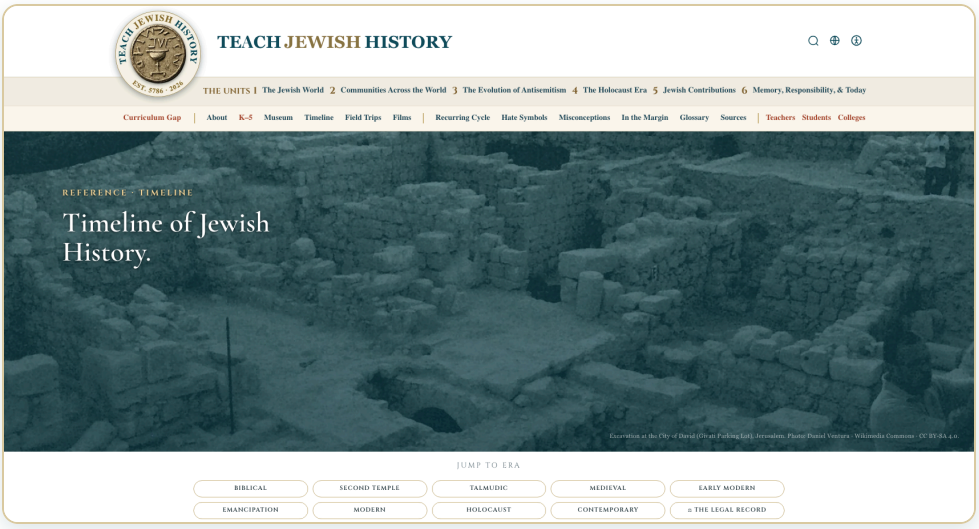
TEACH JEWISH HISTORY

THE STANDARDS COMPANION · ILLINOIS EDITION

In many textbooks, Jews appear as ancient Israelites, then vanish until they reappear as victims of the Holocaust, with a two-thousand-year gap in between.

Teach Jewish History covers what comes between, and after.
Free, source-based, and ready for the courses you already teach.



The site at teachjewishhistory.org: the whole arc of Jewish history, from the Biblical era to the present.

What it is

Teach Jewish History is a free online textbook and teaching companion for Jewish history, civilization, and the evolution of antisemitism, from antiquity through the Holocaust to the present. Six Units and 59 classroom-ready Chapters, each with primary sources, discussion questions, curated readings, and a printable PDF, mapped to the standards you already work from. No login, no cost.

Why it exists

A growing number of states require students to learn this history. Many of these laws set a requirement without a curriculum. A student can reach the Holocaust having met the civilization that was destroyed only in passing, with little sense of how the hatred behind it was built over centuries, or what came after. The site covers the whole arc, before, during, and after, so students meet the Holocaust as the culmination of a history, not its origin. The full case is on The Curriculum Gap.

How to use it, by grade

The site serves three levels from the same body of work. For the **early grades**, the K to 5 program adapts the material into guided modules, projected slideshows, handouts, and vocabulary cards. For **grades 6 to 12**, the 59 Chapters work as textbook chapters: each has a readable history, primary sources and images with full credits, discussion questions, Classroom Connections, and a printable PDF. For **college survey courses**, the same Chapters carry the primary-source depth and bibliographies to assign directly. Critical-thinking lessons add source-literacy exercises for any level. Each item is a link or a PDF, so you can hand it out on paper, email it, or post it in Google Classroom or any learning platform, with no student login.

A note on order. Where you can, teach a Unit 1 Chapter before Unit 3 or the Hate Symbols guide. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum advises the same, so students do not see Jews "only as victims."

Where the site fits the courses you already teach

Every Chapter is mapped to a course. Find the course you teach, and here are the Chapters to pull. Illinois's social science standards are inquiry standards rather than era codes, so the anchors here are the state's mandated units of study, above all the Holocaust and genocide requirement at 105 ILCS 5/27-525. For a version mapped to another state or country, register on the site or write to education@teachjewishhistory.org.

Ancient Civilizations

GRADES 6–12 AND COLLEGE

Who Are the Jews? · The Land of Israel · A Connected People · The First and Second Temples · The Synagogue · Ritual Objects and Material Culture · The Continuous Jewish Presence · plus the printable chapters *Ancient Israel and Judah* and *Judea in the Classical World*.

World Religions and Belief Systems

GRADES 6–12 AND COLLEGE

Who Are the Jews? · Sacred Texts · The Synagogue · The Calendar · The Jewish Life Cycle · The First and Second Temples · Ritual Objects · Nostra Aetate.

> *Teach Judaism here as a religion in its own right, not only as the root of what came after. It is a continuous people and faith that does not seek converts, did not spread by conquest, and has no central authority or governing hierarchy the way a church does.*

Medieval Europe

GRADES 7–12 AND COLLEGE

Adversus Judaeos · The Blood Libel · The Expulsions · The Ghetto System · The Dhimma · Rashi · Maimonides · Joseph Karo · The Diaspora.

Modern and World History, nineteenth and twentieth centuries

GRADES 9–12 AND COLLEGE

The Racial Turn · The Russian Pogroms · The Protocols Forgery · The Nazi Synthesis · The Eastward Turn · Theodor Herzl · The Modern State of Israel · Soviet Jewry · The Departure from MENA · The Terror Record · Contemporary Antisemitism · and the community Chapters: North Africa, Iraq, Iran, and Ethiopian Jewry (Beta Israel).

The Holocaust

EVERY ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL · ILLINOIS 105 ILCS 5/27-525: A REQUIRED UNIT ON THE NAZI ATROCITIES OF 1933 TO 1945

The Years Before the Killing, 1933 to 1939 · Aktion T-4 · The Camp System · The Einsatzgruppen · The Nazi Ghettos · The Holocaust in the Middle East and North Africa · Jewish Resistance and Rescue.

Postwar, Memory, and Human Rights

GRADES 9–12 AND COLLEGE · ILLINOIS 105 ILCS 5/27-525: THE ADDITIONAL UNIT ON OTHER GENOCIDES, FROM ARMENIA AND THE HOLODOMOR TO CAMBODIA, BOSNIA, RWANDA, AND SUDAN

Liberation and the Displaced Persons · The Postwar Trials · Hannah Arendt · Postwar Restitution · The Memory Architecture · Holocaust Denial and the Response · It Didn't End · The Afterlife of the Image. With them, the living registers: The Legal Record, judgments and statutes updated quarterly, and the Incident Record, documented incidents each ending with a verdict, a plea, or an official finding.

United States History

GRADES 8–12 AND COLLEGE

American Jewry · Levi Strauss · Emma Lazarus · Samuel Gompers · The Founders of Hollywood · The Synagogue · The Modern State of Israel · Soviet Jewry · Contemporary Antisemitism.

The First Mandate in the Nation

EVERY PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL · ILLINOIS 105 ILCS 5/27-525, ENACTED 1990, THE FIRST STATE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION MANDATE

Illinois required this instruction before any other state, in every elementary and high school, and later added a second required unit on other genocides. The chapters carry both units: the Holocaust unit from The Years Before the Killing through Jewish Resistance and Rescue, and the wider pattern through Contemporary Antisemitism, The Recurring Cycle, and the Incident Record. The Illinois Holocaust Museum is in the site's training and field-trip listings for the in-person side.

English and ELA

ALL GRADES · ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ELA: READING IN HISTORY AND INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Every Chapter supports the close reading of primary sources. Strongest fits for media and information literacy: The Protocols Forgery and Contemporary Antisemitism, plus the critical-thinking lesson *The Primary Source vs. the Headline*.

Jewish Contributions, from scholarship and science to the arts

GRADES 6–12 AND COLLEGE · UNIT 5

Across the Fields · Moses Mendelssohn · Levi Strauss · Emma Lazarus · Samuel Gompers · Albert Einstein · The Founders of Hollywood · Jonas Salk · with Theodor Herzl, Rashi, Maimonides, and Joseph Karo listed above.

Other ways to weave in the materials

Beyond the core lesson, the materials fit naturally into the rest of classroom life.

- **Print-and-go guides.**
  The eight Teaching Guides, one per grade band or subject, each opening with a first lesson planned beat by beat and a chart for the course.
- **A student club.**
  The Makor Club kit turns student interest into a member-led history club: film nights, virtual field trips, an assembly plan, and community service.
- **Current-event assignments.**
  Pair a story in today's news with the critical-thinking lesson *The Primary Source vs. the Headline*, or with the Contemporary Antisemitism Chapter, to build media literacy.
- **Readings.**
  Assign a Chapter page, or a printable chapter from TJH Originals, with its discussion questions, as a reading.
- **Films.**
  The Films collection gathers documentary viewing for the classroom.
- **Field trips.**
  Virtual Field Trips visit sites and memorials online, and Chapters also point to local museums and historic synagogues for in-person visits.
- **Symbols and misconceptions.**
  When they come up, bring in the guide to recognizing Hate Symbols and the Misconceptions reference.
- **Explore and reference.**
  The online Museum of objects and manuscripts, the interactive Timeline, the Recurring Cycle, and the Glossary support projects, warm-ups, and independent study.
- **Extra credit and independent work.**
  Any Chapter, with its sources and questions, stands alone as a research or writing assignment.

Professional development

A free, self-paced course, Teaching Jewish History and the Roots of Antisemitism, built entirely from the site. About six hours, taken in any order, ending with a classroom plan you build as you go and a certificate of completion. It draws on the guidelines of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the IHRA.

How to help

Read it. Use it in your classroom. Then tell another teacher. Share it with a colleague, a department, or a district, and help put this history where it belongs.

A note on standards

This companion is anchored in 105 ILCS 5/27-525 (numbered 27-20.3 until 2025), the 1990 law, the first of its kind in the nation. It requires every public elementary and high school to teach a unit on the Nazi atrocities of 1933 to 1945, and a further unit on other genocides. Illinois's inquiry-based social science standards apply through each Chapter's Classroom Connections. Standards are revised periodically, so confirm the current codes against the official documents. The site draws on material from established institutions, credits them, and adds original chapters of its own.

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