**Title:** Histoire d’un Traitre — The Story of a Traitor, 1899

**Year (Hebrew):** 5659

**Year:** 1899

**Location:** Europe – Western

**Short description**

This comic strip was published in 1899 in response to the comic strip “The Story of an Innocent” and represents the viewpoint of the anti-Dreyfusards who believed that Alfred Dreyfus was a spy who betrayed France.

**Detailed description**

**​**This comic strip, “The Story of a Traitor,” was published in 1899 in response to the comic strip “[The Story of an Innocent​​](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)”. The images and storyline represent the viewpoint of the anti-Dreyfusards who believed that Alfred Dreyfus was a spy who had betrayed France.

The comic strip, which was sold for 10 centimes, shows the different stages of the Dreyfus Affair, starting with Dreyfus’ alleged spying, the trial, and the protest of the Dreyfusards (who believed Dreyfus to be innocent).

The comic strip includes anti-Semitic texts and imagery; for example, the Jews are depicted as fat, ugly people with large noses, an ugly Jew is seen bribing the public, and there are illustrations of insects with faces of Jews trying to attack soldiers. The final frame shows the anti-Dreyfusards’ wishful thinking in an image of boots kicking Jews out of France. The text below this frame reads:

The French must understand by this terrible adventure that Jews are unsociable and eminently dangerous beings for the countries that give them hospitality. The only existence that suits them is that of their ancestor Isaac Laquedem, the “Wandering Jew.” [The Wandering Jew is a myth that spread in Europe in the thirteenth century about a Jew who taunted Jesus on his way to the Crucifixion and was then cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming.] ​

The depiction of the anti-Dreyfusards is similarly vulgar. The image of Émile Zola, named “a filthy pornographer,” is shown on the body of a pig. The pig’s faeces are tagged “J’accuse” — the title of Zola’s famous article accusing the French establishment of Alfred Dreyfus’ wrongful conviction.

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 a 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](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)”; the comic strip “Story of a Traitor” (discussed here) was the anti-Semitic answer to the earlier “Story of an Innocent” (discussed above). 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**

**​**Teachers are recommended to present this illustration together with “[The Story of an Innocent](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)” comic strip which shows the Dreyfusard viewpoint.

History teachers could use this when presenting the events of the affair or as an example of anti-Semitic propaganda.

​​Art teachers could use this comic strip to demonstrate use of this medium for conveying controversial content. Due to the graphic and vulgar images and text, this resource should only be used with older children.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

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

**Reading Between the Lines**

* After learning about the Dreyfus Affair, give each frame an English title.
* Whose opinion is displayed in this comic strip – the Dreyfusards or the anti-Dreyfusards?
* Why do you think they used a comic strip to convey their message?
* Compare this comic strip with the [comic strip​](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM) created by those holding opposite views.
* Which elements common to cartoons and comic strips can be seen here?
* This comic strip was created by people opposing Dreyfus (the anti-Dreyfusards) who held anti-Semitic views.
* What is the connection between the Dreyfus Affair and anti-Semitism?
* Give examples of anti-Semitic imagery in the comic strip.
* What stereotypes are used to depict the Jews?
* Was the Dreyfus affair the cause of anti-Semitism in France or was the affair caused by prevailing anti-Semitic views?
* Describe the third frame on the second row.
* Who are the people waving Dreyfus off and why are they saying, “We will avenge you”?
* How are these people depicted? What stereotypes are used to show who they are?
* Which frame shows a Jew trying to bribe the public?
* The first frame on the bottom row shows a pig with a human face.
* Who is the person depicted in this picture?
* Why is he shown in this way?
* Describe the last frame.
* Who is kicking who?
* Where are they being kicked from and why?

**Connections**

* Look on the internet for examples of anti-Semitic images from the time of the Nazi regime. Are they similar to the images in this comic strip?
* How do you feel when you see these anti-Semitic drawings?
* Have you ever seen anti-Semitic propaganda in your surroundings?
* What can be done about this?

**NLI Links**

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

[Histoire d’un Innocent — The Story of an Innocent, 1898](https://bit.ly/2R8BpYM)  
[Alfred Dreyfus’ Degradation Ceremony, January 13, 1895](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG003560255&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)