

**Midnight Bowling Program:
From Mobsters to Prepsters: The Transformation of the Jewish Image
SHAFTY, the TYG of Shir Ami, Newton, PA
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Touchstone Text:

- NFTY Study Theme 2005-2006
- Discusses the evolution of Reform Judaism; program relates this with evolution of image of Jews and also importance of Reform Judaism to Participants.

Goals:

- To educate about Jewish immigration and Jewish life in the early 1900's
- To discuss the modern Jewish image
- To discuss the change the Jewish image has undertaken

Objectives:

- PP's will learn about early 1900's Jewish life
- PP's will learn about famous Jewish gangsters of the time period
- PP's will discuss modern image of Jews and how it has changed

Materials:

- Program Packet
- Paper
- Golf Pencils
- Colored Markers
- Tape

Location:

People:

- 1 Rover/ timekeeper (I'll probably do this and sit in on some groups)
- Group leaders (# Depends on how many PP's)

Timetable:

0:00- 0:05- Names, Favorites, etc.

0:05- 0:20- Family Immigration Stories

0:15- 0:20- Background Info on Reform Movement/ Immigration

0:20- 0:25 - Background Info on Jewish Mobsters

0:25- 0:35 - Discussion on Era/ Image of Jews at that Time

0:35- 1:00 - Discussion about Modern Image of Jews

1:00- 1:20 - Quilt Activity

1:20- 1:25 - Wrap-up

Procedure:

0:00- 0:05 Names, Favorites, etc.

Break into groups. Leader should introduce themselves and basic idea of what program is about. Go around the circle and **say names, school, grade, and favorite (Fill in with whatever you want).**

0:05- 0:20 Family Immigration Stories

Everyone in this circle has descended from ancestors from other countries. Go around the circle and **say country/countries of origin. Encourage PP's to share personal stories of relatives related to immigration, struggles in former country, persecution because of beliefs, etc.**

0:20- 0:25 Background Info on Reform Movement/ Immigration

Read Out Loud To Group:

The Reform Jewish Movement was born in Germany in the early 19th century. German Jews made changes to their traditional Jewish lifestyles and practices to mold to the changing times in which many Jews lost their rights in several countries. Some of the changes included doing away with circumcision, the removal of Hebrew from the liturgy, and the replacement of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony with the Confirmation Ceremony.

American Reform Judaism began as these German "reformers" immigrated to America in the mid 1800s. The first "Reform" group was formed by a number of individuals that split from Congregation Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina. Reform rapidly became the dominant belief system of American Jews of the time.

By 1880, more than 90 percent of American synagogues were Reform. This was the time of the major Eastern European immigration, which was heavily Orthodox and non-German, as contrasted with the strongly German Reform movement. Many Reform congregations of this time were difficult to distinguish from neighboring Protestant churches, with preachers in robes, pews with mixed seating, choirs, organs and hymnals.

0:20- 0:25 Background Info on Jewish Mobsters

Read Out Loud To Group:

During this time period, reform Jews were present in almost all major cities, most predominantly in Cincinnati, New York City, and Baltimore. Of course, like all immigrants of this time period, the German and Eastern European Jewish immigrants faced problems of living in the city, such as poor living conditions and lack of work. Because Jews of this time period lived in close knit communities, it led to the start of organized crime, headed by Jews living in the city.

Here are some famous Jewish Mobsters:

Meyer Lansky: Known as the architect of the modern mob family. Lansky worked closely with "Lucky" Luciano, a mob boss in New York. He ran gambling operations in Florida, New Orleans, and Cuba. The character Hyman Roth in the Godfather Part II is based on Lansky.

Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel: Born in Brooklyn, NY, Bugsy grew up learning how to perform small thefts as part of a street gang. Siegel was involved in running protection rackets, bootlegging operations, and helping "Lucky" Luciano. Siegel is attributed with the large-scale development of Las Vegas's "Strip" area, and the idea to turn it into a giant casino and hotel complex.

Dutch Schultz: Schultz was a prohibition era mobster that owned several speakeasies in New York City. He ran a bootlegging ring, and was eventually charged with tax-evasion, which he was later acquitted of.

0:25- 0:35 Discussion:

Lead a discussion with your group about Jews of this time period. Here are possible discussion topics:

- Do you think at this time in history Jews had a positive or negative image? Why?
- Would you turn to a life of crime if you were in the same economic situation as the criminals you heard about?

0:35- 0:55 Modern Image of Jews

PP's will get paper and golf pencils. Ask them to write down:

- a) Characteristics of a modern Jew in America (physical, economical, political, etc.)
- b) What being an American Reform Jew means to them

**Ask everyone to share what they wrote if they're comfortable with sharing.
Ask some of the following questions:**

- How have Jews been able to organize in positive ways since the days of organized crime? (Youth Groups, Jewish Fraternities, Men's Club, Sisterhood)
- What separates the modern Jewish people from the rest of American culture?
- What do you do to make yourself a part of the American Reform Movement? (Going to synagogue, youth groups, etc.) Why?

1:00- 1:20 - Quilt Activity

Hand out pieces of paper and markers to all PP's. Ask them to decorate their piece of paper in a way that represents all of the things they discussed today. They can include:

- Their heritage
- Characteristics of their family
- Aspects of their Jewish life
- Anything else that makes it personal

After about 10 minutes ask PP's to share their quilt pieces if they would like to. Combine all of the quilt pieces together with the tape into one giant quilt. Wait for me to wrap up everything.

1:20-1:25 – Wrap-up

Explanation of how the quilt represents the coming together of all countries, families, and people into one Reform Jewish People.