



The Yiddish Book Center's Field Trip Program for middle and high school students

On a field trip to the Yiddish Book Center—the world's first Yiddish museum—students explore universal themes such as immigration and cultural preservation through one group's unique story.

Dynamic, interactive activities engage students in the rich history of Yiddish culture and the ways that culture has been preserved and remains relevant to people's lives. The activities also serve as a springboard for broader discussions about assimilation, acculturation, and discrimination.

Our Field Trip Program is designed for middle and high school students and addresses the Massachusetts Department of Education's Curriculum Frameworks. We're happy to work with you to tailor a program to meet the specific educational goals of your class.

Hands-on activities at the Center help students to:

- explore the experience of immigrants in the early twentieth century
- understand the value of cultural preservation and gain tools to preserve their own families' and communities' stories
- learn about major events in modern history and their far-reaching effects
- gain insight into what different kinds of texts reveal about the history of a people and its culture



We offer a number of field trip themes, each with several related activities.

THEMES

Immigration and Cultural Preservation

From 1880 through 1924, more than 2.5 million Eastern European Jews immigrated to the United States. Students examine the challenges these new arrivals faced as they tried to fit in in their new home while still holding on to their own language and culture. Students also explore how the tension between assimilation and cultural preservation plays out for immigrants today.

Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life

Yiddish was the vernacular of roughly three-quarters of the world's Jews from the tenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. Five million of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust were Yiddish speakers. Students learn about Jewish life before and after the Holocaust, including the immeasurable effect of the Shoah. They also gain an understanding of Yiddish language and culture, which will provide context for visits to a Holocaust museum, such as the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at UMass Amherst.

Jewish History and Heritage

The Yiddish Book Center's collections and exhibits—which include an overview of Yiddish literature and writers, a recreated Yiddish print shop, interactive exhibits, and Yiddish film and radio clips—introduce students to Yiddish literature, language, and culture and Ashkenazi Jewry's influence on Jewish history and Jewish life in the United States. Students have an opportunity for hands-on engagement with our materials; after reviewing the *alef-beys* (alphabet)—and considering how the same letters are used differently in Yiddish and Hebrew—students help sort Yiddish books or sheet music.

European Area Studies

Yiddish speakers have always lived among other languages and have made valuable contributions to the cultures and countries in which they lived. Students explore the relationship between Yiddish language and culture and the languages and cultures of its European neighbors.

Industrialization

During the Industrial Revolution of 1870–1914, economies shifted to a focus on manufacturing—a shift that coincided with the arrival in the United States of more than 2.5 million Eastern European Jews, many of whom found work in exploitative factories with unsafe conditions. Students investigate the effects of industrialization, focusing on migration from villages and shtetls (small towns) to cities, sweatshop work, labor organizing, and new technologies that made work and life easier.



ACTIVITIES

Yiddish Language Lesson

Students learn about the migratory history of the language and discover parallels between English and Yiddish. They learn the *alef-beys* (alphabet) and put it to use, deciphering a few words from a text connected to the theme of their visit, then learn a few conversational Yiddish phrases. *(Appropriate for Immigration and Cultural Preservation, Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life, Jewish History and Heritage, European Area Studies, and Industrialization themes.)*

A Bintel Brief

For immigrants, newspapers in their native languages were crucial for retaining connections to the homes they'd left behind. Students read selections from a *Bintel Brief*, a popular early twentieth-century advice column for Jewish immigrants, then consider how they would have responded to the letter writers as they grappled with the kinds of challenges faced by newcomers to America. *(Appropriate for Immigration and Cultural Preservation, Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life, Jewish History and Heritage, and Industrialization themes.)*

Oral History

Oral history is an important tool for cultural preservation, recording individual people's stories about traditions, important events, communities, and cultural values and identities. Using excerpts from our Wexler Oral History Project, we highlight how much there is to learn about history and culture from everyday people. Students learn oral history techniques, then try their hands at interviewing one another about their families' histories and traditions; they also receive an oral history guide to help them interview family, friends, and community members. *(Appropriate for Immigration and Cultural Preservation, Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life, Jewish History and Heritage, European Area Studies, and Industrialization themes.)*

Yizkor Books

Yizkor bikher, or memorial books, were created by survivors to commemorate communities destroyed in the Holocaust. Students examine Yizkor books and discuss what they can discern from the books' names, stories, and photographs. Then they'll consider what they would include in a book commemorating a community that's important to them. *(Appropriate for Immigration and Cultural Preservation, Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life, Jewish History and Heritage, and European Area Studies themes.)*

Resistance Poetry

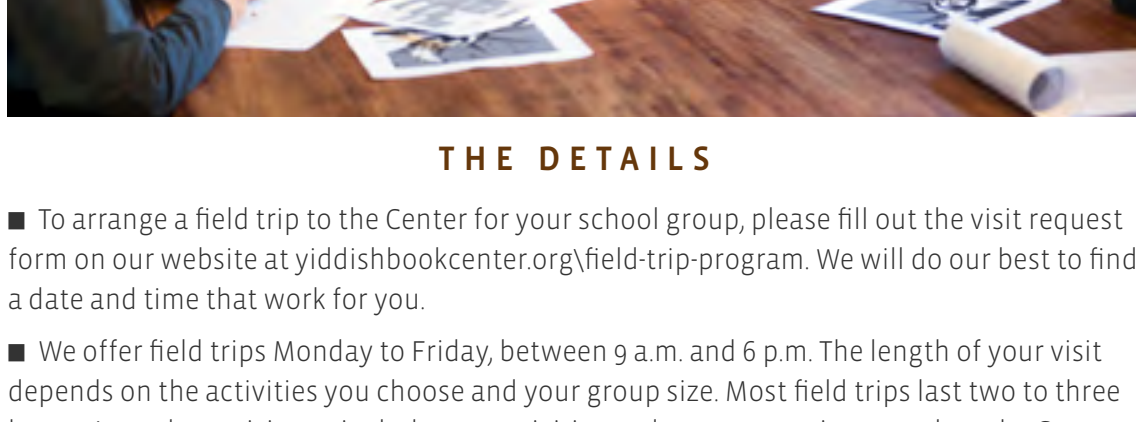
Poetry has featured prominently at key moments of upheaval and struggle in Jewish history. Students learn about the Sweatshop Poets, who grappled with the inhumane working conditions of sweatshops and factories in the late 1800s and early 1900s, or about poetry as a vehicle for spiritual resistance during the Holocaust. Students analyze poems within their historical and cultural contexts, then work collaboratively to write a poem that reflects on lives, struggles, and experiences with resistance. *(Appropriate for Immigration and Cultural Preservation, Pre- and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life, Jewish History and Heritage, European Area Studies, and Industrialization themes.)*

Visiting Exhibits

The Yiddish Book Center regularly hosts visiting exhibits, which often address themes explored in our Field Trip Program. If a relevant exhibit is on display at the time of your field trip, a related activity can be planned.

Exploring the Center

Field trip visits can also include time to explore the Center's permanent exhibits, take a guided tour, learn more about Yiddish literature and culture on a scavenger hunt, or to take a walk in the Yiddish Writers Garden, with a short lesson on Yiddish nature vocabulary.



THE DETAILS

- To arrange a field trip to the Center for your school group, please fill out the visit request form on our website at yiddishbookcenter.org/field-trip-program. We will do our best to find a date and time that work for you.
- We offer field trips Monday to Friday, between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. The length of your visit depends on the activities you choose and your group size. Most field trips last two to three hours. A two-hour visit can include two activities and an opportunity to explore the Center and its grounds, or three activities. A two-and-a-half-hour visit can include three activities and time to explore the Center, or four activities. Eating lunch on-site adds another half hour to a visit.
- During the visit, students are divided into smaller groups, with an ideal student:museum educator ratio of no more than fifteen to one. The Center is fully wheelchair accessible.
- Admission for students is \$5. We require one adult per ten students; these chaperones are admitted free of charge. Additional adults are \$5 each. We have limited funds available to help schools cover admission and transportation costs, which we award based on need.
- The Yiddish Book Center does not have a café, but you are welcome to bring a bag lunch and picnic in our beautiful apple orchard or eat at our guest tables indoors (no pork or shellfish, please, due to Jewish dietary traditions). Please note that we don't have refrigerated storage available for bag lunches. There also are a variety of restaurants within five to fifteen minutes of the Center.
- The Yiddish Book Center is adjacent to the Hampshire College campus in Amherst, Massachusetts. There is ample free parking for buses and cars in the Center's parking lot.
- While in the area, you may want to visit the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, about a twenty-minute drive from the Center.



1021 West Street | Amherst, MA
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Sunday–Friday, 10–4
yiddishbookcenter.org

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QUESTIONS?

Contact us at 413-256-4900, ext. 131, or at fieldtrip@yiddishbookcenter.org with questions about planning your visit.

To learn more or to book a field trip, please visit yiddishbookcenter.org/field-trip-program