

HEROES *With* CHUTZPAH

Discussion Guide

By

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www.heroeswithchutzpah.com

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

For each hero, the following is provided:

1. Three themes that suggest how to focus the discussion.
2. A collection of discussion questions based on the material in the book.
3. Extension ideas to build upon the material in the chapter and provide a deeper dive into themes presented.

CLASSROOM & BOOK CLUB IDEAS

1. Create a semester long or yearlong class on Jewish heroes, using *Heroes with Chutzpah* as the textbook. Cover one or more heroes each class session, utilizing the materials in this guide as a base.
2. Utilize selected biographies to enhance an already established curriculum. For example, incorporate the biographies of Regina Jonas, Simon Wiesenthal, Elie Wiesel, Deborah Lipstadt and others into a Holocaust curriculum.
3. Choose biographies to help mark current events. For example, during the Olympics, incorporate the biographies of Mark Spitz, Ágnes Keleti, Aly Raisman and others into class.
4. Have each student choose one of the biographies for more extensive research. Then set up a museum of Jewish heroes for the parents and other students to visit.
5. Focus on the illustrations in the book and how they incorporate elements of the person's life. Have the students create their own portraits, either of heroes from the book or their personal heroes. The students could also create self-portraits.

WHO IS A HERO?

In *Heroes with Chutzpah*, we defined heroes rather broadly as changemakers, trailblazers and rebels. We have included people who in the last 125 have made a positive difference in the world in a variety of different fields from the arts to sports to spirituality to politics to activism. Our goal is for readers to see themselves in the people portrayed and find role models in them.

1. You might start by asking the students to compile a list of the qualities and criteria that define heroism. It is very possible, as they read through the book, not everybody will meet their definition. And this is okay and will open up a great discussion.
2. *Heroes with Chutzpah* is in no way exhaustive. We could have easily chosen a different 100 modern Jews to include. So encourage young readers to add to their book with their own additions.
3. The Jewish Women's Archives has a good opening lesson plan on heroism:
<https://jwa.org/node/22158>

In addition, here are some thoughts on what makes a hero. You might share some or all of these perspectives to promote the discussion.

1. "What makes a Jewish hero? There is obviously no single formula, but in my eyes he or she must have an unwavering faith in their own ability to create change . . . a Jewish hero is willing to challenge authorities and transcend fear in the face of injustice."
Rabbi Noa Sattath, Director of the Israeli Religious Action Center
2. "Who is the heroic one? The one who conquers one's impulse, as it says, 'slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and the ruler of his spirit than the conqueror of a city.'"
Proverbs 16:32
3. ". . . heroes are a vital part of Jewish culture. Jews, like every other people, teach the next generation about the values and actions they should pursue through its choice of heroes. Heroes are the subject of countless stories and dreams. They are our role models."

ANU, Museum of the Jewish People

4. True Heroes

- a. True Heroes Serve Others
- b. True Heroes Are Extraordinary
- c. True Heroes Take Risks And Face Potential Loss
- d. True Heroes Are Self-sacrificing
- e. True Heroes Are Courageous
- f. True Heroes Are Usually Humble

Doron Lazarus, CEO, Save a Child's Heart, Australia

5. "The hero is not the great warrior, the eccentric designer, or the conquering entrepreneur. True heroism is far less recognized, and requires much greater patience, diligence, and control. The true hero is the devoted parent, the caring child, the responsible citizen, quietly shouldering the task of decency and compassion and love.

6. We show ourselves to be heroic when we adequately appreciate God's gift of life, when we cherish our loved ones and provide for their (and our own) sustenance honestly and with dignity."

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, American Jewish University

SARAH SILVERMAN

Themes: Humor, Fitting-in, Depression

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think comedy helped Sarah Silverman fit in and find friends? Have you ever used comedy in this way?
2. When you feel not completely accepted, how do you react and how do you compensate?
3. How can being funny be heroic?
4. Sarah Silverman suffers from depression. She talks openly about it. A lot of times, people hide mental illness. Why do you think mental illness, like depression, has a stigma?
5. Sarah Silverman says that her physical appearance made her feel left out. Have you ever felt that way? What can one do to change this tendency?

Extension Activities

1. YouTube has numerous Sarah Silverman routines. Watch one as a class and discuss. (Make sure to preview since some of her topics and language aren't kid-appropriate.)
2. Use the biography as a trigger for a wider discussion of depression and mental illness. Invite a mental health specialist into the classroom to talk about the signs, causes and recourses for depression.
3. Genesis 21:6

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחֶק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל־הַשְׁמֵעַ יִצְחָק־לִי:

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

- Sarah Silverman's biblical namesake is connected to laughter. The biblical Sarah says God was the cause of her laughter. What do you think causes laughter?
- The biblical Sarah says that people will laugh along with her. Have you ever been someplace where laughter was "contagious"? Why do you think laughter leads to more laughter?

YOSSI ABRAMOWITZ

Themes: Activism, Environmentalism, Solar Power

Discussion Questions

1. Yossi went to “trainings” as a young person to be an activist. What do you think activism training would include? Is it something that you would like to learn?
2. Yossi stood up for the causes that meant a lot to him. What do you care enough about to advocate for?
3. Yossi created his own major in college. If you could study anything or create your own course of study, what would it be?
4. Yossi says, “Values are what you live by, vision is what you live towards, and leadership is just simply living your values towards your vision. So anyone can do it. Anyone can be a leader.”

Spend some time unpacking this statement. What are your values? What is your vision? How might you live your values to reach your vision?

5. Yossi was stunned that Israel did very little with solar power. It seemed like a natural opportunity that was ignored. Have you ever made a similar observation? What about? How might you go about correcting this oversight?
6. Yossi has been given the nickname “Captain Sunshine.” Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about solar power and if and how it is utilized in your community.
2. Invite a solar activist to come to class to do a training on how to be an activist.
3. Use this Sefaria sheet on Judaism and solar power for a discussion. You might choose only to utilize part of it: <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/179586?lang=bi>

ELIE WIESEL

Themes: Holocaust, Memory, Indifference

Discussion Questions

1. What makes Elie Wiesel heroic? Surviving the Holocaust or something else?
2. It took a long time for Elie Wiesel to talk about the horrors that he witnessed. Why do you think he couldn't talk about it at first? Why did he eventually decide he must?
3. Elie Wiesel loved language. How do you think language helped him heal?
4. What does Elie Wiesel mean when he says, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." Do you agree?
5. Elie Wiesel passed away in 2016. Each year, more and more Holocaust survivors sadly die. Soon, there will no longer be any Holocaust survivors left. What can we do to preserve their memories and keep the story of the Holocaust alive?

Extension Activities

1. Read and discuss an excerpt or all of *Night*.
 2. Invite a survivor to meet with the class and share their own memories. Alternatively, find an interview with Elie Wiesel or another survivor online to watch and discuss.
 3. Use this sheet from Sefaria, or parts of it, to discuss Elie Wiesel in terms of classic Jewish texts: <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/42333?lang=bi>
- Or this sheet from Sefaria to talk about Elie's vision of Judaism and Jewish thought:
<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/115072?lang=bi>

GERTRUDE “TRUDY” ELION

Themes: Gender Equity, Women in Sciences, Perseverance

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had an interest or hobby that broke gender norms?
2. Why might Trudy’s mother, who did not have a career, want Trudy to have one? What do your parents say, if anything, about your future career choice? Do you think they would like you to follow in their footsteps?
3. Trudy had a personal connection to cancer research—her grandfather’s death. How important do you think that a personal connection like this is as a motivator?
4. Trudy says that science is almost like a religion to her. What do you think that she means by this?
5. What do you think that Trudy means when she says, “science is truth and truth is beautiful?”
6. Trudy received her Nobel Prize for the procedure and process that she followed rather than a specific result. Why might procedure and process be noteworthy?

Extension Activities

1. Invite a woman who works in the sciences to speak to the class about the challenges and rewards of her chosen path.
2. Trudy held over 100 patents. Explore her discoveries, perhaps dividing them up among the class to investigate.

SALLY PRIESAND

Themes: Women's Roles in Judaism, Being a Pioneer, Being an Ally

Discussion Questions

1. Sally says that she did not set out to be a pioneer; she just wanted to be a rabbi. How did the role of being a "pioneer" impact Sally's career path?
2. How do you think Sally felt being the only woman in her class? What challenges might it have presented for her? How do you think her classmates could have made it easier on her?
3. Sally originally thought she should pursue a large congregation, but ended up working in a mid-sized synagogue. Why do you think she originally thought that a large congregation meant success? Do you agree with her?
4. Put yourself in Sally's shoes. You are perhaps the first young woman to ever apply to rabbinical school. What do you think she might have said in her application to encourage them to accept her?
5. Sally, at a time of frustration, thought about changing careers. Have you ever worked very hard for something and thought about giving it up? Did you? What impacted your decision?
6. Sally says that she held open doors for the women who came after her. What does she mean? How might she have held doors open for others?

Extension Activities

1. Explore the history of women's roles in Judaism. How have they evolved and changed? The Jewish Women's Archives has articles and other information about the ordination of women. Look through their encyclopedia and discuss.
<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rabbis-in-united-states>
2. Invite a female rabbi or cantor to visit and talk about the challenges and rewards of their profession. How did their experience compare with Sally's? Have the challenges lessened over the years?

REGINA JONAS

Themes: Holocaust, Lost History, Memory

Discussion Questions

1. If you could talk with Regina Jonas now, what would you tell her? What would you ask?
2. How do you think Sally Priesand felt when she learned that she wasn't really the first female rabbi?
3. Several prominent Jewish men and rabbis knew about Regina Jonas but did not talk about her after the war. Why do you think they chose not to talk about her? What would you say to them?
4. Regina served as a rabbi under the most difficult of circumstances—in Nazi Germany and in concentration camps. What messages might she have conveyed to the people in her congregations?
5. Regina put together an archive before being sent to concentration camps. She chose items that represented her life. What do you think she might have chosen for her archives? What items might you choose to represent your life?

Extension Activities

1. The Jewish Women's Archives has a short documentary about Regina Jonas, plus a lot of related curricular resources. Watch the documentary and use the secondary materials for your discussion.
2. Regina Jonas served as a rabbi at Theresienstadt for two years. Learn about Theresienstadt: find pictures of the synagogue there and its role as a "model" concentration camp.

DEBORAH LIPSTADT

Themes: Justice, Holocaust, Standing Up to Bullies

Discussion Questions

1. Deborah Lipstadt didn't start out envisioning a career in the public eye. It was thrust upon her. Have you ever had to take on a role or responsibility due to circumstances rather than choice? How did it feel? What did you gain from it, if anything?
2. Deborah Lipstadt has a major release movie made about her. How do you think that felt? Would you want a movie made about your life?
3. Deborah Lipstadt stood up to David Irving, a bully, in court. Have you ever stood up to a bully? How did it feel?
4. Have you ever heard somebody deny that the Holocaust happened? Did you confront them about it? What could you say?
5. Deborah Lipstadt chose to study the Holocaust as her career. Why do you think she thought that was important or interesting? Do you agree?

Extension Activities

1. Watch some or all of the movie *Denial* and discuss as a class.
2. Research Holocaust deniers. How do they operate? What are their main arguments? How can we argue against these arguments?

DAVID SAPERSTEIN

Themes: Jewish Political Involvement, Power of Spoken Word, Optimism

Discussion Questions

1. David helped to diffuse a tense situation on Cornell's campus through his words. What might he have said?
2. What powers does the spoken word have? How does the power of the spoken word and written word compare? Are you more comfortable speaking or writing your opinion?
3. David chose his career path based on what might let him make the biggest impact on the world. What do you think will impact your career path? What do you envision doing to impact the world?
4. David has boundless optimism. Why is this important? How can you maintain an optimistic outlook? Do you consider yourself to be an optimist?
5. David worked on a wide spectrum of political and social issues during his career. If you worked in Washington, DC, what issues would be the most important to you?
6. David believes each person can make a difference. What can you do?

Extension Activities

1. David spent his career talking to lawmakers about the issues that mattered to him. Learn to write a letter to a lawmaker; there are multiple sites online with advice. Then plan a letter writing campaign.
2. The Religious Action Center, which David directed for decades, maintains an in-depth resource library on a variety of social justice topics. As a class, investigate one of these topics, using the Religious Action Center's materials. Alternatively, divide several topics among the class and have each student prepare a presentation about their topic.

LYNNE LANDSBERG

Themes: Disabilities, Determination, Humor

Discussion Questions

1. Lynne chose to become a rabbi because she “loved people, Jewish texts, and social justice.” How do you think those three qualities relate to being a rabbi?
2. Lynne had a life-altering accident and recovered, in part, because of her determination. When you face a difficult situation, how do you maintain your determination?
3. Lynne maintained her sense of humor even after the accident. Why might humor be important when facing difficult tasks? When might it be the most difficult to maintain your humor?
4. Leviticus 19:14 requires that we not put a stumbling block before the blind. What does that mean? Our tradition interprets “stumbling block” broadly. What might be some other examples of “stumbling blocks” for the disabled.
5. Lynne’s sense of humor and dedication to social justice came right back after she woke up from a coma. Everybody has qualities that are deeply ingrained. For you, what are some of these qualities?

Extension Activities

1. Learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act. What does it require?
2. Do an assessment of your synagogue building. Is it accessible to everybody? What changes might improve it?

KIVIE KAPLAN

Themes: Civil Rights, Smiling, Following your Passion

Discussion Questions

1. Kivie Kaplan thought smiling was very important. Why? Do you agree? What makes you smile?
2. Kivie cut back on working in his family business to pursue his passion for social justice. How do you think his family felt? How would you feel? What do you feel passionately enough about to change your life to fit in your passion?
3. Kivie experienced antisemitism personally. Have you ever experienced antisemitism? How did you react? How do you think Kivie should have reacted?
4. To stand up for civil rights and equality, Kivie had to put himself in some dangerous situations. He was even arrested. What causes would you stand up for? Do you think you have the same courage as Kivie did?
5. Kivie met with some very famous people, like President John F. Kennedy. If you could meet somebody famous, who would it be?

Extension Activities

1. Kivie had a card made up with his personal saying—keep smiling. Design your own cards, with each student choosing the word or phrase that represents him/her/them the most.
2. Kivie was the president of the NAACP. Jews were very involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Study this involvement as a class.

BOB DYLAN

Themes: Jewish camping, changing one's name, creative expression

Discussion Questions

1. Bob Dylan got his start at Jewish summer camp. It was a place where he felt comfortable and which inspired him to be creative. Do you have such a place? Where?
2. Bob Dylan changed his name. Why do you think that he did it? Do you agree with that choice? What would you have done in that situation?
3. Bob Dylan enjoyed many different types of music. What type of music do you like the most? If you like different types, what about each type appeals to you?
4. Bob Dylan did not want to only play one type of music. Many of his fans had expectations for him, however, and thought he should only play folk music. How much do you think fans should influence celebrities? How much do you feel influenced by the people in your life? Who are your greatest influencers?
5. Bob Dylan is still creating music and performing after decades of fame. He certainly does not need to work. Why do you think he does it? What qualities does it take? Do you think you could do the same? Do you know any older adults who are similarly active?
6. Bob Dylan is a songwriter but won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Do you think songs are literature? How so?

Extension Activities

1. Learn to sing one of Bob Dylan's songs. Study its words and discuss.
2. Hold a beit café/coffee house or simply a sing-along. Have students play their instruments, sing and otherwise perform. You can even raise money for tzedakah with it!

DEBBIE FRIEDMAN

Themes: Prayer, Healing, Community Building

Discussion Questions

1. Debbie wanted prayer services to be more participatory. What is your preference at synagogue? Or at a concert? Do you prefer to sing along or sit back and listen? How are the two experiences different?
2. Debbie didn't think that her synagogue's style matched the style of her generation and peers. She thought that more participatory music would help to bridge the gap. What do you think would make synagogue life and Judaism speak to today's kids?
3. What type of music especially moves you?
4. Debbie spent many years writing and singing, despite a chronic illness. How do you think that her life circumstances might have impacted her music? *Mi Sheberach*, the prayer for healing, is one of her most popular and impactful songs. Do you think her life experiences helped her write it?
5. Not everybody liked Debbie's approach to Jewish music. Some people thought it wasn't traditional enough and strayed from historical Jewish music. Why do you think that they didn't like it? What would you say in response to their critiques?

Extension Activities

1. Invite a cantor or other musically knowledgeable person to visit and share some of Debbie Friedman's music with the class. Learn a song or two.
2. Study the words to one of Debbie Friedman's songs. Listen to its melody and compare it to the traditional words and melody of the same lyrics. What tone do you think Debbie is trying to create? Do you think it is appropriate for the prayer chosen?

LEONARD COHEN

Themes: Spiritual Exploration, Creative Commitment, Jewish Identity

Discussion Questions

1. Cohen says that he has a deep “tribal sense.” What do you think that he means? How do you feel about his choice of words?
2. Cohen spent years writing one song. What qualities do you think he had to make this possible? Have you ever been so devoted to a project?
3. Cohen incorporated the cantor from his childhood synagogue into his last song. Why do you think he did this? He had the cantor sing *Hineni*—“Here I am.” Why do you think that he chose this phrase?
4. What do you think Cohen means that other faith traditions helped to strengthen his own Jewish identity? Have you ever had somebody else’s faith, tradition or message strengthen your own identity?
5. Cohen saw writing songs as spiritual. What do you think he meant? What does spiritual mean to you? What makes you feel the most spiritual?

Extension Activities

1. Listen to several renditions of Hallelujah. You can find them on YouTube. Compare and contrast them. Which do you like the best?
2. Take a traditional prayer from the service and have the students put it to music. Alternatively, they can write their own poem and use it.

ALBERT BOURLA

Themes: Memory, Hard Work, Medicine

Discussion Questions

1. Albert's parents' experience during the Holocaust impacted him. He is what is called a "second generation Holocaust survivor." How do you think the experiences of one generation impact the next?
2. Albert's parents spoke to him a lot about the Holocaust when he was a child. Not all survivors were so open about their experiences. Which do you think was a healthier approach? Do you like to talk after bad things happen or do you prefer to keep your feelings private?
3. Albert chose to become a medical professional in part because his parents emphasized the importance of preserving life. What have your parents passed on to you? What are key lessons that they want you to learn?
4. Albert rose up through the ranks to become the CEO of Pfizer. What qualities do you think he had? How might these qualities have helped him when seeking the Covid vaccine?
5. Albert sought out scientists worldwide to help develop the vaccine. How do think this collaboration helped with the vaccine's success? What qualities does it take to collaborate successfully? Have you collaborated on a project before? What was the experience like?

Extension Activities

1. Research about the Jewish community of Greece.
2. Israel has a thriving research community devoted to new medicines. Research the scientific breakthroughs related to Israel.
3. There are many interviews with Albert Bourla available on line. Watch one and discuss. (Some may be too advanced for the students. We advise you to preview them first.)

JONAS SALK

Themes: Courage, Discrimination, Generosity

Discussion Questions

1. Jonas Salk injected his children, colleagues, and himself with the trial vaccine after he felt secure it was safe. Previously, he had only given it to people who already had polio. What do you think of this decision?
2. Jonas Salk could have made a tremendous amount of money by claiming the patent on the polio vaccine. He chose not to do so. Why? Would you have made a similar choice?
3. Jonas Salk experienced antisemitism when searching for a research position. How would you have reacted if you faced a similar situation? What does Salk's experience teach us about tolerance?
4. Salk's mentor said, "Dr. Salk is a member of the Jewish race but has, I believe, a very great capacity to get on with people." What is your reaction to his comment? If you hear somebody make a back-handed comment like this, how would you react?
5. Do you think that Salk's story impacts you differently, because you have lived through the Covid pandemic?

Extension Activities

1. After Jonas Salk tested the vaccine on people who had polio and on his family and coworkers, he ran a trial that included over one million children from the United States, Finland and Canada. Research and learn about these children and their experience.
2. Jewish tradition says a lot about medical ethics and biomedical testing. Research it as a class and hold a debate.

FRIDA KAHLO

Themes: Jewish identity, Overcoming adversity, Solidarity

Discussion Questions

1. Many people may have given up hope after having polio and then being in a horrific accident. What do you think helped Frida Kahlo overcome these setbacks? Have you ever faced adversity or a severe physical challenge? What motivated you?
2. How do you think art helped Frida recover and overcome the pain of her illness and injuries? What do you do to get your mind off of difficult times?
3. Frida's Jewish lineage is questioned by some experts. They do not believe that her father's family was Jewish. And her mother certainly was not. Do you think we should consider Frida Kahlo Jewish, because she claimed Jewish ancestry? Is definitive proof or personal intention more important?
4. Some say Frida claimed Jewish ancestry, because she was disturbed by the rise of the Nazis and antisemitism in Europe. She was proclaiming herself Jewish as a sign of solidarity. How do you feel about this? What other ways can one show solidarity?

Extension Activities

1. Study artwork by Frida Kahlo. What can you learn about her from her art?
2. There are many Frida Kahlo-inspired art projects for kids described on the internet. Find one that will work well for your group.
3. Frida liked to do self-portraits. Look at some of her self-portraits as a class and then create your own self-portraits.
4. Frida learned to draw while lying on her back. That is really hard. Give it a try!

MAURICE SENDAK

Themes: Movies, Children's Books, Resilience

Discussion Questions

1. Maurice's favorite childhood books were adventure stories like *Huck Finn*. What are some of your favorite books?
2. Is there a movie or book that has been particularly impactful on you?
3. "Children who fight back, children who are full of excitement are the kind of children I like," said Maurice. Maurice took a revolutionary approach to children's literature. He did not only write about well-behaved children but also rebels and rule-breakers. What about this approach would appeal to kids, in your opinion? Do you think adults would object to it?
4. Maurice said, "Children are tough, though we tend to think of them as fragile." Do you agree? Has an adult ever thought you were too fragile for the truth? If so, how did that make you feel?
5. Maurice had a lot of resilience as a child. How did that resilience impact him as an adult?
6. Maurice had one rule when writing: "his stories had to end safely, with his characters finding security, love, and acceptance." Do you agree with this approach? What other rules would you add to writing for children?

Extension Activities

1. Read *Where the Wild Things Are* as a class, after you read the bio for Maurice Sendak. Does the story have even more resonance with you since you now know something about Maurice's background? Do certain parts of the story seem more complex now that you know about him?
2. Try writing your own children's stories, emphasizing Maurice's goals and approach.
3. Both PBS Great Masters and Hulu have biographies of Maurice Sendak. The Hulu film *Tell Them Anything You Want* is currently available through Amazon. Consider watching one of the videos and discussing.

STAN LEE

Themes: Superhero Qualities, Imperfections, Dreams and Ambition

Discussion Questions

1. Stan read as a child when things got too stressful at home. What do you do to relax in stressful situations?
2. Stan wanted to be a novelist but turned to comics, because he thought traditional publishing might be closed to Jewish authors. What would you have done in Stan's position? Follow your original dream or alter it?
3. Stan gave his superheroes quirks and imperfections. This was something new for comics. What do you think of this change? How might have the imperfections made them more compelling characters?
4. Stan Lee felt that comics could help bring more peace and understanding into our world. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Stan started as an assistant, refilling ink bottles and doing other mundane tasks. He worked all the way up to lead Marvel Comics. What qualities do you think it took to do this?

Extension Activities

1. Create your own comics, using the biographies in this book as subjects. Stan Lee published a book about how to draw comics. Extend this activity by learning from it first.
2. Ask the students to share their favorite superhero and why. If they don't particularly like superheroes, let them name a literary or movie hero instead.

JUDITH RESNIK

Themes: Ambition, Adventure, Gender Roles

Discussion Questions

1. Judith didn't set out to become an astronaut. In fact, she showed little interest in space exploration. Why do you think she applied to be an astronaut?
2. NASA named a crater on the moon after Judith Resnik to remember her. Do you think this is a fitting memorial? If you were tasked with creating a memorial for Judith, what might you do?
3. One of the other astronauts on the Challenger was a schoolteacher. Many schools had their students watch the launch and, as a result, many children remember the explosion. This memory has stuck with many of them. Do you have a memory of an important event that sticks with you? What is it?
4. Judith said she didn't want to be known as a female astronaut or a Jewish astronaut. Instead she wanted to be known simply as an astronaut. Why do you think that she felt this way? Do you agree?
5. Judith said the danger of space travel didn't cross any of the astronaut's minds. Does this sound plausible to you? When you are fearful, are you able to push your fear out of your thoughts?

Extension Activities

1. Quite a few astronauts have been Jewish including Jeffrey Hoffman, Ilan Ramon and Jessica Meir. See this list on Kveller: <https://www.kveller.com/9-jewish-astronauts-who-have-boldly-gone-to-space/> Research one or more of these astronauts.
2. Judith held up a sign that said "Hi Dad" from space. If you were sending a message back to earth, what would it be? Design a sign to show it.

ANNA SOKOLOW

Themes: Dance as Expression, Alternate Ways of Learning

Discussion Questions

1. Anna didn't like classroom learning. She liked to learn by moving. What is your favorite way of learning? Do you think it is possible to learn through movement and other creative means?
2. Anna saw dance as a way to express political messages and share experiences. Do you agree with her? What methods—other than speaking or writing—are ways to express your viewpoint?
3. What do you think “dance is a weapon in the class struggle” means?
4. Anna pushed her students hard to be the best that they could be. Do you like this method from teachers? Do you think it is effective?
5. Anna traveled extensively to Israel and Mexico to teach dance and to learn folk dances from those countries. Why might this have been important to her? Do you envision yourself exploring distant places?

Extension Activities

1. Choose a theme and have the students work in small groups to create a movement exercise that displays their opinion on it.
2. There are video clips of Anna Sokolow dancing and of other dancers using her techniques on YouTube and on the Jewish Women's Archives website. Watch one or more as a class and discuss.
3. Research the Radical Dance Movement as a class.

BELLA ABZUG

Themes: Women's Rights, Activism, Publicizing Causes

Discussion Questions

1. Bella was known to take stands and speak out without being overly concerned about other people's reactions. She once said, "People may not like it, but no one will stop you." Do you agree with her advice? Do you follow her advice? Do you think it is effective?
2. Bella spoke out about topics that she cared about and which were prominent during her lifetime: Vietnam War, Civil Rights, women's rights and more. What topics do you feel the most passionate about? What would you most like to stand up to support?
3. Bella was known to wear large hats. It was her way of drawing attention to herself. What do you think of this method? Do you think it was effective? What could you do to make people pay attention to your views?
4. Bella had a big personality. Do you think you need to be outspoken like her to make a difference? What are quieter ways to make a difference and have your opinion heard?

Extension Activities

1. Bella was known for her flamboyant campaign buttons and posters. Design your own buttons and posters for a cause that is meaningful to you. Or simply think up creative campaign slogans.
2. Bella worked hard to push for the Equal Rights Amendment, which eventually failed. Research the ERA as a class and what happened to it. Hold a class debate about it.
3. Bella protested against gender restrictions at her synagogue by showing up for a year to say Kaddish for her father. As a class, explore Jewish mourning rituals and why her participation was discouraged.
4. Bella's nickname was Battling Bella. Have the students create activist nicknames for themselves and their classmates.

JAMIE RASKIN

Themes: Memories, Justice, Trauma

Discussion Questions

1. Jamie's first real memory takes place in a courtroom and impacted his life's path. What is your first real memory? How does it impact you today?
2. Jamie says, "law can be an instrument to hurt people and injure people but also an instrument to help and free them." Do you agree? How so? How can we make sure that law is used for the good?
3. If you were elected to Congress, which issues would be the most important to you?
4. Jamie lived through two traumatic events in a row—the death of his son and the January 6 riots on Capitol Hill. He reacted by fighting back against what he saw as corruption on January 6. Some people might have retreated or have found relief in a different way. Why do you think his reaction was to fight back? Would you have chosen the same course?

Extension Activities

1. Jamie gave many moving speeches during the investigation into the January 6 riots. Watch one or more of those speeches and discuss.
2. Jamie's son suffered from depression and died from suicide. Invite a specialist to class to talk about suicide warning signs and prevention.
3. Netflix produced a special about Jamie Raskin called *Love & the Constitution*. Watch the movie and discuss.

ELENA KAGAN

Themes: Empathy, Goals, Compromise

Discussion Questions

1. Elena Kagan knew she wanted to be a Supreme Court Justice from her teen years. Do you have a life goal? Do you think it is good for young people to set goals like that for themselves? How often do you think that people reach their childhood goals?
2. Elena preferred chatting with friends more than going to parties or dance clubs as a teenager. Do you prefer quiet evenings or loud gatherings or both?
3. When Elena didn't like her synagogue's policy about girls and bat mitzvah, she argued her case and reached a compromise with the rabbi. Would you have been happy with the compromise that they reached? What does it take to reach a good compromise?
4. If you encountered a fellow student crying about family problems on their Bar/BatMitzvah weekend, how would you have handled it? What would you have said to them? How would you know whether to say something or to let them have their space?
5. Elena is very accomplished and has a very high level position, but she remains down-to-earth and finds humor in the world. Does this surprise you? How do you think she does it? Do you think this approach helps her in her role as a justice?

Extension Activities

1. There have been eight Jewish Supreme Court Justices. Divide them up among the class and research each, then report back.
2. Elena was the first girl at her congregation to have a "Bat Torah." Study about the history of Bat Mitzvah. When was the first Bat Mitzvah? How did it come about?

SARA HURWITZ

Themes: Religious Observance, Gender roles, Religious Observance

Discussion Questions

1. Sara did not grow up observant but chose an Orthodox lifestyle. What might have appealed to her about religious observance? Do you think you might end up being more or less observant than your parents?
2. Sara could have become a Reform or Conservative rabbi as a woman, but she chose to pursue the rabbinate within Orthodoxy. Why do you think she made this choice? What would you have done in her position?
3. Sara grew up in South Africa during apartheid. How did that experience impact her and help mold her life decisions?
4. Sara attributes her circle of support—her family and friends—to helping her get through trying times. How can you be a supportive friend or family member? How can you build up such a community of support? Have your friends and family ever helped you through a particularly difficult time?
5. Sara is called rabba, which is the female equivalent of rabbi. It is truer to Hebrew grammar but also distinguishes her on the basis of her gender. What do you think of this title difference? (It is somewhat equivalent to Mr. vs. Ms.) What would you have chosen for yourself?

Extension Activities

1. Yeshivat Maharat maintains a lengthy compilation of sermons and article written by Rabba Hurwitz. Choose one or more to read as a class.
<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/>
2. Kunhardt Film Foundation has an hour-long interview with Rabba Hurwitz. Watch it or a portion of it and discuss. <https://www.kunhardtfilmfoundation.org/>

HELEN SUZMAN

Themes: Apartheid, Grit, Modesty

Discussion Questions

1. Helen did not realize apartheid's impact until she was a young woman, even though she lived in South Africa her whole life. How do you think she felt when she realized about the reality of apartheid? Were you surprised that she was not aware at a younger age?
2. Helen considered leaving South Africa but decided to stay and try to make a difference. What choice would you have made in her situation?
3. Helen was treated very badly for criticizing the apartheid system. Her opponents were relentless in trying to intimidate her. But she did not cave in. What qualities do you think she had to allow her to stand up like she did? What would you have said to the other parliament member who criticized and bullied her?
4. Helen decided to visit Nelson Mandela. Robben Island was a notoriously rough prison. What do you think compelled her to visit?
5. Helen did not take any credit for bringing down apartheid. Why do you think that she chose not to seek notoriety?

Extension Activities

1. Research the South African apartheid system and its fall. Focus on Jews involved in the anti-apartheid movement.
2. Learn about Nelson Mandela and his life story.
3. Research the Jewish community in South Africa.

GERSHOM SIZOMU

Themes: Remote Jewish Communities, Community, Persecution

Discussion Questions

1. Gershom is the first person to leave the Abayudaya community to study to become a rabbi in a larger Jewish community. Previously, rabbis trained the next generation within the community itself. Why do you think Gershom decided to go to a larger school? What might he have gained from the experience? Can you think of any disadvantages?
2. Gershom's job is spiritual leader, community organizer and political representative. Which do you think is the most important? The most challenging? How do the different roles complement each other?
3. The Abayudaya went underground during Idi Amin's reign and did not outwardly observe their Judaism. How do you think they may have kept their Jewish identities alive during that time period?
4. How do you think that the Abayudaya preserve their identity when they are living so remotely?
5. What do you think Gershom's classmates learned from him during rabbinical school?

Extension Activities

1. *Heroes with Chutzpah* author Kerry Olitzky has also written a picture book about the Ugandan Jewish community. It's called *Miryam's Dance*. Read the book as a class and compare how the community is portrayed in both.
2. Research the Abayudaya, their history and their customs. Create an exhibit hall to teach others about the community.

ANAT HOFFMAN

Themes: Gender Equity in Judaism, Religious Equity, Judaism in Israel

Discussion Questions

1. Many Israelis, like Anat's family, are secular. They don't actively practice Jewish ritual. Why might a large percentage of Israelis be secular?
2. Anat first found a religious home in the United States and not in Israel. Why do you think Anat—a lifelong secular Israeli—turned to religion in the United States?
3. Anat says, "It's about who owns Judaism in Israel." What does she mean by this statement?
4. Anat has been verbally and physically attacked by other Jews because of her conviction that women should have equal rights to men. What do you think gives her the stamina to keep going?

Extension Activities

1. Women of the Wall meets for prayer and reading Torah on Rosh Chodesh, the beginning of the month. Rosh Chodesh is traditionally a women's holiday. Celebrate Rosh Chodesh in class as a way to honor the women in Jerusalem.
2. Learn about the Western Wall, its history and restrictions for women visiting it. Put up a mock Western Wall and have the students write out blessings and prayers for it.

MARK SPITZ

Themes: Competitive Sports, Determination, Antisemitism

Discussion Questions

1. Mark and his family moved so that Mark could train at a better training facility. Would you be willing to leave your home and hometown to fulfill your dreams?
2. Mark was at the Olympic Village when Palestinian terrorists murdered Israeli athletes. He was whisked away by the police to safety. Have you ever felt fearful because you are Jewish?
3. Mark was an Olympic swimmer. He focused his entire life on swimming. Do you have a passion so strong that you spend your whole life focused on it?

Extension Activities

1. There are many films available about the attack on the Israeli athletes. While it is a painful event, it is an important event in Jewish history and you may want to view one of these films with your students.
2. After reviewing the biography of Mark Spitz, consider what it takes to become an Olympic athlete by outlining and examining a regular week of his training—and what he had to give up for such training.

ÁGNES KELETI

Themes: Aging with Dignity, Perseverance, Survivalism

Discussion Questions

1. Because of various events, including World War II and then an injury, Ágnes entered Olympic competition at an older age than most athletes. Have you ever participated in a sport or activity at an age different than those around you? How did it feel to do so?
2. Ágnes was forced to take on someone else's identity in order to survive during World War II. Have you ever pretended to be someone else in order to protect yourself or reach a goal?
3. After building the sport of gymnastics in Israel, Ágnes moved back to her native Budapest. Why do you think she did so?

Extension Activities

1. There is a group in St. Petersburg, Florida who play softball called Kids and Kubs. You have to be at least 75 years old to participate. You can find more about them at <https://stpetekidsandkubs.com/>. Research the group.
2. Ágnes continued as a gymnast into old age. Do you know of other older adults who have continued athletic competition or team sports? Perhaps you can invite someone to share their experience with the class.
3. Hungary was the last country to expel Jews during World War II. There are many books and films written about this experience, especially about Rudolph Kasztner who helped to save a large group of Hungarian Jews. Ask a student to learn more about what is now called the Kasztner train and share the information with the class.

YOSEF YEKUTIELI

Themes: Israel, Sports, Perseverance

Discussion Questions

1. How might you have advertised the first Maccabiah Games, at the time of the event, and now, considering the opportunities that social media affords us?
2. People laughed at Yosef's ideas. Have you ever had a creative idea that people have laughed about? How did you respond?
3. Do you have any friends who have participated in the Maccabiah Games? What was their experience?

Extension Activities

1. If there is a local group who participates in the Maccabiah Games (usually through the local Jewish Community Center), invite them to come into class for a recruiting session.
2. Perhaps there are things that are missing in the local community—only seen by someone who moves into the community. Ask any newcomers in the community in your class to suggest what might be missing—and then figure out a way to persuade community leaders to make any such necessary changes.

DOUGLAS EMHOFF

Themes: Gender Roles, Blended Families, Respectful Relationships

Discussion Questions

1. The biography called Douglas Emhoff a “typical Jewish kid.” What does that mean to you?
2. Douglas and Kamala have different family backgrounds and blend them together. Does your family have a variety of backgrounds? How do you respect and celebrate each of them?
3. Douglas says his relationships are based on “mutual respect.” How do you build mutual respect in a relationship? What does “mutual respect” mean to you?
4. Douglas stepped back from his career to help his wife pursue her dreams. How do you think Douglas felt about this choice? What would have made it difficult, what would have made it easy? What would you have done in that situation?
5. How does Douglas define his role as 2nd Gentleman?

Extension Activities

1. Douglas has become an unofficial liaison between the Jewish community and the White House. As a class or as individuals, write letters to him, explaining the issues that are most important to you.
2. There are multiple interviews available on YouTube interviewing Douglas Emhoff about his role. Watch one of the videos and discuss.
3. Douglas has been more involved with the Jewish community as 2nd Gentleman than he was at other periods of his life. Research what Douglas says about this transformation and what he has done to be involved in the community.

RALPH LAUREN

Themes: Portraying an Image, Changing Your Name, Personal Style

Discussion Questions

1. Ralph Lauren purposely created an image for himself that was different than his Jewish background. How do you feel about this decision? Why do you think he did it?
2. Ralph created a personal style all his own. Do you have a defining personal style? What impression do you hope to give?
3. Ralph gives generously to different causes, especially those with which he has a personal connection. What causes would you give to? What causes have you supported?
4. Ralph says his success does not have to do with class or money, but rather it has to do with dreams. What do you think he means?
5. Have you ever had a creative idea that you think could be a success in the marketplace? What is it? What would it take to pursue it?

Extension Activities

1. There are quite a few famous Jewish fashion designers. Research them and compare their stories. Isaac Mizrahi is also featured in this book.
2. Have the students work in small groups to create their own fashion brand. What would they call it? What would the style be like? Would they incorporate something from their identity in it?

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Themes: Living Overseas, Preserving Memories, Jewish Identity

Discussion Questions

1. Do you take lots of photos? What are your favorite subjects to take? Why do you enjoy photography?
2. Have you moved? What was that experience like? Do you think you would enjoy living in many different places?
3. Annie spent time living in Israel as a young adult. Would you ever want to live in a different country? Why or why not? What about Israel?
4. Taking photographs helped Annie preserve her memories. What do you do to preserve memories?
5. Annie says that she doesn't practice Judaism but feels very Jewish. What do you think this means? Can you relate? How do you define your Jewish identity?
6. Do you have a mentor? What qualities do you think makes for a good mentor?

Extension Activities

1. Find a portfolio of Annie's work either online or in a book and look through it as a class. Which is your favorite? Which photo is the most surprising? How would you define Annie's style? Alternatively: Annie took photos of many of the people in this book. Look at those portraits.
2. Break into small groups or pairs and take "Annie Leibovitz-style" portraits of each other.

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

Themes: Life Imitating Art, Resolve, Courage, Humor

Discussion Questions

1. As a teenager, Volodymyr worked hard to stay out of trouble and to avoid the gangs. How do you think this prepared him for his role as president?
2. Why is humor a good way to make or emphasize a point? Do you remember a time when humor helped you or somebody else spread an important message?
3. How do you think that Volodymyr's family history of the Holocaust impacted him?
4. When Volodymyr was elected president, many people thought he did not have the experience or the expertise for the position. But, since the Russian invasion, he has proven these skeptics wrong. Have you ever had the experience of either underestimating another person or being underestimated yourself? What did it take to prove the others wrong?
5. Volodymyr and his family refused to go into exile when the war started, even though they had quite a few offers from other countries. Why do you think they made this decision? Would you have made the same decision?

Extension Activities

1. Volodymyr Zelenskyy was *Time's* Person of the Year. Share that issue of the magazine, or the online version, and discuss. Who would they choose as this year's Person of the Year? What criteria should be used?
2. The Jewish community has a strong historic connection to Ukraine. Many American Jews can trace their ancestry back to the region. Study the Jewish history of Ukraine as a class.
3. Episodes of *Servant of the People* are available online. Watch a portion of one as a class. Compare Volodymyr's fictional character with his real life persona as president.

AVITAL SHARANSKY

Themes: Being a Public Figure, Refusniks, Personal Devotion

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Avital felt when she discovered she was Jewish at age 14? What questions might she have had? How do you think she felt about her parents hiding her Jewish identity from her?
2. Avital took many risks to learn about Judaism and stand up for Israel while living in the Soviet Union. What do you think propelled her to do so? Do you think you would have made the same choices?
3. Avital is a quiet person who never sought the limelight. But because of her husband's imprisonment, she pushed herself beyond her comfort zone to meet with world leaders and speak in public. Have you ever pushed yourself beyond your comfort zone out of necessity or because you thought it was the right thing to do?
4. Avital says that she saw herself "as a soldier." What do you think she means? In what ways was Avital similar to a soldier?
5. Avital walked away from public life once Natan was released. He became the public speaking member of the family. Does her decision to retreat into privacy surprise you?
6. Natan is far more well-known than Avital. Why do you think that Avital was chosen to be included for this book?

Extension Activities

1. As a class, research the Save Soviet Jewry movement.
2. Many congregations have members who emigrated from the Soviet Union. Invite one or two to talk with the students about their experiences.

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM PARDO

Themes: Environmentalism, Mexico's Jewish Community, Leadership Styles

Discussion Questions

1. Claudia did not intend to go into politics. She planned to be an environmental scientist. What do you think convinced her to make the switch?
2. How do you think Claudia's background as an environmental scientist helped her as mayor?
3. Claudia is a fairly low-key person who never expected to be a national leader. How might her personality help her in her position? How might it be a hindrance?
4. There are different types of leadership styles. When you have been a leader, perhaps in school, a team or a club, what has been your style of leading?
5. Claudia was both the first female and first Jewish mayor of Mexico City. How do you think this impacted her time as mayor?

Extension Activities

1. Mexico has an active Jewish community. Research and learn about this community as a class.
2. Claudia will be running for Mexico's presidency in 2024. Research how her campaign is going/went.
3. Mexico City has notoriously bad pollution. Learn more about its environmental issues and climate initiatives. How successful have Claudia's new initiatives been?

SIMCHA BLASS

Themes: Yishuv/First Settlements, Innovation, Environmentalism

Discussion Questions

1. Simcha liked to tinker and create. Have you ever had an idea for a new invention or tinkered with an existing one to make it better? Tell the group about it.
2. Simcha left everything that he knew to move to the Yishuv, the pre-state settlements in the land of Israel. Do you think you could ever leave everything behind to move someplace completely new? What would need to be the motivating factors for you?
3. Simcha discovered his drip irrigation nearly by accident. A lot of great adventures and moments in history have happened this way. Have you ever had a “happy accident”—a time when the unexpected leads to something new and important?

Extension Activities

1. Simcha’s invention of drip irrigation ended up being used all around the world. There have been many scientific and technological discoveries in Israel. Study more of them as a class and discuss why Israel and innovation often go hand-in-hand.
2. Learn more about drip irrigation, its technology and its benefits.
3. Study more about the Yishuv and the early Zionist who settled there.
4. It is possible to set up a classroom drip irrigation system. Do this hands-on project. There are instructions online if you search for “Classroom Drip Irrigation” or “Science Fair—Drip Irrigation.”

HEDY LAMARR

Themes: Inventive Mind, Expectations based on Appearance, Life Goals

Discussion Questions

1. Hedy was strikingly beautiful. People were surprised that she was also a brilliant inventor. Hedy isn't the only young woman underestimated because of her looks. Why do people make assumptions based on appearances? What can we do to break down this bias?
2. Hedy lived two lives—glamour Hollywood starlet and budding inventor. Do you think that she liked having such different occupations? How do you think she might have balanced the two? Have you ever felt torn between two competing interests?
3. Hedy famously said, "Any girl can be glamorous. All you have to do is stand still and look stupid." What is your reaction to this quotation?
4. Hedy was an exceptional inventor. What skills and talents does it take to invent?
5. Most people knew Hedy as an actress not an inventor. How do you think she felt about this?
6. Hedy's father encouraged her to look for ways that she could improve the world. She followed his advice with her inventions. What messages have your parents shared with you about setting life goals?
7. Hedy became a recluse late in life. What might have contributed to her desire to step back from public life? Do you ever wish to just be alone?

Extension Activities

1. Watch a clip of Hedy Lemarr acting and discuss.
2. Hedy Lemarr holds multiple patents for different discoveries. Research some of her other scientific breakthroughs.

GAL GADOT

Themes: Service to the Nation, Stardom, Family History

Discussion Questions

1. Gal was surprised about her success in the Miss Israel pageant. Later, she was surprised by her success in the film industry. Did this surprise you? Have you ever been surprised by your own success?
2. Gal didn't want to make money off her looks, so she worked in Burger King rather than as a model. Would you have made the same choice? What motivated her?
3. Speaking about army service in Israel, Gal says, "But in Israel serving is part of being an Israeli. You've got to give back to the state." What obligations do you feel that you have to your country? If you lived in Israel, how do you think you would feel about joining the IDF?
4. Gal's family history is rich and diverse and impact her outlook on the world. How do you think your family history impacts your worldview?
5. Gal has three daughters. How do you think it would feel to have Wonder Woman as your mom?

Extension Activities

1. Serving in the Israeli Army was an important part of the Gal's life. Do research as a class into how the IDF operates in Israel. Or invite a former IDF soldier to speak to the class.
2. Gal is Jewish, but Wonder Woman isn't necessarily Jewish. How might Wonder Woman have been different if Judaism were part of her identity? Design your own comics with a Jewish Wonder Woman.

YITYISH "TITI" AYNAW

Themes: Ethiopian Jews, Trauma, Adjustment to a New Land

Discussion Questions

1. As a child, Titi survived the deaths of both parents and lived in poverty. But she overcame this trauma and found a new home and success in Israel. What personal qualities do you think helped Titi survive this trauma?
2. Titi came to Israel not knowing the Hebrew language and never living in a developed country before. What challenges do you think she faced? What do you think helped her face these challenges and succeed?
3. Titi wanted to win the Miss Israel pageant, in part, to break down the racial barriers in Israel. By being the first black Miss Israel, how do you think she succeeded in doing this?
4. Titi “paid it forward” by helping other at-risk children and founding a center for them. If you could choose a cause to support, what would it be and why?
5. Titi said, “I know racism and tokenism exist in Israel. I’m not here to complain about it, I’m here to change it.” What do you think she means? What is the difference between complaining about a social issue and changing it? How can you make change without complaining?

Extension Activities

1. Research the history and immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.
2. Have Ethiopian Jews been accepted in Israeli society? Do some research and find out!
3. Explore Titi’s Project at <https://www.netanyafoundation.org/titis-project> Consider doing a class tzedakah project to raise funds for it.

NAOMI WADLER

Themes: Gun Control Advocacy, Young Advocates, Jewish diversity

Discussion Questions

1. Naomi spoke in front of a crowd of 800,000 about gun control. Would any causes inspire you to speak in front of such a large group? Which ones?
2. Naomi sang in the car to calm her nerves. What do you do to calm your nerves when facing a stressful situation?
3. Naomi joined other young people to advocate for gun control. It was a strong grassroots effort on behalf of preteens and teens. What can kids do to organize themselves and make a difference? Do you think this type of organizing is important? What holds young people back from being an activist?
4. Naomi has a richly diverse background: American, Ethiopian, Jewish and more. What different groups do you belong to? What different elements come together in your identity?

Extension Activities

1. The March for Our Lives was very much youth-driven. As a class, research how young people organized and stood up for gun control after the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in 2018. What can they learn from this experience?
2. Research the issue of gun control either as a current social issue and/or as a Jewish issue. What are the dynamics and considerations at play? What is the Jewish response? How can the students make a difference?
3. Choose an issue or advocacy event to organize around. Plan out your participation and how you will make a difference and have your voices heard.

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Themes: Jewish pride, Cinema, Holocaust

Discussion Questions

1. Steven says, “I was embarrassed, I was self-conscious, I was always aware I stood out because of my Jewishness.” Have any of the students felt this way? In what context? What has helped them address these feelings? For students who have not had this experience, how did Steven’s comment make you feel?
2. Steven naturally gravitated toward film-making. It helped him express himself. Do you consider yourself a creative person? What is your favorite way to be creative? Is there a medium—like painting or singing or dance—that especially speaks to you? How do you feel when engaging this creative medium?
3. Steven waited a long time to make *Schindler’s List*. He was not ready to do it earlier. Have you ever put something off? How did it feel when you eventually accomplished it?
4. Steven dropped out of college to pursue film-making. Could you see yourself making a similar choice? Why or why not? How would your family feel?

Extension Activities

1. Watch *Schindler’s List* as a class and discuss Steven Spielberg’s role in putting it together.
2. Watch *The Fabelmans* as a class and discuss how it fits with what they have learned about Steven Spielberg.
3. As Steven Spielberg shared his life story in *The Fabelmans*, have the students outline how they would film their life story. What would the first scene, the second, etc. be?

ITZHAK PERLMAN

Themes: Disabilities, Music, Natural Talents

Discussion Questions

1. Itzhak's parents knew he was musical from a very young age. Did you have any early interests that stayed with you and grew as you got older?
2. Itzhak experienced success from a very young age. What do you think it would be like to be such a prodigy? What are the benefits and what are the challenges? Would you like to have had such early success?
3. Itzhak has a physical disability. How has it impacted his life? How has he compensated for it? How do you think he makes sure that he isn't just known for his disability?
4. Itzhak is an observant Jew, who keeps kosher and Shabbat. In what ways do you celebrate and exhibit your Jewish identity? Are there particular rituals that are important to you?

Extension Activities

1. Listen to some music by Itzhak Perlman or watch a video clip featuring him.
2. Invite a professional or semiprofessional musician to visit the class and talk about the importance of music in their life.
3. Itzhak has sometimes found access difficult because of his wheelchair. Learn about what your school or congregation has done to accommodate people with various accessibility needs.

AARON LANSKY

Themes: Yiddish, Preserving Culture, Quests and Motivation

Discussion Questions

1. Aaron saw inherent value in books that other people were ready to discard. How do you decide what has continual use and what to discard?
2. Aaron made saving Yiddish books his personal quest. Do you have anything that has been a “quest” for you? What goes into having a “quest”? Do you know anybody else who has been similarly devoted to a singular goal?
3. A lot of people thought Aaron’s goals were foolhardy. How do you think he got over their skepticism?
4. What do you think were Aaron’s biggest motivators? What motivates you the most?

Extension Activities

1. The Yiddish Book Center has lots of online materials and video clips. Utilize this material in class to expand the discussion of Yiddish culture.
2. Hold a book drive at your synagogue or school. Donate the books to a worthy cause. If any are Yiddish, send them to the Yiddish Book Center!
3. Learn a few key words in Yiddish and practice using them in class.
4. Invite a Yiddish speaker to come to class to speak the language for the students and to talk about how they learned Yiddish and what they enjoy about it.

LEONARD NIMOY

Themes: Jewish ritual, Family Memories, Identity

Discussion Questions

1. Attending synagogue with his father was a key memory for Leonard. What are some of your key family memories?
2. Leonard created the Vulcan hand signal from a Jewish ritual that he found unique, intriguing and memorable. What are your favorite Jewish rituals?
3. Some say that Leonard, after playing Spock for so many years, started to become like Spock. They contend that Leonard's identity was impacted by his acting. Does this seem plausible to you? Why or why not?
4. Leonard named his two memoirs *I am Not Spock* and *I am Spock*. Why do you think he chose to release books with such contradictory titles? If you were to title your memoir, what would the title be?
5. Leonard chose the phrase "Live Long and Prosper" for the Vulcan hand signal. What phrase would you choose?

Extension Activities

1. Watch an episode of *Star Trek* that features Leonard Nimoy and discuss.
2. Break up into small groups and make up a special handshake or other gesture based on a Jewish ritual.

MAYIM BIALIK

Themes: Stardom, Jewish observance, Jewish in Hollywood

Discussion Questions

1. If you could choose pursuing your growing acting career or going to college, which would you choose?
2. Mayim was a child star from a young age. Would you have enjoyed being a child star? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
3. Mayim says that she has never been driven by money or family. Does this surprise you? What drives her? What are her motivators? What are yours?
4. Mayim is one of the only openly observant Jewish actors in Hollywood. What challenges do you think she faces?
5. Mayim's family expected her to go to college, not to focus on building her acting career. What do you think your family would have emphasized in this same situation?
6. Mayim grew up as a Reform Jew but became Orthodox as an adult. Could you see yourself growing up to be more or less observant than your family?

Extension Activities

1. Invite somebody to class who has a different Jewish observance level than the majority of students. Talk to the guest about their Jewish identity and why they have made the choices that they have made.
2. Mayim says, "The best you can do is do each day well with kindness and as a good person." Have each student finish the sentence, "The best you can do is. . . ."

JUDY BLUME

Themes: Books & Stories, Tenacity, Death of Loved Ones

Discussion Questions

1. Judy found time to think and make up stories by bouncing a ball and making baskets outside her house. What do you do when you want to find time for yourself to think?
2. Judy's childhood was impacted by multiple deaths in her family. Her family spent a lot of time sitting shiva. Have you ever lost a loved one? How did it impact you? How did it impact your family? How did you go about remembering the person?
3. As a child, Judy didn't tell her friends about her stories, because she was worried about fitting in. How much do you think peer pressure and wanting to fit in influences young people? How important is it to you to fit in? What advice would you have given young Judy?
4. Judy sent manuscripts to publishers for years until one was accepted. What do you think kept her going? How do you face failure and keep trying? Have you ever faced a situation like Judy?
5. Have you read one of Judy Blume's books? What did you think?
6. Judy tried to write about topics that were real and important to young readers. What do you think are the most important topics for books for kids and teens to address?

Extension Activities

1. Many of Judy Blume's books have ended up on banned book lists. Learn about banned books and, as a class, organize a letter-writing campaign about it.
2. Read and discuss a Judy Blume book or an excerpt from one.

IDINA MENZEL

Themes: Camp/Formative Places, Supportive Family, Divorce

Discussion Questions

1. Idina built up her confidence and discovered her love of music and theater at camp. What places and experiences have been the most influential and important for you and why?
2. As a child, Idina's family was very supportive of her interest in music and theater. Who has been the most supportive of you and your interests? How does it feel when a family member or mentor supports you? How does it feel when they don't?
3. Idina's world was rocked by her parents' divorce. She had to become much more self-reliant and work to help support her and her mother. When something changes significantly in your family, how can you best respond? What advice would you have given Idina at that time?
4. Idina credits hard work, practice and surrounding herself with people who are honest in their feedback for her success. What do you think is necessary for success? Do you agree with Idina's list? Why do people give honest feedback?
5. Idina likes playing strong women. If you were an actor, what type of roles would you like?
6. Idina says that you need to "accept your shortcomings." Do you agree with this advice? Why? Why is it something hard to do?

Extension Activities

1. Learn "Let it Go" or another Idina Menzel song as a class.
2. Idina offers several different "life lessons to live by." Have the class write their own and then share them.

NATALIE PORTMAN

Themes: Changing one's name, Fame, Principles

Discussion Questions

1. If you were Natalie, would you have gone to the film premiere or stayed home to study? Why? If you had a blossoming film career but also an acceptance to Harvard, which would you pursue? Why?
2. Natalie changed her last name to Portman (also a family name) when she became a serious actress. Why? Would you ever change your name?
3. Natalie found it difficult to play Anne Frank because of her family's experience in the Holocaust. What types of roles do you think would be the most difficult to play?
4. Natalie often chooses roles with a Jewish or Israeli connection. If you were choosing roles, what factors would you consider?
5. Natalie lives by her principles. She is vegan and an outspoken activist. What principles are most important to you?

Extension Activities

1. Learn about the various Jewish actors and performers who have changed their names. Have a debate about whether it is the right thing to do.
2. Natalie once said, "I don't love studying. I hate studying. I like learning. Learning is beautiful." What is the difference between studying and learning? Is there a difference?

MOE BERG

Themes: Mysteries, Courage, Heroism

Discussion Questions

1. Moe enjoyed being a mystery even in childhood. What is appealing about being a mystery? Why might somebody hide their identity?
2. Moe went on some very dangerous missions. What qualities do you think it takes for somebody to be a spy? What do you think motivated him to take on these missions? Is facing danger like this heroic?
3. What questions would you ask Moe Berg, if you had a chance?
4. Moe Berg studied with Albert Einstein. Would you have liked to have Einstein as your tutor? Why or why not?
5. Moe Berg was not as good a ball player as the other players on the team. How do you think they felt about him?
6. Moe's contributions are largely unknown. Is it possible to consider somebody a hero if we are not sure of all they accomplished?

Extension Activities

1. Watch and discuss the Aviva Kempner documentary *The Spy behind Home Plate*.
2. Visit the Baseball Hall of Fame site and learn about other Jewish players

SANDY KOUFAX

Themes: Jewish identity, Choices, Role Model

Discussion Questions

1. Sandy, as a teenager, explained his life goal: “To be successful and make my family proud of me.” Do you have a life goal? How would you explain it?
2. Sandy did not excel in the Major Leagues at first. Advice from a coach, Norm Sherry, helped him refine his pitch. Have you ever received advice or coaching that has had a major impact on you? What was it? How do decide what advice to listen to?
3. Sandy is perhaps best-known for his decision not to play baseball on Yom Kippur, despite it being a very important game. What would you have done in Sandy’s position? Would you have made the same decision?
4. Sandy said that he did not play on Yom Kippur in order to be a role model. What makes somebody a good role model? Do you have a role model? Have you ever seen yourself as a role model for others?

Extension Activities

1. There are many other important Jewish players in MLB history, including Ryan Braun, Max Fried, Hank Greenberg, Ken Holtzman, Ian Kinsler, Al Rosen, and others. Spend some time researching and learning about them.
2. Hold a debate about whether Sandy should have refused to play on Yom Kippur.
3. Research more about Sandy Koufax on the Baseball Hall of Fame website.

RANDI WEINGARTEN

Themes: Labor Movement, Family Influences

Discussion Questions

1. As a teenager, Randi witnessed her mother going on strike. This experience propelled her interest in labor issues. Have you had a family experience that you think will similarly guide your future interest and career?
2. Watching her mother go through the strike particularly affected her. Do you think watching somebody else have an experience can influence you as much as going through it on your own?
3. Randi organized her own protest as a teenager, speaking in front of the local board of education and sharing her opinion with decision-makers. What skills go into organizing such a campaign? Do you think that adults actually will listen to children and teenagers? What could young people do to increase their impact?

Extension Activities

1. Invite a local labor or union leader to speak to the class about labor issues.
2. The Jewish community has long been involved in the labor movement. The Jewish Women's Archive's has extensive curricular material available about this involvement. Use JWA lessons to extend the discussion.
3. Jewish tradition has a lot to say about labor issues. Prepare a text study on some of these lessons. Here's a start, taken from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism site.
 - As Jews, we have an obligation not only to feed the hungry but also to help those in need become self-sufficient (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah).
 - "You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer . . . but you must pay wages on the same day, for a laborer is needy and urgently depends on it (Deuteronomy 24:14-15).
 - "If one hires a worker to work with straw and stubble and the worker says, "Give me my wages," if the employer says, "take the results of your labor as payment," we do not listen to the employer.(Mishnah, Bava Metziah 10:5)."

BERNIE SANDERS

Themes: Importance of Politics, Socialism, Economic Equity

Discussion Questions

1. If you were to run as student body president at your school, what causes would you champion in your campaign?
2. Bernie considered politics very important from a young age. Do you consider politics and elections significant and important? Why or why not?
3. Bernie was attracted to the kibbutz way of life, where everybody works and pools their earnings for the benefit of the community. What do you think about this approach? Does it appeal to you? Do you think it is sustainable? Do you think you would like to live on a kibbutz to try out its approach?
4. Bernie made a lot of practical changes and instituted new programs as mayor of Burlington, VT. What changes and new programs might help your community? What would you do if you were mayor?

Extension Activities

1. Write letters to either Bernie Sanders or your senators and congressional representatives about the issues that matter the most to the class. There are guides online about how to best have your voice heard through just outreach.
2. Learn more about the organization and philosophy of the kibbutz movement and how it has evolved over the years. If possible, invite a member or former member of a kibbutz to come visit your class.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

Themes: Jewish Observance, Extended Family, Being a Minority

Discussion Questions

1. Joseph grew up among a close extended family; his grandparents and cousins lived nearby. Do you have extended family nearby? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living so close to family?
2. Joseph's family had very little money during his childhood. How much do you think this was a motivator for him?
3. Joseph was one of the only Jews at Yale. There was a quota to limit the number of Jews at the school. Would you go to a college with such a small Jewish population? What could be the challenges of such a situation?
4. Joseph maintained his Orthodox Jewish observance even as an elected member of the Senate. What do you think the biggest challenges would be? Is this something that you think you could do? It would have been easier for Joseph to give up at least some of his traditional observances. Why do you think he kept them?

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about Joseph's historic bid for the vice presidency.
2. Research the current Jewish members of the Senate.
3. There are several documentaries and segments on television news magazines about Joseph Lieberman. Choose one to watch and discuss as a class.

RUTH BADER GINSBERG

Themes: Women's Equality, Perseverance, Change-Making

Discussion Questions

1. Ruth worked very hard and had many accomplishments, but she still could not find a job after graduation from law school. How do you think she felt? Where do you think she found inspiration to keep trying?
2. Ruth pledges to "change the system." What do you think this means? How can one go about changing the system? How can you tell if the system needs changing?
3. Ruth said, "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time." What does enduring change mean? Do you agree with this statement? Do you think that change needs to be slow and measured or can sometimes change be swift and still last?
4. Ruth was the first person in her family to go to college. What type of responsibility and pressure do you think she faced? Have you ever been the first in your family to accomplish something? How did that feel?
5. Ruth says her parents taught her "to love learning, to care about people, and to work hard for whatever I wanted or believed in." What are the most important lessons that your parents have taught you?

Extension Activities

1. There are several movies and documentaries about Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Watch and discuss as a class.
2. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was not particularly observant Jewishly, but her Jewish identity and Jewish values were very important to her. She said, "The demand for justice runs through the entirety of Jewish history and Jewish tradition. I take pride in and draw strength from my heritage."
3. Discuss this quote from Deuteronomy, setting up the judicial system:
Deuteronomy 16.18-20 "You shall appoint magistrates and officials for your tribes, in all the settlements that Adonai your God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice. You shall not judge unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that Adonai your God is giving you." [JPS translation, edited for gender-neutrality]

JOE LEVIN, JR.

Themes: Rules, Courage, Civil Rights

Discussion Questions

1. Joe was a rule-follower growing up. He wanted his friends to follow the rules on the playground and would correct them if they didn't. Do you consider yourself a rule-follower or do you bend the rules on occasion? When do you think it is alright to bend the rules?
2. Joe learned an uncomfortable truth about his hometown: that his neighbors could be prejudiced against people of different races and religions. How would you react if you discovered this about your hometown? Are there things about your hometown or neighborhood that make you uncomfortable? How do you address them?
3. Joe came to the conclusion that some rules were wrong. How would you react if you thought a rule was unjust?
4. Joe took the KKK to court. Where do you think he found the courage? Would you have had the courage to do so?
5. "Joe's Jewish values guided his work: people were created equally, all in the image of God, regardless of the color of their skin or the religion they practiced." Which Jewish values are most important to you?

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about the Southern Poverty Law Center and the good work that it does.
2. Invite a local activist for civil rights to speak to the class about their work.
3. The Southern Poverty Law Center maintains an extensive database of information on its website. Explore an aspect of this information to explore as a class.

SIMONE VEIL

Themes: Holocaust, Survival, Motivation

Discussion Questions

1. Simone believed forging closer ties between European nations would help to prevent more hostility and war. Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?
2. Simone credits her mother's memory and the feeling of her mother's presence with giving her the strength to live fully. Does this surprise you? What questions would you have for Simone about how the Holocaust impacted her?
3. Simone faced criticism and even threats when pursuing reproductive freedom for the women of France. Have you ever felt strongly about something and fought for it, even if criticized? What gave you the motivation?
4. Simone chose three things to represent her life and accomplishments: the motto of the French Republic, the motto of the European Union, and the number the Nazis tattooed on her arm at Auschwitz. What three things would you choose to represent yourself?

Extension Activities

1. Have the students design their own shield or emblem representing themselves and their accomplishments.
2. The Jewish Women's Archives has a more extensive biography of Simone Veil. Read it and discuss it as a class. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/veil-simone>
3. Posters and bumper stickers that say "Merci Simone" were popular in France. Have students design a poster or bumper sticker for one of the heroes in the book that they especially admire.

SIMON WIESENTHAL

Themes: Memory, Justice, Quests. Holocaust

Discussion Questions

1. Many Holocaust survivors chose to not dwell on their experiences during the war nor even talk about them. Simon Wiesenthal was different, making bringing Nazis to justice his life's work. Which approach do you think would have been the most difficult? Which approach do think would have been the most healing?
2. Simon Wiesenthal uncovered evidence against over 1000 former Nazis. What do think should have been done with this information? Should all of these former Nazis have been prosecuted? Why or why not?
3. Directly after the war, Simon worked with a large group of researchers to track down Nazis. Over time, though, most of the researchers moved onto other occupations and projects. Simon did not, continuing his quest for decades. What do you think motivated Simon to continue searching? What propelled him on his quest?
4. Simon and his wife lost 98 members of their family during the Holocaust. How does one memorialize such a loss?
5. Simon once said, "When history looks back, I want people to know the Nazis weren't able to kill millions of people and get away with it." Do you think that Simon reached his goal?

Extension Activities

1. Research Adolf Eichmann and his trial as a class. There are numerous videos and other materials about the case.
2. The Simon Wiesenthal Center has a plethora of information available on its website. Visit www.wiesenthal.com to choose materials to share with your class.

MOSHE SAFDIE

Themes: Moving, Creativity, Music

Discussion Questions

1. Moshe's family moved from Israel to Canada when he was a teenager. This was very traumatic for him. Has your family ever moved? What was the experience like? Moving can be disruptive but also can be an adventure. Do you think you would like to try living someplace new?
2. Moshe incorporated what he knew into his designs—kibbutz communities and Arab villages. Think about things that you have created, whether it is art or music or writing or something else. How did you incorporate your experiences into your creative work? What role does experience have in creativity?
3. Moshe said, "I think you need to, as an architect, understand the essence of a place and create a building that feels like it resonates with the culture of a place." Think about buildings and spaces that you admire near you. Do they resonate with "the culture of the place?" How so or how not?
4. Moshe listens to music to inspire him while working, choosing music reflective of the culture of his project. Do you like listening to music while working? Does music impact your creativity? How so?
5. Moshe happened upon architecture as a career. He didn't start out with it as his goal or passion. Have you ever happened upon an interest that became a passion?

Extension Activities

1. Look at several of Moshe Safdie's projects and discuss how they incorporate culture and space into them.
2. Have students create their own blueprints for a new building or development. It could be a new synagogue, community center, home or school. How does their design reflect the culture around them?

FRANK GEHRY

Themes: Curiosity, Grandparents, Leadership

Discussion Questions

1. Frank said: "It's about curiosity. And I think that is really important. You've got to be curious." How do you define curiosity? Why do you think that Frank puts such emphasis on curiosity?
2. Frank changed his name from Goldberg to Gehry, fearing antisemitism might hold him back. He later regretted doing so. What do you think of Frank's choice? Would you have made a similar choice?
3. Frank was greatly influenced by his grandparents, who nurtured his love of creativity, Judaism and culture. How have your grandparents or other older relatives impacted you? What is something that you have learned from an older person in your life?
4. There are quite a few similarities between Frank Gehry's and Moshe Safdie's stories. How do they compare? Do you see differences as well?
5. Frank feels more comfortable among artists than architects. What is the difference between the two? What are the similarities? Which is more interesting to you?
6. Even with a staff of 160 people, Frank oversees each project himself. Why do you think he does this? Would you take a similar approach or delegate the work to others?

Extension Activities

1. Frank likes to build with "found" materials. Bring recycled items to class: boxes, building supplies, etc. Ask the students to work in teams to build a model of a building, synagogue, neighborhood, museum or park with the supplies.
2. Look at pictures of Frank's work. How does it reflect Frank's approach to architecture?

AMIT GOFFER

Themes: Empathy, Dignity, Success

Discussion Questions

1. Amit's life was forever altered in a moment. What qualities do you think Amit must have had to keep going after his accident?
2. Amit had not given much thought to challenges faced by the wheelchair-bound until he found himself in a wheelchair. Do you think it is common for people to not recognize the challenges of others? How can we be more empathetic? How easily can we understand other people's experiences until we live them ourselves?
3. Amit gained his inspiration from looking at nature and at the structure of scorpions. Inspiration can come from the strangest of places. Where do you find inspiration? Have you heard of any other inventions with unusual sources of inspiration? Amit built a wheelchair that allows quadriplegics to stand. He says, "The dignity, self-esteem. To feel like part of society again, the core of society, not the fringe of society—the psychological effect is dramatic." Why do you think that standing is so important to Amit? How does it restore dignity?
4. Amit's inventions have helped hundreds of people but have not proven to be a financial success. How do you measure success? Has Amit been successful?

Extension Activities

1. Invite somebody wheelchair-bound into class to talk about their experiences.
2. A number of videos showing Amit's inventions are available on YouTube. Choose one to watch together as a class and discuss.

BARBARA WALTERS

Themes: Resilience, Siblings, Glass Ceilings

Discussion Questions

1. Barbara Walters liked to open interviews with, “Can you tell me about your childhood?” How would you answer this question?
2. Do you think you would have enjoyed meeting a lot of celebrities as a child? What would be the advantages and disadvantages? Do you think you would be intimidated by meeting celebrities?
3. Barbara’s sister had special needs. How did this impact Barbara? If you have siblings, what role do they play in your life? Do you have a family member or friend with a special need? How has this person impacted you?
4. Barbara broke the glass ceiling of television journalism by becoming an anchor. What qualities did she need to have to do this? What sacrifices did she make?
5. Barbara interviewed everybody from world leaders to celebrities. If you could interview anybody, who would it be?

Extension Activities

1. There are many interviews, conducted by Barbara Walters, available on YouTube. Watch one or more as a class and discuss her technique.
2. Break the students into pairs and have them interview each other.

GLORIA STEINEM

Themes: Jewish Identity, Feminism, Difficult Childhoods

Discussion Questions

1. Gloria had a very difficult childhood. How do you think that impacted the rest of her life? What traits and values did it build up in her?
2. “Never in my life have I identified myself as a Christian, but wherever there is antisemitism, I identify as a Jew.” Why do you think Gloria identifies with the Jewish community in the face of antisemitism? How do you feel about Gloria basing her Jewish identity on antisemitism?
3. It was Gloria’s mother, who was not Jewish, who taught her to be proud of her Jewish identity. Do you find this unusual? Who has been the biggest influence in building your Jewish identity?
4. Gloria could not find a spot for herself in traditional journalism and, so, worked with others to create *Ms. Magazine* to be able to write the type of articles that she wanted. What personal qualities do you think this took? Do you think it is better to work within the system or create something new outside of it?
5. Gloria tells young people, “Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.” What does this mean? How is a dream a plan? Have you ever had a dream that you worked hard to fulfill? What steps did you take?

Extension Activities

1. Research the ERA with the students and why it failed to pass. Ask whether they still think it is necessary.
2. Ask the students to write a letter to themselves with a dream that they hope might become a plan. Have them write out the steps toward making it a reality.

STOSH COTLER

Themes: Activism, Jewish Belonging, Personal Philosophy

Discussion Questions

1. Stosh says: "My family was on the fast track to assimilation, and by high school, being Jewish was simply a reminder that I was an outsider." If a friend said this to you, how would you respond?
2. One seder changed Stosh's whole outlook and life course. Have you ever had a singular event that changed how you view things?
3. Stosh marked her return to Judaism by studying and having an adult Bat Mitzvah. What would you choose to do in Stosh's circumstance? What are the first things that you think a person should do to discover or rediscover Judaism and become involved?
4. Stosh sees activism as crucial to her Jewish identity. What are the most important parts of your Jewish identity?
5. Stosh works on issues like coexistence in Israel and the rights of the disenfranchised. What are the most important social justice issues for you?
6. Stosh says, "My purpose in life, if I look back at where I come from, has consistently been to create more space for more people to live free and safe and with dignity." What do you think Stosh means? Finish the sentence, "My purpose in life is. . . ."

Extension Activities

1. Read up on Bend the Arc and its work.
2. The name Bend the Arc comes from a Martin Luther King Jr. quotation: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." What did MLK mean? Why would a Jewish group choose this quote for its name?

ANGELA WARNICK BUCHDAHL

Themes: Jewish Diversity, Jewish Identity, Exclusion

Discussion Questions

1. Angela's family merged its Jewish and Korean identities in a variety of ways. What are the different aspects of your identity? How do you merge them into a cohesive whole? Do any aspects feel at odds with another?
2. Angela says, "I got the best of my mother's spiritual questioning, curiosity, and worldview, combined with my father's Jewish vocabulary." What have you gained from your parents, grandparents and other adults influential in your life? How have these gifts worked together?
3. Angela felt excluded when other teens questioned her identity while visiting Israel as a teenager. Have you ever felt excluded from a group? How did you react? What can you do to make others feel included?
4. Angela says, "I could no sooner stop being a Jew than I could stop being Korean, or female, or me." What are the essential elements of your identity, those aspects that you can't stop?

Extension Activities

1. Many of Angela's sermons are available on Instagram and YouTube. Watch one or excerpts from several and discuss.
2. Invite a member of your congregation with a diverse background to come and speak with the class.
3. Angela was very hurt and uncomfortable when other teens questioned her identity. Role play that scenario. What could have Angela said? What could have an ally said to support her?

MICHAEL TWITTY

Themes: Food, Conversion, Identity

Discussion Questions

1. Food was critical to Michael's path to Judaism and his Jewish expression. Are there particular foods or food memories that connect you especially to Judaism? Does your family have specific foods that have become traditions for you?
2. Michael chose Judaism as an adult. He took the presence of an African American man at a synagogue as a sign. What makes you feel the most comfortable and the most at home in a Jewish setting? Have you ever had an experience in a Jewish setting that made you not feel comfortable?
3. Michael identifies as Jewish, Black, and gay. He says, "This makes my soul's recipe unique and powerful." What different groups do you identify with? What is your "unique recipe"?
4. Michael chose Judaism as an adult. What questions would you ask him about his conversion process?

Extension Activities

1. Ask each student to bring in a recipe or share a description of one that is unique to their family. What is the history of that recipe?
2. Michael gave a TED talk. The recording can be found on YouTube. Watch it as a class and discuss.

RACHEL COWAN

Themes: Conversion, Interfaith Marriage, Social Justice

Discussion Questions

1. Rachel wanted to make a difference in the world and chose to tutor African American students who would be going to newly integrated public schools. Imagine yourself in Rachel's position—newly graduated from college and wanting to make a change in the world. What would you choose to do? What can you do now?
2. Rachel said: "As a teenager in Wellesley, Massachusetts, I was inspired by my Quaker summer camp and my Unitarian Church youth movement, as well as my parents' New England Protestant values, to become a social justice activist, civil rights worker, Peace Corps volunteer, feminist, birdwatcher. A good person." A very similar statement could be made by a Jewish young person. What do you think is the difference? Is there one?
3. Rachel and her husband Paul wrote a book called *Mmixed Blessings* for interfaith couples like them. What types of things do you think they discussed in the book? What do you think are the biggest challenges that interfaith families face? Why do you think that they called their book *Mixed Blessings*?
4. Rachel said, "You don't have to be Ben-Gurion or Golda Meir or Gandhi or Martin Luther King. You just have to be your most authentic, courageous, and inspiring self and to trust your heart." What does this statement mean to you? How can you strive to fulfill the vision in this quotation?

Extension Activities

1. Rachel and Paul Cowan's book *Mixed Blessings* is a classic, but it was also written at a different time. Choose a few selections to share with the students. How has the Jewish community's attitude toward interfaith marriage changed?
2. Rachel was very involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The Jewish Women's Archives has an extensive curriculum about Jewish women in the civil rights movement. Choose selections from it to share with the class.

ANDREW GOODMAN

Themes: Freedom Riders, Martyrs, Civil Rights

Discussion Questions

1. Andrew risked his life to go south and register African Americans to vote. What do you think propelled him to make this choice? Would you make a similar choice?
2. Andrew's family started a foundation in his memory. What do you think would be good ways to remember Andrew and the other two men killed with him?
3. Andrew had just arrived in Mississippi when he was killed. He is remembered as a martyr—one who gives his life for a cause. Is being a martyr also being a hero? Or was something else heroic about Andrew's life and choices?

Extension Activities

1. The other two young men killed with Andrew have interesting stories as well. Michael Schwerner was also Jewish. James Chaney was African American. As a class, research and learn their stories as well.
2. There have been multiple television specials and movies about Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. Watch one as a class and discuss. One source:
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomsommer/>
3. President Obama said that Andrew's "death forever changed our nation." Spend time researching and learning about the country's reaction to Andrew's and the others' murders.

HARVEY MILK

Themes: LGBTQ, Hiding One's Identity, Finding One's Purpose

Discussion Questions

1. It took Harvey a long time to be completely open about his identity. What do you think changed that made Harvey more comfortable with being more open?
2. Harvey always felt a connection to the Jewish community, even if he was unsure whether he would be accepted by the Jewish community. What would you have told Harvey if you had the opportunity? What do you feel most closely binds you to the Jewish community?
3. Harvey took a long time to figure out the direction for his life; he had many different jobs in many different fields. Eventually, however, he found a role which he could excel in. Some people know from the start what they want to do. Other people take a little longer. Do you have ideas on what you might want to do? Do you think you will try different things or settle on one course and stick with it? Which seems like the more natural course for you?
4. Harvey ran for office multiple times before he was elected. Do you think you would have the stamina to do so?
5. When Harvey moved to San Francisco, he lived in a largely gay neighborhood. Do you think this gave him confidence to be more open about his identity?

Extension Activities

1. Watch part of the documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* and discuss. The Sean Penn movie *Milk* might have appropriate scenes to share, but it is rated R.

EYTAN FOX

Themes: Arab-Israeli relations, Israeli Culture, LGBTQ

Discussion Questions

1. Eytan says, "I grew up with that man, with that myth. He's on my shoulder, on my back, he's connected to me from all directions." What does he mean by that statement? What stereotypes or expectations follow you? What happens when somebody doesn't live up to the expectations that the world has for them?
2. If you could make a movie about an aspect of your life, what would you choose? Or would you not choose to focus on your own life but something else?
3. Why do you think that Eytan focuses on human relationships rather than politics in his films? How did his upbringing prepare him for exploring Arab-Jewish friendships?
4. When Eytan first told his father that he was gay, his father did not accept it. How might you have reacted in Eytan's position? What would you have said? Do you think you would encourage your father to be more accepting or just wait for him hopefully to come around?
5. Why do you think being in Hollywood was difficult for Eytan?

Extension Activities

1. Watch an excerpt of one of Eytan's films and discuss. His films, as a whole, will have aspects not appropriate for young people. So preview before choosing something to view.

EMERICH "IMI" LICHTENFELD

Themes: Self-Defense, Stereotypes, Path to Peace

Discussion Questions

1. Like Eytan Fox broke the stereotype of a macho Israeli man, Imi broke the stereotype of a weak, scholarly Eastern European Jew. What use do stereotypes play, if any? How can we fight against stereotypes? What stereotypes exist about contemporary American Jewish kids and teens? Are they correct?
2. Imi chose not to run, but to fight. Would you have made the same decision? What is valid about either choice?
3. What made Imi a hero? His bravery? Physical fitness? Ability to organize? Ability to create a new self-defense system? Something else?
4. Imi spent his whole life devoted to martial arts and supporting the Israeli army. When asked why he did it, he answered, "So one may walk in peace." What do you think Imi meant? How can Krav Maga, meaning Contact Combat, bring about peace?
5. Imi taught Krav Maga to people of all ages and abilities. Why was it important that everybody could learn something from it?

Extension Activities

1. Invite a Krav Maga expert to teach some very fundamental moves to the students.
2. Invite a self-defense expert to teach some basics of self defense.
3. You can find more information about the Pentcho, the ship that Imi took to get to Israel , here: <https://jewishrhodes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/pencho1.pdf> It is an interesting and dramatic story for students.

UZIA GALIL

Themes: High Tech, Culture Shock, Start-up Nation

Discussion Questions

1. Uzia left his family behind to escape the Holocaust at age 16. Then he established himself in the land of Israel on his own. What qualities did this take? Would you be able to have done what Uzia did?
2. Uzia went to Purdue University in Indiana for graduate school. This must have been a tremendous culture shock for a young European refugee who had only recently established himself in Israel. What qualities and motivations would Uzia need to have to be successful?
3. Uzia saw the future of Israel's economy in the high tech world. He was right. Today, Israel is one of the world's high tech giants. What questions would you have for Uzia about his prediction?
4. Uzia declared his life motto to be, "Yesterday has already gone. Tomorrow is the future, and I'm always looking ahead." What does he mean? How does this motto fit with Uzia's life experiences? What would your motto be?

Extension Activities

1. Research Israel's high tech sector as a class. What new technology has Israel shared with the world?
2. Research the Matam Industrial Park as a class
3. Read and discuss this oral history given by Uzia Galil: [https://ethw.org/Oral-History:Uzia Galil](https://ethw.org/Oral-History:Uzia_Galil)

SHERYL SANDBERG

Themes: Women as Leaders, Friendship, Soviet Jewry

Discussion Questions

1. Sheryl is still close with her high school friends many decades later. What qualities do you think it takes to sustain a friendship for that long?
2. Sheryl's friends use the following words to describe her: "commanding, personable, motivated, smart, and dynamic." What words would your friends use to describe you?
3. As a teen, Sheryl was involved in the movement to free and resettle the Jews of what is now the *former* Soviet Union. It taught her that she can make a difference. Do you have a cause that is particularly important to you?
4. When describing women as leaders, Sheryl says, "Women hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in." What does it mean to lean in? Do you agree with Sheryl's assessment?
5. Sheryl says, "A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies, and men ran half our homes." Do you agree with her statement? How would you define an equal world?

Extension Activities

1. Read and discuss a selection from *Lean In*.
2. Sheryl has given several TED talks, available on YouTube. Watch one as a class or part of one and discuss.

ALY RAISMAN

Themes: #MeToo, Jewish Pride, Dedication

Discussion Questions

1. Aly chose to give up a lot to pursue her dream of being an Olympic gymnast. Would you be willing to give up so much to pursue a dream?
2. Aly chose a specifically Jewish song for her winning routine. Why do you think that she made that choice? Would you have made a similar choice?
3. Aly breathed deeply to calm her anxiety. What do you do to calm yourself when you get nervous?
4. Aly tells young people: “Your story matters, you matter, and you should trust yourself.” Do you think this is an important message for young people to hear? What does it mean to “trust yourself”?
5. Aly found the strength to speak out in court about being abused. Do you think this took the same or a different type of courage as being an Olympic athlete?

Extension Activities

1. Watch Aly’s winning routine to Hava Nagila as a class.
2. Bring in a facilitator to talk with the students about identifying and standing up if they suspect or experience abuse.
3. Aly isn’t the only Jewish Olympic gymnast. There are quite a few, including Ágnes Keleti who is also featured in *Heroes with Chutzpah*. Research and learn about other Jewish gymnasts.

PAULA ABDUL

Themes: Passions, Insecurity, Eating Disorders

Discussion Questions

1. Paula says, "Dance is my truest love and my burning passion. What a gift to be able to evoke and express joy, curiosity, sensuality, anger." What do you consider your passions?
2. Paula grew more insecure as she become more successful. Paula says that it was more comfortable being anonymous. Do you think that successful people are usually secure people? Would you rather be famous or anonymous?
3. Paula says that Judaism gave her strength at difficult times. "I treasure the traditions of Judaism. They have grounded me during my most challenging hours when only my faith could hold me to my life's course." Do you feel supported by Jewish traditions? At a time of challenge, what do you look toward for support?
4. Paula chose to have a bat mitzvah as an adult. Do you think you would make a similar choice if you didn't have a bat or bar mitzvah at 13?
5. What do you think Paula means by: "Break the rules, stand apart, ignore your head, and follow your heart." Do you agree?

Extension Activities

1. Invite an expert on eating disorders to come and speak to the class.
2. Invite somebody who has had an adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah to speak to the class.
3. Paula's father was a Syrian Jew who grew up in Brazil. There are many distinct and proud Jewish communities from the Arab or Mizrachi world. Research about the Jewish community of Syria and its customs.

DAVEED DIGGS

Themes: Jewish of color, Setting Priorities

Discussion Questions

1. Daveed used rapping as a way to get people to notice him and pay attention. Do you have any techniques when you want to be heard and have your message amplified?
2. Daveed has repeatedly been the victim of police profiling. How might his friends or bystanders been his ally?
3. Daveed decided to only accept projects that interest him, even if it meant not having a lot of money and needing to rely on the hospitality of others. What would you have done in Daveed's situation? Would you have stuck with interesting, although not lucrative, projects? Or would you have looked for something more lucrative but perhaps not as interesting?
4. Daveed originally did not want to do *Puppies for Hanukkah* but changed his mind when he heard more about it. What swayed his opinion? Why might he not have wanted to make the video? What would you have done in his place?
5. Daveed's family chose to spell his name based on the Hebrew pronunciation, rather than as David. What do you think of that choice? Would you ever choose to use your Hebrew rather than English name or use the Hebrew pronunciation of your name? Why or why not?
6. Daveed faced a number of challenges as a young person: racism, poverty and police profiling. But looking back, that's not what he remembers most. Daveed says, "What I remember is laughing so much my face hurt, and never ever being bored." How do you think that he preserved his positive attitude despite the challenges?

Extension Activities

1. Watch the video *Puppies for Hanukkah* as a class. It is a pretty simple video but what does it accomplish?

JACOBO TIMERMAN

Themes: Activist Journalism, The Disappeared Ones of Argentina, Heroism

Discussion Questions

1. Jacobo faced a lot of challenges and difficult situations in his childhood: pogroms, poverty, the death of his father. How do you think this impacted his life's path to being an activist journalist?
2. Spend a little time with this statement and unpack it. What is Jacobo saying? What is the background of the different words and phrases that he uses? "When I heard them speak, I became destined for that world I would never abandon—a world that at times took the form of Zionism, at times the struggle for human rights, at times the fight for freedom of expression." What is the connection between Zionism, human rights and freedom of expression?
3. Jacobo published the names of the *desaparecidos*, the disappeared ones of Argentina, despite threats to his safety. Why do you think that he did this? Do you think actions like Jacobo's are important? Jacobo received death threats and friends urged him to leave the country. He refused. Do you consider this heroic?
4. What does it mean when he says, "I am the one who belongs to Masada?"
5. Jacobo says, "The word that I hate most is 'unbelievable.'" Why do you think he dislikes the word "unbelievable" so much?

Extension Activities

1. Research and learn more about the disappeared ones in Argentina and the Jewish connection to them.
2. Research and learn more about Masada.

MIGUEL NAJDORF

Themes: Loss and Recovery, Ethnic Pride, Chess

Discussion Questions

1. Miguel felt torn between his Polish and Jewish identities when deciding whether to compete in Nazi Germany. Do you think he should have competed? Do you ever feel torn between your Jewish and other identities?
2. Miguel faced a lot of loss during the Holocaust. Nearly his whole family was destroyed. In explaining how he dealt with the loss, he says, "Chess helped me. Chess teaches one to lose." Did this statement surprise you? How so? What helps you get through difficult times?
3. Miguel took on the name Miguel when he became an Argentinian citizen. Why do you think he made this choice? Would you have done likewise?
4. Miguel, after losing his entire family in the Holocaust, found a remaining cousin on a NYC subway. Imagine that moment. How do you think Miguel felt? What do you think that they said to each other? How do you think the people around them reacted?
5. Miguel played chess against world leaders, among others. How do you think it felt to play the Pope or Winston Churchill in chess?
6. Miguel said of chess, "When I start to play, I feel emotions, the desire to win, happiness. The beauty of chess is like nothing else." This is quite a statement about a game! Do you have an interest that makes you feel happy? Emotional? How would you describe your favorite pastimes?

Extension Activities

1. Learn about other Jewish chess greats.
2. Learn the basics of chess.
3. Research and learn about the Nazi invasion of Poland during World War II.

DAVID BEN-GURION

Themes: Zionism, Israel, Leadership

Discussion Questions

1. David was a born organizer. What skills do you think it takes to be an organizer? Is an organizer different than a leader?
2. What do you think that David was thinking and feeling when he declared the founding of the State of Israel?
3. Why would David choose the name “Lion’s Son” for his last name?
4. The Ottomans (Turkey) exiled David from the land of Israel because of his activism and strong leadership. How do you think David felt to be separated from the land of Israel? He went to the United States to raise money and gained sympathy for the land of Israel because of being exiled. Do you think that Ottoman’s plan worked or backfired?
5. David spent 10 years setting the groundwork for an independent State of Israel, setting up labor unions and political parties. Why was this planning important? What would you do if you wanted to set the groundwork for a new country?
6. David was Israel’s first Prime Minister. What qualities do you think that he needed to have?

Extension Activities

1. Study more about the founding of the State of Israel and the 1948 War for Independence.
2. Video clips of the declaration of Israel’s statehood exist. Watch a clip and discuss what can be learned about that moment in history from the details.
3. David Ben-Gurion loved the song Hatikvah and had it sung twice during the declaration of statehood. Learn the song as a class and discuss its words.

YITZHAK RABIN

Themes: Peace Process, Personal Change, Leadership

Discussion Questions

1. Yitzhak had been a fighter nearly his entire life when he decided it was time to try to be a peace maker. What internal changes do you think he had to go through to make this transition? Do you think he had doubts?
2. Why was a leader like Yitzhak needed to make peace? What about his background was important to the Israeli public? What does it take for a leader to gain your trust?
3. Yitzhak gave a strong speech at the signing of the Oslo Accords: "We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today, in a loud and a clear voice: Enough of blood and tears. Enough!" If you were advising Yitzhak, what would you have suggested that he say during his speech?
4. How can people keep Yitzhak Rabin's legacy alive? Some say that the dream of peace died with Yitzhak. What would you say to them?

Extension Activities

1. The Oslo Accords have had a lasting impact on Israel, the Palestinians and the conflict between them. Learn more about the Accords and its continued impact today.
2. Watch a video of the signing of the Accords, paying particular attention to Yitzhak Rabin's and Yasser Arafat's posture and expressions. What can we glean from them?
3. Learn the song *Shir HaShalom* which Yitzhak Rabin sang right before his death.
4. The portrait in this book shows Yitzhak Rabin as a young man. Compare it to picture of Yitzhak at an older age. Which age seems the most appropriate for the book?

EDWARD KESSLER

Themes: Interfaith Understanding, Teachers and Mentors, Family Expectations

Discussion Questions

1. Edward's family had different expectations for him than Edward had for himself. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? How do you decide whether to follow your family's expectations or your own?
2. Edward says that leaving the family business was the most difficult thing that he did. Imagine yourself as Edward's good friend. What advice would you have given him? How do you think his family felt when he left the business? What would you say is the most difficult thing that you have done?
3. Edward credits his Latin teacher with giving him the confidence to fulfill his academic goals. Have you ever had a teacher, coach or other mentor who was truly influential to you? Who was it? What do you credit them with?
4. Edward set out four steps to interfaith understanding: "encounter people who are different, find what you have in common, try to understand others as they wish to be understood, and build up confidence in who you are." What is important about each step? What do you think is the most critical step? Would you add any steps? How can this outline or method be applied to different conflicts, such as between different groups at school?
5. Edward has a nightly ritual before bedtime. Do you have a bedtime ritual also? Why might a bedtime ritual or personal rituals, in general, be important?

Extension Activities

1. Write your own bedtime blessing or ritual.
2. The Woolf Institute has a robust website with a lot of different resources. Choose some of these to explore. <https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/>

EDDIE JACOBSON

Themes: Friendship, Ordinary Heroes, Birth of Israel

Discussion Questions

1. What makes for a loyal friend? Do you agree that friends should not ask favors of one another?
2. Do you have any cardinal rules of friendship. What are they?
3. Have you ever had to ask somebody for a big favor? How did you approach it? Has anybody ever asked a big favor of you? How did either situation feel?
4. If you had found yourself in Eddie's position, what would you have done? Would you have approached President Truman or would you have respected your rule not to ask for favors?
5. Put yourself in President Truman's position. Would you have listened to Eddie? Would you have given a close friend increased consideration?

Extension Activities

1. Role play the conversation between Eddie and President Truman. What do you think Eddie should have said? What would have been the arguments for recognizing Israel?
2. As a class or individually, compose a list of the most important rules of friendship.
3. President Truman's grandson wrote a blog post about Eddie Jacobson and the founding of the State of Israel. It includes quite a few historical photos. Read it as a class to learn more: <https://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/israel/>

ISAAC MIZRAHI

Themes: Bullying, Fitting In, Reinventing Yourself

Discussion Questions

1. Isaac's father gave him a sewing machine as a young boy. This gift inspired his life's work. Have you ever received a gift that impacted you significantly?
2. Isaac didn't quite fit in at the Yeshiva of Flatbush. He was effeminate and creative and the administrators did not know what to do with him. Have you ever felt like you haven't completely fit in someplace? What did you do in this situation? Did you try to change? Try to leave the situation? Try to address the situation and make it more comfortable?
3. Isaac was teased and ridiculed for being different. If you see somebody who is being bullied or teased, what can you do to help?
4. Isaac has reinvented himself several times to react to changing times and circumstances. What does it take to reinvent yourself? Have you ever found yourself in that position?
5. Isaac had a very specific style: youthful, sophisticated and bright. If you were a designer, what style do you think you would pursue?
6. Isaac wasn't sure that he wanted to partner with Target because it was a discount brand. But he did and it was very lucrative. Would you have had the same concerns? Would you have made the same decisions?
7. Isaac says he is "an artist first and a Jew fifth." Where would you place your Jewish identity in a list of importance?

Extension Activities

1. Isaac Mizrahi is one of many Jewish fashion designers. Others include Tori Burch, Kenneth Cole, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, and Ralph Lauren (also in this book). More complete lists are available online. Divide the names among the class and research more about them.
2. Paula Abdul also has a Syrian Jewish background. Consider them together and research the background of the Syrian Jewish community.
3. Some materials from the Jewish Museum in New York exhibit on Isaac Mizrahi are still available online, including pictures of some of his creations. Explore the materials as a class: <https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/isaac-mizrahi-an-unruly-history>

JENNIE GROSSINGER

Themes: Integration, Ingenuity, Immigration

Discussion Questions

1. Jennie had a difficult childhood as an immigrant with little money. What do you think contributed to her eventual success? What advantages did she have?
2. Jennie was not well-educated. She dropped out of school at an early age to support her family. Yet, she was able to create a successful livelihood. What do you attribute her success to?
3. Jennie was particularly open to integrating her resort to African Americans at a time when many resorts were segregated. What from her background might have encouraged her to be welcoming to all?
4. Jennie and her family pivoted a lot in their lives, moving from one endeavor to another until they found success. What qualities allow somebody to pivot like that? Can you think of a time that you pivoted when something wasn't working out?
5. Jennie worked together with her family to make their resort a success. Can you give examples? How does your family or friendship group or team work together to be successful?

Extension Activities

1. Jennie forged an especially close bond with Jackie Robinson, the baseball legend. Learn more about Jackie and his connections to the Jewish community. Here is a link to one article: <https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/346507/jackie-robinson-and-the-jews/>
2. Read and discuss this longer article about Jennie Grossinger from *Smithsonian Magazine*: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/woman-who-built-waldorf-catskills-180957130/>

RED AUERBACH

Themes: Coaching, Integration, Bad and Good Qualities

Discussion Questions

1. Red's name was really Arnold, but everybody called him Red because of his hair. Do you have a nickname? How did you get it?
2. Red was a highly successful coach but also a controversial one, who had a temper, would gloat, and often got thrown out of games. What do you think of his behavior? Does he get a "pass," because he was a successful coach or because sports can be rough? How do you balance a person's positive and negative qualities?
3. Red was a warm and demanding coach. What qualities do you think a good coach or teacher has? Who has been your best teacher or coach? Have you ever taught or coached younger kids? What skill does it take?
4. Red did not rely too much on statistics when making choices for his team. Instead, he focused on his intuition and each player's personality and "heart." How do you go about balancing concrete facts and intuition when making decisions? Do you trust evidence or your gut reaction more?
5. Red chose to integrate the Celtics on principle and also because it just made sense for the team. How did racial integration help the team?
6. Red said, "Take pride in what you do. The kind of pride I'm talking about is not the arrogant puffed-up kind; it's just the whole idea of caring—fiercely caring." He is suggesting there are different types of pride. Do you agree? What is the difference between "arrogant" pride and "caring" pride? Can you think of an example of each?

Extension Activities

1. There are several movies that can complement this biographical profile.
 - a. *Destination NBA* follows several NBA hopefuls, including one who is an observant Jew. <https://www.amazon.com/Destination-NBA-G-League-Odyssey/dp/B0C6X798X5>
 - b. *The First Basket*, if you find where to purchase or stream it, is a documentary about Jews and basketball. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1171238/>
 - c. *Full Court Miracle* is a fictionalized account of a true story about an African American coach who finds himself coaching at a yeshiva. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382142/> It is available for streaming.

SUE BIRD

Themes: Reaching your Potential, Pay Equity, Women's Sports

Discussion Questions

1. Sue's interest in basketball began when she went to a professional game as a young girl. She was mesmerized by the sport and it quickly became her passion. How did your interests and passions begin?
2. Sue's high school coach asked, "Do you want to be a player who had great potential, or do you want to be that player that reached her potential?" What do you think makes the difference between the two? Sue's parents said that she could do anything if she put her mind to it. Do you agree with them?
3. How do you think Sue felt knowing that she could not play professional basketball, because there was not league for women?
4. Sue faced wage inequity in the WNBA and had to play in the off season to support herself. If you were Sue, how would you have advocated for female athletes?
5. How do you feel about Sue becoming an Israeli citizen to expand her playing options?
6. Sue was never public about being lesbian until her partner Megan Rapinoe encouraged her. What do you see as the benefits of Sue being public about her identity? Or do you see her sexual identity as private, unrelated to basketball which she didn't need to share?
7. If you were famous, would you use your star power for social justice causes? Why or why not? If so, which ones?

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about the history of the WBNA and the challenges of getting it established.
2. *60 Minutes* did a segment in March 2022 about Sue Bird. Watch the episode and discuss: [cbsn.ws/3ikSmyT](https://www.cbsn.ws/3ikSmyT)

JANET YELLEN

Themes: Life Goals, Family Interests, American Dream

Discussion Questions

1. Janet knew from childhood what she wanted to accomplish: she wanted to help people who were working class or experiencing poverty. It took her some time to learn about economics and to realize it could help her goal. How does Janet, by working on economic policy, help the less fortunate? Is she working toward her economic goal? Have you ever had a conversation that really impacted on you and made you think about things differently?
2. Janet, her husband, and their son are all economists. In your family, is there a family vocation or business? Or does everybody have their own professions and interests? What are the advantages of a family business or shared professional interest? What is the advantage of everybody having their own professional interests?
3. At her confirmation hearing to become Treasury Secretary, Janet said, "We must restore the American dream—a society where each person can rise to their potential and dream even bigger for their children. As Treasury Secretary, I will work every day towards rebuilding that dream for all." What do you think is the American Dream? Do you agree with Janet or would you define it differently?

Extension Activities

1. Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, has a whole musical written about him. There are several satirical songs about Janet Yellen on YouTube. Watch one or two and then write your own.
2. A large part of Janet's position is making sure that our country's economics are ethical. Ethics related to money dates back to the Torah and Rabbinic law. For example: "If one weighs with weights that are deficient by the standards agreed upon in his locality, or measures with a measuring vessel deficient by the agreed standards, one violates a negative commandment, for Scripture states (Leviticus 19:35), 'You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in length, in weight, or in measure. (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Theft, 7:1) As a class, study this citation and others related to ethics and money.

DANNY SIEGEL

Themes: Tzedakah, Youth Group, Childhood Experiences

Discussion Questions

1. Danny Siegel and Janet Yellen had very similar experiences as young people. They both had fathers who were physicians to lower-income patients and, by watching their fathers and learning about the patients, they both built up feelings of empathy and the a desire to make a difference. What do you see as different between their experiences? What do you see as different about the outcomes?
2. Danny was very involved and devoted to his youth group, USY (United Synagogue Youth). Do you have a youth group, club or team that is very important to you? What do you gain from belonging to it?
3. Danny sought out “mitzvah heroes” to support. If you were to compose a list of qualities and attributes for a mitzvah hero, what would be on the list?
4. To get started making a difference, Danny says to ask yourself: “What am I good at? What do I like to do? And what’s bothering me about the world today?” Have each student answer these questions and then share.
5. Danny believes that heroes exist everywhere, performing small acts of kindness with big results. Can you think of people who reflect these criteria (other than Danny!)?

Extension Activities

1. As a class, research different worthy organizations in your community and/or Israel. Then, as a class or a school, decide where to donate the tzedakah money that you’ve collected over the year.

AMICHAU LAU-LAVIE

Themes: Family Expectations, LGBTQ, B'nai Mitzvah

Discussion Questions

1. Amichai's family contains rabbis who can be traced back for 39 generations. Imagine that your family had such a legacy. How do you think you would feel about it? Would it be a source of pride or stress or something else? Have you ever been encouraged to follow in your family's footsteps?
2. Amichai's Torah portion for his bar mitzvah contained laws traditionally used to prohibit homosexuality. This was difficult for Amichai to read, because he knew he was gay. What would you have done in his situation? Have you ever been asked or required to do something that you disagree with or find distasteful? How did you react?
3. Why do you think Amichai came to New York rather than staying in Israel? If you could ask Amichai questions about this decision, what would you ask?
4. Amichai eventually followed in his family's footsteps and became a rabbi—a liberal one. He says: "I know what it's like to be ostracized and to be partially welcomed. I know what it's like to hop between identities, to be hyphenated." How do you think his background helps him as a rabbi?
5. Amichai has worked to redefine b'nai mitzvah, or as he says b mitzvah. If you could change aspects of the b'nai mitzvah process, what would they be?

Extension Activities

1. Learn about the Jewish approach to LGBTQ issues. How does it differ between the Jewish religious movements?
2. There is a large number of resources on the LabShul website. Incorporate one or more of these resources into your discussion. <https://www.labshul.org>
3. Amichai has created many new programs and approaches to Judaism and the synagogue experience, including StorahTelling and the Lab/Shul. Think out of the box. What great new ideas do you have for the Jewish community? Work in a small group to develop one idea and then present it to the class.

ABBY STEIN

Themes: Gender Identity, Personal Prayer, Leaving Home

Discussion Questions

1. Abby composed her own prayer for before bedtime: She repeated these words each night before bed: “Holy creator, I am going to sleep now, and I look like a boy. I am begging you, when I wake up in the morning, I want to be a girl.” Have you ever written your own prayers? If you were to compose a prayer, what would it say?
2. Abby felt like an essential part of her identity—her gender—was wrongly identified. What are the key parts of your identity? How would you feel if one part of your identity felt out of sync or wrongly perceived?
3. Abby realized to live as she wanted that she had to leave her family and the tight-knit community that had always been her home. If you were Abby’s friend, how would you advise her?
4. For Abby, leaving the Hasidic community was almost like moving to a new country. What do you think would have been the hardest parts?
5. Most people do not have such a dramatic change in their lives as Abby did, but most everybody leaves home and many people move numerous times over the course of their lives. What can we learn from Abby’s example? Have you ever moved? What did you find the most difficult, the most exciting and the biggest challenges?
6. “I like to shake things up. . . . It’s a way of changing things. Making trouble is actually helping,” says Abby. In a similar vein, civil rights leader John Lewis once said, “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America.” What is “good trouble”? Do you agree with Abby and John Lewis that making trouble is sometimes the right thing to do?

Extension Activities

1. Talk about the purpose of prayer and share examples of prayers, both traditional and individually written, with the students. Explain that there are prayers that express hope and prayers that express gratitude. You might start with a typical blessing that introduced many prayers in Jewish liturgy: “Praised are You. . . .” Have the students compose their own prayers to say before bedtime.
2. Research more about transgender identity and Judaism. The organization Keshet offers this lesson plan on transgender issues in Judaism: <https://www.keshetonline.org/resources/transgender-101-gender-diversity-in-judiasm/> It is meant for adults and teens, so make sure to present it in an age-appropriate way for your class.

DANIEL RADCLIFFE

Themes: Hidden Disabilities, Feeling Different, Jewish identity

Discussion Questions

1. "I was at a private school—an almost exclusively white, very privileged place—and I was put into a film set with people from 100 different backgrounds, races, classes, everything. Suddenly, because of Potter, my worldview got much wider than it would have been," says Daniel. Have you ever experienced a completely new type of environment? How did it affect you?
2. Are you surprised that Daniel has a disability? Do you think having a disability made playing Harry Potter easier or harder? Have you known somebody with a hidden disability? What are some the challenges and what are some of the advantages of this type of disability?
3. Daniel has a Jewish and an Irish background. He says, "I've always had an awareness and pride about those two cultures and histories. And I always felt a little bit different from most people around me." Have you ever felt different because of your identity? How did you address these feelings?
4. Daniel is not religious, but he has a Jewish identity based on his family history and how his family overcame antisemitism. What goes into a Jewish identity? If somebody is not religious, how else can they express their Jewish connection?
5. Daniel says, "There is something inherently valuable about being a misfit." What do you think that Daniel means? Do you agree with him?

Extension Activities

1. Daniel appeared on the British show *Who do you think you are?* to learn more about his ancestors and their stories. Read this article about his appearance on the show and what he learned: <https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tv-series/episodes/daniel-radcliffe> Clips from the episode can be found on YouTube.
2. Daniel sees himself as an ally to the LGBTQ community. Learn what it means to be an ally to ill-treated social groups and brainstorm ways that the students can become better allies.
3. Some people have argued that the goblins in Harry Potter were inspired by antisemitic tropes. Read up on this controversy and discuss it as a class.

REBECCA DUBOWE

Themes: Hearing Impairments, Sign Language, *B'tzelem Elohim*

Discussion Questions

1. Rebecca's parents treated her as a typical child and filled her life with experiences that would enrich any childhood. Why do you think they decided not to dwell on her disability?
2. Likewise, her parents did not have her learn sign language. Rather they focused on making sure that she could read lips and speak. Some in the deaf community would applaud this decision and others feel that sign language binds the deaf community together and is essential to learn. What do you think about the choice made by Rebecca's parents?
3. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, things have become a little easier for those who are disabled. For example, school districts must provide a suitable education for all students. But there still is discrimination. How can you be an ally to those who are disabled, especially fellow students in school?
4. Rebecca makes simple adjustments, called accommodations, to serve as a rabbi, like passing out copies of sermons in advance. What other accommodations do you think might be necessary?

Extension Activities

1. Learn to sign the Shema or another Jewish prayer. There are tutorials available on YouTube.
2. Rebecca says, "I don't consider myself as having a disability; I believe we all have different abilities," she says. "We were all created b'tzelem Elohim (sic.)—in God's image—and we are all unique." Learn more about the concept of b'tzelem Elohim, being created in God's image. Discuss with the class what makes them b'tzelem Elohim.
3. Read this short article by Rebecca Dubowe, about disabilities in the Jewish community, and discuss. <https://www.jewelsofelul.com/2010/09/27/elul-27-rabbi-rebecca-i-dubowe/>

ALMA HERNANDEZ

Themes: Latinx Jews, Prejudice, Elected Officials

Discussion Questions

1. Alma chose the Hebrew-Spanish name Malka Librada for herself. It roughly means “queen of freedom.” If you were to choose a new Hebrew name for yourself, what would it be and why?
2. Alma was unfairly treated in high school, because she was Latinx. If you see somebody being treated poorly because of their ethnicity or religion, what can you do? What if you are the victims of the taunts?
3. Alma chose to run for office so she could make an impact and improve circumstances for kids. What qualities does somebody need to run for office?
4. Alma campaigned to have Holocaust education made mandatory. Do you feel it should be a mandatory part of what students learn? Why?
5. If you were to run for office, what issues and promises would make up the core of your campaign?
6. Alma started working on campaigns as a teenager and was elected to the Arizona State House at age 26. What are some ways that teens can be involved in the political process? Do you think it is important for there to be young elected officials? Or is it better to wait for someone to gain more life experience before running for a public office?

Extension Activities

1. Alma says, “We’re all human. We’re neighbors. And as Jews, we know what it is like to be immigrants. So it’s our duty to do what we can to welcome others who come here.” Read this article and Judaism and immigration <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-and-immigration/>. Then discuss.
2. In this article, author Arielle Egozi explains her Jewish Latina background. Read the article and discuss. <https://www.heyalma.com/i-am-jewish-but-im-also-latina/>
3. The website <https://jewtina.org/> has a lot of information about Jewish Latina history and culture, including numerous first person interviews. Choose materials from the site to learn more.

MOACYR SCLiar

Themes: Mixed Identity, Jews of Latin America, Jewish Writers

Discussion Questions

1. What is the history of your name?
2. Moacyr's family came to Brazil from Russia. Do you know where your family originated? Do you know any part of their immigration story?
3. "We have this double identity—the identity from our parents and the identity of the country we live in. To have a double identity can be a problem, but not for writers. For writers it is a source of inspiration," says Moacyr. Do you have a mixed identity? Do you see it as a problem or an inspiration?
4. Moacyr used a centaur—half horse, half human—to symbolize his mixed identity. If you were to write a story exploring your identity, what might be the central symbol? You may need to discuss symbols and their purpose before asking this question.
5. Brazilian students will likely read *The Centaur in the Garden*. What have been the most memorable books that you have read in school? Have any been by Jewish authors?

Extension Activities

1. The Jewish community in Brazil is the first in the Americas. There is limited antisemitism in Brazil and about 180,000 Jewish citizens today. Learn more about the Jewish community of Brazil. This article is a good place to start:
<https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/judaism-brazil> .
2. *The Centaur in the Garden* is difficult to find in English translation. University of Wisconsin press published a translation in 2003 with this isbn 978-0299187842. It is available through used book sellers.
3. Moacyr said, "I think that you are entitled to all the identities you happen to have. You have the right to several identities." Have the students create a collage representing their multiple identities. Have them include this quotation at the bottom.

ANN LANDERS & ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

Themes: Sibling Rivalry, Reconciliation, Advice

Discussion Questions

1. Abby and Ann were more than twins; their lives mirrored one another. As girls and young women, they were very close and did almost everything together. What would be the advantages of such a close relationship? What would be the challenges?
2. Ann and Abby were famous advice columnists. Do you think you would enjoy being an advice columnist? Why or why not?
3. The two sisters had different approaches. Abby wrote more sarcastic responses whereas Ann's answers were more in-depth. Which approach would you prefer?
4. Ann and Abby became fierce competitors. They even stopped talking to one another. What advice would you give them?
5. Have you ever had a falling out with a friend? Were you able to resolve your differences? How? When you have a fight with a sibling or friend, what are good steps to take toward reconciliation?
6. Abby and Ann made giving advice their lives' work. What do you think are the most important things to remember when giving advice? What is the best way to approach giving advice?
7. Who do you normally turn to for advice? How do you decide who to trust?

Extension Activities

1. Share an advice column from Dear Abby and/or Ann Landers. Here is a compilation of Dear Abby columns: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/words-of-wisdom-the-best-of-dear-abby> Here are some from Ann Landers: <https://annlanders.com/about-ann-landers.php> You will need to pick and choose which letters and answers to share, as many are probably not appropriate for your students
2. Present the students with several "letters" asking for advice and have them work in small groups to answer.

BECKY SILVERSTEIN

Themes: Identity, Personal Pronouns, Non-Binary

Discussion Questions

1. Becky did not quite know where he belonged growing up. He didn't feel quite like a boy or quite like a girl. If you had a friend like Becky, what advice would you offer? How would you support your friend?
2. Identity is a tricky thing. It can be gender identity, ethnic identity, religious identity or social identity. Trying to figure out where you belong can be hard. Have you ever had a moment when you weren't sure about your identity? When do two aspects of your identity seemed to be at odds?
3. Becky uses a traditionally female first name with male pronouns to express his identity as genderqueer. How do you react to this choice? Part of Becky's goal is making people think deeply when referring to him. Does his choice of pronouns help meet this goal?
4. Becky chose to become a rabbi, because he believes deeply in connecting with other people and building up positive relationships. He developed a passion for gathering Jewish community together. What do you think are the most important qualities for a rabbi? When considering your future profession, what criteria do you think might be important to you?
5. Becky's approach to Judaism is finding those elements that have personal meaning and embracing them. What is your approach to Judaism?
6. Becky believes in a non-binary approach. Research what it means to be non-binary. What other topics, other than gender, can be approached in a non-binary way? Do you normally see the world in a binary or non-binary manner?

Extension Activities

1. SVARA, the yeshiva where Becky teaches, has extensive learning materials online. Take some time to visit and choose some to share with your students. The materials are meant for adults so they may need to be adjusted for your students: <https://svara.org/>
2. Becky shares essays, blog posts and musing on her congregation's website: <https://www.beynkodeshlchol.com/> Choose some to share with your students.

JUDITH LOVE COHEN

Themes: Women in Science, Breaking Social Norms, Balancing Work and Family

Discussion Questions

1. Judith was advised to find a “finishing school” and husband, and not go to college. She broke the social norms of the time to pursue her goals. What qualities did Judith need to have to chart her own course? If the guidance counselor had given you that advice, how would you have responded?
2. Judith went through undergraduate and graduate school without meeting any other female students in engineering. How do you think Judith felt about being the only female student? What challenges do you think she might have faced?
3. Judith was a dedicated student and also a dedicated ballet dancer. Both take a lot of time and energy. Do you balance schoolwork and other activities? Is this hard to do? How do you make sure that you have time for everything? Have you ever felt stress or like you were being pulled in multiple directions?
4. Judith had a challenging career and had four children. She even brought work with her when she went into labor! How do you think she balanced it all? Do you think it is possible to truly balance family and professional commitments? How do you envision balancing things when you get older?
5. When she retired, Judith published books about women in science and encouraging girls to pursue engineering and other STEM degrees. Why do you think that she decided to launch this project? Do you think books like this would have an impact on young readers?

Extension Activities

1. Break into small groups and research the Apollo Space Program, Minuteman missiles and the Hubble Space Telescope. Then report back.
2. Invite a female engineer or scientist to visit the class and answer questions about their career path.
3. The books from Judith Love Cohen’s publishing house are still available through used book sites. Consider ordering one or more to share with the class. They are quite dated but will provide a window into the time period when she lived.

ARNO PENZIAS

Themes: Kindertransport, Perception/Intuition, Big Bang

Discussion Questions

1. Arno's parents tried to protect him from knowing too much about the rise of Nazism, but he still heard them talk and understood that not everything was right. "I began to realize that there were bad things that my parents couldn't completely control, something to do with being Jewish. I learned that everything would be fine if we could only get to 'America,'" says Arno. How do you imagine Arno felt, overhearing his parents? How do you think he felt knowing that his parents were not completely in control?
2. Arno's parents sent his brother and him ahead to safety in England, then followed later. How do you think Arno felt, being separated from his family? Many children faced a similar separation. What could have the volunteers in England done to be supportive?
3. Arno knew how to really listen and sense the dynamics of a situation. Some people call this being perceptive; others call it having strong intuition. What skills do you think you need to be a good listener and to sense what is happening below the surface of a situation? What is the difference between being perceptive and having strong intuition?
4. Arno found leftover radiation from the Big Bang. How do you think he felt when he made this discovery? He made the discovery when researching something else. Have you ever started out on a project, only to realize that your work is taking you in a different direction? Do you follow that direction or stick with the original goal?

Extension Activities

1. Learn more about the Kindertransport and the children saved by it.
2. Research about the Jewish approach to the Big Bang. This site from the BBC has some good information: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zw9ky4j/revision/2>
3. Arno Penzias sat for an oral history project about his scientific discoveries. Read the transcript and choose selections to share with the students: https://ethw.org/Oral-History:Arno_Penzias
4. This article from *National Geographic* includes an in-depth story about how the Penzias family escaped from Germany. It includes many vintage pictures. Read and discuss as a class. <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2022/06/how-a-strangers-kindness-during-wwii-helped-give-us-the-big-bang-theory>

SOLOMON SOUZA

Themes: Art, Jewish Heroes, Creativity

Discussion Questions

1. Solomon paints portraits of people whom he finds particularly inspiring. Who would you choose to include for a portrait and why?
2. Do you think you would prefer to do street paintings like Solomon or work in an artist studio? What are the advantages of working on street paintings? What are the disadvantages? Have you ever seen a mural that really moved you?
3. "I am a big mix of a human, a mutt you could say, with roots from India to Israel. . . . I'm able to see the beauty of the world and its differences," says Solomon. How does Solomon's mixed background strengthen his art? How does he incorporate different elements of his background together?
4. Solomon credits his mother for nurturing his creativity from a young age. She was a painter and he spent hours in her studio. Have your parents nurtured your creativity? Other qualities that are important to you? How so?
5. Solomon sees art as a way to communicate and to create change in the world. How can art help him reach these goals?

Extension Activities

1. Have each student choose one of the heroes in this book and have them make a portrait of the person. Consider having them make the portraits mural-sized. If you have an art teacher to work with, introduce Solomon's graffiti style and have them create the portraits that way.
2. Alternatively, have the students create self-portraits.
3. Share several of Solomon's portraits and learn about the people portrayed in them. Solomon posts many examples on his Instagram feed:
<https://www.instagram.com/solomonsouza/?hl=en>
4. Solomon posted this piece of art, of a falling dove, a few weeks after the massacres of October 7, 2023.
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=817833510346041&set=a.206235548172510>
Share the art with the students, discuss and have them create their own art of a peace theme.

MEL BLANC

Themes: Unique Talent, Strong Interests, Bullying

Discussion Questions

1. Mel had a truly unique talent. What is something that you can do very well? What do you consider your talents? Where do you think talents come from? Can you teach yourself a talent?
2. Mel did not excel in school. He skipped class and bothered the teachers with impersonations. What might have been holding Mel back from succeeding more in class? One teacher was particularly cruel to him, saying he would not amount to anything. How would you have reacted to that teacher if you were Mel? If you were another member of the class?
3. Mel was almost obsessive with listening to sounds and trying to copy them. Do you have any interests that have become all consuming? What are they? Mel was so interested in sounds that he sometimes did not even realize that he was practicing making them. Have you ever become so absorbed in an interest or an activity?
4. Mel voiced numerous different characters from Bugs Bunny to Porky Pig to Tweety Bird. It is estimated that he voiced 90% of Warner Brothers characters. Here is a partial list: https://looneytunes.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Characters_voiced_by_Mel_Blanc Which is your favorite? What questions would you ask Mel about his career as a voice actor?

Extension Activities

1. Watch some classic cartoons that Mel voiced. Does it sound like the same person is behind all the voices?
2. Mel once said, "We didn't make pictures for children. We didn't make pictures for adults. We made them for ourselves." Does this surprise you? Do you think of cartoons as being for kids, adults or both?
3. Watch and discuss this interview with Mel Blanc by Johnny Carson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKVw4Zc5Xdw>
4. Read this short article and then take a vote: Is Bugs Bunny Jewish? <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/2013-12-26/ty-article/is-bugs-bunny-a-jew/0000017f-db19-df62-a9ff-dfdf4ded0000>