

## WHOSE FEAR AND WHOSE SECURITY?

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand the issue of security from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives.
- Students will analyze credibility, bias and truth in documentary film.

### VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS

1967 boundaries	Auschwitz and Treblinka	Intifada	security offenders
administrative detention	black labor market	Israeli occupation	terrorist attacks

### MEDIUM

Video clips from two documentary films: Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians and A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada Through Israeli Eyes (Total running time: 9 min, 17 sec)



### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Unit 2, Lesson 4 documentary video clips from Web site or DVD
- *Student Worksheet* (pg. 5-6) for analyzing clips (one per student)
- *Teacher Answer Sheet* (pg. 7-8) for decoding web pages

### TIME

40 minutes

### LESSON STEPS

1. Present *Introduction to the Lesson* (pg. 2) to the class.
2. Distribute *Student Worksheet* for logging the clips.
3. Play the video clips while students log their answers.
4. Lead students through a decoding of the clips using *Teacher Answer Sheet*.
5. Lead a discussion about bias and objectivity in documentary films using *Further Questions* (pg. 3) and *Additional Information* (pg. 3).

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Following its victory in the Six Day War, Israel maintained control of East Jerusalem, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, areas formerly controlled by neighboring Arab countries. Collectively, these were known as the occupied territories. During the period after the war, there was ongoing violence directed at Israel by Palestinian guerilla organizations whose goal was “to liberate Palestine” from Israeli control. The Intifada, an uprising of young stone-throwing Palestinians against Israeli occupation, began in 1987 in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Many Israeli citizens were survivors of the Holocaust. They will never forget Hitler’s genocide against the Jews in concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Treblinka. They were very aware of other attacks on Jewish people throughout history. Maintaining the 1967 borders was of utmost importance to the Israeli government for reasons of security and survival.

After the 1967 war, Israel passed laws allowing soldiers to detain any Palestinian person for suspected security offenses. Administrative detention allows an individual to be held indefinitely without charge or trial. The Israeli human rights group, B’Tselem, reported that more than 1,000 Palestinians were held in administrative detention between 1993 and 1999 for periods ranging from two months to five and a half years (Rubenberg 132).

You are about to see short excerpts from two different documentary films about the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising. A documentary is defined as “a work such as a film or television program, presenting political, social or historical subject matter in a factual and informative manner and often consisting of actual news films or interviews accompanied by narration” (Lexico Publishing Group [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)). When the documentaries were first broadcast on PBS in 1990, they provoked much controversy about fairness and accuracy in media presentations covering Israel and the Palestinians. The first clip you will see is from the documentary Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians, by Jo Franklin-Trout. The second clip is from A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada Through Israeli Eyes, which was made by the Anti-Defamation League in response to the first film.

As you watch each segment, you will keep a film log in order to help you explore issues of point of view and truthfulness in reporting. Pay attention to both words and images as you look for messages about fear and security in these very different perspectives on life for Palestinians and Israelis in the late 1980s.

- **Distribute** the *Student Worksheets* - one per student.
- **Play** the film clips, pausing in between for students to write their answers.. Have students work individually or in pairs to log each film.
- **Lead** discussion of the clips using the *Teacher Answer Sheet*.
- **Have** students give specific evidence from each clip to back up their answers.
- **Follow** decoding with a more open-ended discussion of credibility and bias in documentary films using *Further Questions* and *Additional Information*.

### FURTHER QUESTIONS

Does one of the clips seem more biased or more objective than the other? Explain.

Should documentaries be objective and always present multiple perspectives?

Can we evaluate the biases in these two documentaries having only seen these short clips?

Does either point of view, Israeli or Palestinian, seem to be more valid or justified? How might this depend on your own experiences and background?

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the oversight organization for PBS and NPR, was the last of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs to be enacted. The organization was established by Congress in 1967 following the Carnegie Commission Report. This report argued that public television and radio programming "can help us see America whole, in all its diversity," serve as "a forum for controversy and debate," and "provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard" (qtd. in Barsamian "The Right Wing Attack...").

At the time these documentaries were aired in 1990, there had been a debate in Congress about an alleged liberal bias within PBS. The Speaker of the House at the time, Newt Gingrich, called PBS and NPR "a sandbox for the elite," and claimed that their viewers and listeners were "a bunch of rich, upper-class people who want their toy to play with it" (qtd. in Barsamian).

The producer of Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians, Jo Franklin-Trout, had previously been a producer for PBS' McNeil-Lehrer News Hour. Her film was widely criticized by conservatives for being biased against Israel. The original sponsoring station withdrew its support, and the scheduled airing of the film was postponed twice before WNET, the New York PBS station, stepped in and agreed to show it. When the film finally aired a year after it had been completed, it was followed by a "wraparound" discussion designed to "provide balance" (Holden, "The Second Battle...").

Conservative commentator Andrea Levin, in an online article in [www.camera.org](http://www.camera.org) titled, "PBS and Israel: Tax-Supported Bias," called the film "virulent" and "propagandistic." She suggested that "PBS has aired at least fifteen documentaries on the Arab-Israeli conflict. No more than three of these can reasonably be described as balanced, a standard that Federal statute mandates in 'all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature.' The remainder have projected a clear anti-Israel bias."

On the other side of the controversy, Kurt Holden wrote an article titled "The Second Battle of PBS Leads to the Same Conclusion" for Media Watch: "Of all the national television networks, PBS has been most timid about the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Conventional wisdom on its board of directors had it that its funding—individual, corporate and institutional—would dry up instantly if the network were perceived by the American Jewish community as earnestly striving to be even-handed."

Holden went on to suggest that the second film, A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada Through Israeli Eyes, was conceived and commissioned by the Israeli Consul General in New York, Uriel Savir. Holden complained that this film was just as biased as the other, but did not receive nearly the criticism since "there was no Arab-American community hand wringing over whether or not the film commissioned by the Israeli Consul General was really funded by Americans or the Israeli government."

## CONNECTIONS

Compare how two U.S. presidential candidates explore the same issue from different perspectives with Project Look Sharp's Media Construction of Presidential Campaigns: George H.W. Bush's "Arkansas 2" TV commercial and Bill Clinton's "Steady" commercial.

## REFERENCES

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A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada through Israeli Eyes. Eds. Douglas Cheek and Ann Gaydos. Anti-Defamation League, 1990.

Sela, Avraham. The Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East. New York: Continuum, 1999.

**NAME**

**DATE**

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**DIRECTIONS**

Read over these questions below before watching the short video clips. You should take notes during the video clips, and you will be given a brief time to write your answers after the clips.



**Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians**

- 1. According to this documentary, who lives in fear—Palestinians or Israelis? What is your evidence (the words and images that communicate this message)?**
- 2. What are they afraid of? What is your evidence?**
- 3. What would make them more secure? What is your evidence?**
- 4. What must Israel do to deal with the conflict with the Palestinians?**
- 5. What are the main images you see of Israelis?**
- 6. What are the main images you see of Arabs?**
- 7. What biases, if any, did you notice in this clip?**
- 8. Summarize in your own words the impression this film clip gives about the fear and security in Israel/Palestine.**

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**DIRECTIONS**

Read over these questions below before watching the short video clips. You should take notes during the video clips and you will be given a brief time to write your answers after the clips.



**A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada Through Israeli Eyes**

- 1. According to this documentary, who lives in fear—Palestinians or Israelis? What is your evidence (the words and images that communicate this message)?**
- 2. What are they afraid of? What is your evidence?**
- 3. What would make them more secure? What is your evidence?**
- 4. What must Israel do to deal with the conflict with the Palestinians?**
- 5. What are the main images you see of Israelis?**
- 6. What are the main images you see of Palestinians or Arab people?**
- 7. What biases, if any, did you notice in this clip?**
- 8. Summarize in your own words the impression this film clip gives about the fear and security in Israel/Palestine.**



## Days of Rage: The Young Palestinians

### **1. Who lives in fear—Palestinians or Israelis? What is your evidence (the words and images that communicate this message)?**

*Palestinians*

*Words: Palestinian woman - They (the children) are afraid. Everybody's afraid.*

*Images: Palestinian children listening to woman speak of her fear*

### **2. What are they afraid of? What is your evidence?**

*Israeli military and prisons*

*Words: They face harassment from everybody, they're looking for him*

*Images: Israeli soldiers questioning & grabbing Palestinian youth, prison with barbed wire and Israeli flag*

### **3. What would make them more secure? What is your evidence?**

*Respecting the civil rights of Palestinians*

*Words: if situation continues the majority of Arabs...will have no political power*

*Images: Palestinian workers, shops, marketplace*

### **4. What must Israel do to deal with the conflict with the Palestinians?**

*Dr. Meron Benvenisti, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem says to give voting rights and political power to Palestinians who will soon reach numerical parity with Jews in Israel*

### **5. What are the main images you see of Israelis?**

*Soldiers questioning Palestinians*

### **6. What are the main images you see of Palestinians or Arab people?**

*Youth being questioned by Israeli soldiers, manual laborers, children listening to mother*

### **7. What bias, if any, did you notice in this clip?**

*Focus is on injuries to Palestinians such as the black labor market and administrative detention rather than on Israel's security concerns and Palestinian attacks on Israel. Reporter appears to side with the Palestinians asking about a young Palestinian, "They want to arrest him? They would put him in jail? As small as he is?"*

*They interview a former Israeli official who is critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians without hearing opposing views to his perspective.*

### **8. Summarize in your own words the impression this film clip gives about the fear and security in Israel/Palestine.**

*Answers will vary.*



## A Search for Solid Ground: The Intifada Through Israeli Eyes

### **1. Who lives in fear—Palestinians or Israelis? What is your evidence (the words and images that communicate this message)?**

*Israelis*

*Words: Israeli civilians – “Israel is not secure. We were frightened. We are threatened.”*

*Images: Cars bombed, man and woman injured, dark alley, wary soldiers*

### **2. What are they afraid of? What is your evidence?**

*Attacks by terrorists and Arabs*

*Words: “I am afraid of terrorist attacks, Israel’s nightmare – a surprise attack”*

*Images: 67 headlines, Arab crowd chanting, Iranian hostage takers*

### **3. What would make them more secure? What is your evidence?**

*Strong army and secure borders*

*Words: “If we pull back from 67 borders we are at risk from all sides”*

*Images: Israeli soldiers on alert, sandbagged streets*

### **4. What must Israel do to deal with the conflict with the Palestinians?**

*Ehud Olmert, Minister for Arab Affairs, says to maintain the occupation within 67 borders, otherwise “all Israelis are at risk”*

### **5. What are the main images you see of Israelis?**

*Israeli civilians, man and woman wounded after attacks, Minister for Arab Affairs, young soldiers on patrol*

### **6. What are the main images you see of Palestinians or Arab people?**

*Chanting crowd, burning U.S. flag, taking hostage, marchers pumping fist carrying Khomeini portrait*

### **7. What bias, if any, did you notice in this clip?**

*Focus is on threats to Israel from Arabs rather than on Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. Reporter justifies Israeli occupation saying “The nightmare of a surprise attack, this is what keeps the occupation going in face of opposition on the ground and criticism from abroad.” They interview an Israeli official who notes the “hatred and brutality” of “Muslim fundamentalists and terrorists” without hearing opposing views to his perspective.*

### **8. Summarize in your own words the impression this film clip gives about the fear and security in Israel/Palestine.**

*Answers will vary.*