**What Do I Gain from Learning about My Family History?**

**Lesson Information**

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| Short description of project | This lesson deals with Jewish history and the importance of preserving Jewish memories.  At the end of a research project about family history, we recommend a lesson that reflects on what they students have learned during the project and how this impacts on their Jewish identity and feelings of belonging.  (Teachers who want to lead a discussion on this topic, without completing the research project, can use the teaching suggestions without completing the worksheet.) |
| Age group | Middle school and up |
| Length of activity | 1 lesson period |
| Background information | * Collective Belonging/Activities, *The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education* <https://jpeoplehood.org/toolkit/programs-resources-materials/collective-belonging/activities/> * Why We Need Family History Now More Than Ever, *Family Search Blog* <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/family-history-2/> * Family History Resources, *The Jewish Teacher Project* <http://www.jewishteacher.org/teacher-resources/family-history-resources/> * Jewish Genealogy, *Wikipedia* [*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\_genealogy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_genealogy) * Jewish Genealogy, *Judaism 101* [*http://www.jewfaq.org/genealogy.htm*](http://www.jewfaq.org/genealogy.htm) |
| Material, equipment, and preparations | Print out worksheets |

**Lesson Plan**

1. **Class Activity – Introduction (5 minutes)**

If this activity is a conclusion of a research project, the teacher should reflect on the process and explain that this lesson deals with the lessons learnt from exploring family history as well as the importance of preserving history.

1. **Individual Activity (as conclusion of research project) – Completing worksheet (10 minutes)**

Students complete the “What do I get from learning about my family history?”

Family History Reflection Worksheet <link>

1. **Class Activity – Discussing the importance of preserving history (30 minutes)**

The teacher conducts a discussion or runs an activity on importance of preserving family history.  
The teacher can chose one or several of these suggestions:

* + A class discussion on the answers written in the worksheet.
  + A class debate about dilemmas concerning memory.  
    Example:

**The Name of the Baby**Sally and Jason Stone are a young couple who are expecting their first baby in a few months' time. The couple visit Jason’s grandfather, who tells them that he is very excited that they will be naming the child after his father, Yossel, who was killed in the Holocaust.   
The couple, who have no idea who gave the grandfather this idea, have a dilemma. They do not want to give their son such a name, but they are uncomfortable about disappointing Jason’s grandfather. Moreover, they are not sure about naming a new child in memory of “ancient” Jewish family history? Shouldn’t they just give the child a modern name that will make it easier for him to live in the twenty-first century?

* + The teacher places a piece of tape on the floor of the classroom and AGREE / DISAGREE signs on either side of the tape.

The teacher then shows the students signs with quotes from Jewish thinkers or thoughts about preserving memory and history.  
The students stand on the side that represents their view about each quote.

Examples of quotes:

* + - “Without memory, our existence would be barren and opaque, like a prison cell into which no light penetrates; like a tomb which rejects the living. If anything can, it is memory that will save humanity. For me, hope without memory is like memory without hope.” (Elie Wiesel, from his Nobel Prize lecture)
    - “Pesach is where the past does not die but lives, in the chapter we write in our own story and in the story we tell our children.” (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks)
    - “A nation that doesn’t respect its past will ha​ve a dull present and an uncertain future.”(Yigael Alon, Israeli general and politician)
    - “Memories are a home.” (Avot Yeshurun, Israeli poet)
    - “As long as we are being remembered, we remain alive.” (Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Spanish author)
    - “Memory is a man’s real possession...in nothing else is he rich...in nothing else is he poor.” (Alexander Smith, British author)
    - “Jews have six senses – touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing… memory. While Gentiles experience and process the world through the traditional senses, and use memory only as a second-order means of interpreting events, for Jews memory is no less primary than the prick of a pin, or its silver glimmer, or the taste of the blood it pulls from the finger. The Jew is pricked by a pin and remembers other pins. It is only by tracing the pinprick back to other pinpricks – when his mother tried to fix his sleeve while his arm was still in it, when his grandfather’s fingers fell asleep from stroking his great-grandfather’s damp forehead, when Abraham tested the knife point to be sure Isaac would feel no pain – that the Jew is able to know why it hurts.

When a Jew encounters a pin, he asks: What does it remember like?” ( Jonathan Safran Foer, American author, *Everything Is Illuminated*)

* Additional ideas from [The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education](https://jpeoplehood.org/toolkit/programs-resources-materials/collective-belonging/activities/)

<separate doc, logo, layout> **What Do I Gain from Learning about My Family History?  
Family History Reflection Worksheet**

1. Do you think that it is important to learn about your family history?  
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2. How did you feel when learning about your family history?

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1. What was the most interesting new fact that you learned about your family? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think was a significant moment or event in your family’s history? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which relative do you most closely resemble either in looks or personality? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who is the relative you admire most? Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Think of something that you understand about yourself, now that you have learned about your family’s history. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Has learning about your family changed your sense of identity? In what way?

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1. What else would you like to learn about your family’s history? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. How might you learn about it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_