"Aly Raisman: Jewish Olympic Champion" Lesson Plan

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Students will learn that everyone, even an Olympic champion like Aly Raisman, gets nervous before a public performance. Students will then review some tips for effective public speaking and practice performing in public by speaking about a random topic for one minute in front of the class.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand that anxiety is normal.
- Students will practice performing in public in order to build confidence.

ACTIVITY

1. Olympics Recap Ask students to share their memories of the 2012 Olympics. If no one mentions Aly Raisman or *Hava Nagila,* remind them that a Jewish gymnast performed to the song and won a gold medal for the performance. As a class, watch the clip of Aly Raisman's Olympic floor performance, which is available through the Behrman House Resource Libraries or on YouTube. Ask students:

Is Aly a talented athlete? Why do you think so?
Do you think she was always that good?
How many of you get nervous when you perform (whether as an athlete, musician, or actor) or when you speak in public?
Do you think Aly ever gets nervous?

2. Discussion Read the article "Aly Raisman: Jewish Olympic Champion," focusing on Aly's advice to kids who are afraid to make a mistake in public, her choice of music, and her stance on the moment of silence for Munich victims. As you read, ask students:

How would the Olympics have been different had Aly given in to fear?
How would Aly's life have been different had she given in to fear?
What advice would you give kids who are afraid to make a mistake in public?
How did Aly use her floor routine music as an expression of her heritage? Why did people make such a big deal about this?
What statement does it make when a Jewish athlete from the United States chooses to honor the memories of Jewish athletes from another country?

3. Text Study Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav said, "The entire world is a very narrow bridge, but the main thing is not to fear at all." Discuss: What can help you not to fear? Does this verse only apply to people in dangerous or scary situations? To whom else might these words be important advice and why?

4. Tips for Public Speaking Explain to students that they will now have a chance to put Aly's advice into practice with a brief public speaking activity. Pass out the attached handout, "Tips for Effective Public Speaking" (available below). Spend a few minutes reviewing the information on the sheet.

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5. One Minute Speeches Next, assign each student a random topic to speak about for one minute. A list of topics is provided below on the sheet "Public Speaking Topics." You can cut up this list (or your own list), put the pieces in a container, and have each student randomly draw a slip of paper with their assigned topic. Allow students a few moments to think about their topic, then call students one by one to the front of the room for their presentations. Students should speak from the front of the classroom and announce their topic before beginning their speech. Remind students to focus on eye contact, body language, and gaining confidence as they speak. After each student has spoken, ask the class to offer positive feedback about what the speaker did well in the areas on the public speaking handout.

6. Debrief After every student in the class has had an opportunity to speak, ask students:

How did it feel to stand up in front of the class and perform?
If you were nervous, what were you nervous about? Why?
If you weren't nervous, why didn't you feel nervous?
If you continue to improve your public speaking skills, what kind of impact could you potentially have on the world?

FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT by Rivky Krestt

1. Learn about other athletes and celebrities that are very publicly proud of their Judaism, including Olympic swimmer Lenny Krayzelburg, Israeli Olympic judoka Arik Ze'evi, NASCAR driver Jon Denning, and former NFL player Alan Veingrad, to name a few. Find interviews with these athletes and more, including complete lesson plans, in Behrman House's Resource Libraries.

2. Prepare copies of the biographies of Jewish Olympians from around the world from http://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-athletes-olympics-2012-a-sprinter-a-gymnast-and-a-sailor-walk-into-a-synagogue/ and http://www.london2012.com/country/israel/athletes/index.html. Using a large world map, ask students to place the name of the Jewish Olympian on his or her birthplace and attach a string connecting the athlete's birthplace to Israel.

3. Write a letter to Aly Raisman to congratulate her on her win and her act of courage. Be sure to explain what you find inspiring about her public stance.

4. Discussion Questions: If you were a family member of the "Munich 12" what response would you have to Aly's statement of support for the moment of silence? Is Aly's choice of floor routine music less courageous because she didn't intentionally choose *Hava Nagila* to make a statement? Why or why not?

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Tips for Effective Public Speaking

1. Use Your Words
    a. Think of public speaking as a conversation between you and your audience.
    b. You don't have to use big words. Simple is best!
    c. Avoid fillers like "umm" and "like."
    d. It's okay to pause while you collect your thoughts.

2. Use Your Eyes
    a. Make eye contact with your audience.
    b. Look at the whole group, not just one person.

3. Use Body Language
    a. Stand up straight.
    b. Use your hands and your arms while you're talking.
    c. Open your arms, don't cross them, and keep your chin up.

4. Use Your Voice
    a. Speak loudly enough to be heard by your audience.
    b. Speak slowly and clearly in order to be understood.

5. Use Your Personality
    a. Be yourself!

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Public Speaking Topics

Speak for one minute about one thing you did last summer.	Speak for one minute about one of the toys you liked to play with when you were younger.
Speak for one minute about a book you read recently.	Speak for one minute about a class you are taking in school and what you are learning.
Speak for one minute about the neighborhood you live in.	Speak for one minute about a hobby you enjoy.
Speak for one minute about your family history.	Speak for one minute about a movie you saw recently.
Speak for one minute about a dream you once had.	Speak for one minute about the differences between cats and dogs or apples and bananas.
Speak for one minute about your favorite song and what you like about it.	Speak for one minute about your favorite food or restaurant.
Speak for one minute about one place in the world you would like to visit and why.	Speak for one minute about someone you admire.
Speak for one minute about your favorite holiday and what you like about it.	Speak for one minute, explaining step-by-step how to brush your teeth or how to clean the house.

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