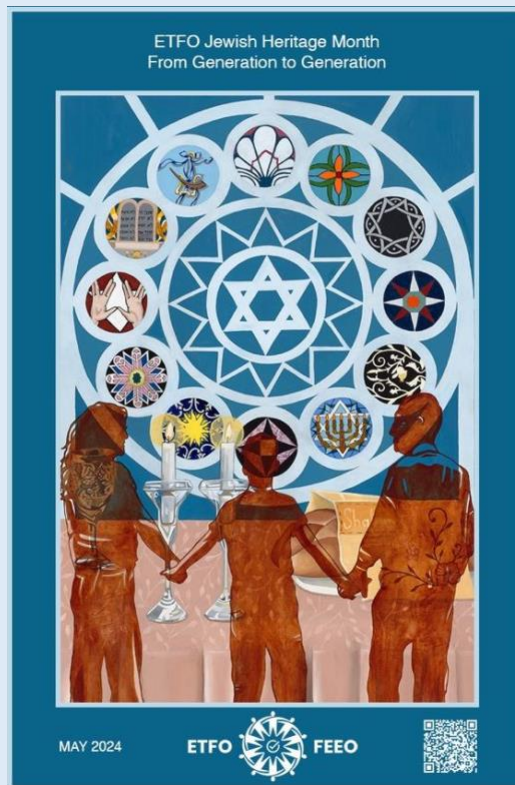


# ETFO Jewish Heritage Month 2024

## Discussion Guide

From Generation to Generation



## Background and Purpose

The month of May was established by the federal government as Canadian Jewish Heritage Month in 2018. With the marked rise in antisemitism, it is essential as educators to ensure that appropriate Jewish education is available to students and the community.

By integrating Jewish heritage into classroom curriculum, we cultivate understanding and appreciation to foster deeper connections among educators and students. Sharing this year's poster in schools and classrooms is an important step towards Jewish heritage awareness and education.

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## Concept and Art Description

This year's poster, featuring the work of Toronto artist and educator [Rosette Sund](#), celebrates Jewish culture, resilience, and contributions in Ontario and beyond. The artwork, entitled *From Generation to Generation*, the English translation of the Hebrew phrase "L'dor Va'dor," encompasses fundamental Jewish values – cultural, religious, and ancestral – all of which continue to be passed down through the generations.

**Culture and tradition** – Using various art patterns found in Jewish institutions and synagogues worldwide, this foundation layer provides a strong visual of the diverse nature of Jewish identity and the cultural influences from around the globe. Some of the imagery includes patterns from Sweden, India, Germany, Tunisia, and Japan.

**Religion** – The second layer celebrates the religious ritual of observing and celebrating Shabbat. For those who observe, Shabbat begins before sunset on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. It is a day to acknowledge the end of one week and welcome the next, as well as to make time for a purposeful day of rest. The image features traditional items found on a Shabbat dinner table: two candles, challah bread, challah bread cover, and a kiddush cup – each with its own meaning and purpose.

**Ancestry and heritage** – The final layer focuses on the contributions and accomplishments of Jewish individuals and communities through the years and over the generations. The three silhouettes represent those of the past, the present, and the future.

These core elements are the foundations of Jewish values and beliefs, as they are for many of the world's cultures.

As you enjoy the poster and think about the symbols it contains, ask yourself what lessons, values, or rituals do you have in your life? What legacies and traditions do you want to pass to the next generation?

# Classroom Connections

## Grade Level: All

**Purpose:** Observe and discuss the various elements within the artwork

1. Give students a limited amount of time to study the poster's design elements (about 30 seconds).
2. After the time is up, direct students to turn their backs to the poster and ask the following observational questions (or add any of your own):
  - What symbol do you see in the centre of the painting?
  - What colour is the tablecloth?
  - What items did you notice on the table?
  - Describe the people you observed
  - What word is written on the bread cover on the table?
  - How many candles are on the table?
  - Describe the hand gestures found in one of the smaller circles
  - What words do you remember reading on the poster?
3. After asking the questions, have students turn around to confirm their responses or look for the observations they did not know.
4. Have them describe what they think each element's purpose and meaning is.
5. Share a brief explanation of the different poster elements (found on pages 9-12 of this guide): patterns from Jewish institutions around the world, shabbat table, and three generations holding hands.
6. Introduce the poster title (*From Generation to Generation*) and brainstorm why the artist chose this title.
7. Discuss the concept of generation to generation by having students share what they know about their heritage and/or the stories passed on from their families or other influential individuals in their lives.

**Variation:** Divide the class into two groups where one group observes and the other comes up with questions. Or, have students partner up and divide roles and then each pair can share their observations with the class.

# Classroom Connections

## Grade Level: Primary/Junior

Read the picture book *Shabbat Hiccups* written by Tracy Newman and illustrated by Ilana Exelby. Share the ETFO Canadian Jewish Heritage Month poster with the class.

### Learning Goal(s)

*We are learning to...*

- Understand Jewish identity as it relates to customs and rituals in bringing families and communities together
- Explore the significance of food in culture, rituals, and identity (e.g., challah bread)
- Tie the Jewish heritage learning experience to something relevant to students

### Success Criteria

*I will...*

- Explore the significance of a ritual, such as Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath)
- Learn the art of braiding challah (in the form of playdough or yarn, etc.) and create a challah cover highlighting vocabulary that mirrors the significance of Shabbat
- Make connections to one's own rituals and traditions

### Action

#### Shabbat

Explain the meaning of Shabbat (shuh-BAHT). The word Shabbat (Sabbath) comes from the Hebrew root word meaning "to rest" or "to cease." Shabbat is a day for taking a joyful break from the activities of daily life, which distinguishes it from the other six days of the week. It starts at sunset on Friday and ends on Saturday evening.

Shabbat Ritual – Share some of the rituals in *Shabbat Hiccups* you may have noticed and make connections to rituals that you practice at home.

## Challah

Introduce the special kind of bread called challah (CHAH-luh). Originating from Eastern European Jews known as Ashkenazim, challah is often braided and features a hint of sweetness. As part of a traditional holiday celebration, the challah is often dressed in an elegant fabric cover with Hebrew writing. The cover is removed, and the challah is blessed before being shared among everyone.

Using playdough or yarn, demonstrate how to braid a three-strand challah:

- Roll out three long, narrow pieces of dough, making sure they are the same length
- Place the three pieces of dough side by side
- Start braiding by taking the outer right strand and crossing it over the middle strand
- Then, take the outer strand on the left and cross it over the middle strand
- Continue braiding in this pattern of outside to centre until you reach the end of the dough
- Pinch the top and bottom ends of the braid together and tidy up any loose bits of dough
- Remember, the bottom side of the loaf is often the smooth side

## Challah Cover

Every item on the Shabbat table receives a blessing prior to the meal being eaten. The challah bread receives the last blessing. As part of the ritual, the bread is kept covered while the other blessings are recited. Students can design and create a unique challah cover and include vocabulary that celebrates the significance of Shabbat.

- Brainstorm vocabulary that can be incorporated on their covers that represent the concept of Shabbat: peace, rest, gratitude, family
- Brainstorm design elements and colours that visually represent those concepts
- Using felt, fabric, or construction paper, students can incorporate their ideas to design a cover

## **References**

Newman, T. (2016). *Shabbat Hiccups* (I. Exelby, illus.). Albert Whitman & Co.

# Classroom Connections

## Grade Level: Junior/Intermediate

Share the ETFO Canadian Jewish Heritage Month poster with students.

### Learning Goal(s)

*We are learning to...*

- Understand the cultural and ethnic diversity of Jewish identity
- Explore the significance of Jewish symbols
- Recognizing contributions of specific Jewish Canadians

### Success Criteria

*I will...*

- Demonstrate an understanding and explain the significance of Jewish symbols
- Make a connection to a symbol from students' own culture
- Learn about Jewish Canadian history and specific contributions to Canadian culture and community

### Action

#### Synagogue Architecture and Design

Students will examine the designs from synagogues around the world in the artwork on the Jewish Heritage Month poster.

- Provide students with some time to work individually, in partners, or in small groups to examine the images and record their observations about similarities in the designs
- Use these guiding questions to assist students with what elements to look for:
  - Describe what you see in terms of design, symbolism, and overall art form
  - Describe possible significance and/or messages that are conveyed by the images
  - Where do you think the symbol(s) is/are from?

The teacher may share designs and provide students with background knowledge on some of the illustrations from pages 9 -10 of this guide.

### Extension Ideas

- Students select one of the designs to research to learn about the synagogue and the Jewish community where the design is from
- Students create their own stained-glass window design that represents ideas and elements uncovered during their research
- Students participate in an actual or virtual field trip to explore their community to look for symbolism or symbols to compare with those of the synagogue designs from the poster
  - Field trip can be a walk in the school community/neighbourhood, or visiting a city centre with a focus on imagery and symbols
- Students create a Venn diagram outlining similarities and differences observed (shapes, colours, symbols, materials, etc.)

### Jewish Canadian History and Contributions

- Help students brainstorm a list of Jewish Canadians (the teacher might need to suggest people students may not be familiar with)
- Have students explore the significance of Canadian Jewish Heritage Month
- Have students explore the Liberation 75 website
- In partners or groups, have students select one Canadian Jewish individual to research and then present to the class



## ETFO Jewish Heritage Month Poster: Artwork Details

### Background:

The overall design of the poster, which includes the Star of David and 12 surrounding circles, is inspired by the window of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, Canada.



Founded in 1856 by members of Toronto's Jewish community, Holy Blossom is thought to be the oldest congregation in the city. After outgrowing its first two locations, the congregation moved to its current synagogue in 1938.



Detail of stained-glass window from the Jerusalem Synagogue in Prague, Czech Republic. Built between 1905 and 1906, and originally named Jubilee Synagogue, the building is often found on lists of “most Instagrammable” synagogues around the world.

Detail of wall tiles from the Great Synagogue of Florence in Florence, Italy. The synagogue opened in 1882 after 12 years of construction. The goal in its design was to create an innovative and unique building highlighting several artistic elements and styles.

Detail of stained-glass window from the Sephardi Synagogue in Sydney, Australia. The synagogue is the oldest Sephardi house of prayer in Australia, having been established in 1962.

Detail from painted wall above the Torah Ark at Kneseth Israel in the Junction neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada. This synagogue is one of the oldest in the city, dating back to 1911.

Stained-glass detail from Templo Libertad, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The hand gesture is one reserved for use by the high priests, the *Cohanim*, during blessings. It may look familiar to *Star Trek* fans, and for good reason. The original Mr. Spock, Jewish actor Leonard Nimoy, borrowed the gesture to accompany the Vulcan greeting, “Live long and prosper.”

Detail from stained-glass window in Keneseth Eliyadoo in Mumbai, India. Jewish presence in India dates back to 587 BCE. Constructed in 1884, this synagogue underwent significant restoration and in 2019 received a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation.



## The Sabbath:

The Sabbath (pronounced shuh-BAHT in Hebrew) is the Jewish day of rest. It begins Friday night at sundown and ends Saturday evening.

Two candles are lit Friday night just before sundown to usher in Shabbat. Traditionally, the prayer for the candles is said while covering one's eyes against the light of the flame.

Shabbat is observed by lighting candles, saying blessings for certain foods, having meals with family members and guests, and attending synagogue. Shabbat is now observed in many different ways depending on people's level of observance.



Many families have a special goblet or glass called a Kiddush cup (pronounced kee-DOOSH). The cup is filled with wine or grape juice and a blessing is recited over the liquid to sanctify Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

Challah (pronounced CHAH-luh) is a loaf of braided bread. Challah is the reminder of the beauty, honour, and strength associated with Shabbat.

Each of the ritual items on the Shabbat table receives a blessing in a particular order (e.g., wine or grape juice is blessed before the bread). The bread is covered to not take away from the importance of blessing the wine.

The challah cover in this picture reads "Shalom" (pronounced shah-LOHM), which means peace.



## Additional Classroom Resources

[Liberation 75 Resources](#) – Explore a variety of classroom resources, visuals, and lesson plans to effectively teach the Holocaust to students of all grade levels to ensure the voices of past generations are heard.

