



## The Seder Plate Through the Generations

### Grade Level(s)

Intermediate; also appropriate as a Family Education experience

### Goals for the Lesson/Activity

#### **Students will**

- Review the meaning of the objects on the Seder Plate
- Explore the concept of “What is a Symbol?”
- Reflect on current struggles in the world and identify those that are personally relevant
- Represent world struggles with new symbols to be placed on a *Seder Plate for My Generation*; this new Seder plate can be shared at each student’s respective Seder(s)

### Materials needed

- Two large sheets of butcher paper; each piece divided into 2 columns.
  - Label the columns of Chart #1: **Object** and **Symbolism**
  - Label the columns of Chart #2: **Struggle** and **Symbol**
- A pad of 3x3 Sticky Notes
- *Seder Plate for My Generation* sheet
- Copies of *Dear Family...* take-home slip (optional)
- An actual, filled Seder plate **and/or** our interactive Seder plate found here:  
<http://www.thinklink.com/scene/630480417035649025>

### Technology Needed (optional)

- Devices with Internet access (tablets, laptops, etc.)
- [ThingLink](#) (Available on any browser, or downloadable on iTunes or Google Play, Free) – **ThingLink** allows you to create interactive photos that contain links to text descriptions, other pictures, websites, and/or videos. The final product can be shared via a link that can be accessed by anyone with a browser and an Internet connection.
  - **Account creation is required**, so be sure to create an account **BEFORE** you begin working with students. Then, log in to your account on all the devices that you will be using on the day of the activity.
  - While ThingLink is available on a browser, if you have tablet devices, the picture sharing process will be less cumbersome.
- You may want to have a screen and projector available to project our interactive Seder plate and/or the ones created by students during this activity.



## The Seder Plate Through the Generations

### **Background for Teachers**

#### **“What is a Symbol?”**

The *American Heritage Dictionary* ([www.ahdictionary.com](http://www.ahdictionary.com)) defines the word *symbol* as follows:

Sym•bol (sĬm'bel) 1. Something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, esp. a material object used to represent something invisible.

The Seder plate is filled with foods that symbolize different aspects of the Passover narrative. For example, the roasted food (traditionally a shank bone) reminds us of the Passover offering that represented God passing over the dwellings of *B’nei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) in Egypt. The *matzah* represents both slavery and freedom, being the bread that *B’nei Yisrael* ate in haste on their way to freedom and also being a poor person’s bread. *Maror* (bitter herbs) represents the bitterness of our lives in Egypt. The Seder, though, is not meant to be simply a look back at a seminal event that occurred more than 3,000 years ago. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for each individual to be redeemed even today:

*The rabbis see in this a tremendous opportunity to invest each generation of Jews in the process of redemption. For the rabbis, all of us were in Mitzrayim, all of us were redeemed, all of us stood at Sinai, all of us received the Law. Rabbinic Judaism is inclusive Judaism, and the Seder ritual is an attempt to re-create the moment of liberation for each Jew in every generation. Certainly, the Seder is an ancient ritual. But, the power of this holiday is that we all long to be redeemed from our personal Mitzrayims, we all hope and work and pray for Messianic times, we all strive to retain our identification as free people and as Jews. This makes the Passover Seder a living expression of a living people.*

*-The Art of Jewish Living: the Passover Seder, p.171, by Dr. Ron Wolfson*

Thus, in modern times, many people add their own symbols to the Seder plate, drawing attention to various causes that we may remember as we think about slavery and freedom during the holiday of Passover.

The phrase, “In every generation every individual should feel as though he or she had actually left Egypt,” goes back at least 2,000 years to the times of the rabbis who put together the Mishnah. Although they were not slaves themselves, the Rabbis realized the importance of remembering the experience in order to appreciate their own freedom and to recognize those who are still not free.



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Every generation has its own struggles for freedom. What are some of the struggles that our generation is facing? Or, to put it another way, what are some of the problems in our world today?

### Description of Activities

#### Part One: Introduction

1. Place Chart #1 up on the wall. Ask each student to complete the following statement:

“One object on the Seder plate is a\_\_\_\_\_.”

  - a. Ask students to write the object that they think of on a sticky note and place the note in the **Object** column on Chart #1.
  - b. It is OK if students repeat answers (and, in fact, they will probably need to). The idea is to have the students tap into their memories and recall past knowledge. This helps to focus their attention on the upcoming lesson.
2. Ask students, “What does the word *symbol* mean to you?” Take several suggestions and share the definition of a symbol.
3. Show students the Seder plate, which holds *symbols* of Passover. If you are not using an actual Seder plate, show them an image of the Seder plate or share our interactive Seder plate found here:  
<http://www.thinklink.com/scene/630480417035649025>
  - a. Ask students to identify each item on the Seder plate and what it symbolizes.
  - b. Organize the stickies in column 1 so that you can add the symbolism for each one in column 2 of the chart.

A sample completed Chart #1 might look like this:

Object	Symbolism
מָרוֹר (Maror)	Bitterness of slavery
צַהַב (Roasted Egg)	Spring / Life is cyclical / Reminder of sacrifice
עֲרוֹבָה (Shankbone/Beet)	Reminder of doorpost blood / sacrifice
טַפְשָׁת (Parsley dipped in saltwater)	Spring – tears
חָרֹסֶת (Charoset)	Mortar for building
צַהַרְתָּה (Chazeret - on some Seder plates)	Another symbol for bitterness
מַצָּה (Matzah – on the Passover table)	Slavery/Freedom



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### **Part Two: Source Text and Modern Interpretation – From Communal to Personal**

1. Post the following phrase from the Haggadah on your board. A large print version is available at the end of this lesson plan.

**בְּכָל דַּעַר וְדַר מֵבָב אָדָם לְרֹאֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כִּאֵלֹה הוּא יֵצֵא מִפְּצָרִים...**  
**"In every generation every individual should feel as though he or she had actually left Egypt."**

2. Ask your students to read the phrase with you and to describe what they think it means. What does it mean to feel as though **we** left Egypt ourselves?
3. Place Chart #2 up on the wall. What are some of the problems in our world today that we would like to eradicate or leave behind?
  - Ask students to work in small groups to brainstorm struggles in the world today. Consider providing iPads or laptops with links to news sites designed for kids. These are great resources for students to begin to find a topic that they connect with personally. As students identify challenges in the world, they can put them on stickies and add them to Chart #2 in the **Struggle** column.

#### **News Websites (ages 8 and up):**

Here There Everywhere <http://htekidsnews.com>

Youngzine <http://www.youngzine.org>

Newsela <https://newsela.com>

Time for Kids <http://www.timeforkids.com/news>

#### **News from Israel (ages 12 and up)**

Israel21c <http://www.israel21c.org/news/>

4. Ask and discuss: What items could we place on the Seder plate to symbolize each of these current struggles?

The chart on the next page provides some examples to help give your students ideas. Begin by letting students provide the struggles themselves. If students are having difficulty identifying struggles on their own, you might share part or all of this list and then ask students to rank them in order of importance. Reordering the stickies will work nicely for this exercise.



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Sample Chart #2:

Struggle	Symbol
AIDS	Red ribbon
Holocaust	Yellow Jewish star
Israel	Flag
World Peace	Olive branch
Reproductive rights	Small calendar (choosing time)
Gay rights	Purple triangle / rainbow
Women's equality	=
Racism	
Obesity	Kosher for Passover candy
War	Kosher for Passover ketchup
Pollution	Crumpled paper
Poverty/hunger	Matzah crumbs
Illiteracy	Pen cap

### Part Three: Personalizing the Material

The following exercise is designed to help each student identify and reflect on the struggles that are important to them as individuals.

- Hand out the *Seder Plate for My Generation* Worksheet. Each circle highlights a different kind of struggle. Each of us has personal struggles; each of us has struggles within our families, etc. Students will identify a struggle related to each of the headings on the Seder plate. Then, the student should choose an appropriate symbol to represent the struggle and write/draw it on the *Seder Plate for My Generation*. Students can refer to the information you gathered as a class on Chart #2 and the news sites that they visited to make their selections.

**DIFFERENTIATION NOTE:** This can be a very personal exercise. If you have students who prefer to work alone, this might be a good exercise to offer both the group (**Interpersonal** Intelligence, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences) and solo option (**Intrapersonal** Intelligence, Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences). Teachers should encourage students to answer honestly and know that they can keep their answer sheets private if they prefer.



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### **Part Four: Closure – From Personal Back to Communal**

The activity can be extended with the following options. Students will be able to share their work with family at their Seder and, using the technology option, continue the conversation with anyone around the world.

- ***Non-technology Option:*** The activity can be extended with the “Dear Family...” Take-Home Slip. Each student takes a moment to choose an object that they would like to add to the family’s Seder plate. The slip has a place for both the object and an explanation of its meaning. This short exercise provides a wonderful opportunity for the student to bring classroom learning into the home.
- ***Technology Option:*** Students will use **ThingLink** to create interactive Seder plates. They can add links to websites and/or videos that provide more information about the world challenges that they chose previously. Students can also add text/video descriptions of why they chose a particular challenge and how it connects to them personally. Detailed instructions are on the next page. These instructions can also be printed for student use.



# ThingLink Instructions

To begin, take a picture of your completed *Seder Plate for My Generation*; then, follow the instructions below for the device(s) that you are using.

 <p><b>Using the ThingLink App on a mobile device:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Open the app, log in, and tap the + in the upper right corner of the screen to start a new ThingLink.</li><li>Select <i>Photo Library</i> to find your picture and then import the picture of your Seder plate from your camera roll.</li><li>Tap the picture anywhere to get a small red circle to appear. This circle allows you to add media to your photo, making it interactive.</li><li>Add some or all of the following to your <i>Seder Plate for My Generation</i>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Text and/or video description of the history of the struggle</li><li>✓ Text and/or video description of why you chose this particular struggle</li><li>✓ Link to a reliable website or video that provides more information about the struggle</li><li>✓ Other pictures that help define or exemplify the struggle</li><li>✓ Other ideas?</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>A Note About Privacy:</b> The first time that you share your ThingLink through the App, be sure to toggle the <b><i>Unlist on ThingLink.com</i></b> button to <b>ON</b>.</p>	 <p><b>Using ThingLink with any browser (Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.) on a computer or laptop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transfer the picture that students took of their seder plate to the computer using a cloud service (Google Drive or Dropbox) or via email. If sharing the picture via email, download the picture(s) to the device.</li><li>Open ThingLink in your browser and log in.</li><li>Click on <i>Create</i> and upload your picture. Click the picture anywhere to get a small black circle to appear. This circle allows you to add media to your photo, making it interactive.</li><li>Add some or all of the following to your <i>Seder Plate for My Generation</i>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Text and/or video description of the history of the struggle</li><li>✓ Text and/or video description of why you chose this particular struggle</li><li>✓ Link to a reliable website or video that provides more information about the struggle</li><li>✓ Other pictures that help define or exemplify the struggle</li><li>✓ Other ideas?</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>A Note About Privacy:</b> The first time that you share your ThingLink through the browser, be sure to click on <b><i>Sharing Settings</i></b> and set the <b><i>Image Visibility</i></b> to <b>Unlisted</b>.</p>
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בְּכָל־דַּיּוֹר וְדַיּוֹר תִּבְּאַדְּסָם  
לְהַזְוֹת אֲתָת עַצְמָתָךְ פְּאַלְגָּו  
הַוְאָתָא רְצָא אַמְּפָצָרִים...

In every generation every individual should feel as though he or she had actually left Egypt.