

Finding out about an Object

The Shofar

Read the information carefully with your partner and decide how you will tell the rest of your group about this object. You may like to highlight the important points on this fact sheet.

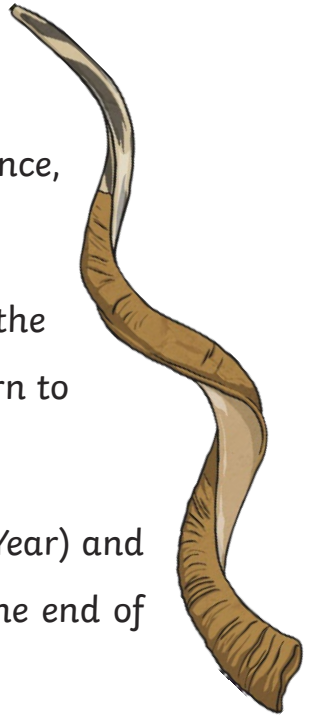
The shofar is an important religious object for Jews. It is a musical instrument made from the horn of a ram. Shofars vary in appearance, but the horn is usually curved.

The shofar is blown in the same way as a brass instrument, with the vibration from the player's pursed lips causing the air within the horn to vibrate.

The shofar is blown at services during Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and is also blown on many mornings during the Days of Repentance. The end of fasting for Yom Kippur is signalled by the blowing of the shofar.

Jews believe that when the shofar is sounded at Rosh Hashanah, as well as celebrating the day of creation, the sound wakes up a person's spirituality and signals to them to focus on reflecting on the things they have done wrong over the year and to put these things right. Another name for Rosh Hashanah is Yom Teruah. This translates as 'day of blasting'.

A male member of the synagogue will be chosen to blow the shofar. It is a great honour to be chosen to do this job.



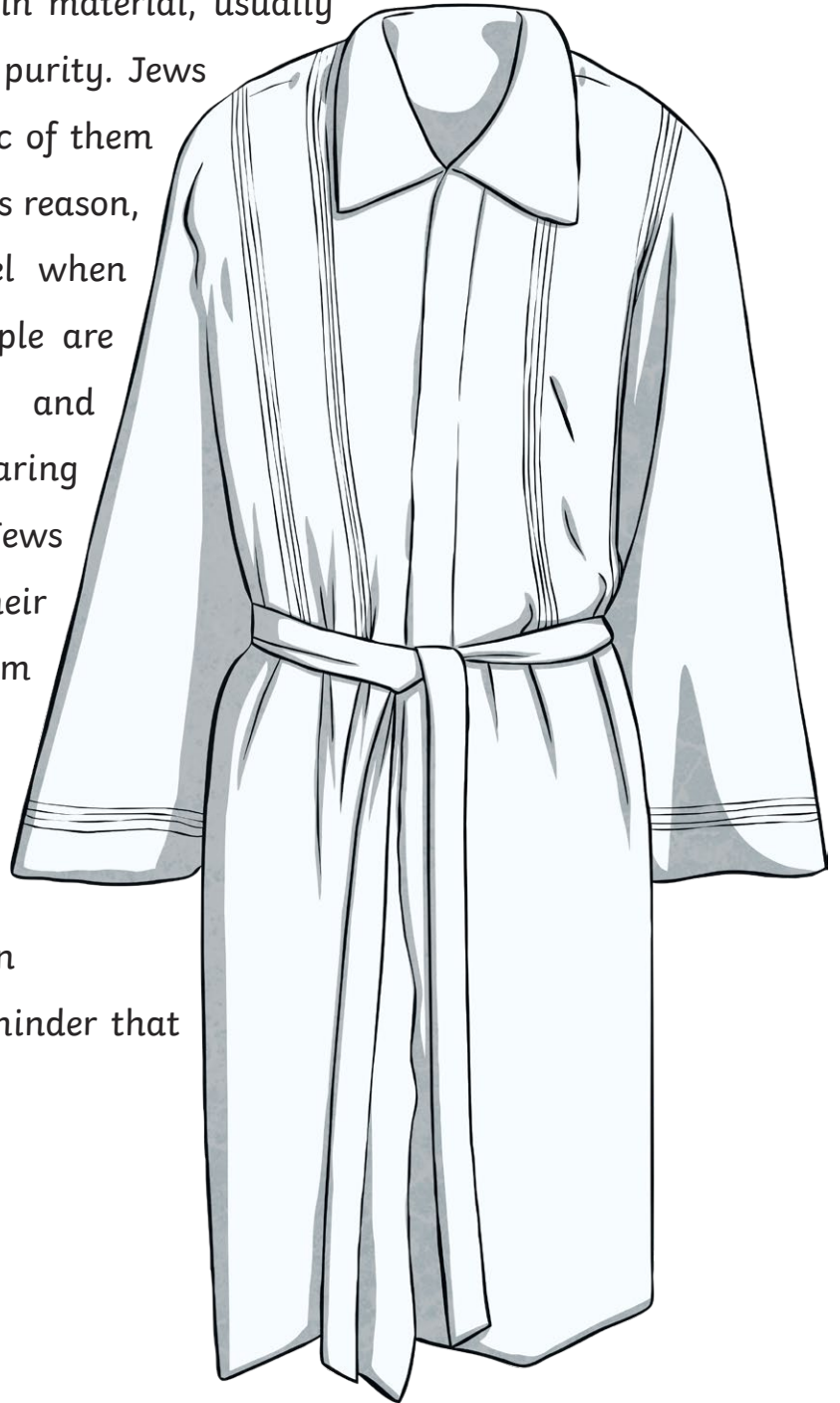
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The Kittel

Read the information carefully with your partner and decide how you will tell the rest of your group about this object. You may like to highlight the important points on this fact sheet.

A kittel is a white robe made of a thin material, usually cotton or linen. White is a symbol of purity. Jews believe that wearing white is symbolic of them being like the angels in heaven. For this reason, Jewish people are buried in a kittel when they die. At Yom Kippur, Jewish people are concentrating on their spirituality and serving God, just like angels. By wearing this robe associated with funerals, Jews are also reminding themselves that their life will end one day. This makes them feel humble.

At Yom Kippur, the kittel is worn by male married Jews in some communities. White clothing is often worn by Jews at Yom Kippur as a reminder that their sins have been forgiven.



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The Tallit

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A tallit is a prayer shawl worn predominantly by Jewish men. It is a white, rectangular shawl, which includes some blue threads. It is usually made from wool or cotton. The tallit has fringes attached to its four corners.

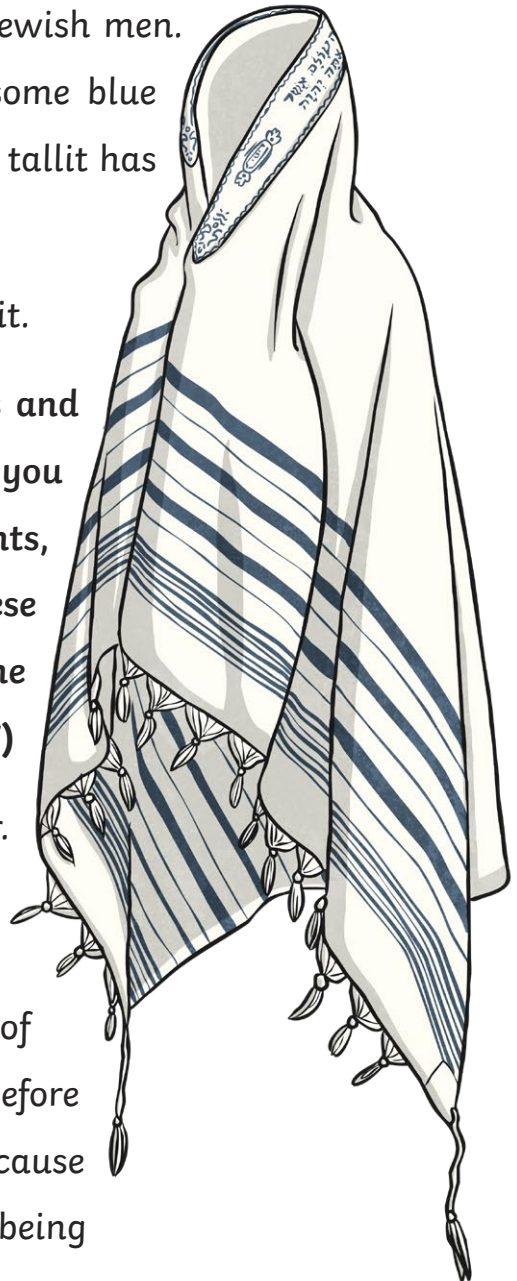
Jews believe God has instructed them to wear a tallit.

“ The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD’.” **Numbers 15: 37-41 (NIV)**

This prayer shawl is usually worn for morning prayer.

This became a custom because the instruction was to ‘look’ at the tassels and so daylight was needed.

However, at Yom Kippur the tallit is worn for all of the services. This is because the tallit is put on before darkness falls and so it can be left on, and also because the white colour of the tallit symbolises purity and being forgiven by God.



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Candles

Read the information carefully with your partner and decide how you will tell the rest of your group about this object. You may like to highlight the important points on this fact sheet.

Candles play an important part in Jewish holidays. Just as women and girls light candles in the home before Shabbat begins every Friday, they also do this to mark the beginning of Yom Kippur. They say blessings before lighting the candles. They light candles to give thanks and to show respect for the day.

Many other Jewish festivals are celebrated with food, but as adults and older children are fasting during Yom Kippur, more candles are lit instead. Many candles are lit in the synagogue. These candles are usually lit by men. The candles in the synagogue should be big enough to stay burning throughout the full twenty-five hours of Yom Kippur.

It is also customary for Jews to light a candle at Yom Kippur in memory of loved ones who have died. These memorial candles stay lit throughout Yom Kippur. Nowadays, some Jews have an electric memorial candle for safety reasons.

