



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

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.

The Ninth Night of Hanukkah

Erica S. Perl (Author), Shahar Kober (Illustrator)

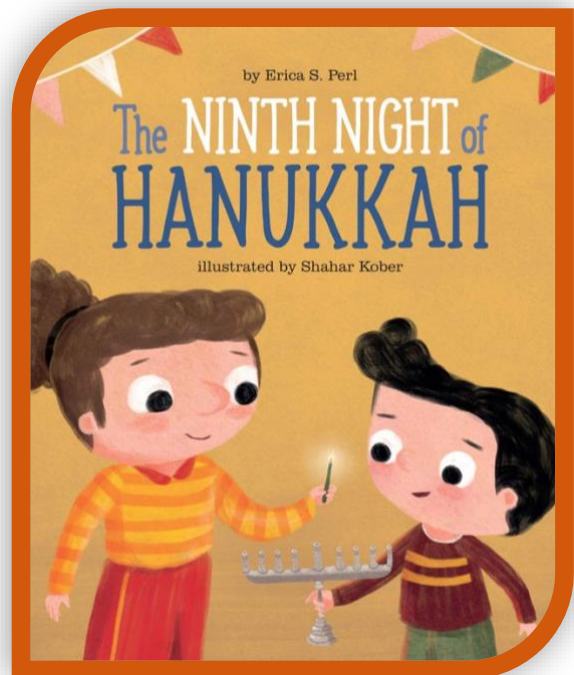
It's Hanukkah, and Max and Rachel are excited to light the menorah in their family's new apartment. But unfortunately, their Hanukkah box is missing. So now they have no menorah, candles, dreidels, or, well, anything! Luckily, their neighbors are happy to help, offering thoughtful and often humorous stand-in items each night. And then, just as Hanukkah is about to end, Max and Rachel, inspired by the shamash ("helper") candle, have a brilliant idea: they're going to celebrate the Ninth Night of Hanukkah as a way to say thanks to everyone who's helped them!

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Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 3-7



Book Themes

Hanukkah, Holidays, Diversity, Neighbors

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 the words' 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. For definitions that are differentiated for young children, see ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- comics
- exhausted
- plan
- steaming
- confident
- Hanukkah
- Reason
- whisper
- decorate
- miracle
- recipe
- delivery
- neighbor
- sing-along

Hanukkah-Related Words

Dreidel: A four-sided spinning top, each side marked with a different Hebrew letter, played during Hanukkah.

Gelt: Money; on Hanukkah, many people give children chocolate gelt, chocolate coins wrapped in gold or silver foil.

Latkes: Potato pancakes often served during Hanukkah; the oil they are fried in symbolizes the oil that miraculously provided light for eight days.

Menorah: A special candleholder; a Hanukkah menorah has nine candlesticks, one for each night of the festival plus an extra one to light the others.

Shamash: The "helper" candle that is used to light the other lights, usually set apart from the other candles.

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book aloud, ask some or all of these pre-reading questions:

- What and who do you see on the cover of the book?
- What is the title of the book, and what do you think it means? What do you know about Hanukkah?
- Who or what do you think the book might be about?

As you read the book aloud, ask a few discussion questions periodically throughout reading to check for comprehension and keep the students engaged. Below are some sample questions that correlate to specific page numbers.

- What is Mom looking for? (Page 5)
- What is the gelt in the book made of? (Page 15)
- What idea do Rachel and Max have about the ninth night of Hanukkah? (Page 23)

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

- What happens in the story?
- How do Rachel and Max feel when they can't find their Hanukkah things?

- What are some of the ways that their family has to improvise (to make or create something by using whatever is available) because they don't have their usual Hanukkah items? Have you ever had to do something like that?
- How did the family's new neighbors help them celebrate Hanukkah?
- Have you ever had neighbors help you with something like that? Please explain.
- How do Max and Rachel feel about their neighbors helping them out? How do you know?
- What did the family learn about their neighbors? How are their neighbors different from them? How are they similar?
- While reading the book, what did you learn about Hanukkah that you didn't know before?
- How did you feel when the book ended?
- Why do you think the book is called *The Ninth Night of Hanukkah*?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?

Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

1. Imagine and Draw/Write What Happens Next

Have students imagine and draw/write what happens next in the book. First, remind them how the book ends by re-reading pages 28-31 and then ask students: *What happens at the end of the book?* Remind students that the family finds their box with all their Hanukkah items and then on the ninth night, they celebrate Hanukkah with their new neighbors and friends. Ask students: *What do you think happens next after their neighbors leave? What do you think will happen when Max, Rachel and their parents run into their neighbors in the building? How do you think the family will celebrate Hanukkah next year?* Have students imagine what might happen if the book continues for a few more pages by letting them think and write some thoughts/ideas on their own and then engage in brainstorming of ideas as a class. Then, have them draw and/or write another page or two of the book as they imagine the book continuing. When completed, students can share their pages with the rest of the class by posting them on the wall and moving around the room gallery-style to see all the ways in which students imagined the story continuing. You can also invite parents and family members in for a whole class reading of the book and include the students' additional pages.

2. Learning about Hanukkah

In the book, Rachel, Max and their family celebrate Hanukkah. Ask students: *What did you already know about Hanukkah? What did you learn about Hanukkah traditions by reading the book (e.g., lighting candles, exchanging presents, eating latkes and sofganiyot (jelly doughnuts), playing dreidel, singing, etc.)?* If they don't already know, explain to students that **Hanukkah** is a festival celebrated by Jewish people and 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 Hanukkah 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 one day's supply of oil allowed the menorah in the Temple to remain lit for eight days. Ask students: *Does your family celebrate holidays and if so, what holidays do they celebrate? What are some of the things you do during those holidays?* Elicit from students the traditions are often 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. You can also have students learn more about

Hanukkah, the origin of the holiday and how different people celebrate it by engaging them in a research project. Here are some online resources they can begin with from [My Jewish Learning](#), [PJ Library](#) and [Kids Britannica](#).

3. Neighbors and Helping

Remind students that in the book, Rachel, Max and their family have just moved to a new building. Because they can't find their Hanukkah items, they have to substitute or improvise. The family gets assistance from their new neighbors and friends who help them celebrate Hanukkah, but in a somewhat different way than they usually do. Ask students: *What is a neighbor?* Explain that a **neighbor** is a person who lives next to or near another person. Remind students that in school, we sometimes refer to someone's "neighbor" to describe a student who sits next to another student. Read aloud the third paragraph of the Author's Note on page 31 which says, "Like the shamash (the "helper candle"), individual people have the power to spark change and brighten the lives of those around them." Elicit from students how neighbors or others have helped them and brightened their lives and the ways they do or have done that for others. Ask students: *Who are your neighbors? Do you know them well, somewhat or not at all?* Explain that neighbors can be people who live next door, in the same building or who live close by. Their neighbors can include those who live there and those who work in stores or businesses in their neighborhood. Have students write a short essay (or create a drawing) about one of their neighbors, especially someone who, like the shamash helper candle, has "sparked change and brightened their lives." They can call the drawing or essay "My Neighbor" and when these are completed, shared with the class.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on Latinx people identity and culture and the power of books.

Curriculum Resources

Diverse Books Matter, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/diverse-books-matter.

Understanding Judaism and the Jewish Community, www.adl.org/media/5136/download.

Who Am I? Identity Poems, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems.

Websites

Calendar of Observances

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/calendar-of-observances

Use this calendar of observances to increase your awareness and sensitivity about religious holidays, observances as well as ethnic and cultural festivities that may affect students, colleagues and neighbors in your community.

Considerations for Inclusive Holidays and Observances

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/considerations-for-inclusive-holidays-and-observances

Holiday celebrations are an excellent opportunity to provide a window into a culture or understand more about a group of people. Here are some important considerations when planning holiday observances in your classroom or school.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children. See "[How Can 'Looking at Lights' Promote Respect Among Children for Various Holidays, Celebrations and Traditions?](#)"

Religion in the Public Schools

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/religion-in-public-schools

The issue of the proper role of religion in the public schools continues to be the subject of great controversy. This handbook will help provide school officials and parents a roadmap through this terrain.

Winter Holidays: December Dilemma or Teaching Opportunity?

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/winter-holidays-december-dilemma-or-teaching-opportunity

December can be a fun and festive time of year, or it can make some students feel excluded and marginalized if not approached with respect and care. This resource provides considerations for school officials to ensure inclusivity and not give students the impression that one set of holidays or beliefs is more important or more acceptable than others.

Children's Books

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

Jewish Culture & Antisemitism, [https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-5=1&tid\[189\]=189&tid\[190\]=190&tid\[191\]=191&tid\[192\]=192](https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-5=1&tid[189]=189&tid[190]=190&tid[191]=191&tid[192]=192)

People, Identity & Culture: Similarities & Differences, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[214\]=214](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[214]=214)