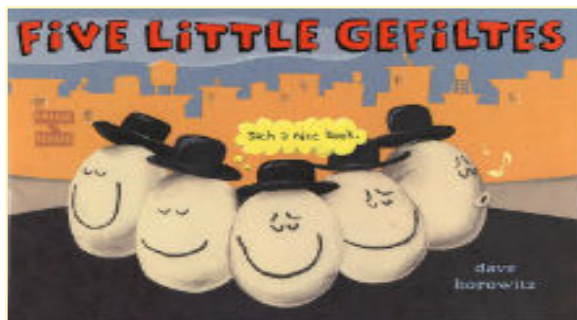


Five Little Gefiltes

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{ Who is a mensch in your life? }

Love for Mamaloshen

“Oy vey,” “shlep,” “chutzpah,” “bubbe,” “kvetch”! These words come from Yiddish, the traditional language of Ashkenazi (eastern and central European) Jews, which stems from the Middle Ages and contains a mixture of German, Hebrew, and Slavic languages. The Yiddish word gefilte, meaning “filled,” refers to stuffed fish. Yiddish is an expressive language that can convey everything from sly humor to deep sadness. Many people call Yiddish the mamaloshen, or mother tongue, reflecting an emotional connection with this beloved language. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/fivelittlegefiltes.

HANDS ON!

Make Play Gefiltes!

Gefilte fish may be a bit of an acquired taste for some, but you can make play gefiltes that also make a nice dessert.

Ingredients:

Five large white marshmallows
Five prunes (or raisins)

Put the prunes (or raisins) on top of the marshmallows. Voila -- you have five little gefiltes! You can act out this story if you like. Try singing it to the tune of Five Little Ducks (search for the song online if you don't know it). Then enjoy a sweet snack!

Little Gefiltes, Big City

The five little gefilte balls all disappear into the big city — New York City, that is, where it's easy to grab a nosh (snack) like knishes (potato-filled pastries) and kreplach (dumplings). The gefiltes run loose on the Lower East Side, where many Jewish immigrants settled in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It is estimated that about half a million Jews were living in the Lower East Side by 1910 — the world's biggest Jewish population at the time! We can spot references to this important period of American Jewish history throughout the book in its depictions of turn-of-the-century garment shops and the Yiddish theater. Most importantly, perhaps, we see the Statue of Liberty, the ultimate symbol of America as di goldene medina, “the golden land.”

More Menschiness, Please!

At the end of the book, the little gefiltes all return to their mother because “each was a mensch.” This Yiddish word literally means “person,” but it's also much more. To call someone a mensch is to say that they are decent and good. This connects to the Jewish values of hesed (loving-kindness) and rachamim (compassion), which are among the most important qualities a person can have. Nu (so...), any mother of a mensch would certainly have a good reason to kvell (be proud)!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHY do you think the little gefiltes kept leaving the jar?

WHY did the little gefiltes all come back to Mama Gefilte in the end? How does Mama feel when they come back?

MAMA says each of her little gefiltes is a mensch. What's a mensch? How can you try to be a mensch?