

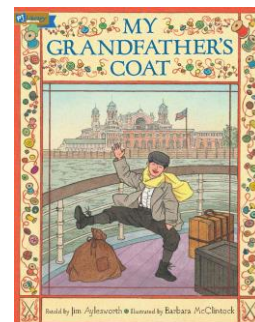


My Grandfather's Coat

Retold by Jim Ayelsoth

Illustrated by Barbara McClintock

Published by Scholastic Press



On one foot: The story in this book is told equally through its words and its illustrations. It is not only about a man's immigration to America, but also his inexhaustible work ethic and attention to repurposing goods.

Highlighted Jewish values:

Tradition: from generation to generation

לְדוֹר וָדוֹר
L'dor va-dor

Preventing waste

בַּל תַּשְׁחִית
Bal tash-chit

Connection to journeys (theme)

This story is about two journeys – the life of a garment and a man's journey through life.

Optional preparation for reading the story:

Find an old or torn garment, such as a coat, to bring into the classroom. (Thrift shops are a good source for this.)

Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

From generation to generation - L'dor vador

Three aspects of this value to consider

- We learn values from previous generations
- Traditions are passed via objects, stories, and rituals
- Each of us is part of the chain of tradition, contributing to the future of the Jewish people

The concept of passing tradition "l'dor vador," from generation to generation, is so fundamental to Judaism that its words are recited as a core part of our liturgy. This central prayer, the *Kedusha* (from the Hebrew word *kadosh*, meaning holy), is said three times a day and signifies the endurance of faith and the continuity of the Jewish people. We gain strength and knowledge from the generations before us, and we commit to passing on the tradition after us. Each generation is like a link in a chain, making its own unique contributions to the collected lore of Jewish culture. This is often physically represented at a bar or bat mitzvah service, as a grandparent takes a Torah scroll from its sacred cabinet and passes it to the child's parent who then passes it to the child. What role do each of us, teacher and student, play in this chain of transmission?

Preventing waste – *Bal tashchit*

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Preserve our resources by repurposing what we have
- Train yourself to think differently about used objects or objects that need repair
- New is not always better

The Jewish concept of not destroying the earth has its origins in the first chapters of the Torah, when God creates humans to fill the earth and govern all of its creatures (Genesis 1:28). An ancient commentary on the Biblical book of Ecclesiastes puts it eloquently: “Consider that [the world was created for humankind], and do not corrupt or desolate my world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you” (*Kohellet Rabbah* 7:13). The sages teach that responsibility for the earth includes everything from preventing food waste to stopping misuse of property and vandalism. We naturally teach children not to harm others’ property, but how do we teach children not to be wasteful in today’s increasingly “disposable” culture?

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging the children



Set the stage with questions

The boy on the cover is coming to new country. How he is arriving? Why? (Hint: this journey was a long time ago.)

There are threads and buttons around the border. This has to do with the boy’s job when he gets older. What do you think that is?

During this book the boy grows up; we see him become an old man. How do you think he will change?

Choose a storytelling technique (optional)

1. Bring in an old garment and ask the children what they would do with it. Wonder aloud if the main character will use any of their suggestions.
2. In this book the grandfather repeats several movements each time he tailors his garment. Solicit movements from the students to enact at the appropriate times in the story.

After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Tradition	Do not waste
Discuss	Discuss
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was the coat important to the grandfather? • The grandfather makes a toy from his beloved coat. Do you have anything that was special to your grandparents? • The family in this book observes both personal family traditions and Jewish traditions. What Jewish traditions can you find in the book? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did the grandfather keep making things from his coat instead of throwing it away? • What were the many ways in which the coat became useful? • What’s the difference between donating and throwing away? Where does garbage go? (What journey does it go on?)



<p>Tradition</p>	<p>Do not waste</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>Activities</p>
<p>Which one is missing? Gather 10 to 12 ritual objects and display them on a tray. (You can also use photos. See family engagement activity below.) Ask the children to identify them. Direct the children to look at the items for 10 seconds, and then cover the items with a cloth. Secretly remove one of the items. Can the students identify the missing object?</p> <p>T-shirt quilt: Have students bring in a T-shirt that is outgrown or worn out. Allow students to share the importance of the shirt. Make a quilt of these shirts by sewing, tying, or clipping the pieces together.</p>	<p>Where did it come from? We understand why a Torah is valuable, but what about common objects? Where did your clothing come from? Map a garment's journey. How did it get there, how many miles, how many workers?</p> <p>What can you do with this? Divide students into small groups. Give each group a common object such as a swimming noodle, a large scarf, or a small box. How many alternate uses for the object can each team devise?</p> <p>Book ambulance/hospital: Books are often sacred in Jewish tradition, and at the very least are objects deserving of respect. Perhaps your school can sponsor a visit from a scribe to explain how to repair a Torah. You might also consider creating a space for repair of textbooks and storybooks.</p>
<p>Image from Rachel Hobson blog http://makezine.com/craft/t-shirt_memory_scarf/</p>	
<p>Passing along tradition: Bring one or more Ping-Pong balls to class. Imagine with your students that the balls are really miniature storage units for their most important traditions. What traditions and values would they store inside? Play relay races and pass the "traditions" on spoons or by hand.</p>	<p>Repair/conservé bingo: Brainstorm things that might need repair or conservation at your school, such as dripping faucets and torn carpet. Create a bingo game or scavenger hunt, and send your students on a journey to find these objects.</p>
<p>Engaging families – tradition</p>	<p>Engaging families – do not waste</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your classroom into a live or virtual museum. Ask families to lend an object (or its photo) for a ritual object display. Invite families to write a card explaining the object's importance. Host an opening day reception for your families. Serve hors d'oeuvres and peruse the display. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for a family swap meet. One family's trash might be another family's treasure. • Do you have a "bag of bags" at home? Ask your students to count how many bags are hidden away at home, and challenge families to reuse or repurpose those bags. • Repair fair. Invite families to help you with bringing and repairing items at a family day. Items might include books, bicycles, lamps, and teddy bears.

