



JEWISH LIVES IN AMERICA

# Lesson Descriptions

**Jewish Peoplehood:** This lesson focuses on helping students understand the concept of Jewish peoplehood, focusing on the notion of “mishpacha” or family connected by central texts, an ancestral homeland, and history. Students will receive an introduction to the Jewish people while also reflecting upon the communities that provide them with a sense of membership and belonging.

## Essential Questions

- ▶ What does it mean to be a member of a community?
- ▶ Who are the Jewish people?

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to develop an understanding of the Jewish people by discussing multiple voices and perspectives.
- ▶ Students will be able to describe the features of a community to which they belong, using a mosaic as a metaphor.

## Enduring Understandings

- ▶ Communal identities are complex and multifaceted, offering membership and belonging while allowing for internal variation.
- ▶ The Jewish people are a joinable extended family, connected by a shared history, ancestral homeland, and central texts yet remarkably diverse.

## Lesson Activities

### Raising Questions and Sparking Curiosity

Students will complete sentence stems to describe their own identities and communities before generating questions about what they'd like to learn about Jewish people.

### Small Group Discussion

Students will watch a short video featuring Michael Twitty and discuss the concept of “mishpacha” before reading a statement by Dara Horn and discussing her definition of Jewish people.

### Teacher Presentation

Students will learn about the central features of Jewish beliefs, behaviors, and belonging through a short presentation.

### Defining Our Communities

Students will independently describe beliefs, behaviors, and what provides them with a sense of belonging to their own communities.





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# Lesson Descriptions

**Diaspora:** This lesson introduces students to the concept of diaspora and the implications that the diaspora has had on Jewish experiences around the world. It will emphasize the realities of expulsion and yearning for a return to an ancestral homeland in Israel while also showcasing resilience and cultural adaptation around the world.

## Essential Questions

- ▶ What is the Jewish diaspora?
- ▶ What challenges and opportunities does living in the diaspora present?
- ▶ How have Jewish people been othered while living in the diaspora?
- ▶ How have Jewish people had to demonstrate resilience in the diaspora?

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to develop an understanding of the consequences of the diaspora for Jewish people, emphasizing their relationship to each other, non-Jewish communities, and their ancestral homeland.
- ▶ Students will be able to describe the relationship between diaspora, otherness, resilience, and cultural exchange.

## Enduring Understandings

- ▶ The Jewish diaspora is a consequence of exile from the Land of Israel and Jews have experienced multiple forced exiles in the past 2,000 years.
- ▶ In a diaspora, communities experience otherness yet also demonstrate resilience and cultural adaptation.

## Lesson Activities

### Reflecting on Home

Students will read a poem by Ruth Behar and watch a clip of a music video by Yemenite Jewish group A-WA, before discussing the themes of home and exile in both pieces of art.

### Teacher Presentation

Students will learn about the Jewish diaspora from Israel in 70 CE and subsequent exiles, with an emphasis on maps and visuals that focus on otherness and adaptation through a short presentation.

### Poetry of Diaspora

Students will interact with lines of poetry written across centuries in order to understand the tensions between yearning for a return to Israel and relationships with diasporic homelands.

### Thinking Across Diasporas

Students will examine examples of non-Jewish communities' diasporas, in order to understand their relationship with their ancestral homes and their homes in exile.





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# Lesson Descriptions

**Jewish Diversity:** This lesson introduces students to the diversity found among Jewish people. In doing so, students will explore the various shapes of cultural and other forms of variation found among Jews, brought on by geographic dispersion and the evolutions that result from responding to varied cultural influences.

## Essential Questions

- ▶ Why are collective identities complex and multifaceted?
- ▶ What does Jewish diversity look like?
- ▶ How has Jewish identity evolved?

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to describe the various ways in which all forms of collective identity are diverse and dynamic.
- ▶ Students will be able to make observations about the ways Jewish identity is diverse.
- ▶ Students will be able to articulate an understanding of Jewish diversity by assuming the role and responsibilities of a museum curator.

## Enduring Understandings

- ▶ All forms of collective identity are diverse and evolving.
- ▶ Jewish people have shared customs and rituals with distinctive forms of expression that continue to change across time and place.
- ▶ Collective identities are complex, multifaceted, and reflected in various forms of material culture, art, and cuisine.

## Lesson Activities

### Gallery Walk

Students will view a curated set of photos showcasing Jewish diversity in order to make observations.

### Teacher Presentation

Students will learn about geographic, ethnic, linguistic, and denominational diversity among Jewish people through a short presentation.

### Film Discussion

Students will watch segments of *We Belong at the Table*, a film series featuring *Jews of Color*, before participating in a discussion.

### Curating Our Diversity

Students will assume the role of museum curators, assembling a collection of photos and writing captions for them in order to showcase the diversity found in their classroom.





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# Lesson Descriptions

**Civil Discourse:** In this lesson students will examine the Jewish value of civil discourse, in particular the long-established Talmudic tradition of recording dissenting opinions, evaluating possibilities and problems of free speech in contemporary American life.



In collaboration with  
High School Law Review

## Essential Questions

- ▶ What is the value of civil discourse in society?
- ▶ Why do Jewish people value dissent?

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to understand free speech as a Jewish value.
- ▶ Students will be able to engage in an act of civil discourse by forming opinions, exchanging ideas, and embracing diverse perspectives and disagreement.

## Enduring Understandings

- ▶ Dissent and discourse are deeply held Jewish values.
- ▶ Civil discourse allows for and encourages respectful disagreement and constructive challenging of perspectives.

## Lesson Activities

### A Talmudic Value

Students will view a video of Olivia Gross, founder of High School Law Review, discussing her appreciation for constitutional law and its connection to studying Talmud before seeing an example of the Talmud and the way it records dissenting opinions.

### Understanding Talmud

Students will be provided with an introduction to the Talmud, examining a color coded page in order to understand its structure and the way dissenting commentaries are preserved.

### Close Reading and Silent Conversation

Students will read a short text and engage in a silent conversation wherein they write their opinions, in response to the reading, and respond to each other's opinions, creating a visual that resembles a page of Talmud albeit around a contemporary issue in their own lives.





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# Lesson Descriptions

**Skokie and Hate Speech:** In this lesson, students will examine the tensions in establishing free speech as a democratic principle, particularly when this right may create space for hate speech. By studying the 1977 Supreme Court case, *National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie*, students will explore and discuss ways to constructively address hate speech while maintaining the value of free speech.



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## Essential Questions

- ▶ Why is it important to protect speech we don't agree with? Are there limits to this idea?
- ▶ What is the tension between hate speech and free speech?

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to explore the tension between free speech and hate speech by examining the facts and decision of the Supreme Court case, *National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie*.
- ▶ Students will be able to engage in critical deliberation about the implications of free speech and hate speech in contemporary society.

## Enduring Understandings

- ▶ Dissent is a necessary facet of life in a democratic society.
- ▶ Hate speech tests the boundaries of free speech and demands a commitment to the value of civil discourse.

## Lesson Activities

### Framing the Case

Students will learn about dissent and its role in democratic society in order to prepare to contemplate a Supreme Court case that tested the limits of protected speech in the United States.

### Facts of the Case

Students will learn about the National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie Supreme Court case through a short presentation.

### Discussing the Outcome

Students will discuss the ruling in the Skokie case, discussing their own opinions, how they would have ruled, and their understanding of the outcome of the case.

### Reflecting on Hate Speech

Students will engage in a discussion of the ways they've seen hate speech in their own lives while appraising different approaches to maintaining civil discourse under such circumstances.

