

## PURIM

### Things are Not Always as They Seem

**P**urim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in the Persian Empire were saved. Among the customs that celebrate survival is the wearing of masks and costumes, which are not only fun and festive but also tie into the holiday theme of identity.

In the story of Purim, as retold in the biblical Book of Esther, a young Jewish woman becomes the Queen of Persia. However, because the Jews had enemies, Esther hid her Jewish identity. When in a dangerous situation, she risked her life and revealed her true identity to the King and ultimately saved the Jews. Both initially hiding and eventually revealing her identity are essential to Esther's leadership and success.

Every one of us, to greater and lesser degrees, learns to navigate different social and cultural

settings, putting forward or concealing elements of who we are. At the same time, we often are seen as who we are on the surface, which can be misleading or not tell the full story. Living in a diverse society demands both the capacity to navigate elements of our own identity as well as be aware of our biases and assumptions about others.

#### Big Idea

The Purim story reminds us that since ancient times individuals have had to navigate different identities. Today, living in an increasingly global and diverse society demands both the ability to recognize different elements of our own identity as well as be aware of our biases and assumptions we make about others. Masks and crowns symbolize the concept of "code-switching," or the ability to navigate different cultural spaces.



## Purim Crowns



This activity uses the making of crowns to engage children in questions of changing identities.

### Materials:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paper/Foam | <input type="checkbox"/> Stickers        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stick-on jewels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stapler    | <input type="checkbox"/> Feathers        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hole punch | <input type="checkbox"/> Pipe cleaners   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Markers    |  |

1. Arrange all the materials on a table (fig. 1).



2. Depending on the size of the paper or foam, cut in half as two pieces might be needed to staple together to fit around a child's head. Fit the crown to each head size and staple the two pieces of paper or foam together (Fig. 2).

3. Using paper or foam, allow children to create their own crowns (Fig. 3).

4. Decorate with markers, stickers, and self-stick jewels. Staple on feathers, pipe cleaners, etc. (Fig. 4).



## Purim

### Discussion questions:

- Why is it fun to wear crowns? Costumes?
- Do you feel different inside when you pretend? When you wear a crown?
- If someone is wearing a crown does that make them special?
- Why do some costumes make you happy? Why are some costumes scary? If a person is wearing a happy or scary costume, are they a happy or scary person?
- Are people who wear crowns better than other people? Or are they just different? How do you feel when you wear a crown?