



SHANGHAI SUKKAH

Written by Heidi Smith Hyde

Illustrated by Jing Jing Tsong

When Marcus's family moves from Europe to China in the 1930s, he feels like a fish out of water. He doesn't know any Jewish families like his. But when he makes a new friend, he's able to build an unusual sukkah just in time for Sukkot – and that helps him feel more at home.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Sukkot (meaning “booths”) is a seven-day Jewish festival that follows Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the fall holiday season. It commemorates the time following the ancient Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt when they dwelled in booths in the wilderness. It is a *mitzvah* (commandment) to build a sukkah and do as many everyday activities as possible in it: eating, sleeping, spending time with friends, etc. Dwelling in the sukkah is full of meaning. It is a much more fragile environment than our solidly-built houses, and offers much less protection from the outside world. In our homes, surrounded by comforts and possessions, it can be easy to feel a sense of self-sufficiency. However, out in the sukkah, one is reminded of the fragility of life, and is motivated to refocus on things of enduring meaning and value.

Sukkot is celebrated around the world. Depending on space, *sukkot* (plural of sukkah) are often built in yards or on balconies. You might also see sukkot in some unlikely places: at a bus stop, outside of a restaurant, or even on the back of a truck! Some people leave their sukkot undecorated, while others make them lavish, using rugs, pillows, wall tapestries, fruits and vegetables, or lanterns. A traditional sukkah must meet certain requirements (for example, one must be able to look through the roof and see the sky), but after that, there is much room for creativity!

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Continue the fun of *Shanghai Sukkah* with the following discussion questions and activities!

Friendship across cultures: In this story, Marcus and Liang are from different cultures. They enjoy teaching each other about their own holidays and traditions. Do you have a friend or know someone from a culture different from your own? In what ways are you similar to and different from each other? What can you learn from your friend? Think of some questions you'd like to ask about his or her country, holidays, and traditions.

An edible sukkah: Build your very own mini-sukkah out of edible items! There are many pictures of real sukkot online, after which you can model yours, as well as pictures of edible sukkah creations. Use items such as graham crackers for the walls, pretzel sticks and parsley for the *schach* (roofing material), and decorate colorfully with small candy pieces. Use frosting, peanut butter, or other yummy items to glue the parts together. After you've admired your creation, dig in and taste!

If you don't have a sukkah of your own, ask around or call a local synagogue or Jewish community center to find a sukkah where your family can take part in the festivities.