

Sixth Grade*

June 2005

The sixth grade curriculum has three primary components: The Holocaust, comparative religion and comparative Judaism. The unit on comparative Judaism will include ritual and prayer practices and customs so that the students are familiar with what other Jews do, as well as believe. Parents should be as involved as much as possible with the Holocaust unit and significant time inside and outside of the classroom should be given to processing the students' feelings and reactions to this period of Jewish history.

From *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust*:

1. Define what you mean by "Holocaust."
2. Avoid comparisons of pain.
3. Avoid simple answers to complex history.
4. Just because it happened, doesn't mean it was inevitable.
5. Strive for precision of language.
6. Make careful distinctions about sources of information.
7. Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions.
8. Do not romanticize history to engage students' interest.
9. Contextualize the history you are teaching.
10. Translate statistics into people.
11. Be sensitive to appropriate written and audio-visual content.
12. Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust.
13. Select appropriate learning activities.
14. Reinforce the objectives of your lesson plan.

Before beginning the Holocaust curriculum, teachers should assess the group's existing knowledge of the Holocaust and introduce the topic and basic vocabulary in a non-threatening manner. Activities for this include:

- *All on the Wall*: Students write on strips of paper everything that they know about the Holocaust -- for each piece of knowledge, they write on a different piece of paper. These are then collected by the teacher and arranged on the wall according to commonalities. For example, if three students all write that people had to wear Jewish stars on their clothes during the Holocaust, then these three strips would all be taped in a clump on the wall together. Teacher should discuss the commonalities, correct any obvious misinformation and commend the students for already having so much knowledge, while also reassuring the students that they're not expected to know too much yet about the Holocaust. Students then write questions that they have about the Holocaust, and the teacher copies these down-- commenting on connections between the questions.

* *This curriculum was developed through grants from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington DC Initiative in Congregational Education.*

- *Different names for the same horror.* Have students each take a three by five card and write the words The Holocaust (English), Ha Shoah (Hebrew-- i.e. Yom Hashoah-- Holocaust Memorial Day) and der khurbn (Yiddish, the destruction) on it. Explain that for the remaining survivors, "the Holocaust" will always simply be der khurbn-- and that part of the destruction was the destruction of the language-- i.e. why we only know of it as the Holocaust. Have the students keep these cards as a reminder of the different names.

- *I Never Saw Another Butterfly/ Picture Drawing.* Have students draw a picture of a window of their life-- a moment at home, at school, at play-- something that is fairly representative of their life and the people and things in it (the students may want more direction, but just encourage them to draw something realistic from their life). Then, after having the students share and explain their pictures, show them the pictures from [I Never Saw Another Butterfly; Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp](#), ed. by Hana Volavkova and discuss the images and compare them to their own artwork.

Topic: Pre-Holocaust/ Rise of the Nazi Party

Vocabulary to cover: **Third Reich, Fuehrer, Nazis, Reichstag, Hitler, Gestapo, SS, Enabling Act, Aryan, inferior race, Nuremberg Laws, Hitler Youth, Brownshirts, fascism, swastika**

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand the events and social/ economic/ international pressures that created an environment where a dictator like Hitler could rise to power and where racism and anti-Semitism could flourish.
- Consider how fascism takes root and why so many young people were attracted to the Hitler Youth Movement.

Activities:

- Watch and discuss the film *The Wave*. It recreates the classroom experiment in which a high school teacher forms his own elite "Reich" demanding fervent loyalty and creating a crisis for those students who choose not to conform. In the end, the teacher reveals his intent; to demonstrate why the German people embraced Nazism. Teachers should clarify during the discussion following the film that the idea of community itself is positive but that the best way to insure community and guard against fascism is to include "outcasts" such as Robert (a character in the film).

Read and Discuss *Daniel's Story*, by Carol Matas. These first two sections deal with Daniel's life in Frankfurt and then in the Lodz ghetto. These sections are particularly relevant if the class plans to visit the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, as the exhibit for children on the first floor is "Daniel's Story." Daniel, at the beginning of the book, is also around the same age as the sixth graders.

Topic: Early Holocaust: Kristallnacht, Symbolic Markers, Early non-Jewish Resistance

Vocabulary:

- Resistance efforts by socialist, Communist, Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses.
Discrimination, Label, Prejudice, Stereotype

Objectives:

- Understand that while Jews had been discriminated against prior to Kristallnacht, the night of broke signaled the beginning of increased state-sponsored terror against Jews and others.
- Consider the actions and bravery of non Jews in opposition to Hitler between 1933 and 1939. • Understand how symbols and labels can be used to isolate and persecute people, even today.

Activities:

- Create Kristallnacht anniversary books: Students make small notebooks using regular paper for the it and construction paper for the cover (stapled together). Decorate the covers of the books with clear jag; pieces of plastic (designed to look like glass). On November 9th-10th, ask the students to interview fries family members-- adults and young people about Kristallnacht. Had they ever heard of Kristallnacht? If what do they know about it? Ask the students to record people's answers in their books. Tell them to e what Kristallnacht is to the people have not heard of it and record their reactions.
- Discuss the following questions from the Center For Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee's [Educator's Resource Toolkit on the Holocaust](#):
 - Think about a time in your life when were a victim of stereotyping, prejudice discrimination. How were you labeled? How did this episode effect you?
 - Think about a time when you have been guilty of stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination. What shaped your view about the person or group of people? Do you think the label affected the other, person?
 - Do you believe the use of labels to describe individuals is justified? Why or why not?

Topic: Ghetto and Partisan Resistance

• **Vocabulary:** Lodz, Warsaw, Vilna, sabotage, underground couriers, United Partisan Organization/ FPO, Judenrat, Minsk.

Objectives:

- Understand that significant and varied forms of Jewish resistance occurred within ghetto walls and beyond in the forests.
- Consider the barriers to resistance-- why it was so hard to fight back.
- Appreciate the role that young people played in resistance efforts.

Activities:

- Distribute copies of the song *Zog Nit Keymol!* (We Survive!) and teach it to the students. Explain that Hirsh Glik, a poet in Vilna, was kept in the concentration camp Vayse Vake during World War II. In 1943, he joined the partisans and when the news of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising reached Vilna, he wrote this song. It immediately became the official hymn of the Jewish underground Partisan brigades. When the ghetto was liquidated, Glik was caught by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp in Estonia. During the Red Army's offensive in the Baltic area, Glik escaped from the camp to the nearby woods, where he died fighting the Germans. He was 23 years old when he died in 1943.
- Pass out copies of the traced "Oneg Shabbat" milk can archive used in the Warsaw ghetto. Explain the idea that recording history can be a form of resistance. Ask the students to decorate their cans with symbols of resistance-- quotes, thoughts and images. Collect the decorated cans and laminate them for the students to keep.
- Plan a Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Commemoration presentation for the Machar community close to April 19th, the anniversary.
- Listen to songs and read the English-translated lyrics from the CD "Rise Up and Fight! Songs of Jewish Partisans," produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.
- Watch and discuss parts of the video *Partisans of Vilna*, produced by Aviva Kempner and directed by Josh Waletzky.
- Discuss violent and non-violent forms of resistance and self-defense. Using the poem, *Shtil di Nacht* about a young woman learning to shoot a gun, discuss whether the students feel that they would have wanted to learn to shoot a gun or whether they would have preferred to participate in non-violent forms of resistance.

Topic: Concentration Camps/Terezin/ Cultural Activities as Resistance

- Children and adults at Theresienstadt painted pictures, wrote poems, played music and acted in plays during their time in the concentration camp. The book Friedl's Fireflies by Susan Goldman Rubin tells the story of Freidl Drucker Brandeis, a secular, leftist art therapist who taught painting and directed plays at Terezin. This book is an excellent resource for this lesson, as is I Never Saw Another Butterfly -- both for the original drawings and collages and for the poetry, all written by young people.

Objectives:

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that amidst unbelievable horror, adults and children found a will to live by engaging in cultural activities.
- Understand that Terezin was used by the Nazis as fake "proof" that concentration camps were livable.

Activities:

- Read and discuss poems written by young people in Terezin and write poems about what it feels like to learn about Terezin.
- Read and discuss Friedl's Fireflies.
- Write and perform an original play inspired by themes raised in Friedl's Fireflies, perhaps referencing the plays produced in Terezin and using poems by the children of Terezin, as well as poems by students in the class.
- Research and discuss how people today use cultural activities to resist oppression, inspire hope and transform communities.

Topic: Treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II

During World War II, at the same time that the Holocaust was occurring in Eastern Europe, the United States government rounded up Americans of Japanese descent and sent them to concentration camps. These were not death camps, but represented terrible discrimination nonetheless. People's entire lives were uprooted, leaving scars for generations to come.

Read the words (and look at the paintings) of Lili Sasaki in *Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps* (edited by Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman), and the self-portrait/ poem by the unidentified child.

Compare the contrast these to the pictures and writings in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (children in Terezin).

Discuss Issei (first generation, immigrant-born) and Nissei (second generation, American born) and whether it is a dynamic of ghetto life that generations interact more intimately. Was this true in the Jewish ghettos, for example?

Source: America's concentration camps: www.ionaprep.put.k12.ny.us/projects/intrnmnt/about.htm

Topic: African Americans Soldiers in World War II

Research and discuss:

African Americans and other people of color faced tremendous racism in the United States during the period of World War II, including being segregated in the army overseas. In some cases, Nazi prisoners of war were treated better than black troops. The black troops were some of the first soldiers to encounter Nazi concentration camp prisoners.

Source: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Learning Center:
www.ushmm.org/wlc

HANDOUT: Black World War II Soldiers Battled Fascism and Racism

By Nurith C. Aizenman, Washington Post Staff Writer

The nation's unparalleled need for troops in World War II gave thousands of African American soldiers, including many in noncombat service units, the chance to prove their mettle in battle and put to rest the assertion by military brass that blacks lacked the courage, discipline and intelligence to fight effectively.

But black soldiers generally received few medals for their accomplishments. They were kept in segregated units, made to sit behind German prisoners of war during USO concerts and banished from the very streets they had liberated once white nurses moved in.

For James Strawder, one of more than 2,000 black soldiers who answered Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's call for black volunteers to replace white soldiers killed during the Battle of Bulge, the final indignity came after Germany's surrender, when the volunteers were immediately transferred back to all-black labor units as their white comrades in arms were being sent home or given more dignified assignments. Strawder and the 200 other black volunteers at the Army post he was sent to refused to work. When their commanders threatened to court-martial and execute them for insubordination, the men marched to the stockade and dared them to go ahead.

"I had already risked death [in battle], I didn't give a john," Strawder, now 83, recalled. The Army relented and allowed the men to return home on a ship bearing other combat troops. But President Harry S. Truman did not issue his order desegregating the military for three more years. At the war's end, Strawder saw little cause for hope.

Like the overwhelming majority of blacks who participated in the war, Strawder was initially assigned to a service unit -- in his case a quartermaster company assigned to an air base near Cambridge, England, early in 1943 to build landing strips, dig ditches and clean latrines. Four days after the D-Day invasion, they were shipped to northern France to bury the dead.

"There were hundreds of bodies all over the place," Strawder said. "We'd spend day after day loading them on trucks. Lordy, was it sickening."

Combat was not an option. Before the war, the Marines and the Army Air Corps barred blacks outright. The Navy accepted them only as cooks, stewards or longshoremen. The Army had only a handful of black combat units, mostly led by white officers.

Still, Strawder said, when white soldiers taunted him about being in a service role, "I just felt inferior. It hurt."

African American leaders in the United States felt the same way and pressed President Franklin D. Roosevelt to use more black troops in combat.

The Army began deploying black combat troops, including such storied units as the 92nd Infantry Division and the 761st "Black Panther" Tank Battalion, which led a 183-day thrust from France into Germany. Twenty-four-year-old Capt. Harold Montgomery was in the first contingent of the 92nd Infantry to land in Naples, Italy, disembarking in the summer of 1944 in pitch darkness. So many wrecked boats blocked the harbor that the men had to walk from their transports to shore on a long network of narrow planks, swaying unsteadily under the weight of their packs as German fighter planes strafed them and Allied anti-aircraft guns boomed back in reply.

As Montgomery reached the dock, he began to make out a new sound "like the roar of a crowd in a ballpark," he said. Hundreds of black service troops -- cooks, stewards and laborers -- had gathered to cheer the arrival of the first black combat soldiers in Italy.

Meanwhile, Strawder had become a truck driver. "We used to say," he said, "if we don't kill these Germans, they'll come home and become our bosses."

For Strawder, as for many black veterans, time and the nation's growing recognition of their sacrifice has helped salve the wounds.

Topic: Jewish German Refugee's Experience in the Jim Crow South

Watch and discuss the PBS documentary *From Swastika to Jim Crow* (discussion guide, including "Realplayer" interviews are available at www.pbs.org/itvs/fromswastikatojimcrow/lessons.html).

This program tells the story of the Jewish intellectuals who fled Germany in 1933 and established themselves at Black colleges in the southern United States.

Topic: Jews in American Civil Rights Movement

Many Jewish Americans were involved in the Civil Rights Movement, some citing the legacy of the Holocaust as their reasons for joining the struggle. During the Mississippi Summer of 1964, Jews made up half of the young people who volunteered in the effort to end segregation. In that struggle, two of the three activists killed by white extremists in Mississippi, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, were Jewish; the third, James Earl Chaney, was African American. Jews played a significant role in the founding and funding of several civil rights related organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee. Many Jewish individuals took leadership roles in furthering the cause of the civil rights movement. Rabbis marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., throughout the South; many were jailed and beaten. Prominent among these was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was a spiritual partner to King in the struggle against racism. Many of the leaders of the UAHC and CCAR were arrested with Martin Luther King, Jr., in Florida, in 1964 after a challenge to racial segregation in public accommodations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were drafted in the conference room of Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, under the organization of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which for decades was located in the Center. Over the next decades, the Jewish community continued to support civil rights laws addressing persistent discrimination in voting, housing and employment against not only women and racial minorities, but also people with disabilities as well.

Ask the students to research the lives of different Jewish activists involved in the Civil Rights movement. If one of the students chooses to research Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, you may also wish to commemorate the anniversary of his death (in mid-January), along-side that of Rev. Martin Luther.

Topic: Reflecting on lessons from the Holocaust

Activities:

Write the following categories (or others) on pieces of paper (fold the paper) and place them in a hat. Have the students pick a piece and ask them to write a letter reflecting on the lessons of the Holocaust from the point of view of the person on their paper. Ask the students to read their letters for the class and discuss.

Someone who was on board the St. Louis (the ship carrying Jews that was turned around by the United States and sent back to Europe).

- Someone who was a member of the Judenrat (the Jewish police force in the ghettos).
- A Jewish American soldier who helped to liberate the concentration camps, and witnessed significant anti-Semitism and racism within the armed forces.
- A German (white, non-Jewish) child born in 1945.
- A Jewish American leader who spoke against increased immigration (i.e. letting more Jews in during World War II), because s/he feared negative repercussions for the American Jewish community.
- African American grandchild of slaves who helped to liberate the concentration camps, and experienced racism within the armed forces.
- Japanese American soldier who fought for the United States in World War II and whose family was taken and kept in a concentration camp.
- A Palestinian whose house was taken by Holocaust survivors.
- A gay survivor of a Nazi concentration camp who is still unable to be "out" at work.
- Jewish klezmer musician whose music is very popular in Eastern Europe, but there are hardly any Jewish people in the audience (because there aren't many Jews left in the area where the musician plays).

Draw the outline of a person on a big piece of paper on the floor. Ask the students, on different colored large post-it notes to write their answers to the following (and place the post it notes on the corresponding areas of the body outline:

- Heart (pink): Something that learning about the Holocaust made them feel
- Head (blue): Something that learning about the Holocaust made them understand -- a specific idea or fact
- Hands (yellow): Something that learning about the Holocaust makes them want to do -- a specific action

Ask the students to discuss (in class or at home with their families and friends) the following questions:

- In what ways do they think the world would be different if the Holocaust hadn't happened
- How do you think your/ our lives would be would be different if the Holocaust hadn't happened

Topic: Comparative Judaism

Discuss with the students the impact that the Holocaust had on religious practice and God belief in various communities of Jewish people around the world.

Explain that while the Holocaust made many Jewish people less likely to believe in God and follow religious laws (since God had "abandoned" them and no such deity would allow something as horrible as the Holocaust to occur, etc), it made others more devout and interested in religious practice (part of surviving is keeping the religious traditions alive, if the Jews in the concentration camps could still pray, then we can/ should as well, Jews survived, and that is proof that God is there, etc)

Explain that the diversity of Jewish practice and (un)belief today reflects a full range of views, and that while the Holocaust and its implications are not always given by Jewish people as a reason why they affiliate with a particular denomination, if pressed, they will often agree that it influences their actions and ideas.

Activities:

Bring 6 different types of ice cream to class. Ask students to pick which flavor they want, and as everyone eats their ice-cream, ask them to brainstorm (write their answers on the chalk-board or flip-chart) what makes ice cream ice cream. Their list will likely include, "it's frozen, milk, sugar," etc. Then ask if all of the flavors they're eating are ice-cream (make sure in advance that they all actually are ice cream, i.e. not low-fat, dairy-free, etc, as the students will get stuck on this). Then, ask the students to brainstorm what makes a Jewish person Jewish. There will likely be more debate over this than the ice cream question. Write all of the students' answers during the brainstorm down and then go back to each one to reach consensus as to whether everyone agrees-- i.e. if a student says all Jewish people have Jewish parents, etc.

Ask the students to brainstorm why the following different categories of people might ask "Who is a Jew?"

- Neo-Nazis (They're really asking "Who are the genetically inferior people who deserve to be killed.")
- The government of Israel (They're really asking "To whom should we grant automatic citizenship rights to?")
- Ultra orthodox Jews (They're really asking "Who should we accept as one of us because the person meets the traditional criteria for membership in the Jewish people -- having a Jewish mother and/or having been converted by three rabbis that we acknowledge)?")

- More liberal religious Jews (They're really asking "How will letting such a person become full-fledged member of our group affect our group's outward and/or self image and what will it mean for our organizational strength?")

Explain that there is no right or wrong answer to the question "Who is a Jew?"

That while there may be certain elements (like milk and sugar in ice-cream) that most Jews share, there are many differences as well. Stress the importance of thinking critically about who asks the question of who is a Jew, and their possible motivations. Explain that just as certain flavors of ice cream are not more truly ice cream than another flavor, there is no such thing as being more "Jewish" than another person. Ask the students whether they think that being more religiously observant is the same being more Jewish. Suggest that while we've been taught to think this, it makes more sense to call such people more religiously observant instead of more Jewish. Allow them to debate this out and wrap up the discussion by explaining that they were given a choice of six different flavors of ice cream as symbols of the six major threads within the contemporary U.S. Jewish community: Secular/ Humanistic/Cultural Jews, Reconstructionist Jews, Renewal Jews, Reform Jews, Conservative Jews and Orthodox Jews-- all Jews, just different kinds. Explain that someday there may be more or less flavors, and that some are and/ or will be swirled together-- many people associated with the Renewal movement, for example, also identify as Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative or Orthodox.

Bring in the Suburban Maryland Yellow Pages and look up, with the students, "Synagogues." Make a list of all of the different types listed, noting when some labels are combined- - i.e. "Reconstructionist Conservative." Note where Machar is listed.

Have six pieces of flip chart paper taped to different walls in the classroom, with a different "flavor" of Judaism" listed at the top. Distribute markers and ask the students to move around the room and write on the papers anything that they've heard and/or know about this particular category of Judaism/ Jewish Identity.

Review these as a class and correct any misinformation. Based on the discussion, the teacher may want to ask about what things the class would like to learn more about and compare between different Jewish denominations. Examples might be, whether they have women rabbis, what they learn in Sunday School, whether or not they wear different clothing of any kind, etc. Design future lessons from this list of questions.

Topic: Secular/Humanistic Judaism

This topic is taught first, in the series of Judaism "flavors" in order to counter the traditional way of teaching comparative Judaism, which starts with Orthodoxy and works its way down the list in terms of religious observance (thus implying that everything else, farther down the line, is watered down, not "real" Judaism, etc). The theory and practice of a non religious, historically based Jewish identity has been championed and explored by thinkers from the very beginnings of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the present.

Mitchell Silver's *Respecting the Wicked Child: A Philosophy of Secular Jewish Identity and Education* provides an excellent overview of the origins and early off-shoots of secularism – the Zionist and Yiddishist movements.

Activities:

Divide the class into small groups and have each group discuss one of the following from Machar's principles:

- We believe that people determine the conduct of their own lives, and must take full responsibility for their behavior.
- We believe that only people can solve human problems.
- We do not use worshipful or prayer-like language or invoke the name of any deity or supernatural force in our rituals or services.
- In resolving ethical dilemmas, whether personal or social, we seek solutions that respect the dignity and self-esteem of every human being.

Ask the groups to report back with

- 1) A re-write of the principle in their own words
- 2) Consensus (or a divided house report if needed) on whether everyone in their group agrees with the principle (and why/ why not)
- 3) why they think Machar's founders felt that the principle was important enough to make it onto the top five list.

Ask the students to discuss the following questions.

- This may be done in pairs in a fishbowl: two or three chairs are inside a circle; everyone else is sitting in the circle. The teacher reads the question and people inside the circle discuss it and leave the circle when they're through. Others take their spot
- Or the discussion can take place a large group discussion.
- The students can also begin a discussion about this and then, as homework, write letters to other students in the class about their reactions to something the other student said, etc).

Questions:

- What do they think of when they hear the word "God(s)"?
- Have they always thought the same thing, or has this changed over time (and how)?
- If they know, what do people in their family and/or their friends think about the idea of God(s)?
- Where do they think that the idea of God(s) came from?
- Why do they think that some people believe in God(s)?
- Why do they think that some people do not believe in God(s)?

After this discussion, explain that since Secular/ Humanistic Jews prefer not to thank God(s) or praise God(s), since we don't know if God(s) exist/s -- we thank our friends, family, teachers and others for everything that they do for us each day. Instead of asking God(s) to solve our problems, we work with other people to solve our problems, and instead of praising God(s), we praise the accomplishments of people. This being the case, it is important that we respect people who believe in God(s).

Create a class mural, poem, skit or song that expresses where students in the class find inspiration, hope, strength and guidance in the world.

Explain what Secular/Humanists do. Many people focus on the fact that Secular/Humanistic Jews do not necessarily believe in God(s), but that this only describes what secular/humanistic Jews don't do.

Explain that many Jewish rituals and activities are done by Secular/Humanists individually and/or with their family. Ask the students to brainstorm everything that they do themselves, or with their family, that they think has something to do with being Jewish. The generated list should include what we traditionally think of as Jewish activities (holiday celebrations, life cycle events, cultural events, tzedakah and tilkkun o'lam, using Yiddish, Hebrew or Ladino expressions), as well as more unexpected things, such as having bagels sent from New York.

Explain that many secular/humanistic Jews, like other Jews, participate in Jewish activities and rituals with their community-- with Machar, for example. Ask the class to brainstorm what activities they've participated in with Machar and/or heard about others participating in. The generated list should include JCS classes, holiday celebrations and services, shabbat services and pot-lucks, b'nai mitzvah ceremonies, pre-class music, community service projects, tzedakah collection, having representatives speak at peace and justice events, adult education, etc.

Explain that for many traditionally observant Jewish people, they subscribe to the idea of a covenant -- a pact of sorts-- between God and the Jewish people.

With the class, create an alternative covenant between everyone in the class. What should such an agreement be called, include, etc?

As homework, ask the students to research God-belief in their family and amongst their friends. Discuss what questions they might want to ask (as well as their overall approach). In addition, ask the students to ask their parent(s) why they chose to belong to Machar.

Create an in-class "mock secular/ humanistic shabbes" and/ or a "mock secular/ humanistic havdallah ceremony."

Explain that Secular/Humanistic Judaism is a work in progress and that new rituals and practices are developed frequently. As a class, create a Jewish Secular/Humanistic ritual for Jewish young people about to enter their b'nai mitzvah year. Think about the components of other rituals-- what the students find meaningful and not so meaningful-- and work from there. Should there be food? Who should be present? What should be said/ read/ sung? Write up notes about this ritual and invite the students' parents to class on the last day and invite the students to lead the ritual.

Have the students research other secular/ humanistic Jewish congregations and communities in North America and around the world.

Sources:

- The International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, www.ifshj.org
- *Judaism in a Secular Age: An Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought*, edited by Renee Kogel and Zev Katz.
- *God-Optional Judaism: Alternatives for Cultural Jews Who Love Their History, Heritage, and Community*, by Judith Seid, Citadel Press, 2001
- *Basic Ideas of Secular Humanistic Judaism*, Written and Compiled by Eva Goldfinger, International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, 1996

Topic: Branches of Judaism

Explain that before the Enlightenment (Haskalah) there was no separate term for those people who today are called "Orthodox Jews"-- the only way of being Jewish was to be religiously observant, following the rules of Halakhah (Jewish law).

Learning about the rituals and practices of religiously observant/ traditional/ Halakhic Jews is one way for secular Jews to understand our ancestors, as well as to appreciate the actions and beliefs of other Jewish people in our community.

Kashrut (laws of keeping kosher)/ the basics: people keep kosher because it is a mitzvah (commandment in the Torah). Also, because it may strengthen their Jewish identity and sense of continuing on an ancient practice and add an element of "holiness" to the everyday act of eating. Fruits, vegetables, milk, nuts and grains are kosher in their natural state. The meat of animals that chew their cud and have split hooves (cows, sheep and goats) and certain birds (chicken, ducks, turkeys, geese) are kosher. Other animals (i.e. pigs are not). However, these animals and birds must be slaughtered according to Jewish law, soaked and salted to remove all blood. Fish are kosher if they have fins and scales (shell-fish are not kosher). Packaged and processed foods- from soup to nuts- are kosher if they are labeled as such. **Parve** foods (vegetables, fruit, grains, fish, nuts and oils) may be eaten with either dairy or meat meals. People who keep kosher may not eat dairy and meat products at the same meal, or cook them together (they have separate dishes, pots, pans and silverware for dairy and meat meals). This comes from the biblical text "you shall not boil a kid in the mother's milk."

Activities:

- **Distribute and discuss** the attached "Glossary of Hebrew Terms" -- most of which have significance for religiously observant Jews

Discuss the definitions of the words on the list. Ask the students to put their vocabulary handouts away, and divide the class into two teams and play a quiz game to see which team can remember the most vocabulary words. This can either be played by giving the word and asking for the definition, or vice versa. For many of the words, the definitions may also be acted out as charades.

- **Invite a class of similar aged students** from a Conservative school in the area to come and engage in an exchange with the class.
- **Teach about the concept of Mishnah and Gemara.** Ask the students for an example of a rule/ law that they think everyone should follow. One possible answer is "Don't commit crimes." Explain that we still have a problem, because we need to be clear what a crime is. Explain that the Mishnah says things like "don't commit crimes" and that the Gemara tries to explore questions such as "what is a crime?" Ask the students to answer this question. They may answer "something bad" or "something other people don't like." Then ask the group for another related question. They may supply "Is picking your nose a crime?" The answer to this may be "No, but people might not like you." Someone else might offer their own definition-- " a crime is breaking

the law." And someone else may disagree-- "all crimes might not be thought of as part of the law, but they're still crimes." And on and on. As these different questions and responses and debates are shouted out, write them down, noting the person who said them. Explain that all of this is Gemara and that the Gemara indicates which rabbi said what. Explain that the Mishnah plus the Gemarah equals the Talmud. The Talmud was written approximately 1,500-2,000 years ago and the Torah was created approximately 3,000 years ago. (note that this activity requires a chalk board or flip chart).

Resources:

- *Symbols of Judaism* by Marc-Alain Ouksin. Beautiful photography of tallith, tefilin and other symbols.
- *The Jewish Catalog*, edited by Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld.
- *The Second Jewish Catalog*, edited by Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld.

Handout

Religious Jewish Terms

aliyah
bimah
berakhah (brucha in yiddish)
devar Torah
halakhah
Hasidim (or Chasidim)
Haskalah
havdallah
kashrut
kaddish
kabbalah
Mashiah
midrash
mikveh
Mishnah
mitzvah
rabbi
shabbat
she-he-heyanu
Shekhinah
shema
siddur
Talmud
Torah
tallit
tefillin
teshuvah
tzedakah
yahrzeit
yom tov

Topic: Creating a New Haggadah

Objectives:

- Understand that not only are there many different established ways of being Jewish, but that new rituals and traditions are being developed all of the time, and that it is possible for all of us to contribute to this.
- Ideally, the comparative Judaism unit will conclude shortly before Passover. Explain that the Passover Seder is a ritual that has an order (the Hebrew word "seder" means order) for the ritual that most Jewish people follow. These are:
 - Saying something about lighting candles
 - Saying something about the wine
 - Saying something about washing the hands
 - Saying something about parsley/ greens and dipping the greens in salt water
 - Saying something about the matzah and dividing the matzah
 - Saying something about the bitter herb
 - Saying something about eating the bitter herb with the matzah and with the charoset (Hillel sandwich)
 - Telling of the Passover story itself
 - Saying something before eating the festive meal
 - Saying something about finding the hidden matzah
 - Saying something after eating the festive meal
 - Saying something about what there is in the world to be grateful for
 - Saying something to end the seder

Ask the students to pick one or more of the categories above to either

- a) create/ write their own poem, story, statement or song to include for this portion of the seder or
- b) b) to find a poem, story, statement or song to include for this portion of the seder.

Compile all of the students' contributions and have the class design a cover for the new Haggadah. Invite the students to also bring in other writings and art that express themes of freedom, liberation and spring-time that they would also like to see included in the Haggadah. For the Maggid and any sections not designed by the students, the teacher should add excerpts from the Machar Haggadah (see the JCS Principal for a copy).

Explain that many Jewish people, from all different denominations, create their own Passover Haggadot and that some traditionally observant and secular/ humanistic Jews conduct Passover seders together, alternating between prayers and secular readings for each of the seder elements. Stress that what they choose to have said for their seder item/action should be something that they personally agree with.

Create a list of modern-day plagues together as a class and add these to the Haggadah as well. Similarly, in terms of the four questions, ask the students to brainstorm a list of questions that they have about being Jewish and/or about Jewish identity. Ask the class to

select four of these, and include this in the Haggadah in place of or in addition to the traditional four questions.

After getting everything together, photocopy the entire Haggadah and distribute it to the students for use with their families during Passover (a shorter version of this activity is to have the students create specific inserts for a few of the seder elements).

COMPARATIVE RELIGION OVERVIEW

Goals:

- Understand basic terms: religion, god, spiritual, monotheism, etc.
- Self-identify whether you are religious, not religious, undecided, etc.
- Understand in what ways secular humanist Judaism meets the definition of “religion” and how it is different from most religions
- See that students in this class have a diversity of religion
- Know which are the largest world religions (by number of adherents)
- Realize what a small fraction of the world population is Jewish

What is religion?

Teacher: Ask students: What is your understanding of “religion”? Is religion important? What would you like to learn about religion?

Each religion has its history, teachings, and practices. We will look at several religions from each viewpoint

Teacher: read definitions of “religion”:

- Belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe.
- A personal or institutionalized system grounded in such belief and worship.
- A set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader.
- A cause, principle, or activity pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion.
- The outward act or form by which people indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or of gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service, and honor are due; the feeling or expression of human love, fear, or awe of some superhuman and overruling power, whether by profession of belief, by observance of rites and ceremonies, or by the conduct of life; a system of faith and worship; a manifestation of piety; as, ethical religions; monotheistic religions; natural religion; revealed religion; the religion of the Jews; the religion of idol worshippers

Be sure class understands the following terms:

- Supernatural power / god
- Spiritual / spiritual leader
- Monotheism - polytheism - atheism

Discussion:

- Are you religious?
- Is yours a mixed family (one Jewish, one something else)?
- If so: How are differences handled?
- If both parents are Jewish: How do their backgrounds or current beliefs differ?

- What practices / observances does your family have?

Discussion: Do you think Secular Humanist Judaism is a religion?

Source: **www.adherents.com**: “The use of the term "nonreligious" or "secular" refers to belief or participation in systems which are not traditionally labeled "religions." Of course, in the absence of traditional religions, society exhibits the same behavioral, social and psychological phenomena associated with religious cultures, but in association with secular, political, ethnic, commercial or other systems. Marxism and Maoism, for instance, had their scriptures, authority, symbolism, liturgy, clergy, prophets, proselytizing, etc. Sports, art, patriotism, music, drugs, mass media and social causes have all been observed to fulfill roles similar to religion in the lives of individuals -- capturing the imagination and serving as a source of values, beliefs and social interaction. In a broader sense, sociologists point out that there are no truly "secular societies," and that the word "nonreligious" is a misnomer. Sociologically speaking, "nonreligious" people are simply those who derive their worldview and value system primarily from alternative, secular, cultural or otherwise nonrevealed systems ("religions") rather than traditional religious systems. Like traditional religions, secular systems (such as Communism, Platonism, Freudian psychology, Nazism, pantheism, atheism, nationalism, etc.) typically have favored spokespeople and typically claim to present a universally valid and applicable Truth. Like traditional religions, secular systems are subject to both rapid and gradual changes in popularity, modification, and extinction.

Secularists do the right thing because it has been proven to be the right thing by human history, not because a supernatural power ordained it, nor because there will be rewards or punishments involved.

Secularists do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, and for no other reason.

Why study “comparative religion?”

Show video: “Faith and Belief: Five Major World Religions”

Handout and discuss:

How many people belong to each religion?

What fraction of the world’s population are Jewish?

HANDOUT

Adherents of Major Religions

Total world population: 6.375 billion (July 2004)

Source: www.adherents.com

1. Christianity: 2 billion
2. Islam: 1.3 billion
3. Hinduism: 900 million
4. Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist: 850 million
5. Buddhism: 360 million
6. Chinese traditional religion: 225 million
7. primal-indigenous: 150 million
8. African Traditional & Diasporic: 95 million
9. Sikhism: 23 million
10. Juche: 19 million
11. Spiritism: 14 million
12. Judaism: 14 million
13. Baha'i: 6 million
14. Jainism: 4 million
15. Shinto: 4 million
16. Cao Dai: 3 million
17. Tenrikyo: 2.4 million
18. Neo-Paganism: 1 million
19. Unitarian-Universalism: 800 thousand
20. Rastafarianism: 700 thousand
21. Scientology: 600 thousand
22. Zoroastrianism: 150 thousand

“ABRAHAMIC” RELIGIONS: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM

Goals:

- Understand that Judaism, Christianity and Islam (“Abrahamic Religions”) have a common history which then diverged.
- Know the common and different beliefs of the Abrahamic religions.
- Understand basic difference between branches of Christianity, esp. Protestantism and Catholicism.

Common features and differences

They believe that a single, all-powerful God created the world and look to Abraham as their ultimate patriarch.

An **Abrahamic religion** (also referred to as **desert monotheism**) is a religion derived from the ancient Semitic tradition of Abraham, a great patriarch depicted in the Bible. This group of largely monotheistic religions, which includes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, constitutes the majority of the world's religious adherents. Muslims refer to adherents of most Abrahamic religions as People of the Book. ... According to the Bible, the patriarch Abraham (or *Ibrahim*, the Arabic version) had eight sons: one (Ishmael) by his wife's servant Hagar, and one (Isaac) by his wife Sarah. According to this account, Jews are descended from Isaac's son Jacob, also called Israel. Biblical Judaism is based on the covenant between God and the "children of Israel" (descendants of Israel's twelve sons) at Sinai. (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abrahamic>)

Teacher: present capsule overview of each Abrahamic religion **Distribute handout**

Source: “Getting to know the basics of world religion,” from Religion for Dummies

Judaism

- We assume you know about Judaism already
- Some core beliefs (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism>)
- There is one god (monotheism) - Yahweh
- God’s commandments are found in the Bible (Torah)
- God has made a covenant with his chosen people, Israel

Christianity

- Basic beliefs *Read from BBC, page 3: Christian Beliefs in God*
Discuss: How do these differ from traditional Jewish beliefs in God?
- Brief history of Christianity
 - Life of Jesus
 - Early Christians
 - Spread of Christianity – Roman Empire
 - Middle Ages
 - Modern
- Note that Jesus was a Jew and that the first Christians were Jewish. Divergence came later. Christians view the Jews as God’s chosen people.

Discussion

- What is meant by “God created man in his own image”? (Genesis)
- What is meant by “Jesus is the Son of God”?
- In what way do you believe people are like God? Different?

Diversity within Christianity

- Catholic (Roman, Orthodox/Eastern)
- Protestant
- Others (hundreds/thousands of denominations)

Discuss the concept: God is on our side

Consider:

“The president [G.W. Bush] described praying as he walked outside the Oval Office after giving the order to begin combat operations against Iraq, and the powerful role his religious beliefs played throughout that time. ‘Going into this period, I was praying for strength to do the Lord’s will...I’m surely not going to justify war based upon God. Understand that. Nevertheless, in my case I pray that I be as good a messenger of His will as possible. And then, of course, I pray for personal strength and for forgiveness.’” - Washington Post, April 17, 2004.

“Neither party expected for the [Civil] war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. . . . Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes....” – Lincoln, 2nd inaugural address, March 4, 1865

<u>Belief in</u>	<u>What Christians Believe</u>	<u>What Muslims Believe</u>
God	God is three gods merged into one God. This one God is called a Trinity. However, to say that God is three is a blasphemy of the highest order. All three parts of the Trinity are "coequal" "co-eternal" and "the same substance." For this reason, this	God is one God in the most basic, simple, and elementary meaning of the word. He has no children, no parents nor any equal. In Islam God is known by the name "Allah" and more than 99 other venerated names, such as "the Merciful," "the Gracious," "the All-Powerful," etc.

	doctrine is described as "a mystery."	
Jesus	The second member of the Triune God, the Son of the first part of the Triune God, and at the same time "fully" God in every respect.	A very elect and highly esteemed messenger of God. No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe this.
The Holy Spirit	The third member of the Triune God, but also "fully" God in every respect.	He is the angel Gabriel. The angel Gabriel is highly esteemed as the "Trustworthy Spirit"
Mary the mother of Jesus	A chaste and pious human woman who gave birth to Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, and at the same time "fully" God Almighty in every respect.	A chaste and pious human woman who was chosen, purified, and preferred over all of the women of creation to be the one to give birth to Gods elect messenger Jesus through the command of God without any father whatsoever.
The Word	Part of God which was "with" God but also "fully" God and then became Jesus the Son of God.	God's command "Be!" which resulted in Jesus' conception in the womb of Mary without the need for a human father.
Previous prophets	All accepted, respected, and believed.	All accepted, respected, and believed.
The Bible	Accepted as 100% the faultless word of God	Muslims believe in the "Torah," the "Psalms" and the "Injeel" (New Testament). However, they believe the Qur'an is the ultimate word of God, while the other books are works of "man."
Muhammad	Varying beliefs. Some believe that he was a liar, some believe he was a lunatic, some believe he was the False Messiah, and yet others claim he was deceived by the Devil.	The last messenger of God to all of humanity. He was known as "The Truthful, the Trustworthy" before he received his first revelation. He was sent by God as a mercy to all creation. He was a human being but performed a number of miracles during his lifetime by the will of God.
The Qur'an	Varying beliefs ranging from it being a copy of the Bible to it being the work of	The last book of God sent to mankind. It was given the distinction of being personally guarded by God from human

	Muhammad (pbuh), to it's being the work of Christians and Jews who were conspiring with Muhammad.	tampering. It is on a literary level never before seen by mankind. No Arab to this day has ever been able to meet it's challenge to "write a work similar to it." It shall remain safe from the tampering of mankind till the day of Judgment as a guidance for all Humanity.
Message of Jesus	That he was sent by God (who was at the same time "fully" Jesus) in order to die on the cross and save all mankind from the sin of Adam. Without this sacrifice all of humanity was destined to perish in the sin of Adam. After the crucifixion all that is required of humanity is faith without any works.	That he was sent by God as a messenger to the Jews in order to return them to the pure and true religion of Moses, and to relieve them of some of the regulations which had been placed upon them in ancient times. He taught them to have faith as well as works. Neither one can stand alone.
Jesus' performing miracles	He performed them as the Son of God and as the "incarnation" of God.	They were performed through the will of God just as Moses, Noah, and all other prophets did so in ancient times through the will of God.
The crucifixion	Jesus was given over to the Jews, who humiliated him and finally hung him on a cross and killed very slowly and painfully.	Jesus was not given to the Jews, but it was "made to appear so to them." God saved Jesus by raising him up unto Himself.
The second coming of Jesus.	Originally expected to happen during the lifetime of the first disciples, many predictions have been made later and he is still expected any moment.	Accepted. Jesus did not die but was raised up into heaven by God. He shall return to earth just before the Day of Judgment, and call all humanity to Islam.
The original sin	All of humanity has inherited the sin of Adam. Only the death of the sinless offspring of God could erase this sin. No one is born clean, no matter if his life is only	There is no such thing. Humanity is created by God destined for heaven unless they chose to disobey Him and refuse His mercy. God can very trivially and effortlessly forgive the sins of all of Humanity no matter if they were to fill the lofty regions of the sky.

	<p>for a single day. Only baptism and faith in the death of Jesus can save one from this destiny.</p>	<p>Such a matter would be trivial and inconsequential for Him since He has already done much more than that such as creating everything we can ever see, hear or imagine. He loves to bestow His mercy and forgiveness on His creation and rewards the most trivial acts with the most tremendous rewards. In order to achieve God's reward one must have faith as well as works</p>
<p>The atonement</p>	<p>The sin of Adam was so great that God could not forgive it by simply willing it, rather it was necessary to erase it with the blood of a sinless innocent -- Jesus, who was also "fully" God.</p>	<p>Adam "atoned" for his sin so God forgave him. God will forgive all sinners who ask His forgiveness, and forsake their evil deeds. There is nothing more pleasing to Him than to forgive the sins of one who comes to Him in sincere repentance.</p>
<p>The path to salvation</p>	<p>If you have faith in the atonement of Jesus for the sin of Adam which you have inherited then you shall be saved. You only need faith. No work is necessary.</p>	<p>If you have faith in God, believe in His messengers, and obey His commands then He shall multiply every single good deed that you do many, many times and erase your evil deeds, until on the Day of Judgment His mercy shall cause your good deeds to far outweigh your evil deeds and grant you passage into an ecstasy and Paradise so great that we can not even imagine it, to abide there eternally. In the Hereafter there is only reward and no work.</p>

Roots and effects of inter-religious hatred.

Examples of conflict (Christian/Jewish, Islam/Christian e.g. Crusades, Islam/Jewish)

Discuss: Is Europe a Christian Continent?

Consider:

“One strong proponent of European unity is Pope John Paul II. The Polish-born pontiff argues that the continent’s Christian history helps define Europeans. Several countries don’t like the sound of that....” - Washington Post, April 25, 2004.

Islam

- Five basic beliefs
- Holidays
- Values:
 - Respect for parents
 - Caring for your neighbor
 - Halal: Do not harm yourself: Smoking, alcohol
 - Peace

Brief history

- Patriarch: Abraham
- Prophets: Moses, Jesus, Mohammed.

Koran: The holy book

Diversity within Islam

BUDDHISM

GOALS

- Understand the story of Siddhartha, the Buddha
- Gain exposure to the idea of a major spiritual religion without a God
- Be able to define the “problem of evil” (a common issue within most religions) and state the role of suffering in Buddhism
- Understand that the question of whether there is life after death is also a common issue and understand the concept of rebirth in Buddhism

Teacher’s resources:

- *Buddha Stories*, Demi. Henry Holt & Co, 1997
- *Buddhism*, Philip Wilkinson. Eyewitness Books, DK Publishing, 2003.
- *World Religions: Buddhism*. Catherine Hewitt. Thomson Learning, 1995.

Tell the story of Siddhartha – the making of a Buddha

Buddha’s emphasis is on you (not him). He teaches that you can only be happy by following the “ightfold path”

Ask the students some or all of these questions

- Are there things you want a lot?
- Suppose you get what you want – what would happen next? (*Responses will often suggest they will want something else.*)
- Buddha’s answer: Stop wanting things.
- Is that possible?

Conduct Meditation

Discussion: What is meditation? (Letting your mind rest) Did it work?

Discuss: Concept of nirvana. Reincarnation

Source:

http://www.totse.com/en/religion/miscellaneous_religious_texts/reincarnational72648.html

Once you attain nirvana, you aren’t reincarnated – you can die peacefully. Reincarnation “is really a philosophical belief structure that is part of many world religions, most notably Hinduism and Buddhism. While many different schools of Hinduism and Buddhism exist, they all basically agree on the fundamentals of reincarnation and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation.” “The Buddhist idea of liberation is ... once all karma has been dispersed, a person's karmic collection becomes one with the universe.”

Describe and discuss: The Four Noble Truths

Source: <http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/>

1. Life means suffering.

2. The origin of suffering is attachment.
3. The cessation of suffering is attainable.
4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

Discuss questions related to the Four Noble Truths

The Truth of Suffering

- What kinds of suffering have you experienced yourself?
- List some of the types of suffering you have seen other people experience.
- Do you think animals experience suffering?
- What everyday activities in our lives produce suffering for non-human forms of life?
- Do you think things would change if \society really believed that other forms of life experience at least the same physical sufferings as humans? Why or why not?

The Causes of Suffering

- What are some of the causes of suffering according to advertisements or movies that you have seen?
- Do you believe that more money means more happiness? Why or why not?
- Have you ever really liked something but then over time grew to really dislike it?
- What are some harmful ways that people sometimes use to find happiness?
- The Truth that We Can Stop Suffering and the Truth of How to Do It

Discuss:

- Do you think it is possible that we are reborn lifetime after lifetime? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you believe it is true that what goes around, comes around (eventually)? What have you experienced that might support or not support this idea of karma?
- Do you think it is possible to treat other people badly on a regular basis and be peaceful and happy? Can you think of anyone you know of who is mean and peaceful?
- Do you think it is possible to learn to reduce your suffering in life? Give reasons for your answer.

Describe and discuss briefly: The Eightfold Path

Source: <http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/eightfoldpath.html>

“The Noble Eightfold Path describes the way to the end of suffering, as it was laid out by Siddhartha Gautama. It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding the truth about all things.”

1. Right view
2. Right intention
3. Right speech
4. Right action

5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

Read parables from Buddha Stories

“The Cunning Wolf”

“The Little Gray Donkey”

“The Magic Elephant”