

Juniors Class Summary--February 24, 2013

During the February session, the Juniors class turned its focus to the Spanish Inquisition and its connections to the holiday of Purim. Students listened to a brief talk about the history of the Inquisition, learning how, just as Haman tried to get rid of the Jews in Persia in the ancient Purim story, during the late 1400s and early 1500s CE powerful people sought to eliminate the Jewish presence in Spain. The class also learned that just as Esther conceals her Jewishness in the Purim story, during the Inquisition many Jews hid their Jewishness and pretended to be Catholic in order to save their lives, while many Jewish people also acted as bravely and courageously as Esther and her uncle Mordechai to save the lives of other Jews. After playing a quick warm-up game of "The Big Wind Blows," students selected partners and split into pairs to read *The Cardinal's Snuffbox*, a choose-your-own-adventure story set during the Spanish Inquisition. Partners worked together to read and make choices about what the story's main character, a Sephardic Jewish young person, ought to do when faced with all kinds of dangers and difficult decisions. After partners had the chance to read through a couple of different storylines, the class regrouped and discussed the different things, good and bad, that had befallen their character based on the choices that they made. Students reflected on what it would have been like to live during this difficult time in history, and shared the kinds of choices that they, as Jewish people, would have made. The discussion closed with a chance for the class to reflect on the positive as well as the negative qualities that the Inquisition brought out in people, and students brainstormed ways that horrible events like it could be prevented in the future. Finally, students listened to a recording of a Purim song called "El testamento de Aman" ("Haman's Will") from a Sephardic Jewish community in Morocco, following the lyrics in Ladino and translation and briefly discussing the song's connection to the Purim story and the Sephardic Jewish experience. The lesson concluded, the Juniors headed downstairs to have lots of fun at the Purim carnival!