



Family Stories

A Weitzman National Museum of American
Jewish History Activity Guide

for children 6–11, with complementary activities for preschoolers



Welcome

This Museum tells the stories of American Jewish families of all sizes and shapes. How did they come to America? When they got here, where did they live and what did they do?

Every family has a special story. This guide will help you explore your family stories and learn the stories of others, too.

So, what's your story? Let's find out!

This Hebrew alphabet board was made in the 1930s and was used to teach children to read. Passing this knowledge to their children was—and remains—something very important to Jewish parents. Words taught here include ocean, fish, book, table, letter, mountain, garden, and house.



Hebrew alphabet learning board. Dedicated in honor of Suzanne and Norman Cohn by Elayne and Philip Banks.

Note to parents: Most content in this guide can be used with children six and older. We've also provided adapted activities, noted in blue text, for three- to five-year-olds.

Answers to back page: 1. Hanukkah lamp, Lodz, Poland, Silver, ca. 1850. Photo by Will Brown. 2. Yiddish typewriter of Nathan Fleisher, manager of Philadelphia's *Jewish World* newspaper, ca. 1920. Photo by Karl Seifert. 3. Seltzer bottle, United States. Glass and metal, ca. 1910 to 1950. Peter H. Schweitzer Collection of Jewish Americana. Photo by Jeffrey E. Holder.

THE STORY *of* ME

How do you begin to learn about your family's stories?

Start with yourself! No matter how old you are, you already have a history. You have stories to tell and facts to discover. So begin your family history search—and learn more about your ancestors—by filling in this personal history sheet.

Your name_____

Today's date_____

I was born on (*day, month, year*)_____

in (*name of city, county, country*)_____

I was named after_____

I now live at this address_____

Here are the names of the people I live with_____

Here is one interesting fact about my family_____

One thing I'd like to know about my family history is_____

For younger children: Tell your children about the day they became part of your family—where did you live, when did they arrive? Tell stories about that day. Use the questions above to guide your conversation.

Family PORTRAITS

LOOK carefully at these family pictures.

What can you learn about the families from looking at them? Where are they? How are they dressed? What do you notice about how they are posed? Which family are you most interested in? Why?



For younger children:
Ask, "Where are the children?"
Can you find a man with a beard? What do you notice about these families?"

Now draw a picture of your family. Consider this before you draw: Which people will you show in your picture? Where will they be? What will everyone be wearing? What are some interesting things about your family you might show in the picture?



My family by _____
(Put me on your fridge!!)

For younger children: Invite preschoolers to write their names above, then to draw a family picture in the space. Ask them to tell you about their picture after they draw it.

Be an ANCESTOR Detector!

Want to find out about your family? Talk to your relatives—parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and others. They offer you a wonderful way to learn about your family's history. You may hear surprising stories from long ago. Use these questions to get started.

You can find a fill-in-the-blanks version of this set of questions [here](#).

Tell me about yourself

- Where were you born?
- Were you named after someone? If so, whom?
- Do you know why you were named after him or her?
- What were your parents' full names? Do you know their parents' full names?

Tell me about your childhood

- Where did you live?
- What did your home look like, and who lived in it with you?
- What was your neighborhood (or village) like?
- What did you do for fun when you were growing up?
- What is one of your favorite stories from your childhood?

For younger children

CIRCLE YOUR FAMILY WORDS

Find the words that describe people in your family. Circle those words—and tell why you picked them. You can also add a word of your own on the lined space.

Mom Dad Funny Strong Silly Busy Big

Small Medium Traveling Brother Sister _____

FAMILY TREASURES

Word Hunt

In this word hunt, you have to find the names of items that hold clues to your family's story. We call them "family treasures," and we've hidden nine words that describe those special things. Can you find the words? Below is the list of what's hiding in the word box. Find those words. **Later, ask your family to help you find some of these family treasures in your home!**

Antiques

Bible

Books

Candlesticks

Clothing

Letters

Passport

Photos

Recipes

E	L	S	O	R	P	H	O	T	O	S	B
E	L	K	Q	S	S	T	O	I	N	A	R
T	E	O	A	R	I	C	O	O	C	O	E
T	E	O	P	L	E	T	T	E	R	S	C
O	P	B	C	L	O	T	H	I	N	G	I
E	E	A	A	R	I	T	U	O	N	C	P
A	N	T	I	Q	U	E	S	T	N	S	E
E	E	A	P	A	S	S	P	O	R	T	S
C	A	N	D	L	E	S	T	I	C	K	S
Q	T	S	B	I	B	L	E	T	N	B	L

PICK A WORD! _____

Invite younger children to pick a word from those above. Then discuss the word and ask your children to write it on the line above. You might also invite the child to draw a picture of it (candlestick, book, clothing, letters, etc.) on a separate sheet of paper.

Family Mysteries...

TAKE A GOOD LOOK at these three pictures. They are items owned by American Jewish families in the early part of the 20th century. What are they? How were they used? Look carefully. **Stumped?** If you come to the National Museum of American Jewish History, you will find these items and others like them.

And if you can't wait to come to the Museum, you can find the answers on the bottom of page two.



Now think about this: If your family was moving far away and you could only take a few items with you, what would you take? Then tell a story explaining why would you choose those items.

Ask younger children "Do you know what these are?" Then give one, two, or three clues about what each one is.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM: Located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History brings to life the more than 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience.

To learn more about the Museum and to help us create more interactive items for children and families, visit us in Philadelphia or on the web at www.TheWeitzman.org, or make a contribution in any amount.

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TheWeitzman.org | 215.923.3811
On Historic Independence Mall | Philadelphia

 WEITZMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY
A Smithsonian Institution Affiliate

Cover images: Top: Lehrbaum family, Luna Park, New York City, ca. 1935. Gift of Bernice Lehrbaum Frank.
Bottom right: Morry, Isabel, and Steve Helzner. Bottom left: Photo by Matthew Christopher.