



Educator's Guide

Famous IDF Battles

Resources compiled by Doug Berkowitz

Since its founding, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has engaged in numerous successful battles, many of which have contributed to Israel's overall war strategy. Six decisive battles in particular have played a pivotal role in shaping Israel's military prowess, each of which required a resilience and strategic ingenuity that has helped turn Israel into the major military force that it is today.

Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/famous-idf-battles/>

Big Ideas

1. In her relatively short lifespan, Israel has fought in a number of wars against numerous enemies.
2. By studying past battles, the IDF can learn from both successes and mistakes.
3. Until Israel can achieve peace with her neighbors, the IDF will need to continue to study war in order to protect Israeli citizens.

Essential Questions

1. What lessons has the IDF taken from past battles and wars?
2. How has the IDF implemented lessons learned in war?
3. Why do people study war?

Review Questions

1. During the 1948 War of Independence, Operation Yevusi sought to conquer some Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem in order to...
 - a. Gain access to food and water
 - b. Connect isolated Jewish neighborhoods**
 - c. Be closer to the Old City
 - d. Have better housing



2. From Operation Yevusi, the IDF learned that...
 - a. **Sometimes you have to go on the offensive**
 - b. A strong defense is most important
 - c. Israel's enemies were more numerous than previously thought
 - d. Peace is easy to achieve if you really try
3. The 1956 Sinai War was concocted in order to...
 - a. Create a buffer between Israel and Egypt
 - b. Gain access to the beachfront resorts of the Sinai
 - c. Provide real-life training scenarios for IDF soldiers
 - d. **Allow the British and French to reclaim control over the Suez Canal**
4. From the Battle at Mitla Pass during the 1956 Sinai War, Israel learned that since it wouldn't win with size, it would need to win...
 - a. By having better weapons
 - b. With the help of God
 - c. **By outwitting the enemy**
 - d. With shape
5. In Operation Moked, on the first day of the 1967 Six Day War, Israel attacked...
 - a. The Suez Canal
 - b. The Golan Heights
 - c. **All of Egypt's Air Force**
 - d. Weapons facilities in Jordan
6. In Operation Rimon 20, during the War of Attrition, Israel faced off with which unusual foe?
 - a. **USSR**
 - b. Iran
 - c. China
 - d. Yugoslavia
7. Israel's bluff during the Valley of Tears battle allowed them to retain control over which area of land?
 - a. Jordan Valley
 - b. Sinai
 - c. Gaza
 - d. **Golan Heights**



8. Israel's goal in the First Lebanon War was to...
 - a. Take over Beirut
 - b. Create a buffer zone between Israel and the PLO**
 - c. Find new deposits for natural resources
 - d. Create a new defense post for the IDF

9. The lesson Israel took from the First Lebanon War was that future wars should...
 - a. Be swift
 - b. Have a clearly defined enemy and objective
 - c. Have a predetermined exit strategy
 - d. All of the above**

Discussion Questions

1. Lessons learned:

What were the lessons that the IDF learned in the battles mentioned in the video?
Why do you think these are important lessons for an army to learn?

2. Rules for war:

From the First Lebanon War and previous wars, Israel learned that future wars should be swift, have a clearly defined enemy and objective, and have a predetermined exit strategy. Do you think these are good guidelines for war? What do you think the consequences would be for following/not following these guidelines? Explain your answers.

3. Applying lessons of the past to the present:

- How can Israel apply lessons of past battles to current situations she is facing? What are examples of relevant takeaways Israel can apply to future conflicts?
- Why might it be difficult for Israel and the IDF(as well as other countries and their armies) to apply lessons from past battles to present day situations? Do you see these difficulties playing out in the current conflicts Israel is facing?

Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan:

Use our ready made lesson plan on "Famous IDF Battles" [HERE](#).



2. Timeline:

As a class, make a timeline of the wars/conflicts Israel has fought since declaring independence. Students can work in groups or individually, taking responsibility for one or multiple conflicts. For each war/conflict, create a graphic that includes the following information:

- Name of the war/conflict.
- Dates of the war/conflict.
- Who fought in the war/conflict.
- Objective or reason for Israel being in the war/conflict.
- Major outcomes of the war/conflict.
- A photo that represents the war/conflict.

Have students present the information to the class and add it to the timeline in chronological order. After all wars/conflicts have been added, take a look at the timeline as a whole.

- How often is Israel at war or in a conflict with other nations/groups?
- What do you think it would be like to live in a country that is involved in conflict so often?
- Do you notice any patterns in the timeline?
- What did you learn from this activity?

Peace treaties can also be included in the timeline to add more context.

3. Israel and Russia:

Most people are familiar with the troubled relationship between Israel and her Arab neighbors, yet fewer know about the history of Israel's relationship with Russia (previously known as the USSR). In groups or individually, ask students to research one facet of the Israeli-Russian relationship. Potential topics include:

- Life in the shtetl ([video](#))
- Russian support for the 1947 UN Partition Plan.
- UN Resolution 3379: Zionism is Racism (1975). ([video](#); [podcast](#))
- Russian Refuseniks. ([video](#); [video](#))
- Fall of the Soviet Union ([video](#))
- Current Russian involvement in the Middle East.

4. Kahoot: Play our [Kahoot](#) about Famous IDF Battles!



Reflection Questions

1. Studying war:

Isaiah 2:4 states "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they study war anymore." This is a hopeful vision for the future in which nations shall live peacefully amongst one another. However, that is not our current reality.

- Why do you think we are currently studying battles in Israel's history?
- Why do you think the IDF and other armies study war? What will they learn from it? Why do they need that type of information?
- What do you think might happen if the IDF *didn't* study their battles and wars? What might be the short-term and long-term consequences?
- Do you think the IDF should continue to study war? How about the army in your country?
- Do you think we might get to a time in which the prophecy of Isaiah 2:4 comes true? Explain your answer.

2. Lesson unstated:

One lesson not stated in the video, but which can be drawn from the Valley of Tears, is that portraying strength in battle has benefits. This was demonstrated when a small, depleted line of Israeli tanks held their ground in the Golan, rather than stand down. Viewing the Israeli tanks standing firm, the Syrian forces retreated.

- Why do you think portraying strength has benefits in battle? What might be potential negative consequences of this tactic?
- Do you think portraying strength is a good strategy in life? What benefits or drawbacks do you think might come from portraying strength in everyday interactions?

3. Serving your country:

Israel has fought in many wars and faced many armed conflicts since declaring independence in 1948.

- Before watching this video, did you know that Israel fought in so many wars?
- What thoughts do you have now knowing that Israel has been fighting enemies since her establishment?
- What do you think it's like living in a country that has been at war so often?



Serving in the IDF is an expectation for most Israelis. In fact, Israel requires that all citizens over age 18 serve in the IDF, though there are [exceptions](#).

- Why do you think military service is mandatory in Israel?
- Do you agree with mandatory military service? Why or why not?
- What do you think are the benefits of this policy? The drawbacks?
- Would you want mandatory military service in your country? Why or why not?
 - Would your answer change if your country were often fighting in wars on her own soil?

Further Learning

1. Unpacked for Educators:

- [Israel's War of Independence • Unpacked for Educators](#) (video)
- [Weird Ways Israel Won its War of Independence](#) (video)
- [1948: Israel's Battle for Independence • Unpacked for Educators](#) (video)
- [The War for Control of The Suez Canal](#) (video)
- [The Six Day War](#) (video)
- [Six Day War| Why Did Israel Go To War? - Unpacked](#) (video)
- [A secret war between the USSR, Israel almost caused WWII - Unpacked](#) (video)
- [The Yom Kippur War: When Israel Almost Fell](#) (video)
- [The Yom Kippur War: How Israel Turned the Tide](#) (video)
- [What Was the First Intifada? • Unpacked for Educators](#) (video)
- [The Second Intifada](#) (video)

2. Jewish Virtual Library, [The War of Attrition: Background & Overview](#) (article)

This article provides the background for and an overview of the War of Attrition.

3. Jewish Virtual Library, [Background & Overview of First Lebanon War](#) (article)

This article provides an overview of the First Lebanon War of 1982.

4. IDF, [Wars and Operations | IDF](#) (articles)

The IDF provides links to articles on major IDF wars and operations from the War of Independence (1948) to Operation Northern Shield (2019).