



Educator's Guide

The Life and Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

Yitzhak Rabin was a supreme Israeli military and political leader whose life and death have shaped Israeli society. From his early years in the Palmach, to head of the IDF, ambassador to the U.S., and two stints as prime minister, Rabin filled many public roles in Israel. Admired by many and abhorred by some, Rabin fought tenaciously for both security and peace. He was known as both a war hawk and a political dove. His assassination shook the country to its core. Watch this video and use these prompts to learn about this complex Israeli leader.

Video: <https://unpacked.education/video/the-life-and-assassination-of-yitzhak-rabin/>

Further Reading

1. Israel Story radio show, episode 8, "Rabin is..."
<https://israelstory.org/episode/8-rabin-is/>
2. Itamar Rabinovitch, *Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman*
3. Prof. Gerald Steinberg, "The Legacy of Yitzhak Rabin"
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-legacy-of-yitzhak-rabin/>
4. Dalia Karpel, "Searching for Yitzhak Rabin's Legacy"
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-searching-for-rabin-s-legacy-1.5415058>
5. Yitzhak Rabin Center, "Yitzhak Rabin, 1922-1995, Short Biography"
http://www.rabincenter.org.il/Items/02027/biography_eng.pdf



Review – Did the students understand the material?

- 1.** Rabin began his military career in which pre-state Zionist militia?
 - a.** Palmach
 - b.** Lechi
 - c.** Hagana
 - d.** Irgun
- 2.** Rabin helped lead Israel to victory in 1967 by building up Israel's:
 - a.** Navy
 - b.** Air force
 - c.** Ground forces
 - d.** Court system
- 3.** What was Rabin's relationship with Shimon Peres like?
- 4.** Why did Rabin resign as prime minister during his first tenure?
- 5.** Rabin was assassinated by:
 - a.** A Jew
 - b.** An Arab
 - c.** A Bedouin
 - d.** A Druze

Discussion Questions

- 1.** Rabin was a unique military and political leader. After Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, he stated: "The whole nation was swept by joy and yet we encounter a strange phenomenon among the fighters. The fighters in the front lines saw with their own eyes not just the glory of victory but also its price, their comrades fell next to them, covered in blood." What does this quotation tell you about the type of leader and person Rabin was?
- 2.** The entire country, as well as Jews around the world, were shaken to the core when Rabin was assassinated by a fellow Jew. Why did the fact that he was killed by another Jew cause a deeper tremor than his assassination otherwise might have?



3. When U.S. President Bill Clinton eulogized Rabin, he concluded with the iconic line, “shalom haver.” In Hebrew, “shalom” means both “goodbye” and “peace.” What meaning do you think the president packed into these simple words?
4. Yigal Amir, Rabin’s assassinator, 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.

Learning Activities

1. [Naomi Chazan](#) said: “Israel’s democracy has never been the same since the assassination of Rabin. In the twenty years that have elapsed, no one has had the courage that Rabin had to pursue peace. In many respects, peace has almost become a dirty word.” Debate whether this is a fair assessment of the situation in Israel. In the decade that followed, there were dozens of suicide bombings in Israel that shook the country. What are Israelis responsible for in the pursuit of peace and what are the Palestinians?



2. Watch the [trailer for the film "Incitement"](#), an Israeli film that depicts the story of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination from the perspective of his assassin, [Yigal Amir](#). After watching the trailer, what questions did it leave you with? How did the trailer make you feel?
3. Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on The Life and Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin!

Reflection Questions

1. Watch this [video](#) of fans from Beitar Yerushalayim chanting Yigal Amir's name during a soccer match. Journal your immediate reaction. How do you internalize it? Do you view this as a group of hooligans who should be dismissed? Does this represent a larger group within Israel who disdain Rabin for his attempt to make peace with the Palestinians?
2. It is [said](#) about Rabin that he was "A leftist, a hawk, a centrist. A reminder that violence is bad, that democracy is important, and that we should all just get along. Maybe this diluted, compromised, one-size-fits-all version of Rabin's legacy is all we as a society can handle at the moment." Rabin was a complex man of paradoxes; to call him only a military hawk or a political dove would do him an injustice. How can a person carry all of these values at once? Are there conflicting values that you hold dear?
3. During the Six-Day War, as Rabin led Israel to military victory, he suffered from intense anxiety. What does this tell you about Rabin as a person and as a leader? What in your life triggers anxiety, and how do you manage it?
4. Yitzhak Rabin is remembered in different and even conflicting ways. From watching this video, what kind of leader did Rabin seem to be? What qualities of his might you emulate and what qualities do you not identify with?
5. Rachel Rabin, Yitzhak Rabin's sister, said about him: "Somehow Yitzhak always felt that he was responsible for me. That he needed to take care of me. To protect me. And that's how I felt. Till his last day, really, I felt he was protecting me, even from afar." Yitzhak Rabin wore many hats. He was a father, a brother, a husband, a soldier, a politician. How do you want to be remembered?



- 6.** Rabin was the leader of the Harel Brigade during the 1948 War of Independence. He was the Chief of Staff during the 1967 Six-Day War and he was aggressive in his reaction to the Palestinians during the First Intifada. Yet he was willing to make peace with the Palestinians. He said, “We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice. Enough of blood and tears. Enough.” Why was he willing to make peace? Are there people who are in your life who you strongly dislike, but want to make peace with? What can Rabin teach you about the pursuit of peace?
- 7.** If you could ask Yitzhak Rabin one question about either his life or Israel now, what would it be?