



Noisemakerspace

Topic

Noisemakerspace, Purim Gragger Workshop

Grade Level(s)

4th-7th

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Learn that a gragger is used to drown out Haman's name
- Explore different types of graggers
- Create a gragger in a makerspace

Materials needed

Table cloths and drop cloths

Different styles of graggers to use as examples

Possible Makerspace Materials

Fasteners: brads, staples, glue, hot glue, tape, rubber bands, duct tape, binder clips

Containers: aluminum cans, water bottles, cardboard tubes, potato chip cans, paper plates, empty juice boxes, take-out boxes

Fillings: rice, beans, popcorn kernels (let parents know if using these items, as Passover comes quickly after Purim and families may want to clean accordingly), small Lego pieces, pennies, marbles, small stones, buttons

Handles: popsicle sticks, dowel rods, Lego pieces, tree branches

Tools: scissors, box cutters, hot glue gun, 3D printer, gears, rulers, funnels

Extras: stickers, aluminum foil, construction paper, tissue paper, googly eyes, markers

Prepare in Advance

Purchase or collect materials for the makerspace. Place the materials around the room, making sure there is enough space for students to work. The list of materials above in the "Materials Needed" section of this document is meant to give you ideas. You do not need to collect ALL the items on the list and can feel free to add items as suits your environment or students' interests.

Gather several different graggers

Cover tables and floors



Noisemakerspace

Technology needed

Optional: Access to a computer or tablet for design ideas or to create a gragger in Scratch (a visual programming language designed for children: <https://scratch.mit.edu>); a 3D printer

Background for Teachers

Graggers and Haman's Name

"Gragger" is the Yiddish word for rattle. A gragger, or noisemaker, is traditionally used during the reading of *Megillat Esther* (the biblical book of Esther) on Purim. Though there are no requirements for how a gragger is made, the image that most often comes to mind when the word gragger is mentioned is a rectangular box, usually made of metal or wood, attached to a cog which allows it to be spun on a handle. This type of noisemaker is known musically as a ratchet.

A gragger is used to "blot out" the name of Haman, the antagonist of the Purim story, during the reading of the *Megillah*. This custom most likely stems from the Torah; Deuteronomy 25:19 states: "you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." Since we learn in Esther 3:1 and 9:24 that Haman is a descendant of Agag the Amalekite, we are commanded to blot out his name. Further textual support for this practice is found in Proverbs 10:7, which says: The memory of the righteous is invoked for blessing, but the name of the wicked rots.

Throughout history Jewish communities have used many different methods of blotting out Haman's name. Among them: stamping feet or banging on walls or benches, writing the name on stones and banging them together or on the soles of shoes and walking in them, clapping hands, writing and erasing the name using various implements, and reciting *yimach sh'mo* (may his name be erased).

Some people hold the opinion that graggers should not be used as the noise could prevent some from hearing the words of the *Megillah*.

Makerspaces

A makerspace is a collaborative work environment in which participants have access to an array of tools and materials, often both hi- and low-tech, that they can use to design and create. A makerspace might contain computers, 3D printers and advanced woodworking tools, or might be filled with used cardboard boxes, packing tape and discarded home goods, or perhaps both.



Noisemakerspace

In school settings, makerspaces are often the intellectual playground used by students to respond to specific challenges. For instance, a teacher might ask students to find a way to carry books that doesn't put stress on the body, or a way to hand in papers without getting up.

Description of Activities

Students will be given the opportunity to work in the makerspace to create a new model for a gragger.

Show students the graggers you have gathered, asking them to take notice of the different materials and noise-making mechanisms.

Ask:

- What is a gragger and why is it used?
- What is a gragger made of?

Fill in any information they may have missed, letting them know that, unlike some other ritual objects, there are no requirements around how a gragger is made. Make sure to point out the biblical proof—Deuteronomy 25:19 and Proverbs 10:7—from which the tradition comes.

Let student know that they will have the opportunity to make their own graggers.

Review any classroom safety rules. Suggestions include: no running, a teacher or teacher's aide must be present when the hot glue gun is in operation, etc.

Present students with a challenge. You might simply say that they should create a gragger that is safe and appropriate for use in a synagogue. Other possible challenges are listed below. Use one of these or one of your own creative ideas:

- It must make noise but can't be too loud; loud noises can scare young children
- Make a gragger you can use with your feet.
- What would a gragger look like in the Harry Potter series, or in Star Wars, or your favorite TV or movie series?
- Make a gragger so that a deaf person can feel the vibrations.
- Make a biodegradable gragger or one that can be composted or recycled.



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Let students get to work.

Remember to leave time for sharing and cleaning up.

Encourage students to bring their creations to your synagogue Purim celebration.

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

- A large number of choices may be overwhelming for some students. Set up a table with two options for containers, sticks, fillers, etc. Or, begin with only one choice, and have the student work with an aide who will bring them a limited number of choices as they continue to build.
- Invite students to choose the gragger they like best from the ones you brought. Invite them to create a replica or to decorate materials in a similar way.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Allow students to create a gragger online using a coding program such as Scratch.
- Encourage students to speak to the Director of Education or clergy to learn about a real challenge with graggers at the synagogue. Invite them to design a solution to this challenge.
- Invite students to create a system by which congregants will know when to start and stop making noise as the *Megillah* is read.
- Encourage students to learn about alternatives to graggers during Purim and to present their findings to the class.