

# FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

**IN YIDDISH**  
WITH ENGLISH SUPERTITLES

פֿידלער אויפֿן דאָך

**CREATED BY ELLEN J. RANK**  
SENIOR EDUCATION CONSULTANT AT THE JEWISH EDUCATION PROJECT

## Synopsis

It's 1905. Tevye, a poor Jewish dairyman with five daughters, is living in the Russian shtetl (village) of Anatevke. He introduces us to the people in his village and tells of their devotion to God and how their traditions are essential to their lives. Tevye explains that without these traditions, their lives would be "as shaky as a fiddler on the roof" (TRADITSYE/*Tradition*).

At Tevye's home, his wife Golde and daughters Tsaytl, Hodl, Khave, Shprintse and Beylke are busy preparing for the Sabbath. As the Sabbath is approaching, Yente, the village matchmaker, visits with Golde. The three oldest daughters wonder if Yente will ever find them the men of their dreams (SHADKHANTE, SHADKHANTE/*Matchmaker, Matchmaker*). Yente tells Golde that Leyzer-Volf, an older man who is a wealthy butcher, wants to marry Tsaytl. Tsaytl, however, wants to marry her childhood friend, Motel the tailor.

Making his pre-Sabbath milk deliveries, Tevye is pulling the cart himself because his horse is lame. Tevye imagines life as a wealthy man, asking God if it would hurt anyone if he weren't poor (VEN IKH BIN A ROTSHILD/*If I Were a Rich Man*).

Tevye brings his milk deliveries to a group of men. There, Avrom, the bookseller, reads news in the newspaper about pogroms and expulsions of Jews. A young scholar from Kiev, Pertshik, overhears the men and scolds them for doing nothing about these threats. Tevye invites him home for the Sabbath and arranges for Pertshik to tutor his two youngest daughters.

At the start of the Sabbath, Motel tries to ask Tevye's permission to marry Tsaytl. But Tevye frightens Motel, and knowing that he may be refused, he is poor, and it is the tradition for a matchmaker to arrange marriages, Motel does not ask. Golde tells Tevye to meet Leyzer after the Sabbath but does not tell him why. The family gathers at the Sabbath table and the parents bless their daughters (SHABES BROKHE/*Sabbath Prayer*).

After the Sabbath, Tevye meets Leyzer at a local tavern and agrees to let Leyzer marry Tsaytl. Everyone there, even the Russian youths, join in and dance to celebrate the upcoming marriage (LEKHAYIM/*To Life*). On his way home from the tavern, Tevye meets the Russian Constable who warns him that a small demonstration (a euphemism for a minor pogrom) will take place against the Jews of Anatevke.

The next morning, Pertshik is teaching a bible story to Hodl's younger sisters (ES KUMT A TOG/*Any Day Now*). Hodl overhears the lesson and mocks Pertshik's radical teachings. He criticizes her for holding on to the old Jewish traditions. To make his point, he dances with her, breaking the tradition which prohibits opposite sexes from dancing together. Pertshik and Hodl begin to fall in love.

Later that day, Tevye tells Tsaytl that he has arranged for her to wed Leyzer-Volf. Golde is thrilled, but Tsaytl is devastated and begs not to marry Leyzer. Motel arrives and tells Tevye that he and Tsaytl have pledged to marry one another. Tevye is outraged that they have broken with tradition, but he considers his daughter's wishes and agrees to let them marry (ZEY HOBN ZIKH GEGBN DOS VORT/*They Made Each Other a Pledge*). Tevye wonders how he will break this news to Golde. Motel and Tsaytl celebrate that Tevye will allow them to marry (NISIMLEKH-VENIFLO'OYS/*Miracle of Miracles*).

That night, in bed with Golde, Tevye pretends to have a wild nightmare in which Leyzer-Volf's widow rises from her grave and threatens to kill Tsaytl if she marries Leyzer and not Motel. Golde is terrified and interprets this to mean that Tsaytl must marry Motel (*DER KHOLEM/The Dream*).

On her way to Motel's tailor shop, Khave is taunted by a group of Russians. Fyedka, a Russian youth, protects Khave and insists that the others stop. After they leave, Fyedka speaks to Khave, who is initially reluctant to speak with him. Fyedka loans Khave a book, and their secret relationship begins.

All the Jews of Anatevke come to Tsaytl and Motel's wedding ceremony (*TOG-AYN, TOG-OYS/Sunrise, Sunset*) and join in the celebration. During the dancing, Pertshik breaks another tradition: he asks Hodl to dance with him. She accepts even though it is against the tradition for men and women to dance together. Suddenly, the celebration ends when the constable and his men enter, carrying out the demonstration, destroying everything in sight, and wreaking more destruction in the village.

Several months later, Pertshik tells Hodl he must return to Kiev to work for justice. He asks her to marry him and says that he will send for her. Hodl agrees (*ITST HOB IKH DI GANTSE VELT/Now I Have Everything*). They tell Tevye that they are engaged, and he is appalled that they are going against tradition by making their own match and not even asking his permission. Tevye contemplates how the world is changing, and he decides to give Pertshik and Hodl his permission and blessing for them to marry (*TEVYES ENTFER/Tevye's Rebuttal*).

Thinking about how his daughters have married for love, he looks back at his own arranged marriage and asks Golde if she loves him (*LIBST MIKH, SERTSE?/Do You Love Me?*). Tevye and Golde talk and realize that after twenty-five years of marriage, they love one another.

Hodl receives word that Pertshik has been arrested and exiled to Siberia (*DER KLANG/The Rumor*). She decides to leave Anatevke to join Pertshik. At the railway station, she explains to Tevye why she must leave and promises to be married under a wedding canopy (*VAYT FUN MAYN LIBER HEYM/Far From the Home I Love*).

More time passes, and the villagers gather at Motel's tailor shop to see his new sewing machine. Khave promises Fyedka that she will tell Tevye about their love for one another. When Khave asks Tevye to allow her to marry Fyedka, he forbids her to ever speak to Fyedka again. He knows things are changing, but he cannot permit marriage outside the Jewish faith.

Golde and Tevye learn that Khave and Fyedka have eloped and been married by the priest. Tevye reflects on the past and how deeply he loved Khave (*KHAVELE/Khavele*). Khave comes to Tevye to beg for his acceptance, but he refuses. He cannot turn his back on everything he believes in and abandon his faith.

The constable tells all the villagers that they have three days to sell their homes, pack up, and leave the town. They are shocked, wonder what the future will be like in a strange new place, and reminisce about life in Anatevke (*ANATEVKE/Anatevke*). The family goes their separate ways. Tevye and Golde, along with their younger daughters, head out for America. Tsaytl and Motel go to Warsaw. Hodl and Pertshik remain in Siberia. And Khave and Fyedka come to tell the family that they are leaving for Krakow; they could not stay among people who could do such things to others. Tsaytl says goodbye to Khave, and Tevye prompts her to add, "God be with you." Tevye pulls the wagon as they begin their journey to a new land.

## Characters

**TEVYE:** Narrator and main character. Tevye is a poor, hard-working dairyman. He is married to Golde and is the father of five daughters. Tevye is devout and upholds the traditions of the Jewish people, but is flexible in the face of remarkable social changes that are unfolding. He is optimistic, even when confronted with hardship.

**GOLDE:** Golde has been married to Tevye for twenty-five years. She is sharp-tongued but dearly loves her family. Golde hopes that each of her daughters will find a good husband.

### TEVYE AND GOLDE'S FIVE DAUGHTERS:

**TSAYTL:** The eldest daughter; she is about twenty years old, and in love with Motel the tailor. She breaks tradition when she begs Tevye to allow her to marry Motel, not Leyzer, the matchmaker's match.

**HODL:** The second-eldest daughter falls in love with Pertshik, a radical young scholar. Hodl defies tradition when she and Pertshik do not ask Tevye's permission to marry; they ask only for his blessing. Later, she leaves Anatevke for Siberia to join Pertshik, who is imprisoned.

**KHAVE:** Tevye's middle daughter entirely breaks from tradition when she falls in love and elopes with Fyedka, a Christian Russian soldier. Tevye refuses to accept this or acknowledge Khave. She is disowned by her family.

**SHPRINTSE:** The fourth daughter.

**BEYLKE:** The youngest daughter.

### THE DAUGHTERS' SUITORS:

**MOTEL KAMZOIL:** A poor but hard-working tailor who loves Tsaytl. Motel asks Tevye's permission to marry Tsaytl. They marry and start a family. The villagers gather with excitement when Motel acquires a sewing machine.

**PERTSHIK:** A radical young scholar who visits Anatevke and falls in love with Hodl. He returns to Kiev to work for the revolution. He is arrested and sent to Siberia.

**FYEDKA:** A young Christian Russian who falls in love with and marries Khave.

**LEYZER-VOLF:** A rich older butcher who tells Yente the matchmaker that he would like to marry Tsaytl.

**YENTE:** The matchmaker and the village gossip.

**CONSTABLE:** A local Russian official. He has a good relationship with Tevye, but he follows his orders to hold a small pogrom during Tsaytl and Motel's wedding, and he carries out the order that all the Jewish villagers must leave Anatevke.

### THIS PRODUCTION OF *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF* WAS DIRECTED BY JOEL GREY.

**JOEL GREY** (Director). Broadway: Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *Anything Goes*, *Wicked*, *Chicago*, *George M!* (Tony Award® nom.), *Cabaret* (Tony Award®). Off-Broadway: *The Normal Heart*, in 1986, co-directed the Tony Award®-winning Broadway premiere in 2011. Film: *Cabaret* (Academy Award), *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, *Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins*, *Dancer in the Dark*, *The Seven Percent Solution*, *Man on a Swing*. Joel is an internationally exhibited photographer with four published books, *Pictures I Had to Take* (2003), *Looking Hard at Unexamined Things* (2006), *1.3—Images From My Phone* (2009), and *The Billboard Papers* (2013). His memoir, *Master of Ceremonies*, was released in 2016 (Flatiron Press).

## From Tevye the Dairyman to *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*

The character Tevye the Dairyman first appeared in the story "Tevye Strikes It Rich," written by Sholem Aleichem (Solomon Rabinovitz) around 1894. Over the next 21 years, he wrote a collection of nine stories about Tevye. The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* is based on these stories. He was born in Kiev, Russia, in 1859. In 1906, after witnessing the pogroms in Southern Russia, he moved to New York City. Rabinovitz knew from personal experience what it was like to leave his homeland for a strange new place. He wrote his stories in Yiddish, the everyday language of the Eastern European Jews.

*Fiddler on the Roof*, with music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, and book by Joseph Stein, first opened on Broadway on September 22, 1964. It was the first Broadway musical theatre production in history to have more than 3,000 performances, and it closed with a total of 3,242 shows. *Fiddler on the Roof* won nine Tony Awards®, including Best Musical, Book, Direction, Score, and Choreography. The film version of *Fiddler on the Roof* was released in 1971 and won two Golden Globe Awards and three Academy Awards. There have been five Broadway revivals of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and it has been performed around the world in numerous languages.

*Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*, directed by Joel Grey, was first presented in the United States by the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in July 2018. The Yiddish translation was created by the Israeli actor-director Shraga Friedman for an Israeli production in 1966. Half of the New York cast were not Jewish and only a few were Yiddish speakers. To prepare the cast, Joel Grey first personally worked with everyone in English; only after they understood the emotions of each scene were they then coached to learn the Yiddish version. Experiencing *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish* "offers a kind of authenticity no other American *Fiddler* ever has" (*The New York Times*).

There's an interesting story behind the song "Any Day Now." This song was written for the film version of *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971) for Pertshik, replacing the song "Now I Have Everything." The song, however, did not end up making the final cut of the film. The creative team for the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene production rediscovered the song and felt that it was fitting and important for Pertshik, the young radical, to sing this song. Rather than replacing "Now I Have Everything," the creative team felt that the strongest placement of this song would be earlier in the story when Pertshik is teaching his young pupils, Shprintse and Beylke, about the exploitation of the working class. As you watch *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*, think about the new placement of this song and how it adds to what you know about Pertshik.



Photo: Victor Nechay

## Jewish Life in Eastern Europe in the Early 20th Century

In 1791, Czar Catherine II (Catherine the Great) established the Pale of Settlement, and insisted that all Jews live within its borders. This was spurred by anti-Jewish prejudice - to keep Jewish businesses out of Moscow and to prevent the "evil" influence of Jews on the Russian people. Even in the Pale, Jews paid double taxes and were not permitted to lease land, run taverns, or receive a higher education. Most Jews lived in shtetls, small villages, and were constantly in fear of pogroms. Pogroms were violent riots organized by the Russian government in which an army of Russian citizens would destroy and loot homes and businesses within the shtetl.

When Alexander II became czar in 1855, restrictions on the Jews were loosened. The majority of Jews remained in their shtetls, forming tight-knit communities filled with traditions and strong family values. But most of the Jews were poor; they worked hard as peddlers, bricklayers, shoemakers, tailors, dairymen, and blacksmiths, providing services to the people in their shtetl and nearby villages. At the same time, there were some Jews who chose to leave the shtetl, move to cities, attend university, and integrate into the larger society.

In March 1881, Czar Alexander II was assassinated by anti-czarist revolutionaries, and the Jews were blamed. That spring and summer, waves of pogroms swept violently throughout parts of the Pale. Under the new czar, Alexander III, harsh new anti-Jewish policies were established, setting limits on where Jews could live, what jobs they could hold, and how many Jews could attend the university. These policies continued under Alexander II's successor, Czar Nicholas II.

A failed anti-czarist revolution in 1905 led to a new wave of pogroms. More than a thousand Jews were murdered when 660 communities were attacked. In the wake of the worst year of pogroms (mid-1905 to mid-1906), more than 200,000 Jews left Russia (the story of *Fiddler on the Roof* is set in 1905). Economic difficulties were another factor in spurring the Jews to leave.

## Settling in a New Country

Between 1881 and 1914, more than 2.5 million Jews left Eastern Europe. The Jews chose to live in countries where, unlike in Eastern Europe, they could live free and independent lives. Many went to Western Europe, a few thousand to Palestine (The Land of Israel), and thousands settled in South Africa, Argentina, Australia, and Canada. But mostly, more than two million Jews came to the United States.

Every family has its own story of how they came to America. Sometimes a husband and son came first, saving up money and later sending it for the rest of the family. Ten years may have passed before a family was reunited. And there are stories where those left behind never made it to the new land.

The immigrants were poor. In the United States, many Jewish immigrants made their homes in Jewish ghettos, such as in New York City's Lower East Side, Chicago's West End, and sections of Philadelphia and Boston. Many wanted to live near neighbors from their old villages; others who followed strict religious practices needed to be near an existing Jewish community. Around 1900, about half of the Jews of the United States lived in New York City.

These Jewish ghettos were crowded and tenement-filled, yet they offered a strong Jewish community and a Yiddish-based culture. Each tenement building was four to seven stories high with four apartments, each measuring 300 to 400 square feet, on each floor. An apartment had three rooms: a front room with windows, a kitchen, and a windowless bedroom. It wasn't unusual for as many as a dozen people to live in one tenement apartment.

In the early 1900s, the garment industry was growing rapidly in the cities, especially in New York City. A large number of the immigrants were skilled in garment work and a significant percent were trained tailors. Many immigrant Jews found work in New York garment factories. Others had jobs in mining, construction, and as merchants.

Women took care of the households and also supplemented their husband's wages. In their homes, women could do piecework (sewing) for others, and cooking and cleaning for boarders. Other women helped out in the family's store, such as a grocery or candy shop, located near where the family lived. Women were also responsible for keeping their tenement flat clean and doing the family's laundry. Living on low earnings, women spent hours shopping among pushcarts and stores looking for the best bargains so that their families could have what they needed.



## Yiddish

Yiddish, the everyday spoken language of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, most likely had its beginning about a thousand years ago. Its basic vocabulary and grammar are from medieval West German, but it also has elements of many languages, including German, Hebrew, and various Slavic and Romance languages. Just as Yiddish adopted words from other languages, English has adopted words from Yiddish!

Did you know that the following words found in the English dictionary are taken from Yiddish?

**Klutz** comes from the Yiddish word *klots*, meaning "a wooden beam." We use it to describe an especially clumsy person. "He's such a klutz!"

**Bagel** is from the Yiddish, *beygl*. Most likely you know what a bagel is! It's that familiar doughnut-shaped bread. "This bagel is delicious!"

**Kvetch** comes from *kvetshn*, meaning to pinch or squeeze. It's used in English to describe constant complaining. "She is such a kvetch. She never stops complaining."

### Have fun using some of these Yiddish words:

**Bissel** – A little bit. "I'd like a *bissel* chicken soup."

**Bubbe** – Grandmother. "My *bubbe* tells the best stories."

**Chutzpah** – Nerve, extreme arrogance. "You have a lot of *chutzpah* asking me to do your laundry!"

**Gurnisht** – Nothing. "That person knows *gurnisht*."

**Kvell** – To experience pride in someone else. "Jennie and Abe were *kvelling* from their grandchildren."

**Maven** – An expert, often used sarcastically. "He's always telling us how to do things. He thinks he's a real *maven*."

**Mensch** – An honorable, decent person. "It's a pleasure to be with Sam. He's such a *mensch*."

**Meshuggeh** – Crazy, insane. "He must be *meshuggeh* to drive six hours straight."

**Mishpocha** – Family. "The whole *mishpocha* is coming to visit."

**Nosh** – To eat or nibble. "Would you like a little something to *nosh* before dinner?"

**Oy vey** – An expression of woe. "Oy vey, I forgot to take the cake out of the oven!"

**Plotz** – To split or burst, from aggravation. "I've been doing this all day. I could just *plotz*!"

**Schlep** – To travel or carry with difficulty. "The kids *schlepped* all the way from Nebraska."

**Schmooze** – Chat. "Call me if you have some time to *schmooze*."

**Shande** – A scandal, embarrassment. "It's a *shande* the way they dress."

**Shmatte** – A rag or old garment. "Oy vey. I only have this *shmatte* to wear."

**Tchotchke** – Knick-knack, collectible. "She has a whole shelf filled with *tchotchkes*."

**Zayde** – Grandfather. "I love to go on the train with my *zayde*."

Joel Grey, the director of *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*, was recently asked to name an especially useful Yiddish expression. His answer was *Genug iz genug*, which means, "Enough is enough." Can you think of an occasion when someone might say, "*Genug iz genug*"?

## Pre-Activities

**Learning through Maps** (Goals: For students to have a context for where the events of *Fiddler* took place; for students to imagine what life may have been like for the Jews of this period.)

Show students a map of the Pale of Settlement and briefly explain the history of the Pale. (Both a map and a description are available [here](#).) Have students locate Kiev on the map. Discuss: What do you think it was like knowing you could only live in a specific part of the country? How do you think this may have impacted the lives of the Jews?

Inform students that as early as 1635, Russia exiled all captured war prisoners to Siberia. Have students locate Siberia on a map.

Discuss: Why would Russia choose to exile prisoners to this territory? What do you think life was like for these exiles? Students can read about the history of Jewish life in Siberia [here](#).

Display a world map. Discuss with students what they think it may have been like for the Jews of Russia in the early 1900s to travel to the United States. What means of travel would they use? What would they take with them? How might they decide where to go? What would it be like to move to an unfamiliar place?

**Our Family Journeys: 1905 to Today** (Goals: For students to use their own family history to understand the experience of moving to a new place and how our traditions may change over time.)

Have students interview family members to learn about their family history. You may wish to create a list of interview questions with your class. Suggested questions include:

- Where were my ancestors living in 1905?
- What were their names?
- What were their occupations?
- What places have my family lived in since 1905?
- Why has the family moved?
- How are our lives today different from their lives in 1905?
- Do we have any objects that have been in the family since that time?

Have students share their family's story. Consider making a class PowerPoint presentation in which each student creates a slide with an early family photo and key information about their family's journey.

As a summation, discuss what different factors caused families to move and to make changes in their lives, and how it felt to undergo those changes.

**Jewish Customs and Rituals** (Goals: For students to become familiar with Jewish customs, rituals, ritual objects, and their origins.)

Have students work with a partner or in a small group to learn about one of the following:

- Prayer shawl (tallis/tallit)
- Small prayer shawl (tallis katan/tallit katan)
- Covering of head by men and boys (includes yarmulke/kippah)
- Covering of head by women
- Torah
- Lighting Sabbath and holiday candles
- Challah on Sabbath and holidays
- Wine on Sabbath and other special occasions
- Separation of men and women (for example: sitting separately, not dancing together)
- Arranged marriages (matchmaker/shadchan)
- Wedding rituals (wedding canopy/chuppah, bride walking around groom, smashing of glass)

Direct students to research the origin, meaning, and purpose of this custom or ritual. Have students prepare a poster or PowerPoint presentation and share with the class.

**Painting: *After the Pogrom*** (Goals: For students to gain a better understanding of the impact of a pogrom.) Inform students that the word "pogrom" comes from a Russian word meaning "to demolish, to destroy, to wreak havoc," and that pogroms took place during the period of *Fiddler*, destroying Jewish communities.

Display the painting *After the Pogrom* by Maurycy Minkowski. Background information and an image of the painting are found [here](#).

Discuss: Who is in the painting? Where are they? What are different people doing? What mood does the painting evoke? What do you imagine that the people are feeling?

Optional: Inform students that they will again discuss what they see in this painting after seeing *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*.

**Traditions** (Goals: For students to identify their own family and community traditions and to reflect on the role of traditions in their own lives; for students to consider why traditions change and the impact of those changes.)

Materials needed: Post-It notes and small colored dot stickers

Distribute Post-It notes to students. Inform students that at the beginning of *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*, the main character, Tevye, says, "Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof." Ask students to write on a Post-It one tradition that their family observes, something that their family has done for many years. Explain that it can be--but does not need to be--a religious tradition. Direct students to place their note on a wall. Give each student small colored dot stickers. Have students walk around room reading the different traditions. You might ask them, for example, to place a sticker on a tradition they would like to know more about or one they would like to be part of.

After students have read one another's traditions, discuss which traditions that students enjoy, which traditions they find more challenging, and why it is difficult to change traditions.

## Things to look for during the show to prepare for later discussions

Think about the kinds of things you want to discuss with your students after the show and suggest that they look for specific elements as they experience *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*. For example:

<b>Topics to discuss after the show:</b>	<b>Before the show, ask students to pay attention to the following:</b>
What the fiddler represents	When does the fiddler appear in the story? What is happening in the story when the fiddler appears? Where is the fiddler? What is the fiddler doing?
Rituals and customs and their meaning in our lives	What rituals and customs do the villagers observe? (These include: wearing a small prayer shawl, wearing head coverings, lighting Sabbath candles, separation of men and women.)
The roles of men and women	What are the men's occupations? What are the women doing? Is education the same or different for boys and girls? Who seems to have the most say in what takes place in the family?
Marriage customs	How were the marriages of the different characters, including Golde and Tevye, agreed upon? How was each couple following or breaking with tradition?
The role of dance in the show	What kind of dances are there? When is dancing included? What dances did you find most exciting? Most emotional?
The setting and scenery	What did you notice about the scenery and the set? How did the set make the show more powerful?

## Post-Activities

### The Universal Messages in *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*

(Goal: For students to delve into the universal ideas presented in *Fiddler*.)

Prior to *Fiddler on the Roof* when it first opened on Broadway, people doubted if anyone not Jewish would be interested in the show. Contrary to their fears, *Fiddler* became a smash and in the 1960s and 1970s, it was performed in many languages around the world. What elements and themes of the story can be seen as universal?

**Being an Oppressed Minority Group** (Goal: For students to apply what they saw in the story to discuss what life is like today for oppressed minority groups.)

Ask students to describe the impact of living as a minority that did not have equal rights on the villagers of Anatevke. Have students bring in newspaper articles that focus on a minority group today that is subject to unfair laws and restrictions. Discuss the situation and the challenges that are being faced by this group of people. How are these challenges similar or different from those of the people of Anatevke? Students can do further research to learn what, if anything, is being done or can be done to help this group.

**Using Yiddish** (Goals: For students to become familiar with common Yiddish words; for students to reflect on what it may have been like for the actors of *Fiddler on the Roof*, of whom only a few knew Yiddish, to perform in Yiddish.)

Invite students to write and present short skits that include at least ten Yiddish words. For fun, students may wish to dress in period clothing.

**Painting: *After the Pogrom*** (Goal: For students to gain a better understanding of the impact of a pogrom.)

Display the painting *After the Pogrom* by Maurycy Minkowski. Background information and an image of the painting are found [here](#).

If students have discussed the painting prior to seeing *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*, ask students what else they understand about the painting now that they have seen *Fiddler*. If this is the first time that students are seeing the painting, ask: Who is in the painting? Where are they? What are different people doing? What mood does the painting evoke? What do you imagine the people are feeling? How does having seen *Fiddler* help you to better appreciate the painting?

**Painting: *The Green Violinist*** (Goal: For students to be familiar with Chagall's work and his portrayal of the shtetl.)

Show students Marc Chagall's [painting](#) *The Green Violinist*. Explain that Chagall, like Sholom Aleichem, the creator of Tevye the Dairyman, was a Russian Jew. Invite students to share what they see in the painting.

Discuss: What do you think that Chagall was expressing in this painting? How do you understand the image of a fiddler on a roof? How does Chagall portray the shtetl?

**A Literary and Visual Collection: Leaving Anatevke** (Goal: For students to express through the arts their understanding of what it was like for the villagers to be expelled from their land.)

Ask students to imagine that they are one of the villagers in the closing scene of *Fiddler*. Invite students to draw illustrations or write poems, journal entries, or short stories to tell their story of leaving Anatevke for a strange, new land. Have each student create a virtual page for their work. Compile these creations to make a virtual literary and visual collection.

**The Making of Tevye** (Goals: For students to become familiar with an original Tevye story; to consider how a character can be developed over time and in different stories.)

As a class, read and discuss one of the original Tevye stories from the collection, “Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories” by Sholem Aleichem, translated by Hillel Halkin.

**The Power of *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish*** (Goals: For students to reflect on the show and consider which scenes they found most powerful; for students to use art to express themselves.)

Invite students to draw or paint a scene from *Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish* that they found very powerful. Have students write why they chose this scene and to explain what was happening during that scene. If possible, display their work in the hallway or invite families and/or other classes to view.



Photo: Victor Nechay

## Resources

The *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* is a resource for teachers and students at the secondary school and college levels. This webpage also includes links to additional in-depth resources on life in Eastern Europe. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/foreducators.aspx>

A full lesson plan focusing on life in the shtetl.  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/sholem-aleichem/understanding-life-shtetl-jews>

Here are online resources as well as interactive activities that teach about life in America for immigrants in the early 1900s. [https://www.tenement.org/education\\_lessonplans.html](https://www.tenement.org/education_lessonplans.html)

In-depth look at the museum at Ellis Island and the immigrant experience. Includes a link to look up ancestors who arrived at Ellis Island. <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/immigration-museum>

Concise article explaining pogroms, their origins, and the response of the Jewish community to pogroms.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-were-pogroms/>

Article detailing what shtetls were.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shtetl-in-jewish-history-and-memory/>

The opening chapters of this middle school textbook focus on Jewish life from 1881-1914 in Eastern Europe and the migration from there to the United States and other countries: *The History of the Jewish People, Volume 2: The Birth of Zionism to Our Time* by Jonathan Sarna and Jonathan Krasner, Behrman House Publishers, 2007.

A 50-year history of the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* and what we learn from the responses and interpretations of the show. "Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of *Fiddler on the Roof*" by Alisa Solomon, Henry Holt and Company, 2013.