

# Anti-Semitism and the Medieval World

Comprehensive Lesson Plan Project: Providing Historical Context for our Holocaust Unit

Teacher: Nicole Dunn

## Lesson Sequence

### Day One: Defining Discrimination through Dr. Seuss' Sneetches

#### Warm Up:

Respond to the following in the journal section of your binder:

What do you think the word discrimination means? Can you brainstorm examples of groups that have faced discrimination, or examples of times you have heard this word being used? You may write in sentence form or create a list.

#### Agenda:

**SWBAT:** develop a personal definition for discrimination and apply that definition to analyze a group of characters in a movie.

How will be accomplish this goal:

1. We will watch the short film *Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss.
2. We will develop a definition of discrimination with our partner and will analyze the discrimination present in the story in writing.

#### Lesson:

Introduction for *The Sneetches*

Dr. Seuss wrote a tale about a group of beach dwelling creatures called the Sneetches. There were two different kinds of Sneetches: the Plain Bellied Sneetches and the Star Bellied Sneetches. The Star Bellies were a snobby bunch and everyone, including the Plain Bellies, perceived them as the superior breed of Sneetches. Naturally, the Plain Bellies desperately wanted to have Stars on their bellies and so when entrepreneur Sylvester McMonkey McBean arrived on the beach with his Star Belly Making Machine, the Plain Bellies eagerly paid for a ride through the contraption.

Watch to see how the story unfolds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdLPe7XjdKc>

Following the film (roughly 12 minutes), ask the students to respond to the following questions about the film itself:

1. Why did the Plain Bellied Sneetches want to have Stars on their bellies
2. What can we learn from the Sneetches?
3. Are there any other groups of people that have been treated like Plain Bellied Sneetches? Explain.

Then ask the students to respond to the following questions connecting to the Holocaust:

4. Why are some people treated differently from others?
5. Why do people think that it is acceptable to act superior to others?
6. How did Hitler make Jewish people feel like Plain Bellied Sneetches?

Finally, ask the students to do the following in order to develop their own definition of discrimination:

In the short film, the audience witnesses a clear example of discrimination based on differences. With your partner, come up with your own definition of discrimination, and explain the effects of discrimination in this film.

Questions to consider: Why were the plain-bellied sneetches treated differently than the star-bellied sneetches? Who is responsible for this treatment? What is the outcome of this treatment over time?

## **Day Two: The History of Anti-Semitism**

### **Warm Up:**

There are two symbols included on this slide. What group or message is represented in each symbol?

### **Agenda:**

**SWBAT:** develop an understanding of anti-semitism and the historical context behind the events of the Holocaust.

How will be accomplish this goal:

1. We will define anti-semitism.
2. We will discuss the Holocaust at a glance.
3. We will perform a Jigsaw Reading activity for a text from the Anti-Defamation League

### **Lesson:**

First, define Anti-Semitism for students:

Meaning: prejudice against or hatred of Jews

Then discuss the Holocaust at a glance\*

\*We will be spending a significant amount of time discussing the timeline and effects of the Holocaust. This "at a glance" presentation is to serve as an introduction for our activity\*

Watch the Scholastic Anchor Video:

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/holocaust-teacher.html>

Background information to share with the students regarding the Holocaust:

Adolf Hitler

- Born to Austrian parents in April of 1889.
- Originally wanted to be a painter
- Parents died and left Adolf alone at a young age
- Fought in WWI
- Joined NAZI party and rose to power

Nazi Propaganda

- Propaganda is the information or ideas spread for the purpose of achieving a specific goal.
- In the following picture, what evidence of propaganda do you see?

The History of Anti-Semitism

- The Holocaust is not the first example of anti-Semitism in history, and in order to fully understand this topic, we must trace back to the roots of anti-Semitism with a focus on the Middle Ages.

#### Jigsaw Activity

- Each student will be assigned a numbered section of the reading “[A Brief History of Anti-Semitism](#)”, to read closely and summarize in their own words with their “Expert Groups”. You will have 15 minutes to read your section and complete your summary (this summary can be in the form of bullet points, organized notes, or in paragraph form). You will then present the most important points to the class.

#### Different Groups for Activity:

1. Definition of Anti-Semitism
2. Biblical Times
3. Anti-Judaism
4. The Middle Ages (paragraphs 1-3)
5. The Middle Ages (paragraphs 4-6)
6. Modern Anti-Semitism
7. The Holocaust
8. Contemporary Anti-Semitism

As each group is presenting their crucial information, be prepared to model along with group one through a **think aloud**. Also prepare crucial excerpts for focus as the discussion progresses.

#### Major Takeaways:

- Reactivate Prior Knowledge: Which prior text does the discussion of the Pogroms in Russia remind you of? What text-to-text connections can be made?
- Anti-Semitism has roots far before the Middle Ages, but we will be focusing on this time in particular as a precursor to the events and representations of the Jewish community during Hitler’s reign and the Holocaust.
- What other takeaways do you have that are not listed above? Discuss with your group, and select one to share with the class.

### **Day Three-Four: Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages**

#### **Warm Up:**

We have defined discrimination and we have defined anti-Semitism. To get warmed up before we analyze anti-Semitism in literature of the Middle Ages, I would like you to consider the following:

Why is it that people are so quick to believe in stereotypes or the public’s view of a person or group of people? We discussed this with our Outsiders unit, but I’d like you to consider this in the frame of anti-Semitism. Why do people reach for hate?

#### **Agenda:**

**SWBAT:** analyze a literary text for anti-Semitism and discuss the elements that make the text engaging.

**SWBAT:** analyze an image for anti-Semitic symbolism.

How will be accomplish this goal:

1. We will introduce our primary text for today with a reading from an article titled, "[A Tale of Two Europes: Jews in the Medieval World](#)".
2. We will actively read a translated version of Chaucer's "[The Prioress's Tale](#)" from *The Canterbury Tales*.
3. We will discuss the anti-Semitism that we witness in this text, and we will then draw a connection to Hitler's Germany through analyzing a famous image of Hitler in conquest garb.

### Lesson:

First, students will complete a brief reading and **Think-Pair-Share** with their partner.

With your partner, read "A Tale of Two Europes: Jews in the Medieval World" pages 1-7 (until the crossed-out text).

Think about the following, discuss with your partner, and be prepared to share out to the class:

1. The author, Amy Kaufman, discusses discrimination she has experienced in her own life. What are some examples of this?
2. What was a common profession for Jews in the Middle Ages? Why was this the case?
3. What was the outcome or reaction from the public because of this profession?

Many misconceptions and stereotypes are based on myths and medieval "horror stories", and today we will read Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale", to gain an understanding of these texts.

"The Prioress's Tale" at a glance:

Present background information for the primary text, "The Prioress's Tale" from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

- The *Canterbury Tales* is a famous text by Geoffrey Chaucer which is a collection of stories that take place during the Middle Ages (1387-1400). The narratives are told from the perspective of various individuals that are traveling to Canterbury, England. These individuals have various roles in society, and this particular story is told from the perspective of a Prioress. A prioress is essentially the head of a group of nuns, and this story is meant to be religious, but it includes the anti-Semitic aspects discussed in yesterday's overview.

### Active Reading Activity

- We will be reading around for this story. We will access the story through the website, Librarius.
- We will read around as usual, I read a paragraph and then you read a paragraph, and we will verbally summarize as we go.
- In order to **actively read** (since we cannot underline/star/highlight/etc. because the text is on the computer), I would like you to keep your notebook out as we read, and anytime you notice something that seems anti-Semitic, I want you to write down the line number.

### Passage Analysis

1. In your "Expert Groups" from our Jigsaw Activity, I would like you to analyze three passages from the text in which you would argue there is anti-Semitism.
2. When you are finished, I would like you to answer the following:
  - a. Why is it that people are so quick to believe in stereotypes or the public's view of a person or group of people?

### Image Analysis

1. What do you see in this image? Begin first with observations (no opinions).
2. What is the message? What images are used to support this message?

**Text to Self Reflection**

What aspects of the history of anti-Semitism do you find most relevant to your own experiences? Do you think that people today can learn something from this history? If so, what? If not, why not?

What groups are still discriminated against today in the United States? In the world? Describe other examples of segregation, discrimination, and persecution in today's global society. What steps can be taken to fight these examples of inhumane behavior?

Consider the following excerpt in your reflection:

We need to better recognize the signs of a template that might turn us against each other. Persecutions and pogroms do not come out of nowhere: politicians, religious leaders, and other hate-peddling zealots set the stage for persecutory violence through propaganda... We can say no to those who might provoke animosities by refusing to accept the project of hate. We must.

Part of recognizing the signs means knowing our own more-recent history and how it connects to the medieval past. In the Middle Ages, just as today, violence against Jews came from the same wellspring of hatred as violence against other religious and ethnic minorities (Sturtevant 5).

From "[Ripping Anti-Semitism Out by its Roots](#)" by Paul B. Sturtevant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage Analysis; "The Prioress's Tale"**

In your "Expert Groups" from our Jigsaw Activity, I would like you to analyze three passages from the text in which you would argue there is anti-Semitism.

Reminder: Your analysis is the most important part of this assignment. Once you have selected a passage that you believe demonstrates anti-Semitism, be sure to explain fully.

|              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| Passage One: | Analysis: |
| Passage Two: | Analysis: |

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Passage Three: | Analysis: |
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Why is it that people are so quick to believe in stereotypes or the public's view of a person or group of people?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Modified\*** Passage Analysis; “The Prioress’s Tale”

In your “Expert Groups” from our Jigsaw Activity, I would like you to analyze three passages from the text in which you would argue there is anti-Semitism.

Reminder: Your analysis is the most important part of this assignment. Once you have selected a passage that you believe demonstrates anti-Semitism, be sure to explain fully.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Passage One:</p> <p>There was a Jewry set amidst the town,<br/>Established by a rich lord of the state<br/>For usury and gain of ill renown,<br/>Hateful to Christ and those who are his own;</p> <p>(Lines 37-40)</p> | <p>Analysis:</p> <p>This quote shows anti-Semitism because...</p> |
| <p>Passage Two:</p> <p>Our primal foe, the serpent Sathanas,<br/>Who has in Jewish heart his hornets' nest</p> <p>(Lines 106-107)</p>   | <p>Analysis:</p> <p>This quote shows anti-Semitism because...</p> |
| <p>Passage Three:</p> <p>That amongst the cursed Jews the widow<br/>sought.</p> <p>(Line 147)</p>   | <p>Analysis:</p> <p>This quote shows anti-Semitism because...</p> |

Why is it that people are so quick to believe in stereotypes or the public’s view of a person or group of people?

People are quick to believe in stereotypes because...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Image Analysis

Analyzing the content of an image can help us in understanding the purpose of the image itself, the message behind the image, and the possible misconceptions or the misinformation that can be communicated.

When viewing this famous image of Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany during the Holocaust, I would like you to begin by just observing the image and making statements regarding what you see.

1. What do you see in this image? Begin first with observations (no opinions).

Observations:

- 
- 
- 
- 
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- 



2. What is the message of this picture? What images/symbols/ideas are used to support this message?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Modified**\* Image Analysis

Analyzing the content of an image can help us in understanding the purpose of the image itself, the message behind the image, and the possible misconceptions or the misinformation that can be communicated.

When viewing this famous image of Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany during the Holocaust, I would like you to begin by just observing the image and making statements regarding what you see.



3. What do you see in this image? Begin first with observations (no opinions).

Observations:

- Hitler is wearing \_\_\_\_\_
- A flag with a \_\_\_\_\_ on it
- Hitler is riding on a \_\_\_\_\_
- Hitler's facial expression is \_\_\_\_\_
- Hitler's posture is \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the message of this picture? What images/symbols/ideas are used to support this message?

The message of this picture is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Some images/symbols/ideas that are used to support this message are... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_