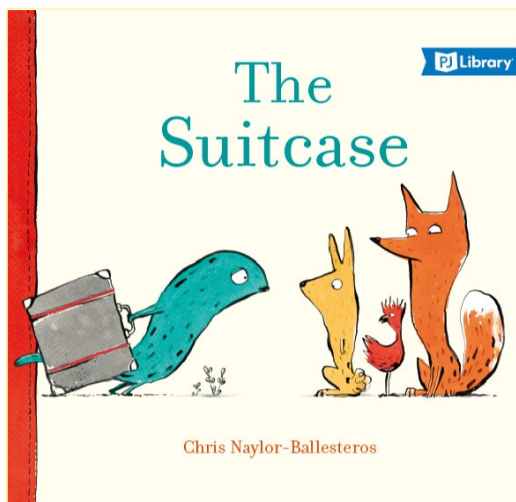


The Suitcase

written and illustrated by

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What do you carry with you?



A Message Worth Repeating

When Bird, Rabbit, and Fox meet the stranger, they're sympathetic, suspicious, and just plain curious – but not welcoming. When a stranger arrives, communities don't always roll out the red carpet, but the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) says: "Love the stranger as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34). The late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote that it can be easy to love our neighbors because they're like us, but we're taught to love strangers because they are different. "This is why the Torah commands us only once to love our neighbor," Sacks said, "but on 36 occasions commands us to love the stranger." To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/suitcase.

We've All Got Baggage

Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) are a time to do teshuvah – to acknowledge our mistakes and set intentions to do better in the future. After breaking open the suitcase, the animals in this story realize that they've made a mistake, and they immediately go about fixing it. We've all got baggage of one kind or another, even if we're not dragging literal suitcases with us. Every one of us has the capacity to unpack our own mistakes and try to fix them. That's what the Jewish High Holidays are all about.

The Mystery of Memory

Who is this stranger? Where is the stranger from? And how does everything fit inside that suitcase? The answer to that last question lies in the Jewish value of memory (in Hebrew, zikaron). At times in our history, the Jewish people have had to leave their homes, sometimes without even a suitcase, and yet Jewish culture and tradition endures. Sometimes memory is more real than anything tangible. We may lose possessions or even a home, but no one can take away our memories. We can hold them all in our hearts, and take them wherever we go.

HANDS ON!

Pack Your Suitcase

In this story, the animals all wonder what's in the stranger's suitcase. When they break it open to find out, they discover things that are important to him. Suppose you were the stranger. What would you put in your suitcase? Here's a project to help you think about it.

Draw an empty suitcase on a piece of paper. Make it nice and large so you can fit many things inside it.

Now begin to draw items inside it. If you were heading to a new place, what would you make sure to pack? Would you put a stuffed animal in there? A favorite book? A special tree or a beloved pet? Remember, this is a magic suitcase! You can put anything in it that you like – nothing's too big.

When your suitcase is full, you'll see that it's more than just a suitcase – it's a collection of things that are important to you. No wonder the stranger was so protective of his suitcase!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT do you think Fox and Bird were thinking and feeling when they first met the stranger? How do you feel when you meet someone new on the playground or at school?

FOX and Rabbit seem to behave differently towards the stranger. How do Fox's words and actions differ from Rabbit's?

PRETEND to be one of the animals who first greets the stranger. What would you say? How would you respond to Fox when he suggests that everyone break open the stranger's suitcase?