



Educator's Guide

Herzl: The Zionist Dream of a Jewish State

This video introduces a Zionist visionary and founding father of the State of Israel, Theodor Herzl. The video tells Herzl's story, from his experience at the infamous Dreyfus Affair to his eventual establishment of the annual Zionist Congress in 1897. While Herzl did not live to see Israel's establishment, he is credited with planting the seeds that allowed the State of Israel to come to fruition, teaching the Jewish world, "If you will it, it is no dream." Students will learn about Herzl's life, legacy and vision. What is Zionism? Why is it so controversial and why there such a strong relationship between Zionism and anti-Semitism? This video and educator's guide explore all this and more.

Watch this video and use these prompts to dig deeply into history, analyze new ideas, and foster meaningful discussion.

Video: <https://unpacked.education/video/herzl-the-zionist-dream-of-a-jewish-state/>

Further Reading

1. Gil Troy, *The Zionist Ideas*, Part One: Pioneers, Founding the State
2. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, Chapters 3 and 4
3. Adam Kirsch, *The People and the Books*, Chapter 13

Review - Did the students understand the material?

1. What was Herzl's initial approach to solving the problem of anti-semitism?
2. In what ways is Judaism not just a religion, but a nation?



3. What is the name of the person who coined the term, “anti-semitism”?
 - a. Karl Duhring (correct)
 - b. Adolf Hitler
 - c. Pontius Pilate
 - d. Gyozo Istoczy

4. What is the name of the Jewish officer who was falsely accused of espionage by the French?
 - a. Ze’ev Jabotnisky
 - b. Leon Pinsker
 - c. Alfred Dreyfus (correct)
 - d. Emile Zola

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think was the primary driver for the push toward Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel: an internal belief in nationalism and self-determination, or the external oppression of anti-Semitism?

2. In a eulogy for Herzl, orthodox Rabbi Eliyahu Kaplan said that even though Herzl was secular and in many ways opposed to the religious Jewish life, he taught all Jews to have pride and the willingness to say, “I am a Jew.” What about Zionism allowed Jews to feel proud about their heritage?

3. Herzl famously said, “Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word—which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly—it would be this: At Basel, I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, certainly in fifty, everyone will know it.” Evaluate whether you think Herzl’s prediction was folly and fantasy or grounded and possible.

Reflection Questions

1. Herzl was rejected time and again about his vision for Zionism and the idea that to solve anti-semitism, the Jewish people would need to develop its own state, but he persevered. In fact, Baron Edmond de Hirsch said to him, “You are an intelligent man but you have such fantastic brain waves.” This, however, did not



deter Herzl. In what ways can you incorporate Herzl's perseverance, even if you are rejected a few times, to resiliently push through?

- 2.** In thinking about the world today, do you think Herzl's approach to Zionism is correct, in that with a Jewish state, anti-semitism would be cured and disappear, or do you align more with Jabotinsky, who believed that even with a Jewish state, anti-semitism would never disappear, but the Jewish people would be protected from it?
- 3.** When processing the impact Herzl had on the world and the challenges he went through, which quality of Herzl do you want to incorporate into your own life, and which qualities are you less inclined to incorporate?