

Simon and the Bear **A Hanukkah Story**

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Summary

When Simon boards a ship bound for America from the old country, he remembers his mother's suggestion to celebrate Hanukkah if he should need a miracle. Stranded on an iceberg with only a polar bear around, Simon dutifully lights the Hanukkah candles and gets an unexpected miracle.

Ideas for Classroom Use

Discussion questions – encourage children to find examples from the story to document their answers.

Why do you think the man in the fur coat entrusted Simon with getting his pocket watch to his son in New York?

Why did Simon choose to exchange places with the man in the fur coat? Do you think that was a wise idea? Do you think you would have done the same in the same circumstances?

What famous sinking ocean liner does this story remind you of?

Why did Simon keep spinning the dreidel over and over again? Was he rewarded for his faith?

What were all the miracles that Simon counted?

Are miracles really for everyone, like Simon said?

Responding to the Text

History – Learn about the sinking of the Titanic

The H.M.S. Atlantic sounds very similar to the great ocean liner, the Titanic. Share some facts about the Titanic – what it was so famous for, who was on it, how many went down with it and how many survived. Then, have your

children research a bit more what it must have been like traveling on an ocean liner to America as a young person. Here are some great websites to explore and find facts to share:

<http://www.coolfactsforkids.com/titanic-facts-for-kids/>

This website has an interactive diorama so you can see where each of the rooms were on the big ship:

<http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/art-166724/An-interactive-diagram-provides-information-about-many-different-features-of>

Science – Polar Bears

Central Park Zoo

See a video of Gus, the Central Park Polar Bear, playing in the water!

<http://www.centralpark.com/guide/central-park-zoo/polar-bears.html>

Learn about being a Polar Bear Keeper:

An interview with a Polar Bear Keeper

www.memphiszoo.org/blog/posts/meet-jen-conrad

Find more information about polar bears here:

www.polarbearsinternational.org/.../polar-bears-

Polar Bear Facts!

Play “*No way Eric Kimmel – that’s not true!!*”

You may have noticed that Eric Kimmel is a master at stretching the truth or “twisting your arm” as some might say – but this gift helps him craft the most entertaining and amazing stories!! Have your children list all of the things that polar bears really wouldn’t or couldn’t do!!

For instance,

- *Would a polar bear actually be polite and eat latkes without gobbling down Simon too? No way, Eric Kimmel!!*
- *Would a polar bear turn up his nose at hard-boiled eggs? Actually I don’t know ---have your students research this!!*
- *Would a polar bear let someone who is a stranger snuggle up with her and let him fall asleep? I don’t know Eric Kimmel – should we ask a polar bear keeper, perhaps polar bear keepers are exceptions?*
- *Would a polar bear share a fish that she scaled with her claws with a human? No way, Eric Kimmel!!*

- *Would a polar bear and a human eat together like Simon and the Bear?* No way, Eric Kimmel, unless, perhaps, it was the bear polar keeper!!
- *Would a polar bear actually come back each evening to watch Simon light the Hanukkah candles and listen to Hanukkah stories?* No way, Eric Kimmel!!

Your children may find other stretched truths that they want to share!! Have fun!

Polar Bear Art –

Encourage children to draw their very own good luck polar bear, for the bear that helped Simon, was really a miracle bear. There are so many ideas for drawing and painting polar bears on Pinterest sites that you can find any kind of art form for your children to use.

Or, simply supply your children with white pastels, chalk or paint and a black or dark, dark blue piece of construction paper for them to draw, then paint their very own miracle bear, for their own special night of miracles! Have fun!

Religion – Celebrating Hanukkah

Simon did two things when he found himself stranded on the iceberg. He remembered his mother's advice to remember to honor Hanukkah. So he played the Dreidel game and also lit the Hanukkah Candles. Here are a few Youtube videos explaining how to do each:

Playing the Dreidel

Here is a short video demonstrating how to play the Dreidel Game:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkTLN1T17p4>

Lighting the Hanukkah Candles

Here is a very simple video about lighting the candles on your Menorah to celebrate Hanukkah:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDKRxbBt5Lc>