The Jewish Museum is an art museum located on Fifth Avenue and East 92nd Street in New York City. The Museum’s collection spans 4,000 years and includes nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, media, and antiquities from around the world. Jewish Museum exhibitions and programs explore the intersection of art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds.

This lesson plan can be used to support discussion and exploration of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah and Jewish ceremonial objects. Teachers may expand on this lesson by exploring related works of art in the Museum’s collection listed at the end of this document. For a more extensive look at Hanukkah lamps, visit the Museum’s online collection, the Jewish Rituals audio tour, or the Objects Tell Stories: Jewish Holidays Educator Resource.
Hanukkah Lamp, Stolin (Belarus), c.1885

Find this work of art on the Jewish Museum’s website [here](#).

Lead: cast, tin Each: 2 7/8 x 1 x 15/16 in. (7.3 x 2.5 x 2.4 cm). The Jewish Museum, New York. Gift of the Chernick Family, JM 102-73.
About Hanukkah

The Hebrew word “Hanukkah” literally means “dedication,” and the festival celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE, following the Jewish victory over the Syrian army. According to accounts in the Talmud and Books of the Maccabees, the Syrian king Antiochus had forbidden Jews in the Land of Israel to practice their religion. In response, a small band of Jews, led by Judah “the Maccabee” (“the Hammer”), rose up against the Syrian army. Two miracles occurred. The Jewish rebels defeated the mighty Syrian forces, and a small bit of oil burned in the rededicated Temple for eight days—giving the Jews time to find more pure oil to keep the eternal flame lit.

Candle-lighting remains the primary ritual associated with Hanukkah. One flame is lit on the first night of the holiday, and an additional candle (or oil container) is added each night until eight lights are burning in the Hanukkah lamp. Sometimes people use the word “menorah” to refer to a Hanukkah lamp; however “menorah” refers to a candle holder with any number of branches so for Hanukkah one would use the term Hanukkah menorah or Hanukkah lamp to distinguish from other types of lamps. Generally, an additional “helper” flame, called the shamash, is lit on each night and is used to light the other flames. Hanukkah lamps are not meant to provide light for utilitarian purposes but rather to make public the miracles of Hanukkah.
About the Artwork

Each of these chairs is an individual oil receptacle. The oil would have been poured inside the seat and a wick inserted in the small hole on top. As a group, these eight lights form a Hanukkah lamp. The ninth light for the *shamash* is missing on this lamp. The two Hebrew letters on the front of each chair stand for Ner Hanukkah (Hanukkah candle) and Nes Hanukkah (Hanukkah miracle). The chairs were cast from lead. Because lead is a soft metal, it has a low melting point. The flames of the lights, therefore, caused the deterioration of the chairs over the years.

The tradition of making cast lead or pewter objects for Hanukkah was centered in Germany, Bohemia, and Eastern Europe. Children would create lead dreidels (spinning tops) from molds they often made themselves. This Hanukkah lamp is one of several chair lamps still in existence. It is not known why the chair form was chosen; however, one type of Hanukkah lamp form with a backplate, row of lights, and legs is referred to as the “bench” type. This lamp may have been a whimsical interpretation of the bench form.
Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about this Hanukkah lamp? How is the lamp different from others you may have seen?

2. This Hanukkah lamp uses oil rather than candles. What clues do you see that tell you how it was lit? Would you need anything other than oil to light this lamp?

3. What kinds of designs or motifs do you see in the chairs?

4. Look at another Hanukkah lamp in the Jewish Museum’s collection made in 2004. How is Karim Rashid’s Menoramorph lamp different from the chair lamp made in 1885?
Activities: Create your own model of a chair Hanukkah lamp

Materials:
- Paper
- Cardboard
- Scissors
- Markers
- Glue or tape

1. Cut out pieces of cardboard and paper to use for the various parts of your chair.
2. You may fold a rectangle or circle in half to create the seat and back of the chair.
3. Then, use tape and glue to add the arms and legs.
4. One way to attach your pieces of board or paper is to fold small tabs at the end of your pieces. Then apply glue or tape to the back of the tabs and press the tabs onto your chair.
5. Another technique is to cut a short slot into the center edge of each piece and slide the pieces together by connecting the slots.
6. Add color using markers and attach more decorative elements to your chair with paper.
7. Try creating multiple chairs and make 8 or 9 chairs to form your own original model of a Hanukkah lamp!

Share photos of your creation with the Jewish Museum [here](#)
Related Works of Art in the Jewish Museum’s Collection

- Karim Rashid, *Menorahmorph*, 2004, silicone and stainless steel
- Marit Meisler, *CeMMen Menorah*, 2006, concrete, stainless steel, and rubber