



DESCRIPTION

Jewish culture is expressed throughout the world today with great diversity and multiple languages. There are thriving religious and secular Jewish communities all around us yet some people carry misperceptions and stereotypes about Jewish culture and Jewish individuals that continually regard them as outsiders. These misunderstandings can lead to hurtful situations even when not intended.

*“A word is like an arrow - both are in a hurry to strike...
A vort iz azoi vi a feil – baideh hoben groisseh eil.”
– a Yiddish proverb*

This lesson plan uses a series of short stories collected under the title, “Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American’s Story” from Susan Stone, a professional storyteller who is Jewish. Stone addresses the role of the Storyteller and the responsibility that comes with representing a culture that is perceived as “different”. Rather than a single thread of a story, she offers us a combination of traditional folktales that have been passed down through the oral tradition as well as some contemporary stories drawn from her own life. Through the stories Stone explores the many roles each of us can play when it comes to name calling and gossip.

*“...your words are like feathers in the wind. Once they’re gone you can’t get them back and you don’t know where they’ve gone to.”
- Excerpt from “Feathers in the Wind”*

The stories in “Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American’s Story” invite people of all religious and cultural backgrounds to reflect on their own lives to explore the impact of hurtful words. This lesson plan provides some ways to engage diverse students with traditional and contemporary stories, to invite personal reflection, peer discussion and the development of collective strategies for making a difference. Together, the exercises are designed to create a culture of empathy and compassion for the differences and similarities among us.



PURPOSE

- To examine some of the unique qualities of contemporary Jewish culture
- To practice personal storytelling and listening skills
- To examine the ways that traditional and contemporary stories can work together to address larger themes and illuminate our lives
- To collectively address ways to create a more inclusive community

OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, each student will:

- Have increased awareness of the depth of contemporary Jewish culture
- Understand the importance of personal critique
- Understand how words can be used to discriminate
- Respond to the issues and themes in the stories
- Relate their own experience to the stories

MATERIALS

- Teacher Instructions
- Lesson Extension Ideas
- Handout #1 Transcript from “Feathers in the Wind”
- Handout #2 Story Chart for tracking while you listen
- Handout #3 Discussion Questions
- Handout #4 Glossary of Terms

LESSON PLAN

The audio file of this story takes about 22 minutes from start to finish. You may decide to listen to the story in its entirety and then select an approach to discussion based on the plan below. You may also decide to listen to the story over the course of two sessions. This lesson plan is designed to be flexible around your time availability and number of students. The story text and audio files are available in formats for either one or two sessions.

SESSION ONE

Distribute Story Chart and Glossary

Introduction and Summary of “Feathers in the Wind” (10 minutes)

Free writing – What power do words have in your life? (5 minutes)

Excerpt #1 and Pair Share (25 minutes) [The end of Excerpt #1 is clearly noted in the recording.]

Session Wrap up (15 minutes)

SESSION TWO

Review and Introduction to Excerpt #2 (5 minutes)

Excerpt #2 and small group discussion (20 minutes)

[The beginning and end of Excerpt #2 are clearly noted in the recording.]

Small Group Reports (10 minutes)

Session Wrap Up (10 minutes)





SESSION ONE: TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Distribute Story Chart and Glossary

Place students in pairs and have everyone get out a clean sheet of paper and pen to begin. Students will do some individual writing before listening to the story excerpt and then engage in partner discussion right after the story excerpt. You'll save time and maintain focus by getting students set up for this at the beginning of the session.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY:

"Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American's Story" (10 minutes)

The script below is intended as a suggestion of some things you may want to say. Personalize these ideas to make them appropriate for your group. Later in the lesson plan there are a few notes of introduction on Jewish culture that you may want to integrate here. This is also a good time to let students know that they'll be writing and discussing in response to the story themes.

Today we're going to begin listening to [and/or reading] excerpts from "Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American's Story" by Susan Stone. Susan Stone is a professional storyteller who is Jewish-American. In this story, Stone tells several stories from different time periods and from different parts of the globe. She tells us some traditional folktales and some stories from her own experiences of growing up Jewish. Through these stories she reveals how words can be used in harmful ways. You'll notice in her personal stories, that sometimes Stone is the target and at other times she is the source of the harmful words. I'm sure we can all relate to being on both sides.

At the beginning, Stone talks about the great responsibility and the burden of representing a race or ethnic or religious group. She cannot tell us what it means to be Jewish for all Jewish people, but she can tell us a bit about what it is for her. Can any of you relate to that? Maybe you've been asked to speak for others or been told that your actions represent all African Americans, all White Americans, all girls, all boys, or even all teenagers. So you already know that each of us can only speak from our own experience. Susan Stone will speak from her experience of being Jewish, not everyone's.

Inside Susan Stone's story, you will hear many stories. Stone begins with a story set a long time ago in Poland. It is about the richest man in town who many thought was a miser. This traditional folktale reminds Stone of a memory from her own life that reveals how each of us can be harmed or can create harm when we carelessly toss words around. Stone tells us two stories of when she was a student teacher and found herself both the target and the source of stereotyping.



In the second half of the story, Stone offers us two more stories from her own life about being one of the few Jewish students in a mostly Christian school. One event happened to her, another happened to her daughter and together these stories teach us about staying silent or speaking up in defense of our own culture. Finally Stone tells us one more traditional folktale that takes us back in time to a different Jewish village, this time in Russia, to learn about the dangers of gossip in a story about a Peddler named *Pinchas*.

Stone uses traditional folktales to give us new perspective on our contemporary lives. Through this collection of stories, Stone builds on the themes of judgment, assumptions, inside/outsider status of various cultures, and the "tragedy of using words to hurt". Her stories invite us to look at our own lives to see how ignorance may have shaped our behavior. By moving through different time periods and perspectives, Stone shows us how everyone plays a part in passing or not passing gossip, in saying things we wish could take back, or in getting hurt by offhand comments. As we listen to these stories, let's consider how these moments, however small, can have a deep impact on our lives. As you listen, notice where you see your own life reflected in these stories. You can use the story chart to record observations and questions as you listen because we will discuss in pairs and small groups throughout this lesson.

FREE WRITING (5 minutes)

The theme for this free write is to reflect on the power of words in your life. Have you ever been hurt by painful words? What happened? You have four minutes to write. Go.

This individual free writing section is a chance for students to ready their minds for listening. They'll work individually on their own with pen and paper. The idea of a free write is that you write constantly for the time allowed, without much worry about punctuation or grammar. The writing will not be collected, it is for the students' own process. This is meant to be like a journal exercise. If students get stuck, encourage them to write, "I don't know what to write..." until something comes to them.

EXCERPT #1 AND PAIR SHARE (20 minutes)

Encourage students to take notes on the story chart as much as that is helpful.

[This excerpt goes from the start of the story until – "I can blend into crowds and no one would know I am Jewish if I didn't tell them."]

Students should take a moment with the discussion questions and identify what they find most interesting. After a moment of self-reflection, students should turn to their partner to share their thoughts on the story in response to the question. Partners should take turns sharing with each other so that each person gets to talk and listen. Depending on your available time, let them know approximately how much they have before you'll ask them to switch.

SESSION WRAP UP (15 minutes)

Ask partners to share some of their partner conversation with the whole class. Take note of common themes and particular areas of interest. You can return to these tomorrow to introduce the second section.





SESSION TWO

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO EXCERPT #2 (5 minutes)

Take a few moments to remind the class of the story and discussion yesterday. It may be useful to revisit any debates or particularly good questions from the day as you get the class focused and ready to listen. This second excerpt has a similar pattern in that it includes both contemporary and traditional stories. However, the contemporary stories are more focused on activity in the classroom and the traditional folktale speaks specifically of gossip.

This session is designed for small group discussion, but if it makes more sense for your class to do partner discussion again, that will work. However you'd like to arrange the discussion, do so now to save time and maintain focus after you listen to the story excerpt.

EXCERPT #2 AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

There are two lines of discussion suggested for this story excerpt. You could assign each pair or group a topic for discussion or you could let them choose. If you let them choose, be sure to give them a set amount of time to choose and begin discussion.

SMALL GROUP REPORTS (10 minutes)

Ask each group or pair to 'report out' on some of their conclusions, debates, and big ideas.

SESSION WRAP UP (10 minutes)

You can use this time to gather main ideas from the two days. You could collect these on the board so everyone can see them. You could list these for reference later. You could also keep this very informal.

What were the surprising aspects of the story?

What was the most challenging?

Are there lessons, images, stories, or questions that were particularly strong for them?

BRIEF NOTES ON JEWISH CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The word 'Jewish' refers both to a religion and a cultural heritage and encompasses people from all over the globe who live in a variety of ways. Jews were originally called Hebrews, or Israelites. Judaism, the study of the Jewish religion, was the first religion to hold as its central dogma the idea of monotheism: the belief that there is only one God. Judaism as a religion has developed over thousands of years, but has always emphasized the



oneness of God, the observance of commandments, the study of Torah, and the importance of community and family.

In North America today, the four main branches of Judaism are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist. Within these denominations themselves, however, there is a great degree of variation in practice and observance. All branches of Jewish religion believe that the work we do on earth to combat injustice, inequality and suffering get us closer to the kingdom of God. However there are many Jews who are not religious yet embrace their Jewish heritage – the history, culture, values and sense of community with Jews everywhere around the world.

The origins of Jewish culture date back about four thousand years and include people from all over the world. The history of the Jews includes some really joyful events as well as great tragedies.

LANGUAGE

Susan Stone tells her folktale to give us a feeling for *Yiddishkeit*, Jewish culture. In Europe, Jews developed *Yiddish*, which was the common everyday language of the people. It is mostly a mix of German and Hebrew used by Jews who preferred to use Hebrew for praying and studying the Torah. Its influence is apparent today in such words and expressions as, "Oy vey!" or "What a schlep!" In the story, Susan Stone introduces us to a few more *Yiddish* phrases.

The two major languages that are associated with Jews are Hebrew and *Yiddish*, though many *Sephardic* Jews (European Jews) speak Ladino and Aramaic was once the language of choice for Ancient Jews.

LESSON EXTENSION IDEAS

1. **Have your students investigate various aspects of *Yiddishkeit*, Jewish culture.** What do they already know of about Jewish Culture and how do they know it? You could select a holiday, a prominent historical figure, a saying, and have students do independent research that they present to the class in a paper or oral presentation.
2. **Create a map of local Jewish Culture.** Have students investigate active Jewish Culture in their neighborhood or city. How many synagogues in the area? Is there a *Yeshiva*, a Jewish school, nearby? You could transform a local map by designating Jewish landmarks or centers of activity to get a sense of the presence of Jewish life around you. What would this mean nationally, globally?
3. **Hold a Story Circle in your classroom.** A Story Circle works very simply and gives everyone a chance to share some of their life experience with the group. You can structure the Circle with a few guidelines to put people at ease. Your guidelines could include gathering chairs into a circle so that everyone can be seen, passing around an object or "talking stick" to designate the speaker, and evenly dividing the time so everyone gets a turn. Selecting a timekeeper works well for Story Circles. You could also give people the chance to pass and come back if they are stumped about what to say.

Some possible themes or questions are listed here, but make up your own based on the culture and comfort-level of your group.



Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American's Story

Tell a Story about a time when you felt like you were put under the spotlight or called out because of your ethnicity or religion? How did you handle it?

Have you ever been expected to represent your race or religion? What happened? How did it feel?

What is the heritage, culture or religious group that you think most defines you? What are some of the practices or traditions that have shaped your life experiences?

For more information on using Storytelling with your group, including Story Circles, please reference "Storytelling: A Toolkit For Bridging Differences And Creating Community" Resource available through the Race Bridges website at <http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/storytelling.html>

Investigate traditional folktales and their relevance today. Ask students to locate a folktale from their heritage that reminds them of their own life. Perhaps they grew up hearing a story, or maybe they need to research in some books. Remind them that all families have a heritage story -- good and bad episodes, traditions, journeys, and experiences. Using Susan Stone's performance style as a model, ask students to tell the traditional tale to the class along with a short related story from their own life.

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Handout #1: TRANSCRIPT

Part One – This audio file is 12 minutes and 18 seconds long.

“Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American’s Story” by Susan Stone

As a storyteller I tell stories—folktales, fairy tales, legends—from many cultures. But I especially like telling stories from my own ancestral, religious and cultural background—Jewish tales.

If you have ever heard any of your relatives tell you about a time from their past then you have heard a storyteller —(a southern guy) “I had an old red, beat-up Chevy when I was your age....” “That little mouse brings to mind the time we hid out in the attic....” (an old lady) “This old pot reminds me of my grandma. Once, when she was making goulash....” (a man) “When I was your age I used to go door to door for Halloween and on one occasion...” Well, you get the idea... I happen to be a professional storyteller, and get paid, usually, for entertaining people.

Once, for instance, I was asked to tell a Jewish story on radio and I realized that people all over the Midwest would hear my story. But I couldn’t think of one from my own life to tell. I started thinking that many of those people never even met a Jewish person. It occurred to me that I was responsible, all of a sudden, for representing Jews.

If I told a stupid tale, people might think Jews were stupid. If I told a noodlehead story maybe some people (noodleheads themselves probably) would think all Jews were fools. If my tale was mean spirited, that is how Jews might be seen. I thought, can the listeners really believe that all the people in any group are like the ONE person they heard? Does ONE person really represent the whole group? (For instance, if one teenager is a shoplifter does it mean that ALL teens are like that?)

I took the responsibility very seriously, and chose my tale carefully. I decided I better tell a traditional tale, passed down through generations, a tale that has a positive message and value. One of our greatest values is *rachmonis*—that is Yiddish for compassion. Maybe this tale would open the hearts of listeners and also give them a feel for *Yiddishkeit*— Jewish culture.



Here is the story I told:

The Miser of Krakow

Once there was a miser in the Jewish part of Krakow in Poland. The rich miser's name was Yossele. Of all the Jews crowded into that small section of the city only Yossele had enough money to give *zedakah*, charity, but he refused to part with even a penny of his wealth.

One Monday morning, in the back of the synagogue, a man named Feivel entered. He waited until the prayers were done, made his way to the *bima*, to the pulpit, and he gave a *clap*. "Gentlemen," he said. "I've just come from Yossele's house. As many of you know he's been very sick. As a member of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, as a member of the burial society, we came to him and I thought I should tell you what occurred.

"Yossele," we said, "Give us 500 rubles. We'll make you a nice funeral and a nice burial. The rest of the money we'll give to the poor."

"I'll give you fifty rubles," Yossele croaked.

"Then we won't bury you," we said.

"Then I'll bury myself," he said. And with that, Yossele recited the *Sh'ma*, the prayer, and died. Well the man needs to be buried."

All of the men were rolling up their *tallisim*, their prayer shawls. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, a little *rachmones*, a little compassion you can have."

A man stood up in the front row. "*Rachmones*, when my wife was sick he barely gave us enough for a pill. You call that *rachmones*?"

And then from the back of the synagogue, "And what about when the *cheder* burned down, the school? He gave nothing."

"Gentleman," said Feivel, "the man still needs to be buried."

From the back of the *shul*, from the back of the synagogue came a small sneering voice, "*Feh*, let him bury himself." And with that all of the men kissed the *mezzuzah* and walked out the door.

Well, Monday passed, Tuesday and finally on Wednesday Feivel took pity on the poor man's body. He buried Yossele in a little grave right outside the Krakow cemetery. He mumbled a few prayers and thought all would be forgotten.

The next day was Thursday. On Thursday afternoon there was knock at the Rabbi's door, Rabbi Kalman. It was a poor Jewish woman. She was crying. "Rabbi, please, you've got to help me. There's a thief in this town."



Come in, said the Rabbi. Please tell me what's the matter? "Every Thursday morning since my beloved Jacob died, *halev hashalom*, may he rest in peace, every Thursday morning I received five rubles under my water bucket. But this morning, Rabbi, there was none. How am I going to make *Shabbos*, to make a nice Sabbath for myself and my family?"

The Rabbi promised to look into the matter. He gave the woman five rubles. And no sooner had she left than a man came to the door.

"Rabbi, could you give me a little money for *Shabbos*?"

"Well, certainly," said the Rabbi, "but, I've never seen you here before. How did you make *Shabbos* last week?"

"Well," said the man, "to tell you the truth, ever since I became lame (and he looked down at his leg), every since I became lame, I received five rubles underneath my door. But this morning, Rabbi, this morning, there was none. Every Thursday morning I received those rubles."

The Rabbi gave him some money. And no sooner had he left than someone else came and someone else and someone else and pretty soon it seemed that every poor Jew in Krakow crowded into the Rabbi's little study. They all told the same stories of the missing rubles on Thursday morning.

Finally the Rabbi quieted them down, "*Sha! Sha*. It was Yossele. It was Yossele! Yossele, you who lie in an unmarked grave, unmourned and lonely, Yossele, you who gave as God gives, secretly and acknowledged. *S'lach lanu* Yossele, forgive us." And with that the Rabbi's head dropped onto the table as if he had died or fainted, and he found himself standing in front of the gates of heaven and there was a man weeping uncontrollably.

An angel, the caretaker of the gates of heaven was patting the man on the back. And the Rabbi asked him, "Why is that man crying?" And the angel said, "He's been crying ever since he got to heaven. We don't know why. He lacks for nothing here in heaven. All he keeps saying over and over is, "If I could just have one more Thursday morning, just one more Thursday morning." And then the Rabbi awoke.

They put a little gravestone on Yossele's grave and it says, "Here Lies Yossele, the Holy Miser".

I thought that would be a great tale. After all, it is about not judging people. We never know what good people do and we shouldn't be hasty with our opinions. It is also about the tragedy of using words to hurt—whether spreading gossip or labeling others. An old Yiddish proverb says, "*A vort iz azoi vi a feil—baideh hoben groisseh eil* - A word is like an arrow...both are in a hurry to strike."

I remember well a time when words, inadvertently, hurt me and I in turn injured someone else...I guess I do have my own story to tell...When I was 21 years old and I was student teaching in a high school, I was young and felt even younger in front of all the teachers in the teachers' lounge. I walked in, took a seat at the table to eat my lunch. My hair was as long as



my skirt was short and I'm sure I didn't look like a teacher. I crunched opened my brown bag to get my lunch when Mr. Drake, the man who was my teacher mentor, walked in. He leaned over—his black suit jacket salted with white specks from his greasy hair -- and said, so all could hear, "Whacha got there? Matza ball soup?" (laughter) That was all he knew about being Jewish and he probably meant to be chummy. An uncomfortable silence in the room felt as thick as soured milk. The tiny scar where the arrow pierced is still with me.

During the same year, I also was guilty of *loshon hara* - evil tongue—meaning hurting others with a look or a word. As I said, I was a student teacher and was teaching a high school speech class. Fourteen- year old Fernando very calmly and with great confidence got up to give a speech to demonstrate.

What he demonstrated was how to make tacos. It was great! First he took out the tortillas. Then he explained how to put in all the ingredients and fold it all together. Yum. I grew hungry just listening to him and he was a great speaker. After that I called him "Taco Man". I called him that, affectionately. Really. He asked me to stop. I did. I didn't even know enough to know that this name was a stereotype. How could I? I grew up and had never even met a Latino before. I learned a lesson, and it wasn't how to make tacos!

Maybe Mr. Drake had never met a Jew before. I was as mysterious to him as Fernando was to me. Unlike other ethnic groups, and because I am not an orthodox or Chasidic Jew, I can blend into crowds and no one would know that I am Jewish if I didn't tell them.

Part Two – This audio file is 8 minutes and 58 seconds long.

There were many times that growing up Jewish wasn't so easy.

At Christmas time, when everyone around me was decorating their house, getting presents, having parties and being merry, we Jews were going about our everyday lives. Our holiday of *Chanukah* often falls during the Christmas season but it's not like Christmas at all.

Our differences sometimes feel rough and dark like burnt toast. I remember how hard it was for me to sing "Silent Night" in my 6th grade Christmas assembly. I stood there in my white anklets, saddle shoes, poodle skirt, and white starched blouse. Mrs. McMahon, with her black lacquered hair, vehemently pounded out the tunes on the piano as she encouraged us to sing, nodding her head to the beat (her hair never even moved).

Although many of my classmates were Jewish we all pretended that it was just fine to sing about a savior we didn't believe in. We didn't even know what, exactly, we were singing about but we knew it just wasn't right for us. I didn't even know what "savior" meant. "Jingle Bells"—no problem. "Frosty the Snowman"—okey dokey.

But what was a manger? What was a virgin (in those days 6th graders didn't know what that was—especially Jewish 6th graders). The "holy infant" was just another baby to us—little did we know then that he was one of our own.



Now I understand of course about many religions. I've made it my business to understand so I could see how different but also how much alike we all really are. It helps me to respect everyone's beliefs. I still can't sing "Silent Night," but I do enjoy hearing it.

I remember another time when the arrow of harsh words really hit their mark. But this time it was my daughter who suffered the wound. Do you know about the "Million Man March" created by Louis Farrakhan in 1995? Well, my daughter was in 7th grade when it was going on. She knew, from our discussions at home, that Minister Farrakhan often made incendiary remarks about Jews. Her teacher, an African American, was Jessica's favorite. But this teacher and many of the African-American students were singing the praises of Minister Farrakhan, and Jessica was starting to feel uncomfortable.

She sat in her seat listening to everyone's viewpoints. Feeling more and more uncomfortable she felt that she must speak out. Bravely she raised her hand and said, "I don't think he is a very admirable man because of what he says about Jews."

"Well," her teacher responded, "You are, of course, entitled to your opinion but I disagree." Eyes glared at the pretty little Jewish girl with the long brown hair. No one stood up for her. Imagine how very alone she felt. When she walked out of the classroom door, many of the African American students made disparaging remarks to her. "Nazi," one student taunted. "Racist," another hissed. Someone even threatened her.

"A pasch f'gate un a vort b'shtate" - A hit will go away but a word stays with you.

She came home, quietly told me what happened, and laid down on the couch as hurting as if she really had been hit. Staring at the ceiling she laid there immobile. Shortly thereafter I received a call from another parent. "Thank you", said the voice on the other end. "My daughter is in Jessica's class and felt the same way but was too intimidated to speak up. We think Jessica is a hero." It was at that moment that I realized Jessica had done what I could not so many years before—she was courageous despite the possible consequences.

"You were right to speak up if you felt that you heard someone whose views you thought were scary, anti-Semitic and hurtful," I told my daughter. "I am proud of you." The snake venom of righteous anger welled up inside of me and I was hurting as much as my daughter. What to do? What to do? What would you do? Would you call the teacher? Tell the principal and risk getting the teacher angry? Would you do nothing at all if someone you loved was in pain and felt ostracized?

It was a lesson in difference. We can cherish our differences but we must speak up if our differences are, in any way, publicly or privately denigrated. That's what I taught my children ...Stand up for what you believe in. but listen, listen, listen to other points of view. Too bad the children in that classroom hadn't learned that lesson. In case you are curious....I did talk to the teacher...but that's another story.

Nowadays I use words, as I said to entertain, enlighten and envelop my listeners. I try hard not to use them to do harm. Hmm, that reminds me of a story....



One last tale...one that is hundreds of years old and comes from a famous rabbi...I'll tell you my version...(singing *nigun*).

Once there was an old peddler in Russia named Pinchas. Every time he came into a town to peddle his wares he would also peddle ...gossip! He would hear a bit of news from one person and promise not to tell. Immediately he would say to another, "Have you heard? Have you heard about..."And then he would proceed to tell the news, always adding his own twist. "Don't tell anyone," he would add. But of course the gossip spread like wildfire.

Soon no one in the town wanted to come near him. After all, if he talked about someone else, he could talk about YOU. He couldn't sell anything.

He went to see his cousin Hannah. "Hannah, please you must help me. No one wants to buy from my cart anymore. They don't seem to want to be near me." Hannah knew why and begged, "Pinchas, please, go to your cart and bring back a feather pillow and a knife." Pinchas knew her to be a wise woman and he did as she asked.

"Now, Pinchas, cut open the pillow!" Pinchas lifted the knife and slashed the pillow and soon there was a blizzard of feathers!

"Catch those feathers!" Hannah cried. Pinchas tried. He reached and stretched and leapt like a dancer but they all (sound) blew out the window, even the one on the cat's tail. Only one little goose feather was left and it was attached to his mustache. Pinchas gingerly lifted it up between his fingers and peered at it closely.

"Pinchas," Hannah told him, "your words are like feathers in the wind. Once they're gone you can't get them back and you don't know where they've gone to. Go home. Do good." Pinchas put the feather in his pocket, thanked his dear cousin, and left.

After that, whenever he was tempted to talk about someone else, or even to say a mean word, he would stick his hand in his pocket, feel that feather, and remember that his words were like feathers in the wind. (singing *nigun*)

Nowadays, whenever I feel a nasty word come to my lips, or even the temptation to talk about others, all I have to do is reach my hand in my pocket and remember that my words are...well, you know.

Hey...I'm so glad I could share my stories with you. I could feel you listening. "Zei Gezundt". Go in good health.



Handout #2: Story Chart

Use this handout to keep track of main ideas in the stories as you listen

<p>The Miser of Krakow</p>	
<p>The Student Teacher: Matzo Ball Soup and Tacos</p>	
<p>The Student: "Silent Night" and Minister Farrakhan</p>	
<p>Pinchas, the Russian Peddler</p>	





Handout #3: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH PARTNERS

These Questions Correspond to Transcript Part One

- 1) Susan Stone uses a lot of *Yiddish* terms in her telling of “The Miser of Krakow”. How does hearing the *Yiddish* terms and phrases impact your experience of listening to the story? What new concepts about Jewish culture did you learn through her stories?
- 2) When the people in the synagogue hear that Yossele died, they react by telling stories of how selfish he always was. Did this scene remind you of any experiences in your own life? Have you ever been a part of a group like that or witnessed a scene like that when a group of people passed judgment on another person? What was it like for you to be in that kind of situation?
- 3) We discover through the story that Yossele actually did many charitable deeds in his life he just kept them secret. What does this mean for you? What is the value of keeping generous acts private? Do you find this hard or easy in your own life?
- 4) In the story about being a student teacher, Stone talks about matza ball soup and tacos to address all sorts of associations and stereotypes that are perpetuated about different cultural groups. Do you encounter stereotypes in your school or community? Why do you think they still carry power? How does Stone’s story impact how you feel about them? What stands out for you from her story?
- 5) Stone ends this section by saying, “I can blend into crowds and no one would know that I am Jewish if I didn’t tell them.” Are there parts of your identity that are hidden like this? How do you feel about that? How do you make the decision to tell or not tell?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS IN SMALL GROUPS OR WITH PARTNERS

These Questions Correspond to Transcript Part Two

1) CONFUSION IN THE CLASSROOM

Stone describes the confusion she felt as a student who was expected to sing “Silent Night” even though she couldn’t relate to the song’s religious message. At the time she chose to sit quietly with her discomfort. She also tells us the story of her daughter’s discomfort when her class is talking about Minister Farrakhan. The daughter chose to speak up, even though she was one person against many.

What do you think about staying quiet or standing up in these situations? What is the cost of silence? What is the cost of speaking out? What is better in your opinion? What do you do?

What could the other students in the daughter’s class have done to change the outcome? What could the teacher have done? What would you do?

2) FEATHERS IN THE WIND

In the story about Pinchas, the Russian Peddler, Susan Stone gives us this image of gossip as “feathers in the wind”.

What does that mean to you?

Have you ever tried to get something back that you said?

How does gossip affect your school community?

Imagine this village as your school or your group of friends. What could the others (the villagers) have done to change to situation before they completely alienated Pinchas? How will Pinchas get integrated back into the community? Are there things he must do?





Handout #4: Glossary of Terms from “The Miser Of Krakow”

Cheder – The elementary school for Jewish boys in Eastern Europe.

Chevra Kadisha - is an organization of Jewish men and women who see to it that the bodies of Jews are prepared for burial. They respect the corpse, dress it for burial, and protect it from desecration until burial.

Matza Balls - Round dumplings served in soup on Passover and year round.

Mezzuzah - A parchment scroll inscribed with two biblical passages, including the *Sh'ma*, and God's name enclosed in a decorative case. It is attached to every doorpost in Jewish homes and serves to offer divine protection as well as to show loyalty to and identity with Jewish tradition.

Minyan – The minimum number of ten adult Jews or, among the Orthodox, Jewish men required for a communal religious service.

Nigun - A melody without words.

Shabbes or Shabbos – The Sabbath.

Sh'ma – The central prayer in Judaism from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It is read every morning and evening and begins “Hear O Israel ...”

Shul – A synagogue.

Synagogue - A place of Jewish worship.

Tallisim – Plural for a prayer shawl (tallis) worn over the head or shoulders by Jewish men (and now many women) especially during morning prayers

Definitions are drawn from:

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

My Jewish Learning: www.myjewishlearning.com

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.



RESOURCES

Books

Frankel, Ellen. The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore.

Carlebach, Shlomo. Shlomo's Stories : Selected Tales.

Schram, Peninnah. Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another.

Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Literacy (Revised Edition): The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History

Organizations and Websites

The Jewish Outreach Institute has been a leader in the development of Jewish community-based outreach programming since 1988. Through their national conferences, publications and informational resources, JOI has helped foster the creation of scores of Jewish outreach programs from coast to coast. <http://www.joi.org/>

My Jewish Learning

This website provides articles and links to exploring contemporary aspects of Jewish culture including food, art, literature, music and language. <http://www.myjewishlearning.com>

United States Holocaust Museum.

This website of the Washington D.C. Holocaust museum contains special sections for students, families, teachers, children and adults. The website also features extensive areas on education, research, history and remembrance. <http://www.ushmm.org>



Yad Vashem.

This website of the Israeli museum dedicated to the Holocaust. It has many Holocaust resources, including a detailed question and answer page, a chronology of the events of the Holocaust, historical documents pertaining to the Holocaust and more. <http://www.yadvashem.org.il/>

Facing History and Ourselves. Provides conferences and free resources and lesson plans for teachers. Focuses on issues of anti-Semitism, racism, building inclusive communities, and so on. <http://www.facinghistory.org>.

