



## ***Yiddish Test Lesson Plan by Laurie Lazar***

***Subject Area: Jewish History & Culture, Jewish Identity & Community***

***Game/Tool***

***Target age: Primary or Secondary (3rd grade and up)***

***Lesson Objectives:***

- 1. Students will develop an appreciation and understanding of Yiddish***
- 2. Students will connect with their ancestors through language***
- 3. Students will learn some Yiddish words***

***Resources: The Joys of Yiddish, by Leo Rosten  
Too Young for Yiddish, by Richard Michelson***

***Materials: Pencils or Pens and Yiddish Test (see attached)***

***The Yiddish Test is a test containing a story in English with highlighted Yiddish words interspersed throughout. On the right hand side of the page are English choices that match with the Yiddish words. Using context clues from the story, students are to connect the unknown Yiddish word with the English word that best defines it.***

Background on Yiddish: For nearly a thousand years, Yiddish was the primary, sometimes the only language that Ashkenazi Jews spoke. Unlike most languages, which are spoken by the residents of a particular area, or by members of a particular nationality, Yiddish, at the height of its usage, was spoken by millions of Jews of different nationalities all over the globe. While the mid-twentieth century marked the end of Yiddish as a widely spoken language, and of the unique culture the language generated, some groups continue to use Yiddish as their primary language to this day. In addition, the language is now fully acknowledged and widely studied in the non-Jewish and academic worlds.

***Over the course of the greater part of a millennium, Yiddish went from a Germanic dialect to a full-fledged language that incorporated elements of Hebrew, Aramaic, Slavic languages, and Romance languages. David Shyovitz***

***Procedure: To start off this lesson, give the students the test without any explanation except to do it silently on their own. Upon completion, conduct a discussion while in character of an Eastern European Jewish person with an accent. Read each sentence***



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*and allow students to discuss why they picked the answer they picked. Discuss each of the words and how context clues help them figure out what it means.*

*Additionally, two of the words are interchangeable since they are both verbs and they both make sense in either place. This complication helps students to really think about the words, what they mean, and if they might have heard them before.*

*To test their knowledge and understanding, have the students turn their papers over so that they cannot see them. Read the sentences again and see if they know the meanings of the Yiddish words.*

### **Alternatives / Follow-up Lessons / Extensions:**

- *Read the test aloud and do it together as a class.*
- *Have students work in pairs discussing together the possible answers.*
- *Have students work in pairs where one student reads the passage and the other students must guess what it means without seeing the options listed on the page.*
- *Add many more English choices to substitute for the Yiddish words (more difficult).*
- *Add more Yiddish words and make the story more complex and robust for older students.*
- *Give a new Yiddish test every week adding some new words and keeping others.*
- *Play charades by having students act out Yiddish words.*
- *Have students use Yiddish books to create tests for each other.*
- *Teach about Ashkenazi Jews and how Yiddish developed as a language.*
- *Read stories and books about and containing Yiddish.*
- *Look and listen for Yiddish words that have become commonplace in America. Make a running list and bulletin board with clippings.*
- *Show maps of Eastern Europe.*
- *Have student interview their families for Yiddish words they know, or give the family the tests that you do in class and discuss the results.*
- *Invite community members who know Yiddish to come to the classroom.*