



Educator's Guide

Six Day War Project

This video gives a play-by-play of the action of Israel's incredible Six-Day-War. It details the ins and outs of Israel's strategy, leadership and impressive military feats. But more than that, it opens the door to important questions and issues that Israel faced in the aftermath of the war and still does to this day.

Start by watching this video series and then use our prompts to explore a pivotal and highly impactful event in Israel's history, which ultimately changed Israel in a way no other war or moment in Israel has.

Link to video: <https://unpacked.education/video/six-day-war-project/>

Further Reading

1. Michael Oren, *Six Days of War*
2. Yossi Klein Halevi, *Like Dreamers*
3. Micah Goodman, *Catch-67*
4. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, chapters 12-13

Review

1. Why did Israel go to war in 1967?
2. Why did Israel consider this a “war of no choice”?
3. Who was Israel’s prime minister at this time?
 - o Levi Eshkol (correct)
 - o Golda Meir
 - o David Ben-Gurion
 - o Moshe Sharett



- 4.** Which country's air force did Israel decimate on the first day of the war?
 - Jordan
 - Syria
 - Lebanon
 - Egypt (correct)
- 5.** Why did Jordan join the war even though Israel vowed not to attack it?
- 6.** How wide was Israel's narrowest stretch?
 - 3 miles
 - 9 miles (correct)
 - 21 miles
 - 39 miles
- 7.** Which territory did Israel not capture in the Six-Day War?
 - Golan Heights
 - West Bank
 - Sinai desert
 - Galilee (correct)
- 8.** What significance does the West Bank have in Jewish history?
- 9.** Why was it so important for Israel to defeat Syria?
- 10.** After the war, Israel offered to give back land in exchange for peace. How did its Arab neighbors respond?

Discussion Questions

- 1.** Moshe Dayan is quoted as saying, "To our Arab neighbors, Israel stretches out its hand in peace, and the members of other religions may rest assured that all their religious rights and freedoms will be fully protected. We did not come to conquer the holy sites of others or to restrict their religious rights, but to ensure the integrity of the city and to live there with others in brotherhood." Consider Moshe Dayan's statement after the Israelis captured the Kotel (Western Wall) and the Khartoum resolution, in which the Arab leaders adamantly refused to consider



peace with Israel. Evaluate whether or not the Arab leadership made the right decision to deny negotiations with Israel. What do you think was behind the decision of the Khartoum resolution?

- 2.** On the one hand, the term “occupation” is a contentious word, and many Israelis dispute that Israel’s presence in the West Bank is an “occupation” in the legal sense. One of the reasons it might not be an occupation, which is noted above, is because Jordan renounced claims to the territory. On the other hand, Micah Goodman notes that in lived reality, “The Palestinians are a nation that lives under occupation. The conclusion is that the territories are not occupied, but the Palestinian people are.”

Do you think that this nuanced distinction between occupation of land and occupation of people is a constructive way to analyze the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? Why or why not?

- 3.** In reference to Jordan’s aggression, Micah Goodman, in *Catch-67*, notes that Jordan made a mistake, saying “its entry into the war did not lead to Israel’s collapse, but to its expansion. At the end of the war, Israel found itself with East Jerusalem in its hands as well as the Judean Desert and the hills of Samaria. This much is an indisputable historical fact: Judea and Samaria were conquered not in an act of Israeli aggression but in an act of Israeli defense.” Goodman continues by saying that “it would be a “dangerous world” if “bullies face no risks” after they started a war. What do you think Israel should have done after this war when the Arab world refused to negotiate as per the Khartoum resolution?

- 4.** Although they were once enemies—and countries who are responsible for the death of thousands of Israelis, Jordan and Egypt are now two of Israel’s biggest allies in the Middle East. What do you think this sea-change says about the nature of geopolitical foes? To what extent are the peace deals with Egypt and Jordan analogous to the Palestinians, and how might the situation with the Palestinians be different?



- 5.** Israel captured so much territory in this war that it tripled in size. Do you think Israel intended to hold onto the land, or do you think the Israeli leaders intended to hold onto the land as leverage for a peace deal?
- 6.** Israel: David or Goliath? Today, Israel has become a military and technological superpower in the region. At the same time, it is a small country often surrounded by hostile neighbors. Before June 1967, Israel was seen as a David. How do you think this change of optics and reality has impacted how many ethnic and minority groups have started to view Israel as a result of Israel's victory in 1967?
- 7.** Many people claim that 1967 was the beginning of Israel's 21st-century conflict. Based on what you saw in this film, do you agree? In what ways might these events have laid the groundwork for the modern-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- 8.** Why do you think permanent peace has been so elusive in Israel's history?
- 9.** When capturing the Old City of Jerusalem, Israel refrained from using artillery so as not to damage holy sites. This decision likely cost human lives. Do you agree with this decision? Why or why not?

Reflection Questions

- 1.** English illustrator Pauline Baynes famously said, "Believe what you like, but don't believe everything you read without questioning it." When reflecting on the outbreak of the war in 1967 and who you perceive as the aggressor, what about the history of the war do you find yourself questioning and wanting to understand better?
- 2.** Sari Nusseibeh, a leading Palestinian public intellectual, notes in his *Once Upon a Country* that "King Hussein had never wanted the war, and if it had been up to him, the No Man's Land dividing the city would have stayed in place until the end of time." The only reason Hussein joined the war was as a "prophylactic measure against the inevitable Arab charge that he was cooperating with the enemy." In light of this information, do you think a nation's motives are important in



choosing to go to war, and do you think motives should be connected to the peace process?

- 3.** Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser is quoted as saying, “The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel...to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation. This act will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs were arranged for battle; the crucial hour has arrived. We have reached the stage of serious action and not declaration.” Put yourself in an Israeli’s shoes at this time. What emotions are you feeling after hearing this?
- 4.** What do you imagine Israeli Arabs were experiencing during this war? Would you expect them to identify with Israel or its Arab neighbors? If you were a Jewish Israeli, what would you want to talk to your Arab neighbors about?
- 5.** The Six-Day War is an ultimate example of being teamed up against on all sides. Can you think of a time you or your team were teamed up on? Is that experience similar on a small and large scale, or different?
- 6.** In 1967, Jews returned to the Old City of Jerusalem en masse. Remember, or imagine, seeing the Western Wall for the first time. What did it mean to Jews then, and what did it/would it mean to you?
- 7.** *“In a world from which colonialism has been eliminated, Israel, since 1967, is endeavoring to impose colonial rule on the territory of a foreign people. Two aspects of Israeli rule over the West Bank and Gaza ought to be considered...The question of the internal implications of including one and a quarter million Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza under the rule of the state of Israel... The second problem involves the implications for Jewish Arab relations. The occupation rule in the West Bank and Gaza will bring about solidarity of the half a million Israeli Arab citizens with their brothers in the occupied territories. This will lead to a radical change in their state of mind. Inevitably, they will no longer regard themselves as citizens of the State of Israel, but rather as members of a people exploited by a state.”*

-Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Occupation and Terror*, 1976

(Yeshayahu Leibowitz is considered one of Israel’s leading and controversial



public intellectuals.) When reading this quote, do you find yourself frustrated by what Leibowitz argues or in agreement with his point of view?

- 8.** *“The Zionist Idea gave me—and millions of others—a meaningful identity. In June 1967, when I was nineteen, the call from Jerusalem—‘The Temple Mount is in Our Hands’—penetrated the Iron Curtain. Democratic Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, defeating Arab dictatorships threatening to destroy it, inspired many of us all over the world to become active participants in Jewish history... Forging a mystical link with our people, we discovered identity, or as we call it “peoplehood.” Suddenly, we Soviet Jews, Jews of silence, robbed of our heritage by the Soviet regime, realized there is a country that called us its children.”*

-Natan Sharansky, Foreword to Gil Troy’s *The Zionist Ideas:*

Visions for the Jewish Homeland –Then, Now, Tomorrow After reading both Sharansky and Leibowitz, whose reaction do you identify with more and what impact can this view have on your life?