



Yossi's Goal

Ellen Schwartz

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Consider this question as you read *Yossi's Goal*: Does freedom always come at a price?

Story

Yossi, a Jewish immigrant boy in Montreal, longs to play hockey, but when his father becomes ill and cannot work, all Yossi's hard-earned savings must go to help the family, not to buy skates.

Author

Ellen Schwartz's grandparents emigrated to North America at about the same time, and in similar circumstances, as Yossi's family. In order to learn about early Jewish immigrant life, she did a lot of research in Montreal, a city she loves. Ellen is the author of many books for children, including the Starshine series, *I Love Yoga!* and *Jesse's Star* (Orca), the first book about the irrepressible Yossi. She lives in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Curricular Integration

Language Arts

- Yossi works in the garment industry and sells newspapers to make money to help his family. Have students write three to five journal entries as Yossi, discussing how he might feel about each of these jobs and his situation.
- In the previous novel, *Jesse's Star*, Yossi is bullied by the Russian soldiers; in *Yossi's Goal* he and his friends are bullied by older boys trying to take over their ice rink. In both cases Yossi comes up with a plan to stop the bullying. Have students think of a time they or someone they know has been bullied and then write a solution to the situation.
- How many goals does Yossi have besides the one he scores in the hockey game? Have a discussion about what goals are and how they influence the way we live.
- Have students create poems about hockey, using the drawings they have created (see "Art") or a hockey scene from *Yossi's Goal* as inspiration.
- In *Jesse's Star*, Jesse travels back in time to become Yossi before he emigrates to Canada. Now imagine Yossi traveling forward in time to be Jesse and ask students to write about what he might experience.
- Yossi struggles with his new country. He and his family are free, but they are very poor. Discuss or debate the following: Is freedom worth giving up everything for? Have students reflect on the discussion and write a paragraph giving their opinion.
- Yossi sells newspapers on the street corner. Have students create a newspaper using events from *Yossi's Goal* as the content of the newspaper. Include illustrations and captions in the paper.
- Yossi and his friends gag Max and tie him up in order to prevent him from stopping the strike. Debate whether "the end justifies the means." Have students write a paragraph explaining their response to this idea.

History

- Yossi and his family immigrated by ship to Canada from Russia in the late 1890s. Have students research what life was like in Montreal at this time. Compare it with what life is like in Montreal today.

- Yossi's family left Russia because of persecution. Research the conditions of Jews in Europe and Russia in the late 1800s.
- Yossi finds new friends and allies by playing ice hockey. Today there are many hockey leagues, the most famous being the National Hockey League. Find out how the game was invented and what the rules are.
- Yossi tastes his first maple syrup stirred into snow after a game of hockey. Maple syrup is made from the sap of the maple tree. Investigate the steps involved in the production of maple syrup and where in North America it is produced.
- Yossi is angry when he realizes wealthy Jews own the garment factory in Montreal, but many factory workers are very poor Jews. Discuss why and how this happened and suggest ways that the situation might have been changed for the better.
- What is a labor union? Find out about the rise of labor unions in the garment factories of Montreal.
- Garment factories were not easy to work in. They were referred to as sweatshops. These types of places still exist today. Research sweatshops in the modern world.

Art

- Bring in a pair of hockey skates and have students draw them using charcoal or pencil. Compare them to the skates illustrated in *Yossi's Goal*—what is the same, what has changed.
- Ken Danby is a Canadian painter who has created some famous paintings about hockey. Two of his works are entitled: “At The Crease” and “Wayne Gretzky Farewell.” Find out more about Danby's work and have students create a painting or drawing in his style.
- Yossi and some of his family work in a garment factory. Using primary source pictures online or excerpts from *Yossi's Goal*, draw a picture of what it might be like inside the factory.
- Have students select six scenes from *Yossi's Goal* to use in the construction of a comic strip.

Drama

- The garment factory workers in *Yossi's Goal* were not treated fairly. They decided to stand up for their rights as human beings. Have students create skits from scenes in the book that reflect this. For example: When Daniel talks about the workers pulling together to get better wages, or when Miriam explains to her father that the workers are ready to take action.
- In Chapter Nine there is a problem with the ownership of the ice hockey rink. Have students create short skits that illustrate how this problem could have been solved.

Physical Education

- In *Yossi's Goal*, the boys play ice hockey, but hockey can be played in a gym, on a street or on a field. Learn the rules for field and cosom hockey and have your students play games of hockey in both venues.

Selected Resources

Fiction

Bierman, Carol. *Journey to Ellis Island*.

Bouchard, David. *That's Hockey!*

Carrier, Roch. *The Hockey Sweater*.

Dueck, Adele. *Nettie's Journey*. (Russian Revolution)

Flanagan, Katie. *Polar Bears on Ice*.
 Harlow, Joan Hiatt. *Joshua's Song*.
 Leonetti, Mike. *My Leafs Sweater*.
 London, Johnathan. *The Sugaring-off Party*.
 MacGregor, Roy. *The Screech Owls* series.
 Napier, Matthew. *Hat Tricks Count: A Hockey Number Book; Z is for Zamboni: A Hockey Alphabet*.
 Nixon, Joan Lowry. *Land of Promise*.
 Schwartz, Ellen. *Jesse's Star; Mr. Belinsky's Bagels*.
 Taback, Simms. *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*.
 Vandervelde, Beatrice. *Ice Attack*.
 Ward, David. *The Hockey Tree*.
 Watling, James. *Two Cents and a Milk Bottle*.
 Woodruff, Elvira. *The Memory Coat*.

Nonfiction

Etue, Elizabeth. *Hayley Wickenheiser: Born to Play*. (796.96)
 Faulkner, Megan. *A Day at the Sugar Bush*. (633.6)
 Foley, Mike. *Play by Play Hockey*. (796.96)
 Freeze, Gregory L. *Russia: A History*. (947.9)
 Hughes, Susan. *Coming to Canada: Building Life in a New Land*. (304.8)
 McDermott, Barb. *All About Canadian Sports: Ice Hockey*. (796.96)
 Maki, Wilma, ed. *Weaving a Country: Stories from Canadian Immigrants*. (971.008)
 Purslow, Frances. *Jewish Immigrants in Canada*. (971.004)
 Rutter, Jill. *Jewish Migrations*. (304.8)
 Thomas, Keltie. *How Hockey Works*. (796.96)

Online

Child Labour

www.unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour.html

The National Hockey League

www.nhl.com

Ice Hockey Glossary

proicehockey.about.com/od/hockeyglossary/

Standing up for your rights

changingminds.org/techniques/assertiveness/standing_up_for_rights.htm

How do they make maple syrup?

home.howstuffworks.com/question71.htm

National Museum of American Jewish History

www.nmajh.org/links/links1.htm

Virtual Jewish History Tour Canada

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsources/vjw/canada.html

The Migration to North America

www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/migration/chapter52.html

How Smart Clothes Work

www.howstuffworks.com/computer-clothing.htm

Sweatshop

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweatshop

The History Place Child Labor in America 1908-1912

www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html

Sweatshop Watch

www.sweatshopwatch.org/

A Letter from the Author

Dear Readers,

After I published *Jesse's Star*, I thought I was finished with feisty mischievous Yossi. After all, his family had escaped from Russia and were on a steamship, about to land safely in Canada.

But Yossi wouldn't leave me alone. And readers kept asking me what happened to him after he arrived in Canada. I wondered too. What would his life be like? How would he and his family survive in a strange new place? So I had to write another book to find out.

For starters, I knew that Yossi and his family would be very poor. That's usually the case with immigrants, especially those who don't speak the language and don't have the kind of skills needed in the new country. My own Jewish grandparents fled from Eastern Europe (Russia, Poland and Lithuania) and landed in New York. They lived in the poorest neighborhoods near the port, until they settled in, learned the language and started earning enough money to move "uptown."

I visited the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York and saw the appalling conditions poor immigrant families lived in during the 1890s: no running water, no indoor toilets, poor lighting, few windows, and lots of people living in one room. As soon as I saw this, I knew this was how Yossi and his family would have lived.

I decided to set the story in Montreal – partly because I love the old section of the city, with its brick buildings and cobblestone streets; partly because Montreal has a rich Jewish history (some stores still have Hebrew lettering in the windows); and partly because my daughter lives there and the need to do research gave me an excuse to visit her! I spent several days at the Jewish Public Library, looking at old photographs and reading books about early immigrant life in Canada.

I found out that most of the Jewish immigrants worked in garment factories under truly terrible conditions. What surprised me most was that the owners of those factories – called "sweatshops" – were Jews themselves. These wealthy business owners were treating their fellow Jews terribly, forcing them to work long hours for very little pay. That piece of information was too good to pass up, and I knew I had to use it in my story.

Somehow, from the moment I decided to write the book, I knew Yossi wanted to play hockey. (I had an anxious moment when I wasn't sure whether hockey had been invented by the 1890s – but thankfully it was!) But of course, since his family was so poor, he wouldn't have been able to afford skates and a stick. So the quest to get some skates and learn how to play became an important part of the story.

In that way, the title *Yossi's Goal* has a double meaning. It's about Yossi's desire to help his family thrive in their new home, and it's also about the hockey goal that Yossi longs to score.

I love when titles have double meanings, don't you?

Sincerely,

Ellen Schwartz