

## **Room 2: The Jewish Diaspora: Origins of European Jewish Communities and the Path to the Holocaust**

**Audience:** Grades 6 - 8

**Time:** 50 minutes (2 class periods)

### **Overview**

This two-day lesson explores the Jewish Diaspora from its ancient origins through the creation and impact of the Pale of Settlement, connecting these historical events to the Holocaust. Featured in Room 2 of the virtual museum, this section examines how centuries of displacement shaped Jewish communities across Europe and Russia, creating the demographic conditions that would later be exploited during the Holocaust. Students will analyze primary sources and engage with interactive maps.

### **Student Outcomes**

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to...

- Explain the historical origins of the Jewish Diaspora and its impact on Jewish communities worldwide
- Analyze how the Pale of Settlement shaped Jewish life in Eastern Europe
- Evaluate the cultural and linguistic impacts of forced migration on Jewish communities
- Connect historical patterns of discrimination to later events of the Holocaust

### **Aligned Standards (California Common Core)**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

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### **Context:**

Students will explore two significant historical periods that shaped Jewish communities in Europe. Day 1 focuses on the ancient diaspora following the Roman conquest, while Day 2 examines the Pale of Settlement and its lasting impact on European Jewish communities. Room 2 of the interactive museum details the Jewish dispersion from the land of Israel. It includes maps of the areas impacted. This lesson also provides for the development of the Pale of Settlement and the intention of moving Jews into this land.

### **Glossary:**

#### **Key Terms**

- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of people from their original homeland
- **Judeans:** Ancient inhabitants of Judea
- **Second Temple:** Major Jewish holy site destroyed by Romans in 70 AD
- **Shtetl:** Traditional Jewish village in Eastern Europe
- **Pale of Settlement:** Territory created by Imperial Russia where Jews were forced to live
- **Pogrom:** Organized violence against Jewish communities
- **Russian Orthodoxy:** The official state religion of Imperial Russia
- **Yiddish:** A language developed by European Jewish communities

### **Materials:**

- [Read about the museum](#)
- [Access to virtual museum Room 2](#)
- Three student handouts
  - Timeline of Jewish Diaspora (attached)

- Map Analysis Worksheet: The Pale of Settlement (attached)
- Aron's Story from Odessa (attached)
- Large wall maps (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>)

### **Differentiation:**

- Create illustrated cards with key terms and provide sentence starters for written responses.
- Break down Aron's story into smaller segments with step-by-step guided reading questions.
- Complete the map analysis worksheet and participate in whole-class discussions about diaspora impacts.
- Write paragraph responses analyzing historical events using provided evidence.
- Research and compare multiple Jewish communities across different regions of the Pale of Settlement.
- Create an analytical presentation connecting historical events to modern diaspora experiences.

### **Lesson/Activity:**

#### **DAY 1: Origins of the Jewish Diaspora**

##### **Opening (10 minutes)**

- Content Warning Introduction (2 minutes)
- Activating Prior Knowledge: Migration Discussion (3 minutes)
- Essential Question Introduction (5 minutes)

##### **Main Activities (35 minutes)**

- Historical Context of Roman Conquest (15 minutes)
  - Timeline creation
  - Map analysis
  - Discussion of Second Temple destruction

- Impact of Forced Migration (20 minutes)
  - Community dispersal patterns
  - Cultural preservation strategies
  - Development of new Jewish communities

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Exit ticket: How did the Roman conquest change Jewish life?
- Preview Day 2 content

## **DAY 2: The Pale of Settlement**

### **Opening (10 minutes)**

- Review Day 1 concepts
- Introduce Pale of Settlement essential question
- Examine 1791 historical context

### **Main Activities (35 minutes)**

#### **The Pale of Settlement Deep Dive (20 minutes)**

- Creation by Catherine the Great
  - Motivations and imperial policies
  - Geographic boundaries
  - Impact on Jewish population movement
- Life in the Pale (15 minutes)
  - Population statistics and distribution
  - Cultural developments
  - Language evolution (Yiddish)
  - Economic restrictions and opportunities
  - Religious and community life
  - Case study: Aron's story from Odessa

### **Closing (5 minutes)**

- Synthesis discussion connecting both days
- Final reflection writing

### **Assessment:**

- Day 1: Timeline analysis and exit ticket
- Day 2: Map activity and written reflection
- Overall: Class participation and handout completion

### **Supplemental Resources**

- Virtual tour of relevant museum exhibits
- Additional primary source documents
- Interactive map of Jewish migration patterns
- Recorded survivor testimonies

### **References**

#### **Books**

Weinberg, S. (2020). *The world of our fathers: The journey of the East European Jews to America and the life they found and made* (Young readers edition). NYU Press.

Bartoletti, S. C. (2017). *Terrible times: The story of the Jewish people* (2nd ed.). Clarion Books.

#### **Digital Resources**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2022). *Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust* [Interactive timeline]. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/timeline-group/holocaust/before-1933>

Jewish Virtual Library. (2023). *The story of the Jewish diaspora* [Educational resource]. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-diaspora>

Khan Academy. (2023). *Overview of early Judaism part 2* [Video].

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/ancient-medieval/judaism/v/overview-of-early-judaism-part-2>

## Handouts For Room 2 Lesson

### Timeline of Jewish Diaspora

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Historical Events and Their Impact

#### 70 CE

- The Roman Empire conquers Judeans
- Destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem
- Beginning of major Jewish displacement

#### 135 CE

- Large-scale expulsion of Jews from their homeland
- Formation of early Jewish communities in different regions
- Start of widespread migration

#### 500-1700 CE

- Development of distinct Jewish communities across Europe
- Growth of unique cultural and religious traditions
- Emergence of different Jewish languages and customs

#### 1791 CE

- Creation of the Pale of Settlement by Catherine the Great
- Forced relocation of Jews into designated territories
- Areas included parts of modern-day:
  - Belarus
  - Lithuania
  - Moldova
  - Poland
  - Ukraine
  - Western Russia

## **1820s**

- Yiddish becomes primary language of European Jews
- Jewish population in Pale reaches 5 million
- Represents 40% of global Jewish population

## **Student Analysis**

1. How did each event impact Jewish communities?
2. What patterns do you notice in this timeline?



## Map Analysis Worksheet: The Pale of Settlement

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Geographic Analysis Activity

#### Part 1: Map Labeling

On the map provided: Map in the virtual museum can be used

1. Circle the location of Odessa
2. Shade the general area of the Pale of Settlement
3. Label modern-day countries that were part of the Pale:
  - Belarus
  - Lithuania
  - Moldova
  - Poland
  - Ukraine
  - Western Russia

#### Part 2: Analysis Questions

1. Why do you think this location was chosen for the Pale of Settlement?
2. How might the geography of this region have affected Jewish communities?
3. Look at the borders. What challenges might people have faced living in this region?

#### Part 3: Population Distribution

The Pale contained over 5 million Jews by the late 1800s.

- Calculate the approximate percentage of Jews who lived in:
  - Cities: \_\_\_\_\_%
  - Small towns: \_\_\_\_\_%
  - Rural areas: \_\_\_\_\_%

### **Connection to Today**

How does understanding the geography of the Pale help us understand:

1. Modern Jewish communities in Eastern Europe?
2. The later events of the Holocaust?

Your response:

## **Aron's Story from Odessa**

### **A Personal Account of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Reading and Analysis Activity**

#### **Historical Context**

Odessa was a major city within the Pale of Settlement, known for its vibrant Jewish community and cultural life. This port city on the Black Sea became home to thousands of Jewish families who built new lives there under challenging circumstances.

#### **Aron's Experience**

[Excerpt from Aron's story to be inserted based on specific museum and or novel documentation-TBD by teacher]

#### **Analysis Questions**

Answer the following questions using evidence from the text:

1. What aspects of daily life in Odessa does Aron describe?
2. How did living in the Pale of Settlement affect Aron's family?
3. What evidence of Jewish cultural life can you find in the story?
4. How does this personal account help us understand the larger history of the Jewish Diaspora?

## Key Terms to Know

- **Shtetl:** Traditional Jewish village in Eastern Europe
- **Pogrom:** Organized violence against Jewish communities