

# Tying the Knot: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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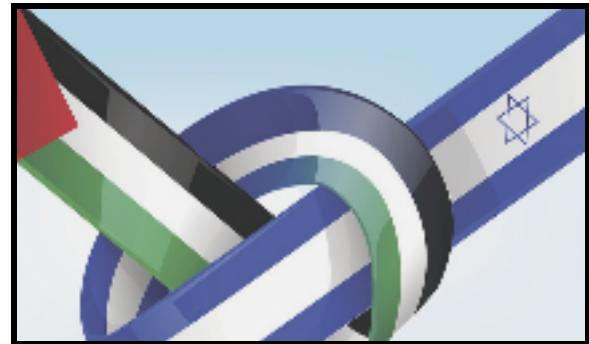
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**Grade Level:** Grades 9-12

**Lesson Relevance:** World History, Macroeconomics, Global Issues, Human Geography, Civics



**Duration:** 3 60-minute class periods

**Relevance:** This lesson works well as an extension of units on Judaism and Islam, World War II and the Holocaust, the geography of the Middle East, and international diplomacy. Some aspects of this lesson also connect easily to discussions involving barriers/walls, human migration, national security, economic disparity, and terrorism.

## Lesson Objectives:

- Examine the history of the region by charting the changes in political boundaries across time.
- Connect the patterns of the Palestinians' plight with that of other indigenous peoples throughout the world.
- Investigate the ways in which contemporary conflicts over borders, access to natural resources, and economic development frustrate the prospect of peace.
- Discuss the ways in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict spotlights the interconnectedness of land, identity, economy, and politics.
- Relate the ongoing conflict in the West Bank with broader themes in history (e.g. European Imperialism) and current developments in the US

## Resources:

Google Slide Presentation for Lesson <https://goo.gl/6FJfgH>

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Concise History <https://goo.gl/pNV2GH>

Resource Analysis Packets: <https://goo.gl/qlLXyx>

- *Barriers to Progress*
- *Making "Cents" of the Conflict: The Economic Reality*
- *"Well"-Intentioned: Water Distribution in the West Bank*

Computers with internet access

## Day 1: The History

Note: Access the Google Slide Presentation for a visual guide to this initial day of the lesson.

### Procedures:

1. **Introduction:** Provide the students with a brief overview of the lesson. Explain that they will examine the historical roots of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and connect these details with current events. (Note that this lesson focuses almost exclusively on the status of the West Bank.)
2. **Historical Background:** Divide students into small groups of 3-4 people. Distribute copies of "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Concise History" to each student. Instruct students to read the overview of each historical era (four eras total). Within their small groups, they should then discuss the questions listed for each

era (found on the last page). Allow students time to read all four eras and discuss the assigned questions. Recommendation: 20-30 minutes.

3. **Large class discussion:** Spotlight the key developments that occurred in the region from World War I to the Second Intifada. Using the discussion questions as a guide, ask students how these developments might impact Israeli-Palestinian relations over time.
4. **Questions to Ponder:** In the final minutes of class, invite students to consider and discuss the following questions...
  - a. *"I was here first!": Both Israelis and Palestinians insist that they occupied the region first. How is this possible?*
  - b. *How did developments in Europe during the 20th century intensify the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine?*
  - c. *Martyrdom: Both sides of the conflict are adept at casting themselves as the victim in the conflict. Based on what you have read thus far, who is the aggressor? Who is the victim?*

## **Day 2: Current Situation**

Note: Access the Google Slide Presentation for a visual guide to this second day of instruction.

### **Procedures:**

1. **Introduction:** Briefly review the historical background of the situation as discussed the previous day.
2. **Focus:** Access the Google Slide Presentation to provide students with a visual introduction to the status of the West Bank in the 21st century.
  - a. "Widening the focus: Does this narrative look familiar?"(Slide #6): Invite students to comment on the visual similarities between the status of American Indians' land in the US and the status of Palestinian land in the West Bank. Challenge them to predict some of the issues/problems that might emerge as a result of the Palestinians' loss of land over time.
  - b. The West Bank today: The next several slides (#7-12) illustrate the reality of land distribution in the West Bank from a visitor's perspective.

-**Slide 7:** Map of the different regions within the West Bank, detailing the special conditions/status assigned to each color-coded area. Note the location of Israel's Security Fence signified by the bold black link that winds through the land on the east side of Jerusalem. For additional information, see <http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2014/7/west-bank-security.html>

-**Slides 8-9:** Images of Israel's Security Fence near Bethlehem in 2014. Photo credit: Amy Perkins

-**Slide 10:** Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) military tank parked in the center of Hebron in 2014. For more information on the historical significance of Hebron, see

<https://www.ipost.com/Magazine/Hebron-The-conflict-in-a-nutshell-490446> Photo credit: Amy Perkins

-**Slide 11:** Access to Israeli settlements in the West Bank is closely guarded and fenced off, signifying the tense relationship between Palestinians and Israelis living in the West Bank. A road sign warns Israeli drivers that they are leaving Area C and entering Area A. Photo credit: Amy Perkins

-**Slide 12:** The Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem. For more information, see

<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/dheisheh-camp> Photo credit: Amy Perkins

-**Slide 13:** A brief overview as students prepare for a closer analysis of the current situation.

3. **Small Group Analysis:** Tell students that they will now explore three different ways in which the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is affecting the daily lives of people living in the West Bank. They will investigate how

access to water, the construction of security barriers, and the distribution of land has often frustrated the prospect of peace in the region. (See slides #14-16)

- a. Create six research stations, two stations for each topic. This duplicity will ensure that student groups do not exceed 4-5 people. Provide each station with an informational packet highlighting one of the three topics. Be sure to include enough copies for all students who will visit that station (15 copies for a class of 30 students). Equip each station with a computer that has internet access. Note that two of the topics (Barriers to Progress and Making "Cents" of the Conflict) require students to watch a short video clip.  
*\*In the interest of time, teachers can modify the plan by assigning student groups ONE topic to research in depth. Those student groups will be expected to teach their classmates about that topic during the next class period.*
- b. Divide students into six smaller groups and assign them to their first station. Each station will require 15-20 minutes to complete. Monitor students' progress to determine the best time to tell them to advance to the next stations. They need to research all three topics by the end of class.

4. **Planning ahead:** Explain to students that they will be sharing their findings with the class on the next day.

## **Day 3: Connecting the Past and Present**

### **Procedures:**

1. **Discussion:** Facilitate a class discussion of students' findings regarding each one of the research topics.
  - Barriers to Progress**
  - Making "Cents" of the Conflict: The Economic Reality**
  - "Well"-Intentioned: Water Distribution in the West Bank**
2. **Conclusions:** Challenge students to reach broader conclusions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by addressing key questions (slide #18). Note that the answers to these questions are hotly disputed today among experts and the individuals living in the region.
  - *Why did the Israelis construct barriers and to what extent have these defensive measures relieved/intensified conflict in the region?*
  - *How and why has the economic disparity grown between Israelis and Palestinians?*
  - *Who is responsible for the ongoing conflict?*
  - *What can be done, if anything, to reduce tensions in the region?*
3. **Connections to History:** Invite students to consider how settlement patterns in the West Bank compare to settlement patterns in other regions of the world. What insight does this juxtaposition of maps (slide 19) reveal about human migration, settlement, and conflict throughout history?
4. **Connections to the Present:** To what extent does students' analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict help them gain insight into developments/events that dominate the news today.
  - *the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*
  - *the effectiveness of border walls*
  - *the US position on the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the relocation of the US embassy*
  - *the growing conflicts over finite resources (water, oil, fertile soil)*
  - *the debates over US intervention in foreign conflicts, international trade, and nuclear armament*
5. **Final thoughts:** Reserve time for students to share any additional questions they might have about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

## Amy Perkins Reflective Response

### Tying the Knot: The Israeli Palestinian Conflict

<https://goo.gl/D9gCpM>

This three day lesson is the direct result of my time in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2013-2014. I visited the region during my winter break as a guest of friends living in Jerusalem. Their home was my basecamp each day as I explored freely on my own, often wandering into areas not frequented by tourists. My singular goal was to better understand the gnarled roots of the ongoing tension between Israelis and Palestinians.

Ultimately, the 16 day adventure was the MOST profound international experience of my life (thus far). When I returned home I immediately began crafting this lesson, eager to use my travels to help my students understand an especially complex development in world history. This was not an easy task, and my efforts were frustrated by conflicting viewpoints, the pervasive bias of various sources, and the ever-changing landscape of the conflict. The end product, although far from perfect, is my modest attempt to help teachers and students begin a discussion about a conflict that is central to history, politics, culture, and religion.

I have taught this lesson in my AP World History and (regular) World History classes for three years now. Much of the lesson is student-centered, allowing me the chance to observe students' reactions as they demystify an extraordinarily complex narrative. First, as the students read the historical overview of the conflict, they begin to make important connections across time and place. Suddenly the stories they know (European imperialism, World War I, the Holocaust, World War II, etc.) intersect with a new plotline, albeit one that follows along the winding path of Israel's Security Fence. They begin to appreciate how global developments like world wars have far-reaching consequences that continue to affect us today. Watching my students reach these introductory conclusions is gratifying for me and empowering for them. Secondly, as they do their analyses on the second day of the lesson, I often overhear them argue with each other about "justice" and "fairness". More impressively, they expand their insights to include ongoing debates about the distribution of the wealth, government policies toward American Indians, and the construction of a barrier along the US-Mexican border. However, our final day of the lesson is when the real magic happens. Teachers live for the "light bulb" moments, and there are often several "light bulb" moments as we conclude this lesson. The students do not leave my room with a sterile list of names and dates important to history. They do not exit my class with a simple solution or a definitive "correct" answer. Rather, they end the lesson preoccupied with questions, evolving insights, and a desire to know more. If I do my job correctly and I present the lesson effectively, day three will not be the last day they devote to understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I shared the lesson with educators in Macomb County two years ago, encouraging them to use my collection of resources and images as a launch pad for discussions in their classrooms. A few of them commented that this particular topic might provoke heated debates among their students and throughout their community. The schools in their county have a greater representation of Jewish and Muslim populations than I do in Stevensville. Even still, I hope that teachers have the courage to tackle these controversial topics in their classrooms.