

The Boston Chocolate Party

Activity Guide

Story Summary

The Hanukkah holiday is about to begin, and Joshua Mendes misses his best friend Isaac, who has moved to Boston. Joshua's father is a merchant importing chocolate beans to the American Colonies, showing café owners how to make hot chocolate now that the British tea tax has made tea too expensive to drink. When Joshua hears that his father is travelling to Boston, he insists on going along. Together, they help Isaac's family open a chocolate house. On the last night of Hanukkah, they celebrate the opening of the new Chocolate House, while the people of Boston demonstrate against British tea taxation.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the themes of this story? (*friendship, freedom, hard work*)
2. How would you describe Joshua? Isaac?
3. Why did Isaac's mother move the family to Boston?
4. Joshua developed a plan to help his friend Isaac's family. There are many needy people in our city. Can you think of ways to help them?
5. What is the connection between Hanukkah and The Boston Tea Party? What makes them similar? How does that connection come through in this story?
6. Joshua's family comes from Portugal and are known as Sephardim. Sephardim have their own special customs for Hanukkah. Which custom did you learn about in this story?
7. How is the menorah (*Hanukkiyah*) that Joshua and his family use different from those you may have used or seen before? What is similar?
8. What are your favorite Hanukkah songs? Joshua and Isaac probably sang Hanukkah songs in Ladino, a Judaeo-Spanish language. Here is a popular Ladino Hanukkah song for you to watch/listen to. It's called "Ocho Kandelikas," which means "Eight Little Candles." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyDYB8UXy8s>



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Activities

Play Jackstraws/Pick-Up Sticks

Materials:

Straws plucked from a new, clean broom OR a package of bamboo skewers.

How to Play:

- Sit on the floor, with two-three players playing at a time. If playing with a large group, divide into two or three sections.
- Have one player hold all the sticks tightly in one hand, then open their hand to allow all the sticks to fall randomly on the floor.
- Have one player then remove an individual stick without moving any of the others and continue as long as the remaining sticks stay in place on the floor. If other sticks move, the turn ends. Then the next player gets a turn.
- At the end of each round, each player counts their sticks.
- *If playing tournament-style:* The player with most sticks wins and then plays against the winner from another group, and so on, until there is just one winner.

Playtime

Use the concept of a chocolate house as the basis for a play. Turn a section of your classroom into your own Chocolate House. Make a Chocolate House sign, create your own menu with prices, create a kitchen workspace where children can pretend they are making chocolate based on the process portrayed in the book.

Have children dress up, if possible, and play the roles of Chocolate House manager, chocolate makers, waiters/waitresses and customers. Serve real hot chocolate to everyone and if you can, serve buñuelos.



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