

THE ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

LESSON OVERVIEW

Between 1985 and 2007, almost 65,000 Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israel, many after arduous journeys through Sudan which included time spent in transit camps awaiting departure to Israel. For most of these immigrants, it was the first time that they had ever ventured away from their homes in Ethiopia, as well as the first time ever seeing and being on an airplane. The rescue/coordinated immigration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel was part of a larger effort over the course of Israel's history to provide a "safe haven" for Jews from throughout the world, including Yemen, the Former Soviet Union and other parts of the Arab World.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

The journey from Ethiopia to Israel was difficult and dangerous.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did Ethiopian Jews go to Israel?
- What were the challenges that the Ethiopian Jews faced on their journey
- Why were Ethiopian Jews willing to leave everything behind?
- How was the experience of Ethiopian children different from our students?

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Identify the common themes of the immigrant experience in a primary source oral history or narrative
- Understand how a primary source is used to create a secondary source
- Compare/contrast primary and secondary sources
- Understand the concept of pushes and pulls in immigration

TIME RECOMMENDED:

3-4, 45 Minute Sessions

GRADE LEVEL:

2-5

ASSESSMENT:

Students will create their own children's stories from one of the two personal accounts from the Ethiopian National Project website.

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES
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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Activity One: The Journey to the Land of Israel

1. Begin by having students listen to a recording of Shlomo Gronich and the Sheba Choir ([for an article about Gronich and the Sheba choir click here](#)) singing Hamasa L'Eretz Yisrael (Journey to the Land of Israel).
[A recording of the song is available on YouTube by clicking here.](#)
2. After they have listened to the song, discuss the following (have students listen to the song first without the lyrics in front of them)
 - a. Do you like the song?
 - b. Do you recognize any of the Hebrew words?
 - c. What is the tempo of the song? Is it a happy or sad song?
 - d. Who do you think is singing?
 - e. What do you think the song is about?
3. After listening to the song once and discussing the questions, distribute the lyrics and play the song again. The lyrics in [Hebrew and English can be found here.](#)

(If your students read Hebrew, encourage them to sing along)

Now that they have listened to the song twice and read the words:

- a. Ask them again, "What do you think the song is about?"
- b. Then ask students to write a brief description of the song in their own words. (This can be done in groups and each group can share with the class their answers)

Activity Two: Thinking About Moving to a New Place

1. Ask students to brainstorm reasons why someone might move to a new place or leave the place that they are living. The answers can be collected on the board or made into a word cloud using www.wordle.net or www.tagxedo.com. Alternatively students can work on brainstorming in groups and present/share their answers with the class.
2. After they have compiled their list, see if you can separate the reasons into push and pull factors. A push factor is a reason to want to leave a place and a pull factor is a reason why the place you are going is attractive to you.
For example , a push may be that there is not religious freedom where you live now while a pull might be that the new place has lots of religious freedom (as opposed to moving to another place where there is no religious freedom)
3. Ask students to brainstorm what are some of the challenges or difficulties with moving to a new place. As in question one, the answers can be collected on the board or made into a word cloud using www.wordle.net or www.tagxedo.com. Alternatively students can work on brainstorming in groups and present/share their answers with the class. The difficulties can be in arriving in a new place or as a part of the journey.

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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Activity Three: Personal Accounts I: Yuvi

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Play the videos of Yuvi's talk:

Part 1: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVfrPtltwoA&feature=channel&list=UL>)

Part 2: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2ek6KpMJyw&feature=channel&list=UL>)

Note – there is some of the talk missing between parts 1 and 2 but it is mostly intact.

3. In their groups, have students answer/discuss/report the following questions listed below. This can also be recorded into a chart with spaces for each of the three sections. (*Adapted from the Library of Congress teacher's Guide for Analyzing Oral Histories.*)
 - a. Observe:
 - i. What do you notice?
 - ii. What format is used for the oral history you are examining now? (An audio recording, video or film, or a written transcript)
 - b. Reflect:
 - i. What can you learn about the speaker?
 - ii. When did the events she is speaking about happen? What does she remember? How might her story be different if she were speaking closer to the time of the events?
 - iii. What can you learn from this oral history?
 - c. Question: If you were in the audience for Yuvi's talk, what questions would you ask her?

Looking for more about Yuvi? [Click here for a news article/interview from April 2009, a few days before the talk, from the Toronto Star.](#)

Activity Four: From Primary to Secondary Source – Yuvi's Candy Tree

Author Lesley Simpson met Yuvi at the talk in Toronto. After her meeting, Simpson wrote the book [Yuvi's Candy Tree](#), about Yuvi's journey from Ethiopia to Israel.

1. Read the story to the class
2. Discuss: Did you like the story? How is the book similar or different from the account they watched? What elements were changed and why? How do the illustrations help tell the story?

Yuvi's Candy Tree is a PJ Library book selection. Author Lesley Simpson did a podcast on the online Book of Life series about the book. Click the link below to listen.

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/589/helping-kids-relate-to-the-passover-story/>

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Activity Five: Personal Accounts II: Riki Assessment

Now that they have seen how an oral history can inspire a secondary source, students will look at one more oral history of a young person who emigrated from Ethiopia to Israel. Unlike Yuvi's account, Riki's account is not a video recording, but rather a written transcript. As a final assessment, students will work together to write and illustrate a children's book version of Riki's story.

1. Divide students into groups and distribute the account Riki's Story
(The account is printed at the end of this lesson and is taken from The Ethiopian National Project website, <http://www.enp.org.il/Community.aspx?Store=4>)
2. As in Activity Three - in their groups, have students answer/discuss/report the following questions listed below. This can also be recorded into a chart with spaces for each of the three sections. (Adapted from the Library of Congress teacher's Guide for Analyzing Oral Histories.)
 - a. Observe:
 - i. What do you notice?
 - ii. What format is used for the oral history you are examining now? (An audio recording, video or film, or a written transcript)
 - iii. Are any words unfamiliar to you?
 - b. Reflect:
 - i. What can you learn about the writer?
 - ii. When did the events she is speaking about happen? What does she remember? How might her story be different if she were writing closer to the time of the events?
 - iii. What can you learn from this oral history?
 - c. Question: If you met Riki, what questions would you ask her?
3. Creating a Children's Story

Working in their groups, have students adapt Riki's Story into a storybook for other children. Reflect back to the discussion about **Yuvi's Candy Tree** from Activity Four or have a general discussion about which elements should be included before students begin writing.

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Riki's Story

(Taken from The Ethiopian National Project, <http://www.enp.org.il/Community.aspx?Store=4>)

Riki and her family came from Ethiopia to Israel in 1984. During this time, an estimated 13,000 Ethiopian Jews traveled from Ethiopia and across Sudan in the hopes of reaching Israel; almost 4,000 died along the way. Here, Riki recounts her family's experience, and what motivates her to do this work.

In Ethiopia, we lived in a village of Jews. We all lived together to retain our identity and to keep our Judaism; the only other option was to live in the city, where the risk of assimilation was very high. My grandfather was a Kes, a rabbi. Every Shabbat he would tell us the story about the journey in the Torah from Egypt to Israel. Our desire to live in Jerusalem was very strong and we never gave up on our dream of moving to the Holy Land.

In 1984, we heard about the chance to come to Israel. There were six people in my family and we left everything - our land, our house, everything we owned. We made the journey to Sudan from Ethiopia on foot and we walked by night, to avoid being caught by the Sudanese army. We finally arrived at a refugee camp in Sudan and lived there for a year.

The conditions in Sudan were extremely harsh - we almost lost my brother. We were in Sudan, where it wasn't safe for Jews, and we had to hide our identity. There was a time when we had no money, no food, and even the water was contaminated. In fact, even after I arrived in Israel, it took me a long time to feel safe drinking tap water.

I'm grateful that no-one from my family died - I knew other families who didn't make it. When I look back, I don't know how we did it. But we had each other and were willing to take any chance to get to Israel.

After about a year of living in Sudan, I came to Israel all by myself, aged nine years old. I simply told myself, "I'm going to Jerusalem and I don't care what difficulties there may be along the way." But when I got to Israel, it was hard, and I missed my parents very much. I was in Israel for six months before my parents arrived at an absorption center in Eilat. As I had already learned a little Hebrew by then, I was the one who took responsibility for my parents.

It was very difficult to adjust, especially for our parents. We had lived an agricultural life in Ethiopia - we grew our own food. But we couldn't do that in Israel. And the men lost their authority. It was easier for the women to adapt and accept a culture of democracy and equality. But the men lost everything. Even today this is still a particularly sensitive issue and a challenge for the Ethiopian community in Israel.