



# NATIONALISM

Israeli and  
Palestinian  
Narratives and  
Symbols



# ABOUT

**This resource helps you think about national identity and how it is expressed.**

You will explore questions such as:

- What is nationalism?
- Why is it important to people?
- What symbols are used?
- What narratives are used?

This activity can be completed on your own through reading and reflection, or working together with someone you know from home or school.

**Let's get started!**

01

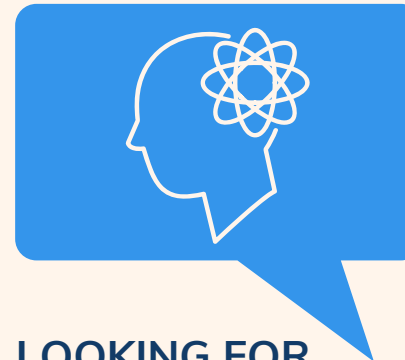
Here are the kinds of skills which are Important for this activity:



**REASONING**



**IMAGINATION**



**LOOKING FOR  
PATTERNS**



**SELF-  
AWARENESS**





# WARM UP

## What does national identity mean to people?

Do you have a sense of national identity? It could be one identity or several. If you don't, think of someone you know who does seem to have a sense of national identity. Try to answer the following questions, either for yourself or that person:

What symbols represent that nationality?

What historical figures are connected to that nationality?

What stories or 'narratives' are told about that nationality?

What piece of territory is connected with that nationality?

Scotland sneak peek!

02





# KEYWORDS

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## What is a nation?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a nation is a country, especially when thought of as a large group of people living in one area with their own government, language, traditions, etc.

*Apart from the three things listed above, what other characteristics might identify a nation?*



Wondering about genetic characteristics and nationality? A guy called Van den Berghe in 1995 argued that 'social races' have 'biological underpinnings'. However, when his theory came under criticism\* he eventually admitted that there is little evidence for this!





# KEYWORDS

04

## What is a state?

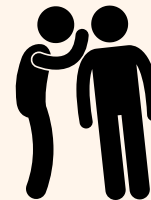
According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the state is the political organisation of society, or, more narrowly, the institutions of government. The state is distinguished by its purpose, the establishment of order and security; its methods, the laws and their enforcement; its territory, the area of jurisdiction or geographic boundaries; and finally by its sovereignty.



*Notice that law is key here! Try looking up the consitutions of some states to get an idea how they decide to govern themselves.*

"Pssst! You can use the word 'self-determination' to mean 'govern yourself'"

"Oh, right!"





# HOW MANY NATION STATES?

05

## A little puzzle!

How many nation states are there in the United Nations (UN)?

There were 51 original founding member states of the UN in 1945, and an additional 137 states joined before the year 2000. Then in the 21st Century the UN grew again by 10% of its original membership. How many member states are there now in the UN?

Answer = 193

In which year did Israel become a member state of the UN?

Answer = 1948

There are two 'observer' states in addition to the full member states. One of them is Palestine!

Pause for thought: are there the same number of nations in the world as nation states?



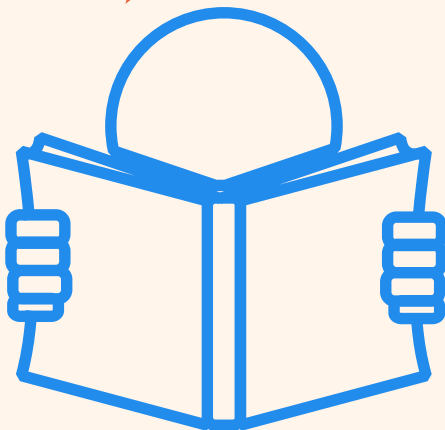


# ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITIES

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We are now going to think about why identity is important to Israelis and Palestinians. When thinking about conflict resolution, we often think about physical, material, and visible interests, problems, and resources, rather than the emotional and psychological aspects of conflict. These aspects can be the most difficult parts of conflict and therefore, the most important sources of conflict resolution.

**Read pages 191-198 and write a brief summary on what you learnt**



Here is an article about the role of national identity in conflict. It suggests that national identity is a collective identity. This means that it is an identity that only exists in relation to others around you or in the same community as you. What do you think about this? How is it different to individual identity?







# ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITIES

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## Historical Narratives - the 'Homeland'

The idea of homeland has different meanings for everyone, and for Israelis and Palestinians, who both seek a homeland on the same piece of land, it goes further.

For many Israelis and Jews around the world, the idea of a homeland is returning to this land of Israel where Jews once lived, but were exiled from in 70CE. They feel they are returning to a place where they will be safe and secure and connected to the land. For many, the founding of Israel in 1948 was a return for Jewish people to their homeland. The term 'Zionism' is used to refer to this belief.

For Palestinians, the same piece of land is also their homeland because their ancestors lived there for many generations prior to the establishment of the state of Israel. But for many Palestinians they are not able to live there or return to there. For them, the 1948 'Nakba' was a period of expulsion or fleeing from their homeland and there are now over five million Palestinian refugees worldwide.

Here are some writers explaining what Palestine and what Israel mean to them as a homeland.







# ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITIES

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## Historical figures

From time to time, key leaders rise up within a national group, who become part of that nation's 'story' about themselves and their identity. Two such figures were Shimon Peres, who was President of Israel and Yasser Arafat who was President of Palestine.

Watch Arafat address the UN General Assembly about peace for the first time in 1974



Watch Peres speak about the importance of peace in the Middle East



No leader can be perfect. Was there any criticism of these two figures? It would be good to try a Google search!





# CAN NATIONALISM GO WRONG?

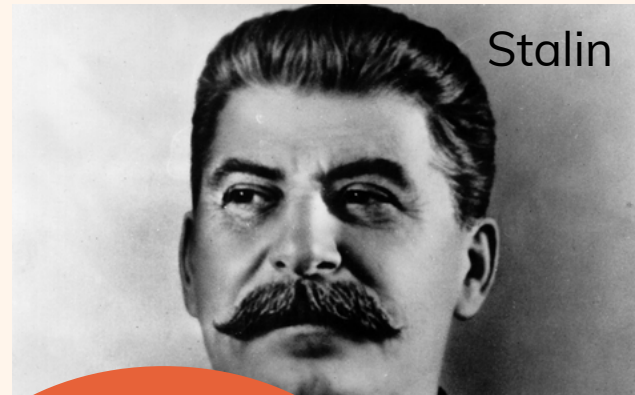
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## Ultrnationalism

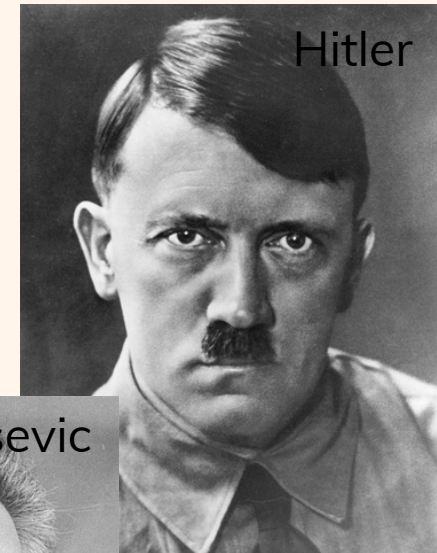
The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'ultranationalism' as: "extreme nationalism that promotes the interests of one state or people above all others". What are some historical examples of ultranationalism? What ideologies and beliefs is ultranationalism founded upon?

### Some characteristics:

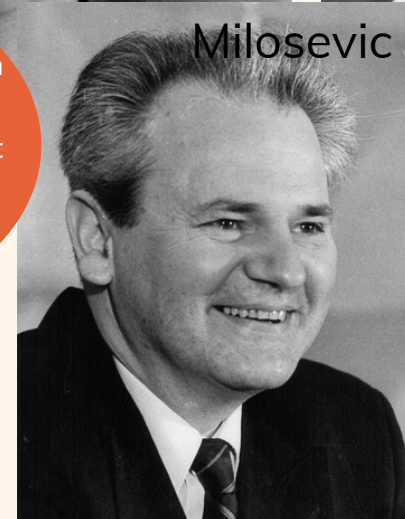
- Believe their country is more superior than others, economically, politically, ethnically, etc.
- Deny people of human rights and freedom
- Separate into "us" & "them"
- Promote their own national interest: which leads to invading other countries
- Hostility towards other ethnicities - they use racism and fanaticism



Stalin



Hitler



Milosevic

Where is the line between nationalism and ultranationalism and what happened when these leaders crossed that line?



[Click here](#) for a short video about current ultranationalism in Europe.



# ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN IDENTITIES

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Listen to the national anthems of Israel and Palestine!

## Symbols

Symbols can be used in politics to help create a strong sense of identity. They can be 'borrowed' from already existing religious and cultural identities, or newly created. Physical, audio or visual symbols usually include iconography (e.g. emblems and buildings), written language, and rites, rituals and songs.

Take a look at these Palestinian and Israeli symbols. What is the 'story' behind them and why have they come to represent these nations?



Once you have gained some insight into these symbols, write down some thoughts as to why symbolism is so important for creating and maintaining a group identity.



פֶּסַח



الله



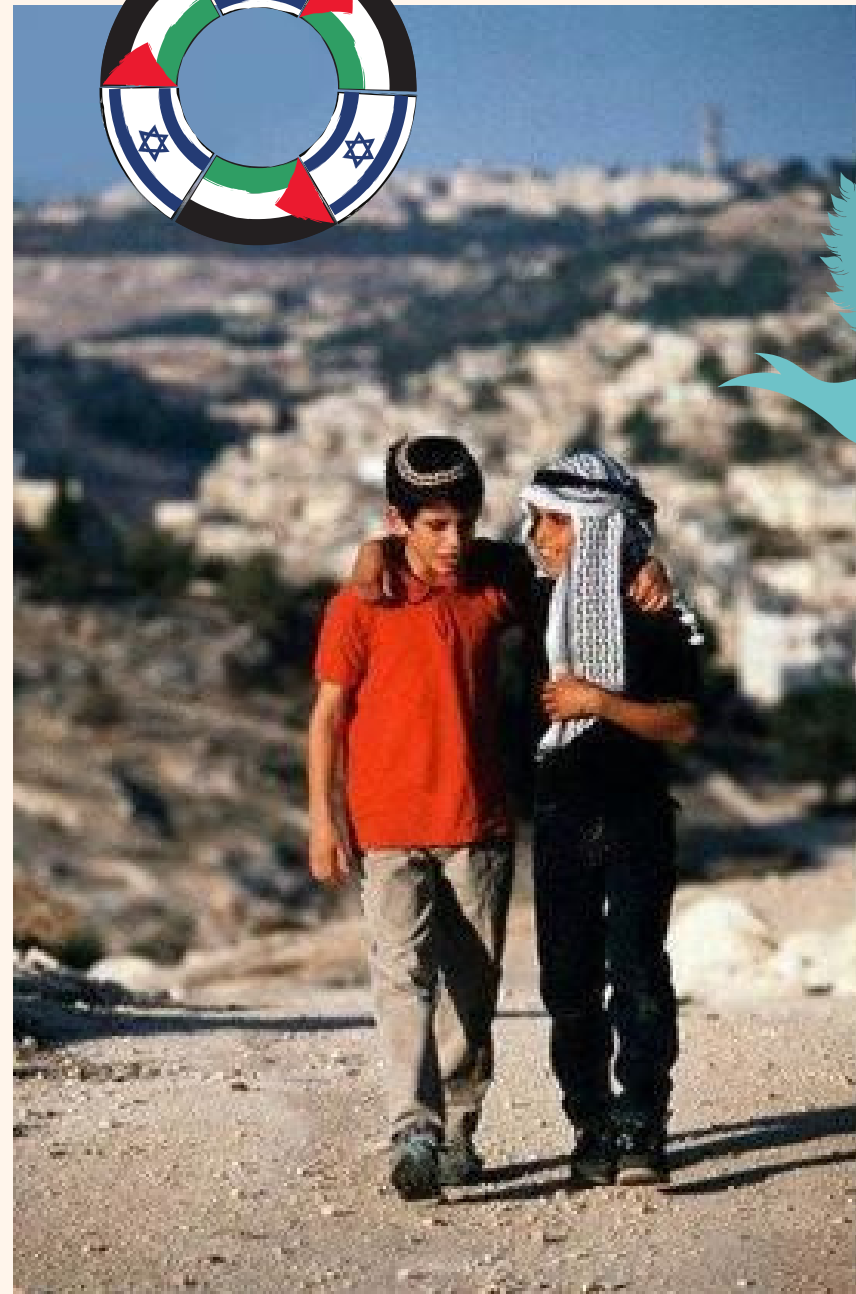


# REFLECTION

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You now have a good insight into Palestinian and Israeli narratives, leadership figures and symbols, and the dangers of nationalism going too far. Take a moment to reflect on nationalism.

- Do you think nations are something ancient, or a modern, artificially-created concept?
- Do you think nationalism is something to be celebrated or eradicated?
- What new stories about their national identities could Israelis and Palestinians tell that could help them fulfil their national identities and live together?







# WHAT NOW?

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Check out one of SNS' partner organisations called 'New Story Leadership'. They are working on shaping a new story about Israel and Palestine for the next generation!

There are some more organisations listed on our website, Many are seeking ways to fulfil both Israeli and Palestinian national aspirations. A good research project would be to investigate what these ways might be!

"We won't let those in power talk about us, without us!"



"It's about our identities, and our future."



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