

Andrew Roberts
Heidi Schmitt
Notable Social Studies Book Invitations

The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela By Uri Shulevitz

Book Summary:

The author takes you along on the historic journey of Benjamin from Tudela. Benjamin left his native town of Tudela in Northern Spain on a fourteen-year journey through most of the known world. He was the greatest medieval Jewish traveler. During the twelfth century, travel was laborious and dangerous and you needed to be brave, resourceful, and lucky to survive.

Social Studies Themes:

Jewish Culture, Religion, Twelfth Century Travel, Communication, Historical Facts, Pirates, Segregation, Plague, Civil Wars

Learning Invitations:

- Literacy Invitation: Journal of Benjamin's Journey
- Geography Invitation: Mapping Benjamin's Journey
- Art Invitation: Create an Event for the Hippodrome
- Technology Invitation: Google Earth

Teacher Notes:

Start this inquiry by reading the book aloud to the class. Pause often to make predictions, comments, check for comprehension, and discuss questions. After everyone has had a chance to read the book, allow plenty of time for the students to work on the invitations. Each invitation is designed for students to work independently or in small groups. Each invitation can be contained in a folder, notebook, or basket.

Here is what materials the students will need to complete the invitations:

- Journal of Benjamin's Journey- large sheet of colored paper, several sheets of white copy paper, copy of book, writing utensils, stapler, copy of directions sheet.
- Mapping Benjamin's Journey- copies of map, markers, copy of directions sheet, copy of book.
- Create an Event for the Hippodrome- scissors, construction paper, markers, Scotch tape, glue, copy of directions sheet, copy of book
- Google Earth- computer with Google Earth software, copy of directions sheet, copy of book

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Journal of Benjamin's Journey

1. Assemble your journal by using 1 sheet of colored paper for the cover and 4 sheets of white paper that you fold in half (hamburger style). Put the folded sheets of white paper inside of the cover and use the stapler to assemble.
2. You may design your cover and name the journal as you wish.
3. In your journal you will be writing in first person about your experiences as if you are Benjamin.
4. In your journal address at least 4 of the following questions:
 - What is your purpose for traveling?
 - What was it like traveling during the twelfth century?
 - Were you in danger during your travels? If so, what type of danger and how did you avoid it?
 - What did you see while you were on your journey?
 - How were you treated by the people you met during your journey?
 - Could you let everyone know that you were Jewish?
5. Feel free to add any other details or information about your journey in addition to the questions above.

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Mapping Benjamin's Journey

1. Use the map to locate the places mentioned in the book where Benjamin stopped and traveled through on his journey.
2. Use a marker to mark an X on the cities that Benjamin stopped or went through on his journey. Use the story to draw a line to connect the X's to map out his journey from beginning to end.
3. Once you have completed mapping out the journey share your map with a friend and compare to see if you have mapped the same journey.
4. If the journey you mapped out is different from your friends, go back to the book to find out the correct path.

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A Look Through Google Earth at Benjamin's Travels

1. Open Google Earth and in the Search Box type in Cedar Falls, IA
2. Then type in Tudela, Spain
 - How would you get to Tudela, Spain in the present day? What about in the 12th century?
 - Explore the town and click on the picture icons to take a closer look
3. Next, type in Marseilles, France
 - How would Benjamin get from Tudela to Marseilles? Are there any obstacles that stand in his way for the journey?
 - Explore Marseilles with the picture icons
4. From there, type in Rome, Italy
 - Explore Rome and pay attention to the architecture from the pictures
5. After that, type in Istanbul, Turkey
 - Constantinople was a bustling city during the 13th century similar to Istanbul today. Explore the pictures and think about what makes Turkey a place travelers would want to come to
6. Type in Cairo, Egypt in the Search Box
 - Explore Cairo and think about this question: What makes Cairo an area to go to? Any specific sites or geographical areas that are unique?
7. Finally, type in Jerusalem, Israel
 - Jerusalem is considered a “holy city”. Especially explore the Biblical village of Bethany and Solomon’s Temple Model. Why would Benjamin want to come here?

When finished with this exploration, respond to these questions:

- How difficult would travel have been in the 12th century? How does travel in the 12th century compare to present day?

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- Did any of these cities intrigue you? Why did they intrigue you (give some examples)?
- Would you want to be an explorer? What would you have to prepare for?

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Creating Your Own Hippodrome

The Hippodrome was the center of entertainment in Constantinople, Turkey during the 12th century. Events like horse and chariot racing, sports, and the circus took place in this area. Your goal is to create your own Hippodrome using the materials given (construction paper, Scotch tape, scissors, glue, markers). After constructing your Hippodrome, draw in the event you will be staging in your Hippodrome like a circus, horse or chariot racing, or sporting event during the 12th century. If you are struggling or have a problem, examine the model that is on the table.