

## **Chanukah: Heroes & Heroism**

Grade level: 5th grade, can be modified and adapted to grades 3, 4 & 6

Curriculum Area: Holidays, Jewish History

Time frame: two weeks

Developed by: Lisa Richman

### **DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL AND/OR CREATIVE THINKING**

This unit was developed to help students increase their knowledge of mitzvot and virtues and help them be more discerning when choosing people to hold in high esteem. An important resource for this unit is the book Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values: Living Mitzvot in Today's World by Barry L. Schwartz, 1996. It is comprised of biographies of famous Jews who made a difference by upholding Jewish values and fulfilling mitzvot.

Enduring understandings: Heroism is making a choice that will benefit others even if personal sacrifice might be necessary. Making the right choice offers the opportunity for personal growth.

Essential questions: What is a hero/heroine? What can we learn from our heroes and heroines? How can we incorporate the character traits of our heroes and heroines into our own lives?

#### General Learning Plan:

The students view the Hebrew film: Little Heroes. This was the first film made in Israel for children. (Synopsis attached.)

The students are presented with the project outline Jewish Heroes Congress worksheet. (Attached.) It is an outline for independent study once the children have been assigned a character to research. The children must fill out the biographical information, focusing on exactly what the character did to earn the title of hero. Using a variety of technology tools, they need to design a magazine cover highlighting their person as the Jewish hero of the year. While they will not be writing actual articles, they need to include article titles on the front cover, which indicate that they know the essential points about their research topic.

The students view the DVD The Final Victory: The Story of Felix Zandman. (Sample magazine cover based on Felix Zandman attached. At the end of the unit, close to Chanukah, we visit the National Liberty Museum, a Philadelphia treasure. In the museum is an exhibit showing the small area underneath the house where Zandman was hidden by a Polish family during the Shoah. The children are not told about this in advance. The museum staff is often astounded by the knowledge of the students at this point! The children, of course, are very excited when they happen upon the exhibit and are able to share their knowledge. They also proudly share that Zandman's grandchildren went to their school.

At the end of the unit, there is a 'Gallery Walk'. The children walk around, viewing everyone's contributions to the Jewish Heroes Congress. The magazine covers or posters, the worksheets and the images of how the characters contributed in their own ways are all placed around so the students can share their work with their peers. The children are instructed to view each piece in the exhibit with the essential questions in the back of their mind.