

MEET JELLY ELI Z.



Eli Zipperbaum, better known as Jelly Eli Z., is in fourth grade with his best friend, Benny. He's always got a pocket full of jelly beans. Lemon, cherry, lime, coconut – it doesn't matter, Eli loves them all! But when Eli's not eating jelly beans he's got a lot on his mind. Will his class win the pizza party competition? Will his team win the baseball game? And why does the principal keep staring at him?

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Illustrated by Dena Ackerman

Teacher Troubles for **JELLY ELI Z.**



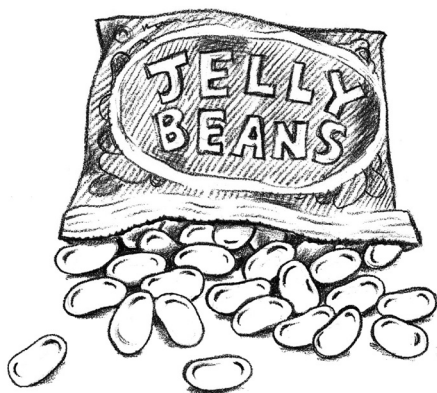
DAVID A. ADLER

MENUCHA CLASSROOM SOLUTIONS



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Chapter 1

NOT WITH MR. MOSCOWITZ

“ELI!”

“Huh.”

“What’s the answer?”

What’s the answer? What was the question? What subject is this? Math? History? Science?

I look at the boys sitting nearby. A few are smiling. They seem glad Mr. Moscowitz caught me not paying attention. Benny's book is open and he's pointing to it.

"Book."

"Book! I asked you about George Washington's family, how many children he had. What kind of an answer is 'book'?"

I look at Benny again and see he's pointing to a picture in the book.

"Washington didn't have children of his own, but he had two stepchildren," Avi answers. "They were his wife Martha's children."

Benny still has his book open. I squint and look at the picture of Washington, his wife, and the two children. Washington's hair is white and puffy by his ears. It looks like a wig, but it's not. Men wore the wigs then, not women, but Washington didn't.

George Washington

1st President of the United States

1789-1797



He powdered his hair to make it look white. You see, I don't pay attention in class, but I know things.

Avi isn't done.

"He married a widow named Martha Custis. She had a son and a daughter, Jacky and Patsy, so they became his stepchildren."

"Thank you, Avi."

Mr. Moscovitz looks right at me when he says that. Why would he look at me when he thanks Avi?

It's because he wants me to be more like him. That's why. He wants me to always listen in class, to always have the right answer. And I've tried. But how long can I listen to talk about the Revolutionary War? It ended more than two hundred years ago. Get over it, Mr. Moscovitz!

And long division, fractions, and decimals! Someone should make his math lessons into

tiny tablets and sell them as sleeping pills. I don't know how Avi can keep his mind on that stuff. I don't know how Benny can. He's a good student, too.

"Why does he do that?" I ask Benny on our way home. "Why does he call on me when he knows I'm not listening?"

"It's his job."

"No, it's not. His job is to talk about history and number stuff. He does that. It's not his job to bother me."

"Actually, it is," Benny says while we wait at the corner near school. "He has to make sure we learn."

It's odd, I think. He gets paid to make me know that stuff. Why don't they just pay me? If they paid enough, I'd be happy to learn it.

Someone should rethink this whole school business.

The traffic light changes to green and we cross the street. Benny and I live on the same block. We walk together to and from school. He lives in a big house in the middle of the block with all his brothers and sisters. I think seven.

I live in an apartment in the corner building with my mother, grandmother, and sister. What about my father? Benny never asks me about him. Good friends are like that. They don't ask lots of questions.

Oh, and I have a nickname. People call me "Jelly Eli" because it rhymes and because I love jelly. Every day I go to school with a pocket-full of jelly beans. My favorite flavor is lime. I have jelly sandwiches for lunch, every day a different flavor. Today it was boysenberry.

I'm Jelly Eli Z.

The Z is the first letter in my last name,

Zipperbaum. That's some last name, isn't it? I once figured that in just one year of homework, and I get lots of it, it takes me many extra hours just to write my name. The next time we get one of those long writing assignments, the teacher should say, "Eli Z., you've spent so much extra time writing that last name of yours, you don't have to do the report."

I'm already in fourth grade and it hasn't happened. And I don't think it will happen this year, not with Mr. Moscovitz.