

Welcome to the Skirball

For more than twenty-five years, the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, California, has been a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

About this Curriculum

Teaching students about Jewish life and creating connections to Jewish stories, people, history, and culture are vital to addressing bias and hate of all kinds, especially amid rising antisemitism* in our schools and communities.

This set of FREE lessons for students in Grades 4–12 are inspired by the stories and artifacts featured in the Skirball's permanent exhibition, *Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America*. Drawing on Jewish traditions, these activities invite young people of all cultural backgrounds to explore their own family histories, create original works of art, and build a more just society.

The Visions and Values Curriculum was created in partnership with the Skirball Teacher Advisory Council, a dynamic group of educators serving LA County's diverse student populations. Each lesson connects to the Skirball's six essential Jewish values:

Welcome the Stranger

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:21)

Honor Memory

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. (Deuteronomy 32:7)

Seek Learning

Great is study, for it leads to action. (Talmud, b. Kid. 40b)

Pursue Justice

You shall not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds. (Leviticus 19:16)

Build Community

How good and pleasant it is to dwell together. (Psalms 133:1)

Show Kindness

The world is sustained by compassionate deeds. (Pirke Avot 1.2)

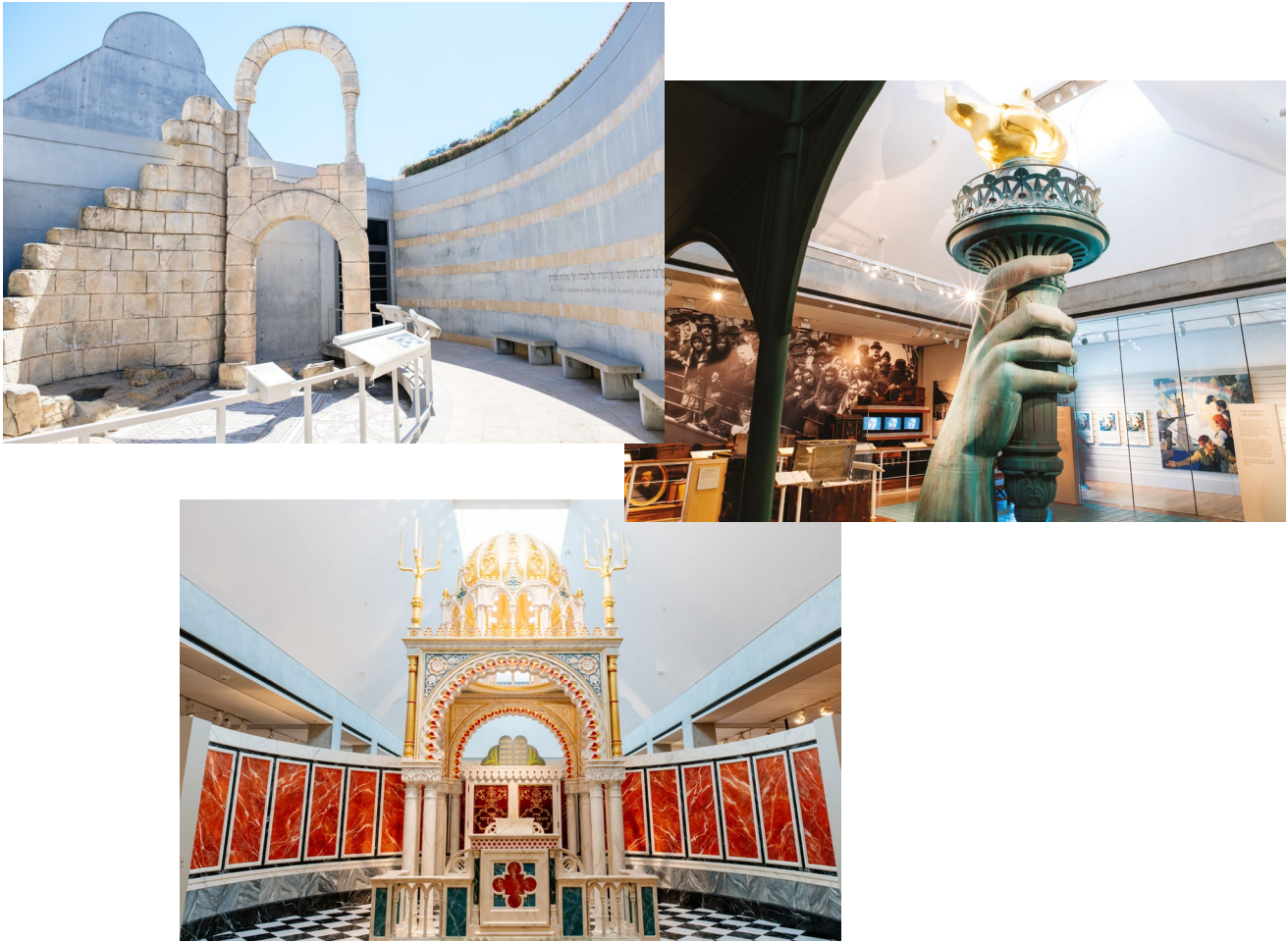
Which value resonates most with you?

How might you put these values into action to combat hate?

*antisemitism—the hatred and discrimination towards Jewish people

Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America

This curriculum is inspired by stories and objects in the Skirball's permanent exhibition. Within *Visions and Values*, visitors can learn how the Jews have survived as a diverse, migratory, minority population by actively engaging with the many communities and cultures they've encountered, while also retaining a core set of values.



Did you know? Children 2–12 and full-time students receive discounted admission to the Skirball. Teachers can visit for FREE with code 99957 (valid work ID required at check-in). [Learn more about special admissions offers.](#)

The objects below are part of the Skirball Cultural Center’s permanent collection. They are both household objects related to friendship, family, and hospitality. Take a close look at each image and read about how these items were used to **build community**.



These brass candlesticks were transported from Poland and Russia to Mexico in 1921, and then to the United States in 1945, by a man named Nathan Kirman. They are believed to have belonged to Nathan’s mother, who kept them in order to remember the holidays she celebrated with her family.

Do they look the same to you? Sometimes women traded single candlesticks with one another before they emigrated (left their homeland) so they could preserve memories of their friends and families. One candlestick was taken to the new place and one was left behind.

Candlesticks, Warsaw, Poland, early twentieth century

**What object would you take to a new place?
What object would you leave behind with a friend?**

This silver serving set is called a *tavla de dulsé* (pronounced tav-lah de dool-say), which means “table of sweets” in Ladino. Ladino is an endangered language that blends Spanish and Hebrew. Once, Ladino was more widely spoken by Jewish people who lived in Spain, Greece, and Turkey—countries where silver was produced.

In the early 1900s, it was customary for a bride’s family to give serving sets like this one to the husband’s family. The bride would then use the set to serve sweets like rosewater candy and nuts to guests in her new home.

Tavla de Dulsé, Izmir, Turkey, 1920s



How do you make others feel welcome?

The objects below are part of the Skirball Cultural Center's permanent collection. They were brought to the United States by European immigrants fleeing religious persecution and seeking freedom.

For the people who carried them, these objects helped preserve memories of their home and the people they left behind. **Honor memory** by taking a close look at each image and reading about their history.

Originally from Russia, Aron Brull was sent to Romania to live with relatives so he would not be drafted into the Russian Army. He never reached his family, but instead grew up with an adoptive family. In 1905, Aron, his wife Leah, and their son Harold, left Romania for America to escape religious persecution.

Leah, a talented needleworker, brought along many of the hand-embroidered items she made in Romania, including clothing, table linens, and bedsheets. They also brought photographs of their family and friends as reminders of the loved ones they had left behind.

Trunk, Romania, ca. 1890; Clothes and Textiles, Romania, ca. 1900



What photographs or keepsakes remind you of loved ones?

Can you ask a friend or family member to tell you about a photograph or keepsake that is meaningful to them or their culture?



In 1938, Marion Stiebel Siciliano, a German teenager from a wealthy Jewish family, was told by her parents that they were going to Italy on vacation. She packed items she thought she might need, such as a tennis racket and accordion. In truth, her family was fleeing the Nazis, who had taken power and begun persecuting Jews.

Marion's mother brought a typewriter so that she could find work as a typist when they arrived in their new country. The Stiebels traveled from Germany to Portugal to France, and then eventually to the United States. Marion kept her items with her so she would always remember the journey from Germany to America.

Suitcases, Tennis Racket and Press, Accordion, Typewriter, Germany, 1930s

What is an object you keep to remind you of a past experience?

The objects below are part of the Skirball Cultural Center's permanent collection. They are both traditional items related to Jewish holidays and customs. Take a close look at each object and **seek learning** by reading about their history and meaning in Jewish culture.



Jacob Seasongood and his family left Germany in the 1830s, when the first large wave of Jewish immigrants came to the United States. The Seasongoods settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, purchased a house, and joined a synagogue (Jewish house of worship).

The family brought with them a shofar like the one pictured here. Made from a ram's horn, a shofar is traditionally blown during the Jewish new year and at various synagogue events to call people to prayer. Shofars are usually handmade and make a loud, forceful sound.

Marcus Jonas, Shofar and Case, Oakland, California, ca. 1870

What occasions or events are special to you? Why?

The light from this oil-burning Hanukkah lamp once illuminated a Moroccan Jewish home during the eight nights of Hanukkah, also known as the wintertime festival of lights.

Until the late 1940s, Morocco was home to over a quarter of a million Jews. Today, most Moroccan Jews and their descendants live in Israel, France, and Canada, as well as in the United States, where they keep their vibrant holiday traditions alive.

Hanukkah Lamp, Morocco, twentieth century



Is there a school/community holiday you don't know very much about? Reach out to your teachers, librarians, or family members to help you learn.

The objects below are part of the Skirball Cultural Center’s permanent collection. They are both *tzedakah* boxes. Pronounced “suh-dah-kah,” *tzedakah* comes from the Hebrew word for “Justice.”

Traditionally found in Jewish homes, businesses, or places of worship, *tzedakah* boxes are used to collect loose change on the sabbath and other occasions to donate to people in need. But *tzedakah* is a much more wide-reaching term, emphasizing the importance of caring for others and community service. Take a close look at each object and read about how these items are used to **pursue justice**.



When the artist Tony Berlant created this *tzedakah* box, he wanted to highlight the value of Jewish charity—anonymous helping those in need.

By overlaying the brick structure with imagery of a bountiful harvest, Berlant conveys the basic human needs for food and shelter.

Tony Berlant, *Tzedakah Box*, Los Angeles, California, 1994

What does justice mean to you?

This *tzedek* (TSEH-deck) box connects to a Jewish holiday celebrated in the spring, Yom HaTzedek (Day of Justice). Unlike traditional *tzedakah* boxes used for charitable donations, this box is designed to “deposit” good deeds for the community. Created by artist Tobi Kahn, the box features vibrant blue hues to evoke the “sky, water, and the greening Earth.” Its painted surface emphasizes “the importance of protecting our fragile planet.”

Tobi Kahn, *ZAHRYZ* (tsah-RITZ), acrylic paint on wood, 2021



What causes do you support? Why?