



## Curriculum Guide

### ***A Mitzvah for George Washington***

by Rachelle Burk, illustrated by Chiara Fedele

isbn 9781954354-30-2

Lexile Level 610

Guided Reading Level: M

Grade Level Equivalent: 3

Interest Level: 2-5

RRL: 20

CCSS/ELA-Literacy: W.2.1,2,3,5,6,7,8; SL.2.1,1b,1c,2,3,4,6; RF.2.3,3c,3d,3f,4,4a,4c;

L.2.3,4,4a,4b,4c,5,5a,5b,6; RL.2.1,2,3,4,5,7,10

Educational Description: Historical fiction, based on true events, third person narrative, problem solving.

Story Elements: setting, plot and character development, problem and solution, author's purpose, repeated words and phrases, illustrations enhance meaning and tone, figurative language: simile, hyperbole, metaphor. Themes: religious freedom, tolerance, diversity, hope, determination

Backmatter: Author's note

### **THEMES:**

#### *Problem-solving*

How did Bella and her friends try to show their thanks to President Washington?  
 What possible solutions are there to the problem? What would you have chosen to do?  
 Children often feel like adults ignore and that their voices don't matter. Are there situations when you wanted to express an opinion and felt that you weren't heard? What could you have done to make your feelings clear?

Have the class make a list of times they felt ignored. Pick one for the class to solve and discuss ways you all can be heard and try to make a difference.

### *Personal Action vs. Community Action*

Bella's father as head of the Jewish community was already expressing appreciation to President Washington. Why did Bella and her friends want to do so as well? Discuss when people need to make their individual voices heard, why it does and doesn't matter.

### *Religious Freedom*

Religious freedom was one of the founding principles of the United States. Why did it matter to the colonists so much? Why did the first British immigrants come to America in the first place?

Some states, such as Pennsylvania, barred Jews from holding public office, even though many fought in the Revolutionary war. Washington worked hard to change that, saying that tolerance was not enough, "as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." Rather, "every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make them afraid."

Do Jews still face prejudice in the United States? Do other religions?

### **ACTIVITIES:**

There is a poem about liberty on the base of the Statue of Liberty:

*Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Seen these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

These lines welcome immigrants into the country, assuring them of the freedom they will find here. It was written by Emma Lazarus, a descendant of the Seixas family, Bella's family. Write your own poem, celebrating what freedom means to you and your family.

Write and draw your own thank you card to George Washington. What do you like about where you live and how do you want to show your appreciation?

