



Hanukkah Symbols through Stamps

Topic Hanukkah Symbols through Stamps

Grade Level(s) 2-3

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Review the symbols associated with Hanukkah
- Learn about the creation of Hanukkah postage stamps
- Create a personal Hanukkah stamp using their favorite symbols

Materials needed

- Hanukkah Stamps handout
- Hanukkah Symbols handout
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Prepare in Advance

- Print out the Hanukkah Symbols handout and fold it so that only the column with the images can be seen at first.
- Gather 3D representations of symbols where possible: candles, dreidels, etc.

Background for Teachers

United States Postal Service Hanukkah Stamps

On October 16, 2018, the United States Postal Service (USPS) and Israeli Post announced the joint issue of a new Hanukkah postage stamp. It was created by artist Tamar Fishman and designer Ethel Kessler. Though the design remains the same, the USPS version will, of course, feature English, while the Israeli version will use Hebrew. The following is from the USPS press release.

“The stamp we’re celebrating today depicts an image of the Hanukkah menorah created through papercutting — a Jewish art form that dates at least to the Middle Ages,” said Postal Service Judicial Officer Gary Shapiro. “Starting today, this work of art celebrating the Jewish Festival of Lights will travel on millions of letters and packages, throughout America and around the world.”

This stamp is not the first collaboration between the USPS and Israel Post. The very first USPS Hanukkah stamp, released in 1996, was also a joint issue. The stamp was designed by graphic designer Hannah Smotrich, and features candles in bright colors. It is not only the first Jewishly-themed stamp printed by the USPS, it is the first stamp to recognize a non-Christian holiday. The first Christmas-themed postage stamp was



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released in 1962. Except for the three years, the postal service has issued a new Christmas stamp every year since 1965.

In 2004, after many years of reissuing the original Hanukkah stamp, the USPS debuted a new stamp featuring a dreidel. This stamp was used through 2008, with periodic updates to reflect the increase in the cost of postage.

In 2009, a stamp designed by Lisa Regan was released, featuring a *Hanukkiyah* with nine lit candles. The image on the stamp was created by photographing her sculpture.

Yet another stamp was released in 2011; this time featuring the word “Hanukkah.” All of the letters in this design are inside colorful boxes, except for second “K” which is inside a dreidel.

The 2013 design once again featured a *hanukkiyah*. This design was re-released in 2016 with a different colored background.

It is interesting to note that these stamps have been created using a variety of media, including graphic design, photography, sculpture, paper-cut, and collage.

Hanukkah stamps from other Countries

The Canadian postal service, Canada Post, has issued several Hanukkah stamps, many including both English and French. Perhaps the most celebrated of these is the 2017 stamp which was issued, along with stamps to commemorate the Muslim holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and the Hindu holiday of Diwali. All three stamps were meant to recognize Canada’s diversity in its 150th year.

In 2012, Israel and India issued a Hanukkah stamp in celebration of twenty years of diplomatic relations.

In addition to the stamps issued in conjunction with other countries, Israel has produced many Hanukkah-related stamps over the years. Many of these stamps have featured the same symbols as featured in the US; however, some stamps incorporate more historical and geographical features well-known to Israelis.

Description of Activities

Distribute the Hanukkah Symbols handout, with only the pictures of the symbols showing. Invite students to name and describe the symbols knowing that some, like dreidels and candles, might be more familiar than others.



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Tips:

- Take care to re-enforce the difference between a *hanukkiyah* and a *menorah*.
- If students have difficulty identifying an image of the symbol, show them the real symbol where possible.

Ask if they have ever received a letter in the mail or gone with a parent to purchase stamps.

Show students the 2018 joint-issue Israeli/American Hanukkah postage stamp. Let them know that the first US Hanukkah stamp was printed in 1996, and that there have been many different Hannukah stamps in between.

Distribute the Hanukkah Stamps handout, letting them know that, in addition to the stamps from the United States, they will also see stamps from Israel, Canada, and India. If you choose, share more information about these stamp releases.

Instruct students to unfold the Hanukkah Symbols handout so that they can see all three columns. The second column contains a description of the item and the third contains a letter.

Instruct students to search for symbols on the stamps and to write the letter or letters that correspond to that symbol in the boxes under the stamps. When they are finished, if time permits, go over their answers, naming the symbols in each stamp.

Point students to the blank stamp at the bottom of the handout. Invite them to create a stamp using their favorite Hanukkah symbols. Distribute crayons or markers.

Ask:

- Who chooses what subjects or people are going to be featured on stamps?
- Who makes the images on stamps?

Let them know that, in the United States, anyone can suggest an idea for a stamp. The USPS receives 30,000 suggestions each year. There is a group called the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee made up of artists and teachers and historians, etc., that meets four times a year to choose the ideas they like and suggest that they be made into stamps. The Postmaster General, who is the person in charge of everything relating to



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the USPS, gets the final word. Artists, graphic designers, and photographers from all over the country have been asked to draw or create images for stamps.

If they would like to submit the stamp they created, or an idea for a different stamp, they can send it to:

Stamp Development

Attn: Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee

475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300

Washington, DC 20260-3501

The guidelines for submissions can be found here: <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/csac/process.htm>

Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- When looking for symbols on stamps, invite them to search for one item; candles and *hanukkiyot* are common. If they have time, suggest they look for a second object.
- Where possible, give students 3D symbols in addition to images to help them search. Allow them to hold a candle or a dreidel, or example.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- The United States and Israel have both produced several stamps related to Jewish themes other than Hanukkah. Invite students to investigate stamps picturing Jewish people or other holidays and events
- Challenge students to create stamps for other holidays using the appropriate symbols.