



Educator's Guide

Who Are the Houthis?

Resources compiled by Sarah Golubtchik

The Houthis aren't your ordinary rebels; they're fueled by a mix of anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment, Jew-hatred, and Islamic fundamentalism, and, surprisingly, they've captured the attention and fascination of an audience ranging from TikTok influencers to college students with their viral videos of synchronized dancing and singing.

By understanding the history of Yemen, a nation marred by instability and foreign intervention, the roots of the Houthi movement as a response to Saudi influence and domestic corruption, become clearer.

Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/who-are-the-houthis/>

Essential Questions

1. What role does social media play in forming public opinion?
2. What is the difference between fact and narrative?
3. Why is it important to study history?

Big ideas

1. Public opinion can be easily manipulated
2. The relationship between fact and narrative can be complex
3. The study of history is critical to our ability to understand current events

Review Questions

- 1.** Yemen is bordered by _____ to the north:
 - a.** Oman
 - b.** Turkey
 - c.** Saudi Arabia



- d. Egypt**
- 2.** The Houthis follow a minority version of Islam known as _____:
 - a. Borha**
 - b. Zaidiyyah**
 - c. Twelver**
 - d. Ismaili**
- 3.** The _____ backed both sides of a civil war in Yemen in order to keep a foothold of control over the country.
 - a. Saudis**
 - b. Iranians**
 - c. Iraqis**
 - d. Americans**
- 4.** The Houthis gained control of Yemen's capital in 2015, resulting in:
 - a. A democratic government**
 - b. A temporary cease fire**
 - c. A Nobel Prize**
 - d. Another civil war**
- 5.** The Houthis have been targeting merchant ships in the Red Sea as well as British and U.S. warships with an arsenal largely funded by:
 - a. Iran**
 - b. Iraq**
 - c. The United Nations**
 - d. Egypt**
- 6.** Which of the following statements does **not** appear on the Houthi flag:
 - a. God is the greatest**
 - b. A curse upon the Jews**
 - c. From the river to the sea**
 - d. Death to Israel**
- 7.** The Houthis are guilty of human rights violations that include:
 - a. Murdering civilians**



- b.** Blockading humanitarian supplies
 - c.** Restricting women from doing much of anything
 - d.** All answers are correct
- 8.** One of the reasons that the Houthis hate _____ is because they sell arms to Saudi Arabia:
- a.** Israel
 - b.** The United States
 - c.** Egypt
 - d.** Iran

Discussion Questions

- 1. Choosing alliances:** An alliance is [defined](#) as “a union or association formed for mutual benefit, especially between countries or organizations.” One of the reasons that the Houthis have been able to launch attacks on ships in the Red Sea is due to their alliance with Iran.
 - a. Why do groups of people or nations form alliances? What is the advantage of having allies?
 - b. How do people choose their allies? In what ways do you think the old adage, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” is accurate when it comes to forming strategic alliances?
 - c. How do the Houthis and the Iranians each benefit from their alliance with one another? How might this alliance affect each country’s ability to make an impact both locally and globally?
- 2. Going public:** In addition to firing rockets at ships in the Red Sea, the Houthis have declared war on Israel using music videos on social media. Watch one of their [videos](#) here.
 - a. What thoughts and emotions do you have after watching the video?
 - b. What messages does this music video convey? How do the use of music, choreography, cinematography, and language contribute to these messages?
 - c. What is the role of social media in shaping public opinion?



- d. Why do you think the Houthis took on this strategy as part of their military campaign? What do you think they were hoping to achieve? Do you think this strategy will be successful?
- 3. Understanding history:** The Houthis have garnered support from some anti-Israel groups and other far-left activists. Read more about this support [here](#).
- a. What are some of the reasons given for supporting the Houthis?
 - b. What role does narrative play in persuading people to support a cause? How do people differentiate between historical fact and personal narrative?
 - c. What role does narrative play in the Houthis' attempts to gain international support?
 - d. What are some ways to counter this narrative? What would you recommend that people learn or do in order to gain a more balanced perspective on this topic?

Learning Activities

1. [Lesson plan](#)
2. **Where in the world?:** Despite its internal instability, Yemen has a very strategic geographic location.
 - a. Give students access to a [regional map of Yemen](#) and have them answer the questions in Part A of this [worksheet](#) (this can be done individually or in small groups).
 - b. Read about the Suez Canal [here](#) and answer the questions in Part B.
 - c. After students have familiarized themselves with the geography of the region and have filled out the questions, engage in a class discussion on the following points: How might the Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea impact the global economy? What steps do you think countries like the United States can or should take in order to prevent these effects from taking place?
3. **Social media response:** A Yemeni teenager has gotten a lot of [attention](#) on social media after posting pictures of himself on a cargo ship that was seized by the Houthis. Rashid Al-Hadad has used his platform to support the Houthis and to



advocate for freeing Palestine from Israeli aggression, which he described as [violating human rights](#). You can read more about the self-proclaimed “Red Sea Pirate” [here](#).

In order to help social media consumers distinguish between narrative and fact, design a response to the “Red Sea Pirate” that could be posted on a popular social media platform. In your response, make sure to clarify the connection between the Houthis and the Gaza conflict. You should also consider what you know about the Houthis and their own human rights violations ([Unpacked video](#)) [you can read more [here](#)].

While preparing your response, think about the following:

- a. What do you want to accomplish in your response?
- b. Who is your target audience?
- c. What medium will you use (video, image, words)?
- d. What follow-up might you need to prepare?

- 4. Fact sheet:** Given what you have learned about the role that the Houthis have played in the recent political history of Yemen, as well as their wide-ranging human rights violations, prepare a one-page fact sheet or poster that highlights some of the important historical, political, and geographical information that you think people should know about this extremist group. In addition to the [Unpacked video](#), these resources may be helpful: [The World Factbook](#), [US Department of State](#), [American Jewish Committee](#), [PBS](#).

Your work should address the following questions:

- a. Who are the Houthis?
- b. Who are their allies? Who are their enemies?
- c. What are their goals for Yemen?
- d. What are their goals for Israel and the United States?
- e. What makes the Houthis a threat, both nationally and globally?

- 5.** Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on “Who are the Houthis?”



Reflection Questions

- 1. Important lessons:** What have you learned about the complexity of the Houthi war against Israel and America? What deep conflicts and motives underlie the music videos and the social media supporters? What are two things that you wish other people knew about this situation?
- 2. The Houthis and social media:** The Houthis and their supporters are using social media to garner support for their cause. How do you feel when you see antisemitic content on social media? What strategies do you use to help keep yourself grounded when faced with uncomfortable content (journaling, speaking to a trusted adult, meditation or prayer, etc)?
- 3. Fresh perspectives:** What is something new that you've learned about the Houthis? Is there anything that surprised you? What would you like to learn more about?

Further Learning

- 1. Unpacked for Educators:**
 - [What do the Iran nuclear talks mean for Israel](#) (article)
 - [The war for control of the Suez Canal](#) (video)
 - [Combating hate speech and antisemitism on social media](#) (article)
- 2. Houthis:**
 - [Music video](#) (video)
 - [The World Factbook](#) (article)
 - [US Department of State](#) (proposal)
 - [American Jewish Committee](#) (article)
 - [PBS](#) (article)
- 3. Social media support:**
 - ["Red Sea Pirate"](#) (article)
 - [Houthi pirate rebel](#) (article)
 - [What to know about the rebel pirate](#) (article)
- 4. [Human rights violations](#)** (article)



5. Geography

- [Suez Canal](#) (article)
- [Map of Yemen and region](#) (map)