



Educator's Guide

Narratives: The Palestinian Story Explained

This video attempts to explore the challenging concept of "narratives," how different people and groups can have different perspectives on historical events. Here we delve into the establishment of the State of Israel; which Israeli Jews typically view with excitement while the Palestinian community typically views that same time period as the "Nakba," "catastrophe." This video opens the door for big questions about Israel's story, its people and its future.

Watch this video and make sure to guide a conversation with our educational guide about a challenging, yet critical topic, helping your students ask essential questions, and helping them flex their empathy muscles without sacrificing their passion for Israel and Zionism.

Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/narratives-palestinian-story-explained/>

Further Reading

- 1.** Francis Nataf, "Getting the Discussion Started: Teaching the Palestinian Narrative in Diaspora Jewish Schools"
<https://www.lookstein.org/journal/getting-discussion-started-teaching-palestinian-narrative-diaspora-jewish-schools/>
- 2.** Benny Morris, "Peace? No Chance"
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/feb/21/israel2>
- 3.** Dr. Eran Lerman, "The Palestinian Victimhood Narrative as an Obstacle to Peace"
<http://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/the-palestinian-victimhood-narrative-as-an-obstacle-to-peace/>



- 4.** Corey Gil-Shuster, “The Ask Project”
<https://www.youtube.com/user/coreygilshuster/featured>
- 5.** Dr. Einat Wilf, “Personal Experiences that Have Shaped My Views on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDrQ_wgfYdo

Discussion Questions

- 1.** What is the difference between history and narrative? How does narrative influence our understanding of history?
- 2.** What is the typical Israeli narrative of Israel’s establishment? What is the typical Palestinian narrative?
- 3.** How can two groups that experienced the same events have such a different perspective on them? See the study [here](#) and apply it to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- 4.** In the video, Professor Asher Susser says: “These days it’s very difficult to draw a very clear distinction between historical narrative and historical fact because the writing of history has become more politicized in recent years than it was before. But not all narratives are equal.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree?
- 5.** Does a nation’s or religion’s ancient claim to a land matter hundreds of years later? Is that what ties the Israelis or Arabs to the land, or is it the legalities of the events of the 20th century?
- 6.** How do the differences between the Israeli and Palestinian narratives impact the ability of both parties to live together and achieve peace?
- 7.** Do you think people ever really change their minds on a topic of importance? If so, how do you think that process happens?
- 8.** Of the narratives you heard in this video, which one do you identify with most? Why?



Reflection Questions

1. [Mahmoud Darwish](#), prominent Palestinian poet, writes in *I Come from There*:

*I am from there and I have memories. Like any other
Man I was born. I have a mother,
A house with several windows, friends and brother.
I have a prison cell's cold window, a wave
Snatched by seagulls, my own view, an extra blade
Of grass, a moon at word's end, a supply
Of birds, and an olive tree that cannot die.
I walked and crossed the land before the crossing.
Of swords made a banquet table of a body.
I come from there, and I return the sky
To its mother when it cries for her, and cry
For a cloud on its return
To recognize me. I have learned
All words befitting of blood's court to break
The rule; I have learned all the words to take
The lexicon apart for one noun's sake,
The compound I must make:
Homeland.*

As a student internalizing someone else's expression of their narrative, what challenges and opportunities do you have when reading this poem?

2. [Jonathan Haidt](#) writes in his book *Righteous Mind*: "People bind themselves into political teams that share moral narratives. Once they accept a particular narrative, they become blind to alternative moral worlds."
3. How would you apply this idea to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Heterodox Academy explains "viewpoint diversity" in this [video](#). What do you make of its role in education? Use this topic as a test case.
4. Pro-Israel activist [Chloé Valdary](#) frequently notes: "Criticize in order to uplift, not to tear the other person down."



- a.** Ask your students to choose a position on this topic with which they vehemently disagree, to pause and consider it.
 - b.** Ask your students to then argue with the perspective, and give suggestions to alter it.
 - c.** Remind students to zone in on the idea and not the person.
 - d.** Ask your students how they view that idea and if it has changed by engaging in this process.
- 5.** [Yuval Noah Harari](#) writes in *Sapiens*: “Do we focus on the aristocracy, the simple peasants, or the pigs and the crocodiles? History isn’t a single narrative, but thousands of alternative narratives. Whenever we choose to tell one, we are also choosing to silence others.”

What are some ways you can learn the different narratives of the Palestinians and the different narratives of the Israelis, and make sure to hear from the stories of people who may not be front and center in the media?