual Audit of Antisemitic Events](#)

Key Words

activism
advocacy
bias
challenge
discrimination
immigrant
institutional
interpersonal
stereotype
systems of bias

PROCEDURES

Opening: Information Sharing: What is Antisemitism?

1. Ask students: *What is antisemitism?* Elicit and define **antisemitism** as follows:
Antisemitism refers to prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.
2. Ask students to share any examples of antisemitism they have seen or heard about. Explain that antisemitism can include attitudes, stereotypes, incidents, or acts of bias. Explain that a stereotype is a belief about a person or group of people, prejudice is an attitude about a person or group of people. Record the examples that students share and include the following on the list:
 - Swastikas.
 - Nazi symbols.
 - Throwing a penny at a Jewish person.
 - Thinking that all Jews are rich and/or cheap.
 - A Jewish person being assaulted or attacked.
 - Jokes about the Holocaust.
 - Denying housing to a Jewish family.
 - Anti-Jewish graffiti.
 - Vandalism in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries.
 - Antisemitic comments made on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
 - Bullying a Jewish student because of their Jewish identity.
3. Ask students if they have heard about any recent incidents of antisemitism. After eliciting responses from students, share a few data points from [ADL's Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#). Consider sharing the overall incident total, the percentage difference from the previous year and K-12 specific data.
4. Engage students in a discussion by asking:
 - What thoughts and feelings come up for you in hearing about these antisemitic incidents?
 - Why do you think these incidents are happening now?
 - Who are the targets of these incidents and do you think it involves Jewish and non-Jewish people? Explain.
 - What do you think the perpetrators of these incidents are trying to accomplish?
 - What impact does it have on the Jewish community?
 - What impact does it have on the larger society?
 - What should we, as a society, do about it?
 - What can we do within our school community to stand up to antisemitism?

Defining Terminology: Ally, Advocate, Activist

1. Explain to students that while it is important to be able to identify an incident of bias, for example antisemitism, it is also important to stand up against antisemitism and other forms of bias when we see it. There are lots of ways to show that hate has no place in our school and larger community, so let's talk about it.

2. Ask students to define the words: **Ally**, **Advocate** and **Activist** and come up with the following definitions, asking students to come up with an example for each. (There are examples in the definitions but first see if students can come up with examples.) Explain that there is overlap between the three; sometimes a person or group is acting as an ally and an advocate at the same time.
 - **Ally:** Someone who speaks out on behalf of someone else or takes actions that are supportive of someone else. *Example: Hearing someone use an antisemitic slur and reaching out to that person and telling them you think that was wrong.*
 - **Advocate:** Someone who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy. *Example: Writing a letter to your Congressperson to urge her/him to support legislation about antisemitism.*
 - **Activist:** Someone who gets involved in activities that are meant to achieve political or social change; this also includes being a member of an organization which is working on change. *Example: Participating in a demonstration that is focusing on antisemitic hate crimes.*
3. Explain that what the three roles have in common is that they involve people who stand up to bias, bullying or hate in some way.
4. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking:
 - Why do people engage in ally, advocacy and activist behavior?
 - What impact does acting as an ally, advocate and activist have on the people engaging in it?
 - What message does it send to others?
 - How do we engage in ally, advocate and activist behaviors within our school community?



Small Group Activity: Acting as an Ally, Advocate or Activist

1. Explain to students that now they have learned about what antisemitism is and how they can act as allies, advocates and/or activists, they are going to think about what they can do as young people and leaders when they see or hear something antisemitic within their school community.
2. Begin by referring back to the list of antisemitic incidents that students generated at the start of the lesson. Divide students into small groups of 3-4 and assign each group one of the examples of antisemitism from their list. As a reminder, that list may include:
 - Swastikas.
 - Nazi symbols.
 - Throwing a penny at a Jewish person.
 - Thinking that all Jews are rich and/or cheap.
 - A Jewish person being assaulted or attacked.
 - Jokes about the Holocaust.
 - Denying housing to a Jewish family.
 - Anti-Jewish graffiti.
 - Vandalism in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries.
 - Antisemitic comments made on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
3. Ask students to brainstorm ways that they can respond to their assigned incident as an ally, advocate and activist. Ask them to generate at least two examples for each category. Give students 10 minutes to complete this task.
4. Have each small group share their ideas with the whole class.

Closing

Engage students in a whip around where every student shares one way they can act as an ally, advocate or activist in the future.

Optional Follow-Up Activity

Add in a reading standard... Find a current article about teenagers taking steps to combat antisemitism. Print copies of the article for students to read in small groups. Direct students to reflect upon the article thinking about things like: how were students able to effectively act as allies? How were students able to effectively act as advocates? What can we learn from this group of students to be better allies and advocates within our own community?

Looking for an article? Consider this one: "[Subway Riders Scrub Anti-Semitic Graffiti, as 'Decent Human Beings'](#)".

Common Core Anchor Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
Language
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
Self-Management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.