THE TEACHING GUIDES

# Teaching English Language Arts

One lesson, one book, or the year · Free, ready to teach · Literature, memoir, poetry, rhetoric, and media literacy

**Start at your size.** Fifteen minutes: add one chapter's story, source, and question to the unit you are teaching, at teachjewishhistory.org/for-tomorrow. One lesson tomorrow: The Years Before the Killing, the history behind the memoirs, planned on page three, beat by beat. One book: the chart on page two sets a chapter beside the titles already on your syllabus, from *The Merchant of Venice* to *Night*. The year: keep the chart at hand, and each major text picks up the history it carries as your course reaches it.

## Two facts

**It fits the course you already teach.** Shakespeare wrote Shylock for an England that had expelled its Jews three centuries earlier. The dystopias rehearse a lie becoming official truth, and the real forgery is documented, page by page. The chart sets each book beside the history it carries.

**Your state likely requires it.** A 2026 federal review found that 42 of the 50 states and D.C. require Holocaust education through academic standards or state law. Many requirements arrive without a curriculum, and building one is left to you.

### AM I QUALIFIED TO TEACH THE HISTORY BEHIND THE BOOKS?

If you teach English in grades 6 to 12, in a public, private, or religious school, yes. You do not need to be a historian. Teaching a text in its context is already your work, and the pages are written for readers new to the subject: 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, more than 3,000 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 the site fits what you already teach

The chart walks the English classroom shelf. Each row is a book or unit you already teach, and the chapter that carries its history, each a single lesson. The chart lists the strongest fits, not all of them: every chapter names its courses and standards codes in its Classroom Connections section.

| IF YOUR CLASS IS READING | ADD THIS CHAPTER |
|---|---|
| ***Night*, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, *Maus*, or *The Book Thief*** | The Years Before the Killing · The Camp System · Jewish Resistance & Rescue · the history the memoirs assume: the six legal years that closed the doors, the camps in precise terms, and the resistance · /topic-1933-1939 · /topic-camp-system · /topic-resistance, or all of Unit 4 at /section-4 |
| ***Refugee*, *Number the Stars*, or *The Devil's Arithmetic*** | The Years Before the Killing · Jewish Resistance & Rescue · The Camp System · the middle-school novels beside the record: the voyage of the St. Louis, the Danish rescue of October 1943, and the camps · /topic-1933-1939 · /topic-resistance · /topic-camp-system |
| ***The Merchant of Venice*** | The Expulsions · The Ghetto System · Shakespeare wrote Shylock for an England that had expelled its Jews in 1290, and set him in a city whose ghetto had stood since 1516. The Expulsions section "How lending became a Jewish trade" traces the moneylender figure from the Church's canon 67 of 1215 to Shylock · /topic-expulsions · /topic-ghetto-system |
| ***The Crucible*** | The Blood Libel · a town convicts its neighbors on a rumor: the machinery of accusation, documented case by case, centuries before Salem, and its rejection by popes beginning in 1247 · /topic-blood-libel |
| **Epics, myths, and the Bible as literature** | The Sacred Texts · the Hebrew Bible beside the Homeric epics, and the tradition as one continuous conversation · /topic-sacred-texts |
| ***1984*, *Animal Farm*, or *Fahrenheit 451*** | The Protocols Forgery · The Years Before the Killing · a lie becomes official truth and books burn: the real forgery, and the real book burnings of May 10, 1933 · /topic-protocols · /topic-1933-1939 |
| ***To Kill a Mockingbird* or *Lord of the Flies*** | The Racial Turn of 1879 · both books turn on a group deciding who counts as an outsider: the chapter traces that logic into law, and the seventy-five public figures who answered it in 1880 · /topic-racial-turn |
| ***Persepolis*** | The Jews of Iran · the 1979 revolution beside more than 2,500 years in Persia · /topic-iran |
| **Poetry units** | Emma Lazarus · The Memory Architecture · Jewish Resistance & Rescue · "The New Colossus" as a sonnet from the poet's own life, the Niemöller confession with its history behind it, and the Terezín children's poems · /topic-lazarus · /topic-memory-architecture · /topic-resistance |
| **Essays, speeches, and argument** | Hannah Arendt · Liberation and the Displaced Persons · *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the controversy that followed, and the Harrison Report of 1945 · /topic-arendt · /topic-liberation-dp |
| **Journalism and media literacy** | The Protocols Forgery · Holocaust Denial and the Response · Hate Symbols · how a lie is built, how denial works, and the symbols that carry hate today · /topic-protocols · /topic-holocaust-denial · /hate-symbols |

### WHERE DOES THE CHAPTER FIT INSIDE A BOOK UNIT?

Before the book, one lesson gives the history the text assumes. During the book, a single section answers a question the text raises. After the book, the chapter carries the class from the story to the record. One lesson in any of the three places is enough.

#### IN AP COURSES

In AP English Language, The Protocols Forgery and the source-literacy lessons are rhetorical analysis from primary documents, and Hannah Arendt pairs with argument writing. In AP English Literature, *The Merchant of Venice* and the poetry rows above teach with their chapters beside them. Every chapter names its standards in Classroom Connections.

## One lesson, fully planned

The planned lesson: **The Years Before the Killing**, the chapter that stands behind the memoirs. *Night* and *The Diary of a Young Girl* begin after the trap has closed. This chapter is the six years that closed it, 1933 to 1939, told law by law in plain language for middle-school readers. It fits before a memoir unit, inside a dystopia unit, or on its own. 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.
teachjewishhistory.org/topic-1933-1939

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

**Opening, 5 min.** Ask each student to write one sentence: how does a country of laws arrive at the events of the book you are reading? Keep the answers. They revise them at the close.

**Reading, 15 min.** Read two sections together: "The legal machinery, built in eleven months" and "Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass." Students list what each law or decree took away.

**Discussion, 15 min.** Discussion question 1, straight from the page: "The Nazis built the machinery of persecution step by step for six and a half years before the war began. Choose two steps from this Chapter and explain what each one took away from Jewish Germans, and why the order of the steps mattered." *Listen for: the steps were laws, passed in public. Work went first, then citizenship in 1935, then property and safety in 1938, and each step made the next one easier. German Jews organized in answer: the Jewish Cultural League and the Reich Representation under Rabbi Leo Baeck.*

**Close, 5 min.** Students revise their opening sentences, then set the chapter beside the book. Leave the class with the chapter's first sentence: none of it was hidden.

#### NEW TO THE SUBJECT ENTIRELY?

Give it one full period: **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

#### WHEN STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR OWN BOOKS

The site's For Students page carries the same connections written to the student: from *Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Crucible*, and the dystopias to the chapters behind them. For independent reading, assign the book and point to the page.

## 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?

Most chapters sit at high-school level. The Years Before the Killing is written for middle-school readers, and every chapter's print-ready PDF makes excerpting easy for younger classes. A full chapter is a half hour's read: the lesson plans assign sections, not chapters.

#### DO I NEED APPROVAL TO USE THE SITE?

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.

## If a parent or your principal asks

Here is what to point to.

- **Each Chapter cites its sources on the page.** Documents, laws, and figures are credited, most with a link to the archive or museum that holds the record.
- **For the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, start with the dates.** The Modern State of Israel sets out the main events since 1967 in order, with its sources listed at the end of the Chapter.
- **Hate texts are cited, never linked.**
- **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 teachjewishhistory.org/editorial-standards, and the chapters in this guide name the state standards they support.

### What the site adds TO YOUR ENGLISH COURSE

In the English classroom the gap shows on the syllabus: students meet Shylock without the expulsion that shaped him, the dystopias without the documented lie beside them, and the memoirs without the six years that closed the doors. The chart sets each book beside its history, one lesson at a time: the play and the edict of 1290, the sonnet and the pogroms that reached New York, the diary and the laws that came first.

### What Teach Jewish History is

**It's ready.** Every chapter can anchor a lesson, with questions, sources, and a print-ready PDF.

**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.

**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. teachjewishhistory.org/timeline
- **The Museum.** Manuscripts, coins, and objects, each credited to the institution that holds it. One object, projected, opens a class. teachjewishhistory.org/museum
- **Virtual Field Trips.** Archaeological sites, memorials, and historic Jewish quarters, from the projector. teachjewishhistory.org/field-trips
- **Films.** Curated film and video by unit, grade bands marked. teachjewishhistory.org/films
- **The Incident Record.** Documented antisemitic incidents of the contemporary era, each entry ending with its record: a verdict, a plea, or an official finding. teachjewishhistory.org/incident-record
- **The Legal Record.** Judgments, treaties, and statutes, each linked to its primary document. teachjewishhistory.org/legal-record
- **Misconceptions and the Glossary.** The beliefs students bring to class, set beside the documents, and every term defined. teachjewishhistory.org/misconceptions · teachjewishhistory.org/glossary
- **The source-literacy lessons.** Reading documents against headlines, and recognizing propaganda, with printable handouts. teachjewishhistory.org/for-teachers
- **Standards & Mandates.** The state requirements, on one page: find your state's. teachjewishhistory.org/state-mandates

- **Sample Syllabi.** The full elective plan, plus a college survey. teachjewishhistory.org/sample-syllabi

## Find your way on the site

**Home** · teachjewishhistory.org

**The Curriculum Gap**, why the site exists · /curriculum-gap

**Table of Contents**, the whole site on one page · /table-of-contents

**For Teachers**, the guides, a self-paced course, and registration for updates · /for-teachers

**For Students** · /for-students

**K–5**, the early-grades program · /k5

## EVERY CHAPTER CAN ANCHOR A LESSON

Each one can anchor a lesson, 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 book 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
Who Are the Jews? · The Land of Israel · The Continuous Jewish Presence in the Land · The First and Second Temples · The Synagogue · The Sacred Texts · The Calendar & the Cycle of the Year · Ritual Objects and Material Culture · The Jewish Life Cycle · The Diaspora

**Unit 2 · Communities Across the World** · /section-2
A Connected People · The Jews of Iraq · The Jews of Iran · The Jews of North Africa · The Departure from MENA · The Jews of Spain and the Sephardic World · The Jews of Poland and Lithuania · Soviet Jewry · American Jewry · Ethiopian Jewry, Beta Israel · The Modern State of Israel

**Unit 3 · The Evolution of Antisemitism** · /section-3
Adversus Judaeos · The Blood Libel · The Ghetto System · The Expulsions · The Racial Turn of 1879 · The Russian Pogroms · The Protocols Forgery · The Nazi Synthesis · The Dhimma · The Eastward Turn · The Terror Record · Contemporary Antisemitism

**Unit 4 · The Holocaust Era** · /section-4
The Years Before the Killing · Aktion T-4 · The Nazi Ghettos · The Camp System · The Einsatzgruppen · The Holocaust in the Middle East and North Africa · Jewish Resistance & Rescue

**Unit 5 · Jewish Contributions** · /section-5
Across the Fields · Rashi · Maimonides · Joseph Karo · Moses Mendelssohn · Levi Strauss · Emma Lazarus · Samuel Gompers · Theodor Herzl · Albert Einstein · The Founders of Hollywood · Jonas Salk

**Unit 6 · Memory, Responsibility, and Today** · /section-6
Liberation and the Displaced Persons · The Postwar Trials · Hannah Arendt · Postwar Restitution · The Memory Architecture · Nostra Aetate · Holocaust Denial and the Response · The Afterlife of the Image · The Hatred That Outlived the War

Teach Jewish History (teachjewishhistory.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 many standard textbooks, the Jewish people appear in the ancient world, then reappear more than two thousand years later as victims of the Holocaust, a history with no in-between. Read in order, its six units and more than 60 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.

Teach Jewish History · Original content licensed CC BY-NC · This guide may be shared freely with educators.