

CORNERSTONE 2019 RESOURCE

Using Children's Books to Teach Big Ideas at Camp

Elective

AUTHOR(S):	Daniel Abramson
SUMMARY:	In this session, participants will gather together for storytime. We'll read stories to help think about all the things that happen at camp and think about the ways that stories shape us. We'll hear stories, and tell stories about stories and even think about how we sometimes tell stories about telling stories! - <i>Submitted by Daniel Abramson</i>
TOPIC(S):	Storytelling, Programs for young campers
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn how to view a well-stocked bookshelf as an indispensable toolbox for working with kids and adults. You get to know some of the very best books to add to your collection and see how they be a natural way to bring Jewish values into your cabin.
AUDIENCE:	This session is meant for counselors who will be working primarily with younger campers, however a good story can be an amazing way to introduce meaningful conversations with older campers as well.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Annotated booklist
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Storybooks Milk Cookies
SET-UP DETAILS:	A cabin with enough room for campers to gather is an ideal place for this program. Sitting around a campfire is another good option. Any space that is quiet enough and comfortable enough can be used. Milk and cookies, or smores and a campfire are always a good addition, but not strictly necessary for a good story session.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

- 10 minute - Welcome and introducing ourselves (favorite stories)
- 15 minutes - Blueberry Girl (learning about hopes at camp, gifts that we bring)
- 15 minutes - The Woman who Outshone the Sun (Teaching about difference)
- 15 minutes - Break into groups, read each other a story about a topic that interests you
- 15 minutes - Seder Plates, and the Carpet Boy's Gift (Ritual objects and the telling of stories)
- 20 minutes - Book Club/Talk and reflection

Welcome and introducing ourselves

Participants are invited to find a comfortable place to sit for storytime! It is a great idea to ask adults to find a good spot in the same way that a teacher might do in a classroom for kids on a carpet, and for the leader to sit on a chair. Feel free to modify the arrangement if sitting on the floor isn't comfortable for participants.

Ask participants to tell their name, gender pronoun, and the name of one of their favorite children's stories.

Read Aloud - Blueberry Girl

Gaiman, Neil, and Charles Vess. *Blueberry girl*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. Print.

Synopsis:

This is a prayer for a blueberry girl . . .

A much-loved baby grows into a young woman: brave, adventurous, and lucky. Exploring, traveling, bathed in sunshine, surrounded by the wonders of the world. What every new parent or parent-to-be dreams of for her child, what every girl dreams of for herself.

Let me go places that we've never been, trust and delight in her youth.

Nationally bestselling author Neil Gaiman wrote Blueberry Girl for a friend who was about to become the mother of a little girl. Here, he and beloved illustrator Charles Vess turn this deeply personal wish for a new daughter into a book that celebrates the glory of growing up: a perfect gift for girls embarking on all the journeys of life, for their parents, and for everyone who loves them.

Give her all these and a little bit more, gifts for a blueberry girl.

This book is an amazing way to start a conversation about what parents hope for their kids. Facilitator can explain that at camp, the staff are like the "Ladies" in the book who bestow gifts on a girl as she grows. Facilitator might ask "What gifts do you think were given to you at camp?" or "Who were the Ladies of Measure in your life?" or "What gifts do you hope to be able to give to your campers?" This is my go-to book for staff training!

Read Aloud - The Woman who Outshone the Sun

Martinez, Alejandro, et al. The woman who outshone the sun : the legend of Lucia Zenteno = La mujer que brillaba aún más que el sol : la leyenda de Lucía Zenteno. San Francisco, Calif: Children's Book Press, 1991. Print.

Synopsis:

A strange and wonderful woman comes to a village. While elders advise the villagers to be kind to Lucia, their fear about her difference eventually causes them to drive her out. When Lucia leaves, the river leaves with her.

I use this book any time a cabin needs to have time to think about differences, exclusion, community, and forgiveness. Facilitator might ask “Have you ever felt like Lucia?”, or “Have you ever felt like the villagers?”. In the end, the villagers seek forgiveness. The facilitator can ask if participants if they agree with Lucia’s response.

Having modeled how story books can help introduce discussion about big ideas, participants will choose a book on a topic that interests to explore with others.

Race

Lester, Julius, and Karen Barbour. Let's talk about race. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005. Print.

Racism

Michelson, Richard, and Raúl Colón. As good as anybody : Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's amazing march toward freedom. New York: Dragonfly Books, 2008. Print.

Inclusion

Polacco, Patricia. Thank you, Mr. Falker. New York: Philomel Books, 1998. Print.

Kindness

Edwards, Michelle, and G B. Karas. A hat for Mrs. Goldman : a story about knitting and love. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2016. Print.

Finding Your Voice

Drachman, Eric, and James Muscarello. Ellison the elephant. Los Angeles, CA: Kidwick Books, 2004. Print.

Gender Identity / Bullying

Fierstein, Harvey, and Henry Cole. The sissy duckling. New York: Little Simon, 2014. Print.

Managing Anger

Silver, Gail, and Christiane Kromer. Anh's anger. Berkeley, Calif: Plum Blossom Books, 2009. Print.

Gratitude

Davis, Aubrey, and Dušan Petričić. Bagels from Benny. Toronto, ON Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press, 2003. Print.

Participants will read their chosen book as a group and prepare a quick book talk to tell others about it. Participants should include who they would read the book with and when/why they might choose to read it.

Facilitator will show a seder plate and Haggadah. These ritual items remind us of a specific tradition of storytelling. Ask participants to explain how the symbols of the seder plate relate to the telling of the passover story. These items and the way we incorporate them into a meal make our learning about slavery and freedom experiential.

Facilitator will read one more story,

Read Aloud - The Carpet Boys Gift.

Shea, Pegi D., and Leane Morin. The carpet boy's gift. Gardiner, Me: Tilbury House, 2006. Print.

Facilitator asks “How do stories help us understand others?” or “How do our stories of oppression, help us to understand the stories of other people’s oppression?”

Book talk and reflections

Participants are invited to look at any other books that they are interested in, to share a great book with others and/or to make a list of books that they would like to bring to camp.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Thomas King, a canadian Indigenous writer often said, “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” At the end of his lecture he says “take this story, it's yours do with what you will tell it to friends turn it into a TV movie forget it but don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story you've heard it now”

Listen to the whole lecture here:

The Truth About Stories - Thomas King - The Massey Lectures Part 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzXQoZ6pE-M>

For camps that use the [Making Menschies - A Periodic Table](#), You might consider creating an index that matches the values to the books in your collection to make it easier to connect stories and resources when you need them!



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