**Title:** Histoire d’un Innocent — The Story of an Innocent, 1898**Year (Hebrew):** 5655

**Year (Hebrew)**: 5658

**Year:** 1898

**Location:** Europe – Western

**Short description**

A comic strip printed in France in 1898 depicting the Dreyfus Affair.

**Detailed description**

​​The text of the comic strip is in French and the images depict the events of the Dreyfus Affair. The comic strip starts showing Dreyfus being framed by two fellow military men. Subsequent frames illustrate his trial and imprisonment and end with his imagined acquittal. This depiction was published by the Dreyfusards who fought to prove Dreyfus’ innocence.

The images include drawings of the relevant characters but also elements common to comic strips such as: the word “Berlin” on the suitcase being held by Estherhazy, the real culprit; speech bubbles with Dreyfus’ cry of “I am innocent”; and the image of an angel representing justice at the end of the comic strip.

Alfred Dreyfus, a French-Jewish officer, was wrongly accused of spying for Germany, and in 1894 he was convicted and placed in solitary confinement on Devil’s Island. One of the reasons for his conviction was the anti-Semitic atmosphere rampant in Europe at the time. Only years later, as result of public protest, was Dreyfus acquitted.

In the years following Alfred Dreyfus’ trial and imprisonment, the Dreyfus Affair split the French nation in two. On one side were the Dreyfusards who were fighting for Dreyfus’ innocence; on the other, the anti-Dreyfusards who supported his conviction. It was the press which was primarily responsible for shaping the case into “The Dreyfus Affair.” From 1898-1899, in particular, the public campaign became a goldmine for graphic artists and draughtsmen; newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures, postcards and board games attracted readers with colourful caricatures, cartoons, and vignettes. The two camps seemed to be involved in a ping pong match: a month after the publication of a poster entitled “Dreyfus is a Traitor,” a poster appeared entitled “Dreyfus is Innocent”; the comic strip “Story of a Traitor” was the anti-Semitic answer to the “Story of an Innocent”. Likewise, the newspaper L’Aurore published “The Game of Truth,” a Dreyfusard spin on the traditional Goose Game; the newspaper L’Anti-Juif then responded with “The Game of 36 Heads.”

**Would You Like to Know More?**

**The Dreyfus Affair**  <previous document>

**Teaching Suggestions**

​​​**History** teachers could show this when discussing the events of the Dreyfus Affair or when teaching about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

​This resource could also be used in **English** or **Citizenship** lessons when teaching about the media and public opinion and also as an example of the power of protest.

​**Art** teachers could use the comic strip to demonstrate the use of this medium for conveying serious content.

​​**French** teachers could use the resource as a way of integrating Jewish and Israeli content in the general curriculum.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* ​Look through the comic strip. What historical event does it depict?​

**Reading Between the Lines**

* After learning about the Dreyfus Affair, take a look at each frame and give it an English title.
* Whose opinion is displayed in this comic strip – the Dreyfusards or the anti-Dreyfusards?

**Connections**

* Why do you think they used a comic strip to convey their message?
* Compare this comic strip to the comic strip created by those who held opposite views.
* Which elements common to cartoons and comic strips can be seen here?
* Describe the frame showing Dreyfus on Devil’s Island.
* What is he saying?
* What are his guards doing?
* What message is conveyed in this frame?
* ​Describe the second frame from the left on the third row.
* Who are the people illustrated in the frame? [Émile Zola, Bernard Lazare, Jean Jaurès, Émile Duclaux]
* Find out about these figures and how they were involved in the Dreyfus Affair.
* What is written on the pages that they are holding? [country, truth, justice, humanity]
* Why does the sun appear behind them?
* What message is conveyed in this frame?
* Describe the last frame on the page.
* Who are the characters in the frame?
* What expression is on the face of the character on the left? Why?
* What does the woman flying above the characters represent?
* What message is conveyed in this frame?

**Creative Ideas**

* **​**Choose another important event in modern Jewish history and illustrate it in a comic strip.​

**Target audience:** Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[The Dreyfus Affair](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/collections/PersonalWebs/Dreyfus/Pages/default.aspx)

[Shana Tova, Alfred Dreyfus, 1901](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENGSP222&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Cdreyfus%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D8)  
[​​The Dreyfus Affair Time​line](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/nlis/en/education/Pages/Dreyfus-Timeline.aspx)