

# 5 Ways to Craft Engaging Lessons

*These techniques will help you use textbooks as creative springboards for classroom discussion and activities.*

## 1. Familiarize your class with the special features of the textbook.

- Use the table of contents as an informal pretest to determine what the students already know.
- Select a few illustrations or chapter headings and ask students to locate them.
- Have your students locate the names of three people listed in the index. Which one has the most written about him or her? Ask them to speculate as to why.

## 2. Get the full impact from photographs.

- Ask students to examine a photograph in the textbook and have them write or tell a story about what is happening in it. You may also want to ask what they think happened immediately before or after the photograph was taken.
- Have students write an alternate caption for a photograph, and ask them to explain why their caption is appropriate.
- Ask students to find a place in the textbook that they think needs an accompanying photograph and to describe the picture they would add. Then have them write a caption.

## 3. Use accompanying workbook or exercise pages within the textbook.

- Assign these materials to individual students or to small groups, to focus attention on key ideas.
- Create your own worksheets based on the specific needs of your class.

## 4. Divide your class into research teams of three or four students.

- Give each team a research question that requires reading the text in order to find the answer. Make sure to allot class time for team presentations.
- Ask research teams to role-play what they have read. For example, have them reenact the meeting of Napoleon's Sanhedrin, taking the parts of various members of the Jewish community, such as traditionalists who were fearful of modernity, liberals who welcomed it, and pragmatists who worried about offending the emperor.

## 5. Transform your classroom into a complete learning environment.

- If you teach Hebrew, make Hebrew labels for objects in your room; use Hebrew expressions for routine tasks, for praise, or to begin and end each class.
- If you teach other subjects, follow these suggestions: Holidays—decorate your room with holiday pictures and ritual items; History—reinforce a lesson with a bulletin board display that depicts the period you are studying; Torah—create a family tree of our ancestors during a unit on *Genesis*, make a list of the top ten classroom rules while learning the Ten Commandments.

Pages 38-39 adapted from *Making Textbooks Work for You* by Carol K. Ingall. Available for download at [www.behrmanhouse.com](http://www.behrmanhouse.com)

