



{ **What's more important, the outside or the inside?** }

Don't Judge the Jug

There's an important saying from Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors), an ancient collection of rabbinic writings: "Look not at the container, but at what it contains." Marco may wear patched-up clothes and a layer of coal dust, but on the inside, he shines. In this story, thanks to the kind gesture of an honorable gentleman, Marco wears a "splendid coat" and finally shines on the outside. But rather than become a snob, Marco plays the situation to his full advantage by stuffing the lovely coat with delicious foods to share with his family back home. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/eatcoateat.

Eats from the Middle East

Are you wondering where this story takes place? We see couscous and the cone-shaped tagine used to cook it, stuffed grape leaves, shish kebab, and even the cube-shaped dessert known as Turkish delight. These foods have traditionally been eaten by Jews in Turkey and other Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and North African countries. Food also symbolizes the different attitudes of people in the story. Marco, whose family is poor and eats simple food like pita bread, sees even the burnt leftovers as a blessing, while the rich guests with all the best dishes and wines spend most of their time complaining!

Do Clothes Make the Person?

This story might remind us of other Jewish stories about coats and clothes. In the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), Jacob gives his son Joseph a "coat of many colors" to show that he is the favorite son. No one really knows what this garment looked like. Many scholars think it had stripes, checks, or decorative pictures; some suggest the material was silk, wool, or linen; others believe that it had long sleeves or a hood. Regardless of what the coat looked like, what matters is that it made Joseph's life really complicated! Clothes can certainly change how others see us. Do they change how we see ourselves, too?

HANDS ON!

Make Your Own "Coal" Drawings

Marco sells coal all day long in the marketplace to help people heat their homes and cook their food, and sometimes he uses a piece of coal to make drawings for the town's children. Most people don't have pieces of coal hanging around their homes these days, but you can make a "coal" drawing that looks like Marco's. All you need is a black crayon or a charcoal pencil.

Using your crayon or pencil, go ahead and start drawing. For ideas of what to draw, think of your favorite parts of this story. You could draw funny faces, the way Marco does, or maybe draw your own "hungry coat" and the different foods you would feed it!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT is really "inside" Marco that makes him so special?

IF you were one of the other guests at the party, what would you think when Marco feeds his coat?

HOW do people treat Marco when he wears his old coat to weddings and feasts? How do people react when Marco wears the beautiful silk coat? Why is Marco treated differently based on what he wears?