



Jewish Americans

Identity, History, and Experience

presented by



Institute for
Curriculum Services

Objectives

Explain how identities are composed of visible and invisible attributes, and are multifaceted

Learn about diversity within the Jewish American ethnic community

Understand the varied identities of Jewish Americans and how Jews see themselves

Understand Jewish American history, Jewish American experiences over time, and Jewish American contributions

Receive ready-to-use resources for instruction in a variety of course settings, such as world religions, world cultures, U.S. history, human geography, ethnic studies, etc.

What is Identity?

identity noun

 Save Word

iden·ti·ty | \ī-'den-tə-tē , ə-, -'de-nə-\

plural identities

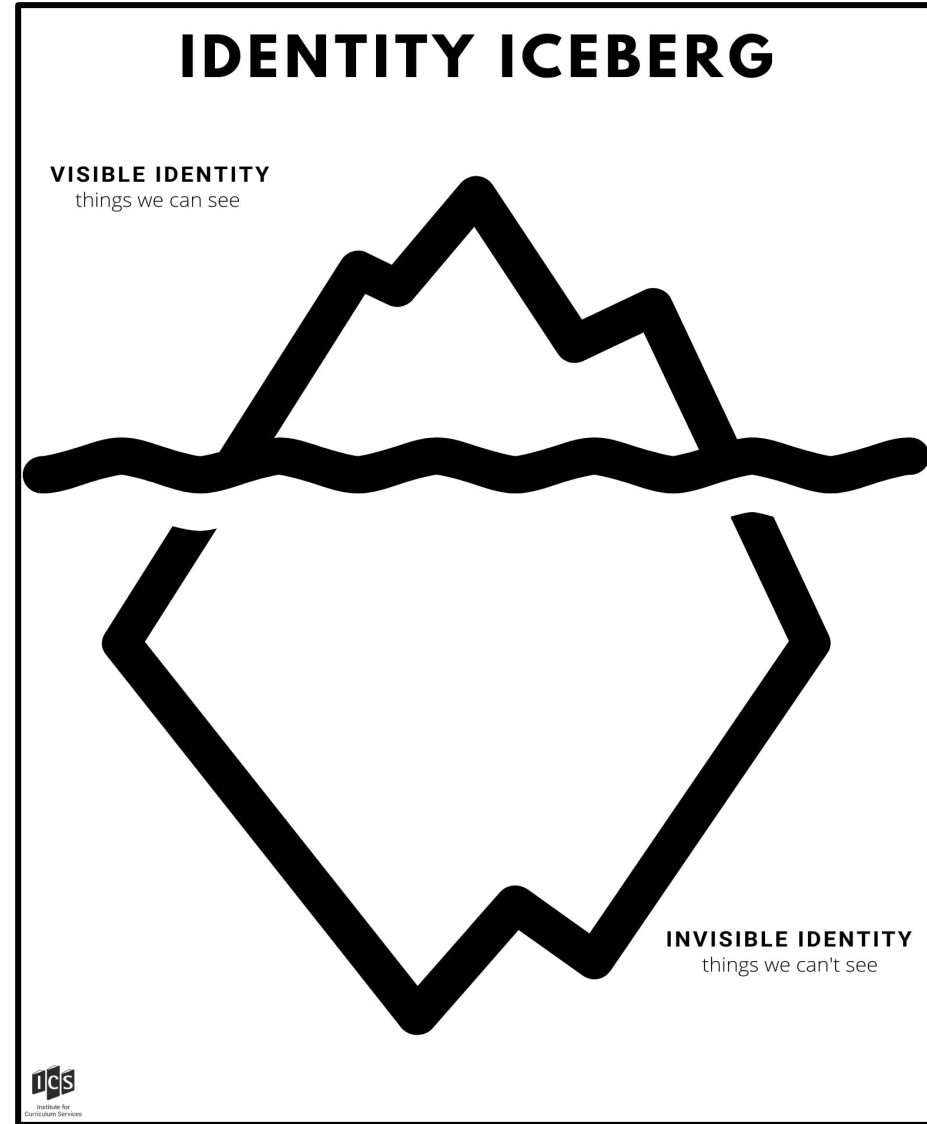
Definition of *identity*

- a** : the distinguishing character or personality of an individual : INDIVIDUALITY
- b** : the relation established by psychological identification

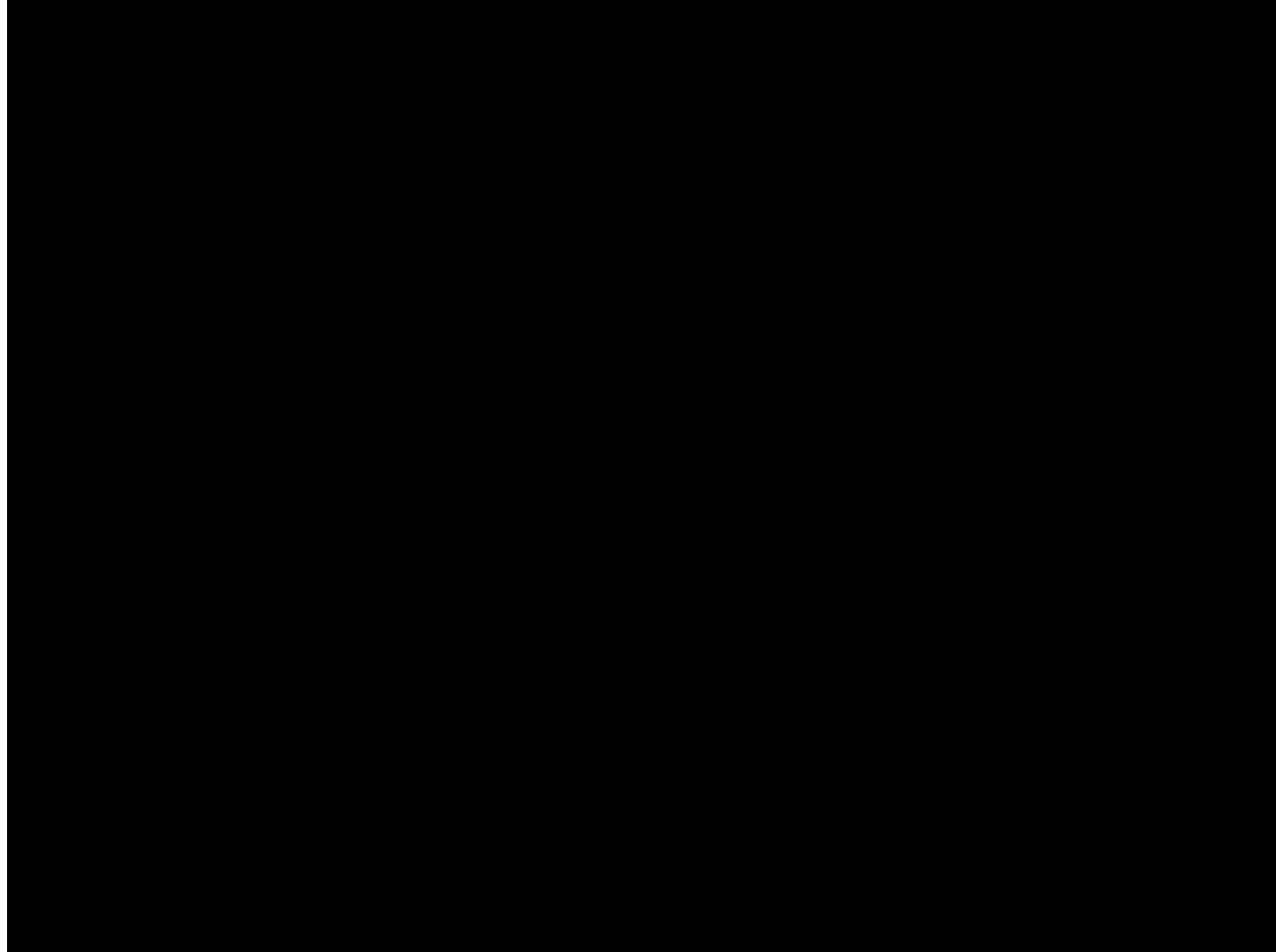


Identifying Identity Activity

Access template [HERE!](#)



What Does it Mean to be Jewish?



Historical Timeline

- **1654** - First Jews to arrive in (pre) America
 - **Sephardic Jews:** Jews of Spanish/Portuguese descent
- **1840-1924** - Central/Eastern European Jewish Immigration - **Ashkenazi Jews**
- **1924 Immigration act** - Aimed to return the U.S.'s ethnic make-up to what it had been in 1890



Question to consider:

What aspects of Jewish American history are similar/different to other ethnic groups?

Antisemitism

- The hatred, fear, discrimination, and prejudice against Jews as individuals or as a group based on age-old stereotypes and myths
 - **1898-1941:** Jews categorized as part of the “Hebrew Race” under U.S. law
 - Antisemitism continues to be a problem in America today



What aspects of Jewish American history are similar/different to other ethnic groups?

American Jews: Modern Day

- Jews have immigrated to America from all over the world
 - Middle East
 - Soviet Union
 - India
 - Ethiopia
 - Israel



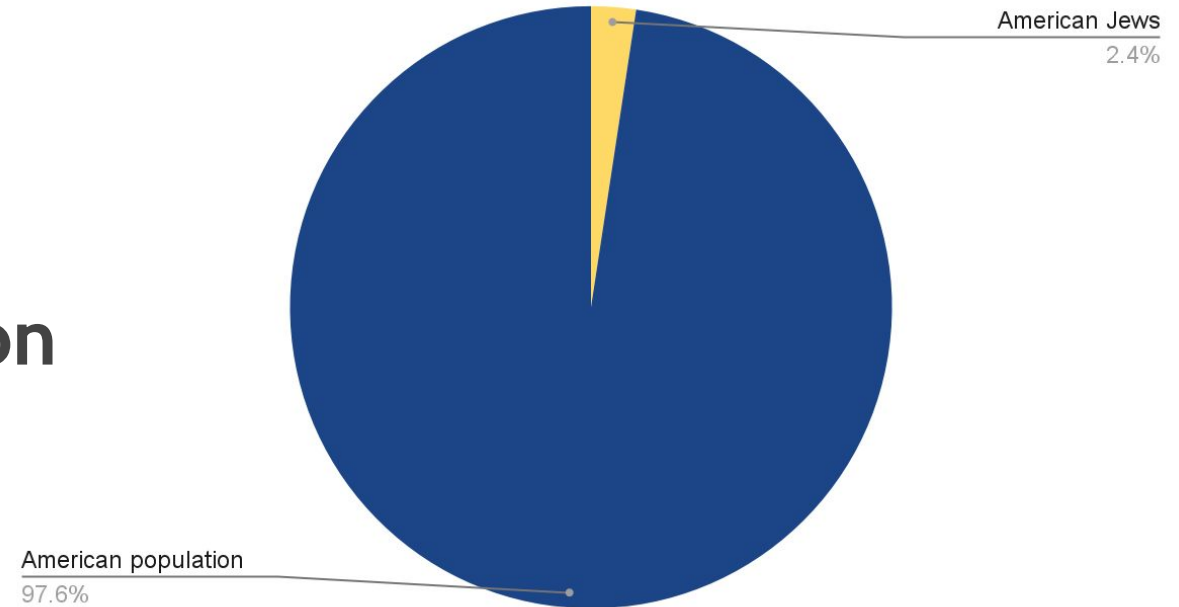
Source: Pew Research Center - Jewish Americans in 2020

What aspects of Jewish American history are similar/different to other ethnic groups?

Current Jewish Population in the U.S.

- Jews make up a little more than **2% of the U.S. population**
- **7.5 million Jews in the U.S.**
 - 5.8 million adults and 1.7 million children
- Of Jewish adults, 4.2 million identify as Jews by religion and 1.5 million identify as Jews of no religion

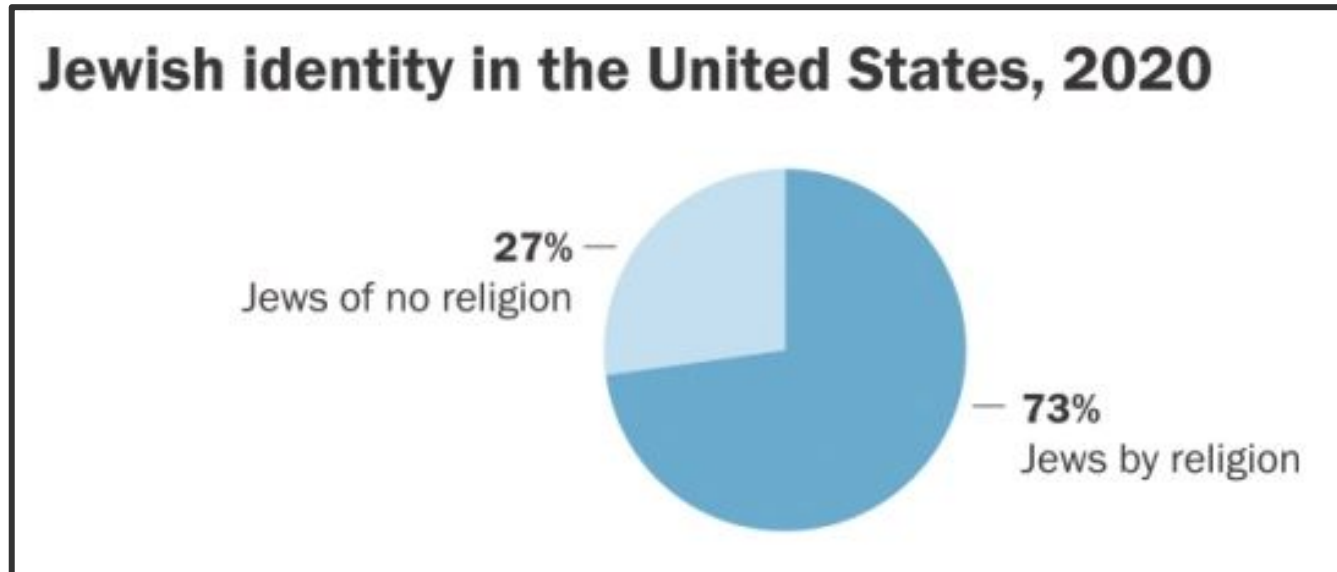
Jewish population in U.S.



Source: Pew Research Center - Jewish Americans in 2020

Current Jewish Identity in the U.S.

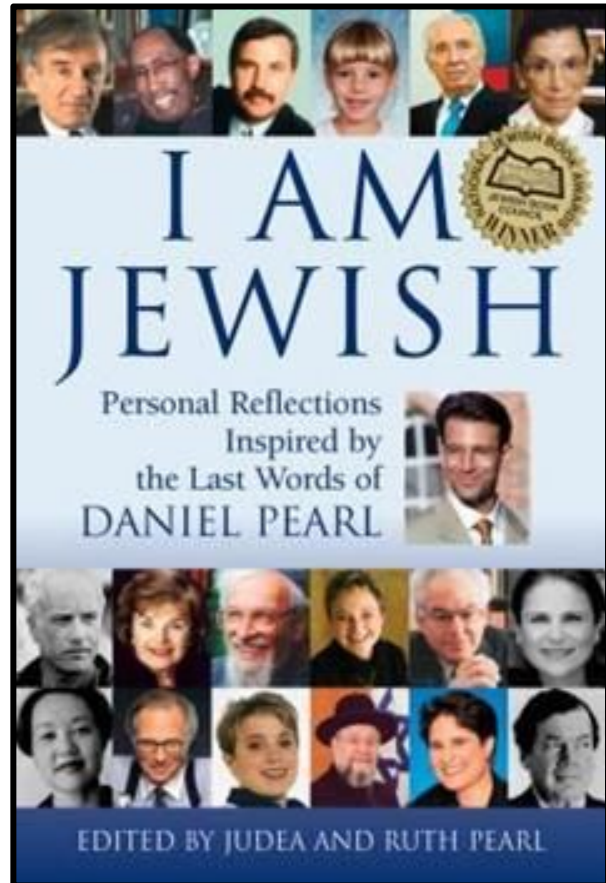
Two Expressions of Jewishness



- People are categorized as “Jews of no religion” if:
 - they answer a question about their present religion by saying they are atheist, agnostic or have no religion in particular
 - *and* they say they had a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish
 - *and* they consider themselves Jewish in some way aside from religion, such as ethnically, culturally or because of their family background



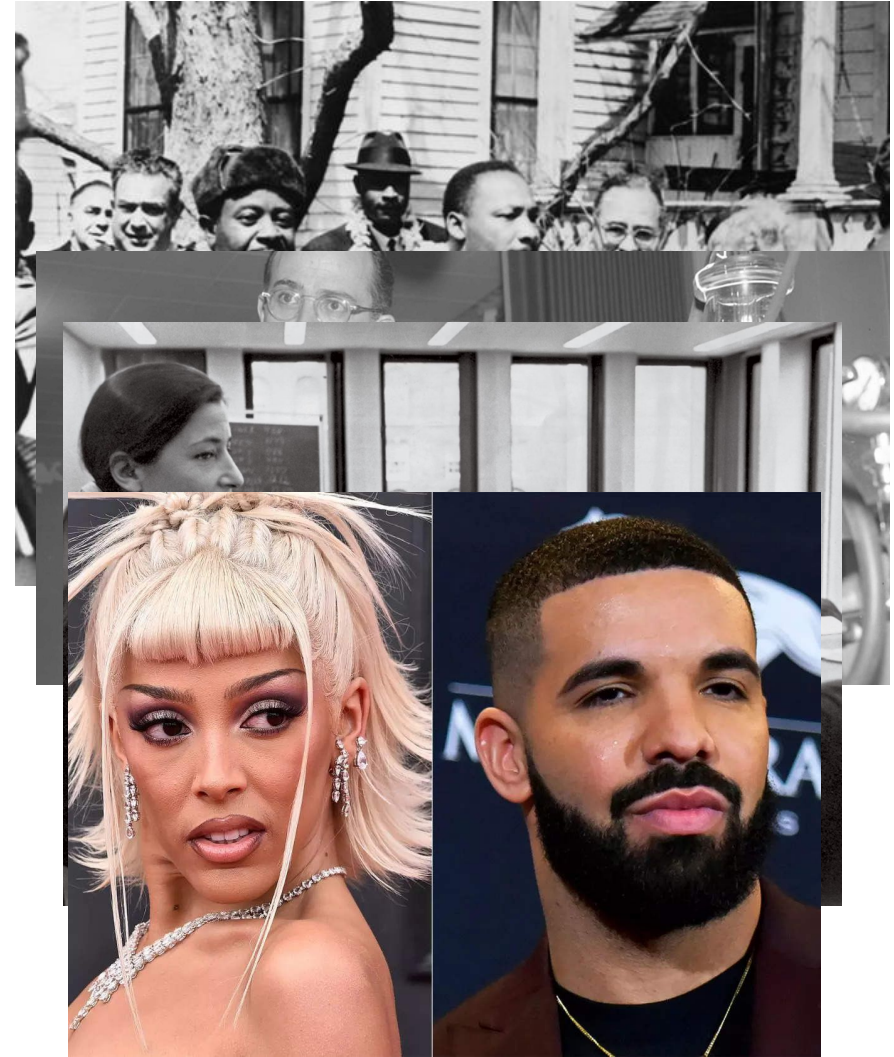
Jewish American Diversity Activity



Daniel Pearl was an American journalist for The Wall Street Journal. In 2002, he was kidnapped and later beheaded by terrorists in Pakistan. Pearl was working as the South Asia Bureau Chief of The Wall Street Journal, based in Mumbai, India. His mother is an Iraqi Jew whose family was saved from the Farhud by Muslim neighbors and his father is an Israeli of Polish Jewish descent.

Contributions to American Life

- **Civil Rights Movement:** Allies with the African American community
- **Medical Advances:** Polio vaccine, measles vaccine, mammogram, Heimlich, etc.
- **Gender Equality:** Feminist movement, marriage equality, LGBTQ rights
- **Entertainment:** Music, comedy, film – early 20th century to modern day



Did You Know?

Contributions & Fun Facts About Jewish Americans

Levi Strauss, an immigrant from Germany, invented his blue jeans in 1873.

Christopher Columbus' interpreter on his voyage to the New World was Yosef Halevy, a Catholic convert.

Songwriter Irving Berlin wrote God Bless America and White Christmas.

The words "...give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses..." on the Statue of Liberty were written by a Jewish woman, Emma Lazarus.

Superman is Jewish. His name, Kal-El, resembles the Hebrew words for "voice" and "vessel." His creator Jerry Siegel said that he was strongly influenced by antisemitism he experienced.

Yip Harburg, born to Yiddish-speaking parents from Minsk, wrote the lyrics to the Oscar-winning Over the Rainbow.

Judith Resnick was the first Jewish astronaut in space. She died in the Challenger shuttle disaster in 1986.

Immigrant Julius Meyer lived with Sioux Indians in Nebraska in 1867 and became known as Curly-Headed White Chief with One Tongue due to his honesty.

Baseball player Sandy Koufax refused to play in the first game of the 1965 World Series because it fell on Yom Kippur.

Scientist Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine in 1955.

Celebrating Jewish Americans with



Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) is an annual recognition and celebration of Jewish American achievements in and contributions to the United States of America during the month of May.

President George W. Bush first proclaimed the month on April 20, 2006, as a result of cooperation with Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), as well as the Jewish Museum of Florida and the South Florida Jewish Community.

Since then, annual proclamations have been made by Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden.

Celebrating Jewish Americans with



May is Jewish American Heritage Month



 **JAHM** JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

CELEBRATED EVERY MAY!

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

During May 2023, hundreds of organizations and Americans of all backgrounds are joining together to discover, explore, and celebrate the vibrant and varied American Jewish experience from the dawn of our nation to the present day.

Menorah by Manfred Anson. Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 2011.39.1. Donated by Dr. Aaron Feingold in honor of Zara Feingold and Rachel Feingold



Celebrating Jewish Americans with



May is Jewish American Heritage Month



Take a virtual tour of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History or virtually bring their educators into your classroom.



WEITZMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY