



Educator's Guide

History of HaTikvah

This video dives into the history of Israel's iconic national anthem, *HaTikvah*. While some students may be familiar with these words, do they know their meaning, or the anthem's complex backstory? Originally a nine-stanza poem, HaTikvah's melody may have been lifted from an earlier Italian or Czech song. Today, HaTikvah both inspires and irritates. It is an aspirational anthem, which connects Jews around the world, and it also alienates others who do not connect to the themes. This episode begs the important question: What's more important in a national anthem- that it include all of its citizens or that it embody the spirit upon which the country was founded and that it strives to maintain?

[Link to video](#)

Big Ideas

1. Hatikvah began as a poem written by an imperfect, struggling person, but it grew into a song of hope that carried the Jewish people through some of history's darkest moments.
2. Hatikvah is unlike most national anthems because it contains no mention of conquest or militarism. It is only about hope, peace, and the longing for home.
3. Israel is home to many different groups, including religious and secular Jews, Arab citizens, Druze, and others. Because of this, its national anthem sparks real debate about who a country's song should speak for.

Essential Questions

1. Should a national anthem represent every citizen, express the spirit and history the country was founded on, or try to do both?
2. How can a song be deeply meaningful to one group of people while feeling alienating to another group in the very same country?
3. What does it mean for a poem or song to carry emotional weight far beyond what its original writer ever imagined?



Review Questions

1. What is the main theme of "Hatikvah"?
 - Hope and the longing to return home
 - Military victory over enemies
 - Celebrating a good harvest
 - Independence Day fireworks
2. Based on the video, what happened when Jewish prisoners in concentration camps sang Hatikvah?
 - Guards rewarded them for singing
 - **It became a source of resistance and hope, even facing death**
 - It was rewritten to remove all mentions of Zion
 - It was performed as an official camp anthem
3. Who wrote the original poem "Tikvatenu" in 1877?
 - Theodor Herzl
 - Samuel Cohen
 - Ze'ev Jabotinsky
 - **Naftali Hertz Imber**
4. Which religious Zionist leader wrote a more religious counter-anthem called "Shir Ha'emunah" ("Song of Faith")?
 - President Chaim Weizmann
 - **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook**
 - Rabbi Isaac HaLevi Herzog
 - Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik
5. Unlike many national anthems, "Hatikvah" does not mention which of the following?
 - Its country's name
 - **Militarism**
 - Hope
 - The country's flag
6. In what year did the 18th Zionist Congress officially adopt Hatikvah as its anthem?
 - 1897
 - 1903
 - **1933**
 - 1948



- 7. According to a 2012 Peace Index poll from Tel Aviv University, about what percentage of Israeli Arabs said Hatikvah was "unsuitable"?**
 - 10 percent
 - 50 percent
 - 65 percent
 - **90 percent**
- 8. Which two melodies are often mentioned as possible sources for Hatikvah's tune?**
 - **"La Mantovana" and "Die Moldau"**
 - "Hava Nagila" and "Jerusalem of Gold"
 - "Ode to Joy" and "Ave Maria"
 - "Yankee Doodle" and "God Save the Queen"

Discussion Questions

1. Whose Anthem Is It?

Many Arab citizens of Israel, along with some Jewish citizens, say they don't feel connected to Hatikvah's words.

- Why might Arab citizens of Israel feel disconnected from the lyrics of Hatikvah?
- Why might some Jewish citizens, such as ultra-religious or Mizrahi Jews, also feel disconnected, even though the song was written for the Jewish people?

2. Inclusion vs. Identity:

Every country has to decide what its national symbols should stand for.

- What matters more in a national anthem: that it includes every citizen, or that it reflects the history and spirit the country was founded on?
- Do you think a country can do both at the same time? What might that look like?

3. Protest and Patriotism:

In 2012, Israeli Supreme Court Justice Salim Joubran, who is Arab, stood for Hatikvah but did not sing. In the United States, athletes like Colin Kaepernick and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf have also chosen not to participate in anthem traditions.

- How is Joubran's choice similar to, or different from, these American examples?
- Do you think choosing not to sing or stand for an anthem is disrespectful, a form of free expression, or both?

4. A Song Without Weapons:



Many national anthems include war imagery or calls to fight, but Hatikvah does not.

- Why do you think so many national anthems include violent or militaristic language?
- Does knowing that Hatikvah avoids this change how you think about the song, compared to other anthems you know?

Learning Activities

1. [Lesson Plan](#)

2. Social Barometer: Should Hatikvah Change?

Post a sign reading "Strongly Agree" on one side of the room and "Strongly Disagree" on the other.

Read the statement: "Israel should change its national anthem to include the perspectives of all of its citizens."

Have students physically stand along the line based on their opinion.

Ask several students at different points to explain their placement, then allow students to move if their thinking changes during the discussion.

3. Fishbowl: Many Voices, One Anthem

Arrange a small circle of chairs (the "fishbowl") inside a larger circle.

Assign fishbowl volunteers a role to represent each of the following:

- An Arab-Israeli citizen
- A secular Israeli Jew
- A religious Zionist
- A Mizrahi Jew
- A Holocaust survivor

Have them discuss, in character, whether Hatikvah should remain Israel's anthem.



Students in the outer circle listen quietly and take notes, then switch places and continue the conversation.

4. Design Challenge: Write an Anthem for Everyone

In small groups, have students imagine they are founding a brand-new country made up of many different cultures and beliefs.

Ask them to write a short anthem, or a list of the key themes and images it would include, that speaks to all of their imagined citizens.

Have each group present their anthem or themes and explain the choices they made.

5. Give your students our [Kahoot](#) on the history of Hatikvah!

Reflection Questions

1. Connecting to the Words

Hatikvah has moved the hearts of Jewish people for over a century

- In what ways do you identify with and internalize the lyrics and meaning of the anthem?

2. A Song of Hope, Far From Home

For many Jews living outside of Israel, Hatikvah still carries deep meaning.

- Does Hatikvah hold special meaning for you even though you may not live in Israel?
- Is there a song, symbol, or place that gives you a similar feeling of hope or belonging?

3. Sitting With Discomfort

Not everyone connects to Hatikvah the same way.

- When you learn that some people feel left out by Hatikvah, do you feel empathy for them, frustration, or both? Why?

4. Singing in the Dark

The video describes Jewish prisoners in concentration camps singing Hatikvah, even facing death.



- *How does learning this change the way you hear or think about the song?*

Further Learning

1. Unpacking Israeli History Podcast, ["Hatikvah: The story behind the anthem"](#)
2. Dr. James Loeffler, ["How 'Hatikvah' \(The Hope\) Became Israel's National Anthem"](#) (article)
3. Edwin Seroussi, ["Hatikvah: Conceptions, Receptions and Reflections"](#) (academic paper)
4. Times of Israel, Ilan Ben Zion, ["How an unwieldy romantic poem and a Romanian folk song combined to produce 'Hatikva'"](#) (article)
5. Jewish Ledger, Dr. Rafael Medoff, ["'Hatikvah' in the Holocaust"](#) (article)
6. The Forward, ["Rewriting 'Hatikvah' as Anthem for All"](#) (article)