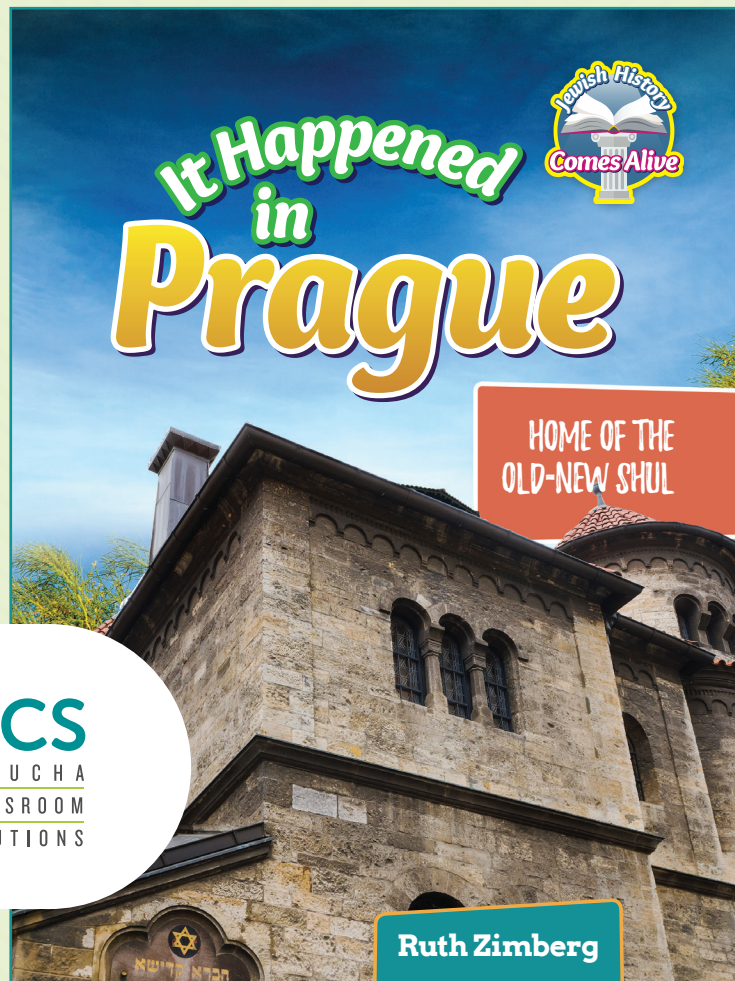




# A Teacher's Guide

to the Jewish Historical Sites Series



**CLOSE READING, CRITICAL THINKING**  
Focus on Text Features

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 Prague*.

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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.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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## STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PLAN

### CLOSE READING, CRITICAL THINKING

#### 1: PREPARING TO READ

Distribute the book *It Happened in Prague* 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 Old-New Shul in Prague.*
- » **How old is the Altneuschul?** *The Altneuschul was built in 1270 at the same location as the oldest shul in Prague, which had burned down in 1142. This makes it over 700 years old.*
- » **What are some artistic features of the Altneuschul?** *The Altneuschul has a very high ceiling, carvings over the door, twelve windows, and beautiful chandeliers.*
- » **What is one important detail about the history of the Altneuschul? What makes this important?** *How long Jews have been praying there, where it is located, who built it. These give us basic background information so we understand the importance of the shul.*
- » **What is one interesting detail?** *Possible answers include what the ceiling looks like, decorations over the door of the building, number of windows in the shul.*
- » **What is Jewish life like in Prague today?** *Today there are only about 1,400 Jews in Prague. They have shuls, schools, and kosher restaurants. There is a Jewish Museum which has one of the world's largest collections of Jewish books and objects.*

##### READ THE BOOK – SECOND READ

Direct students' attention to pages 8-14 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.

- » **On p. 8, the text mentions "stonemasons." What are stonemasons?** *(focus on vocabulary) Stonemasons are people who cut, prepare, and build with stone.*
- » **How did the author organize ideas in this section of the text?** *(focus on text structure) These ideas are organized as descriptions of the Altneuschul, focusing on all of its artistic features.*
- » **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 unique characteristics of the Altneuschul, including its physical beauty and its historical significance.*
- » **On p. 12 there is a photograph of a gold coin of Emperor Ferdinand III. Why is this photograph included?** *(focus on text features) This photo provides additional background on Emperor Ferdinand III who is mentioned in the text for giving a gift of a large red banner to the synagogue.*

##### READ THE BOOK – THIRD READ

Students look back at pages 8-14 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 photo on p. 9. How does it help you to understand the topic on this page?** *This photo helps the reader understand that Prague was built on a river, so the streets were built very high to withstand flooding.*
- » **Describe how the Altneuschul is similar to synagogues today. Use details from the photos on pages 8-14.** *There is a bimah in the shul, some shuls have reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, some shuls have chandeliers.*
- » **What text features (headings, table of contents, glossaries) did the author include to help the reader?** *Bold words, headings, table of contents, glossary.*

#### 3: CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Engage students in a class discussion around the following points. What does this text show us about the importance of the shul in Jewish life? How does the history of the Old-New Shul show us its importance?

## **CLOSE READING: IT HAPPENED IN PRAGUE**

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Answer the questions below to help you explore the text features and primary sources in *It Happened in Prague*.

1. Consider the table of contents at the beginning of the book. Choose three sections and summarize the information in those sections in one to two sentences each:

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2. In the section “The Jews of Prague,” there is some important information as well as some interesting information. Choose one detail from this section that you find interesting and explain why.

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3. Read the table of contents at the beginning of the book. Describe how the purpose of the sections changes throughout the book.

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## CLOSE READING: IT HAPPENED IN PRAGUE

4. Complete the graphic organizer below for the section beginning on page 8, "Inside the Old-New Shul."



<b>TOPIC</b> _____		
Main idea: _____		
Detail	Detail	Detail
<b>TOPIC</b> _____		
Main idea: _____		
Detail	Detail	Detail