CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM

Roots and Routes: Sharing Family Stories

An at home activity guide
For early learners through age 10



Roots and Routes: Sharing Family Stories provides the opportunity for you and your children to learn about your family's history and share the stories in fun and creative ways.

Story Sharing

Interviewing a family member is a great way to learn about what it was like to live in a different time or place. Before starting, discuss with your child who he/she would like to talk to, and what they might ask. Review the questions below, and decide which ones to use for the interview. It can be great to have a globe or world map available, to show the places your family member mentions in their stories.

Here are some questions that may prompt stories:

- What do you remember about being a small child? Where were you born?
- What was the house and neighborhood like that you grew up in? Can you tell me about some of the people in your home or neighborhood?
- What kinds of activities did you do as a family? Can you tell me a story about one of these activities? How was it different than what we do today?
- When did you/your family arrive in this country/city? Can you tell me some details about your journey, or the journey of your family members?
- Can you tell me a story about your parents or your siblings when they were younger? Do you have any photos that I can see?
- Can you tell me a story about what school was like when you were growing up?
- (If married/partnered) How did you meet your husband/wife? Can you tell me about your wedding or your courtship?

Here are some ways to record the stories you will hear:

- Use a sketchbook with blank pages, write the stories on one side of the page and create related drawings on the other side. (e.g. child draws grandmother's home while adult writes the details about her home)

- Use your phone or camera to record audio or video. Some fun apps for easy sharing are Vocaroo or Vimeo. Take a few photos to save for your family journal or online scrapbook or photo album.

Activities

Now that you've learned more about your family story, what are ways you can document this information and share it with others? This is a fun time to get creative.

Family Story Book

Create a picture book of one of the stories you heard during the interview.

Materials:
A blank sketchbook or loose paper (all the same size and folded in half)
Colored pencils, pens, or crayons (markers will bleed through the pages)
Collage (maps, photos, decorative papers)
Scissors and glue stick
Stapler/decorative tape

Choose a story and write out some key words/sentences onto the pages (keeping the text to one or two lines per page.) After the text is written, create the pictures using found collage and drawing tools. Add an extra page for the cover and title.

A good place to start is the setting and objects of the story (e.g. a house, a ship) and then move onto the characters. It can be helpful to remind children that they do not need to draw realistically and can use collage if there is any frustration. **Tip:** Once the characters are created, make some copies and cut them out to use on multiple pages.

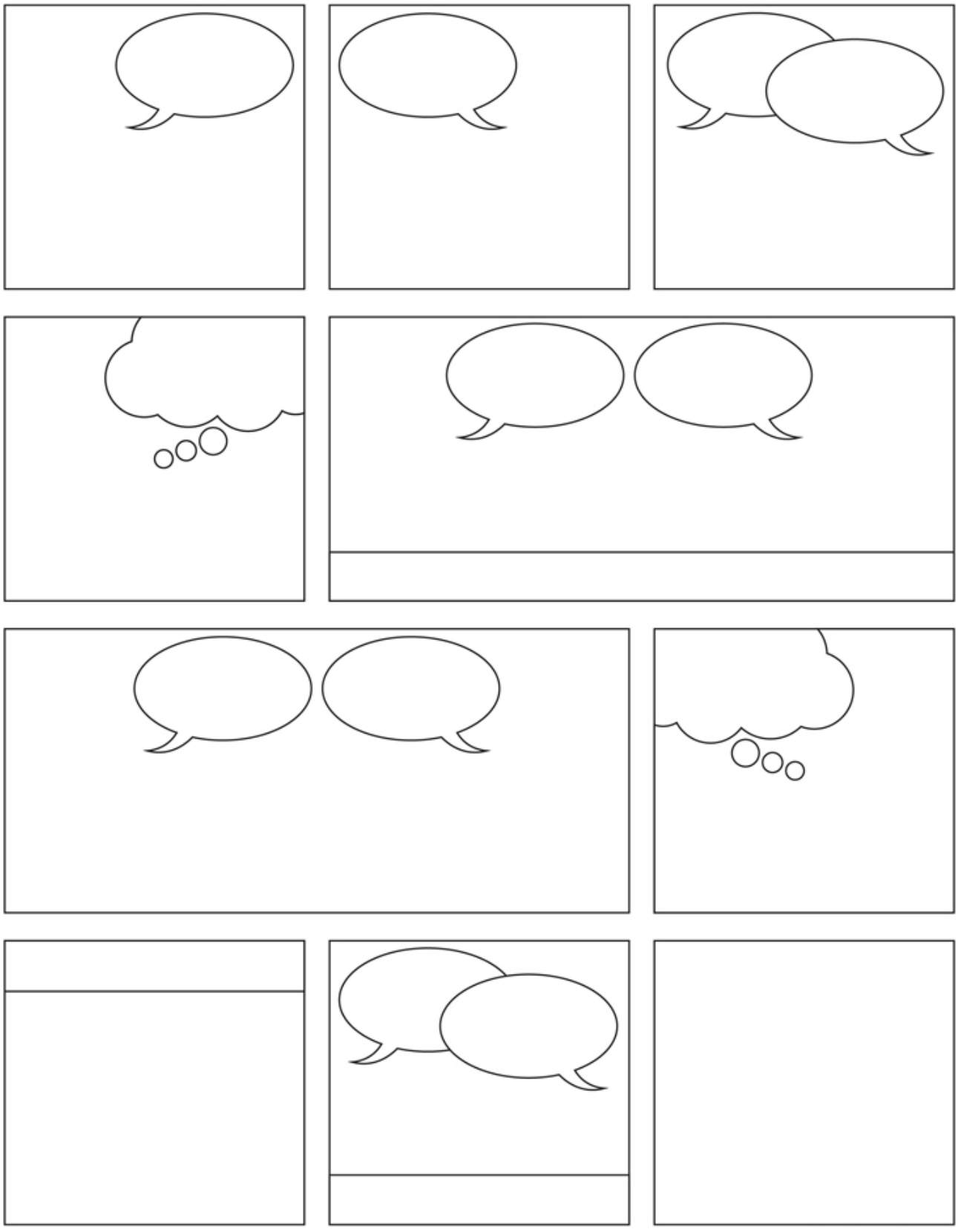
When you are done, staple the pages together to make the book. Use decorative tape over the staples for a more finished look. If using a sketchbook, create a cover and add a title.

Family Superheroes: Create a Mini Graphic Novel

Creating a graphic novel of a family story can be especially fun for older children. Print out the comic book template below this activity.

Materials:
Comic strip template
Drawing tools

The process is the same as the Family Story Book, except the text will be more in the form of thought or speech bubbles and the story will be more about the action. One way to start is to outline the pictures with a pencil, adding in color and details later. Take a look at some comics or graphic novels for kids to give them some ideas. Have fun with it—the family member that told the story can become a comic super hero!



Photokapi.com

Story Scavenger Hunt and Dramatic Play

Children love to tell stories using toys and puppets, and with a little twist, this same activity can be a fun way to dramatize family stories. Capture them on video to add to your family archives and share with others!

Choose a story from your interview. Write down some objects that could help your child tell the story. Go on a scavenger hunt in your home, looking for as many of these objects as you can find.

You will also need some materials to build the other items or characters in the story.

Here are some ideas:

Legos
Modeling clay
Paper puppets: draw character on thick paper, cut out, and tape onto a Popsicle stick.

After you have gathered and created your objects, write down some key moments and scenes from the story that you would like to be part of your show. Organize your objects so they are ready to go for each part of the show.

Choose a space in your house for you and your children to dramatically tell your story. You can use a table, cardboard box, or an area on the floor. Covering the area with fabric can make it feel more like a "theater." Gather an audience for your show if possible, and include other siblings as directors, camera operators, or to hand out tickets.



Want to explore more? Youth 18 and under always receive free admission at The CJM. Drop-In Art-Making is every Sunday from 1–3pm. The Zim Zoom Family Room is always open!

Check out thecjm.org for other family programs and activities.

Exhibitions Overview

Three exhibitions on view at The Contemporary Jewish Museum (The CJM) from February 26–May 24, 2015 offer artistic paths for exploring family histories. We hope visiting The Museum sparks an interest for a larger family conversation about your heritage, culture, and ancestors.

On view February 26–May 24, 2015

Our Roots

In this international youth video project, teens from San Francisco, Poland, Ukraine, and Israel used images, interviews, objects, and archives to create films about their heritage.

Poland and Palestine: Two Lands and Two Skies

Photographer Ze'ev Aleksandrowicz's images from the 1930s capture everyday life of Polish Jews in both Kraków, Poland and the land that is present day Israel.

Letters to Afar

This exhibition presents a journey into the lives of Polish Jews during the 1920s and 30s, when Poland had one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. American Jewish immigrants, originally from Poland, filmed these movies while visiting their childhood homes. They show everyday life of the time, from big cities to small *shtetls* (Jewish towns) and were used as "visual postcards" to share with friends and families back in America.

Video artist Péter Forgács edited these movies together, playing with time and repetition to create a unique visual experience. Forgács invited the band The Klezmatics to compose an original soundtrack for the film, adding another dimension to the installation.

These films are particularly important, as many of these Polish Jewish communities no longer exist today. During World War II, Jews across much of Europe had to leave their homes due to discrimination and most died during the tragic events of the war.

Today, these movies offer us a rare glimpse into personal moments and invite us to honor the vibrancy and diversity of Jewish life at that time.

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Bank of America

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