



Stained Glass Window
ca. 1922, Chicago

This stained glass window once hung in a large synagogue in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago. The synagogue was called Shaare Zedek and it had over 1000 seats. Sadly, the synagogue was sold in 1977 because most of its members had moved out of the neighborhood, many to homes in Chicago's growing suburbs. Before demolition began, Spertus was fortunate to receive one of the synagogue's stained glass windows, along with ark curtains and torah mantles. An important part of Spertus' mission is to preserve Jewish objects from Chicago and around the world.

Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions

Symbols

In art, a symbol is usually a simple, recognizable thing—such as an animal, a plant, a shape or an object—that stands for or represents something else. Often symbols are used to express something too complicated to show in a picture, for example, an idea. In this window the



menorah is being used as a symbol. What does the menorah represent? Where else have you seen the symbol of the menorah used? This historic photograph of Shaare Zedek seems to indicate it appears there were many stained glass windows, yet only one survives. What symbols might have decorated the other windows and why?

The Old Neighborhood

There are many downtown Chicago neighborhoods that once had large Jewish populations. The most famous of these was Lawndale, which at one time had so many Jewish residents, synagogues and kosher stores that it was known as the “Jerusalem of Chicago.” Interview an older relative and find out what neighborhoods he/she has lived in. Ask what Shabbat or holidays were like there; where she went to school or shopped for groceries; how that neighborhood differs from the one where she currently lives.

Transparent, Opaque, and Translucent

Materials that are transparent allow light to completely pass through so that objects behind can be clearly seen. Materials that are opaque do not allow any light to pass through so that objects behind cannot be seen. Stained glass is translucent, or semi-transparent, meaning it allows some light to come through, but it also absorbs and scatters light. To create a deeper understanding about transparent, translucent, and opaque walk around the classroom, school, neighborhood, or home and identify objects with these properties. For a Chanukah project use craft sticks and glue to make a dreidel or Star of David and fill the spaces with colored tissue paper. Hang in front of a window to catch the light.