



Educator's Guide

Do Jews Cause Antisemitism?

It may sound bizarre, but a shockingly large number of people believe that Jews cause themselves to be hated. For centuries, bigots have blamed racial, religious and sexual minorities for their own persecution. If we're going to beat back antisemitism, we'll need to understand why this claim is so egregiously wrong — logically, historically, and morally.

[Link to video](#)

Further Learning

1. Unpacked for Educators, [The Origins of Antisemitic Conspiracies](#)
2. CNN, [A Shadow Over Europe](#)
3. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism - survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU](#)
4. Yair Rosenberg, [Sweden Public Radio Asks: Are Jews Responsible for Anti-Semitism?](#)
5. Walter Russell Mead, [Palestinian PM: Don't Use Us to Justify Your Anti-Semitism](#)

Review Questions

1. A recent CNN survey found that 1 in 5 Europeans believe that:
 - Jews kill Christian babies
 - **Antisemitism in their countries is a response to Jewish behavior**
 - Antisemitism is caused by antisemites alone
 - Antisemitism doesn't exist in their countries
2. According to the video, for which reasons is blaming Jews for antisemitism wrong?
 - Moral
 - Historical
 - Logical
 - **All of the above**
3. What percentage of Swedish Jews are afraid of publicly identifying as Jewish?
 - 20%
 - 50%
 - **60%**



- 15%
- 4. In which profession were many Jews compelled to work during the Middle Ages?
 - **Moneylending**
 - Medicine
 - Law
 - Priests
- 5. What percentage of the world's Jews live in Israel?
 - 10%
 - 25%
 - **50%**
 - 75%
- 6. _____ don't cause antisemitism, _____ do.
 - Antisemites, Jews
 - Islamists, Christians
 - Israel, Zionists
 - **Jews, Antisemites**

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think antisemites blame Jews around the world for Israeli policy that they oppose? Can you think of other examples in which a group of people is blamed for the actions of a government or people from the same group somewhere else? Why is this morally wrong?
2. Jews came to be associated with money and greed due to the fact that they often had to work as moneylenders since usury (money lending for interest) was deemed illegal for Christians in Medieval Europe by the Christian Church. Should this stereotype of money and greed be blamed on the Jews themselves or the antisemites?
3. Imagine a world in which Jews were a majority in most societies. Do you think that antisemitism would be as widespread? Why or why not?
4. The two leading early Zionists Theodor Herzl and Ze'ev Jabotinsky offered contrasting perspectives on the relationship between antisemitism and Zionism. Herzl believed Zionism would *solve* the "Jewish Question," and that having a sovereign state would eliminate antisemitism altogether, arguing that "Antisemites will become our surest friends." Jabotinsky did not think antisemitism would ever vanish, and he believed the goal of Zionism would be to protect the Jewish people from antisemitism. Which of the early Zionist thinkers do you think was right or were they both wrong? What do you think Israel's role should be when it comes to antisemitism?
5. Why is it historically inaccurate to blame Israel for antisemitism? Is it because antisemitism existed long before the State of Israel? Is it because one shouldn't blame the victim for discrimination they face or is it something else?



Learning Activities

1. Ask your students the following question:

“Do the Jews themselves have any responsibility in the growing antisemitism that we see now?”

After discussing, listen to this full [clip](#) from Swedish Public Radio in which the interviewer asks the Israeli ambassador this very question.

After listening to the clip, ask your students to share how they felt about Israeli ambassador Isaac Bachman’s response to the question.

2. Ask your students to write and present a one-minute speech answering the question “What causes antisemitism?”
3. Play our [Kahoot](#) about “Do Jews Cause Antisemitism?”

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Jews are hated? Is it because Jews are a small minority that is different from the majority or is it something else?
2. According to the [2018 antisemitism survey](#) (Figure 17) by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 79% of European Jews have felt that they’ve been blamed for something the Israeli government did. Have you ever felt this way and if so, how did you deal with it? Is this number surprising to you? Why or why not?
3. How would you personally respond to somebody who blamed you for antisemitism?
4. After a terrorist attack at a Jewish school in Toulouse, France, Walter Russell Mead [wrote](#):

“It is an ugly fact that violence against Jews today, whether in France or elsewhere, is too often justified or explained away as if not a legitimate then at least an understandable response to Israeli policies like the occupation. Indeed, this depraved rationale – which serves as an apologia for murderous hate by holding all Jews mortally responsible for the policies and actions of a far-off Middle Eastern country – is offered not only by the perpetrators of such crimes, but sometimes by European officials and intellectual elites.



Fayyad has it right: schoolchildren in France have nothing to do with the construction of settlements on the West Bank or anything else that the government of Israel may or may not do. The fact that so many otherwise sensible people accept this kind of muddled collectivism (all Jews are complicit in and responsible for what any Jew does) shows just how widespread anti-Semitism still is."

How does it make you feel to know that the more tension there is in Israel, the more Jews are targeted around the world? What can you personally do to combat this phenomenon?