



IN GEVEB A JOURNAL OF YIDDISH STUDIES

Selected Worksheets from a High School Course on *Tevye the Dairyman*

Jessica Kirzane

These worksheets were generously shared with *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* by their creator, Jessica Kirzane. We want you to use them in whatever way best aids your teaching. If you wish to alter or add to the worksheets, please make note of this in your new worksheet, and please keep this original attribution. You may send questions or comments to the creator through us: pedagogy@ingeveb.org

Name _____

Who Is Tevye?

The main character of *Tevye the Dairyman* is Tevye, a very poor man with seven daughters and not enough money to feed his family. In the beginning of the stories he labors pulling logs from his rural village home to a slightly larger village where some wealthier people spend their summers and weekends. Later on in the stories he purchases a milk cow and earns his living by selling dairy products to his neighbors.

We learn everything we know from the stories through Tevye's own narration. The premise of the stories is that Sholem Aleichem, the author, is visiting the area and runs into Tevye. They meet, they chat, and Tevye has so much to say that it just spills out of him – and Sholem Aleichem records it directly onto the pages of this book.

The earliest Tevye story includes a description that Sholem Aleichem omits from later editions:

"Tevye is a healthy Jew, with broad shoulders, and dark, thick hair; his age is hard to guess; he wears heavy boots Tevye is always ready to talk. He likes an honest saying, a parable, a bit of Torah; he's neither a great scholar nor an ignoramus when it comes to the fine print."

Answer the following questions with a partner, and then we will discuss them as a class:

- 1) What character traits do you assume about Tevye based on his physical description?

- 2) Can you tell yet whether Tevye is a good man? How?

- 3) Does the description "dairy man" (which is not only a description of his job, but also of his character – feminine, weak) seem to fit with this description? Why or why not?

- 4) What do you think are Tevye's weaknesses? What are his strengths?

Tevye's Prayer

(this worksheet is designed to accompany a conversation about Tevye's relationship to God,
based on the stories "Tevye Blows a Small Fortune" and "Today's Children")

Instructions: Complete the worksheet to compose a prayer that Tevye might recite.

- 1) What would Tevye pray for? What is something he is very concerned about? Write the answer in the title to your prayer.

- 2) Choose a text (Jewish or otherwise) that Tevye might begin with or draw inspiration from. Write a short quote (a few words) from that text at the start of your prayer.

- 3) Now, rephrase the quote in Tevye's own words. You can change the meaning of the text in ways that reflect Tevye's attitude toward God or the particular things he is praying for.

- 4) Finally, write a sentence that explicitly states Tevye's feelings about God, or his request to God. (This can be more than one sentence if you like. You can also repeat steps 2 and 3 to create a longer prayer).

Tevye's Prayer for _____

Quote:

Interpretation:

Personal Statement to God:

Amen.

Name: _____

“Today’s Children” Discussion Worksheet

Give one example from “Today’s Children” of deception. Who is doing the deceiving, and why?

Give one example from “Today’s Children” of misunderstanding. Who does not understand whom? Why?

Why do you think Sholom Aleichem included so many examples of deception and misunderstanding in this story?

How does Tevye’s ability to deceive and manipulate affect how you understand his character? Does it make him more or less sympathetic?

How does Tevye’s misunderstanding of the people around him affect how you understand his character? Does it make him more or less sympathetic?

Name: _____

Tevye's Conflicting Emotions about Hodl

In the spaces below, describe or quote 1-3 examples from the story "Hodl" in which Tevye expresses each of the conflicting emotions toward his daughter Hodl

Pride	Disappointment
Page number: Example:	Page number: Example:
Page number: Example:	Page number: Example:
Page number: Example:	Page number: Example:

Confusion

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Sympathy

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Admiration

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Fill in this space with an emotion of your choice:

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Page number:

Example:

Name: _____

List the arguments given in the story for why Tevye should or should not accept Chvedka as someone Chava can have a relationship with. Next to each argument, write the name of the person who makes the argument (Tevye himself makes arguments on both sides of this issue).

Why Chava Should Be Allowed to Associate with Chvedka	Why Chava Shouldn't Be Allowed to Associate with Chvedka

Choose one argument or quotation. Explain why you think it is a good argument – what makes it interesting or convincing?

Name: _____

Final Project Grab Bag

With a partner, small group, or by yourself, choose one of the following options for a final project. Successful projects should be creative and engage with the text in a meaningful way.

<p>With a partner or in a group, create a newspaper for Boiberik or the small village where Tevye lives. Write brief news and feature stories about the different characters and events. Also include appropriate advertisements and illustrations.</p>	<p>Develop a pilot for a TV show or movie based upon the characters in <i>Tevye the Dairyman</i>. Write the script, concentrating on one or perhaps two key events, which may be modified for creative purposes.</p>	<p>Create an advertising campaign to promote sale of the novel, including a poster for a bookstore, commercials for radio and television, and ads for a magazine subway car advertisement.</p>
<p>Create script for a talk show with the novel's main characters as guests. Interview the guests, asking them questions about their behavior and key events in the novel.</p>	<p>Create a graphic novel based on a scene or chapter from <i>Tevye the Dairyman</i>.</p>	<p>Design a board game based upon characters and key events in the novel. Include not only the board for playing but also rules and clear directions.</p>