

Jewish American Heritage Month: Jewish Americans and the American Story: Movement, Rights, and Contributions

Grades: 6-12

Duration: Two class periods (45-50 minutes each)

Student-Facing PowerPoint:

[Jewish Americans and the American Story \(Gr. 6–12\)](#)

Instructional Note:

Boxed sections appear throughout the lesson. These indicate optional content for teachers. They provide additional background knowledge, instructional rationale, or guardrails. They are not required to deliver the core lesson.

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TEKS Alignment

Grade 6:

- **Geography**
 - 113.18(c)(6)(B)
- **Culture**
 - 113.18(c)(7)(A)
 - 113.18(c)(7)(B)
- **Social Studies Skills**
 - 113.18(c)(21)(A)
 - 113.18(c)(21)(B)
 - 113.18(c)(21)(C)

Grade 7:

- **Geography**
 - 113.19(c)(8)(A)
- **Culture**
 - 113.19(c)(9)(A)
- **Social Studies Skills**
 - 113.19(c)(29)(A)
 - 113.19(c)(29)(B)
 - 113.19(c)(29)(C)

Grade 8:

- **Geography**
 - 113.20(c)(11)(A)
- **Culture**
 - 113.20(c)(12)(A)
- **Government**
 - 113.20(c)(1)(A)
 - 113.20(c)(22)(C)
- **Citizenship**
 - 113.20(c)(19)(A)
- **Social Studies Skills**
 - 113.20(c)(29)(A)
 - 113.20(c)(29)(B)
 - 113.20(c)(29)(C)

Instructional Requirement for Grade 8 Alignment

To fully meet Grade 8 TEKS, students must directly engage with and interpret the exchange between Moses Seixas and George Washington. This primary source analysis is essential for meeting TEKS related to: government (development of democratic principles), citizenship (understand rights), and Social Studies skills (primary source analysis).

Instructional Requirement for Grades 9-12 Alignment

To fully meet Grades 9–12 TEKS, students must move beyond identification and summary to analyze, connect, and explain how movement, opportunity, rights, and contributions shape society over time. While this lesson provides a strong foundation, additional instructional emphasis is needed to fully capture the depth of high school TEKS.

Grade 9

- **World Geography**

- 113.43(c)(6)(A),(B)
- 113.43(c)(7)(B)
- 113.43(c)(17)(B),(D)
- 113.43(c)(21)(A),(D)

Grade 10

- **World History**

- 113.42(c)(15)(A)
- 113.42(c)(19)(A)
- 113.42(c)(24)(A), (B)
- 113.42(c)(29)(B),(30)(A)

Grade 11

- **U.S. History**

- 113.41(c)(3)(C)
- 113.41(c)(11)(B)
- 113.41(c)(22)(C)
- 113.41(c)(28)(A),(B)

Grade 12

- **U.S. Government**

- 113.44(c)(1)(A), (B)
- 113.44(c)(6)(D), (F)
- 113.44(c)(12)(A), (B)
- 113.44(c)(19)(A), (D)

Alignment Notes

- This lesson is designed as a study of Jewish Americans within the broader context of American history and culture and does not constitute Holocaust instruction.
- The lesson supports historical inquiry skills, including observation, evidence-based reasoning, primary source interpretation, and contextual analysis.
- Instruction centers on patterns of human movement, early American ideas about rights and belonging, and cultural and civic contributions. The lesson intentionally avoids graphic content or detailed discussion of persecution or violence, making it developmentally appropriate for grades 6–8.
- Cultural and historical examples are used as evidence to understand how individuals and communities contribute to American life. These examples are not presented as religious instruction or belief-based teaching.
- For Grade 6, this lesson functions as a case study in human movement, settlement patterns, and cultural development.
- For Grades 7–8, this lesson functions as a model for understanding how different groups have shaped American communities and identity over time, with clear connections to Texas History and U.S. History content.
- For Grade 8 in particular, this lesson provides an entry point into early American democratic principles by examining primary source documents, including the exchange between Moses Seixas and George Washington. This supports student understanding of rights, religious freedom, and the development of American ideals.
- This lesson is intentionally structured to show that Jewish Americans are part of broader American historical patterns, including migration, community formation, and civic participation. This approach helps prevent oversimplification and supports a more accurate understanding of American history as shaped by diverse groups.

Lesson at a Glance

Instructional Throughline

This two-day lesson follows the way historians and social scientists build understanding: they begin by identifying patterns of human movement, examine primary source evidence to understand historical experiences, and then interpret how ideas, identity, and contributions shape a society.

Students first examine why people, including Jewish people, move to the United States by analyzing push and pull factors and patterns of settlement. They then explore early American ideas about rights and belonging through primary source documents, focusing on how these ideas shaped opportunities for Jewish communities. Finally, they analyze how Jewish Americans have contributed to American life across time and fields, using multiple examples as evidence to explain their impact.

This sequence builds from movement → opportunity → contribution → belonging, ensuring that students do not just learn about individuals, but explain what these examples show when considered together. Jewish Americans are understood as part of broader American patterns of migration, settlement, and participation, while maintaining a clear focus on Jewish American experiences.

As a Jewish American Heritage Month lesson, it highlights the diversity of Jewish American contributions and reinforces that Jewish Americans have helped build and shape the nation across time, establishing their place within the American story.

Day 1: Movement, Belonging, and Early American Ideals

Activity 1: Why People Move – Establishing a Universal Framework (5–7 min)

Students identify common reasons people move to the United States. Students:

- Generate reasons for migration (push and pull factors)
- Connect movement to needs such as safety, opportunity, and freedom
- Write one complete sentence explaining why people move

Key Concept: People move for identifiable and often overlapping reasons.

Focus: Establishing a universal lens so Jewish American migration is understood as part of broader human movement.

Activity 2: Migration Map Analysis – Patterns and Evidence (10–12 min)

Students analyze a U.S. map showing Jewish American settlement patterns over time.

Students:

- Identify where Jewish communities formed (e.g., ports, cities, regions)
- Interpret labeled regions (e.g., “South: 1700s, port cities”) as examples, not universal experiences
- Identify one pattern of movement (arrival, settlement, or relocation)
- Write a sentence explaining how the map shows why Jewish people moved

Key Concept: Maps show patterns, not every individual experience.

Focus: Using geographic evidence to support claims about movement while avoiding oversimplification.

Activity 3: Understanding Belonging and Rights in Early America (15–20 min)

Grades 6–7

Students explore belonging and community through a short scenario or historical description. Students:

- Identify what people need when arriving in a new place (safety, opportunity, community)
- Describe challenges people may face when moving
- Explain what helps someone feel safe and included
- Write a sentence explaining what people hope to find when they move

Key Concept: People who move want safety, opportunity, and belonging.

Focus: Building foundational understanding of belonging and community formation.

Grade 8

Students analyze excerpts from Moses Seixas and George Washington. Students:

- Identify what Moses Seixas is asking for
- Identify what George Washington is promising

- Explain how the exchange reflects ideas about rights and belonging
- Connect the exchange to religious freedom and early American democratic ideals

Key Concept: Early Americans debated whether rights and freedoms would apply to all groups.

Focus: Interpreting primary sources to understand democratic ideals and minority perspectives.

Grade-Level Instructional Note

- Grades 6–7: Do NOT use the Seixas/Washington letters
- Grade 8: MUST use the Seixas/Washington letters to meet TEKS

Day 1 Closing Activity – Exit Reflection (5–7 min)

Students:

- Identify one thing Jewish Americans hoped for in early America
- Explain why that would matter in a new country

Key Concept: Movement is connected to expectations about safety, rights, and belonging.

Focus: Reinforcing the connection between migration and early American ideals.

Day 2: Jewish American Identity and Contribution

Activity 4: Emma Lazarus – Interpreting American Ideals (12–15 min)

Students analyze an excerpt from Emma Lazarus and a short video connected to the Statue of Liberty.

Students:

- Identify who is being described in the poem
- Interpret key phrases (e.g., “tired,” “poor”)
- Explain what the poem suggests about the United States
- Connect the poem to push/pull factors and immigration
- Use visuals to better understand references (e.g., Colossus of Rhodes)

Key Concept: Cultural texts reflect ideas about what a country claims to be.

Focus: Interpreting author perspective and connecting text to historical movement and opportunity

Activity 5: JAHM (Jewish American Heritage Month) – Profiles of Contribution (15–18 min)

Students work with a set of 20 Jewish American profiles across fields (sports, law, music, science, business, civic life).

Students:

- Analyze one assigned individual:
 - What did this person do?
 - What was their impact? (with evidence)
- Learn from at least two additional individuals
- Gather evidence across profiles
- Identify patterns in contributions across time and fields

Key Concept: Individuals contribute to society by using opportunities, skills, and effort across different fields.

Focus: Gathering and using evidence to understand how people shape American society

Activity 6: Synthesis – Bringing It All Together (10–15 min)

Students complete a STAAR-style Extended Constructed Response (ECR) using their work from both days.

Students:

- Make a clear claim
- Use at least 3 examples
- Include:
 - Day 1: movement/opportunity
 - Day 2: contributions
- Explain how examples connect
- Show what the examples reveal when considered together

Key Concept: Movement, opportunity, and contributions together explain how people become part of and help shape a society.

Focus: Synthesizing multiple sources of evidence into a clear explanation

Day 2 Closing Activity / Assessment (3–5 min)

Students:

- Reflect on their writing
- Share one clear idea from their response
- Connect individual examples to a broader understanding

Closing Focus: Students articulate what their evidence shows about Jewish Americans in American society

Final Teacher Close (spoken):

Jewish Americans have been part of the American story across time, contributing in many fields and helping to build and shape society.

Day 1: Movement, Belonging, and Early American Ideals Lesson Plan

Purpose

Students examine why people, including Jewish people, move to the United States, how Jewish American communities formed, and what people hoped to find when arriving in a new country.

Students will:

- identify reasons for migration
- analyze patterns of settlement using a map
- examine what belonging, safety, and rights look like in a new society
- (Grade 8) interpret how early Americans discussed rights through primary sources

Essential Question

Why do people, including Jewish people, come to the United States, and what did they hope to find?

Teacher Materials

- Slideshow (Teacher-Led Instruction)

Student Materials

- Student Handout: Understanding Movement and Belonging Packet
- Primary Source Sheet (Grade 8 Only)

Teacher Note:

All visuals used in the slideshow are also included in the Teacher Materials section. Student materials are located in the Student Materials section.

Teacher Background

Jewish Americans are studied in this lesson as part of broader American history, including migration, settlement, and civic life.

Jewish people share a common history and cultural traditions. Some Jewish people practice Judaism as a religion, and others identify through family history or culture. Jewish Americans are not a single, uniform group. They come from different regions and backgrounds. The time in which a Jewish family arrived in America can also influence many identity expressions.

In this lesson, students are not learning religion. They are learning about a group of people as part of American history, focusing on:

- Why they came
- Where they settled

- How they participated in society
- This lesson is not religious instruction.

Teacher Note:

This lesson intentionally follows a progression:

1. Observation (image)
2. Generalization (why people move)
3. Evidence (map)
4. Application (belonging and rights)

Teachers should not skip steps. Each step builds the next.

Opening (Hook) – Image Observation (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Hook Image

Project Slide 1. Do not move forward until observation is complete.

Teacher Script:

“Take a moment and look closely at this image. Do not speak yet.”
(10-20 seconds)

“Now, what do you notice?”

Teacher Moves

- Accept only observable responses
- If students need guidance, try the following prompts:
 - “What do you see that makes you say that?”
 - “Stay with what you can observe or see.”
 - “What are you noticing that makes you say that?”

Teacher Look-Fors

Students:

- Describe visible details
- Begin forming ideas about movement

Transition Question

“If you were one of the people in this image, what would you hope to find in this new place?”

Turn and Talk

Teacher Synthesis

“When people are making a big move like this, leaving where they lived and starting somewhere new, they are often looking for safety, freedom, opportunity, or a better future”

Teacher Note:

Be sure to guide students with appropriate questions like, “what makes this feel like a big move and not just a visit?” to accurately introduce migration reasons in clear and concrete language.

Bridge:

“This image shows immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in New York in 1920. Today, we are going to focus on Jewish Americans as part of this larger story of migration—why people move and what they hope to find.”

Activity 1: Why People Move (7-8 minutes)

Slide 3: Push and Pull Factors

Slide 4: Essential Question

Slide 5: Section 1 of the Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

Student Materials Used: Student Handout

Step 1: Push and Pull Factors – Mini-Teach (2-3 minutes)

Display Slide 3: Push and Pull Factors

Teacher Script:

“People move to new places for many reasons. When people move from one country to another, that is called immigration. Historians often explain why people immigrate using the terms push and pull factors. Push factors are things that push people to leave where they are. A push factor might be not feeling safe, not being able to find jobs, or not having enough food. Pull factors are things that pull people toward a new place. A pull factor might be more job opportunities, better schools, safety, or freedom. Push and pull factors usually happen together when someone decides to move.”

Teacher Script – Brief Example:

“For example, let's think about a real situation from history to see if we can identify the push and pull factors. In the 1800s, many people living in Ireland depended on potatoes as a main food source. Then, something happened to the crops, and the potatoes stopped growing. This means many families did not have enough food to eat. There were other food sources in Ireland, but many people could not afford them. People began to face hunger, and it became harder to survive where they were living. At the same time, people in Ireland heard that in places like the United States, there were jobs where they could earn money, which could be used to buy food. They would have more reliable access to food in the U.S. than in Ireland.”

Guided Questions

The teacher reads the questions.

The teacher will select 1-2 students to answer the question.

Teacher Move: Conduct as a series of turn and share moments.

1. **Teacher Question:** “What is the push factor—what is pushing people to leave Ireland?”

Expected Student Responses:

“They didn’t have enough food”

“They couldn’t get enough food”

“They were hungry”

“They couldn’t afford food”

Teacher Reinforcement: “Yes—the lack of access to food and the difficulty surviving is pushing them to leave.”

2. **Teacher Question:** “What is the pull factor—what is pulling them toward a new place?”

Expected Student Responses:

“Jobs”

“Money”

“They can buy food”

“Better access to food”

Teacher Reinforcement: “Yes—jobs mean they can earn wages (money), and earning wages means they can buy food and have more reliable access to it. That directly connects to the problem they were facing.”

3. **Critical Connection Question:** “So are the push and pull factors connected in this example?”

Expected Student Response:

“Yes”

“The jobs help solve the food problem”

“The pull fixes the push”

Teacher Anchor Statement: “Exactly—the pull factor often helps solve the problem created by the push factor.”

4. **Bridge to U.S. Immigration:** “So based on this example, what could we anticipate about why people immigrate to the United States from Ireland in the 1800s?”

Expected Student Responses:

“They didn’t have enough food, so they left”

“They couldn’t afford food, so they came for jobs”

“They wanted to earn money so they could buy food”

“They were hungry and needed a better way to survive”

Teacher Reinforcement: “Yes—many people left Ireland because they did not have reliable access to food, and they came to the United States because they believed they could earn wages and improve their access to food.”

Step 2: Essential Question (1 minute)

Display slide 4: Essential Question

Teacher Script:

“Now let’s think beyond Ireland for a moment. Our Essential Question asks: Why did people, including Jewish people, come to the United States, and what did they hope to find?”

[Pause]

“We can use push and pull factors to help us answer that question.”

Quick Check:

Turn and share: “What is one push factor someone might have for leaving a country?”

Call on 1-2 students only.

Turn and share: “What is one pull factor that might draw someone to a new country?”

Step 3: Student Task

Display Slide 5: Complete Section 1 of the Student Handout

Step 4: Bridge (DO NOT SKIP)

Teacher Script: “In the next activity, we are going to analyze how communities form and move across the United States. Keep in mind push and pull factors. Push factors explain why people leave, and pull factors explain what draws them to a new place. Now we are going to apply that thinking to real historical patterns.”

Activity 2: Migration Map Analysis (10-12 minutes)

Slide 6: First Jewish Arrival – New Amsterdam, 1654

Slide 7: How to Analyze the Map

Slide 8: Movement Patterns in the United States

Slide 9: Section 2 of the Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

Student Materials Used: Student Handout

Step 1: Anchor the Story – 1654 Arrival (2-3 minutes)

Display Slide 6: First Jewish Arrival – New Amsterdam, 1654

Teacher Script: “In 1654, a group of 23 Jewish people arrived in New Amsterdam, which is today New York City. They had been living in Recife, Brazil. Recife had been controlled by the Dutch, and under Dutch rule, Jewish people

were allowed to live there. When control changed to the Portuguese, Jewish people were no longer able to live there safely and were forced to leave. They came to New Amsterdam, in part because it was part of a Dutch colony, and because they needed a place where they could stay, live, and work. They were also looking for a place where they could continue to live as Jewish people.”

Additional Content Background (Teacher Facing):

This group consisted of **23 Jewish individuals** arriving in 1654

They had been living in **Recife, Brazil**, under Dutch rule

When the **Portuguese regained control**, Jewish residents could no longer safely remain

They were displaced due to **religious pressure, legal restrictions, and risk under the Inquisition**

They arrived as **refugees**, not voluntary migrants

The governor of New Amsterdam, Peter Stuyvesant, did not initially want them to stay

The colony was controlled by the Dutch West India Company, which allowed them to remain

The company made this decision based on:

- economic growth (more settlers = more trade)
- existing Jewish participation in Dutch trade networks

Even after being allowed to stay, they faced **unequal treatment**, including:

- special taxes not imposed equally on others
- restrictions from certain civic roles

Teacher Prompt: "What is the push factor in this situation?"

Expected Student Responses:

"They were forced to leave"

"They couldn't stay in Recife"

"It wasn't safe for them"

Teacher Prompt: "What is the pull factor?"

Expected Student Responses:

"A place to live"

"A place to stay"

"Somewhere they could remain"

Critical Bridge to Map: "Jewish people were part of American history from the beginning—not something added later. This is one early example of a Jewish community forming in what would become the United States."

[Pause]

“But this is not the only place where communities formed. Over time, both Jewish communities and other communities in the United States appear in different regions. Some people are moving from one area of the United States to another, while others are arriving from other countries and settling in different parts of the United States.”

[Pause]

“As we look at the map, you are going to compare where these communities form and use push and pull factors to explain why.”

Step 2: How to Read and Analyze the Map

Display Slide 7: How to Read and Analyze the Map

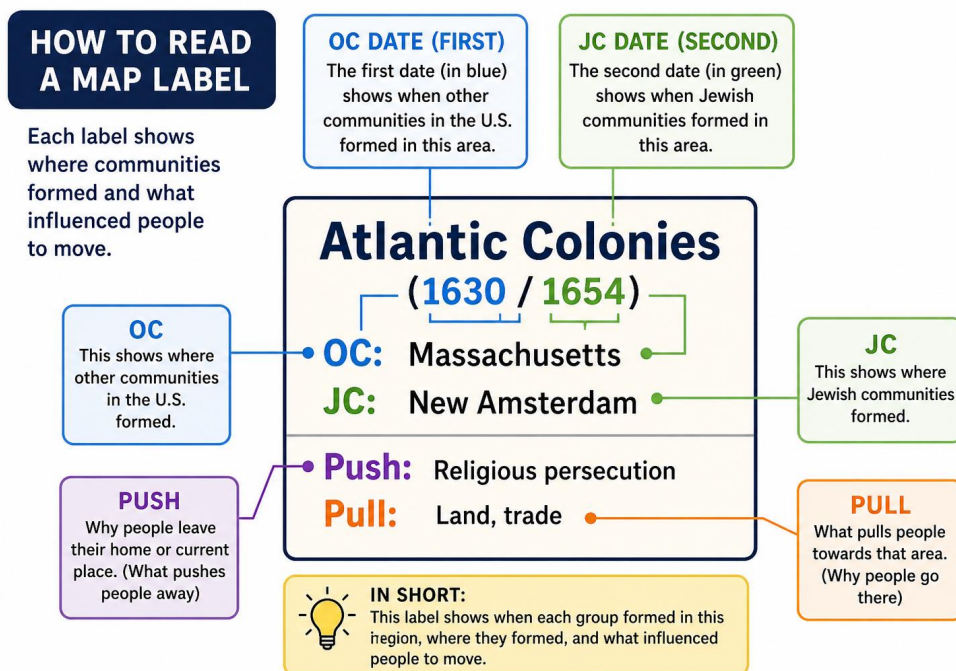
Teacher Script: “Before we look at the full map, this slide shows you exactly how to read it.”

Teacher Script:

“Each region includes:

- Where other communities in the United States form (OC)
 - The first date connects to OC (Other Communities in the United States)
- Where Jewish communities formed (JC)
 - The second date connects to JC (Jewish Communities)
- Push factors, which explain why people leave
- Pull factors, which explain what pulls people toward that area”

“You are looking for patterns across regions. You are looking to answer the question: What patterns do you notice, and what explains those patterns?”



Step 3: Full Map Analysis (5-6 minutes)

Display Slide 8: Movement Patterns in the United States

Teacher Script: “Now you will analyze the map. Pay attention to where communities form, when they appear, and what factors are driving movement. Remember you are looking to answer the question: What patterns do you notice, and what explains those patterns?”

[Set a timer and hold 4-5 minutes for them to explore silently]

Guided Observation (Optional):

Teacher Prompt: “What do you notice about the push and pull factors across regions?”

Expected Student Responses:

“They are in similar places”

“They move over time”

“The reasons for moving are similar”

Teacher Reinforcement: “This shows that Jewish communities formed within the same patterns as other communities in the United States. They are part of the same system of movement, shaped by similar push and pull factors.”

Step 4: Student Application

Display Slide 9

Teacher Script: “Now complete section 2 of your handout.”

Activity 3: Understanding Belonging and Rights in Early America (15-20 minutes)

Slides 10-14

Student Materials Used: Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

IMPORTANT TEACHER NOTE:

If you teach Grades 6-7: continue to Step 2A

Grades 6-7, students answer: What do Jewish communities need to build a life after arriving?

If you teach Grade 8 (or above): Skip to Step 2B

Grade 8, students answer: Were Jewish communities fully included and protected under U.S. law?

Step 1: Bridge from Activity 2 – ALL GRADES (1 minute)

Display Slide 10: After People Arrive

Teacher Script: “We just used the map to identify patterns of movement. We saw that Jewish communities and other communities in the United States often formed in similar regions and were shaped by similar push and pull factors.”

[Pause]

“But movement is only one part of the story. After people arrive, they still need to build a life. They need work, safety, community, and equal protection under the law in order to stay. Now we are going to focus on what happens after people arrive.”

Teacher Script:

“We saw that Jewish communities formed in many of the same places as other communities. But forming a community takes more than just arriving. When Jewish families arrived in a town or city, they needed to build a life there.”

[Pause]

“They needed places to live and work, and they also needed ways to stay connected to their identity while becoming part of the wider community.”

Teacher Prompt:

“If you’re not sure where to start, think about this first:”

“What do all people need when they move to a new place?”

Expected Student Responses

“A place to live”

“Food”

“A job”

“Safety”

“People to help them”

Teacher Script:

“Right. Those are the basic things people need to get started. For many people, including Jewish families, building a life also includes staying connected to who they are—their traditions and their unique culture. If someone arrives somewhere new, are they automatically part of the community right away?”

Expected Student Response: “No”

Teacher Follow-Up: “What might take time?”

Expected Student Responses

“Getting to know people”

“Finding work”

“Understanding how things work”

“Building connections”

Teacher Script: “Building a life in a new place takes time. People need opportunity, support, and connections in order to become part of a community.”

IMPORTANT TEACHER NOTE – READ CAREFULLY

If you teach Grades 6-7: Continue to Step 2A

If you teach Grade 8: Skip to Step 2B

Step 2A (Grades 6-7): Jewish Community Experience (6-7 minutes)

Display Slide 11: 2A: Jewish Community Experience

Teacher Direction: “You are going to apply what we just discussed to think specifically about how Jewish communities build a life in a new place.”

Turn and Share Prompts (on slide)

Prompt 1: Needs

What would Jewish families need in order to build a stable life in a new place?

Teacher Moves (If Needed):

If students stall: “Think back, what do all people need first? What do they need after that?”

Prompt 2: Community

What helps a community grow?

Prompt 3: Challenges

What challenges might Jewish families face after arriving in a new place?

Display Slide 12: Section 3A of the Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

Teacher Script: “Jewish communities formed in many of the same places as other communities, but building a life in those places took time. Communities grow when people have the support and opportunities to remain and build something over time. Communities that have roots in an area hold onto their unique cultures, traditions, and blend them with their new culture to make something beautifully unique.”

Step 2B (Grade 8): Rights and Belonging (10-12 minutes)

Display Slide: 13

Student Materials:

Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

Moses Seixas Letter (edited, annotated version)

George Washington Letter (edited, annotated version)

Teacher Direction:

“You are going to work with two historical letters. One is written to George Washington by a Jewish community leader, Moses Seixas (*say-shush*). The

other is the response from George Washington to Moses Seixas. You are going to read and annotate these like historians.”

Teacher Move:

Students work in pairs (recommended)

Partner A: reads aloud

Partner B: annotates

Then switch

Read and Annotate Moses Seixas Letter (4-5 minutes)

Start with the Moses Seixas letter.

Review the expectations found on the Moses Seixas letter

[Original Letter to George Washington from Moses Seixas](#)

Read and Annotate George Washington’s Reply (4-5 minutes)

Review the expectations found on the George Washington letter

[Original Reply from George Washington to Moses Seixas](#)

Quick Partner Check (1-2 minutes)

“With your partner:”

What is Seixas asking for?

How does Washington respond?

Teacher Look-Fors

Seixas → Asking for rights and protection

Washington → Says those rights exist and are protected

Move to Writing – Section 3B (3-4 minutes)

Teacher Script: “You annotated so you could use the text. Now you will use your annotations as evidence. Complete Section 3B of your handout. Use at least one piece of evidence.”

Day 1 Closing Activity – Exit Reflection (5-7 minutes)

Display Slide 15: Final Reflection

Student Materials: Student Handout: *Understanding Movement and Belonging*

Step 1: Turn and Share (1 minute)

Teacher Script: “What is one thing from today’s lesson that stood out to you and why?”

Teacher Moves:

Each partner shares briefly

Keep responses focused and concise

Do not extend discussion. This is a quick reflection.

Step 2: Written Reflection (4-5 minutes)

Teacher Script: “Now take that thinking and put it into writing. Complete the Exit Reflection on your handout. Be sure to answer both parts of the question.”

Student Task (From Handout)

Grades 6–7: What is one thing Jewish Americans hoped to find in early America, and why would that matter in a new country?

Grade 8: How do the Seixas and Washington letters show what people expected from the United States, and why does that matter?

Extensions and Differentiation

These are optional and are not required for lesson implementation.

Differentiation

- Provide sentence starters
- Allow bullet responses before full sentences
- Chunk tasks
- Allow verbal rehearsal before writing
- Use a word bank
- Provide partially completed responses
- Require multiple pieces of evidence for responses
- Assign reading roles like reader, annotator, evidence finder
- Pair students strategically (mixed readiness)

Extension (Grades 6–8)

- Students explain in writing how push and pull factors connect.
- Students explain in writing how a specific pull factor addresses a specific push factor.
- Students select a key phrase from one or both letters, rewrite it in their own words, and illustrate it to show meaning.
- Students practice a STAAR SCR by responding to the prompt:
“Jewish Americans are part of the American story because...” using two pieces of evidence.

Extension (Grades 9–12)

- Students write a short analytical response explaining how movement, rights, and opportunity are connected, using evidence from both the map and the Seixas/Washington exchange.
- Students analyze how the Seixas and Washington letters reflect early American ideas about religious freedom and government responsibility, and explain why those ideas matter over time.

- Students revise their writing to include precise academic vocabulary (e.g., migration, liberty, rights, opportunity, society).
- Students compare the experience shown in this lesson to another example of migration or minority experience and explain one similarity in how people build belonging.

Teacher Materials

- Image: Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, New York (1920)
- Image: Push and Pull Factors
- Image: New Amsterdam, 1600s
- Image: Jewish Tercentenary Monument New York
- Image: How to Read and Analyze the Map
- Map: Movement Patterns in the United States
- Teacher Guide for Student Handout: Understanding Movement and Belonging

Image: Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, New York (1920)



Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

Image: Push and Pull Factors

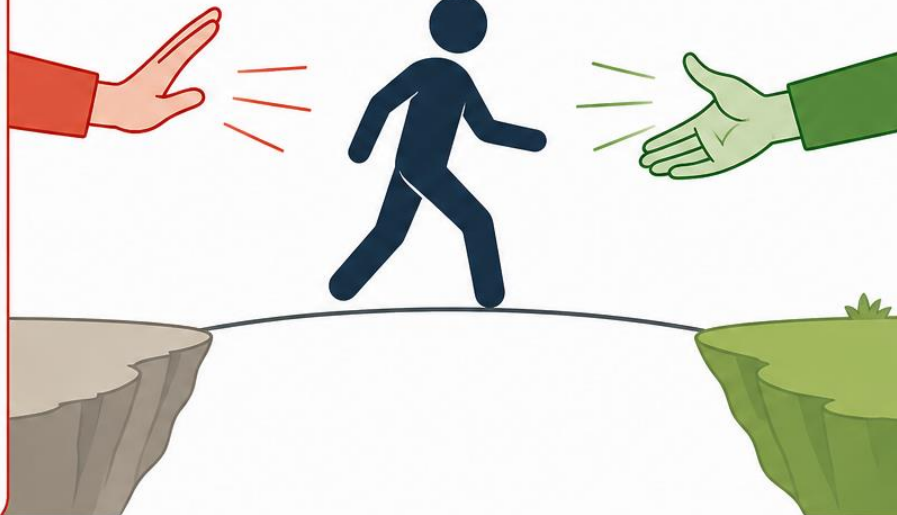
PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

People move from one place to another because of both **push** factors and **pull** factors.

PUSH

Factors that **push** people **away** from where they live.

-  Danger or violence
-  Not enough food
-  Few or no job opportunities
-  Discrimination or unfair treatment
-  Poverty
-  Environmental problems (e.g., natural disasters)



PULL

Factors that **pull** people toward a new place.

-  Family
-  Job opportunities
-  Education
-  Better living conditions
-  Freedom and safety
-  A better future

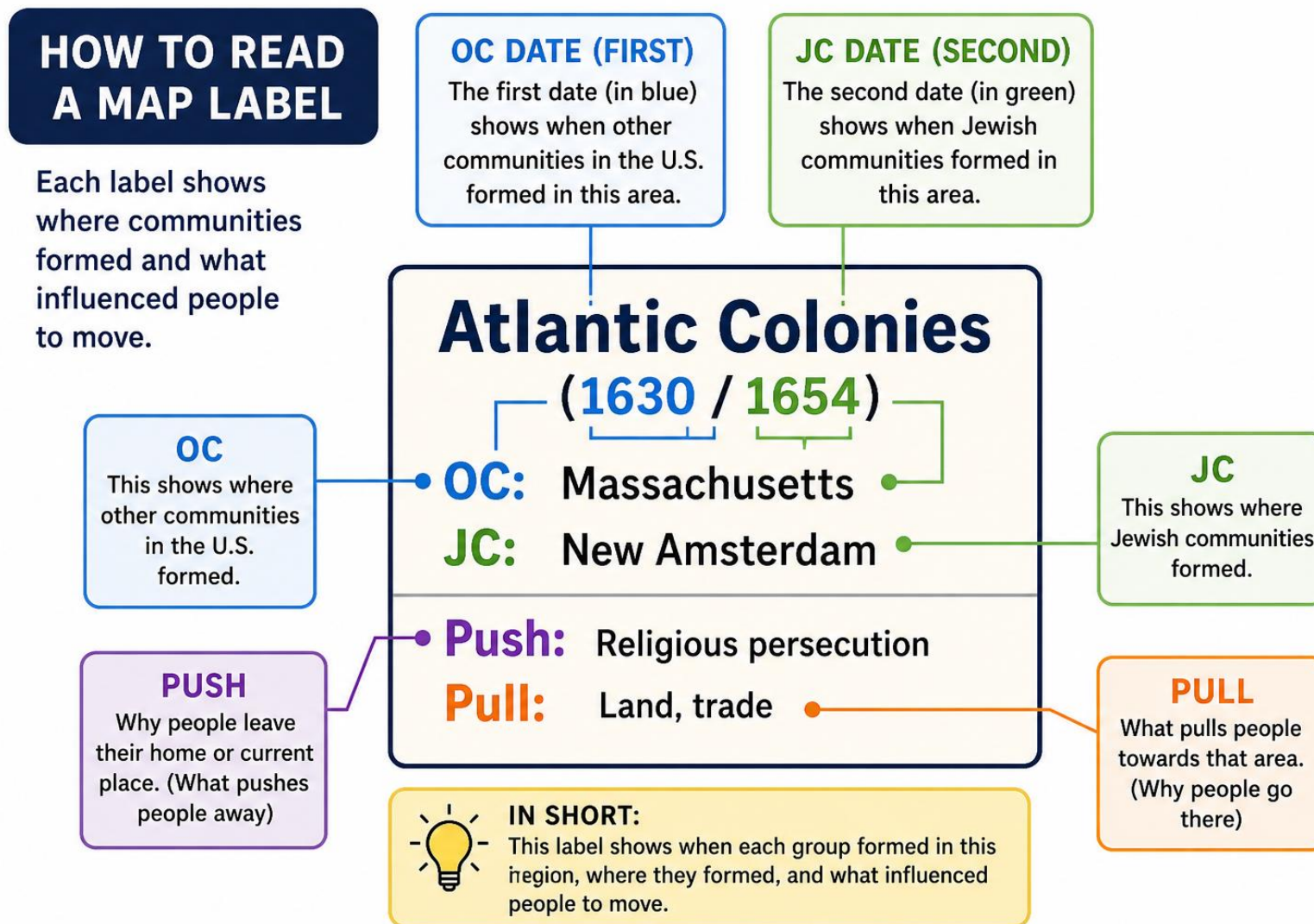
Image: New Amsterdam, 1600s



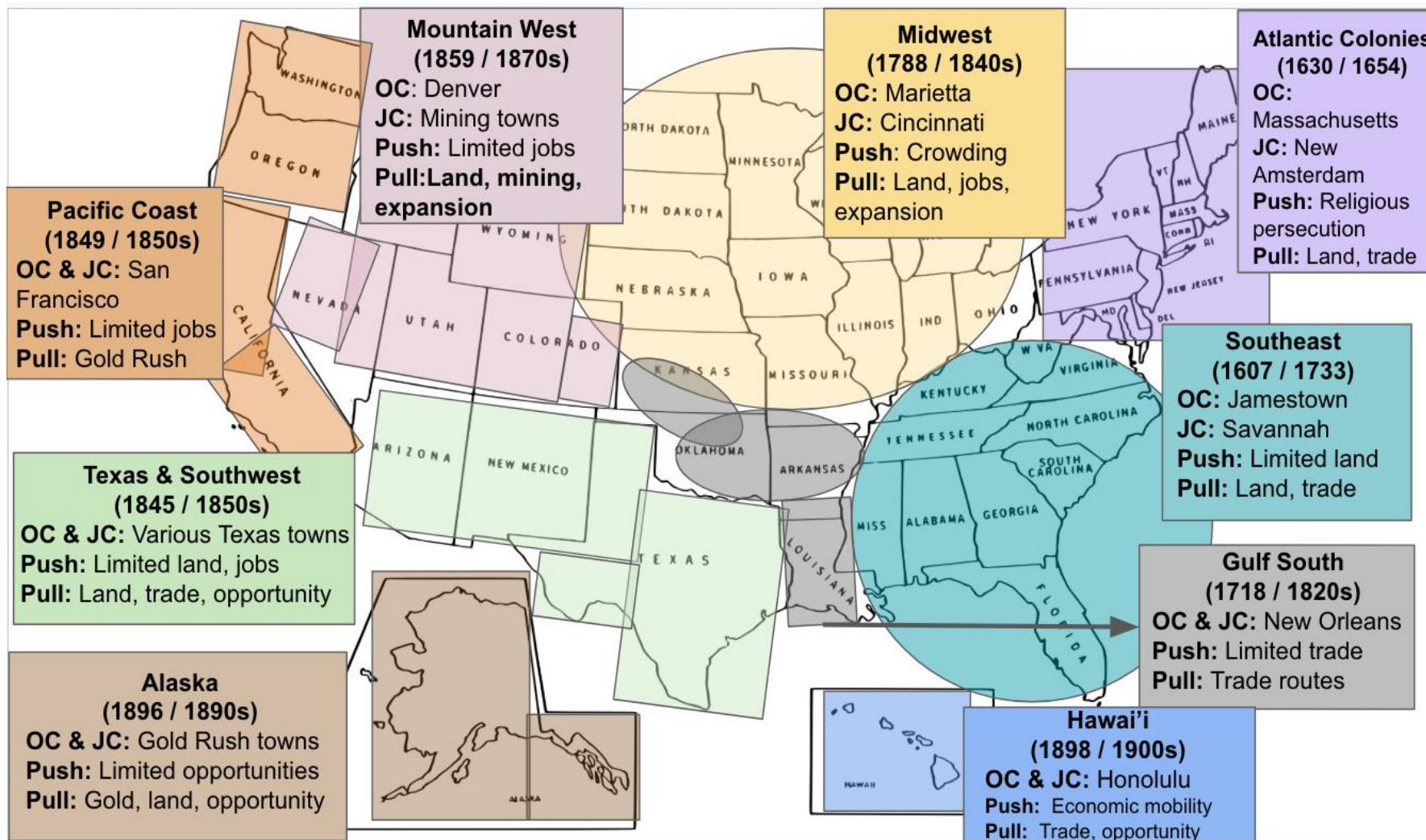
Image: Jewish Tercentenary Monument New York



Image: How to Read and Analyze the Map



Map: Movement Patterns in the United States



(Grade 8) Moses Seixas Letter to George Washington, 1790

*The letter has been edited for clarity using principles from Stanford History Education Group. The meaning and key phrases have been preserved, but some wording has been simplified so you can focus on analyzing the ideas. You are reading to analyze what this document shows about belonging and rights in early America.

- **Underline** any part of the text that shows what Jewish people experienced before this government.
- **Circle** the line that describes what is different about the United States.
- **Star** the one phrase you think is most important in the entire letter. Be ready to explain why you chose it.
- Next to your annotation, write short notes (3-6 words per note is fine):
 - What is Seixas saying about the past?
 - What is he hoping for now?

To the President of the United States of America

Sir:

Permit the Jewish people to approach you with respect and admiration. We join with our fellow citizens in welcoming you to Newport, Rhode Island.

With pleasure we reflect on the days where you were protected during the struggle for the United States. We are grateful that you now serve as the Chief Magistrate of these states.

In the past, we were denied the full rights of free citizens. Now, with a deep sense of gratitude, we see a government created by the people—a **government which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,** but instead provides **liberty of conscience and the rights of citizenship to all.**

This government recognizes that people of every nation, language, and background are equal parts of the country. Because of these civil and religious freedoms, we express our gratitude and hope that this government will continue to protect them.

Done and signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation

Newport, Rhode Island

August 17, 1790

Moses Seixas, Warden

(Grade 8) George Washington's Reply to Moses Seixas, 1790

*The letter has been edited for clarity using principles from Stanford History Education Group. The meaning and key phrases have been preserved, but some wording has been simplified so you can focus on analyzing the ideas. You are reading to analyze what this document shows about belonging and rights in early America.

- **Underline** phrases that show what rights people have in the United States.
- **Box** phrases that show what the government will or will not do.
- **Circle** the line that shows people's rights are not just being "tolerated" but are guaranteed.
- **Star** the one phrase that best explains what belonging means in this letter.
- Next to your annotation, write short notes (3-6 words per note is fine):
 - What rights does Washington say people have?
 - What is the government responsible for?

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island

Gentlemen,

Thank you for your letter and for the warm welcome you gave me in Newport.

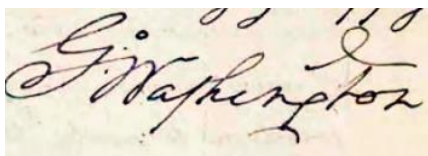
We have come through difficult times, and we now live in a period of greater safety and opportunity. If we use these advantages wisely, we can continue to grow as a strong and successful nation.

The people of the United States have created a government based on a fair and equal approach. All people have liberty of conscience and the rights of citizenship.

It is no longer just a question of being "allowed" to have rights. These rights belong to all people. **The government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.**

All who live under this government are expected to act as good citizens and support it. May the Jewish people who live in this country continue to live in safety and be respected by others.

May all people live securely and without fear.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script, which reads "G. Washington". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, aged piece of paper.

G. Washington

Teacher Guide: Understanding Movement and Belonging

Section 1: Why People Move

- a. Write one push factor and one related pull factor for why someone might move to a new country.

Push factor (why someone leaves where they are): Lack of jobs or poverty

Pull factor (what they hope to find in a new place): More jobs and economic stability

- b. Explain or draw what push and pull factors are in your own words. Use your example from Part A to help explain. Push factors are reasons why people leave a place, like not having enough money or jobs. Pull factors are reasons why people want to go somewhere else, like better opportunities or safety. In this example, people leave because they cannot find work and go to a place where they can earn money and support themselves.

Section 2: Map Analysis

- a. What is one pattern you notice about where OC and JC communities form across regions? (Focus on locations and reasons, not just dates.) One pattern is that Jewish communities and other communities often form near cities or trade routes. These places have more jobs, resources, and opportunities, which makes it easier for people to settle and build a life.

- b. Choose one region from the map to answer the questions below:

Region: Northeast

Push: Limited opportunities or persecution in other countries

Pull: Jobs, safety, and established communities

- c. Complete the sentence: Jewish communities and other communities both form in cities or trade areas because there are more jobs and resources available, which shows that people settle in places where they have the best chance to succeed and build a stable life.

Section 3A: Jewish Community Experience

a. What are two things Jewish families would need in order to build a stable life in a new place?

1. Jobs or ways to earn money
2. Community support (like places to gather or help each other)

Why would each of these be important for building a life? Jobs are important because families need money to survive and build a stable life. Community support is important because it helps people feel safe, connected, and able to support each other in a new place.

b. Explain how one need from Part A can help a Jewish community grow over time. Having jobs helps a Jewish community grow over time because families can stay in one place, build businesses, and support future generations. This allows the community to become more stable and expand.

c. You learned how Jewish communities formed, where they settled, and what it took to build a life in the United States. Where do you see a similar pattern of people moving and building a community? Name the example and explain at least two ways it is similar. A similar pattern can be seen with immigrant communities today, such as Hispanic communities in cities like San Antonio. They move for better opportunities and settle in places with jobs and family connections. Like Jewish communities, they build support systems and create strong communities over time.

Section 3B: Rights and Belonging

- a. What is Moses Seixas saying about the past and what he hopes will be different in the United States. Use at least one phrase from the text in your answer. Moses Seixas is explaining that Jewish people were not always treated equally in the past and hopes that things will be different in the United States. He uses the phrase “deprived...of the invaluable rights of free citizens,” which shows that Jewish people did not always have equal rights. He is asking for freedom and equal treatment.
- b. What is George Washington saying about what rights people have and what the government will do. Use at least one phrase from the text in your answer. George Washington is saying that people of all religions will have rights

in the United States and that the government will protect those rights. He says that the government “gives to bigotry no sanction,” which shows that discrimination should not be accepted. He is promising that people will be treated fairly.

c. How do these two letters show what belonging meant in early America and why this mattered for Jewish Americans?

These two letters show that belonging in early America meant having equal rights and being treated fairly. Seixas is asking for religious freedom and equal treatment, and Washington responds by saying that the government will protect those rights. This shows that Jewish Americans were becoming part of American society because they were being recognized as equal citizens. This mattered because it gave them the opportunity to build stable lives and communities in the United States

Student Materials

- **Student Handout: Understanding Movement and Belonging**
- **Exit Reflection**

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

Understanding Movement and Belonging

Section 1: Why People Move

- c. Write one push factor and one related pull factor for why someone might move to a new country.

Push factor (why someone leaves where they are):

Pull factor (what they hope to find in a new place):

- d. Explain or draw what push and pull factors are in your own words. Use your example from Part A to help explain. _____

Section 2: Map Analysis

- d. What is one pattern you notice about where OC and JC communities form across regions? (Focus on locations and reasons, not just dates.) _____

- e. Choose one region from the map to answer the questions below:

Region: _____

Push: _____

_____ Pull: _____

- f. Complete the sentence: Jewish communities and other communities both form in _____ because _____

_____, which shows that _____

Section 3A: Jewish Community Experience

d. What are two things Jewish families would need in order to build a stable life in a new place?

1. _____

2.

Why would each of these be important for building a life?

e. Explain how one need from Part A can help a Jewish community grow over time. _____

f. You learned how Jewish communities formed, where they settled, and what it took to build a life in the United States. Where do you see a similar pattern of people moving and building a community? Name the example and explain at least two ways it is similar. _____

Section 3B: Rights and Belonging

d. What is Moses Seixas saying about the past and what he hopes will be different in the United States. Use at least one phrase from the text in your answer. _____

e. What is George Washington saying about what rights people have and what the government will do. Use at least one phrase from the text in your answer.

f. How do these two letters show what belonging meant in early America and why this mattered for Jewish Americans?

In your answer:

Explain what Seixas is asking for

Explain how Washington responds

Explain what this shows about Jewish Americans and their connection to the United States

Use at least one piece of evidence

Day 2: Jewish American Identity and Contribution

Purpose

Students examine how Jewish Americans expressed identity and contributed to American life.

Students will:

- interpret how identity and belonging are expressed in cultural texts
- identify contributions made by Jewish Americans
- analyze how individuals shape American society
- use evidence to explain how Jewish Americans are part of American society

Essential Question

How do Jewish Americans build lives in the United States and contribute to American society?

Teacher Materials

- [Jewish Americans and the American Story \(Gr. 6–8\)](#)
Slides 15-23

Student Materials

- Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience*
- The New Colossus (Optional)
- Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) Profiles (1 per student)

Teacher Note

This lesson intentionally follows a progression:

- Observation (text)
- Interpretation (meaning)
- Evidence (profiles)
- Application (written synthesis)

Teachers should not skip steps. Each step builds the next.

Teacher Background: Jewish American Identity Key Understanding

- Jewish Americans are part of the broader American population and have contributed across many areas of life, including culture, science, business, and civic leadership.
- Jewish Americans make up about 2% of the population of the United States.

- In Texas, Jewish Americans make up well under 1% of the state population. Jewish communities are found in cities such as Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio, where larger populations and economic opportunities supported community development.
- Jewish identity can include:
 - shared history
 - cultural traditions
 - religious practice (for some individuals)
 - family background
- Not all Jewish Americans practice religion in the same way. Some identify culturally, historically, or through family traditions.
- Jewish Americans are not a single, uniform group. They come from different regions, time periods, and backgrounds.

In this lesson, students are learning:

- how people build lives in the United States
- how individuals contribute to society
- how identity and belonging are expressed through actions and contributions

Teachers should emphasize:

- Jewish Americans are part of the same systems of movement and opportunity as other Americans
- their contributions reflect participation in American life, not separation from it

Important Framing for Teachers

- Avoid presenting Jewish Americans as:
 - a single type of person
 - only connected to one field (for example, entertainment or business)
 - separate from the broader American experience
- Reinforce that:
 - Jewish Americans contributed alongside others
 - their work shaped American culture, science, and society

Language Guidance

Use:

- “Jewish Americans are part of American society”
- “Jewish Americans contributed to...”
- “Like many groups, Jewish Americans...”

Avoid:

- language that isolates or generalizes

- framing that suggests one shared experience

Activity 4: Emma Lazarus – Identity and Belonging (12–15 minutes)

Slides 16-19

Student Materials:

Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience*
The New Colossus

Step 1: Read and Observe (3–4 minutes)

Display Slide 16: Emma Lazarus

Teacher Script:

“Before we read, here is some context. Emma Lazarus was a Jewish American writer in the late 1800s. Her family came to America in the 1600s. She wrote a poem, *The New Colossus*, which is now connected to the Statue of Liberty. The poem describes people who arrived in the United States. Take a moment to read this excerpt carefully.”

[Pause]

“What do you notice? What do you think this is about?”

Teacher Moves

Accept text-based observations

Prompt if needed:

“Who is being described?”

“What stands out in the language?”

Teacher Look-Fors

Students identify that the poem is about people arriving

Student notice descriptive language

Step 2: Interpret Meaning (4–5 minutes)

Slide 17: The New Colossus (Full Text)

Teacher Script:

“Now we are going to look at more of the poem. Read through the full text. You do not need to understand every word. As you read, think about what images come to mind.”

Teacher Moves:

If students are given a hard copy of the *New Colossus* instructs them to underline words or phrases that stand out to them.

[Protect silent reading time]

Student Questions:

(Teacher can decide to read out and select 1-2 students, or turn and share moments)

“Which words did you highlight?”

“What images came to mind as you read?”

“What kind of people are being described?”

“Who is Emma Lazarus describing in this poem?”

Teacher Look Fors:

Students identify people seeking opportunity or safety

Students recognize an idea about life in the United States

Step 3: Deepen Understanding (3–4 minutes)

Continue to display Slide 17: Statue of Liberty Image / Video

Play video on slideshow [The New Colossus - Emma Lazarus](#)

Teacher Script:

“Now we are going to watch and listen to the poem. As you watch, pay attention to both the words and the visuals. Focus on this question as you watch: How does this poem help explain why the United States might be a pull factor for people moving from other places?”

[play video ~ 1:36 minutes]

Teacher Prompt (Immediately After Viewing): “What did you notice that shows why people might be drawn to the United States?”

Teacher Look-Fors:

Students identify opportunity, freedom, or safety

Students connect language like ‘tired,’ ‘poor,’ and ‘yearning to breathe free’

Step 4: Student Task

Display Slide 18: Section 1 of the Student Handout

Students Materials: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience*

Activity 5: Jewish Americans in Practice – Profiles of Contribution (15–18 minutes)

Slides 19-20

Student Materials:

Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience*

JAHM Profiles (20 included; 1 per student)

Step 1: Introduce the Task (2 minutes)

Display Slide 19: JAHM Profiles – Individual Analysis

Teacher Script:

“You are now moving from ideas to real people. The individuals you will study are Jewish Americans. Like many Americans, they built lives, created opportunities, and contributed in different ways. As you read, pay attention to:

- what they created or contributed
- how they used opportunities available to them
- what helped them succeed

You will use this information to explain how individuals contribute to American society.”

Step 2: Individual Analysis (5-6 minutes)

Slide 19: JAHM Profiles – Individual Analysis

Student Materials:

1 JAHM profile per student

Student Task

Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience* Students complete Section 2A (Individual Analysis)

Teacher Moves:

Place students in pairs or small groups (3-4)

Ensure each student has a clear role (reading, discussing, recording if needed)

Step 3: Learn from Others (5-6 minutes)

Slide 20: JAHM Profiles – Learn From Others

Student Materials:

Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience* Section 2 (Learn from Others)

Teacher Script:

“Now you are going to share your person and learn from others. Speak with at least **two different students** who have different profiles.

Record their information in Section 2B (Learn from Others).”

[Pause / circulate]

“As you listen, focus on:

- what each person did
- the impact of their work

Be specific. You will use this information in your final writing.”

[After 2–3 minutes, tighten the expectation]

“You are not just collecting names. You are gathering evidence. In the next activity, you will explain what all of these examples show. Make sure you have strong, clear examples you can use.”

Activity 6: Synthesis – Evidence of Belonging and Contribution (10–15 minutes)

Slide 22

Student Materials:

Student Handout: *From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience*

Step 1: Set the Task (1–2 minutes)

Display Slide 22: Synthesis Prompt

Teacher Script: “You’ve now studied movement, belonging, and real individuals. Now you are going to bring all of that together. This is not just a summary. You are going to explain what these examples show.”

Writing Prompt

How do movement, opportunity, and contributions show that Jewish Americans are part of American society? Use specific examples.

Step 2: Student Writing (8–10 minutes)

Display Slide 22: Section 3

Student Expectations (on slide or stated clearly):

Your response must include:

- a clear claim
- evidence from Day 1 (movement/opportunity)
- evidence from Day 2 (individual contributions)
- explanation of how your evidence connects

Teacher Moves (Stronger + More Targeted)

Circulate and prompt:

- “What is your claim? Say it clearly.”
- “Which example shows movement or opportunity?”
- “Which example shows contribution?”
- “Explain how those connect.”
- “Don’t just list—what does it show?”

Teacher Look-Fors

Students:

- use at least 2–3 specific examples
- connect Day 1 → Day 2
- explain impact (not just describe)
- move from examples → general idea

Closing: Quick Share + Strong Finish (3–5 minutes)

Slide 23

Step 1: Silent Think (30 seconds)

Teacher Script:

“Look back at what you wrote. Share one idea from your writing and what it shows about Jewish Americans in American society.”

Step 2: Quick Share (2–3 minutes)

Teacher Directions:

Call on 3–4 students only

Keep responses to 1 sentence

Teacher Script:

“Share your idea in one clear sentence. Start with: These examples show that...”

Teacher Moves:

Cut off long responses: “One sentence”

Push clarity:

“Say it clearly—what do they show?”

If needed, revoice:

“So you’re saying these individuals contributed in different ways across American life.”

Step 3: Final Teacher Close (Do Not Skip_

Teacher Script:

“What you just said matters.

Across time, in different places, and in many fields, Jewish Americans have helped build and shape American society.

They didn’t stand outside of it—they have always been part of the American story.”

Extensions and Differentiation

These are optional and are not required for lesson implementation.

Differentiation

- Provide sentence starters
- Allow bullet responses before full sentences
- Chunk tasks
- Allow verbal rehearsal before writing
- Use a word bank
- Provide partially completed responses
- Require multiple pieces of evidence for responses
- Assign reading roles like reader, annotator, evidence finder
- Pair students strategically (mixed readiness)

Extension (Grades 6–8)

- Students explain in writing how one individual’s contribution connects to a larger idea about American society.
- Students identify a pattern across at least two individuals and explain what that pattern shows.
- Students revise their Section 3 response to strengthen their explanation (add “this shows...” statements).
- Students create a one-sentence claim using multiple examples: “These examples show that Jewish Americans...”
- Students practice a STAAR SCR by responding to the prompt: “How do contributions show that people are part of a society?” using two pieces of evidence.
- Students create a visual representation (poster, one-pager, or illustrated panel) of one individual’s contribution.
 - Must include:
 - what the person did
 - their impact
 - one clear “this shows...” statement
- Students design a symbol or image that represents how Jewish Americans contribute to society and write 2–3 sentences explaining their choices.

Extension (Grades 9–12)

- Students write a more developed analytical response explaining how individual contributions connect to broader social patterns over time.

- Students revise their writing to include clear connections between movement (Day 1) and contributions (Day 2).
- Students incorporate precise academic vocabulary (e.g., identity, participation, impact, society, opportunity).
- Students analyze how different individuals contributed in different fields and explain what that shows about participation in American life.
- Students compare two individuals and explain how their contributions reflect different ways of shaping society.
- Students create a visual or conceptual representation (infographic, concept map, or symbolic illustration) showing the relationship between:
movement → opportunity → contribution → impact
 - Must include a written explanation of how the elements connect
- Students design a museum-style panel or exhibit piece that presents one or more individuals using a claim, evidence, and explanation, showing how they contributed to American society

Teacher Materials

- Image: Emma Lazarus, c. 1872
- The New Colossus (teacher and student material)
- Teacher Guide: From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience

Image: Emma Lazarus, c. 1872



The New Colossus
By Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Teacher Guide:

From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience

Section 1: Interpreting Movement and Belonging Through Text

Use the excerpt and the full poem *the New Colossus* to answer the question below.

Write in complete sentences and use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

- a. Select one phrase from the poem that describes the people arriving in the United States.

Phrase: Your tired, your poor

What does this phrase suggest about their situation before arriving? It suggests that people were struggling before arriving. They were poor and likely living in difficult conditions, which made them want to leave.

- b. How does this poem connect to what you learned about why people move?

In your answer:

- Refer to push factors
- Refer to pull factors
- Explain the connection clearly

This shows push factors like poverty and hard living conditions. The U.S. was a pull factor because it offered safety and opportunity. People moved to improve their lives.

Section 2: Individual Stories

- a. **Your Assigned Individual**

Name of individual: Irving Berlin

What did this person do? (Be specific. Describe their contribution to American life.) He wrote songs like "God Bless America" that became part of American culture.

What was their impact? (Use evidence. Explain why their contribution mattered.) His music helped shape American identity and is still recognized today.

- b. **Learn from Others (At least 2 individuals)**

Individual #2

Name: Sandy Koufax

What did they do? He was a successful baseball player who would not pitch on Yom Kippur during the World Series.

Impact: He showed how personal identity can influence important decisions.

Individual #3

Name: Ruth Bader Ginsburg

What did they do? She became a Supreme Court Justice.

Impact: She helped shape laws about fairness and equal rights, especially for women.

Section 3: Bringing It All Together

Respond to the prompt below. Write in complete sentences. Use specific examples.

How do movement, opportunity, and contributions show how Jewish Americans are part of American society?

(STAAR ECR: Level 3 Response)

Movement, opportunity, and contributions show how Jewish Americans are part of American society because they came for better opportunities and then helped shape the country. The poem shows push factors like poverty and pull factors like opportunity. This explains why people moved to the United States. Jewish Americans then contributed in different ways. Irving Berlin helped shape culture through music. Sandy Koufax showed how identity can influence actions. Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped shape laws about fairness and equal rights. These examples show that Jewish Americans are part of American society because they contributed in many areas and helped build the country over time.

STAAR-ECR Aligned Rubric:

<p>Level 4 (Master)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear and thoughtful claim - 3 or more strong, specific examples - Clear connection between movement/opportunity and contributions - Strong explanation of why it matters - Ideas connected across time or different fields - Writing is clear and well organized
<p>Level 3 (Meets)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear claim - 2–3 relevant examples - Includes movement/opportunity (Day 1) and contributions (Day 2) - Explains what the examples show - Writing is organized and easy to follow
<p>Level 2 (Approaches)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claim is unclear or too general - 1–2 examples (may be incomplete) - Limited connection to movement or contributions - Little explanation (mostly summary or listing)
<p>Level 1 (Does not meet)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No clear claim - Little or no relevant evidence - Does not answer the prompt - Response is incomplete or off-topic

Student Materials

- Student Handout: From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience
- JAHM Profiles (20)

Name: _____ Date: _____

From Movement to Contribution: The Jewish American Experience

Section 1: Interpreting Movement and Belonging Through Text

Use the excerpt and the full poem *the New Colossus* to answer the question below.

Write in complete sentences and use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

- c. Select one phrase from the poem that describes the people arriving in the United States.

Phrase: _____

What does this phrase suggest about their situation before arriving?

- d. How does this poem connect to what you learned about why people move?

In your answer:

- Refer to push factors
- Refer to pull factors
- Explain the connection clearly

Section 2: Individual Stories

c. Your Assigned Individual

Name of individual: _____

What did this person do? (Be specific. Describe their contribution to American life.) _____

What was their impact? (Use evidence. Explain why their contribution mattered.)

JAHM Profile



Frances Rosenthal Kallison

Frances Rosenthal Kallison (1908–2004) was a Jewish American civic leader in San Antonio, Texas, born to Jewish immigrant parents who came to the United States seeking economic opportunity and long-term stability. Like many Jewish families in the early 20th century, her family established a business and became active in both Jewish communal life and the broader civic community. Kallison grew up in an environment that emphasized responsibility, public service, and the importance of contributing to the society in which one lives.

Kallison became a central figure in shaping San Antonio's civic and cultural institutions. She played a major role in expanding the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo, helping transform it into one of the largest events of its kind in the United States. She is also the only Jewish cowgirl inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Fort Worth. She was deeply involved in the National Council of Jewish Women, supporting initiatives focused on education, social services, and assistance for all families in need.

Her leadership reflects how Jewish Americans contributed to the development of local communities while maintaining strong cultural identities. Rather than working in isolation, she built systems and institutions that continued to serve others over time. Her work demonstrates how civic leadership at the local level can produce long-term impact that shapes a city's identity and opportunities.

Push Factors (family): limited economic opportunity in Europe

Pull Factors (family): economic stability and opportunity in the United States

Contribution: Civic leadership, community development

JAHM Profile

Barbra Streisand



Barbra Joan Streisand (born 1942) is a Jewish American singer, actress, and filmmaker who was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in a Jewish household in a working-class neighborhood, where financial limitations and social expectations shaped her early experiences. Rather than conforming to the entertainment industry's expectations about appearance and style, she chose to maintain her identity, including her voice, name, and public presence.

Streisand first gained national attention for her role as Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl*, a character based on a real Jewish performer who navigated success while maintaining her identity. She went on to star in films such as *The Way We Were* and later directed and starred in *Yentl*. *Yentl* is particularly significant because it explores Jewish religious tradition, focusing on a young woman who disguises herself as a man in order to study sacred texts that were traditionally restricted. Through this work, Streisand brought questions of identity, access, and tradition into mainstream American film.

Over the course of her career, Streisand became one of the most accomplished performers in American entertainment, achieving success across music, film, and directing. Her work reflects how Jewish American artists have shaped cultural narratives while also expanding opportunities within the industry. By maintaining her identity rather than adapting to expectations, she influenced both representation and creative control in entertainment.

Contribution: Music, film

JAHM Profile



Richard M. Sherman & Robert B. Sherman

Richard Morton Sherman (1928–2024) and Robert Bernard Sherman (1925–2012), known as the Sherman Brothers, were Jewish American songwriters whose work helped define American family entertainment in the 20th century. They were born to Russian Jewish immigrant parents who had come to the United States seeking stability and opportunity. Their upbringing in a family connected to music and storytelling influenced their approach to songwriting.

The Sherman Brothers became widely known for their work with Walt Disney Studios. They wrote songs for films such as *Mary Poppins*, including “A Spoonful of Sugar” and “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” They also wrote the song “It’s a Small World,” which became one of the most performed songs in the world. Their songs were designed to be accessible, memorable, and emotionally engaging, helping audiences connect to characters and stories.

Their work helped establish the American entertainment industry, especially in how music is used in storytelling. Their contributions continue to shape how film, theme parks, and media use music to create shared cultural experiences.

Push Factors (family): limited opportunity and instability in Eastern Europe

Pull Factors (family): economic opportunity and creative freedom in the United States

Contribution: Music, film, storytelling

JAHM Profile



Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster

Jerome Siegel (1914–1996) and Joseph Shuster (1914–1992) were sons of Jewish immigrants who came to the United States from Europe seeking safety and opportunity. Their families were part of a broader migration of Jewish communities leaving environments marked by discrimination, economic hardship, and limited rights.

Siegel and Shuster grew up during the Great Depression, a time of widespread economic instability in the United States. These experiences shaped their understanding of struggle, fairness, and justice. In 1938, they introduced Superman, a character who would become one of the most recognizable figures in American culture. Superman was designed as a protector of the vulnerable and a symbol of justice, often standing up for individuals who could not defend themselves.

Scholars have noted that Superman's identity reflects elements of the immigrant experience. He is an outsider who adopts a new identity while maintaining a hidden origin. This dual identity mirrors the experiences of many immigrant families navigating life in the United States. Their work helped establish the comic book industry.

Push Factors (family): discrimination and limited opportunity in Europe

Pull Factors (family): safety and economic opportunity in the United States

Contribution: Storytelling, popular culture

JAHM Profile

Sandy Koufax



Sanford Braun Koufax (born 1935) is a Jewish American baseball player widely regarded as one of the greatest pitchers in Major League Baseball history. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in a Jewish household. Growing up in New York City exposed him to both cultural diversity and the realities of being part of a minority community.

Koufax began his professional career with the Brooklyn Dodgers and continued with the team after its move to Los Angeles. Over time, he became known for his fastball, curveball, and control. His performance during the early 1960s placed him among the most successful athletes in American sports.

One of the most defining moments of Koufax's career occurred during the 1965 World Series, when he chose not to pitch Game 1 because it fell on Yom Kippur, one of the most important days in the Jewish calendar. This decision drew national attention because it represented a clear instance in which an athlete prioritized religious identity over professional expectations at the highest level of competition. His choice was framed as a personal commitment.

Koufax's career reflects the intersection of competition and identity. His actions contributed to a broader recognition of Jewish identity within American sports and demonstrated that personal beliefs can remain central even within highly visible and demanding professions.

Contribution: Sports, public identity

JAHM Profile



Sammy Davis Jr.

Samuel George Davis Jr. (1925–1990) was a Jewish American entertainer whose career spanned music, film, television, and live performance. He was born into a family of performers and began his career at a young age, developing skills in singing, dancing, and acting. In 1954, after surviving a serious car accident, he converted to Judaism and became deeply committed to Jewish identity. He often spoke about how Judaism provided structure, and meaning for his life.

As a Black Jewish American, Davis occupied a unique position within American society. He experienced discrimination based on both race and religion, which shaped his understanding of identity and belonging. Rather than separating these aspects of his identity, he connected them, viewing his experiences as part of a broader struggle for equality and recognition.

Davis became one of the most recognizable entertainers of the 20th century. He was a member of the Rat Pack alongside performers such as Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. His musical career included performances of songs such as “The Candy Man” and “Mr. Bojangles,” which reached wide audiences. His ability to move between film, television, and live performance made him one of the most versatile entertainers of his time.

At the same time, Davis used his public visibility to challenge segregation and discrimination. He refused to perform in venues that enforced racial separation and participated in major Civil Rights events, including the 1963 March on Washington.

Contribution: Entertainment, civil rights

JAHM Profile



Stan Lee

Stan Lee was born Stanley Martin Lieber (1922–2018) in New York City to Romanian Jewish immigrant parents. His parents came to the United States seeking economic opportunity. He grew up during the Great Depression and experienced financial struggles. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army, where he worked in writing and communications.

After the war, Lee became a writer and editor at Marvel Comics and co-created characters such as Spider-Man, the X-Men, Iron Man, the Hulk, and the Fantastic Four. His approach to storytelling differed from earlier comic book traditions. Instead of creating perfect heroes, he introduced characters who struggled with identity, responsibility, and social acceptance. The X-Men, for example, reflected themes of discrimination and exclusion, mirroring real-world experiences.

His work helped transform comic books into a major cultural force and laid the foundation for modern film franchises. By introducing complexity and ethical conflict into popular storytelling, Lee reshaped how audiences understand heroism and responsibility.

Push Factors (family): economic hardship and limited opportunity in Eastern Europe

Pull Factors (family): economic opportunity and stability in the United States

Contribution: Storytelling, cultural influence

JAHM Profile



Irving Berlin

Irving Berlin was born Israel Beilin (1888–1989) in the Russian Empire. During his early childhood, his family experienced the effects of anti-Jewish persecution and violence. As a result, they immigrated to the United States, joining a larger wave of Jewish migration from

Eastern Europe in the late 19th century. His family settled in New York City's Lower East Side, where they faced significant economic hardship while attempting to build a new life.

Berlin grew up in poverty and had limited access to education. He developed an early connection to music through street performance. He wrote over 1,000 songs, many of which became central to American cultural life, including "God Bless America," "White Christmas," and "There's No Business Like Show Business." His work appeared on Broadway, in Hollywood films, and in national ceremonies, making his music widely accessible across different audiences and regions.

Berlin's work helped define how Americans expressed identity, especially during times of national challenge. Songs like "God Bless America" became associated with unity and national belonging, while "White Christmas" became one of the most widely recorded songs in history.

His career reflects how Jewish immigrants did not simply adapt to American culture but actively shaped it. Berlin's music became part of the shared cultural language of the United States, demonstrating how immigrant experiences can influence national identity.

Push Factors: anti-Jewish violence, legal restrictions, and economic hardship in the Russian Empire

Pull Factors: safety, economic opportunity, and cultural freedom in the United States

Contribution: Music, American cultural identity

JAHM Profile

Idina Menzel



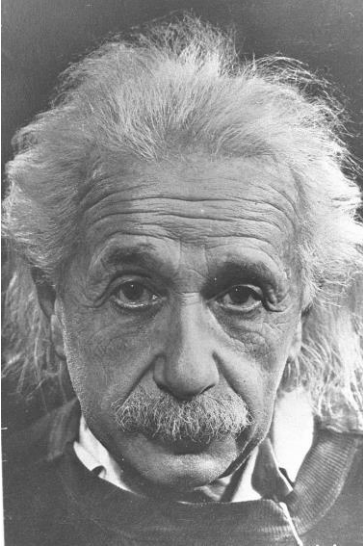
Idina Kim Mentzel (born 1971) is a Jewish American actress and singer whose career has significantly influenced modern musical theater and global entertainment. She was raised in a Jewish family in New York, where she was exposed to performance from an early age.

Menzel first gained national recognition for originating the role of Elphaba in the Broadway musical *Wicked*. The character of Elphaba is defined by her difference from others and her experience of exclusion, making the role closely connected to themes of identity, marginalization, and self-definition. Through performances of songs such as “Defying Gravity,” Menzel helped bring these themes into mainstream theater, where they resonated with audiences navigating similar questions of belonging and acceptance.

She later reached a global audience through her role as Elsa in Disney’s *Frozen*, performing “Let It Go.” This performance expanded the reach of her work beyond theater into international media. Menzel’s career reflects the continued role of Jewish American performers in shaping modern entertainment, particularly in storytelling that centers identity and difference.

Contribution: Theater, film, music

JAHM Profile



Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein (1879–1955) was a Jewish scientist born in Ulm, Germany, into a period when Jewish communities across Europe faced social and political limitations. Although he initially built his career in Europe, the rise of the Nazi regime in the early 1930s placed him in direct danger. As both a Jewish intellectual and a public critic of Nazi ideology, he was specifically targeted. In 1933, he left Germany and immigrated to the United States.

Einstein developed the **theory of relativity**, which fundamentally changed scientific understanding of space, time, and energy. His equation $E = mc^2$ demonstrated the relationship between mass and energy and became one of the most influential ideas in modern physics. After arriving in the United States, he continued his research at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where he remained a central figure in global scientific development.

His experiences as a Jewish refugee shaped his views on freedom, human rights, and the conditions necessary for intellectual progress. He recognized that scientific innovation depends on individual ability and also on the social and political environments that allow ideas to develop.

Push Factors: persecution under Nazi rule and targeting of Jewish intellectuals

Pull Factors: safety, academic freedom, and research opportunities in the United States

Contribution: Science, mathematics

JAHM Profile



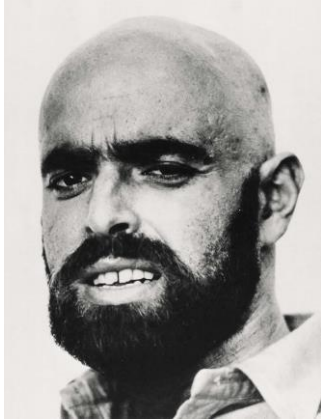
Judith Resnik

Judith Arlene Resnik (1949–1986) was a Jewish American astronaut and electrical engineer born in Akron, Ohio. She was raised in a Jewish family that placed a strong emphasis on education, discipline, and academic success. Resnik studied engineering and earned a Ph.D. in electrical engineering. In 1978, she was selected by NASA as part of the first group of astronauts that included women. This marked an important change in who had access to careers in space exploration. She flew aboard the Space Shuttle *Discovery* in 1984, where she operated robotic equipment and supported scientific research in space. Her work required both technical skill and the ability to work under pressure in a high-risk environment.

In 1986, Resnik was part of the crew of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, which broke apart shortly after launch. Her career is connected to a larger shift in American society, where more women and Jewish Americans gained access to advanced education and scientific careers. Her work represents both personal accomplishment and broader progress in science and education.

Contribution: Science, engineering, space exploration

JAHM Profile



Shel Silverstein

Sheldon Allan Silverstein (1930–1999) was a Jewish American writer, poet, songwriter, and illustrator born in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up in a Jewish family during a time when Jewish Americans were becoming more involved in American cultural and creative industries.

Silverstein became widely known for his books, including *The Giving Tree*, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, and *A Light in the Attic*. His writing often appears simple, but it requires careful thinking. His stories explore ideas such as relationships, independence, decision-making, and the consequences of choices. He does not always give clear answers, which encourages readers to interpret meaning on their own.

Shel Silverstein did not only write books. He also wrote songs for well-known musicians. For example, he wrote “One’s on the Way,” which was recorded by Loretta Lynn. This shows that his writing reached audiences beyond books and into music.

His ability to write both stories and songs shows how one person can influence culture in different ways. His books are often used in classrooms, where students read his work to practice understanding meaning, making inferences, and thinking about choices and relationships.

Contribution: Literature, arts

JAHM Profile



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (born Joan Ruth Bader, 1933–2020) was a Jewish American lawyer and Supreme Court Justice who played an important role in shaping how laws are interpreted in the United States. She was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in a Jewish family that valued education, and hard work. Her early life included both strong academic support and personal challenges, including the loss of her mother before she graduated from high school.

Ginsburg attended Cornell University and later Harvard Law School, where she was one of very few women in her class. She later transferred to Columbia Law School and graduated at the top of her class. Despite her academic success, she faced difficulty finding a job as a lawyer because many employers were not willing to hire women. These experiences helped shape her understanding of fairness and equality.

Ginsburg focused on showing how laws that seemed neutral could still create unequal outcomes. She later served on the Supreme Court, where she wrote opinions and dissents that addressed how laws should be applied in cases involving equality and individual rights. Ginsburg's career reflects both the barriers people face and the ways those barriers can change over time. Her work shows how the legal system can be used to question existing rules and expand how rights are understood. Her life connects personal experience with broader changes in American law and society.

Contribution: Law, public service

JAHM Profile



Alexander Joske

Alexander Joske (1843–1924) was a Jewish immigrant from Prussia (modern-day Germany) who became a major business and civic leader in San Antonio, Texas. He was born into a Jewish family at a time when Jewish communities in Europe faced legal restrictions and limited economic opportunity. As a young man, he immigrated to the United States seeking greater freedom and the chance to build a stable future.

Joske settled in San Antonio and opened a small dry goods store in 1868. Over time, that business grew into **Joske's Department Store**, one of the largest and most well-known retail establishments in Texas. Joske's became a central part of downtown San Antonio life, offering a wide range of goods and introducing new shopping experiences for customers.

Joske was active in the Jewish community and broader civic life. He supported local institutions and helped strengthen connections between San Antonio's Jewish population and the larger city. His leadership reflects a pattern seen in many early Jewish American communities, where business development and civic involvement went hand in hand. By building a successful business and investing in his community, he helped shape both the economic and social development of San Antonio. His work shows how migration, opportunity, and innovation can come together to create lasting local impact.

Push Factors: legal restrictions and limited economic opportunity for Jews in Europe

Pull Factors: economic opportunity, religious freedom, and community growth in the United States

Contribution: Business, civic life

JAHM Profile



R. L. Stine

Robert Lawrence Stine (born 1943), known professionally as R. L. Stine, is a Jewish American author who helped reshape how young people engage with reading. He was born in Columbus, Ohio, and raised in a Jewish family that valued education, humor, and creativity. From a young age, he showed a strong interest in writing, often creating joke books and short stories.

Stine began his career writing humor, but he became widely known for his fiction, especially the *Goosebumps* series. These books combined suspense, humor, and unexpected twists, making them highly appealing to young readers. He later wrote the *Fear Street* series, which introduced more complex plots and targeted older readers. His writing style often uses cliffhangers, fast pacing, and surprise endings, which require readers to stay engaged and think about what might happen next.

His work had a significant impact on reading habits in the United States. At a time when some students were losing interest in books, Stine's stories helped bring them back to reading by making it feel exciting and accessible.

Stine's work demonstrates that literature does not need to be complex in structure to require thinking. Readers must follow plot clues, interpret character choices, and understand cause and effect. His influence extends beyond entertainment into education, where his books are often used to support interest in reading.

Contribution: Literature, popular culture

JAHM Profile

Aerin Frankel



Aerin Frankel (born 1999) is a Jewish American ice hockey player who competes as a goaltender for the United States Women's National Team. She was raised in a Jewish family in New Jersey, where she began playing hockey at a young age. Her early development in the sport required consistent training and dedication.

Frankel played as a goaltender at Northeastern University, where she became one of the top goalies in the country. During her college career, she set several records, including career shutouts, and helped lead her team to national recognition. Her strong performance earned her a place on the United States Women's National Team. She competed in international tournaments and represented the United States in the 2026 Winter Olympics, where her team earned a silver medal.

Frankel's participation in international competition shows how women's sports have grown in the United States over time. As a Jewish American athlete, she is part of a long tradition of Jewish athletes who have contributed to American sports and competed at high levels. Opportunities for female athletes have increased, allowing players like Frankel to train, compete, and represent the United States on the world stage.

Her career shows how hard work and access to opportunity can lead to success in sports. Her role on the national team shows how individual skill supports the success of the entire team. At the same time, her presence in international competition helps make Jewish athletes more visible and shows that American sports include people from many different backgrounds.

Contribution: Sports, international competition

JAHM Profile



Levi Strauss

Levi Strauss (1829–1902) was a Jewish immigrant born in Bavaria, Germany, into a Jewish family facing limited economic opportunity. After his father died, Strauss and his family immigrated to the United States, joining a larger movement of Jewish families leaving Europe in search of stability and better economic conditions. They settled first in New York before Strauss later moved west.

Strauss traveled to California during the Gold Rush. Instead of mining for gold himself, he recognized a different need. Workers required strong, durable clothing that could withstand harsh labor conditions. Working with tailor Jacob Davis, Strauss helped develop reinforced work pants using rivets, which later became known as blue jeans. This innovation solved a practical problem and blue jeans became popular for people working in hard labor jobs.

His business grew into Levi Strauss & Co., which became one of the most recognized companies in the United States. Over time, blue jeans moved beyond workwear and became a common part of everyday clothing across the country. His success reflects how identifying a need and responding with a practical solution can lead to long-term impact.

Strauss's life demonstrates how immigrant entrepreneurs contributed to the growth of American industry. Rather than simply participating in the economy, he helped shape it by creating products that became part of daily life.

Push Factors: limited economic opportunity and restrictions on Jewish communities in Europe

Pull Factors: economic opportunity and expansion in the United States

Contribution: Business, industry

JAHM Profile

A. J. Dillon



Algiers Jameal “A. J.” Dillon Jr. (born 1998) is a Jewish American professional football player who has competed in the National Football League. He was raised in a Jewish family and has spoken publicly about his identity as a Jewish American, including his experiences as a Jew of color. His upbringing included participation in Jewish education and community spaces, which shaped his understanding of identity and belonging from a young age.

Dillon played college football at Boston College, where he became one of the most productive running backs in the country. He set multiple school records for rushing yards and touchdowns, showing both strength and consistency on the field. His performance at the college level led to his selection in the NFL Draft, where he joined the Green Bay Packers. He later played for the Philadelphia Eagles and now plays for the Carolina Panthers. As a professional athlete, his role requires discipline, preparation, and the ability to perform in high-pressure situations.

Beyond his athletic performance, Dillon has used his public platform to speak about identity and representation. As a Jewish American athlete in the NFL, he represents a group that is not often visible in professional football. His willingness to discuss his identity openly helps others better understand the diversity within American sports. His presence challenges assumptions about who participates in both athletics and Jewish life.

Dillon’s career shows how access to opportunity, along with preparation and persistence, can lead to success at the highest levels of sport. At the same time, his visibility shows how identity can be expressed confidently in public spaces. His example connects individual achievement with broader representation in American athletics

Contribution: Sports, public representation

JAHM Profile

Louis Brandeis



Louis Dembitz Brandeis (1856–1941) was a Jewish American lawyer and Supreme Court Justice who helped shape modern American law. He was born in Louisville, Kentucky, to Jewish immigrant parents from Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic). His family left Europe because of political instability and limited opportunities for Jewish communities. They came to the United States seeking greater freedom and a better future.

Brandeis studied law at Harvard Law School, where he graduated at the top of his class. He became known as a lawyer who worked on cases that helped the public, often representing individuals and groups without charging fees. He was especially known for using strong facts and detailed evidence to support his arguments, which changed how lawyers presented cases in court.

In 1916, Brandeis was appointed to the United States Supreme Court, becoming the first Jewish justice in the Court's history. His appointment showed that more people from different backgrounds were beginning to take on important leadership roles. During his time on the Court, he helped shape decisions about privacy, free speech, and how the government should regulate business.

Brandeis's career shows how law, identity, and public responsibility are connected. As the child of immigrants, he benefited from the opportunities available in the United States and used those opportunities to help strengthen the country. Through his work, he helped improve how laws protect people and promote fairness. His careful use of evidence and clear reasoning helped shape how laws are understood and applied over time, making American systems stronger and more effective.

Push Factors (family): political instability and limited opportunities in Europe

Pull Factors (family): greater freedom, legal rights, and economic opportunity in the United States

Contribution: Law, public service

JAHM Profile



Gene Simmons

Gene Simmons was born Chaim Witz (born 1949) in Haifa, Israel, to a Jewish family with direct ties to Holocaust history. His mother was a survivor of Nazi concentration camps, and her experiences shaped his early understanding of identity, survival, and resilience. As a child, he immigrated to the United States with his mother, settling in New York City. Like many immigrant families, they faced financial challenges

while adjusting to a new country, language, and culture.

Simmons grew up in a working-class environment and developed an early interest in music, performance, and business. He later co-founded the rock band KISS, which became one of the most successful and recognizable bands in the United States. The band was known for its dramatic performances, bold makeup, and large stage shows. KISS became popular for songs like “Rock and Roll All Nite” and “Detroit Rock City,” which helped bring their music to a wide audience across the country.

Beyond music, Simmons was heavily involved in branding and business development. He helped expand KISS into a global brand, including merchandise, media appearances, and licensing deals. His approach demonstrated how entertainment could extend beyond performance into broader cultural and commercial influence. His career reflects not only artistic success but also strategic thinking about business and audience engagement.

Simmons’s life connects immigration, identity, and opportunity. As someone who arrived in the United States as a child of a Holocaust survivor, his success reflects both personal determination and the opportunities available in American society. He has remained open about his Jewish identity and background, connecting his achievements to a larger story of survival and rebuilding.

Push Factors: Holocaust trauma and displacement affecting his family

Pull Factors: safety, stability, and opportunity in the United States

Contribution: Music, entertainment, business