

Working with Young Campers Inspiring Stories *Specialty Track 2*

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SUMMARY:	Inspiring Stories. How can we use children's books to tackle challenging conversations and difficult topics with young campers? - <i>Submitted by Asya Gribov</i>
TOPIC(S):	young children; staff training; respecting different perspectives; stories; kindness
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn how to address Jewish themes and difficult topics with younger campers through children's books. Participants will learn tools for discussing stereotypes, kindness, inclusivity, divergent perspectives, individuality with young campers. Participants will explore different modalities for integrating books into programming for younger campers.
AUDIENCE:	group size can vary; staff, specialists, counselors
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Document: <i>It Could Always Be Worse</i> Document: <i>The Paper Bag Princess</i> Document: <i>Giraffes Can't Dance</i>
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Printout – <i>It Could Always Be Worse</i> Printout – <i>The Paper Bag Princess</i> Printout – <i>Giraffes Can't Dance</i> text Book: <i>Bagels for Benny</i> Paper, pens
SET-UP DETAILS:	No specific room set up is needed

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Energizer: Impromptu Theater

It Could Be Worse – A Yiddish Folktale

Margaret Zemach

Without telling participants what they are about to do, use masking tape to draw a square shape on the floor. The square should be enough to fit eight people. Give select participants pieces of paper with their character. (This can be large and taped to their body once their role is revealed.) Assign, or let participants choose, the roles of the old man, his wife, the children, the rabbi, a child, two grandparents, a chicken, a goat, and a sheep. If the group has more participants, cast multiple chickens, goats, and sheep and other animals. The roles should be written on a piece of paper and not revealed to others. The narrator reads the story (Handout). As each character is mentioned, the role is acted out by the participant who received that role.

What Jewish values can this book teach campers?

GRATITUDE AND CONTENTMENT

Questions for campers:

How did the man feel at the beginning of the story? The middle? The end? Why?

How would you feel if you were living in that house?

Why did the man go to the Rabbi for advice?

Whom do you go to for advice when you have a problem?

Questions about happiness:

Is he truly happy? Or just happier than before?

Did the family live any differently at the end of the story than in the beginning of the story? Did anything change?

If nothing actually changes, can you really be happy in the same situation that made you unhappy before?

What does happiness depend on?

Do you think something can make you unhappy sometimes and make you happy other times?

Is happiness an attitude, a way you think about something?

Can you choose to be happy?

Questions about gratitude:

How does his perspective change?

What is gratitude?

Are happiness and gratitude related?

Different Perspectives:

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

By Jon Scieszka

Discussion questions for campers:

How are the two versions of the story alike? How are they different?

Which version of the story do you like better? Why?

Which version of the story do you think is true? Why?

How can you figure out which version is the correct one?

Is it possible to determine if one is the truth? Why or why not?

Have you ever disagreed with somebody about something that happened? Did you figure out what really happened?

What can we do when we have two versions of an event? How can we figure out which one, if either, is true?

Al claims to have knocked down the pigs' houses by accident. Should Al be in trouble for something that was an accident? Why or why not?

Does the fact that it was an accident change what happened? Explain.

Have you ever been punished for something that happened by accident? Was it fair that you got punished?

Discussion questions for staff:

What Jewish values can this book be used to illustrate?

APPRECIATION OF OPPOSITION INTEGRITY

The Jewish approach includes embracing multiple sides of an issue and grappling with the complexity of life, as there are no simple answers.

From the Mensch Periodic Table:

Middah: *haarecha shel machloket*

Jewish voice on seeing different perspectives. Appreciation of Opposition, or *HaArecha Shel Machloket*, is essential to becoming mensch! We have the opportunity to learn and debate with others at camp. These experiences lead to appreciation for civil discourse and learning from individuals will opposing views.

Activity:

Thinking of a day at camp, ask everyone to write down their account of this scenario from the different perspectives of counselors, campers, and even inanimate objects.

(shy camper, outgoing camper, homesick camper, bored camper, overly excited camper, tired counselor, anxious counselor, tree, clipboard, etc.)

Participants share their accounts.

or

Tell the story of Cinderella from the perspective of the shoe.

Tell the story of Noah's Ark from the perspective of a tiger on the ark.

Tell the story of Cornerstone from the perspective of the flagpole.

Tell the story of Max from the perspective of the monsters.

or

Working in pairs, participants write an alternative ending, or an additional chapter to a popular kid's book.

Participants share their work.

Participants select one of the three stories and modalities:

Story Walk

Bagels from Benny

Prior to the session, photocopy a page of a book on separate pieces of paper. Hang each paper along a path in the woods or around camp prior to the start of the program.

As participants walk along the hike, they are able to read the story.

Mixed Up Story

Paper Bag Princess

Having the book pages all separated and mixed up, participants work together to arrange the story in the right order.

Make Your Own Illustrations

Giraffes Can't Dance

Participants receive the text of the story divided onto separate pages and create their own illustrations for the book.

After having completed the book activities, participants work in small groups to

- discuss the themes and Jewish topics in the book that can be applicable in camp.
- think of questions for discussion with campers based on their book.
- present their book and themes to the rest of the group

Giraffes Can't Dance

By Giles Andreae

Questions for campers:

Why did the lions start laughing at Gerald before he even started dancing?

Why did the other animals think that Gerald would be bad at dancing?

Has anyone ever thought something about you or one of your friends just because of how you or your friend looks? How did that feel?

Was it fair for the other animals to assume that Gerald couldn't dance?

Is it fair for someone to say "you are tall, so you must be good at basketball"?

Is it ok to judge other people based on their appearance? Why or why not?

Is making assumptions about other based on their appearance ever a good thing? Why?

What helpful advice did the cricket give to Gerald?

When did Gerald start believing that he could dance?

How did the way the other animals saw him affect the way Gerald saw himself?

If someone told you that you were bad at something based on your appearance, how would that make you feel?

Does believing in himself make Gerald better at dancing?

Broadly speaking, does believing you are good at something make you better at that thing? How come?

If I started believing that I am an Olympic athlete, would that happen?

Discussion for staff:

How does this apply to camp?

How can this book be used to discuss confidence, trying new things, finding your personal skills?

What questions might you add after reading this book to make it applicable to camp?

What Jewish values can be illustrated through this book?

Paper Bag Princess

HUMILITY

Questions for campers:

1. What are some other stories with princes and princesses?
2. How does Elizabeth look and act differently from other princesses? Why is this unusual?
3. Can you name some roles that are meant for mostly men or mostly women?
4. Is being a boy or a girl a role? Who decides?
5. Is it right to say how someone should be have when they are born?
6. If Elizabeth still felt like a princess and thought of herself as a princess, would she be a princess?

Bagels from Benny

PIETY
COMPASSION

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Questions for Discussion with kids: www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org