

**SYDNEY  
JEWISH  
MUSEUM**  
WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE




NB Student tasks appear in orange boxes.

# What is Antisemitism?

Teacher notes:

Class discussion: Students discuss their understanding of antisemitism.

# What is antisemitism?



Hatred of Jews

Persecution of Jews

Prejudice against Jews

Hostility towards Jews

Racism against Jews

'The oldest hatred'

Write the definition in your notes: *Antisemitism is hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jews.*

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

Click through and explore different aspects of antisemitism.

In sum: Antisemitism can exist in thoughts, words or acts.

Ask students to write the definition in their notes.

## The origins of antisemitism

- There are examples of antisemitism from across the ancient world, in Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman societies
- Usually, these arose from rivalries between different nations and groups, each asserting the superiority of their gods over that of their neighbours
- **Optional extension study: Research one of the following examples of ancient antisemitism:**
  - Manetho's inversion of Exodus story
  - The Alexandrian Pogrom
  - 19CE Expulsion of Jews from Rome
  - 70CE Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

### Teacher notes:

Explain that in Ancient times, there was often conflict between people of differing religions.

“Fly away and Find Out” - Teachers may opt to give students 5 minutes for brief online research of one of the extension examples (in red). Alternatively, teachers may allocate this task as homework.

## The Medieval Period

- During the Medieval Period, as Christianity spread across Europe, negative stereotypes of Jews became common
- Jews became the victims of discrimination



Image of a Jew from Worms, Germany, late 16th century

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Pope Innocent III (1161–1216) decreed that all Jews living in Church-controlled lands must dress in distinguishing attire. This ruling was refined in 1227 at the Synod of Narbonne where it was decreed that all Jews must wear an oval badge of very specific measurement on the breast of their garments.

Image from <https://antisemitism.sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/historical-context/>

## The Medieval Period

1215 – Pope Innocent III decrees Jews must wear distinguishing attire

1218 – King Henry III issues Royal Decree requiring Jews to wear a badge on their outer clothes at all times

1227 – Synod of Narbonne decrees Jews must wear an oval badge



Yellow Badge

Image of a Jew from Worms, Germany, late 16th century

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

The clothing restrictions were used to identify and separate Jews from the rest of the community.

Inform students that the colour yellow was often used, and came to be associated with negative traits.

## The Medieval Period

SYDNEY  
JEWISH  
MUSEUM

Compare and contrast the two sources below.

Jew wearing  
the yellow  
disc in  
Worms,  
Germany,  
late 1500s



Jews wearing  
the yellow  
star in Nazi-  
occupied  
Vienna, 1941



WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

Compare and contrast activity: assist students to draw a link between the earlier antisemitism and antisemitism during the Holocaust.

Second image from <https://newspapers.ushmm.org/events/german-government-forces-jews-to-wear-yellow-stars>

## The Medieval Period

- What is this man holding?
- What messages are these items sending?
- What effect might such stereotypes have?



Image of a Jew from Worms, Germany, late 16th century

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

He is holding garlic and a bag of money.

These are two antisemitic symbols of Judaism.

- Jews were associated with eating garlic. It was an unpleasant connotation, sometimes associated with Jews emitting a 'foul smell'

- There is a persistent and damaging stereotype that Jews are greedy, wanting to get rich by any means.

## Let's explore three flawed bases of antisemitism

### 1. The myth that Jews killed Jesus



14th century fresco depicting a Jew nailing Jesus to the cross.

- Jewish 'deicide' is the antisemitic trope that holds all Jews responsible for the death of Jesus
- This is false: The Nicene Creed confirms it was Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor, who sentenced Jesus
- The Catholic Church expressly repudiated the deicide myth in the 1964 Nostra Aetate

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

Some jew-hatred begins with the misunderstanding that Jews killed Jesus  
The Nostra Aetate is the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", which states unambiguously that the crucifixion of Jesus "cannot be charged against all Jews of today"

Image from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_deicide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_deicide)



## Let's explore three flawed bases of antisemitism

### 3. The stereotype of Jews and money



Depiction of two Jews counting money  
From the Wellcome Library, London

- In Christian Europe in the Medieval and Early Modern periods, Jews were banned from most trades, with exceptions such as moneylending
- Christians were banned from moneylending
- So Jews became associated with money even though the great majority lived in poverty

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Teacher notes:

Note that the damaging stereotype about Jews and money actually arose from the fact that they were forced into the moneylending profession as a form of punishment. ie it was forced upon them, then used against them

## Let's explore three flawed bases of antisemitism

### STUDENT TASK:

*"Hatred of Jews has evolved in response to some key myths and lies."*

Discuss with reference to the sources provided. Your response should be one to two paragraphs in length.

Teacher notes: The task focuses on the historical concept of cause and effect. Teachers can provide time for this in class (ten minutes), or for homework.

## Antisemitism in Interwar Germany

- **After WWI, conditions in Germany were poor.**
- **The population was suffering from the combined effects of:**
  - War losses from WWI
  - The conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles
  - Inflation and
  - The Great Depression
- **So they looked around for someone to blame...**

Teacher notes:


Students should understand that the people who got blamed would be the Jews.



Image from a 1919  
Austrian postcard

- Who are the two figures represented here?
- How are they each portrayed?
- What is the overall message of the cartoon?
- Is this message fact, opinion or propaganda? Explain.

AN DIE DEUTSCHEN MÜTTER!



72000  
jüdische Soldaten  
sind für das Vaterland  
auf dem Felde der Ehre  
gefallen

Christliche und jüdische Helden haben gemeinsam gekämpft und ruhen gemeinsam in fremder Erde.  
**12000 Juden fielen im Kampf!**  
 Blindwütiger Parteihass macht vor den Gräbern der Toten nicht Halt.  
**Deutsche Frauen,**  
 duldet nicht, dass die jüdische Mutter in ihrem Schmerz verhöhnt wird.  
 Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten E.V.

Translation: 72,000 Jewish soldiers died on the battlefields for the Fatherland.  
 Christian and Jewish heroes fought together and rest together in foreign soil.  
 12,000 died in battle! Blind and savage party hatred does not stop at the graves of the dead.  
 German women, do not allow the suffering Jewish mother to be mocked in her pain.  
 - The National Union of Combat Veterans

SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Image from <https://www.annefrank.org/en/timeline/193/the-stab-in-the-back-legend/>



- What is the overall message of the cartoon?
- Is this message fact, opinion or propaganda? Explain.

**SYDNEY  
JEWISH  
MUSEUM**

AN DIE DEUTSCHEN MÜTTER!

72 000  
jüdische Soldaten  
sind für das Vaterland  
auf dem Felde der Ehre  
gefallen

Christliche und jüdische Helden haben gemeinsam gekämpft und ruhen gemeinsam in fremder Erde.  
**12000 Juden fielen im Kampf!**  
 Blindwütiger Parteihass macht vor den Gräbern der Toten nicht Halt.  
**Deutsche Frauen,**  
 duldet nicht, dass die jüdische Mutter in ihrem Schmerz verhöhnt wird.  
 Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten E.V.

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

Consider the two cartoons together:

- How do you account for the difference in their messages?
- Which source is more reliable? Explain your response.

**Teacher notes:**

The goal here is not for students to say one source is correct, while the other is incorrect. Rather, the goal is for students to understand the nature of propaganda, the way in which perspective influences every source, and the need to think carefully about everything they see and read.

Teachers are encouraged to draw links between these images, and the information students consume.

## Finishing Up...

Complete this cloze paragraph using the words in the box.

Antisemitism is a form of \_\_\_\_\_ directed specifically at Jewish people. It has existed for thousands of years and can be seen in \_\_\_\_\_, words, and thoughts. In ancient times, Jews were often targeted due to \_\_\_\_\_ and cultural differences.

During the \_\_\_\_\_ period, laws forced Jews to wear special clothing, such as the \_\_\_\_\_ badge, to mark them as different. Dangerous myths, like the \_\_\_\_\_ (the false claim that Jews used Christian blood in rituals), and stereotypes about Jews and \_\_\_\_\_, helped spread hatred.

These ideas were used again in \_\_\_\_\_ Germany, where Jews were blamed for the country's problems after World War I. Understanding these lies and their impact helps us recognise and challenge \_\_\_\_\_ today.

- Medieval
- actions
- money
- racism
- antisemitism
- Blood Libel
- yellow
- Nazi
- religious

WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

The completed exercise reads: Antisemitism is a form of **racism** directed specifically at Jewish people. It has existed for thousands of years and can be seen in **actions**, words, and thoughts. In ancient times, Jews were often targeted due to **religious** and cultural differences. During the **Medieval** period, laws forced Jews to wear special clothing, such as the **yellow** badge, to mark them as different. Dangerous myths, like the **Blood Libel** (the false claim that Jews used Christian blood in rituals), and stereotypes about Jews and **money**, helped spread hatred. These ideas were used again in **Nazi** Germany, where Jews were blamed for the country's problems after World War I. Understanding these lies and their impact helps us recognise and challenge **antisemitism** today.

**SYDNEY  
JEWISH  
MUSEUM**  
WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

**THANK YOU**