

# Jewish Literature

## Summary

This lesson plan is designed for 10th and 11th grade honors students of American Literature. This lesson plan is designed to help students study "story" as a form of literature, taking them inside the lives of groups of people and individuals. The specific focus of this lesson plan is the Jewish community.

## Time Frame

6 class periods of 70 minutes each

## Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

## Materials

### Day One

Bernard Malamud's "The First Seven Years"

- [Jewish Experience Packet](#)
- [Elie Wiesel's Night](#)

### Day Two

- [Elie Wiesel's Night](#)
- [Jewish Experience Packet](#)

### Day Three

- [Jewish Experience Packet](#)
- "Jewish Community" in [Missing Stories](#)  
Student journals

### Day Four

Student journals

### Day Five

Interview tips/guidelines handout  
Student journals

### Day Six

- [Jewish Experience Packet](#)

## Background for Teachers

In addition to being aware of the historic experience of the Jewish community in the United States, teachers should be aware of the specific experiences of Jews in Utah. Reading the Jewish Community section in [Missing Stories](#) provides a useful background and insight into this information. Teachers should also have some background in conducting an oral history/life story. Some basic interviewing tips will get you started.

## Student Prior Knowledge

It is not necessary for students to have prior knowledge of Jewish literature or the Jewish experience in Utah (or the United States). Many students will be familiar with "Judaism" and "Jewish" people, their struggles during WWII, and the Holocaust. Prior student knowledge is assessed in the "pre-writing" activity in Lesson One.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Increase students' understanding of Jewish stories in the Utah community.

Help students see, through reading Jewish literature, universal themes that connect and divide all people.

Help students learn interview skills so they can participate (facilitate) in primary research and experience personal connections through documentary practices.

Advance student study skills (reading and reflecting) independent of class time.

## Instructional Procedures

### Lesson One

As a class (together or individually) read Missing Stories, "Preface" to the Jewish Community section (pp 130-136). In this section, students will find the answers to the following questions: Why many Jews came to Utah; when they came; where they came from; business connections; cultural conflicts and connections.

Preview and read together, Bernard Malamud's short story "The First Seven Years." Discuss the reading as a class and how the reading contributes to the focus of the entire lesson.

When discussing "The First Seven Years" focus on the following:

Author's background as a Russian Jew.

Parent/child relationships and expectations (intergenerational issue).

Speaker's tone of voice.

What is at stake in the story?

What motivates Feld? Mariam?

Distribute the ["Jewish Experience Pre-write Assignment"](#). Have the students work on filling out the handout and answering the questions. This will establish student prior knowledge.

Spend the remainder of the class period discussing what the students will do in this section of study (various readings, keeping a journal, interview with a member of the Jewish community or other minority community in Utah).

Answer any student questions and discuss their prior knowledge from the "pre-write assignment."

Assign the first section of Elie Wiesel's Night. Give students "[Study Questions](#)." Students should be prepared to discuss their reading in the next class period.

### Lesson Two

Discuss students' initial reaction to Night and clarify any questions from the study questions.

As a class, discuss the connections between "The First Seven Years" and Night (generational conflict, individual v. society, tone, etc.)

Read together Harry Isadore Smith's interview in Missing Stories (pp 139-142). While reading, students will model journal note taking on the [handout](#).

Assign section two of Night and study questions for homework.

### Lesson Three

Discuss reading of section two of Night, answer any student questions and review study guide/questions. Focus on their understanding of racism, discrimination, and prejudice in the text and in their own lives--home, community, school.

Divide the class into four groups to read Doris Guss, Norman Nathan, Joel Shapiro and Helen Sandack interviews from the "Jewish Community" section of Missing Stories (one interview per group).

Each group will prepare a group report for the next class period, using excerpts from the stories to share with the class. Students should continue to do journal notes.

For homework, assign section three of Night and complete study questions.

### Lesson Four

Each group presents their reports, other groups should take journal notes from each presentation and

for a discussion at the completion of the presentations. Students should make connections between each of the stories (interviews) and "The First Seven Years" and Night.

Begin discussion of the process of collecting life stories/oral histories. Use the examples from Missing Stories to talk about "slice of life stories." Ask students to think about:

What are these stories?

Where do they come from?

Who tells them?

Discuss student project: Conducting an interview with someone in the Jewish Community. Discuss assignment due dates.

Assign the final section of Night and study questions for homework.

### Lesson Five

Begin with a discussion of journal notes to highlight the ideas/themes/conflicts that cross story lines. How can these ideas help students design interview questions for their own interviews of members of the Jewish community in Salt Lake City?

Have students work independently on a list of questions they would ask a member of the Jewish community (or another minority community). After each student has comprised their own list, students should divide into small groups to refine their lists. When all students have had the opportunity to talk about their list of questions get together as a class and design a master list (of possible questions). These are questions students can use to shape their personal interviews.

If there is time remaining in the class, students should practice interviewing each other.

For homework students should start to find someone (friend, family members, school employee, etc) they can interview.

### Lesson Six

Answer any questions about the interview process. Work with any students who are having difficulty finding someone to interview.

As a way to close the lesson, return to a discussion of the initial concepts of this lesson: discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes.

How have these terms changed?

Have the terms changed. Why or why not?

What has each student learned since completing the "pre-write" assignment?

Each student should now complete the "[final writing exercise](#)."

Remind students of the due date for their interviews and schedule class time for presentations.

Students should prepare a report for the class that highlights the more interesting/unique aspects of their interview. Students should make an effort to connect their findings to class/lesson material.

### Extensions

Students will most likely complete the interview assignment in this lesson after the in class lesson is completed (six days). Revisit the interviews when they are complete and take a day (or two) for students to present their work to the class. This might happen as much as a week or two after the lesson is complete.

### Bibliography

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

Malamud, B. (2003). "The First Seven Years" in The Magic Barrel. Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Reprint edition.

Wiesel, E. (2006). Night. Hall and Wang; Revised edition.

## Authors

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