

The Art Lesson

written by

Wayne and Allison Marks

illustrated by

Annie Wilkinson



What do you create?

Momentous Moment

The holiday of Shavuot marks the day when Jewish people received the Torah on Mount Sinai, thousands of years ago. According to Jewish tradition, the entire nation -- young and old -- were there to witness this meeting of heaven and earth, and the events of Sinai have been carefully passed down l'dor vador, from generation to generation, ever since. It's like Grandma J sharing her love of art with Shoshana in this story, and then Shoshana in turn lovingly teaching her own granddaughter to create beautiful things. When something is so important to you that you want to pass it on to the next generation...and the next...and the next, you know you've got a real gem. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/artlesson.

HANDS ON!

Make L'dor Vador Art

Art can be a powerful way of transmitting ideas and values in the Jewish tradition of l'dor vador, from generation to generation. Here's a project to get you started on making your own l'dor vador art.

Supplies:

- Large paper
- Art supplies/old magazines/scissors
- Friends and family

Call some family members and friends who are older than you.

Ask each of them the same question: "If you had one piece of advice to give me, what would it be?" Write down their answers.

Create a poster featuring the answers you receive. You can illustrate the quotes yourself, or cut out images from magazines to make collages -- whatever you like.

Make sure to leave some space to write down the advice you want to pass on, too!

Taste and See

It's traditional to decorate for Shavuot with flowers and leafy branches placed in homes and synagogues. Shoshana, whose name means "rose" in Hebrew, is thrilled to learn that roses are often included in the decorations! Like Shoshana and Grandma J, the Jews of Eastern Europe had the tradition of making intricate papercuts to hang in their windows for Shavuot, and their designs often included rosettes, known as roizalakh in Yiddish. Another Shavuot tradition is to eat dairy treats like blintzes and cheesecake, because the nourishment milk gives to the body reminds us of the spiritual sustenance the Torah gives to the soul. For lovers of beauty and lovers of food, what's not to like about Shavuot?

Perspective Is Everything

According to a *midrash* (ancient commentary on biblical text), all the Jews in the world stood together at Mount Sinai when the Torah was given, but each person heard the words in their own unique way, on a level they could personally grasp. In this story, Shoshana and Grandma J experience this phenomenon through art. Shoshana is frustrated by her first attempts at papercutting, while Grandma J sees beautiful images within her work. One advantage of perceiving the world differently is that we can share our unique perspectives with each other. When Shoshana looks at her art through Grandma J's eyes, a whole new world opens up for her. What new perspective can you try on today?

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

COMPARE Grandma J's art studio to the studio Shoshana has when she becomes an artist herself. How are they similar and how are they different? What would you enjoy about spending time in each one?

AT first, Shoshana's project doesn't go the way she wants it to. Have you ever felt that way? What do you do when a project doesn't turn out the way you want it to?

WHEN Shoshana grows up, she gives her granddaughter the same art lesson that Grandma J gave her. What special lessons do you think you might teach someone someday?