

Inside and Outside the Sukkah

Framing this unit

Take a peek into a family sitting in their sukkah and celebrating sukkot! In this unit we will analyze a picture by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim from 1867 and learn about some aspects of Jewish life in Germany at the time. Then we will create a digital worksheet of our own, using observation skills and analyzing details in primary sources.

This picture by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim depicts a Jewish family celebrating the festival of Sukkot in Frankfurt. In the painting the father sits at the head of the table, holding a wine goblet and probably reciting the Kiddush, while his wife and daughter are looking at the baby. Outside of the Sukkah two blonde children with satchels on their backs (probably non-Jews) are peering curiously into the strange structure. Also pictured outside of the Sukkah is a maid bringing the family a tureen of food.

The Sukkah is made of wood, the material commonly used to construct Sukkot in Europe due to the cool weather during the festival (in contrast to Israel or the southern hemisphere). Inside the Sukkah, a candelabra hangs from the roof. It is similar to the candelabra used for lighting Shabbat candles and is designed in the shape of a Jewish star, hence its German name Judenstern. The Sukkah is also elaborately decorated with lanterns, floral wreaths, and even curtains. Of special note are the Christmas ornaments hanging from the roof of the Sukkah, probably used because they were the ornaments available in the predominantly Christian city.

Moritz Daniel Oppenheim was born in Hanau, Germany in 1800. He was one of the first recognized modern Jewish artists. He lived in the era of the Emancipation when many Jewish families were rapidly assimilating. Oppenheim, nonetheless, painted a number of portraits of traditional Jewish families performing various religious ceremonies. He also painted middle-class Germans.

Discussion

- Describe what you see in the picture: Who are the people? What are they doing?
- Describe the objects in the photograph (for example, their clothing, the decorations). What do they tell us about the people?
- Look at the expressions on the people's faces. How does this enrich your understanding of the picture?
- Is this picture representative of German Jewry at the time?
- Can you see people from different class backgrounds in the painting? Explain.
- Do you think the boys peering into the Sukkah are Jewish? Why or why not?
- In the painting the artist has frozen a moment in time. Imagine what was going on either before or after this particular moment.
- Do you think the artist wanted to convey a message in his painting? What do you think it is?
- What other questions do you have about this painting?
- Compare the Sukkah in the painting to a modern-day Sukkah. In what ways is it the same or different?

Group Activity

Create a digital worksheet using Marqueeed, an online tool for annotating images that will enable you to analyze the drawing.

Creating a digital worksheet with the image

1. Save the Sukkah image to your computer.
2. Upload the image to Marqueeed.
3. Copy the link to the image.
4. Send the link to your students.
5. Ask students to add questions or comments on the picture by highlighting the part of the picture they want to work on. To add your comments or questions, highlight the part of the picture you would like to work or comment on.

This activity could be done during class time by showing the picture on a smart board or a projector. (Students will then not need private accounts). You could also send the link to your students for individual or group study. Finally, as a flipped classroom activity, you could send the link to your students as a homework activity and then discuss the picture in the following lesson.

Primary sources in this lesson

- [Sukkot, Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 1867](#)