Title	*Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*			
Author (Text & Illustration)	Simms Taback			
Publication Year	1999		Publisher	Viking Books for Young Readers
Translated Versions	Japanese translation available.			
Words	182	Pages	32	YL Level	0.6

Synopsis

The protagonist of this picture book, Joseph, is a genius of reusing. He cuts up an old overcoat and re-tailors it into a jacket. He makes a vest when the jacket, too, becomes old, and then a scarf, a tie, a handkerchief, and finally, a small button. He then loses the button, but Joseph does not give up. What is his final idea for "reusing"?

Introduction

What do you do with your belongings when they become old? There has been a movement toward "minimalism" recently, about actively disposing of things that have not been used in years, but these things can also be repaired or reused for other purposes. The "reusing" of old clothes may give an impression of being poor or preachy, but this book, with its bright and colorful illustrations and fast pace, creates a sense of anticipation and excitement about how the object will be used next time. Originally based on a Jewish folk song (a Yiddish children's tale), the original song also has a light and cheerful tone. It is a message of positive thinking about reusing old things while having fun, instead of using them reluctantly.

The author humorously mentions in the afterword that he and Joseph are similar in appearance. The book is set in Poland, the choir sings Tumbalalaika, and there are many references to Jewish culture and society in the illustrations, such as the story of the rabbi in the newspaper. It is also a reminder that many people of Jewish descent were tailors to begin with. This picture book is perfect for deepening understanding of such different cultures.

There are die-cuts on the pages of the book, and the old coat is transformed and passed on from the previous page to the next. This could be interpreted as an allusion to the continuation of Jewish culture.

2000 Caldecott Medal Winner.

(Text: Megumi Kobayashi)