



Mr. Peabody's Apples

written by
Madonna

illustrated by
Loren Long

{ **Do your words hurt or heal?** }

Master of the Good Name

This tale is based on a story told by the sage known as the Baal Shem ("Master of the Good Name"). Born Israel ben Eliezer around 1700 in what is now Ukraine, the Baal Shem Tov founded Hasidic Judaism. He encouraged fostering a direct connection and closeness with God, a concept known as *devekut*. Prayer and the mystical significance of Hebrew letters and words were also central to his teachings. The Baal Shem Tov probably never imagined that this story would become a book about a small town named Happville! To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/mrpeabody.

Taming the Tongue

The rumor that Mr. Peabody is a thief spreads like wildfire. This is the damage that gossip, or *lashon hara* (Hebrew for "evil tongue"), causes. Many Jewish teachings emphasize avoiding negative speech about others. *Lashon hara* is said to harm three people at the same time: the one who says it, the one who hears it, and the one who's being talked about. The opposite of *lashon hara* is *lashon hatov*, good speech. By the end of this story, Tommy would agree that *lashon tov* is the way to go.

Making Things Right

Instead of running away from what he's done, Tommy owns up and wants to make *teshuvah* (Hebrew for repentance, literally "turning"). Most parents are probably familiar with the challenge of helping their kids understand that saying "I'm sorry" is just the first step. To really mean it, we have to try to make things better, and we have to avoid repeating our mistakes. When Tommy asks for forgiveness, Mr. Peabody uses the opportunity to gently teach the boy an invaluable lesson about the power of words. Forgiveness and peace between friends is the happiest ending of all.

HANDS ON!

Make a Your Home a Gossip-Free Zone

Want to make your home a place for *lashon hatov*, good speech? Set the stage by creating a sign.

Supplies

- Large piece of white paper or poster board
- Pencil
- Markers or paint

Decide on the message you want to use about the power of positive words – "Gossip-Free Zone" works well, but feel free to create your own. Use the pencil to write it in large bubble letters on the paper. Fill in the letters with markers or paint, making them colorful and bright. Feel free to add extra decorations. Hang the sign on your fridge as a reminder to everyone to speak positively about others as much as possible.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHY is it important to be careful what we say?

WHAT do you think Tommy could have done when he first saw Mr. Peabody take an apple without paying?

CAN you think of a time when you've had to ask for forgiveness, or someone has asked you for forgiveness?