Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 1: Domination and Control

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![1], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

Accusations and theories that Jewish people are trying to take, or have taken, over the world have been in circulation for hundreds of years, though they gained particular prominence in the early twentieth century due to a fabricated antisemitic text called The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The text, which was published in Russian before being translated into multiple languages, falsely claims to be the minutes of a meeting of Jewish leaders in which they discuss their plan for global domination by controlling the press and the world's economies. In the 1930s, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party regulary used the text to spread anti-Jewish sentiment, blaming Germany's economic hardship on the secret plot, and deployed it as reading material in schools to indoctrinate young children. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was the highest selling book internationally between 1920 and 1945, second only to the Bible.[2] It is still available to buy today.

Today, this conspiracy theory can be seen through accusations that Jews control the global financial system and the media (press, music and movie industry), and are behind significant world events, such as COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, antisemitic lies concerning domination and control have spiked: some claim Jewish people 'created' the virus as a way to take control of the world, while others allege that the vaccines are being used by Jewish elites to control the masses or purely for the financial gain of Jewish people.

Many antisemites avoid criticism by engaging in something called 'dog-whistling': blaming prominent Jewish individuals – and Jewish people by extension – for problems without referring to them as Jews. Images relating to this trope often depict famous and wealthy Jews, such as the Rothschilds, George Soros and Mark Zuckerberg, as 'puppeteers', controlling world events from behind the scenes, or as octopuses, choking the world with their tentacles (an image first popularised by the Nazis).

Central to the trope of domination and control is the idea that Jews have an inordinate amount of power and control over global institutions, wealth and politics, despite their proportion of the population: Jews account for less than 0.2 per cent of the global population and for 0.4 per cent of the UK population.

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[1] The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.
[2] Sol Goldberg, Scott Ury and Kalman Weiser, eds, *Key Concepts in the Study of Antisemitism* (London: Palgrave Critical Studies of Antisemitism and Racism, 2021), 83.

This trope can be found across social media platforms, has taken many forms over the years, and still remains one of the most adaptable and damaging antisemitic tropes.

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1.   What does the antisemitic trope of domination and control allege?

2.   What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?

3.   What is dog-whistling? Why do you think people engage in it?

4.   What are the similarities and differences between how the antisemitic trope of domination and control has been used throughout history and up to the present day? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?

5.   What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.

6.   In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.

Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 2: Wealth and Greed

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![3], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

One of the most persistent antisemitic tropes is the depiction of Jewish people as wealthy and greedy. This millennia-lasting myth accuses Jews of being naturally good with money, but stingy and willing to seek profits by any means. The origins of this trope date back to medieval times when Christians were forbidden from lending money for interest (in Christianity, it was considered a sin), and Jews, due to discrimination on account of their status as a religious minority, were banned from owning land and serving in many professions. These laws resulted in many Jewish people becoming merchants, money lenders and tax collectors, making Jews easy scapegoats in times of economic or political crisis and leading to accusations that Jews were wealthy and greedy.

Religion, literature and politics further perpetuated the stereotype of the greedy Jew. In Christianity, the biblical figure of Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus to the Romans for thirty pieces of silver, is used as an example of Jewish greed. In literature, Jewish characters – such as Shylock, a money-lender in Shakespeare's play The Merchant of Venice, and Fagin, an untrustworthy criminal running a ring of pickpockets in Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist – are often portrayed as money-obsessed villains. This was such a normalised stereotype that, in 1933, one of the definitions of the word 'Jew' in the Oxford English Dictionary was 'to cheat'. The focus on the supposed wealth possessed by Jewish people was also a core message in Nazi propaganda and influenced attitudes towards Jewish people, which ultimately resulted in the atrocities of the Holocaust.

Central to the wealth and greed trope is the idea that Jews have an inordinate amount of power and control over global institutions, wealth and politics, despite their proportion of the population: Jews account for less than 0.2 per cent of the global population and for 0.4 per cent of the UK population. In recent years, Jews in general have been accused of controlling the world's economy by dominating the financial and media sectors, while wealthy Jewish individuals, such as George Soros and the Rothschild family, have been placed at the centre of global conspiracy theories.

This trope is common on social media, on which antisemitic images of rich, fat Jewish men (often depicted as repulsive, subhuman monsters) can be found. But the stereotype also exists in more subtle forms: for years, scoring a 'cheap goal' (an easily scored goal) on FIFA was commonly known as scoring a 'Jew goal'.

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[3] The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.

It is fundamental when tackling antisemitism to understand that Jews, like all people, are different and have different economic status. To assume that Jews are all wealthy and cheap for profit helps to spread a dangerous antisemitic trope.[4]

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1. Why did Jews often become merchants, money-lenders or tax collectors? Why would being involved in these professions make Jews 'easy scapegoats in times of economic or political crisis'?

2. How did literature normalise and perpetuate this stereotype? What does this teach us about the power of the stories we read and/or are told?

3. What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?

4. What are the similarities and differences between how the antisemitic trope of wealth and greed has been used throughout history and up to the present day? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?

5. What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.

6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.

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[4] 'An Introduction to Antisemitic Tropes', Get the Trolls Out!

Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 3: Deicide and Demonisation

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![5], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

'Jewish Deicide' is the belief that the Jewish people are responsible for the death of Jesus. This antisemitic slur was first spread by early Christian leaders, despite the fact that Christianity emerged from Judaism, and has been used to justify violence against Jews for millennia. Content in the New Testament is one of the key influences of this accusation of deicide: passages in the Gospels of Matthew and John have been interpreted as suggesting that Jews are not only responsible for Jesus's death, but that they are also aligned with the devil. These gospels were written decades after the death of Christ at a time when early Christians were beginning to differentiate themselves from Jews, in part, to avoid persecution by the Romans. Pinning the death of Christ on Jews rather than Romans would have therefore served such interests. Jesus was, however, almost certainly executed by the Romans: historians assert that, at the time of Christ, crucifixion was a form of execution characteristic of the Roman Empire.[6]

Antisemitic arguments concerning this trope often ignore the fact that Jesus and his disciples were Jewish – they celebrated Jewish festivals and worshipped in a Jewish temple – and that Christianity did not emerge until years after Jesus's death. Despite this, during the Middle Ages, anti-Jewish interpretations of the New Testament and the teachings of early church leaders heavily influenced European Christians, leading to increasing hostility towards Jews. As a consequence, Jews were murdered, expelled from towns, and accused of causing society's misfortunes, such as the Black Death. This hostility continues in the present day with many modern readers viewing the trials of Jews and Jesus as a conflict between Jews and Christians, despite Jesus's identity as a Jew.

This accusation of deicide has led to the demonisation of Jews: Jews are accused of worshipping Satan, of being affiliated with the devil and/or of possessing demonic features, such as devil's horns, sharp claws, jagged teeth and pointy ears. It has also influenced another antisemitic trope known as the Blood Libel – the allegation that Jews are blood-thirsty and murder children, particularly Christian children, to use their blood for religious rituals.

Hitler and the Nazis used this historical conflict between Judaism and Christianity to help win support for their racist plan to eradicate Jews in Europe: they spread propaganda

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[5] The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls
6 Phyllis Goldstein and Harold Evans, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 2012).

depicting Jews as 'Christ-killers' and demons to dehumanise Jews, so that people regarded them as 'dangerous outsiders'.

In 1965, however, the Catholic Church released a declaration called the 'Nostra Aetate', which stated that the wider Jewish community and Jews today could not be held responsible for the death of Jesus. Today, interfaith work has helped to heal generations of religious conflict between Jews and Christians. Despite this, antisemites across the world continue to spread lies about Jewish people, accusing them of being responsible for Jesus's death and of aligning with the devil, drawing on images and myths that date back millennia. Content concerning deicide and demonisation can be found on social media, is contained in the QAnon conspiracy theory, and was even shown to influence the far-right terrorist Robert Bowers, who killed eleven people after shooting and shouting antisemitic slurs at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2018.

The QAnon conspiracy theory has also modernised the Blood Libel myth, claiming that the global elite harvest a chemical from children called Adrenochrome, killing them in the process, and that they drink this red liquid to remain young.

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1. **What is the antisemitic trope of deicide? How has it impacted how Jews have been treated?**

2. **What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?**

3. **How has the New Testament and the teachings of early Christian leaders been used to perpetuate the trope of deicide? What does this teach us about the power of the stories we read and/or are told?**

4. **What are the similarities and differences between how the antisemitic trope of deicide and demonisation has been used throughout history and up to the present day? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?**

5. **What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.**

6. **In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.**

Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 4: Blood Libel

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![7], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

The Blood Libel is an antisemitic trope that accuses Jews of the murder of non-Jewish children, particularly Christian children, and the use of their blood for ritualistic purposes. Stories based on this myth go as far back as the twelth century, when the monk Thomas of Monmouth blamed local Jews for the murder of a young boy in Norwich. Thomas of Monmouth rooted his ideas in an antisemitic belief known as Jewish deicide, which accuses the Jewish people as a whole of being responsible for the death of Jesus. He claimed that, each year, Jews killed a child in a re-enactment of the crucifixion.

The concept of Blood Libel quickly spread across Europe and the world, and it was believed by many that Jews sought out Christian blood to bake unleavened bread for Passover and/or to use the blood as medicine. Jews were used as scapegoats when children died or disappeared and, in some instances, were accused of having murdered children by Christian enemies, who wanted to bribe them for money. In these cases, it was often found later that the children had been hidden by their parents. Such duplicitous accusations of murder must have occurred regularly enough for Pope Gregory X (1210–76) to condemn Christians who behaved this way in a letter, explaining that 'It happens, too, that the parents of these children or some other Christian enemies of these Jews, secretly hide these very children in order that they may be able to injure these Jews, and in order that they may be able to extort from them a certain amount of money by redeeming them from their straits'.[8]

Despite this, the myth of Blood Libel persisted, leading to the murder of Jews and the violent expulsion of Jewish communities during the Middle Ages. In England, King Edward I expelled the Jews in 1290, a decision that was influenced by antisemitic beliefs, including that of the Blood Libel (the Church of England recently apologised for this). The trope also made its way into art and literature. In Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales', for example, 'The Prioress's Tale' tells the story of a child murdered by a Jew.

The Blood Libel continued to spread well into the twentieth century. In 1913, for example, Menahem Mendel Beilis, a Russian Jew, was put on trial for the murder of a young boy, which many claimed he committed as part of a Jewish ritual. At the trial it was alleged that it was common for Jews to kill Christians for their blood. Beilis was eventually acquitted of the antisemitic charge. Blood Libel was also heavily used in Nazi propaganda. A 1934 issue

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[7]The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.
[8] *Myths and Misconceptions About Jews*, Antisemitism Policy Trust, 4.

of the Nazi tabloid Der Stürmer used an image of Jews extracting blood from Christian children for religious and ritual sacrifices.

Claims of Blood Libel can still be found on many social media platforms today. The QAnon conspiracy theory was found to include elements of Blood Libel and claims that Jews were ritualistically kidnapping and murdering children, while the state of Israel is sometimes accused of targeting non-Jewish children for murder.

Recognising the repetitive similarities of Blood Libel accusations throughout history is key to countering this antisemitic trope.

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1. **What is the antisemitic trope of Blood Libel? How has it impacted how Jews have been treated?**

2. **What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?**

3. **How has the New Testament and the teachings of early Christian leaders been used to perpetuate the trope of deicide? What does this teach us about the power of the stories we read and/or are told?**

4. **What are the similarities and differences between how the antisemitic trope of Blood Libel has appeared throughout history and up to the present day? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?**

5. **What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.**

6. **In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.**

Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 5: Dirt and Disease

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![9], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

Accusations of Jews being the spreaders of disease, of possessing physical defects, and of being associated with dirt and barnyard animals, have been prevalent in antisemitism for centuries. Jews, for example, have often been accused of causing epidemics or pandemics: in the fourteenth century (1347–51), when the bubonic plague (also known as the Black Death) spread across Europe, killing approximately 50 million people, many blamed the Jewish community. Searching for an explanation for the horror, Jews were falsely accused of causing the Black Death by poisoning wells. In some parts of Europe, Jews were even coerced into confessing to this act through torture. Holding the Jews accountable for the Black Death led to acts of retaliation against Jewish communities, beginning with the murder of forty Jews and the destruction of the Jewish quarter in Toulon, France in 1348. Several more massacres occurred around Europe and in Strasbourg in February 1349, 2,000 Jews were burnt alive (the plague had not even reached the city yet).

The blaming of Jews for outbreaks of diseases continued long after the fourteenth century: in Germany in 1892, during the cholera and typhus epidemics, Jews were banned from swimming pools and quarantined, while, in the present day, Jews have been blamed for the COVID-19 pandemic. Some antisemites claim that the COVID-19 virus was created and spread by Jews for their own benefit (e.g. to profit from the vaccines), and the terms 'Holocough' and 'Jew flu' are used, particularly on social media, to further this narrative.

Jews are also associated with ugliness, often depicted as having exaggeratedly large, hooked noses, beady eyes and drooping eyelids, and in some cases as being in possession of demonic features, such as horns and tails. Such exaggerations, which are meant to depict Jews as grotesque outsiders, were often used in Nazi propaganda to turn people against Jews. They also have racist undertones and are connected to a false belief propagated by 'race science' that some races, notably the white race, have intellectual and physical abilities that are superior to those of other races. Biologists and geneticists have not only disproved this claim, they have also declared that there is no genetic or biological basis for categorising people by race.

Throughout history, Jews have also been compared to barnyard and wild animals in a derogatory manner. These comparisons have worked to dehumanise Jews and spread the idea of them being dirty. The insult 'dirty Jew' is widespread in the present day and reinforces these centuries-old antisemitic tropes.

[9]The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1. What is the antisemitic trope of dirt and disease?

2. What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?

3. Which epidemics/pandemics have Jews been accused of causing? How has this impacted how Jews have been treated?

4. What are the similarities and differences between how the antisemitic trope of dirt and disease has appeared throughout history and up to the present day? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?

5. What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.

6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.

Antisemitic Tropes
Reading 6: Holocaust Denial and Distortion

Directions: With your group members, read the following text created in collaboration with Get The Trolls Out![10], an organisation that works to counter religious hate speech, and then discuss the connection questions together.

The Holocaust was the catastrophic period in the twentieth century, in the midst of the Second World War, when Nazi Germany and its collaborators murdered 6 million Jews and millions of other civilians (including Roma and Sinti, disabled people, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles, and prisoners of war). It is one of the most comprehensively documented events in history.

'Holocaust Denial and Distortion' describes the attempt to disprove the established facts of genocide by either denying the Holocaust even took place or by minimising its extent. Holocaust denial first began within the Nazi Party itself, which declared that the concentration camps were a fabrication of the Allied Forces to win public support against Germany. As Germany's defeat in the Second World War became clearly imminent, Nazi forces went to great lengths to destroy evidence of the mass extermination of Jews, including records, camps and mass graves.

In 1948, a French journalist called Maurice Bardèche became the first person to publish a book spreading the antisemtic lie that the death camps were Allied inventions. He also claimed that Jews were responsible for the war and accused them of falsifying history to get international support for the formation of the state of Israel. From then on, a series of 'revisionist historians' set out to deny or distort the truth of the Holocaust by manipulating facts and figures under the guise of 'scholarly research'. One such 'revisionist historian' named Paul Rassinier published a series of conspiratorial books stating there were no gas chambers, the figure of 6 million Jews killed was incorrect and that testimonies of survivors were lies. These accusations became the pillars of modern-day Holocaust denial and distortion.

In recent years, Holocaust denial and distortion has been on the rise as antisemites have used social media to give conspiracy theories magnified reach. A survey conducted in 2019 revealed that 5 per cent of the British population did not believe that the Holocaust took place, while 64 per cent did not know how many Jews were murdered or grossly underestimated the number.[11] In the Middle East, Iran further gives credence to theories of denial and distortion by hosting an International Holocaust Cartoon Competition, in which cartoonists are invited to submit cartoons that make light of or deny the Holocaust. Since 2005, there have been three such competitions. Holocaust distortion has also surged during the COVID-19 pandemic: some people opposing lockdown measures have accused

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[10]The organisation Get the Trolls Out! counters anti-religious hate speech through exposing individuals and organisations, finding and debunking dangerous narratives in the media, and educating young people how to spot and respond to online trolls.

[11] 'About Our Research to Mark Holocaust Memorial Day', Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, 1 February 2019.

governments of being Nazis, while others who are against vaccination have attended demonstrations wearing the yellow stars that Jews were forced to wear in Nazi Germany. Ironically, there is a crossover between those who deploy language and imagery that references the Holocaust with those who distort and/or dispute the facts of the genocide.

Holocaust denial and distortion often overlap with the antisemitic trope claiming Jews are powerful influencers of world governments and the media, as antisemites falsely argue Jews invented the Holocaust for their own benefit.

Countering Holocaust denial and distortion can be difficult as it takes an extremely high level of factual understanding.

Connection Questions

Discuss the following questions together. Then, write a short summary of the reading in your notebooks. You will be sharing your summary with a new group in the next part of the activity.

1. What is the antisemitic trope of Holocaust denial and distortion?

2. How might it feel to encounter Holocaust denial as a Jew? Explain your response.

3. What emotional response does this trope seek to provoke? How does it seek to influence attitudes towards Jews?

4. When did Holocaust denial and distortion first begin? How did it evolve over time? What does the evolution of this trope teach us about discrimination/antisemitism?

5. What does the content of this article make you think and feel? Explain your answer.

6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.