



LEAVING MITZRAYIM, THE PASSOVER STORY THROUGH ART

Submitted by: *Julia Bry Schwab*

Subject Area: Jewish Living and Identity, Holidays, Prayer, Jewish History, Culture & Art.

Target Age Group: 2nd grade and higher – more assistants with younger students

The Concept:

The idea of relating personally, first through each student's experience and stories, and then through the art-making process, is the cohesive element in this project. The exodus out of Egypt, as told each Passover is the theme. Egypt in Hebrew, "Mitzrayim," translates to mean **constricting**, and that will be the working metaphor for the first week's class. The constricted part of the art experience will be working on small cut-out paper shapes with paint. Each of the many pieces comes to be pasted onto a large cardboard as they are completed at the front of the class, and that is essentially the content of Week 1.

Naturally Week 2's task will be to remember and paint the sense of **freedom**, release, letting out. Again we notice the language. The word in Hebrew which conveys this meaning is similar to the former root "shoresh," of "Mitzrayim," mem-tzadi-resh. The word for release "Yitzar," comes from the root. yud-tzadi-resh. So, with stories once again, students tell of their liberation from limitation or constriction. And, with paint again, one person at a time now comes forward with the color and the gesture, remembering that liberated sense with a brush stroke onto the framed area surrounding the interior one.. It is almost a performance, indeed a dramatic witnessing as the students "dance" their paint strokes upon the new surface. At the end of this exuberant class, the interior panel (of the painted shapes representing constriction) is placed atop the free-form frame.

The message of moving from personal constriction, Mitzrayim, as students learn empathy and celebration in sharing with others, is a lifetime one. This Passover tale in leaving Egypt will be known more emphatically through the art experience in a personal and collective awareness.



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Materials:

Diverse Origami squares cut diagonally into triangles

A cardboard backing, at least 2-3 feet in dimension either way(for week1)

Another cardboard backing with at least 6 inch margin increases beyond the former one(for week2)

Paintbrushes – pliable and in working condition, more that the number of students, alot!

Acrylic paints – at least 8 different colors (student grade is okay)

Containers for water

Paper plates for palettes

Newspapers & masking tape to cover the tables

Smocks or old shirts to protect clothing

Glue or acrylic medium to paste triangles onto inner board

Glue gun to connect interior panel onto exterior one

Glossy or satin-finish polymer varnish to cover the entire piece when done

Paper towels



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Step by Step:

Week 1 –

Arrange the material in a neat and presentable way on one table Tape newspaper on each working table along with filled water container & towels for brushes Gather students in a circle to introduce concept of what leaving Egypt may mean and to tell stories of personal constriction Describe constricted shapes as the reminder of our constriction in Egypt upon which we will paint..... anything! The work will happen most effectively if kids don't perseverate. [fun] Students stock up their palettes, chose bushes, and get to work As each triangle is complete, 1 by 1, they come and paste it onto the board adjacent to another triangle, etc. Each person may be reasonably expected to paint up to 4 or 5 triangles When the paint and the glue has dried, the instructor may chose to paint any of see-through spaces with opaque colors to coalesce the whole

Week 2 –

Gather students in circle to discuss the freedom component of the exodus, possibly to explore language similarities of word roots (as mentioned in “concept” above), and to share personal stories of release, escape, liberation Arrange students in semi-circle now around the larger cardboard that has a wide frame drawn around its edges, the part upon which will be painted one person at a time. (I reinforced the back of cardboard with heavy duty tape curley-cued so it would be secure on the wall) Create order of rotation so everybody knows when their turn is coming Students load their brushes as each approaches the frame to create a gesture of freedom Appreciation and applause often follow Process continues until there is satisfaction that the frame is “finished” Glue gun ready, instructor takes the inner panel of last week’s “constriction” and places it onto the frame pf “freedom” Photograph students with their art!