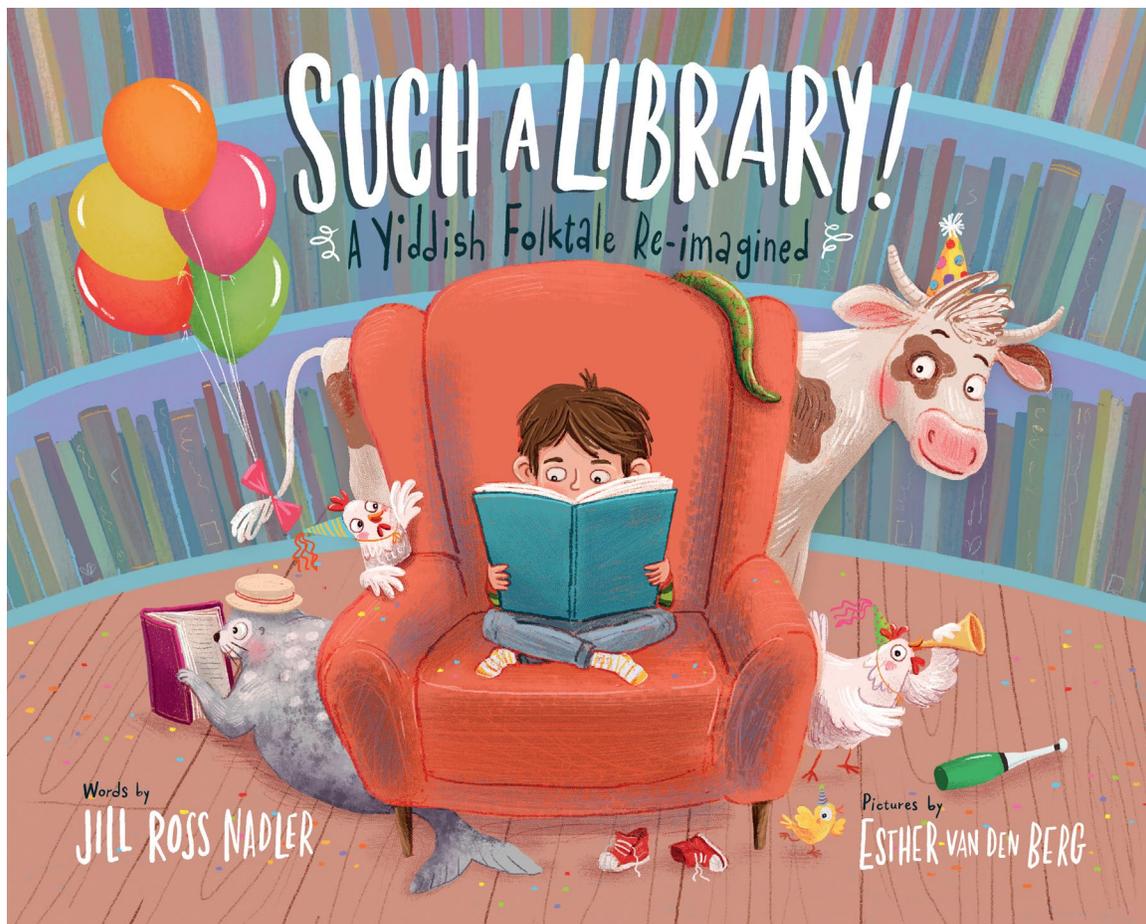


A Teacher's Guide for
SUCH A LIBRARY!:
A YIDDISH FOLKTALE RE-IMAGINED

written by Jill Ross Nadler
illustrated by Esther van den Berg



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Praise for *Such a Library!: A Yiddish Folktale Re-Imagined*

“...this imaginative retelling is an absolute delight.”

—School Library Journal

Story Summary

SUCH A LIBRARY! is a retelling of the old Yiddish folktale, “It Could Always Be Worse”

The book begins with a retelling of the traditional tale of a man in the shtetl who lives in a very crowded house and his rabbi’s sage advice—to bring in the chicken, and the cow and the horse and the ducks! Finally the man cannot take it, and the rabbi tells him to take all the animals out. “Ah quiet,” says the man contentedly.

The book then transitions to the Whisper Oaks Public Library where Stevie is trying to read his book. But the library is too noisy.

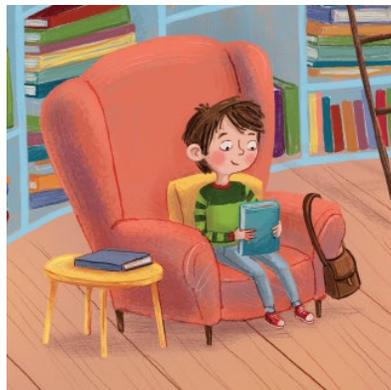
Stevie goes up to the librarian, Miss Understood. When Stevie complains, “It’s like a party in here,” Miss Understood exclaims, “That’s a great idea!” And out of her magical book pops... a party.

When Stevie complains that it’s like a zoo, Miss Understood opens her magical book again and out pops... a zoo.

Then Stevie complains that it’s like a circus, and, oh no!, out pops a circus. There is even a rabbi on a flying trapeze!

Finally, Stevie has had enough. And Miss Understood opens her magic book and takes the party, the zoo and the circus back inside.

Now Stevie can read in the once “noisy” library.
“Ah, quiet,” says Stevie.



About the Author



Jill Ross Nadler has had a varied career with jobs that include professional storyteller, children's television host, and stilt-walking toy soldier. She's the co-founder of Page Turner Adventures, a touring theater company that inspires kids to collect, tell, and write stories. She's written leveled readers for Fountas & Pinnell and a middle grade novel about an unusual girl who visits the world's strangest roadside attractions. In addition to stories, Jill collects names. She's been known as both Riley Roam and Storyologist, Page Turner. When she's not writing or performing, Jill can be found curled up with a good book, visiting weird museums, or creating robots out of Altoid tins. She lives in South Florida with her husband and way too many cats.

About the Illustrator



Esther van den Berg was born and raised in a small Dutch village where she spent a happy childhood reading books, building huts, and drawing the things that surrounded her. Her love for creating things got her into art school, where she graduated as an illustrator some years later. Since then, many of her illustrations have been featured in books, magazines, and animations. Besides illustrating for others, Esther also writes and illustrates her own picture books. She likes to draw animals and humans alike and especially loves how they sometimes resemble each other in all their quirky ways. Esther lives in the lovely city of Amersfoort with her partner and their two daughters

Prior to Reading (help to activate students' prior knowledge):

Ask students:

What might you do if you were in a place that was very crowded and noisy?

Discuss possible solutions.

Additional Pre-Reading Activity – Story Comparison

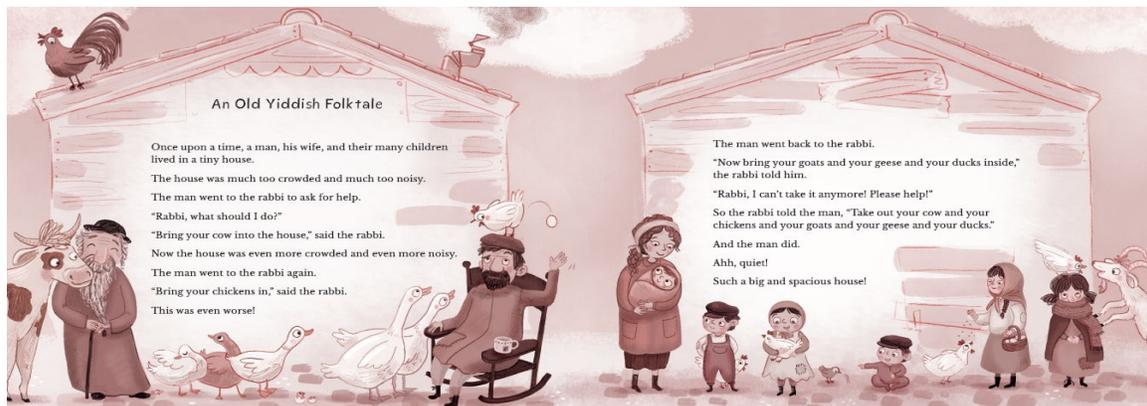
Read various versions, both traditional and modern, of the traditional folktale.

These versions could include:

It Could Always Be Worse by Margot Zemach (winner of the Caldecott Medal)

A Crowded Farmhouse Folktale by Karen Rostoker–Gruber and Illustrated by Kristina Swarner

Oy Vey! Life in a Shoe by Bonnie Grubman (author of *Bubbe and Bart's Matzoh Ball Mayhem*) and illustrated by Dave Mottram



Discuss: How are these versions alike? How are they different?

Possible Post-Reading Activities:

LITERATURE / STORY ANALYSIS:

SETTING:

How does the setting affect a story?

How is *Such a Library!* different being set in the Whisper Oaks Public Library than if it were set in the shtetl?

How is it the same?

STORY COMPARISON / CHARACTER:

How similar does this version feel to the original folktale?

How different does it feel?

How is *Such a Library!* similar to and different from other versions of the folktale you read?

How does Miss Understood and her magical misunderstandings affect the story?

STRONG VERBS:

Notice how the author, Jill Ross Nadler, uses wonderfully strong verbs in her writing.

What strong verbs can you use when you write your own stories?

WRITING:

Work as a class, in small groups or as individuals—

How might you write your own version of this traditional Yiddish folktale?

What new setting could you put the story in? How would that setting impact the story?

Write your own version of the traditional folktale

ART:

Illustrate your own re-imagined version of the folktale.



ETHICS / VALUES:

Discuss the phrase from Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) included in the backmatter of the book:

“Who is rich? The one who is happy with what he has.”

What does this phrase mean?

How does it apply to the story?

How could you apply this lesson to your own life?

DRAMA:

Act out your own version of *Such a Library!*

Children can take turns being:

Miss Understood, the magical librarian with a chicken in her hair

Stevie the young library patron who wants quiet

the various animals (including the many chickens!).

the party people, the zoo animals the clowns from the circus.

(Someone can even be the rabbi on a flying trapeze.)

