



Educator's Guide

The Oslo Accords

After years at war, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) sought out a change of pace. In January 1993, the Israelis and the Palestinians opened secret negotiations on neutral ground in Oslo, Norway.

In September of 1993, a series of peace agreements called the Oslo Accords were signed by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat. However, within eight months, terror reigned down on Israel once again.

A new agreement called Oslo Two was signed in an attempt to re-establish peace. Many Israelis and Palestinians were hopeful about the new agreement, yet the haunting events that followed still impact the Israeli-Palestinian peace process today.

[Link to video](#)

Big Ideas

1. The story of Israel and the Palestinians' path to peace is a complex and divisive one.
2. Despite the hope that the Oslo Accords brought, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved.
3. The Oslo Accords taught that courageous leadership still requires consensus from the population.

Essential Questions

1. What was the legacy of the Oslo Accords on Israeli and Palestinian societies?
2. What factors led to the Oslo Accords, and how did this agreement change the relationship between Israel and the PLO?
3. Why have subsequent attempts at peace failed, and what are the major obstacles to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Review Questions

1. What was the PLO's main tactic in the 60s, 70s, and 80s?
 - a. Diplomacy
 - b. Nonviolent protest
 - c. **International terrorism**
 - d. Peace negotiations

2. What was the First Intifada?
 - a. A Palestinian political party
 - b. A peace agreement between Israel and the PLO
 - c. **A popular uprising in the Palestinian territories**
 - d. An Israeli military operation in Lebanon

3. What was the effect of the nightly news coverage of the First Intifada?
 - a. **It created sympathy for the Palestinians**
 - b. It made the Palestinians sympathetic to Israel
 - c. It had no effect on public opinion
 - d. It increased support for violence

4. What event led the PLO to start making peace with Israel?
 - a. **The Gulf War**
 - b. The First Intifada
 - c. The Madrid Peace Conference
 - d. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

5. Which two world leaders worked to bring Israel and its Arab neighbors into the same room at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference?
 - a. **George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev**
 - b. Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin
 - c. Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac
 - d. Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin

6. Which of the following facts are false concerning the division of the West Bank / Judea and Samaria according to the Oslo Accord agreement?
 - a. Area A is under full Palestinian control
 - b. Area B is under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control

- c. Area C is under full Israeli control
 - d. Area D is under UN control**
- 7.** Which Israeli leader was assassinated after the signing of the Oslo Accords in November 1995?
- a. Shimon Peres
 - b. Yitzhak Rabin**
 - c. Benjamin Netanyahu
 - d. Moshe Dayan
- 8.** How did the director of the Mossad learn about the secret meetings between Israelis and Palestinians in Oslo?
- a. He was invited to attend the meetings
 - b. He hacked into the participants' email accounts
 - c. He had a bugged chair in Mahmoud Abbas' office**
 - d. He received anonymous tips from a whistleblower
- 9.** True or **false**: the Israelis and Palestinians made peace as a result of the Oslo Accords.
- 10.** Who was Yasser Arafat?
- a. The Prime Minister of Israel in 1992
 - b. The leader of the PLO**
 - c. The Norwegian ambassador to Israel
 - d. The director of the Mossad

Discussion Questions

1. The legacy of Oslo

After watching the video about the history of the Oslo Accords and everything that has transpired since, what do you think is the legacy of the Accords? Did the Oslo Accords accomplish anything or not?

2. The Abraham Accords and their impact on peace with the Palestinians

In 2020, Israel signed normalization agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made the [argument](#) that instead of attempting to achieve peace with the Palestinians and only then with

the rest of the Arab world (as laid out in the [Saudi Peace Initiative](#)), Israel should first make peace with the Arab world and then with the Palestinians.

- Do the Abraham Accords give you hope that Israel and the Palestinians can ultimately reach a peace agreement or do you think they are an impediment to peace between Israel and the Palestinians?
- Do you agree or disagree with prime minister Netanyahu's assertion that peace with the Arab world can ultimately lead to peace with the Palestinians?

3. Questions of leadership and heroism

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was a giant in Israel. He was a celebrated war hero in both 1948 and 1967 and authorized the raid on Entebbe amongst other impressive accomplishments. Throughout the Oslo Accords, different questions about leadership arose. Take some time to ponder the following questions:

- Is it possible to be a daring thinker and leader when your plans don't have support from many of the people you're leading?
- Is peace best produced top down or bottom up? Meaning, should peace come from leaders or from the everyday people?
- How important is consensus and unity in the population when it comes to political decisions?
- Rabin is considered a hero by many for a variety of reasons. Do you think Rabin's role in the Oslo Accords makes him a hero? Why or why not?
- What lessons of leadership can be learned from the Oslo Accords?

4. The power of media in conflict

During the [First Intifada](#), images and videos in nightly news broadcasts led to an increase in world sympathy for the Palestinians.

- What role does the media have in reporting conflict to world audiences?
- How has the growth in social media changed the reporting of conflicts?
- Do you view social media as a positive or negative development when it comes to sharing the news?
- How do you feel coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reported in news media and represented in social media?

5. Recognition in conflict

One achievement that came out of the Oslo Accords was the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. How important is recognition of the other side in negotiations if it doesn't lead to more substantial progress?

6. Yitzhak Rabin's final speech

In Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's final speech before being assassinated, he said *"I have always believed that the majority of the nation wants peace, and is ready to take risks for peace. And those who are here today, along with those who couldn't be here, prove that the nation really wants peace."*

- There are various strategies to achieve peace. Some suggest peace through strength while others suggest peace through compromise. Which strategy do you think is more effective and why?

7. Taking responsibility

Yigal Amir, Rabin's assassin, was a product of the Religious-Zionist community in Israel. One of its leaders, R. Aharon Lichtenstein, [stated the following](#) after Rabin's assassination:

"Naturally, this shame should be felt by our camp, the National Religious camp, more than any other. Here was a man who grew up in the best of our institutions. A day before the murder, he could have been cited as a shining example of success and achievement, and a source of communal pride. Coming from a 'deprived' background, he studied in a Yeshiva High School, attended a great Yeshivat Hesder, and was accepted to the most prestigious division of Bar-Ilan University. Today, we hide behind the phrases, 'a wild weed,' 'from the outskirts of our society.' But if a day before the murder we would have said proudly, 'See what we have produced,' we must say it now as well - 'See what we have produced!' It is indefensible that one who is willing to take credit when the sun is shining should shrug off responsibility when it begins to rain."

- Do you agree with R. Lichtenstein's sentiments or do you think Amir was in fact a "wild weed"? Explain.
- Is it fair for the Religious-Zionist community to be held responsible for one individual's actions? What about the rabbis who used inflammatory rhetoric when speaking out against Rabin and the peace process?
- How can communities and individuals oppose policies that they are vehemently against while still making sure to not incite violence?

Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan:

Use our ready-made lesson plan on "Land for Peace" [HERE](#).

2. Journal entry: Flexing our empathy muscles

Israelis and Palestinians experienced the Oslo Accords and their aftermath in different and complex ways. Some Israelis felt that the peace process died with Rabin's assassination while others lamented the fact that Israel was making concessions to the Palestinians who weren't genuine about peace and were supporting terrorism against Israelis. Some Palestinians on the other hand continued to feel stateless, hanging in limbo between terrorists on one side and political corruption on the other while other Palestinians felt that their leaders shouldn't be negotiating with Israel for peace at all. Put yourself in the shoes of both an Israeli and a Palestinian during the time of Oslo. Write a journal response from both perspectives that answers the following questions:

- What do you hope that the Oslo Accords achieve for your community?
- What is your reaction to the results of the Oslo Accords? Are you happy or frustrated?
- Are you hopeful for peace with the other side? Why or why not?

3. What ifs?

As an exercise, give your students the opportunity to respond in writing to one of the "what if" questions below:

- Would there be peace today if Yasser Arafat had stopped the terror attacks?
- Would there be peace today if Yigal Amir had never assassinated Yitzhak Rabin?
- Would there be peace today if Rabin had more support from the Israeli public?
- Would there be peace today if Arafat had more support from the Palestinian public?

4. Rabin's last speech

Have your students watch Rabin's final speech [here](#), noting that he is killed shortly afterward. Hand out the [text of the speech](#).

- Divide the students into groups and have them each choose two quotes to present that they found especially meaningful.
- How does Rabin address and acknowledge people who have lost relatives to terror and war? What is his argument that it is worthwhile to pursue peace? Do you find his argument compelling?
- If you had been present at this speech, would you have thought peace to be possible? How do you feel about the potential for peace knowing how everything turned out?

5. The courage to make peace

Have your students [watch](#) (starting at 46:21) or [read](#) Rabin's speech at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (1993).

- How might you describe Rabin's actions in advocating for peace as courageous? Explain your answer.
- In this speech, Rabin quotes passages from Tanakh twice; once from Kohelet ("...a time of war, and a time of peace"), and from Psalms ("He who makes peace in His high places should make peace for us and for all of Israel", "oseh shalom bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu..."). Why do you think he included these passages?
- What is a line from this speech that you find especially meaningful?

6. Kahoot: Play our [Kahoot](#) about the Oslo Accords!

Reflection Questions

1. Imagine you were prime minister

Put yourself in the shoes of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin leading up to the Oslo Accords.

- With all things considered with how the Oslo Accords played out, would you have gone through with the Oslo Accords or not?
- What would be the different considerations to help determine your answer?

2. Oslo takeaways

Ultimately, does learning about the Oslo Accords make you optimistic or pessimistic when it comes to the prospect of peace between Israel and the Palestinians?

3. Optimistic or pessimistic

Shimon Peres famously said "*Optimists and pessimists die the same death, but live very different lives. Let's continue working to make peace possible.*"

- Do you think this quote is relevant to the Oslo Accords? Why or why not?
- When it comes to the Oslo Accords, do you think Shimon Peres was being overly optimistic and naive or courageous and rational?

- How can you apply this quote to your own life?

4. Legitimate criticism vs incitement

During the time of Oslo, protests raged amongst both Israelis and Palestinians. Bumper stickers in Israel called for “the criminals of Oslo” to be “brought to justice.” Some extremist demonstrators carried [posters of Rabin dressed as an SS officer](#). In the West Bank, Palestinians burned pictures of Arafat.

- At what point do you think legitimate criticism crosses the line into incitement?
- How would you define “inciting speech”?

5. Important lessons learned

What is the major lesson that you personally learned from this important moment in history? What is one question you still have? What is something that surprised you?

Further Learning

1. Unpacked for Educators:

- [Oslo: The Peace That Wasn't](#) (Unpacking Israeli History podcast)
- [History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)
- [The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process](#)
- [The First Intifada](#)
- [Abraham Accords – Peace in the Middle East?](#)
- [The Life and Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin](#)
- [The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin](#) (podcast)

2. [How The Oslo Accords Almost Ended The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | History](#)

3. Primary Sources - CIE:

- [Oslo Accords \(Declaration of Principles on Interim Self- Government Agreements\)](#)
- [Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Reasons for Signing the Oslo Accords](#)
- [The Oslo Process – 25 Years On](#)

4. [Look beyond the Oslo accords, say architects of Middle East peace plan | The Guardian](#)

5. [The Palestine National Charter \(1964\)](#)

6. Sari Nusseibeh, [Once Upon a Country](#) (Palestinian perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict)

7. [Arafat's Johannesburg Speech - IRIS](#)

8. [The Oslo Accords/Oslo Process | ADL](#)

