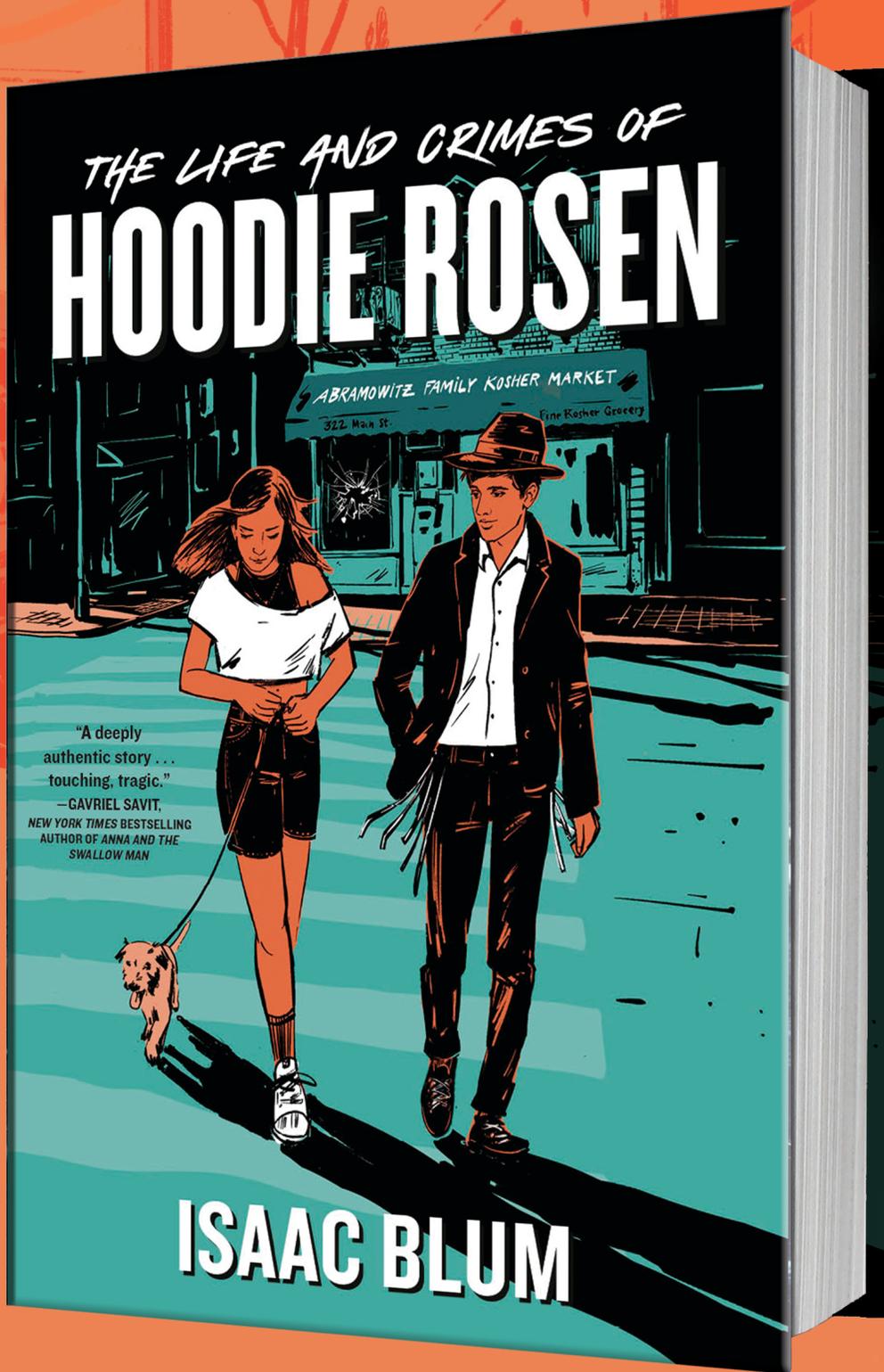


A DISCUSSION GUIDE TO



THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF HOODIE ROSEN

"A deeply authentic story . . . touching, tragic."
—GAVRIEL SAVIT,
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF ANNA AND THE
SWALLOW MAN

ISAAC BLUM



ABOUT THE BOOK

Hoodie Rosen's life isn't that bad. Sure, his entire Orthodox Jewish community has just picked up and moved to the quiet, mostly non-Jewish town of Tregaron, but Hoodie's world hasn't changed that much. He's got basketball to play, studies to avoid, and a supermarket full of delicious kosher snacks to eat. The people of Tregaron aren't happy that so many Orthodox Jews are moving in at once, but that's not Hoodie's problem.

That is, until he meets and falls for Anna-Marie Diaz-O'Leary—who happens to be the daughter of the obstinate mayor trying to keep Hoodie's community out of the town. And things only get more complicated when Tregaron is struck by a series of antisemitic crimes that quickly escalate to deadly violence.

As his community turns on him for siding with the enemy, Hoodie finds himself caught between his first love and the only world he's ever known.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Isaac Blum (he/him) is a writer and educator. He's taught English at several colleges and universities and at Orthodox Jewish and public schools. He lives with his wife in Philadelphia where he watches sports and reads books that make him laugh while showing him something true about the world. *The Life and Crimes of Hoodie Rosen* is his debut novel. You can visit Isaac online at ISAACBLUMAUTHOR.COM and follow him on Twitter and Instagram @ISAACBLUM_.

PRAISE FOR *THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF HOODIE ROSEN*

LONGLISTED FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

★ "BLUM TACKLES THEMES OF ACCEPTANCE AND COMMUNITY [IN] THIS IMPRESSIVELY DRAWN STORY."

— PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

★ "FUNNY, SMART, MOVING, COURAGEOUS, AND SO TIMELY IT ALMOST HURTS."

— KIRKUS REVIEWS, STARRED REVIEW

★ "A SHARPLY WRITTEN COMING-OF-AGE STORY."

— HORN BOOK, STARRED REVIEW



THIS GUIDE WAS CREATED BY BRAD GIBSON AND ISAAC BLUM.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

****CORRELATES TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ELA-LITERACY:**

RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.3, RL.7.4, RL.7.6; SL.7.1, SL.7.2, SL.7.3; W.7.1, W.7.2, W.7.3

RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.8, RL.8.9; SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.3; W.8.1, W.8.2, W.8.3

RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.9-10.3; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.3

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- *The Life and Crimes of Hoodie Rosen* follows an Orthodox Jewish narrator. What do you know about Judaism and Jewish culture? What are you curious to know more about?
- Hoodie's life is heavily influenced by his family's religious and cultural traditions. Do you have religious or cultural traditions that are important to your family or community? If so, how do you feel about them?
- One of the novel's major themes is cross-cultural friendship. Why might relationships between people of different backgrounds be important or meaningful?
- Hoodie faces hate and bias, specifically antisemitism (bias and/or prejudice against Jews). In your mind, where do hate and bias come from? How and why might they develop?

DURING-READING QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1 (1-13)

- Why is Hoodie not supposed to shake hands with girls? (9)
- What is Hoodie's school like? How does it differ from yours?

CHAPTER 2 (14-24)

- Why is Hoodie required to buy British (rather than American) Starburst? Why does his family have two panini presses?
- How are the expectations for Hoodie affected by the fact that he is the only boy in the family? How does he respond to those expectations? (23)

CHAPTER 3 (25-53)

- What is Anna-Marie's explanation for the antisemitic behavior of the town? (44-45) Do you think her account fully explains the behavior?
- Why is Hoodie forbidden from using Instagram or owning a smartphone? (45)
- Hoodie does not particularly like Moshe Tzvi, but also acknowledges him as his best friend (25). Use evidence from the text to explain why Hoodie feels this way. Is it possible to dislike a best friend?
- Hoodie feels conflicted about spending time with Anna-Marie when he sees that her home has a lawn sign that presents the Jewish community as a threat to Tregaron. He concludes, "She was one of them. Even if she condemned it. I resolved not to give her my number. I gave her my number" (37). Why would Hoodie give Anna-Marie his number after resolving not to?
- Rabbi Moritz tells Hoodie not to work with Anna-Marie to fight antisemitism, explaining, "You believe that if you open yourself up to the outside world, they will accept you. But they won't. We know. We have centuries of evidence. We've seen it over and over. That's why we have to have our own schools, our own businesses. It's the only way" (51). What "evidence" is Rabbi Moritz referencing? Explain whether you find his argument persuasive.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *CONTINUED*

CHAPTER 4 (54–68)

- Why is Hoodie’s father so angry with his son for defending the sanctity of desecrated Jewish headstones?

CHAPTER 5 (69–79)

- When Hoodie first sees the video of Anna-Marie dancing on TikTok, he questions why he felt the need to slam his computer shut: “[D]id I do it because it was wrong of her to be so immodest? Or was it because I’d just been told that it was wrong to look at something like that?” (76) Use evidence from the text to explain Hoodie’s motivations for this behavior.
- Hoodie reflects that while he had always questioned what he considered to be minor rules and behaviors expected in his community, he had never questioned the life path that had been set before him. Why is he now questioning the “big picture”? (76)
- When discussing the burden of adhering to his strict religious faith, Hoodie uses the metaphor of being forced to wear too many layers of clothing (77). Explain how this metaphor applies to Hoodie’s life using specific evidence from the text. What rules or practices represent different layers of clothing? Why is the path he feels forced to walk on “overgrown”? (77)
- What is Moshe Tzvi’s response to Hoodie’s question about whether the burden of adhering to their strict religious faith is “too much”? Do you agree with his perspective? Why or why not? (78)

CHAPTER 6 (80–93)

- Why would Hoodie’s family hold his baby sister near a light switch so she could flip it on Shabbos? (82)
- When Hoodie and his father are bumped into and nearly run over by hostile locals on the street, Hoodie senses that his father sees this as proof that they cannot trust or engage with people outside of their community. Do you think that this perspective is merited? Use evidence from the text to explain why or why not. (85)
- When Hoodie and his friends are confronted by Anna-Marie’s antisemitic friends, he is taken aback by their behavior. Despite being a victim of this abuse, why is he more concerned about Anna-Marie after this altercation? (95)

CHAPTER 7 (94–100)

- When his family is singing after their Shabbos dinner, Hoodie explains that he feels something “extra” in the room. How does he describe this feeling? Describe a moment in your life when you also felt something “extra” around you. (96)

CHAPTER 8 (101–126)

- Anna-Marie acknowledges to Hoodie that she holds mixed feelings about her community: “My mom is so embarrassing. So are my friends. So is my town. I feel like I’m apologizing every time I see you . . .” (106). Why does her community make her feel guilty? Why is she hesitant to distance herself from people that embarrass her?
- When Hoodie visits Anna-Marie’s home, what surprises him about it? Why is he so unsettled by this discovery? (102)
- When Hoodie visits Anna-Marie, her mother appears to be annoyed with both of them. What makes Hoodie’s visit so uncomfortable for the mayor? Why does Hoodie seem to recognize this discomfort from his experiences in his own home? (105)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *CONTINUED*

- When Hoodie acknowledges how interpretations of religious texts have been challenged and eventually changed over time, he wonders what happened to those, like him, who challenged the rules. Is Hoodie likely to be “recognized later as being right”? When have you broken a rule because you thought the rule was wrong? Were you successful in convincing anyone of your perspective? (107-108)
- Why is the mayor so determined to obstruct the Jewish community in establishing a presence in her town? (108)
- When the police order members of the Jewish community to leave their “overcrowded” market, Rabbi Friedman instructs them to stay. What should citizens do when they feel that following the law violates their religious convictions? (118–119)
- Why does Hoodie find the standoff between the police and his community leaders “embarrassing”? Do you agree that this conflict represents a failure in leadership on both sides? (119)
- When Hoodie argues to Zippy that people are all basically the same, she disagrees strongly. Why does she disagree and why does this difference make Hoodie’s behavior so offensive to his community? Do you agree with Zippy’s reasoning? (123)

CHAPTER 9 (127–130)

- What are the differences between Anna-Marie’s reaction video and her mother’s quotes in the online article? How do each of them see the violent incident? What does Hoodie think about their reactions? (128–130)

CHAPTER 10 (131–146)

- Moshe Tzvi says he wants to find a passage that will exonerate his friend. What does he find? How does he understand Hoodie’s actions? (143)

CHAPTER 11 (147–158)

- At 15, can Hoodie leave behind his family, community, and everything he knows for a girl he’s spent a few hours with? On the other hand, how can he ignore his desire to question the rules of his world, especially when he feels like breaking them is not immoral?

CHAPTER 12 (159–168)

- Why did Hoodie “give up everything” for Anna-Marie? Be specific and use evidence from the text in your response. (168)
- What are Anna-Marie’s motivations for spending time with Hoodie?

CHAPTER 13 (169–180)

- How does Hoodie describe the shooting? How does he interpret the way guns work? (172–177)

CHAPTER 14 (181–200)

- What are some of the “narratives” in the news after the shooting? Which ones (if any) do you believe are relevant to the event and why? Why do these narratives seem to be of little interest to Hoodie? (184–185)
- What does the photo of Hoodie and Anna-Marie after the shooting come to symbolize? Do you think this interpretation of the photo is correct? Explain your answer. (185)
- Hoodie recognizes that it is technically “a violation” to pray the Kaddish alone in his hospital room, but he still finds that it brings him comfort. Why is this such an appropriate way for Hoodie to mourn? (200)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *CONTINUED*

CHAPTER 15 (201–216)

- While Hoodie is uncomfortable with some of Anna-Marie’s motivations for spending time with him, why is he ultimately happy to have her in his life? (202)
- Hoodie compares his sense of his place in his own community to the feeling of a jacket that he’s outgrown. Why does he find this feeling so threatening? (203)
- Why does Hoodie pull back after kissing Anna-Marie when he had recently made a plan to marry her? (209)
- Why does Zippy give Hoodie a secret unfiltered smartphone? Will this allow him to stay connected to his community or will it drive him away? Explain your answer using evidence from the book. (213)

POST-READING QUESTIONS

- Why does Hoodie admit that part of him wishes he had no choice about what he would do with his life? Do you also ever share Hoodie’s desire to have important choices made for you? Why or why not? (206)
- Though Hoodie and Anna-Marie risk alienating their communities by spending time together, why do they both find their friendship so valuable?
- Hoodie sometimes finds adhering to his religion to be burdensome, while in other moments he finds great meaning and comfort in his faith. Is it possible for Hoodie to enjoy the benefits of being part of this community without feeling overwhelmed by its rules?
- Why is it so difficult for the mayor and other town officials to work productively with the leaders of the Jewish community? How could the issues between the two groups be resolved?
- During an argument with Hoodie, Anna-Marie claims that he could never be a permanent part of her life: “You’re like a time traveler in a sci-fi movie. You’ve come here to visit, but eventually you have to go back to your own time, you know?” Is this analogy about their relationship accurate? Why or why not?
- The antisemitism in Tregaron spreads and festers beneath the surface, then explodes. Trace its path. Where does it come from? How does it grow? (166)
- In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to fight against hate and bias? What advice would you give to Hoodie and Anna-Marie, given what they face in Tregaron?
- Describe the community Hoodie is growing up in. How does it differ from your own community? Are there similarities?
- What is Hoodie like as a narrator? How would you describe the way he narrates the book?
- Hoodie makes a lot of jokes, even in moments when he faces terror. What is the function of humor in the book? Does it serve a purpose?
- How do Hoodie and Anna-Marie grow as characters? Do they change and develop through the novel? If so, how?
- What do you think are the major themes of the novel? How are they developed?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

****CORRELATES TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ELA-LITERACY:**

SL.7.4, SL.7.5; W.7.4, W.7.6, W.7.7, W.7.8, W.7.9 | SL.8.4, SL.8.5; W.8.4, W.8.6, W.8.7, W.8.8, W.8.9
SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.5; W.9-10.4, W.9-10.6, W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9

A HISTORY OF ANTISEMITISM

When facing hostility and discrimination in Tregaron, leaders of the Jewish community reference both contemporary antisemitism as well as historical instances of oppression overcome by their ancestors. Research and present on one of the following topics referenced in the book to learn more about the history and sources of antisemitism:

- **The Spanish Inquisition**
- **The Kiev Pogroms**
- **The Holocaust**
- **Holocaust denial**
- **Antisemitism in response to Jewish moneylending**

Your presentation should explain:

1. when and where these events occurred (or the ideas originated);
2. the hypocrisy and fraudulence of the arguments used to justify the oppression or slandering of Jews;
3. the harm that resulted from these events or ideas;
4. the response by the Jewish community.

For historical examples, facts and figures should be used to capture the scale of the event, while presentations on antisemitic ideas should carefully identify their many falsehoods and distortions. A final reflection slide should explore what you have learned about the phenomenon of antisemitism during the course of your research.

OR CELEBRATING JEWISH CULTURE

Though Hoodie questions the rules prescribed by his faith, he also finds meaning and comfort in many of these rituals. Research and present on one of the following topics referenced in the book to learn more about Jewish culture:

- **Shabbos (also known as Shabbat or the Jewish Sabbath)**
- **The Torah and the Talmud (also known as the Written Torah and the Oral Torah)**
- **Purim**
- **Simchat Torah (also known as Simchas Torah)**
- **The Kaddish**

Your presentation should explain:

1. the purpose of the rituals, holidays, or texts;
2. examples of important passages from the texts, or specific prayers or rituals that are part of these holidays;
3. images of the Jewish community engaging in these rituals or of religious ceremonies that use these texts;
4. how the celebration of these holidays or understanding of the texts have changed over time.

A final reflection slide should explore what you have learned about Jewish culture during the course of your research.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

WRITING FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

****CORRELATES TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ELA-LITERACY:**

W.7.3, W.7.4 | W.8.3, W.8.4 | W.9-10.3, W.9-10.4

While the first-person point of view offers great insight into Hoodie’s mind, the reader is left to infer what other characters are thinking throughout the story. Write a diary entry from the point of view of a supporting character that explains how this person understands an important conflict in the story:

- **Anna-Marie:** Why am I hanging out with Hoodie?
- **Zippy:** Why did I buy Hoodie an unfiltered smartphone even though I know our father would not permit it?
- **Moshe Tzvi:** What do I think about Hoodie spending time with Anna-Marie after looking through the holy texts for evidence to support him?
- **Hoodie’s father:** Why am I so angry that Hoodie tried to clean the vandalized Jewish headstones with Anna-Marie?

In your diary entry, be sure to use first person pronouns (such as “I,” “me,” and “my”) and to base your understanding of the character in evidence from the text. You should also try to capture the tone you believe this character would use. (Tone can be understood as the mood created by the author’s word choice. For example, Hoodie’s tone is often sarcastic, irreverent, and understated.)

When working on this creative writing assignment, make sure to address the following questions:

1. How does this conflict make the character feel and why do they feel that way?
2. How would this character like to see this conflict resolved?
3. How does the character feel more generally about Hoodie?
4. What (if anything) is inaccurate or incomplete about Hoodie’s perception of this character as presented in the book?

PERSONAL ESSAY PROMPTS

****CORRELATES TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ELA-LITERACY:**

W.7.1, W.7.4, W.7.5 | W.8.1, W.8.4, W.8.5 | W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.5

Choose a prompt to write an essay exploring one of the central themes of the book:

- **If you feel out of place in your community, should you try to change your feelings or change your community?**
- **When deciding what to do with one’s life, do more choices always lead to more happiness? (In other words, would people be happier with a more limited set of potential “life paths”?)**
- **If you believe that a rule is wrong, should you break it or follow it until you can convince others of your perspective?**

In answering any of these prompts, be sure to provide a clear thesis statement and specific, relevant evidence for each of your supporting arguments.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

CREATE A TEXT CHAIN

****CORRELATES TO THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ELA-LITERACY:**

W.7.3, W.7.4 | W.8.3, W.8.4 | W.9-10.3, W.9-10.4

Though texting is central to Hoodie and Anna-Marie’s relationship throughout the story, the book ends with Hoodie finally having the ability to send her pictures, memes, and emoji.

Drawing on what you learned about the two characters from the book and where you think the story is taking them, create a “future” text chain between Hoodie and Anna-Marie. Try to tell the story of where you think their lives (and their relationship) is headed through these texts, and be sure to incorporate all of the digital media that you think the characters would use in their conversation.



RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT JEWISH IDENTITIES AND ANTISEMITISM:

(THIS IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE, BUT IT’S A GOOD START FOR MOST TEACHERS)

- Facing History and Ourselves’ [antisemitism and religious intolerance resources](#)
- The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)’s tools and resources for [anti-bias education](#)
- A classroom activity from the ADL titled Anti-Semitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist
- The United States Holocaust Museum’s [tools and resources](#)
- Learning for Justice’s free documentary film [One Survivor Remembers](#) and teacher’s guide to this resource on the Holocaust
- LFJ’s [school climate resources](#), including [Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#)
- Selections from the LFJ Student Text library: “[Out of Auschwitz](#),” “[About Feeling Jewish](#),” “[Danger on My Doorstep](#),” “[Letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport](#),” and “[What Is Talmud?](#)”

GLOSSARY

THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF HOODIE ROSEN BY ISAAC BLUN

WORDS / TERMS:

Abba (Hebrew) - Father.

Aleinu (Hebrew) - One of the most common Jewish prayers, recited in most Jewish services.

Am ha'aretz (Hebrew) - Literally “people of the earth,” it can be used to mean an ignorant or uneducated person.

Apikores (Hebrew) - Heretic, apostate, one who believes and/or acts contrary to generally accepted religious teachings.

Apikorsim (Hebrew) - Plural version of “apikores.”

Chasidism (Hebrew) - A Jewish religious movement, a sect of ultra-Orthodox Judaism.

Cherem (Hebrew) - Exile or excommunication from a Jewish religious community.

Chet (Hebrew) - A sin, wrongdoing, or transgression.

Chumash (Hebrew) - The Torah in book form. If the Hebrew bible is written on a scroll, it's called a Torah. If it's printed as a book, it's called a Chumash.

Cubit - A biblical measurement of length, about eighteen inches.

Eema (Hebrew) - Mother.

Eruv (Hebrew) - A special space that allows Sabbath-observant Jews to do activities that are otherwise forbidden on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, there are things you're permitted to do in your home that you aren't permitted to do in public. An eruv allows a certain amount of outside space (a city block, a neighborhood) to function as “home.” For example, it is generally accepted that you cannot carry a child outside of your home on the Sabbath, but you can carry a child within an eruv, because the eruv extends the boundaries of your home. So if your home and synagogue are both within an eruv, you can carry your baby to the synagogue.

Farshtunken (Yiddish) - Stinky or nasty.

Frum (Yiddish) - Literally “pious,” a frum Jew is an observant, religious Jew. “Frum” is often used as a synonym for “orthodox.”

TWO NOTES ABOUT THIS GLOSSARY:

1.

Almost all of these words and names are transliterations, meaning that they are traditionally written with the Hebrew alphabet, and you will find a variety of Roman alphabet spellings. This glossary provides only one spelling, but know that the spelling here is arbitrary and not an endorsement of any particular transliteration system.

2.

The definitions provided are in the author's words. The “correct” definitions of some of these words are up for (vigorous) debate, so know that the definitions here are not supposed to be . . . definitive.

WORDS / TERMS:

Gefilte fish (Yiddish) - Minced fish formed into a patty.

Gemara (Hebrew/Aramaic) - A collection of rabbinical commentary on the Talmud (the Oral Torah). Sometimes the word “Gemara” is used to stand in for the entire Talmud, even though it technically refers to only one component.

Gentile - As a noun, it means non-Jew. As an adjective, it means non-Jewish.

Goyishe (Yiddish) - Non-Jewish, the adjective version of the noun “goy” or plural noun “goyim.”

Goyim (Hebrew/Yiddish) - Non-Jews.

Halacha (Hebrew) - Jewish religious law, the rules of observant Judaism.

Halachic (Hebrew) - the adjective version of “halacha” (see: halacha).

HaShem (Hebrew) - Literally “the name,” a common way to refer to God.

Havdalah (Hebrew) - The religious ceremony that marks the end of the Sabbath, recited at sundown each Saturday.

Judaica - Items related to Jewish life or Jewish religious practice. Examples of Judaica include menorahs, prayer shawls, and tefillin.

Kaddish (Aramaic) - A Jewish prayer of mourning.

Kashrut (Hebrew) - The laws of kosher food, the rules about what foods are permitted and not permitted to observant religious Jews.

Kippah (Hebrew) - A small cloth cap, usually worn by Jewish men.

Kosher (Hebrew) - Literally “clean,” “pure,” or “proper,” it is usually used in reference to food. If a food is “kosher,” you are allowed to eat it under Jewish religious law.

Kofer ba-ikkar (Hebrew) - Heretic, apostate, similar to “apikores.”

Maven (Yiddish) - Literally “expert,” it is often used mockingly to mean “self-proclaimed expert.”

Midrash (Hebrew) - Rabbinical commentary on an aspect of the Torah or another holy text.

Mincha (Hebrew) - The afternoon Jewish prayer service, following Shacharis (morning prayers), preceding Maariv (evening prayers).

Mishegoss (Yiddish) - Crazy.

Mitzvahs (Hebrew) - The commandments of Judaism, derived from the Torah.

Nivul peh (Hebrew) - Foul or inappropriate language.

Nu (Yiddish) - Used to replace the English “well” or “so,” especially at the beginning of a sentence, or as an interjection.

WORDS / TERMS:

Oyev (Hebrew) - Enemy.

Pesha (Hebrew) - An act of rebellion.

Purim (Hebrew) - A Jewish holiday. It commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from death at the hands of a Persian official.

Putz (Yiddish) - Literally “penis,” usually used as an insult.

Rabbi (Hebrew) - A Jewish religious leader, the Jewish equivalent of a priest, minister, imam, et cetera.

Rebbe (Hebrew) - Another word for rabbi.

Sha (Yiddish) - Be quiet, hush.

Shabbos (Yiddish) - The Jewish day of rest, the Sabbath, also known as “Shabbat” in Hebrew.

Schmear (Yiddish) - A spread to put on food. It often refers specifically to cream cheese.

Shacharis (Hebrew) - The morning Jewish prayer service, preceding Mincha (afternoon prayers) and Maariv (evening prayers).

Shema (Hebrew) - A Jewish prayer, the first section of which is recited before bed.

Sheitel (Yiddish) - A wig worn by observant Jewish married women in accordance with the tradition that married women cover their head/hair.

Shiva (Hebrew) - A weeklong Jewish mourning period following the death of a family member.

Shtender (Yiddish) - A podium or tabletop stand often used to hold an open book.

Shtetl (Yiddish) - A small Jewish town. The term often refers specifically to towns/villages in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust.

Shulchan Aruch (Hebrew) - A book on halacha, Jewish religious law. In English it is often referred to as the Code of Jewish Law. (See: halacha)

Simchas Torah (Hebrew) - More commonly spelled “Simchat Torah,” it is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the completion of the yearly Torah reading cycle. A portion of Torah is read each week at the synagogue, and Simchas Torah marks the end of the reading cycle and the beginning of the next one.

Sitra achra (Aramaic) - Literally “the other side,” it is the Jewish realm of evil spirits.

Soneh (Hebrew) - Literally “hater,” it can be used to mean “enemy.”

Talmud (Hebrew) - The Oral Torah. A central Jewish religious text, it includes holy laws and teachings passed on orally at first, but eventually written down by ancient rabbis. It also includes more contemporary commentaries on the original teachings.

WORDS / TERMS:

Tefillin (Hebrew) - A pair of black boxes and leather straps worn (traditionally by Jewish men) on the head and arm during weekday morning prayers. The boxes contain small scrolls that have Torah verses written on them.

Teshuvah (Hebrew) - Literally “return,” it is the act of repentance or atonement in Judaism.

Torah (Hebrew) - The first five books of the Hebrew bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The word “Torah” often refers specifically to a scroll, while the word “Chumash” is used when the same text is printed in book form.

Tu B’Av (Hebrew) - A minor Jewish holiday that celebrates romantic love and the beginning of the Jerusalem grape harvest.

Tzitzis (Hebrew) - Ritual tassels usually worn by observant Jewish men, hanging below the waist. The tassels are supposed to remind the wearer of God’s commandments.

Tznius (Hebrew) - The Jewish religious idea of modesty, particularly when it comes to the way one dresses and acts.

Yasher koach (Hebrew) - Literally “may your strength be firm,” it is often used to mean “thank you.”

Yeshiva (Hebrew) - A school that focuses on Jewish religious education.

Yom Zeh L’Yisrael (Hebrew) - A Jewish hymn, often sung on the Sabbath.

Zichrono livracha (Hebrew) - Literally “may his memory be a blessing,” it is a statement to honor the dead.

Z’miros (Hebrew) - Jewish hymns, usually sung around the Sabbath dinner table.

PEOPLE:

Chofetz Chaim (1838–1933) - A rabbi best known for his writings on Jewish ethics.

Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943) - A rabbi and historian.

Ibn Ezra (late 1000s to mid-1100s) - A medieval rabbi and Torah commentator.

Rashi (1040–1105) - A medieval rabbi best known for his extensive commentaries on both Torah and Talmud.

Maimonides (mid-1100s to early 1200s) - A medieval rabbi and Jewish philosopher.

Nachmanides (1194–1270) - A medieval rabbi and Jewish philosopher.

Shimon bar Yochai (100s) - A rabbi best known for writing about Jewish mysticism, as well as Jewish law and ethics.

