

The Umbrella Nobody Could Describe

Eight activities

Activity 1: Remember the story

1. What does Simcha's first sign say, and what happens to the table?
2. How does the man from the morning minyan know the umbrella taken from the table was his?
3. What does the new sign say, and what must a claimer do?
4. What happens with the green wooden-handle umbrella?

Activity 2: Fact or guess

1. The first table system returns every item to its true owner. Fact / Guess
2. The man from the morning minyan is angry when he speaks to Simcha. Fact / Guess
3. The certain man's green umbrella turns up in his son's office coat closet. Fact / Guess
4. The youth group asks to copy Simcha's sign. Fact / Guess

Activity 3: Think and write

1. "Fast and done are not the same thing." Explain what Simcha means, using the two systems.
2. The gabbai says the rule is "for the things, not against the people." How does that line keep the rule kind?
3. Why does "it's mine" fail as a test, even when nobody is lying?

Activity 4: Apply it - Rutie's lost-and-found box

The rule: an owner can be asked for what only an owner knows - the details. A feeling of mine is not proof.

1. (a) Rutie runs the lost-and-found box for her seminary's dorm floor. A girl says, "That's my water bottle," pointing at one of three identical ones. Using Simcha's rule, what does Rutie ask, and what answer would send the bottle home? (b) Another girl says, "Why should I have to prove my own stuff?" Write Rutie's answer in one or two sentences, keeping the gabbai's line in mind.
2. "The sign was doing a job a sign can't do." What job? What kinds of jobs can only a person do?
3. Simcha's brother earns the binoculars with a plan, not a claim. What does the plan prove that the claim doesn't?

Activity 5: Scrambled words (from the story)

1. MICAL
2. WORNE
3. VOLEG
4. CRAFS

Activity 6: Word work

Match each word to its meaning from the story.

1. gemach a. a claim based on facts only the rightful person has
2. proof of ownership b. a free-loan collection that lends or gives items
3. claim c. to say something is yours
4. conscience d. the inner sense of whether you did right

Activity 7: Word search

Find the eight words hidden in the grid. All words run left to right.

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C L A I M V W B F Y
D E S C R I B E R S
U M B R E L L A X J
O W N E R Y G H U P
S I G N R S T C D E
M A T C H J K V W B
P I L E U P L M N O
G A B B A I A I Q Z
X J K V W B F Y G H
U P L M N O R S T C

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The eight words: CLAIM, DESCRIBE, UMBRELLA, OWNER, SIGN, MATCH, PILE, GABBAI.

Activity 8: Your turn - the door and the details

Think of a place where things get lost and found in your life - school, shul, camp, home. Write five lines: how items are claimed now, what could go wrong with the easy way, and one "tell me about it" question that would work there.