

# THE POWER OF WORDS

## LESSON 3 ANTI-SEMITISM AND HATE SPEECH

### TEACHING GOAL

Students will achieve an understanding of the concept of anti-Semitism. Students will develop an awareness of the effects of anti-Semitic and other hate propaganda in modern and historical contexts.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Students will consider the connections between anti-Semitic and other hate speech, prejudice and oppression, and violence.

#### TERMS/CONCEPTS ADDRESSED

Antisemitism/Anti-Semitism, hate speech, anti-Semitic terms, including: Christ-killer, Hebe/Heeb, Hymie, kike/Kike, Shylock, Yid, (for more, see *The Color of Words: An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Ethnic Bias in the United States*, available from [www.interculturalpress.com](http://www.interculturalpress.com)).

**Antisemitism/Anti-Semitism** (*The Color of Words*, pp. 13-14): Anti-Semitism is prejudice and discrimination against Jews.

... Along with the difficulties of the seemingly timeless issues of anti-Semitism has gone the difficult problem of defining the term. Not surprisingly, for many Jews the term anti-Semite carries with it the memories of Nazism and the smell of mass murder. More broadly, the anti-Semitic label has been used to refer to those who are prejudiced against Jews seen as a race or against Judaism, the religious beliefs and the observation of Jewish practices. In the “new” anti-Semitism described by Forster and Epstein (1974), it means those who criticize the policies of Israel or institutions that oppose those policies.

**Hate speech** (*The Color of Words*, pp. 103-104): Talk or communication that is likely to be perceived as offensive by a minority group or a group that defines itself as a victim. Groups considered to be the targets of such speech are usually racial, ethnic, religious or national; also targeted are certain categories including gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status and physical capacity.

**Christ-killer** (*The Color of Words*, p. 53): From the second half of the nineteenth century, a hostile, insulting reference to a Jew, considered as someone whose ancestors made the mistake of betraying Christ to the Romans and failing to recognize the true Messiah.

**Hebe/Heeb** (*The Color of Words*, p. 105): From Hebrew, this term is a disrespectful or derogatory nickname for a Jewish person (usually a man) that appeared in the 1920s.

**Hymie/heimie** (*The Color of Words*, p. 113): Recent offensive slang word for a Jew, from the Hebrew word hayyim, meaning “life.”

**Kike/kike** (*The Color of Words*, p. 133-134): A highly pejorative term meaning an uncouth Jewish merchant, but may be used for any Jewish man or woman.

**Shylock** (*The Color of Words*, p. 206): An anti-Semitic epithet meaning a “loan shark” or “extortionist.” As a verb, it means to “lend money at exorbitant interest rates.”

Shylock was the name of a character in Shakespeare’s play *The Merchant of Venice*. He was a Jewish man portrayed as a bloodsucking usurer. The image of a practitioner of commercial deception, however, was a part of the stereotype of the Jew long before Shakespeare.

**Yid/yid** (*The Color of Words*, p. 239): (pl. Yidden, “the Jewish people”). A Jew, particularly an eastern European Yiddish-speaking Jew, which is what the term denotes.

... Pronunciation reflects whether the usage is intended to slur: Yid, rhyming with did, as anti-Semites pronounce it, is offensive; but Yeed, rhyming with deed, is not.

#### TYPE OF LEARNING ACTIVITY

Case studies • Research • Problem-solving

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- This lesson plan
- Teaching Tolerance’s free video “The Shadow of Hate” (order form included below)
- One or more of the following links to archives of Nazi propaganda:

##### The Eternal Jew

[www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/diebow.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/diebow.htm)

##### Caricatures from Der Stuermer

[www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/sturmer.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/sturmer.htm)

##### Nazi Propaganda (1933-1945)

[www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/ww2era.htm#Antisem](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/ww2era.htm#Antisem)

##### Cartoons from Die Brennessel

[www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/brenn1.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/brenn1.htm)

**TIME RANGE**

- Several hours for research
- 2 class periods

**GROUP SIZE**

Small to large (2 to 20+). Large groups may want to divide into smaller groups for discussion.

**LEARNING ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Before your group meets, visit one or more of the websites listed above and view some of the archives of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. Notice the visual imagery as well as the language used.

2. View the Teaching Tolerance video “The Shadow of Hate.” Listen for the types of language used about or directed against the groups and individuals who were targets of acts of hatred.

3. In small groups, share your impressions. Answer the following:

- What emotions did you feel as you were watching the video? Did you feel anger, compassion, fear, embarrassment or sorrow?
- What did you notice about the language used?
  - What were some of the labels used?
  - What were some of the descriptive adjectives used?
  - How does this kind of language affect people’s impressions of individuals before they meet or get to know them?

4. Consider the definition of hate speech.

5. Using that definition, and your insights from viewing the video, analyze the piece(s) of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda you researched. Free-write for 10 minutes, explaining the connections between propaganda (hate speech); an environment that dehumanizes people; and acts of violence, killing and genocide.

6. In small groups, share your responses.

**DEBRIEF**

Questions for debriefing:

- What strategies do hate mongers have in common?
- What are the connections between language and hate?
- How has anti-Semitism continued?
- Has this exercise given you any new ideas? If so, what are they?
- Are there some ways you have consciously or unconsciously engaged in anti-Semitic speech or behavior (or other hate speech or behavior)?
- If so, are there ways you can change this speech or behavior?
- Do any contemporary groups use similar strategies today? How do they use them, and to what success?

**VARIATION**

1. View the Simon Wiesenthal Center film “Genocide,” available from [www.wiesenthal.com/](http://www.wiesenthal.com/).

2. Starting at the Southern Poverty Law Center ([www.splcenter.org/index.jsp](http://www.splcenter.org/index.jsp)), Simon Wiesenthal Center ([www.wiesenthal.com/](http://www.wiesenthal.com/)) or Anti-Defamation League ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)), research a current anti-Semitic hate group.

3. Follow the instructions detailed above on page 2.

The Power of Words curriculum is based on cultural anthropologist Philip Herbst’s ground-breaking dictionaries, *The Color of Words: An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Ethnic Bias in the United States* (ISBN# 1-877864-97-8, \$29.95) and *Wimmin, Wimps and Wallflowers: An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Gender and Sexual Orientation Bias in the United States* (ISBN# 1-877864-80-3, \$44.95). Both are available from:

**Intercultural Press**  
**P.O. Box 700**  
**Yarmouth ME 04096**  
**Toll free: 866-372-2665**  
**[www.interculturalpress.com](http://www.interculturalpress.com)**

# It's EASY to order Free Teaching Tolerance Resources! Here's how...

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**MULTIMEDIA KITS** The following materials are available to schools, homeschool networks, teachers' colleges, religious organizations and nonprofit organizations that work with youth. Write the name of the kit(s) you would like to receive in the spaces below.

**Starting Small** Includes 58-minute VHS video and 250-page book. Professional development. *Grades K-5.*

**I Will Be Your Friend** Includes 26-song CD and 130-page activity book. *Grades K-5.*

**Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks** Includes 40-minute VHS video and viewer's guide. *Grades 5 and up.*

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**The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in the U.S.** Includes 40-minute VHS video, 128-page text and teacher's guide. *Grades 8 and up.*

*Please send me the following kits:*

**The Shadow Of Hate**

**PUBLICATIONS** The following products are available to individual teachers, counselors, administrators, homeschools, religious leaders, nonprofit workers who work with youth and pre-service teachers:

- SIGN ME UP FOR MY FREE 2-year *Teaching Tolerance* magazine subscription
- Responding to Hate at School: A Guide for Teachers, Counselors and Administrators*  English  Español

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