

# The Mystery Bear

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## Who is wise?

### Bearly Spring

Each year, Purim arrives as winter gives way to spring, so a bear cub emerging from hibernation might well stumble upon this fun Jewish holiday. Luckily for hungry bears, a typical Purim celebration includes a feast with lots of fabulous food. A stray cub might also find funny (and sometimes furry!) costumes, and see that for joyful full-grown people, there are enough spirited drinks that revelers might not easily “tell the difference between Mordechai and Haman” (the hero and villain of the Purim story) – or between a well-disguised villager and a real bear! To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/mysterybear](http://pjlibrary.org/mysterybear).

### Play Time

Play may be children’s work, but during Purim everyone gets in on the act. Purim is a carnival holiday, and it’s traditional to celebrate by dressing up in costume, putting on a parade and/or a spiel (Yiddish for “play”), and to listen to the story of Purim read aloud. When the reader says the name of the story’s villain, Haman, listeners shake groggers (Yiddish for “noisemakers”), stamp their feet, yell, or make other loud noises to drown out Haman’s name! What could be more fun for kids?

### Who Is Wise?

Itzik is curious and observant, just like Little Bear. He notices, watches, and listens, unlike the grown-ups around him. Jewish tradition is careful to remind adults that a little humility is a good thing. In Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors, an ancient collection of rabbinic sayings), Ben Zoma says, “Who is wise? One who learns from everyone” (4:1). Perhaps at Purim it is especially wise to listen to children and to look beyond the surface of things.

## HANDS ON!

### Make a Little Bear Mask

A classic way to celebrate Purim is to dress up! Take a cue from this story and make a Little Bear mask. Will people think you’re a real bear?

#### Supplies

- Paper plate
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, or paints
- Popsicle stick or plastic spoon

Color or paint the plate brown.

Cut out two large circles for the eye holes (this may be a grown-up’s job), then repurpose the circles by gluing them at the top of the paper plate to make ears.

Cut out a black triangle for a nose and a pink half-circle for a tongue, and glue them onto the plate.

Glue a popsicle stick or plastic spoon onto the back of the plate for a handle.

Now we are ready for Purim -- let’s play!

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**LOOK** at the illustrations in this book. How does Little Bear know it is spring?

**WHAT** does Little Bear like about the Purim party? What would you like?

**WHAT** would you do if you saw a bear at a Purim party?