



Educator's Guide

Pre-IDF Brigades: Haganah, Irgun & Lechi

This video tells the fascinating story of three Jewish militias in pre-State Palestine: Haganah, Irgun and Lechi. Before the groups joined forces to become the IDF in 1948, they had major ideological differences. They were all set on the Zionist ideal of creating a Jewish state, but disagreed about how to achieve this goal. Between Ben-Gurion's diplomatic approach, Begin's pro-active one, and the Stern Gang's radicalism, tensions ran high in the 40's. In this episode, students will consider: What were the key differences between the groups, and how did they put these differences aside to work together? Which of these groups do you identify with most and why?

Watch this video and use the prompts to foster discussion, critical thinking and meaning making.

[Video](#)

Further Reading

1. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, Chapter 7
2. Noah Rayman, ["Mandatory Palestine: What It Was and Why It Matters"](#)
3. The Jewish Agency, ["Jewish Defense Organizations"](#)
4. Testimonials: [Toldot Yisrael](#):
 - [Benjamin Gepner - Life in the underground](#)
 - [Rina Aharoni - Joining the Lehi](#)
 - Yael Ben-Dov [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) (fighting in the Lehi)
 - [Yoash Tzidon - Serving as a Haganah commander in Cyprus](#)
 - [Miriam Glazer-Taasa - Hiding weapons at home while in the Irgun](#)
 - [Margalit Nirenberg - Discovering her sister was in the underground](#)



Review - Did the students understand the material?

1. Which one of these was NOT a military group in pre-State Israel?
 - a. Lechi
 - b. Irgun
 - c. Haganah
 - d. Tzahal (correct answer)
2. What was the key difference between Haganah and Irgun?
 - a. Haganah preferred restraint and diplomacy, while Irgun preferred military force when it believed to be necessary (correct answer)
 - b. Haganah supported the White Paper, while Irgun opposed it
 - c. Haganah worked against the British, while Irgun supported them
 - d. Haganah fought the Arabs, while Irgun fought the British
3. Who led the Irgun?
 - a. Golda Meir and David Ben-Gurion
 - b. Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin (correct answer)
 - c. Abraham Stern
 - d. Theodor Herzl
4. Why did Golda Meir believe in putting a violent end to Lechi, while David Ben-Gurion did not?
5. Why did the groups decide to bomb the King David hotel, and what were the ramifications of that move?

Discussion Questions

1. From November 1944 to February 1945, the Haganah engaged in "The Saison" or the Hunting Season, in which its leaders suppressed the Irgun's fighting against the British and even handed over some Irgun members to the British authorities. With the Irgun and Lechi refusing to accept the British denial of Jewish immigration, and the Haganah following the motto of "fighting the war as if there is no white paper, and fighting the White Paper, as if there is no war," the Haganah decided to turn in its men. Explain where the Haganah was coming from and where the Irgun and Lechi were coming from.



2. What leadership qualities enabled the Haganah, Irgun and Lechi to work out their differences and form a united front?
3. While some believe that all early Zionists were unified in the establishment of the state of Israel, this was not necessarily the case. How do you think these differences of opinions helped shape Zionism?

Learning Activities

1. The famous line “two Jews, three opinions” is very relevant when it comes to Pre-IDF brigades and their struggle against both the British and Arabs of Mandatory Palestine. Was the fact that the Jewish community had such a diversity of ideas and methods advantageous or to the detriment of the Zionist goals of establishing a Jewish state? Discuss.
2. The three Pre-IDF brigades reunited for 10 months after World War 2 ended to fight against the British. What do you think today’s Israeli politicians can learn from the United Resistance movement’s unity of 1945-1946? Split your class into pairs for a Think-Pair-Share.
3. Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on Pre-IDF Brigades!

Reflection Questions

1. After learning about each group’s philosophies and tactics, considering what was at stake in the creation of the state and the atrocities of the Holocaust that were happening at this time, which of these groups do you identify with most and why?
2. When push came to shove, the three militias were able to set aside their differences to work together and unite. This ability to unite despite serious differences and bloodshed between the groups is one of the main reasons Israel was able to become a state. Are there people with whom you have serious differences and would want to unite notwithstanding your areas of disagreement? What can you take from this situation of Tenuat Hameri Ha’lvri and implement in your own life?