



BRONTORINA

Author: James Howe

Illustrator: Randy Cecil

Jewish Value: Persevere—*Hatmadah* הַתְּמַדָּה

Additional Value:

Be Inclusive, Don't Place a Stumbling Block—*Lifnei Aver* לִפְנֵי עוֹר

Enduring Understandings

- Believe in yourself, never give up, and you will succeed.
- Each person is special and unique in his or her own way.
- Treat each person with respect.

Book Summary

Brontorina is a charming dinosaur “who was rather large—too large to fit in Madame Lucille’s dance studio. And Brontorina did not have the right shoes.” Yet, she is determined to follow her dream of becoming a ballerina. She doesn’t give up and with the love and support of the other story characters, her dream comes true. An inspiration to young children, Brontorina reminds us that with hard work, determination, will, and the support of friends, anything is possible.

Be Inspired: Consider the ideas included as starting points, as you and your students explore, discover, and live the values. Be sure to elicit and encourage student and parent participation, consistently reinforcing the values being addressed. Allow lessons to authentically develop and change based on engagement and interests.



For the Educator Jewish Thought, Text, and Traditions

(For more information on Jewish values, visit www.jewishlearningmatters.com.)

The Jewish value of *hatmadah*—to persevere is about staying on task and not giving up. Perseverance is when you show commitment, pride, and a positive attitude when completing tasks. Perseverance is the ability to stick to something and complete a task even though difficult circumstances may try to prohibit you from finishing. You show perseverance whenever you keep trying in spite of obstacles or discouragement.

Our tradition asserts that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would never have succeeded in entering a covenant between G-d and the Jewish people had it not been for their extraordinary perseverance. Maimonides, in his *Mishneh Torah*, records that Abraham, for example, withstood ten major trials: suffering exile, twice; the abduction of his wife, Sarah, twice; the binding of Isaac; the sending away of his son Ishmael; the war with the four kings; the prophetic vision of his descendants' enslavement and exile; Nimrod's attempt to murder him; and the danger of undergoing circumcision at an advanced age.

Perseverance, then, is anchored in hope; and hope is rooted in the belief that things will get better.

“You are not obligated to complete a task, but nevertheless you are not free to leave it.” -*Pirke Avot* 2:20

“A righteous person can fall seven times and rise.” -Proverbs 24:16

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does perseverance connect with the notion of being determined?
2. Maimonides would explain that in order to persevere, we must hold ourselves responsible for all the challenges that we face. Do you agree with his understanding?
3. How can you incorporate the value of perseverance in the classroom?



Jewish Every Day Incorporate Jewish Values

Integrate the celebration of perseverance in daily activities. At the end of each day, involve students in a reflection of what was accomplished! Create a “We Did It!” bulletin board or picture frame to document the day’s work through pictures, illustrations, or words, and place them on the “We Did It!” display.

Place the “We Did It!” display near the door so that family members who pick up students at the end of the day will easily see and celebrate the students’ hard work and collaboration. Update daily or weekly as appropriate.



Materials and Resources

MATERIALS

- Copy of *Brontorina*
- Introducing the Story: artifacts representing characters and plot from the story, such as a plastic *Apatosaurus* (brontosaurus), small plastic toy figures of a boy and a girl, large and small pairs of shoes, a pair of ballet slippers, a tutu, etc.

TECHNOLOGY

- HooplakidzTV’s “I’m a Dinosaur-Apotosaurus”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl_T8Ubn2E4search
- Sesame Street’s “Don’t Give Up” with Bruno Mars: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWp6kkz-pnQ>
- “Parade of Colors” (an example of diversity): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXTaknCm0lg>
- Teacher resource: Building self-esteem in children: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/09/27/girls-self-esteem_n_978416.html



Sharing the Story

INTRODUCING THE STORY

For strategies for teaching vocabulary, see Appendix, Vocabulary Strategies.

What's in the bag? Play a guessing game by giving clues that pertain to each of the following items placed in a large brown bag: a plastic figure of an *Apatosaurus* (brontosaurus), a small plastic figure of a boy and girl toy, ballet slippers, and a tutu.

- Show the students the cover of the book and ask, "What do you see? How do you think the things in the bag go together with the book?"
- Explain that Brontorina is an *Apatosaurus*, but we know this type of dinosaur more by the name brontosaurus.
- Ask, "Why do you think the book is called *Brontorina*?" Would students prefer *Brontorina* or *Apatorina*? Take a class vote.
- Have students look at the cover of the book again and ask, "What do you think this story might be about?"
- Tell students that there is something about Brontorina that is very admirable, that she shows something called *perseverance*. Ask students what they know about this word, and ask them to share their thoughts. If this is an entirely new word to them, use examples to explain the quality in a way that will resonate with most young children, such as, trying again and again and again, being patient and willing to work hard, or continuing to work, even when the job is hard, and never giving up.

Before reading the story, explain the following:

- This book is about a dinosaur named Brontorina, who has a dream of becoming a dancer. Help students understand what it means to have a dream or an important goal to do something special. What are their dreams?
- Discuss and demonstrate the meaning of ballet terms such as *plié*, *relevé*, *arabesque*, and *jeté*. Give students the opportunity to experiment with these ballet movements.
- Point out the speech bubbles and explain that they are coming from the person who is saying the words that are inside the bubble.
- Ask the students to identify things that are similar and different among students in class, for example, hair color and length, eye color, number of siblings, pets, favorite toys, activities they do, books they read, etc. List some of them and guide students to understand that while they are all individuals, they are all children and about the same age, and there are many ways in which they are similar as well. As appropriate, introduce a Venn diagram to graphically illustrate similarities and differences.



Sharing the Story

continued

READING THE STORY

*Read the story aloud, stopping when appropriate to explore illustrations, address comments, clarify, predict, and guide students' understanding of the story and the values to **persevere**—**hatmadah** and to **be inclusive, don't place a stumbling block**—**lifnei aver**.*

Discuss the following:

- Brontorina said that she had the heart of a ballerina. Guide students in understanding what Brontorina means by this.
- Did Madame Lucille think Brontorina could be a ballerina? What things did she do that made you think this? (You may wish to ask this at different times during the story, as Madame Lucille's opinion keeps changing.)
- Stop after Clara tells Brontorina not to give up because her mother was working on a surprise. Ask students what they think the surprise could be. Ask if they can think of other reasons that Brontorina should not give up.
- After reading the line in which Madame Lucille says, "[My] studio is too small," stop and ask students how this problem might be solved.



Sharing the Story

continued

AFTER THE STORY

Go back and have students identify pictures in the story that highlight important happenings. Discuss them in relation to our Jewish values. For example:

- In what ways was Brontorina similar to the other children (not only in physical qualities but in other things as well, such as things they all enjoy, etc.)? In what ways was she different?
- How did the other characters treat Brontorina? What did they do to make her feel special?
- Judaism teaches that we must not wait to do a good deed or *mitzvah*. How might the story have ended differently if Clara's mother had waited to make the shoes for Brontorina?
- Reinforce the earlier discussion of what it means to have a dream, something students would really like to be able to do someday. What things did Brontorina do in order to follow her dream of becoming a ballerina? How did she demonstrate perseverance—*hatmadah*?

What is your dream?

Ask students what things they would really like to be able to do someday that will take practice and hard work. Brainstorm and list these ideas.

- Have students draw themselves doing one very special thing they each would like to accomplish. Have them add a speech bubble to share their thoughts.
- Create a class "Dreams" book with their drawings and thoughts. Discuss with students how some of their dreams are different from each others' and how some may be similar.
- Have students watch the Sesame Street video "Don't Give Up," with Bruno Mars: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWp6kkz-pnQ>. Ask students what Grover and Telly were trying to learn and what happened. What did this video say about having a goal (or dream)?
 - Reread the completed class "Dreams" book, and after each page, repeat one or more of the phrases from the video's song, such as, "Keep on Trying" or "No, no, no, don't give up."



Explore, Discover, and More

Extension and Reinforcement Activities

SWEET REWARDS OF PERSEVERANCE

COOKING

Demonstrate the concept of perseverance by involving students in making whipped cream!

- This activity can be done as a class, with one large jar, or individually, with baby food jars.
- Put cold heavy whipping cream and sugar into the jar and ask students to shake the jar until the ingredients morph into whipped cream. Generally this takes 3-5 minutes. Students will often complain that their arms are tired, but encourage them to keep trying and not to give up!
- Give students the opportunity to enjoy the whipped cream they made along with fresh fruit or other treats. As the class enjoys their snack, discuss how they feel about their accomplishment, if they are glad they kept on working, and commend them on their perseverance.

BALLET LESSONS

MOVEMENT, MUSIC

Have students practice some of the ballet movements illustrated in the story of *Brontorina* and / or view this instructional ballet video on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tskJQtiOx_s. Involve students in dancing along! Invite a local dance teacher (or perhaps a parent or family member) to help with this.

- After watching the video, discuss the size of the room and how much room was needed to make the ballet movements. Ask, “What would happen if Brontorina came to this ballet studio? Do you think Brontorina would fit?”
- Ask students if they were the children in the video, would they want Brontorina to be part of the group? Why or why not?
- Notice and praise students for their perseverance when they try the movements a few times in order to master them.
- Remind students how the children in the story made Brontorina feel special.

“I’M A DINOSAUR—APATOSAURUS”

VIEWING

Play the YouTube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl_T8Ubn2E4search to teach about the *Apatosaurus*. Brainstorm things they learned about the *Apatosaurus*. (For example, it’s as big as a ten-floor building, the name “*Apatosaurus*” means “deceptive lizard,” etc.)

CREATIVE DISPLAYS

ART

Have students draw their own picture of an *Apatosaurus* (like Brontorina), making it look like a hill, or a tree, or whatever else they think it looks like. Share and display the pictures.



Explore, Discover, and More

Extension and Reinforcement Activities

continued

THOMAS EDISON'S PERSEVERANCE

SCIENCE, DISCUSSION

Ask your students if they know who invented the lightbulb. If they don't, teach them that a man named Thomas Edison did. Look at lights and explore them in a way that is meaningful to your class. Edison said, "I never failed once when I invented the lightbulb. It just happened to be a 2,000-step process." Ask students what he meant, and if there is anything they have done that took many steps in the process.

HOW BIG WAS THE APATOSAURUS?

MATH

Have students measure their heights using a piece of string. Take students out to the playground and have them place a 75-foot, pre-cut piece of string (the average length of an *Apatosaurus* from head to tail). Discuss why they couldn't do this activity in the classroom.

BALLET BEAUTIES

DRAMATIC PLAY, DRESS UP

Enhance the dress-up area by providing ballet clothes, slippers, and shoes in different sizes. Make music available so that students can move to the music.



Music

(Access all songs at www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music.)

**“Think You Can” by “Miss” Emily Aronoff Teck
Track # 10 from *Good Choices, Volume 2***

INSPIRATION TEXT

“A righteous person can fall seven times and rise.” -Proverbs 24:16

“THINK YOU CAN” ACTIVITY

Ask students to think about tasks that seem difficult or tough to them today and make a list. Ask students to think about tasks that used to be tough (for example, it was tough once to walk, talk, and feed themselves), but now seem simple. Throughout the year, see which tasks can be moved from the tough to the simple category.

LYRICS

CHORUS

When the job gets tough, when the going gets rough,
Just think you can until you know you can
And then work through it, ‘cause you can do it!
When your job seems too hard, don’t be stopped by fear
That is the time, this is the time to persevere

It’s drop-off time at my new class, my parents say goodbye
I start to feel nervous, I start to wanna cry
I decide to be brave, take deep breaths and feel strong
They’ll be back to get me, ‘til then I’ll sing this song

CHORUS

I’ve been trying for weeks to get my shoes tied tight
Sometimes I feel frustrated, like I’ll never get it right
‘Til finally, tied them myself and now I feel so proud
It feels so good that I want to sing out loud!

CHORUS

Sometimes I ask for help, it can be a brave thing to do
For kids and for grown-ups when they try something new
It doesn’t really matter if you are young or old
If you don’t remember, you might need to be told...

CHORUS



Music

continued

ADDITIONAL MUSIC CONNECTIONS

To access additional Jewish and secular songs from a variety of traditional and contemporary artists that reinforce and teach these values, visit www.jewishlearningmatters.com/music.



Evidence of Learning

Invite students to role-play various scenarios that reflect the value to persevere. For example, ask, “What happens when a clean-up job is a lot of work?” or “What happens when you want to move something that is too heavy to do by yourself?”

Using the bag of artifacts used to introduce the story *Brontorina*, ask the students to take turns selecting an object from the bag and explain how it relates to what happened in the story. As appropriate, ask questions to determine understanding of the value to persevere— *hatmadah*.



Home and Community Connections

Encourage families to learn more about the values and reinforce the concepts with their children visiting www.jewishlearningmatters.com.

Create a video of the students as they are role-playing the various scenarios. (See Evidence of Learning above.) Email this to parents and encourage discussion in terms of appreciating one another, differences and all.

Bind the After the Story activity, the “Dreams” book, and send it home for a night with each student. Have a page in the back of the book for family members to write their positive thoughts about the class book. The students love hearing positive feedback, and this should make them feel proud and give families the opportunity to share their kind words and words of encouragement with their children. Remind parents to listen to and encourage their children’s interests and dreams.



Literature Connections

Title	Author(s) and Illustrator(s)	Summary
<i>We Are All Alike ... We Are All Different</i>	The Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergartners Laura Dwight	A story written by children for children, it teaches that children have similarities as well as differences.
<i>It's Okay to Be Different</i>	Todd Parr	Children of every shape, size, color, family makeup, and background will feel included in this clever, colorfully illustrated book that celebrates diversity.
<i>Dream Big, Little Pig</i>	Kristi Yamaguchi Tim Bowers	Olympic gold medalist ice skater Kristi Yamaguchi inspires children with her tale of Poppy, a waddling, toddling pig, who dreams of becoming a skating star.
<i>The Apple Tree's Discovery*</i>	Peninnah Schram and Rachayl Eckstein Davis Wendy W. Lee	A little apple tree in a forest of oaks begs G-d for stars like those glimmering on the branches of the great oak trees beside her. As the seasons pass, she learns to appreciate her own gifts and realizes that it's possible to find a star in each of us.

*PJ Library Book



Thematic Connections

Respecting others
Perseverance
Size and measurement
Dance: types of dances
Dinosaurs
Diversity

LESSON CONTRIBUTOR

Stacey Oxenberg and Michele Wilensky
Levis JCC Betty & Marvin Zale Early Childhood Learning Center