

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles

Tami Lehman-Wilzig (Author), Nicole Katzman (Author), Jeremy Tugeau (Illustrator)

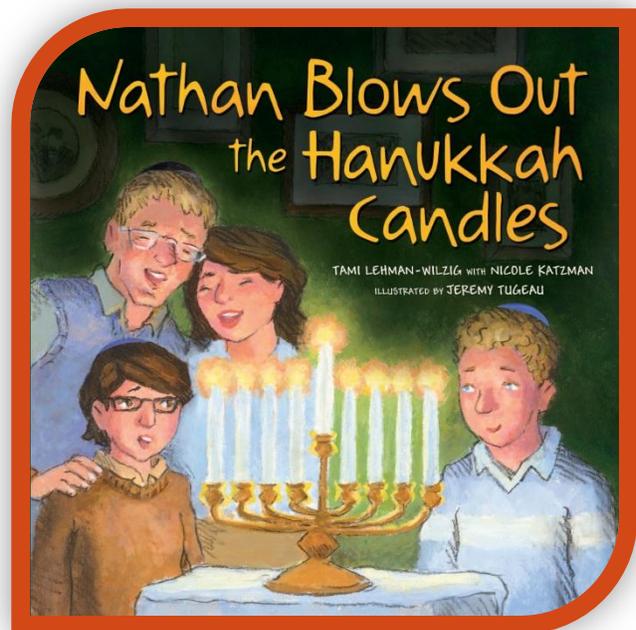
Jacob has an autistic brother, Nathan, whose repetitive and unusual behaviors annoy Jacob. They also embarrass him in front of his new friend, Steven. But when Steven makes fun of Nathan, Jacob comes to his brother's defense. In the end, both Steven's and Jacob's families learn to enjoy a new way of celebrating Hanukkah.

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Publisher: Kar-Ben Publishing

Year Published: 2011

Age Range: 4–8



Book Themes

People with disabilities, Family, Jewish culture, Holiday celebrations

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book. Do not focus on students' retention of all the words; instead make sure they understand the words enough to follow the story and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. You can also post the words and point out to students when they appear in the story. See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice and Bullying](#).

- autistic
- beams
- celebrate

- differently
- neighbor
- weird
- hypnotized
- nudge
- wired
- menorah
- repeating
- worried
- miracle
- traditional

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask pre-reading questions:

- What is the title of the book?
- Who and what do you see on the cover of the book?
- What do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout the reading to check comprehension and keep the students engaged:

- How many days does Hanukkah have? (page 5)
- Why did Nathan blow out the candles? (page 13)
- What did Jacob and Steven do with the dreidel? (page 20)

After reading the book aloud, ask some or all of the following discussion questions:

- What happens in the story?
- How does Jacob feel about his brother Nathan repeating things over and over again? How do you know?
- What do you think their Mom means when she says “Nathan’s mind is wired differently?”
- How does Jacob feel when he realizes there is a new boy next door who is the same age as him?
- Why do you think Nathan blows out the Hanukkah candles? Why is Jacob upset about Nathan blowing out the candles?
- Why is Jacob worried when Steven and his family come over to his house?
- How do you think Jacob feels when Steven says, “Your brother is weird” and then the next day Steven makes fun of Nathan blowing out the candles?
- How do you think you might feel if someone said that about someone in your family?
- What does Jacob do after Steven makes fun of Nathan several times?
- Why do you think Jacob tells Steven that his brother Nathan is autistic?
- Do you know what it means to be autistic? How does Jacob explain it?
- How do Nathan and Jacob’s mother prepare the candles so they can celebrate Hanukkah “Nathan’s way?”

- How does the story end? How did you feel when the book ended?
- What do you learn about Hanukkah from the book?
- What do you think was the message of the book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with children in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Draw a Scene

Have students select a favorite scene from the book and draw that scene, giving it a title, caption or quote. First, as a class, brainstorm the different parts of the book or scenes by asking: *What was your favorite scene of the book? What part really grabbed your attention or surprised you (e.g. when Jacob imagines he is Judah Maccabee; when Jacob meets Steven for the first time; when Nathan blows out the candles on the menorah; when Jacob talks to Steven about his brother; when the two families celebrate Hanukkah together, etc.)?* Make a list of scenes in the board and have each student (or have students work in pairs) choose one. Instruct them to draw a picture of the scene and write a title, caption or quote that goes with it. If they are too young to write, they can dictate their caption or title and you can write it for them. Have the students share their drawings with the class, asking them to talk about what happened in the scene and how the person(s) felt. Create a gallery and invite parents/family members to view it.

2. Autism and Differences

In the book, Jacob and Nathan are brothers and Nathan is autistic, which according to his Mom means “his mind is wired differently.” [Autism Speaks](#) defines **autism** as follows:

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. We now know that there is not one autism but many types, caused by different combinations of genetic and environmental influences.

You can explain this to your students using words they can understand. Engage students in a brief discussion about people with disabilities. Be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students with disabilities in your class, especially “invisible” ones. First ask: *What does it mean to be disabled?* Elicit and define disability as a mental or physical condition that affects a person’s movements, senses or activities. Make the connection about Nathan’s “mind being wired differently” to more general differences in order to discuss similarities and differences with students in a variety of categories including: (1) aspects of physical appearance, (2) likes and dislikes, (3) family structure, (4) race, ethnicity and culture, (5) gender and (6) ability. Have students work in small groups at their tables to identify ways in which they are similar to each other and ways in which they are different. They can record these similarities and differences on paper using words and/or pictures, which can then be shared with the class.

3. Holidays and Family Celebrations/Traditions

In the book, Jacob and his family celebrate Hanukkah. Ask: *What did you learn about Hanukkah from the book?* Explain this about Hanukkah:

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday which celebrates the victory of the Jewish people over another group of people who were treating them unjustly. It is often called the “Festival of Lights” because it is

celebrated with the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah (also called a hanukkiyah) for eight nights, commemorating a miracle that happened during this time, where just a day's supply of oil allowed the menorah in the Temple to remain lit for eight days. To learn more about Hanukkah, see [My Jewish Learning](#).

Ask students: *What holidays does your family celebrate, either in December or other times during the year? What are some of the things you do during those holidays?* Elicit from students the traditions that are a part of those holidays which may include family activities, food, games, gift giving, songs, stories, etc. Have students go home and talk with their parents/family members about their holiday traditions. Ask them to bring an object or picture to school which represents something about their holiday traditions. Have students also share their objects with the class, explaining more about their family's holiday traditions.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on people with disabilities, ableism, Jewish culture and holiday celebrations.

Curriculum Resources

Challenging Anti-Semitism: Debunking the Myths and Responding with Facts, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/challenging-anti-semitism-debunking-the-myths-and.

Dolls Are Us, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/dolls-are-us

Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/equal-treatment-equal-access-raising-awareness-about

'The Present' and Living with a Disability, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/the-present-and-living-with-a-disability

Tools & Strategies

Assessing Your School Environment for Access to People with Disabilities, www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/assessing-your-school-environment-for-access-to-people-with-disabilities.pdf

Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability, www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/communication-guidelines-relating-to-ability.pdf

Suggested Language for People with Disabilities, www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/suggested-language-for-people-with-disabilities.pdf

Winter Holidays: December Dilemma or Teaching Opportunity?, www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/winter-holidays

Websites

Anti-Bias Education

www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias

Provides training program offerings for pre-K through 12th grade school communities—educators, administrators, youth and families—which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying.

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-an-anti-bias-learning-environment

Provides tips for the classroom educator to create an anti-bias learning environment.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Ability, Disability & Ableism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[160\]=160&tid\[161\]=161&tid\[162\]=162&tid\[163\]=163](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[160]=160&tid[161]=161&tid[162]=162&tid[163]=163)

Jewish Culture & Anti-Semitism: Jewish Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[191\]=191](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[191]=191)