



MENDEL'S ACCORDION

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In this winning story, the memory of a young man's long-forgotten accordion playing resurfaces when his great-grandson comes upon his instrument.

IMMIGRATION

Mendel represents countless Jewish people who fled their pogrom-torn homeland in Eastern Europe and came to the United States seeking refuge and a better life. Many settled on the Lower East Side of New York City. What a challenge to hold to their traditions while assimilating into a new country! For many, music was a connection to the “old country,” a reminder of a very different life.

Mendel's Accordion gently describes the changes in Jewish life from the time of the *shtetl* (small village) to the present. As your children are ready, point out changes in Jewish life throughout this story. Note the changes in names (Shmelke to Leon), clothing (see, especially, the wedding scenes), and types of instruments and the musicians (women as well as men).

This book lends itself to interesting questions:

- Why does Mendel take his accordion with him to America?
- What prized possession would you take as a reminder of home if you were going on a long trip?
- What sounds, tastes or activities from your home give you happy feelings?

KLEZMER MUSIC

Klezmer music, with its unique sound, often appeals to children. Let your youngsters experience the music that people like Mendel brought to America by playing some Klezmer music for them. The Internet is a great source, as is your local music store or library.

Many children enjoy the music of *Peter and the Wolf*. There is a Klezmer version starring Maurice Sendak, with the Shirim Klezmer Orchestra. On the CD, called *Pincus and the Pig*, each animal is represented by an instrument from a Klezmer band. Share many kinds of music with your children. Discuss differences they hear between Beethoven and Yiddish lullabies, or Frank Sinatra and Bruce Springstein! Talk about music styles appeal to you!