



The Group Project Puzzle

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities

The Group Project Puzzle

Morah Batya claps her hands. "Today we begin our group projects. Each group will build a model of the Mishkan. You'll have two weeks."

Four girls move their desks together: Esther, Pessy, Dina, and Ruchie.

"I have the best idea," says Esther right away. "We should build it out of clay. I saw a picture of one, and it was amazing."

"Clay takes too long," says Pessy. "Let's use cardboard. It's faster."

"Cardboard looks ugly," says Esther.

"Clay cracks," says Pessy.

Dina and Ruchie look at each other. Neither says a word.

Esther crosses her arms. Pessy crosses hers too. For a minute, nobody speaks. The clock ticks.

Esther feels her face heat up. She wants to say, You never listen! But she stops herself. She remembers something her older sister has told her. "When you argue, you stop thinking about the project and start thinking about winning."

She takes a breath. "Okay. Let's slow down. We each have an idea. Maybe we can put all the ideas on the table."

"Fine," says Pessy.

Morah Batya has given each group a large sheet of paper. Esther writes "Ideas" on top. "Pessy, what do you like about cardboard?"

"It's lightweight, and it's easy to cut," says Pessy. "And we can paint it."

Esther writes that down. "Okay. I like clay because it can make the little details, like the utensils."

"That's true," Pessy admits. "Cardboard can't make a tiny menorah."

Dina speaks up for the first time. "What if we use both? Cardboard for the walls and the courtyard. And clay for the small things inside."

Esther looks at Pessy. Pessy looks at Esther.

"That could work," says Pessy slowly.

"Ruchie, what do you think?" asks Esther.

Ruchie's cheeks go pink. She is shy, and she doesn't often get asked. "I think we could also ask Morah if we can use real fabric for the curtains," she whispers. "It would look amazing."

"Ruchie, that's a great idea!" says Esther.

Ruchie smiles so widely that her eyes sparkle.

They divide the jobs. Pessy and Dina will build the cardboard frame. Esther will sculpt the clay pieces. Ruchie will find fabric and cut the curtains. They agree to meet at lunch on Wednesday to check their progress.

Over the next two weeks, there are some bumpy moments. On Tuesday, Pessy cuts a wall the wrong size, and Esther's face scrunches up. But she takes a breath and says, "No problem. We can fix it together." And they do.

On Thursday, Esther drops a clay table and it cracks. She feels her chest tighten. "I ruined it," she says.

"It's okay," says Dina. "We can make another."

By the end of the second week, the model sits on the big table at the front of the room. The cardboard frame stands tall. The tiny clay menorah gleams gold. The fabric curtains hang in soft folds.

When Morah Batya sees it, she is silent for a moment. Then she says, "This is wonderful. Tell me how you worked together."

"We argued at first," admits Esther. "But then we put all our ideas on the table. And it turned out better with everyone's ideas."

"That's the secret of a good team," says Morah Batya. "Nobody gives up all of their idea. But everybody gives up a little, so there's room for a bigger idea."

On the way home, Pessy says to Esther, "I'm glad we figured it out."

"Me too," says Esther. "I almost said something mean on the first day."

"I almost did too," says Pessy. "Want to do the next one together?"

"Yes. But I get the clay."

"Fine. I get the cardboard."



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What do the groups build?

2. What two materials do Esther and Pessy disagree about?

3. Whose idea is it to use both materials?

4. What does Ruchie suggest using for the curtains?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. The class has two weeks for the project. Fact / Guess
2. Ruchie is very shy. Fact / Guess
3. Esther wants to quit the project. Fact / Guess
4. A clay table cracks on Thursday. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. Why does Esther write 'Ideas' on a big paper?

2. When have you worked in a group? What was hard or easy?

3. What does 'everybody gives up a little' mean?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: MISHKAN, CLAY, CARDBOARD, TEAM, CURTAINS, IDEAS

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



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. ALYC = _____

2. ABRCODARD = _____

3. ASUTCRNI = _____

4. MHANEOR = _____

5. EMAT = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Let's put all our ideas on the table."

"I like that idea. Can I add something?"

"What do you think?"

Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Teamwork Chart

#	Idea	Who it came from	How we used it
Idea 1			
Idea 2			
Idea 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the Mishkan model with cardboard walls, clay menorah and cloth curtains.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing the Mishkan model.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. A model of the Mishkan
2. Clay and cardboard
3. Dina's
4. Real fabric

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Fact; 3 Guess; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: CLAY, CARDBOARD, CURTAINS, MENORAH, TEAM

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.