

From Generation to Generation, History through Sources

INTRODUCTION

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From Generation to Generation, History Through Sources updates a collaborative project of Western Reserve Historical Society and Cleveland's Bureau of Jewish Education, known today as the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland. This project, *From Generation to Generation, History Through Images*, offered teachers a set of document facsimiles that examined the contributions of Jews to Cleveland, Ohio. The revised project adds resources related to significant contributions of Jews in the later twentieth century.

The resources help teachers accomplish two important goals: (1) to teach the meaning of "community" through the examination of the contributions of one ethnic group, the Jews, to Cleveland, Ohio, and (2) to teach the history of this group through primary documents. Each of these goals requires an understanding of both context and methodology.

This update, which contains document facsimiles and sample unit plans, was prepared to:

- (1) *Demonstrate how primary documents can facilitate the formulation of concepts related to community and ethnic identity;*
- (2) *Provide teachers with suggested activities and resources about the Jewish community of Cleveland, Ohio, and other ethnic groups;*
- (3) *Help teachers prepare students for life in a society composed of diverse cultures, racial and ethnic groups.*

As a result of the experiences these resources provide, students will:

- (1) *Improve their understanding of their own heritage and of the heritage of others;*
- (2) *Know the rich and diverse achievements of the Cleveland Jewish community;*
- (3) *Understand the processes of community-and identity-building, and why a particular group worked to maintain its distinct identity in our diverse society.*

How can a social studies and/or Jewish studies instructor use these resources, which examine the contributions of one particular group, the Jews, to one community in which they settled, Cleveland, Ohio? This can be done by exploring the community-building concepts which the documents address: religion, family, immigration, neighborhoods, work, social/cultural activities and social justice. (See Concept Guide Chart.) These themes integrate the documents into the broader context of community and identity.

The contributions of America's ethnic groups to the building of our present communities are of particular interest to teachers who wish to foster an understanding of the role of ethnic groups in our society, and of student pride in one's group. Teachers are encouraged to promote student expressions of cultural diversity in their classrooms.

In recent years, the prevailing concept of a "melting pot," into which American ethnic groups would be assimilated, has been discarded in favor of the idea of cultural pluralism, i.e. the maintenance by each community of its distinctive characteristics. This issue has been discussed in *Assimilation in American Life* in which the sociologist Milton Gordon delineates three views of American culture: Anglo-conformity, the "melting Pot", and cultural pluralism. According to Gordon, the most prevalent ideology of assimilation has been the idea of Anglo-conformity which assumes the desirability of maintaining English language and cultural patterns. Gordon asserts, however, that the American creed legitimates a moderate amount of structural and cultural pluralism and that all the major religious faiths operate to perpetuate ethnic communality. Acceptance of Gordon's point of view grants credence to the institutions of the ethnic sub-society which mediate between the native culture of the immigrants and the American culture. This is demonstrated in the documents about the Cleveland Jewish community included here.

A second goal is the study of an ethnic community, the Jewish community, through primary documents. This method encourages the students to formulate hypotheses and to replicate the work of the professional historian. Each document lends itself to a careful reading that reveals characteristics of the group. Included in the original project are representative samples of the types of document artifacts studied by the historian, such as an ethical will, a ship manifest, an autobiography, advertisements, a memoir, a letter, a playbill, newspaper and periodical articles, and city directories. This revision adds cartoons, greeting cards, photographs, recipes, memoranda, a telegram, maps, and tables. Students are encouraged to search for patterns, comparisons, and contrasts within and among the documents. Extended learning activities to help promote student activism are also included in the revision's unit plans.

HOW TO USE THE RESOURCES

While the original project provided sample lesson plans that typically could be studied in one class session, the revision groups the documents into units of varying lengths. Recent approaches to the teaching of history suggest that multiple interactions with a topic through various types of documents tend to promote more complex student thinking. The teacher is encouraged to read through both the suggested unit plan and the related documents before adapting the materials to a particular classroom setting.

Document arrangement: The documents are arranged according to unit topic. They may be accessed either through clicking on the links in the concept chart or the links on the unit plans.

Students may access the documents through links or may work with printed copies downloaded and provided by the teacher.

Age and grade: Each unit is written with a suggested age range and grade. The teacher will find material suited for elementary, middle, or high school. The teaching activities have been framed with the listed student level in mind; however, teachers can certainly adapt the activities to their students' abilities.

Number of class sessions: The unit plans also suggest the number of sessions usually required to teach the suggested learning activities. These are based upon a 45-50 minute teaching period and are offered as a guideline for planning. If teachers wish to use the extended learning activities for the unit, then the number of sessions may need to be adjusted.

Arrangement of activities: Each unit plan includes both suggested and extended learning activities. Each activity is a complete learning segment. Teachers who are able to complete all the suggested learning activities will find that the unit builds to a conclusion when the activities are done in the suggested order. Nevertheless, the teacher is free to select from each category.

Teaching methods: The unit plans suggest a variety of teaching methods that include whole class, small group, and individual student activities. Although access to computers and the internet will enrich the units, student use of computers is not required after the teacher has downloaded the document facsimiles.

Background information: Teachers who are not familiar with Cleveland and/or the Cleveland Jewish community should consult the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, especially the essay "Jews and Judaism". A bibliography is also provided for both teacher and student research.