

Title: Jewish Holidays Musical Chairs
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Subject Area: Holidays

Single/Multi-unit lesson plan Single Unit/Game

Target Grade: K-12

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify various symbols associated with Jewish holidays.
2. Students will get exercise and be able to release energy (allows for kinesthetic learning).
3. Students will have fun.

This is a great activity for the end of a class period where students were asked to sit still and listen for an extended period of time.

This is also a great lesson for the day before a vacation or holiday, if the students are struggling to pay attention.

While this would work best with elementary or middle school students, I facilitated this activity with high school students. While it initially seems beneath their educational development, they loved it. I even had a few students who still didn't know some of the more minor holidays or more obscure symbols.

Procedure:

Set-up

1. Place enough chairs in a circle in a classroom or gym so that each student has one chair. The chairs should face the center of the circle with enough room for someone to walk between each chair.
2. Either outside the classroom or outside (weather and space dependent), hide enough objects per holiday (see below) for every student to find one. As the rounds continue, you could hide fewer objects per holiday as students get "out".

The Activity

1. When students come in, have them sit in a chair in the circle and explain the instructions. For Round 1, the instructor says the name of the holiday. The students have to run (or walk quickly) to the pre-designated hiding areas (another classroom, hallways, outside in a yard etc.) and find a symbol associated with the particular holiday. Once they find the object, they run back into the classroom and find a chair. Once everyone is back, go around the circle and each student

has to be able to explain how their object symbolizes or is used for this particular holiday.

2. Round 1 – Chanukkah. Objects hidden could include: dreidels, gelt, olive oil, (having enough oil for the menorah, fried foods etc.), menorahs, candles, a potato, suffganiot, light bulb (the festival of lights). You can be as abstract or literal as you wish. You can also hide more than one of each item for a particularly large class.
3. As students are out hunting for the Chanukkah symbols, pull one chair out of the circle and far away so students realize it is no longer in play. The last student to return with a symbol is “out” and helps you judge if the explanations are good. They can also pull chairs for you.
4. Once all of the students return, they need to go around and explain how their symbol fits in with the holiday. If they are incorrect or cannot explain, the last person that arrived gets a chance to “steal” the chair. If they are able to explain their object, they are still in the the other student is out.
5. Round 2 – Tu B’shevat. Hidden objects could include pictures of trees, plastic or wooden trees, fruit, dried fruit, anything made of wood (made from a tree), leaves, sticks. Repeat steps 3 and 4.
6. Round 3 – Passover. Hidden objects could include a seder plate, haggadah, Elijah’s cup, orange, hard boiled/roasted egg, box of matzah, charoset (or an apple), toy plagues, horseradish. Repeat steps 3 and 4.
7. Round 4 – Shabbat. Hidden objects could include candlesticks, candles, challah cover, challah plate, challah, washing cup, travel candle sticks, wine glass, wine. Repeat steps 3 and 4
8. Round 5 – Purim. Hidden objects could include graggers/noise makers, costumes and wigs, golden scepter (be creative), crown, picture of a horse (Haman had to lead Mordechi around on a horse), string tied into a hangman’s knot, and little bags of candy or other treat symbolizing mishloach manot. Repeat steps 3 and 4.
9. Round 7 – Havdallah. Hidden objects could include wine glass, wine, spice box, any type of spices, braided candle
10. Round 6 – Rosh Hashannah. Hidden objects could include apples, honey or honey sticks and calendars. (this would be a good one for when you have very few students left)

11. Round 8 – Sukkot. Hidden objects could include lulav, etrog, string, branches, picture of a sukkah, squash/gourd or other fall fruit or vegetable (again, good for a later round).
12. Round 9 – If you have very few students left 2 or 3, you could use the lesser known holidays since you will need fewer items: Tu B’Av (hearts), Lag B’Omer (scissors-only time during the omer people can cut their hair, pictures of bon fires), Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israeli flags), etc.

Nine rounds would work if you had 10 students in the class. See modifications for suggestions on how this would work for classes larger than 10.

Modifications

1. When I did this lesson, I hid the objects in a lobby and along a hallway. Be creative with the space you are given.
2. I played this multiple times in one day with different groups of students. After the students found the items from a particular holiday, the next “round” consisted of them running back to place the objects exactly where they found them and then running back to their chairs. This prevented me from having to re-hide objects each class period. Depending on time and number of students, you could also eliminate a chair during this “round” as well. If you used 10 of the holiday rounds and 10 of the “return objects” rounds, you could have up to 20 students.
3. Depending on time and number of students, you can eliminate more than one chair per round.
4. If this could pose a disruption in the school setting, try to do it outside.
5. To create a sense of urgency, you could create teams or an ultimate “winner” with a prize. You could time each round, but I found that students tend to hurry because of the “contest” nature of the game.
6. For more students than 10, you could work in teams of 2 or 3 students with only one representative of each team having to sit in a chair and only one object per team.
7. If you don’t actually have these items, you can laminate cards with pictures of the items on them. This may be less fun yet still effective.

List of materials needed

Enough chairs for each person in the class

Holiday items (see Procedure)