THE SECRET INGREDIENTS IN EVERY PJ LIBRARY BOOK

By Naomi Shulman
PJ LIBRARY BOOK SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBER

IF YOU’VE LOOKED AT THE FLAPS on a PJ Library book recently, you may have noticed that they’ve been spiffed up a bit. Compared to older book flaps, they’re longer (we print on the underside of the flap, doubling our real estate), designed with parents in mind (clear headings and illustrations make for better readability), and they offer more information to families, including discussion prompts, hands-on activities, and individualized book URLs for more resources.

It’s a challenge to pack this much information onto a slice of paper that isn’t much larger than a bookmark. But our research tells us that for many families, these flaps provide much-needed guidance. If you’re a parent raising Jewish children and you don’t know much about, say, Shavuot or Tu B’Shevat, it’s helpful to get a little more backstory. Ironically, the flaps that often have to do the heaviest lifting are the ones for books that have the least overt Jewish content. Rather than lifting are the ones for books that have the flaps that often have to do the heaviest lifting are the ones for books that have the least overt Jewish content. Rather than fleshing out a holiday or a tradition, flaps get a little more backstory. Ironically, the flaps that often have to do the heaviest lifting are the ones for books that have the least overt Jewish content. Rather than fleshing out a holiday or a tradition, flaps get a little more backstory.

THE BIG QUESTION.
This overarching question at the top of the flap distills each book to a single, open-ended question that’s intended to make everyone, kids and adults, think.

JEWISH CONCEPTS.
Three or four chunks of information answer a question readers might have about the holiday, tradition, or value. This section may also answer the question, “What’s Jewish about this book?”

HANDS ON.
Whether they’re recipes, crafts, or games, these are ideas about things to do when the book is finished. Ideally it will involve things that are already hanging around the house – we don’t want people to have to make a special trip to the crafts store.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS.
The Big Question is for everyone; the Jewish Concepts are for parents. These discussion prompts are tailored for the kids receiving the book and are meant to open conversation about it with their caregivers.

When we mix all these ingredients together, the ideal result is a guide that provides useful information to all families, across the spectrum of Jewish practice, and complements the messages inside the book. The Book Selection Committee strives to send out books that families will want to read again and again. With any luck, families will also read the flaps at least once, and be inspired to think and talk – and maybe even do – more.

Behind the (New) Book Flaps!