



Purim

# Lesson Plans

*Middle School/High School*

*“Do not look at the container, but what is in it.” (Pirke Avot 4:27)*

*Recommended for Middle School and High School*

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## OPTION 1: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE PURIM STORY

### Big Ideas

- Emotional Intelligence: Everyone wears a mask as a tool for self-preservation.
- Esther fears for her safety and initially hides her Jewish identity.
- It can be difficult to be yourself even around people who you care about and who care about you.
- Compassion for other people, you never know what someone else is going through.

### Objectives

- Students will be able to identify 3-5 traits that they openly share with other people.
- Students will be able to identify 3-5 traits that they keep concealed.
- Students will be able to identify how Esther concealed her identity and how revealing her Judaism to King Aushverosh saved the Jewish people.
- Students will begin to appreciate that their hidden traits should also be valued.



## Materials

- Writing and art materials for decorating personal masks (crayons, markers, gel pens, colored pencils)
- Blank mask printable
- Scissors for cutting out the masks (optional)

## Accessibility Considerations

- Pre-cut masks (included) or have adaptable scissors available for students to use.
- Identify for students at the beginning of the lesson that it is hard work to reflect on your character and that they can take time to think before writing anything down.
- Self-reflection and emotional intelligence are challenging skills, allowing students to take a break, drink some water, or sit quietly while they process their responses will support their self-regulation skills.
- Some students may be more successful typing on a computer or discussing their responses than writing on paper.
- Circulate the room to check for understanding.
- Consider having students sit in a circle during the discussion part of the activity.
- Some students may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with the class, you can encourage them to write their responses on a post-it or piece of paper.
- Consider having a variety of writing tools available for students to choose from including pens, markers, crayons, flair pens, or colored pencils.

## Activities

Begin with a discussion about Purim and how Esther hides her true identity in order to be accepted as queen. Ask your students the Discussion Questions in order to guide the conversation.

Once students have a grasp of what it means to hide your identity vs. being open about who you are, direct them to the art activity.

Pass out the downloadable Matan mask template, students can cut out the masks or keep the paper whole. On the front side of the mask students can write or draw personal traits that they share with the world vs. the traits or characteristics they keep to themselves or only share with close friends or family.

Depending on the social emotional comfort level in your classroom, students can share their masks when they have been completed.



## Discussion Questions

1. Do you ever feel like you need to hide parts of yourself?
2. Are there spaces where you feel like you can truly be yourself?
3. What traits do you admire in other people?
4. What traits do you want to continue to develop in yourself?
5. In Megillat Esther, Mordechai encourages Esther to tell the king her true identity. Are there people in your life who you can be yourself with? What makes that person feel safe?
6. Do you ever choose to wear outward symbols of being Jewish, like a kippah or a Star of David necklace? Is it important to you to be identified as a Jew?
7. Do you ever feel like you don't want other people to know you are Jewish? Why or why not?

# Purim Masks



## OPTION 2: DEVELOPING AND EXPRESSING YOUR OWN PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

### Big Ideas

- Standing up for yourself, your friends, or your beliefs may come at a personal cost.
- Vashti and Esther both have admirable qualities.
- It is important to celebrate those who speak up against harassment and who work toward equality and equity.
- Defined personal boundaries make it easier to be courageous when needing to express those boundaries.
- Boundary development encourages autonomy and independence.

### Objectives

- Students will be able to identify at least three personal boundaries after participating in a class discussion.
- Students will be able to identify one of Vashti's personal boundaries and what the consequences were for her actions.
- Students will be able to identify one of Esther's personal boundaries and what the consequences were for her actions.
- Students will practice boundary setting phrases..

### Materials

- Writing tools
- Blank or lined paper
- Copies of your class Purim story
- Scissors and adaptive scissors (optional)
- Glue (optional)

### Accessibility Considerations

- Identify for students at the beginning of the lesson that it is hard work to develop your boundaries and that they can take time to think before writing anything down.
- Self-reflection and development are challenging skills, allowing students to take a break, drink some water, or sit quietly while they process their responses will support their self-regulation skills.
- Some students may be more successful typing on a computer or discussing their responses than writing on paper.
- Circulate the room to check for understanding.

- Consider having students sit in a circle during the discussion part of the activity.
- Some students may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with the class, you can encourage them to write their responses on a post-it or piece of paper.
- Consider having a variety of writing tools available for students to choose from including pens, markers, crayons, flair pens, or colored pencils.

## Activities

Once they are familiar with the Purim story, students will engage in a conversation about boundaries, how to develop your personal boundaries, how to be courageous if your boundaries are being crossed.

- The Purim story begins with Vashti's boundaries being crossed when she is summoned to dance/meet/perform in front of the king. Some interpretations state that she was asked to come to the party naked in order to entertain the men that were present. Vashti stands up for herself and refuses to come to the party. Vashti is banished from the kingdom, or killed, depending on the interpretation.
- Esther must pretend to not be Jewish during her time in the kingdom. Some interpretations believe she continued to keep kosher but only eating fruits and vegetables and refraining from eating meat. Eventually Queen Esther must reveal herself to the king in order to save herself and the Jewish people.

Once the class has discussed some of the personal boundaries that were crossed in the Purim story, use the Discussion Questions below to guide a conversation about developing personal boundaries.

Notes about boundaries:

- boundaries are different for everyone
- having boundaries and being able to express them can help keep you safe
- boundaries create space between you and other people
- healthy boundaries are important for friendships and romantic relationships
- establishing boundaries helps teens process how they feel and what their limits are
- establishing boundaries supports teens to clearly communicate their feelings

Teach students closed phrases that they can practice and use when they are in an uncomfortable situation and unsure of how to respond:

- "Let me think about that and get back to you"
- "No thank you. I'm not comfortable with that"
- "Let me talk to my parents and let you know tomorrow."

After concluding the discussion students will have the opportunity to write down three personal boundaries they have or want to establish in relation to other people.

Extension Idea: Have students role play boundary crossing situations from the Purim story and/or from real life situations.

Extension Idea: Matan printable: Sorting healthy and unhealthy boundaries. Students can circle or cut up, sort, and glue the boundaries in their respective spots.

## Discussion Questions

1. How were Vashti's boundaries crossed? How did she stand up for herself?
2. How were Esther's boundaries crossed? How did she stand up for herself?
3. What is a boundary that you have established with friends or family?
4. Why is it hard to express your boundaries to other people?