

# Never Say A Mean Word Again

## A Tale from Medieval Spain

### SUMMARY

- Inspired by a powerful legend of conflict resolution, this multicultural book is the compelling story of a boy who is given permission by his father, the grand vizier, to punish an enemy. “Make sure Hamza never says a mean word to you again,” he orders Samuel. What will he do?
- This story was inspired by the Jewish poet Samuel Ha-Nagid (993-1056), who was the vizier (highest royal advisor) in Muslim Spain
- Features colorful illustrations in a striking design, evocative of medieval Spain
- Explores the challenges of friendship across cultures and social status
- Addresses the question of fair punishment for name-calling
- Models behavior for turning an adversary into a friend

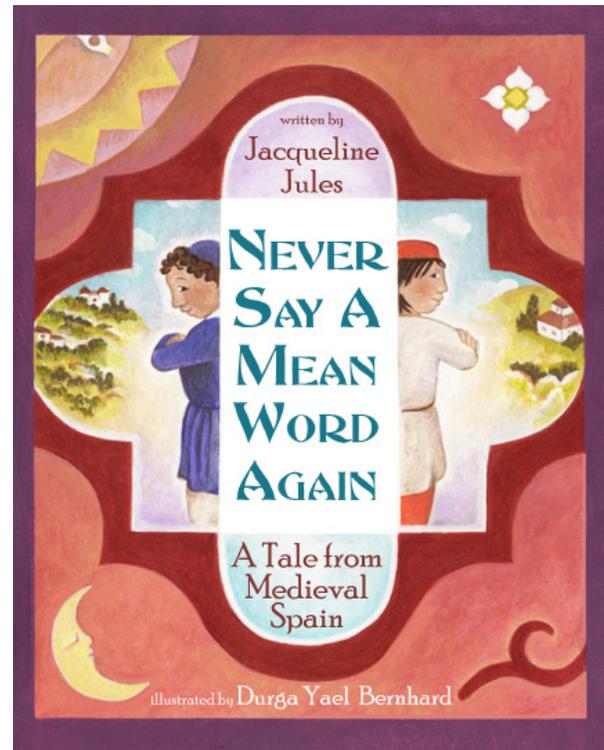
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former school librarian and teacher, JACQUELINE JULES is the author of over two dozen books for children including the award-winning *Zapato Power* series. Half of her titles are of Jewish interest for young readers, including *The Hardest Word*, a National Jewish Book Award finalist, and Sydney Taylor Honor Award winners *Sarah Laughs* and *Benjamin and the Silver Goblet*.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

D. YAEL BERNHARD was raised in New York’s Hudson Valley and began painting at the age of 13. She is the illustrator of numerous award-winning children’s books, including fiction and non-fiction, natural science titles and multicultural folktales. Ms. Bernhard is also a children’s teacher of Hebrew, Judaic Studies, and illustration.

\$16.95, 32 pages, hardback, 8x10  
36 color illustrations  
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Winner of a 2014 Aesop Accolade, awarded by the Children’s Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society

Finalist in the “Children’s Picture Book: Hardcover Fiction” category of The USA “Best Books 2014” Awards

“Jules’s down-to-earth narrative communicates Samuel’s subtle internal transformation as the unexpected, amusing, and touching outcomes of his attempts to obey his father turn a power struggle into a budding friendship. . . . Bernhard’s illustrations convey an elegant, multicultural castle environment. Energy and movement infuse the paintings.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

★STARRED REVIEW★



Wisdom Tales  
Stories from Around the World

# NEVER SAY A MEAN WORD AGAIN — WISDOM TALES DISCUSSION GUIDE

## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Do you think it is possible to make friends with someone who has insulted you?
2. What would you do if someone called you a name?
3. Have you ever felt justified calling someone else a name?
4. Do you think you could come up with a fair punishment for someone who hurt your feelings?
5. Sometimes it is hard for people from different family backgrounds to become friends. What can people do to make it easier?

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why would being the son of an important man make it hard for Samuel to make friends?
2. How could you tell the story took place in medieval Spain? Give details about the book that helped you identify the setting and time period.
3. What words would you use to describe Samuel? For each word you choose, give at least one example from the story.
4. How do you feel about Hamza's reaction at the banquet?
5. How do you think Samuel felt when his father told him he should punish Hamza?
6. Why do you think Samuel thought a lemon would be a good punishment for a boy who said mean things?
7. Why did all of Samuel's attempts to punish Hamza fail?
8. Do you think Hamza and Samuel changed during this story or did they remain the same? Give specific details to support your opinion.
9. How did Samuel follow his father's orders?
10. Did Samuel do what his father expected him to do?

## ACTIVITIES:

- The conflict between Hamza and Samuel starts when Hamza views Samuel's clumsy action as being mean. So he returns Samuel's unkindness and he calls him names. The way we speak and act towards others is important in how they view us in return. How can we turn unkindness into kindness with our words? Think about kind words that you might say to defuse a situation, or when you meet a new person.\*

### EXAMPLES:

- Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. What's yours?
  - Can I help you?
  - What's your favorite color?
  - Thank you.
  - I'm sorry.
  - I forgive you.
  - Please
  - I'm glad you're my friend.
  - You're awesome.
  - I like you.
  - That's incredible!
  - Want to play?
- The song "You and I" by Jacqueline Jules has been composed to encourage classroom engagement whilst using *Never Say a Mean Word Again*. Find the words and a recording of the song at: <http://jacquelinejules.com/youandi.htm>



\* Thanks to Valarie at *Jump into a Book* blog for suggesting this activity.