



THE MAKOR TEACHING GUIDES

Teaching Grades 6–8

One lesson, one unit, or a year · Free, ready to teach · Social studies, world history, and ELA

Start at your size. One lesson tomorrow: The Years Before the Killing, planned on page three, beat by beat. Five lessons: the full Holocaust unit, which has its own guide in this series. The year: the chart on page two drops a chapter into nearly every unit you already teach.

Three facts

Your state likely requires it. Roughly twenty-nine states now mandate Holocaust education, several from the middle grades up. The requirement usually arrives without a curriculum. Building one is left to you.

Your students have already met the subject. Antisemitism reaches them online before any teacher reaches them with the history.

It fits more than one unit. The same history runs through classes you already teach: ancient civilizations, medieval Europe, U.S. immigration, World War II, the Cold War. The chart shows where each piece fits.

AM I QUALIFIED TO TEACH THIS HISTORY?

If you teach social studies, world history, or ELA in grades 6 to 8, in a public, private, or religious school, yes. You do not need to be a specialist. Every page assumes the reader starts from zero: terms are defined, events are dated, people are introduced. If you can assign a reading and lead a discussion, you can teach this.

OPEN EVERY LESSON WITH THE STORY SO FAR

Five sentences, spoken aloud, ground any lesson from this guide. Each has a chapter behind it if the class wants more.

1. The Jews are a people, with a faith, a language, and a calendar, three thousand years old. [/topic-who-are-the-jews](#)
2. Their homeland is the Land of Israel, where their two Temples stood in Jerusalem. [/topic-land-of-israel](#) · [/topic-temples](#)
3. The diaspora spread Jewish communities across the world, before and after the Second Temple fell in the year 70, and some always remained in the land. [/topic-diaspora](#) · [/topic-continuous-presence](#)
4. Wherever they lived, they kept the same book, the same calendar, and the same hope of return. [/topic-sacred-texts](#) · [/topic-calendar](#)
5. The hatred they met kept changing its reasons, faith, then money, then race, but the target never changed. [/topic-adversus-judaeos](#) · [/topic-nazi-synthesis](#)

Where Makor fits what you already teach

Makor slots into units you already have. Your WWII or Holocaust unit gets the five-lesson unit, planned lesson by lesson in Teaching the Holocaust, this series' companion guide. Most other units in a middle-school year have a chapter that fits inside them as a single lesson:

IF YOU ARE TEACHING	ADD THIS CHAPTER
Ancient civilizations	The Land of Israel · ancient Israel, from the Israelite kingdoms forward · /topic-land-of-israel
Ancient Greece and Rome	The First and Second Temples · The Diaspora · Jerusalem under Greece and Rome, the year 70, and the Greek-speaking Jewish world of Alexandria · /topic-temples · /topic-diaspora · /topic-continuous-presence
The rise of Christianity	Adversus Judaeos · where it started: the hostility of the ancient world, the Church's teaching, and the accusations that lasted centuries · /topic-adversus-judaeos
World religions or cultures	Who Are the Jews? · Ritual Objects · The Jewish Life Cycle · a people and its practices, taught like any tradition · /topic-who-are-the-jews · /topic-ritual-objects · /topic-life-cycle
Medieval and early-modern Europe	Rashi · The Blood Libel · The Expulsions · The Ghetto System · Jewish life and scholarship in medieval Europe, and the libel, the expulsions, and the walled quarters that closed in on it · /topic-rashi · /topic-blood-libel · /topic-expulsions · /topic-ghetto-system
The Islamic world	The Dhimma · Maimonides · Jewish life under Islamic rule, and its most famous philosopher · /topic-dhimma · /topic-maimonides
Immigration and the industrial era	Emma Lazarus · American Jewry · immigration history through one people's story · /topic-lazarus · /topic-american-jewry
The Cold War	Soviet Jewry · two million Jews the Soviet state would not let leave, and the movement that got them out · /topic-soviet-jewry
Scientists and inventors	Albert Einstein · Jonas Salk · the physicist the Nazis drove out, and the developer of the first polio vaccine · /topic-einstein · /topic-salk
Media literacy and civics	The Protocols · Hate Symbols · how a lie is built, and the symbols that carry hate today · /topic-protocols · /hate-symbols

IN ELA

Every chapter is document-based reading practice: primary sources, discussion questions, and close reading, aligned to the Common Core literacy-in-history standards. The chapters pair with books your classes already read. Teaching The Diary of a Young Girl or Night? [The Years Before the Killing](#) and [The Camp System](#) hold the history around them. Teaching Number the Stars? The real Danish rescue is in [Jewish Resistance & Rescue](#). Two books on the site's own shelves reach the middle grades: Number the Stars itself, and All-of-a-Kind Family, the Lower East Side in 1912 through five sisters, a natural companion to Emma Lazarus and American Jewry.

One lesson, fully planned

Teach this one first: **The Years Before the Killing, 1933–1939**. It answers the question students actually ask, how did this happen, with dated laws and documents, in plain language for middle-school readers. The plan is a floor, not a script: teach it as written, or take the chapter your own way. The chapter page carries the full set of discussion questions, its sources, and key takeaways: the plan below uses the first question, and the rest are there when you want them. makorproject.org/topic-1933-1939

Before class. Open the chapter. Read it once. Press Open PDF if you want handouts. That is the whole prep.

First 5 minutes. Open with three laws, fifteen centuries apart: 438, Jews barred from public office. 1215, Jews ordered to dress differently. 1935, Jews stripped of citizenship. Ask what students notice. Then read the chapter's line aloud: "The Nazis did not need a secret parallel system."

Next 15 minutes. Read the first two sections together: the day Hitler took power, then the first year of laws. On their handouts, students circle every date.

Next 15 minutes. Discussion question 1, straight from the page. *Listen for: the order. Exclusion from jobs and schools came first, the 1935 race laws defined "Jew" in law, and each step relied on the one before it.* Then read aloud the chapter's short account of the fine imposed after Kristallnacht.

Close, 5 minutes. Return to the three laws. The steps came in order, each one making the next easier. Leave the question with the class: what made each step possible?

What if I can only spare one lesson?

Each of these stands alone and fits a course you already teach:

- **Who Are the Jews?** · the site's front door: a people, not only a religion. The right first chapter when the subject is new to your class. [/topic-who-are-the-jews](http://topic-who-are-the-jews)
- **Ritual Objects** · the easiest read on the site. A civilization told through the objects it made. Fits any culture or world-history unit. [/topic-ritual-objects](http://topic-ritual-objects)
- **Emma Lazarus** · the poet whose words gave the Statue of Liberty its meaning. Fits U.S. history and ELA. [/topic-lazarus](http://topic-lazarus)
- **The Jewish Life Cycle** · birth to mourning, taught the way schools teach any tradition's customs. [/topic-life-cycle](http://topic-life-cycle)

The anatomy of a chapter

Every chapter page holds a readable history, written to be taught or assigned. Primary sources and images, each credited to its holding institution. Discussion questions that ask students to reason from the documents. Classroom Connections: the courses it fits and the standards it supports. Key takeaways, for review and exit tickets. A printable PDF: one button, the whole chapter.

CAN MY STUDENTS READ THE CHAPTERS?

The Years Before the Killing is written in plain language for middle-school readers. The site overall sits at grades 9 to 12: strong readers work from the pages, and the printable PDFs make excerpting easy for everyone else. A full chapter is a half hour's read: the lesson plans assign sections, not chapters.

DO I NEED APPROVAL TO USE MAKOR?

That depends on your district's materials policy. In many districts, supplemental materials for a course you already teach sit within a teacher's discretion. In others, a principal or department signs off. Either way, the material is built to pass review: every claim sourced, standards named, editorial rules published.

If a parent or your principal asks

The real fear is usually not the material. It is being accused of teaching a side. Here is why this material holds, and what to say if someone challenges you.

- **Every claim carries its source, on the page.** Dates, laws, and figures link to the archive or museum that holds the record. You are not asking anyone to trust you, or us. You are showing them a document.
- **The site documents. It does not argue.** Its standing rule is that the reader draws the conclusion.
- **Contested questions are labeled contested.** Where scholars disagree, the page says so and names them. No political side is taken, and on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the site says plainly that it is a subject with legitimate arguments on both sides, and does not adjudicate it.
- **Hate texts are cited, never linked.** Students learn what a forgery like the Protocols did without the site ever sending anyone to read it.
- **Teaching about religion as history and culture is settled ground** in public schools, drawn in 1963 in *Abington v. Schempp*: the chapters study a tradition and never practice one.
- **The standards are public.** Every editorial rule the site follows is published at makorproject.org/editorial-standards, and the chapters in this guide name the state standards they support.

WHAT MAKOR ADDS TO YOUR MIDDLE GRADES

In standard textbooks, Jewish history is a page or two in the ancient world, then the Holocaust, a history with no in-between. Middle school is where the gap opens: it is where the Holocaust is first taught, and where antisemitism first reaches students online. The chart in this guide fills the in-between one lesson at a time, inside the units already on your calendar, so that when the Holocaust unit arrives, it lands on ground students already know.

WHAT MAKOR IS

It's ready. Every chapter is a lesson: planned, one class period, teachable tomorrow.

It fits. Chapters drop into the units you already teach, with no new course to add.

It's solid ground. Primary sources and verified standards, so the documents do the talking.

It's free, with no logins and no ads.

The classroom toolkit

- **The Timeline.** Project it as a warm-up, or have students place the day's lesson on it. makorproject.org/timeline
- **The Museum.** Manuscripts, coins, and objects, each credited to the institution that holds it. One object, projected, opens a class. makorproject.org/museum
- **Virtual Field Trips.** Visits to archaeological sites, memorials, and historic Jewish quarters, from your projector. makorproject.org/field-trips
- **Films.** Curated film and video by unit, grade bands marked. makorproject.org/films
- **Misconceptions and the Glossary.** The beliefs students bring to class, set beside the documents, and every term defined. makorproject.org/misconceptions · makorproject.org/glossary
- **Standards & Mandates.** The state requirements, on one page: find your state's. makorproject.org/state-mandates
- **The Incident Record.** Documented antisemitic incidents of the contemporary era, each entry ending with its record: a verdict, a plea, or an official finding. makorproject.org/incident-record

- **The source-literacy lessons.** Reading documents against headlines, and recognizing propaganda, with printable handouts. makorproject.org/for-teachers

Find your way on the site

Home · makorproject.org

The Curriculum Gap, why the site exists · [/curriculum-gap](https://makorproject.org/curriculum-gap)

Table of Contents, the whole site on one page · [/table-of-contents](https://makorproject.org/table-of-contents)

For Teachers, the guides, a self-paced course, and registration for updates · [/for-teachers](https://makorproject.org/for-teachers)

For Students · [/for-students](https://makorproject.org/for-students)

K–5, the early-grades program · [/k5](https://makorproject.org/k5)

EVERY CHAPTER IS A LESSON

One class period of material each, with discussion questions, sources, a print-ready PDF, and a Where-this-Chapter-fits note naming the courses it supports, all on the chapter page. The shelf is a menu, not a syllabus: take the chapter your unit calls for, and leave the rest where they are. The lessons planned in this guide come from this shelf, and any other chapter teaches the same way.

Unit 1 • The Jewish World · [/section-1](https://makorproject.org/section-1)

[Who Are the Jews?](#) · [The Land of Israel](#) · [The Continuous Jewish Presence](#) · [The First & Second Temples](#) · [The Synagogue](#) · [The Sacred Texts](#) · [The Calendar & the Cycle of the Year](#) · [Ritual Objects & Material Culture](#) · [The Jewish Life Cycle](#) · [The Diaspora as a Phenomenon](#)

Unit 2 • Communities Across the World · [/section-2](https://makorproject.org/section-2)

[A Connected People](#) · [The Jews of Iraq](#) · [The Jews of North Africa](#) · [The Jews of Iran](#) · [The Departure from MENA](#) · [Soviet Jewry](#) · [American Jewry](#) · [Ethiopian Jewry](#) · [Beta Israel](#) · [The Modern State of Israel](#)

Unit 3 • The Evolution of Antisemitism · [/section-3](https://makorproject.org/section-3)

[Adversus Judaeos](#) · [The Blood Libel](#) · [The Ghetto System](#) · [The Expulsions](#) · [The Racial Turn](#) · [The Russian Pogroms](#) · [The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#) · [The Nazi Synthesis](#) · [The Dhimma](#) · [The Eastward Turn](#) · [The Terror Record](#) · [Contemporary Antisemitism](#)

Unit 4 • The Holocaust Era · [/section-4](https://makorproject.org/section-4)

[The Years Before the Killing](#) · [Aktion T-4](#) · [The Nazi Ghettos](#) · [The Camp System](#) · [The Einsatzgruppen](#) · [The Holocaust in North Africa & the Middle East](#) · [Jewish Resistance & Rescue](#)

Unit 5 • Jewish Contributions · [/section-5](https://makorproject.org/section-5)

[Across the Fields](#) · [Rashi](#) · [Maimonides](#) · [Joseph Karo](#) · [Moses Mendelssohn](#) · [Emma Lazarus](#) · [Theodor Herzl](#) · [Albert Einstein](#) · [The Founders of Hollywood](#) · [Jonas Salk](#)

Unit 6 • Memory, Responsibility, and Today · [/section-6](https://makorproject.org/section-6)

[Liberation & the Displaced Persons](#) · [The Postwar Trials](#) · [Hannah Arendt](#) · [Postwar Restitution](#) · [The Memory Architecture](#) · [Nostra Aetate](#) · [Holocaust Denial & the Response](#) · [The Afterlife of the Image](#) · [It Didn't End](#)

The Makor Project (makorproject.org) is a free online textbook of Jewish history and the history of antisemitism, built from primary sources. It was built to close a gap: in standard textbooks, the Jewish people appear in the ancient world, then reappear two thousand years later as victims of the Holocaust, a history with no in-between. Read in order, its six units and 57 chapters form a full course. Taken singly, each chapter drops into lessons teachers already teach. Every chapter names the standards it supports in its Classroom Connections section, so the alignment work is already done.

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