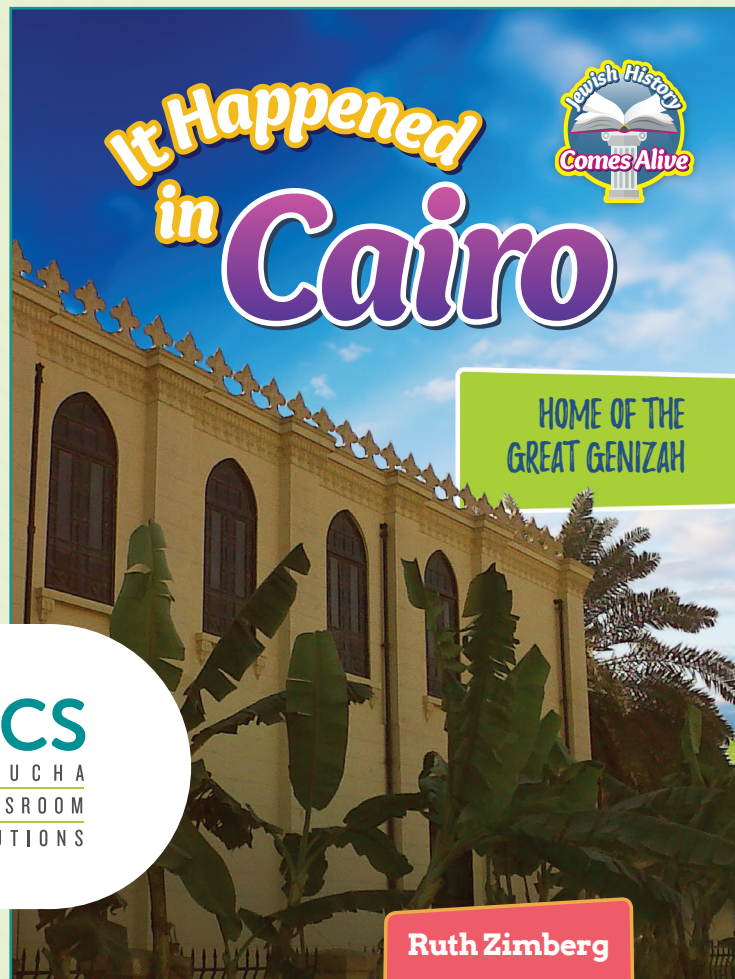




A Teacher's Guide

to the Jewish Historical Sites Series



CLOSE READING, CRITICAL THINKING
Focus on Text Evidence

Dear Educator,

Today's literacy standards demand that students become proficient at close reading. Reading closely involves reading – and rereading – the same text multiple times to construct meaning. In close reading lessons, students are asked to read the text carefully as they consider the main ideas and details, and then to reread the text as they look at the craft and structure and as they integrate what the text says with what they already know.

The **Jewish History Comes Alive** books can be used for close reading in your elementary classroom. Your third through fifth graders might be ready to read these books with your scaffolding and support. Remember that close reading should involve texts a bit beyond what students can read on their own to meet the Common Core expectations for text complexity. Asking students complex questions with room for deeper thinking ensures that these lessons meet the expectation of rigor. Use this instructional routine to guide your students through the close reading of *It Happened in Cairo*.

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Next Generation English Language Arts Anchor Standards

Reading, discussing, and responding to the Jewish History Comes Alive series helps students move toward the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards.

- *Reading Anchor Standard 1* expects children to “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.” The close reading activities detailed in the teacher's guide encourage students to read closely to construct meaning from the text and to support their ideas with textual evidence.
- *Reading Anchor Standard 2* calls for children to “determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas,” skills that are woven into the first read of the close reading routine.
- *Reading Anchor Standards 4 and 5* focus on vocabulary and text structure, skills that are targeted during the second read of the close reading routine.
- *Reading Anchor Standard 9* requires children to “analyze and evaluate texts... through a variety of lenses and perspectives.” In their third read, children work toward this standard as they integrate knowledge and ideas within the text and across texts.

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STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN

CLOSE READING, CRITICAL THINKING

1: PREPARING TO READ

Distribute the book *It Happened in Cairo* to students. Explain that this book is full of interesting and new information. Students will be reading the book more than once in order to understand it completely. Decide how they will be reading the book – individually, with partners, or in a small group. Remind students to use whatever strategies they know to prepare for reading the text, such as looking at the cover, table of contents, and illustrations.

2: READING AND DISCUSSING

READ THE BOOK – FIRST READ

Students read the entire book and determine what the text is about. Remind students that during this read, they should be thinking about what the book is *mostly about* as well as the *most important details* in the book.

CLOSE READING QUESTIONS

Discuss some of the following key questions after students read the entire book.

- » **What is the book mostly about?** *The book is mostly about the Cairo Genizah.*
- » **Why are books placed in genizah?** *Holy books cannot be thrown out, so instead they are put away, often in the attic or basement of a synagogue.*
- » **What makes the Cairo Genizah unique?** *It was around for over a thousand years, held more than 300,000 books and papers, and gave us clues into old Jewish life in Egypt.*
- » **Where are the books of the Cairo Genizah today?** *These papers are now all over the world – in Cambridge University, in New York, and in sixty-five libraries around the world.*

READ THE BOOK – SECOND READ

Direct students' attention to pages 18-23 of the book. This time, focus on the language used by the author and how the text works.

CLOSE READING QUESTIONS

Discuss some of the following key questions as students look at these pages.

- » **How did the author organize ideas in this section of the text?** *(focus on text structure) These ideas are organized in chronological order, describing the different visitors to the Cairo Genizah and the scattering of its works around the world.*

» **Look back at the table of contents. How do the sections of this book fit together to develop the main idea?** *(focus on text structure) The different parts of this book fit together to describe the significance of the Cairo Genizah and where its books are found today.*

» **On p. 21 there is a photograph of an old diary. Why is this photograph included?** *(focus on text features) This photograph supports the ideas written on this page about Rabbi Sapir's diary of his trips to Cairo.*

READ THE BOOK – THIRD READ

Students look back at pages 18-24 one more time, this time with a focus on looking for meaning by making inferences and putting ideas together. Have students think about the following key questions as they read: What inferences can I make from the text to help me understand what the author doesn't say explicitly? How can I connect any of the ideas of the text to another text I've read or something I've learned? What larger message do the writer's ideas add up to?

CLOSE READING QUESTIONS

Discuss the following key questions after students reread these pages.

- » **Look at the map on p. 22. How does it help you to understand the topic on this page?** *This map helps the reader visualize the distance from Cairo to Cambridge, to where Elkan Nathan Adler took 25,000 papers from the genizah.*
- » **On p. 23, the author writes, "More and more people took papers out of the genizah." What might have been the effect of this?** *Important papers may have gotten lost. There may be historical information which we can no longer access because these papers were taken by laypeople.*
- » **Describe the process of the discovery of the Cairo Genizah based on details from these pages.** *Slowly the genizah was emptied by many different people, some researchers and historians, and presumably others as well.*
- » **What text features (headings, table of contents, glossaries) did the author include to help the reader?** *Bold words, headings, table of contents, glossary, photographs.*

3: CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Engage students in a class discussion around the following points. What does this text show us about the importance of books in Jewish life? How does the history of the Cairo Genizah show us its importance?

CLOSE READING: IT HAPPENED IN CAIRO

FINDING AND USING TEXT EVIDENCE

Answer the questions below to help you find and use text evidence from *It Happened in Cairo*.

- 1.** Reread the introduction on pages 6-7. Find text evidence to prove that Jews consider important books to be valuable.

- 2.** Find textual evidence to support the idea that the Cairo Genizah is important not only from a religious perspective, but from a historical one as well.

- 3.** How would an old shopping list help people today learn more about what life was like long ago?

- 4.** On page 20, it says, "Rabbi Sapir understood how important the genizah was." Can you support this idea with evidence and details from the text?

- 5.** What are some reasons why the Ben Ezra Synagogue is so famous?
