

The Joseph and Belle Braun Anshe Emet Religious School

First Grade History



We don't just teach Hebrew; we nurture a growing Jewish soul.

History: Lesson 1 - How Did Jews Get to America? (Ashkenazim)

Coach's Voice:

Our goals for addressing how Jews came to America with first graders is to help them understand that Jews have been in this country since its beginning and that Jews in America are very diverse, with varying backgrounds, appearances, traditions and stories. Most importantly, exploring how Jews came to America lays the foundation for students to explore their own stories, how THEIR families came to America, whether 200 years ago or 2. Here is a good article for you to read for your own understanding:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-immigration-to-america-three-waves/>



- Read the book *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest*
- Wonder with the students: What might Jessie have felt when the rabbi chose her to come to America?
 - On the boat?
 - During the first few months in Cousin Kay's house?
 - Does it require bravery to do what Jessie did?
- How did she travel here?
- Why did she come?
 - Why do the people in her village call America "the promised land"?
- The book doesn't tell us, but it's likely Jessie's story happens between 1880 and 1920, about 100 years ago
 - Are there students in the class whose families came to America around the same time as Jessie?
 - This is a great conversation to spark between parents and their children
- Look at a world map, and trace Jessie's journey
 - The book tells us only that Jessie is from a "poor village far from here" so you can place that anywhere in Eastern Europe (Russia, Austria-Hungary, or Romania)

Suggested Activity:

- Jessie crosses the sea, but it is very important to her to pass along tradition, like her mother's wedding ring
- Bring several Ping-Pong balls to class
 - Imagine with your students that the balls are really miniature storage units for their most important traditions
 - What traditions and values would they store inside?
- Play relay races and pass the "traditions" on spoons or by hand

(Adapted from

https://pilibrary.org/HGF_ResourceCenter/media/LiveResourceLib/My-Grandfathers-Coat-Resource-Guide.pdf)

Supply Needs:

- Globe/map(s) of the world
- Story books
- Ping-Pong balls
- Spoons

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand that Jewish people have lived in America since it began in colonial times

History: Lesson 2 - How Did Jews Get to America? (Sephardim)

Coach's Voice:

Our goals for addressing how Jews came to America with first graders is to help them understand that Jews have been in this country since its beginning and that Jews in America are very diverse, with varying backgrounds, appearances, traditions, and stories. Most importantly, exploring how Jews came to America lays the foundation for students to explore their own stories, how THEIR families came to America, whether 200 years ago or 2. Here are some good articles for you to read for your own understanding:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-immigration-to-america-three-waves/>

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/judaism.htm>

<https://jewishmuseumtulsa.org/collections/oklahoma-jewish-experience/american-jewish-immigration/>



The Journey

- On the world map where you traced Jessie's journey from somewhere in Eastern Europe in the previous history lesson on how Ashkenazi Jews came to America, trace the path of the first Sephardic Jews to come to America:
 - Spain - Expelled during the Inquisition 1492
 - The Netherlands - Some Jews in the sixteenth century sought refuge in the young Calvinist republic of The Netherlands
 - Brazil - A century later, hundreds of their descendants crossed the ocean to settle in the new Dutch colony of Recife in Brazil, where Jewish communal life became possible for the first time in the New World
 - New Amsterdam (Lower Manhattan, NY) - When Portugal recaptured the colony of Recife in 1654, its Jews scattered
 - A boatload of about twenty-three Jews sailed into the remote Dutch port of New Amsterdam and requested to stay.
- Explore with students:
- Why did these first Jews come to America?
- Consider:
 - In colonial times, Jews settled along the Atlantic coast and in several southern states
 - During the 17th century, Rhode Island was the only New England colony which allowed a permanent Jewish community
 - That settlement was in Newport, where the Touro Synagogue, built in 1773, still stands as a memorial to the patriot and philanthropist Judah Touro
- Other early Spanish-Portuguese Jewish communities were established in Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia
- What language did these first Jews speak?

- Read the book *Buen Shabat, Shabbat Shalom* by Sarah Aroeste*
 - This is a board book, so it's young for first graders, but it is still useful for how it weaves Ladino vocabulary throughout
 - Ladino is a combination of Spanish and Hebrew (similar to how Yiddish is a blend of German and Hebrew)
- Sing a song in Ladino, such as Ocho Kandelikas:
 - Lyrics: <http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=ochokandelikas>
 - Video of Flory Jagoda performing the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfHPK6CEN1k>

Supply Needs:

- Story books

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand that Jewish people have lived in America since it began in colonial times

History: Lesson 3 - Where Did American Jews Come From?

Coach's Voice:

Our goals for addressing how Jews came to America with first graders is to help them understand that Jews have been in this country since its beginning and that Jews in America are very diverse, with varying backgrounds, appearances, traditions and stories. Most importantly, exploring how Jews came to America lays the foundation for students to explore their own stories, how THEIR families came to America, whether 200 years ago or 2. In this lesson, we focus on the incredible diversity of the American Jewish community. Here is a good article for you to read for your own understanding:

<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/>



- Read *We Are Jewish Faces* by Debra. B. Darvick.

Coach's Voice:

This book is written for much younger children; it is included here to spark a conversation about the diversity of the American Jewish community.



- Wonder with the students:
 - Have you seen Jewish people in your synagogue, at Jewish events, on TV, etc., that look like the different people in this book?
 - Based on the people you know of, and the people pictured in this book, where do Jews in America come from? (Every answer the students give is correct. Jews come from everywhere.)
 - Is being born into a Jewish family the only way to be Jewish? (No. See question below)
 - How might someone become Jewish? (Hopefully students will offer these options, if not, add them to the conversation: adoption, conversion/choosing to be Jewish. They might have other interesting thoughts, too).
 - Can there be a Jewish family where not every member of the family is Jewish? (Yes!)
 - Make sure this conversation validates all ways of being Jewish as equally esteemed
- We've talked previously about how some Jewish families came to America long ago - remember that story about the Statue of Liberty?
 - But some Jewish families didn't come from Europe or Spain long ago; they came to America recently or even became Jewish recently
- This story about a baby adopted from Vietnam shows us that some of us were not born Jewish; we became Jewish on our way to America, or even in America:

- *Rebecca's Journey Home* by Brynn Olenberg Sugarman

Suggested Activity:

Creating a Scene

- In the Torah, God says to Abraham, "Look to the heavens and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be" (Genesis 14:5).
- None of us know what Abraham's face looked like, but according to Jewish tradition, every Jew is part of his family, whether by birth or by choice
 - Converts to Judaism are all considered children of Abraham and his wife Sarah, patriarch and matriarch of the Jewish people

(From the PJ Library reading guide for We are Jewish Faces

<https://pjlibrary.org/getmedia/cf974c47-1112-497d-9d47-f91f69c7e8f4/We-Are-Jewish-Faces-Reading-Guide.pdf>)

- Using magazine pictures, invite students to make a collage of a big Jewish event (all together on large paper or individual ones)
- The students can determine (or make up) the event or celebration, and use magazine pictures, Jewish store catalogs or their own drawings to make the event identifiably Jewish
- Encourage students to include at the event the diversity of Jews in America

Supply Needs:

- Story books
- Magazines
- Glue

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Feel part of a wide, diverse Jewish family

History: Lesson 4 - Where Did MY Family Come From?

Coach's Voice:

Every student has a story. Some stories are easy to collect and easy to share. Other stories need to be handled with more care. Students who are adopted may have a more complex experience answering the question “Where did my family come from?” Students whose parents are divorced or under unusual strain may have more difficulty securing parents’ participation in this project. Know your students. Consider the potential challenges and landmines as you shape this lesson, and adapt accordingly.



Collect stories

- In advance of this lesson, send a questionnaire to families regarding the story of how their family came to this country
- Consider including questions such as:
 - From what country does your family originate?
 - Who in your family came to this country?
 - How did they travel?
 - Why did they come?
 - What special things or traditions did they bring?
- Read *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco*
- The author tells us where her ancestor came from but doesn't tell us how she came to America
 - Can the students figure it out from what they've learned?
- What are some traditions that are handed down through the generations in the story?
 - How are they handed down?
- What are some traditions that have been passed down in the students' families?
- Mark your city on a world map
- Mark the cities or countries students' families came from.
- Compare how far students' families have traveled
- Is there a place in the world when several families originate from?
- Discuss with your students:
 - If they were moving to a new, faraway place, what would they pack?
 - If you have students who have moved to your city from a faraway place, or even not such a faraway place, invite them to share their story, as much as they are comfortable
 - What did they pack?
 - What was exciting about the move?
 - What was scary?

Gratitude

- Encourage students to illustrate and/or write a letter of gratitude to their ancestor who came to this country
- The letter might be to a known relative, such as Great-great Grandma Bess or Mom and Dad, or an unknown relative, if the story is not known or if it's complicated
- What are the blessings that come from living in your country or city that the student is grateful for?
- The student might also consider what challenges and risks the ancestor faced in order to come to this country, and express thanks or praise

Supply Needs:

- Story books
- Drawing supplies
- World map

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand that Jewish families in America have different skin colors, speak different languages, have different customs, and are all part of the same Jewish family

History: Lesson 5 - Coming to America - Celebration of our Stories

Coach's Voice:

In the previous lesson, students considered what it was like for their ancestors who came to this country, and wrote letters acknowledging and expressing their gratitude. Now it is time to celebrate those journeys and stories that have led to the creation of this community in this class.



- Invite family members to join the class to celebrate their coming to America stories
- Consider:
 - Asking parents or grandparents who made the journey themselves to tell the students about their journey, or why they chose to come to America
 - Inviting family members to bring pictures of people or places in the place they came from
 - Asking family members to share a tradition or ritual object that has traveled with the family through locations and/or generations
 - Inviting students to teach their families about the diversity in the class by explaining the map illustrating where all the families came from.
 - Inviting students to read their letters of gratitude to their ancestors for all the families

Suggested Activity:

Create a class community mural

- On a long expanse of butcher block paper, invite students and their families to draw the story of their coming to America, and their being in America, and this class community
- Drawings might include:
 - Symbols of where they've come from
 - Modes of transportation to get to America
 - Traditions that have traveled with them
 - Relationships that exist in the class because all these families have come to America
- End with the Shehecheyanu blessing, to give gratitude for all the people who braved changing their lives so that these students and families could come together in this class

Supply Needs:

- Writing and drawing supplies
- Butcher block paper

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Feel pride as they share their family's story of coming to America