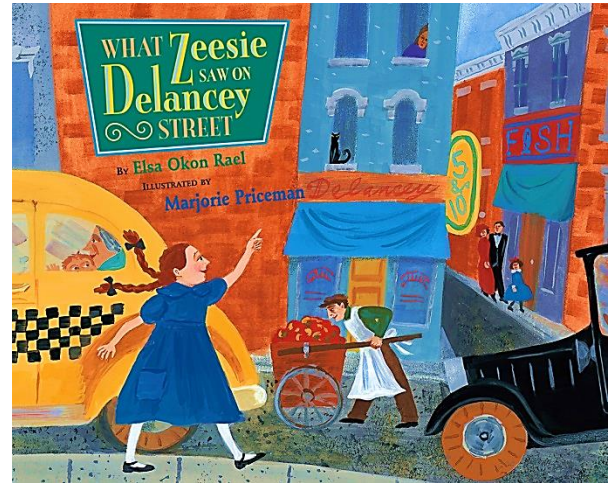


What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street

By Elsa Okon Rael

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 4-8
 Time frame: 60-90 minutes
 Central value: Tzedakah and Community



Synopsis

In the early 1900's on the Lower East Side, a seven-year-old girl learns lessons of community, generosity, and courage from the Jewish immigrant population. With illustrations that are lively and filled with ethnic and historical detail, this book teaches the Jewish philosophy of social justice and "charity" without overly explaining or preaching about Tzedakah.

Goals

- Give families a greater insight into the meaning of Tzedakah
- Provide a glimpse into Jewish immigrant life in the early 1900s
- Emphasize the importance of community and especially the Jewish responsibility to community.

Submitted by

Kitty Wolf – Tidewater, Virginia
 Kittywolf18@yahoo.com

Plan in advance

Prepare Special Packages

Materials

- Empty boxes or lunch bags
- Various sheets of wrapping paper
- Ribbon and other decorative materials
- Tape and glue
- Gift tags

Advanced Preparations

1. Lay out materials on a table for families to select.



Prepare Tzedakah Boxes

Materials

- Empty icing cans, jars, small coffee cans, or other food containers with plastic tops
- A selection of different shapes of pasta
- Gold, silver or sparkle paint (or spray paint)
- PVA (white craft) or all-purpose glue

Advanced Preparations

1. Display containers so that each family can easily come and choose one.
2. Lay out pasta, glue, and paints out on each table.
3. If using spray paint, provide a well-ventilated area for ADULTS to spray, or have pasta pre-sprayed before the session.
4. If you prefer, you can make colored pasta to eliminate use of spray paint:
 - Obtain 2 cups of pasta, 2 teaspoons of food coloring, and 3 teaspoons of rubbing alcohol
 - Mix the alcohol with the food coloring and then add the pasta. Put all in a covered bowl or Ziploc bag.
 - Shake slowly, making sure to cover the pasta with the liquid.
 - Spread to dry for several hours. Can be used to make jewelry, decorative plaques or pasta pictures.



Prepare Dancing Activity

Advanced Preparations

If possible, invite a klezmer musician to come and play music so families can dance together and experience more of what Jewish immigrant life on the Lower East Side was like. If you cannot find a live musician, there are many Klezmer recordings that you can purchase or download from the web.

Here are suggestions:

- [The Jewish Wedding Band](#) - 'A Child's Hanukkah', from *Music for Little People*. Performed klezmer-style, this CD plays out like a joyous family gathering full of songs, skits, fun times, and a cast of characters. Includes Yiddish, Hebrew, and English lyrics. Released by *Music For Little People* in 1998.
- You can get the music and listen to the Yiddish song that Zeesie sang with her Tante (Aunt) Trina, *Shain Vi Di L'vone* online at: www.folktunefinder.com/tunes/61474/



Prepare Jewish Food Tasting

Materials

- A buffet table with a cloth
- Plates, spoons/forks and napkins for each participant
- A variety of the following foods (with serving utensils):
 - Arbes - Chickpeas (Zeesie's favorite)
 - Charnishka - black caraway seeds
 - Flanken - pot roast
 - Knish - filled dumpling
 - Kugel - baked pudding
 - Leykach - honey cake
 - Mandelbrot - a hard semisweet cake
 - Pirogen - dumplings
 - Ruggelah - filled, rolled pastry
 - Sauerkraut - pickled cabbage
 - Tsimmes - sweet carrot and prune compote

Advance Preparations

Many of these foods can be found in the local grocery store and recipes for Tsimmes and Leykach are found at the back of the book. Other recipes are easily found in Jewish cookbooks or online.

Copy the names of the food you are serving and what they are on a poster board to display and on name tags to put by each dish.

Introduce with an activity

Make Special Packages

Today, we'll be reading a story about a little girl named Zeesie who lived on the Lower East Side of New York in the early 1900's. It's her birthday, and she is going to a special party called a "Package Party." Every family who attends the event brings a specially wrapped package. However, the packages are not for her. The packages will be sold to raise money to bring new immigrants from their former village in Europe to America. Before we begin the story, let's wrap our own packages to have as props while we listen.

Directions

1. Invite families to select a box/bag and material to wrap the box or decorate the bag.
2. Tell the families that even though there is nothing inside the packages, we want to make them look very appealing on the outside.
3. Let families work on their packages for 5-10 minutes, or however long it takes most families to finish.
4. Give each family a blank gift tag to attach to their package. Tell them to leave it blank until later.



Read the story

Have families move to the story telling area if you plan to have one, bringing their newly wrapped packages with them. Remind families that the story setting is a Jewish American community on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the early 1900s and that Zeesie is going to a package party with her parents, relatives, and neighbors. It is her birthday. *Pretend that you are going to the package party as well. You have your packages ready to bring along.*

Encourage Participation

Read the story through. You may want to pause to explain Yiddish words and phrases and at the following points to ask for group participation:

- When Zeesie and her family get to the social hall and put down their package, ask the group to hold up their packages to show everyone.
- When Zeesie imagines what might be in the money room, ask the group what they think might be in there.

Adaptations for Group Size and Age

- The program works well with both small and large groups as long as there is space for families to participate together comfortably.
- The program is suitable for both younger and older children as families participate as a unit (older children can help younger siblings who enjoy being part of the family activities).

After the Story

In our story, what Zeesie saw inspired her to do something very generous. Zeesie learned a lot at the package party. She learned about Tzedakah. Tzedakah is an important Jewish mitzvah, and giving is an important part of what we do as Jews. The word "Tzedakah" is often translated as "charity," but it means much more than just giving money. Tzedakah actually means "righteousness." When we learn the mitzvah of tzedakah, we learn that as Jews we are commanded to care of each other – Jews and non-Jews – and to take our place in the repair of the world. Zeesie gave her wonderful birthday present to help others and didn't tell anyone! That makes the mitzvah even better!



The money from the packaged food auction was also used to help care for others. You have a wrapped package, too. Pretend that someone bids on it. What would you like the money to be used for? Take some time to talk together with your family now about what you would like to do to help care for others. Make a plan for your Tzedakah. Write on the tag what you will do. This is for your family only. Like Zeesie and her family and neighbors, we will not share what we are going to do to help care for others but we will take our packages home to help us remember to continue the Tzedakah projects we have chosen.

Follow Up activities and resources

Make Tzedakah Boxes

A first step in following through with our own Tzedakah plan is to have a special tzedakah box at home to saving money for the causes we have identified. We will create such a box- a beautiful handcrafted work of art- here today. Putting money in a jar for helping others can be meaningful but putting a penny into a can painted and decorated by you and your family is much more fun. Take some time now to come and select the perfect jar or can to hold your Tzedakah collection. And, you have a homemade family heirloom Tzedakah box. When your tzedakah box is full, you will be ready to give the plan for your money on your gift tag.

Directions

1. Have an adult family member make a slit for coins in the container top.
2. Use the PVA glue to stick pieces of dry pasta onto the containers and tops.
3. If using colored pasta, seal the finished product with some varnish once the glue has dried.
4. Have families show finished projects.



An alternate and much more elaborate box can be made by attaching purchased beach glass pieces or stick-on-jewels to the containers instead of pasta pieces. The glass can be purchased at a Dollar or craft store. Follow the same procedure as above but use stronger glue.



Dancing Together

Another follow-up activity that will get people moving and reinforce what we have learned about the immigrant community is to dance together. A Klezmer Band performed the music at the Package Party. Klezmer is lively Jewish folk music derived from Eastern European folk songs and Hebrew melodies. If you have someone who can lead and teach Jewish circle dances, great; but if you don't, it's just as much fun to just get up and dance around free style or in a circle. Dancing together helps families to experience a greater sense of community.

Jewish Food Tasting

Zeesie and her family shared many wonderful foods. Have a food tasting for your families using some of the following foods. All the foods are listed in the Glossary at the back of the book. Some of them may sound strange to us!

Directions

1. Set up the buffet table, perhaps decorating it with some nicely wrapped packages.
2. Set out the food to share with serving utensils.
3. Have families come together to take small portions to taste and share together.
4. After the tasting ask what foods people liked or did not like. What foods will they try at home?



Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Send parents home with the following information on how to continue nurturing the practice of Tzedakah at home (You can print it out and send it as a follow-up handout, but before you close, go over the point with the group).

Tzedakah At Home

There is so much that parents can do at home to help children learn to take care of the world they live in and the people with whom they share it. For children, giving their money for tzedakah is more meaningful if it is their own idea. So in situations where children recognize an injustice in their world and question it, help them to find ways to create change for the better. Ask some leading questions:

- What is it about this situation that bothers you?
- How can we help to make this situation fairer?
- What can we do to help?

As parents, you know your children the best: let your child's natural curiosity drive the conversation, with some help and guidance from you. Help your child understand that in the end, one of the best ways to help make our world a more just, fair place is to share the resources we have with others who don't have them. For every child who has ever fought over a toy, this concept makes complete sense. Make it a regular ritual to put money in your Tzedakah box. Have a special place to keep your box and a regular time to put money in and to count it. Even the youngest children can participate: Putting a coin through a small slot is a great fine motor activity. It also lays the foundation of association: coins go in this box. As children grow, and you follow through on your Tzedakah projects, they will begin to understand what the coins in the box can do.