

Jews in shtetl

WORD OF THE DAY: DIGNITARIES: People considered important and highly respected

1. You might write some terms on the board: Shtetl, torah, Hasidism, Yiddish, rebbe, rabbi. They might want to know that Hasidism is a form of Orthodoxy.
2. You can tell them that Milwaukee has a very famous rebbe family (some are also rabbis). This is the Twersky family of the Sherman Park neighborhood. In Milwaukee there are two large Hasidic communities—one in Sherman Park and one on the East Side. The East Siders are the Lubavitchers. Most Jews in greater Milwaukee are Reformed Jews or Conservative Jews. They don't practice all the rules and ceremonies that the Orthodox do.
3. There had been much controversy about why the Jews didn't fight harder against the Germans or fight harder to make an exodus during WWII. There were actually tons of resistance movements, but fewer among the strong Orthodox sects. It also tended to be the more secular Jews who were able to emigrate because they tended to have good connections outside of their local Jewish community and could get sponsors—or else they had Jewish family already in places like America
4. All the words in the story are pronounced just as they are spelled. But “rebbe” is pronounced REbee.
5. Rebbe Mendl was not a real person.
6. Because the name of God is never to be uttered by most Jews, they left the vowel points out of the Hebrew name of God in many texts (hence Jews will often use the spelling G-d rather than God in the English language). The term *Adonai* (“Lord”) is often substituted for G-d in prayers.

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