

# HISTORY OF ISRAEL EXPLAINED

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



## THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

### Section 1: Additional Resources

- Walter Laquer, A History of Zionism, Part One, Chapter 3
- Anita Shapira, Israel: A History, Part 1, Chapter 1
- Jerusalem U video, "Who Was Theodor Herzl?"  
<https://medialab.jerusalemu.org/lesson/herzl-the-zionist-dream-of-a-jewish-state/>
- Joellyn Zollman, "The Dreyfus Affair" <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-dreyfus-affair/>
- Liam Hoare, "Did Dreyfus Affair Really Inspire Herzl?"  
<https://forward.com/schmooze/193316/did-dreyfus-affair-really-inspire-herzl/>
- Adam Gopnik, "Trial of the Century: Revisiting the Dreyfus Affair"  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/09/28/trial-of-the-century>

### Section 2: Discussion Questions

- Does the Dreyfus Affair sound to you like something that could only take place at a certain time and place in history or something that could happen today?
- From the Dreyfus Affair, it is noted that the facts of Dreyfus's guilt or innocence is less relevant than the hostile atmosphere that the trial created in which the French country was split and people were even chanting, "Death to the Jews." From a historical lens and from the perspective of the history of Zionism, why do you think the reaction is more important than the facts of the case itself?
- There is debate surrounding how much the Dreyfus Affair impacted Herzl and early Zionism. After watching this video and this one, what is your take?
- Eventually, Dreyfus was pardoned and reinstated in the French military with high honors. To what extent does this rectify what had previously been done to him?

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### Section 3: Review

1. Who was Alfred Dreyfus?
2. In what year was Dreyfus sentenced to life in prison?
  - a. 1845
  - b. 1875
  - c. 1895
  - d. 1905
3. What was Herzl's relationship to Dreyfus?
  - a. Cousin
  - b. Lawyer
  - c. Journalist covering his case
  - d. Rabbi
3. What was the thesis of Herzl's book *The Jewish State*?
4. What role did French novelist Emile Zola play in the Dreyfus Affair?

### Section 4: Reflection Questions

- As nationalism swept through Europe, Jews had to ask themselves if they should remain loyal to their empires and become nationalists of those empires or if they should develop their own collective identity. If you could put yourself back into the 19th century, what would you choose? Does it have to be one or the other?
- The French Revolution gave the Jewish people rights as individuals, but not as a people. Clermont-Tonnerre declared, "To the Jews as individuals--everything; as a nation--nothing." Anita Shapira notes in *Israel: A History*, "A paradox was created whereby in an era of increasing secularization, the Jews' self-definition began to lean heavily on religion: Germans of the Jewish faith, French people of the Jewish faith, and so forth." For the first time, Jews felt a distinction between Jews as a people and as a religion. In what ways do you see Judaism as a religion, a nationality or a culture?
- Put yourself in Herzl's shoes. How would you feel if you watched such injustice take place? What would you write in your journal or diary?
- Herzl first believed that the answer to anti-Semitism was for Jews to assimilate and to convert to Christianity; he then changed his mind and saw the solution in establishing a Jewish State. Looking back on it, it's easy to judge Herzl negatively for his initial solution of conversion. What can this tell us about the context in which he lived in, that his only solutions were either developing a Jewish state or converting?
- Many consider Emile Zola a hero in this story. What makes a hero?