Challenging False Claims

How the Anti-Defamation League responded to antisemitism

USH.C.4.1.G "Describe the purpose of the Anti-Defamation League in response to antisemitism in the early 20th Century."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two harms caused by antisemitic claims, circle two ways the ADL responded, and number the two aims in its founding statement. Use your marks to trace why the organization acted.

Why the ADL Was Founded

1. In 1913, a Jewish family opening a newspaper might find more than local news. Some papers and public speakers repeated false claims about Jews as a group. Such claims could make neighbors suspicious and help excuse unfair treatment at work or in public life. Antisemitism, hostility or prejudice toward Jewish people, was not just a matter of rude words. It could influence decisions about who belonged and who received fair treatment. That year, Jewish leaders in the United States founded the Anti-Defamation League, or ADL, through the Jewish service organization B'nai B'rith. They wanted an organized response, not silence.

2. The ADL's founding statement gave it two linked aims: to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Defamation means damaging a person's or group's reputation with false statements. To carry out its mission, the ADL challenged antisemitic claims in print and helped the public recognize why those claims were false. It also spoke against discrimination, which could deny people opportunities because they were Jewish. The point was not to shield anyone from fair criticism. It was to keep lies and prejudice from becoming accepted reasons to mistreat people.

3. Consider a newspaper that tells readers, without evidence, that Jewish neighbors cannot be trusted. A reader may first believe the claim, then support excluding those neighbors from a job or club. In the 1920s, the ADL protested antisemitic material in Henry Ford's newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, which spread false conspiracy claims about Jews. By disputing these messages, the ADL sought to limit their reach and protect people's chances to participate equally in American life. Its purpose connected a defense of Jewish people against targeted falsehoods with a broader demand that everyone receive fair treatment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did false claims about Jewish people call for an organized response, according to the passage?

2. How are the ADL's two founding aims connected?

3. Why did the ADL protest material in *The Dearborn Independent*?

4. Why does the passage distinguish fair criticism from defamation when explaining the ADL's purpose?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a 1910s newspaper editor is considering printing an unverified claim that Jewish shopkeepers cheat customers. Write a four-sentence letter explaining why the ADL would object, how the claim might affect Jewish residents, and what fair treatment for all would require.

ANSWER KEY

Challenging False Claims

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.1.G

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two harms caused by antisemitic claims, circle two ways the ADL responded, and number the two aims in its founding statement. Use your marks to trace why the organization acted. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did false claims about Jewish people call for an organized response, according to the passage?	**The claims could make neighbors suspicious and help justify unfair treatment at work or in public life.**
2	How are the ADL's two founding aims connected?	**Stopping false claims about Jewish people helps prevent prejudice from being used to deny fair treatment, which the ADL sought for all.**
3	Why did the ADL protest material in *The Dearborn Independent*?	**The newspaper spread false conspiracy claims about Jews. The ADL challenged those messages to limit their reach and protect equal participation.**
4	Why does the passage distinguish fair criticism from defamation when explaining the ADL's purpose?	**The ADL sought to challenge false, prejudicial claims that could lead to mistreatment, not to prevent evidence-based criticism.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Editor, an unverified accusation against Jewish shopkeepers treats an entire group as guilty without evidence. The ADL would object because spreading the claim could damage Jewish residents' reputations and cause customers to avoid their businesses. Please check any specific complaint using evidence instead of blaming neighbors for their religion. That approach protects Jewish residents from prejudice and holds everyone to the same standard of fair treatment.

Accept answers that connect the ADL's opposition to false claims about Jews with its aim of securing fair treatment. For the letter, look for a plausible effect of the claim and a response grounded in evidence rather than group blame.