

ANTI-SEMITISM & XENOPHOBIA

during 19th century epidemics



FOR GRADES 6-12
RUN TIME: TWO 50-MIN
CLASS PERIODS (100 MIN)

CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

Ruchi Shah
Kathy Lu
Julia Wang
Sulynn Miao

REVIEW BOARD

Donna Neary
Adam Strom

SLIDE DESIGNER

Ruchi Shah

Summary & Key
Understandings - 2

Common Core Standards - 4

Activities - 5

Resource List - 9

on xenophobia & public health

In times of great emergency, blame and anger manifest in violent ways toward perceived outsiders. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. IHI is proud to present this series of lesson plans investigating the link between xenophobia and public health crises through in-depth historical case studies. This free instructor guide presents important but sobering history, highlights how past events mirror the present, and challenges both students and teachers to consider the COVID-19 pandemic in all its dimensions and take action against racism, fear, and hate.

Made possible with funding from CT Humanities.

this lesson plan contains:

- Customizable slide deck & student worksheets
- 2 hands-on student activities involving primary source analysis
- List of further resources to guide teacher research & preparation

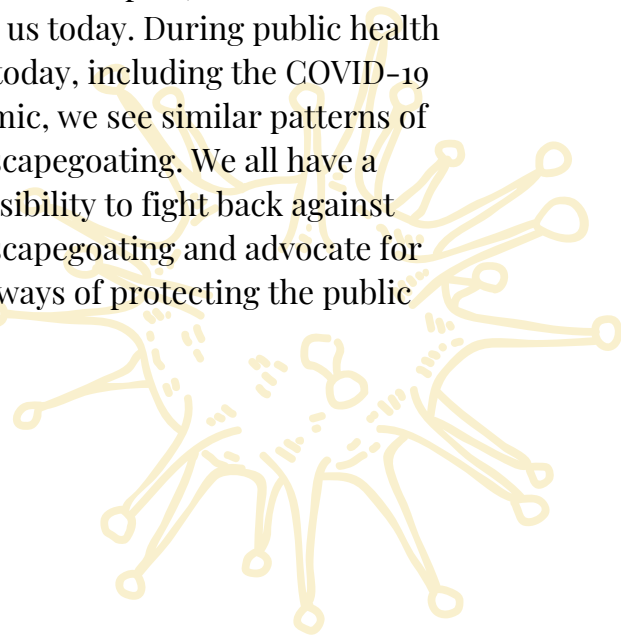
INSTRUCTOR'S QUICK SUMMARY

- Throughout history, epidemics have often led to the scapegoating of Jewish communities, dating back to as early as the Bubonic Plague during the Middle Ages. During disease outbreaks in the 19th century, Eastern European Jewish immigrants and residents were perceived as dirty and carrying disease.
- In 1892, two epidemics took place in New York - typhus and cholera - both centered around the New York Port, the busiest port in the U.S.
- Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were blamed by officials and the public for bringing the diseases to the U.S. Public health officials targeted those who had recently arrived as well as other Jewish residents in the city in an attempt to stop outbreaks. The U.S. government banned the immigration of Russian Jews.
- Many Jewish immigrants and residents were forcibly quarantined even when they weren't sick, and those living in the city were monitored and even evicted. The conditions in which Jewish immigrants were held, i.e. in highly unsanitary and crowded spaces, exacerbated the spread of disease among vulnerable populations. Many became sick as a result of inadequate quarantine facilities.
- Similar to public rhetoric during the COVID-19 around Chinese and other East Asian communities, blame centered around immigrants from one particular area as the 'cause' of disease, when in fact the epidemics had already spread through Asia and Europe and were brought to the U.S. by multiple ethnic groups.

DOWNLOAD THE SLIDES
FOR FULL HISTORY LESSON &
ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS AT
tinyurl.com/anti-semitism

KEY UNDERSTANDINGS FOR STUDENTS

- Racism and anti-immigrant sentiment tend to spike during times of great emergency, such as public health crises. Racial scapegoating occurs when one racial group is **unfairly singled out and blamed** for a particular problem, leading to mistreatment and injustice.
- Public health policy created based on racist beliefs or agenda have devastating consequences on the population and distract from more effective ways of preventing or stopping disease outbreaks.
- Racism and xenophobia are not only confined to the past, but continue to impact us today. During public health crises today, including the COVID-19 pandemic, we see similar patterns of racial scapegoating. We all have a responsibility to fight back against racial scapegoating and advocate for better ways of protecting the public health.



Activity 1: Anti-Semitic Scapegoating in Texts (*page 5*)

Students will analyze two textual primary sources from different points of view to understand how anti-semitic scapegoating was pushed, justified, or condemned.

Activity 2: Creative Letter Writing (*page 7*)

Students will write letters advocating for the public health rights of quarantined steerage passengers in the cholera outbreak. Can be adapted for younger students.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

This lesson plan fulfills many Common Core standards in the areas of English & Language Arts. See below for a non-exhaustive list. For more information, please visit www.thecorestandards.org.

Grades 6-8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6



ACTIVITY 1: ANTI-SEMITIC SCAPEGOATING IN TEXTS

learning objectives

Students will be able to:

- Understand and apply the critical concept of scapegoating
- Analyze and understand textual primary sources
- Identify and examine anti-Semitic rhetoric in the 1890s
- Compare and evaluate the writers' perspectives and biases

activity instructions

scapegoating –

The unfair blaming of a person or a specific group of people for something they are not responsible for.

1. (5 min) Present the section of the slide deck for Activity 1 (slides 47-55). Hand out the worksheet for Activity 1. Before beginning, first define and discuss the lesson's critical concept, "*scapegoating*."
 - This term will be used to frame the activity as students look at how the blame was placed on Eastern European Jewish immigrants for the spread of cholera in New York City, even before cholera entered the New York Port from Hamburg in August 1892.
 - Discuss: How does this concept apply to the cholera & typhus epidemics in New York? Who was scapegoated? Why?
2. (8 min) Instruct students to read excerpt one, then respond to the discussion questions in a pair share:
 1. What is Author 1 saying? How does he support his position? What do you think Author 1 is arguing for?
 2. What perspectives and biases does Author 1 show through the way he represents Jewish immigrants? What words does Author 1 use to reveal his anti-Semitic biases?
 3. If you could speak to Author 1 now, 129 years later, what would you say in response to his statements? What would you want to tell him?

3. (8 min) Instruct students to read excerpt two, then respond to the discussion questions in a pair share:

1. What is Author 2 (Wise) responding to? How does Wise argue that Jewish people are treated unfairly?
2. What does Wise suggest for responding to the spread of epidemics?
3. What would you tell Wise? What have you learned from history, including history after Wise's time, to help with his arguments?

4. (5-7 min) Facilitate a brief classroom discussion on the following questions:

1. How did scapegoating fit into the response to the cholera epidemic in 1892?
2. What are the consequences of blaming one group of people for the spread of disease?
3. Do you see similarities to what people have said and done during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Don't forget to download the all the slides & handouts at tinyurl.com/anti-semitism

VOCABULARY LIST

Regulations: rule made by authority

Contagious: spread from person to person by contact

Infectious: likely to be spread from person to person

Prominent: important, noticeable

Ignorant: uneducated, unsophisticated

Refuge: safety, shelter

Offensive: causing hurt, repulsive

Menace: person or thing likely to cause harm

Originate: to come from

Riffraff: people regarded as worthless

ACTIVITY 2: CREATIVE LETTER WRITING

learning objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe the unfair quarantine conditions and related class and racial dynamics
- Understand and advocate for sanitary quarantine facilities and public health rights

activity instructions

1. (5 min) Present the section of the slide deck for Activity 2 (slides 56-64). Distribute the worksheet for Activity 2. Review the background information and vocabulary. Then, prompt students to imagine themselves as steerage passengers on the ships from Germany and think about what they would do in those circumstances.

Don't forget to download the all the slides & handouts at tinyurl.com/anti-semitism

VOCABULARY LIST

Cholera: disease from infected water supply

Quarantine: place where people who have been exposed to a contagious disease are placed

Contamination: polluting or making something impure

Ventilation: fresh air

Steerage: second class passengers

2. (15 min) Instruct students to write their own letters highlighting the quality of their quarantine conditions to a public health official. Students can make up their own backstories about why they are coming to America, where they are coming from, how they could have or didn't catch cholera, exactly where they are quarantined, etc. The letter should address the following questions:

1. How would you describe the quarantine conditions?
2. How would you suggest improving these conditions, and how will you convince the public health official?

3. (5 min) After writing their letters, ask students to share out to the class a few things they mentioned in their letters. Facilitate a brief classroom discussion on the following questions:

1. How did disease spread during quarantine? Why?
2. Why were steerage passengers treated differently from cabin class passengers? Do you think this was just/fair? Why or why not?



RESOURCES & READINGS

1. Achilles, Manuela, and Debaere, Peter. "Q&A with Richard J. Evans on the Relevance of a Past Cholera Epidemic." *Global Water Blog*, October 27, 2020. <https://blogs.darden.virginia.edu/globalwater/2020/10/27/qa-with-richard-j-evans-on-the-relevance-of-a-past-cholera-epidemic/>
2. Batlan, Felice. "Law in the Time of Cholera: Disease, State Power, and Quarantine Past and Future." *Temple Law Review* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2007), https://www.templelawreview.org/article/80-1_batlan/
3. The City University of New York. "Cholera." Copyright 2001. https://virtualny.ashp.cuny.edu/cholera/cholera_intro.html
4. The City University of New York. "Health of New York's Jewish Immigrants." Last modified May 13, 2009. https://macaulay.cuny.edu/seminars/drabiko9/articles/h/e/a/Health_of_New_York%27s_Jewish_Immigrants_566a.html
5. Digital History. "Migration and Disease." Copyright 2021. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3296
6. Jackson, Paul S. B. "Fearing future epidemics: the cholera crisis of 1892." *Cultural Geographies* 20, no. 1 (January 2013): 43-65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474012455017>
7. Kenealy, Annesley. "The Cholera in Hamburg." In *The Congress of Women: Held in the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893*, edited by Mary Kavanaugh Oldham, 354-358. Chicago: Monarch Book Company, 1894.
8. Kushner, Aviya. "Pandemics have always incited anti-Semitism. Here's the history you need to know." *Forward*, May 4, 2020. <https://forward.com/culture/445419/pandemic-anti-semitism-coronavirus-black-death-typhus-cholera-immigrants/>
9. Markel, Howard. "Knocking out the Cholera: Cholera, Class, and Quarantines in New York City." In *Quarantine!: East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892*, 101-134. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
10. Owen, Ryan W. "The Immigrant Experience in 1892: New York's Cholera Scare and Its Effect on Boston." *Forgotten New England*, 2022. <https://forgottennewengland.com/2012/03/03/the-immigrant-experience-in-1892-new-yorks-cholera-scare-and-its-effect-on-boston/>

CREDITS

Image Credits

Page 1: New York City Municipal Archives

Page 4: Ohio State University

Page 8: The Everett Collection

All Rights Reserved.

You may use these materials only for your personal, or your organization's internal, use. You may redistribute, alter or modify these materials for any non-commercial educational purpose, provided that, in all cases, you appropriately credit IHI as the source of the information and provide a link to the website (www.immigranthistory.org).

