

A Teaching American History Project in Four Parts:

Part 1: Using Artifacts Owned by Russian Immigrants
to Connect Students
to Choices Made by Immigrants

Part 2: Using Oral Stories and Interviews
of Russian Immigrants to Inspire
Biography Writing of Family Immigration Stories

Part 3: Using Artifacts to Preserve and Understand History
Identifying Primary Source Artifacts

Part 4: Member Contributions
Biographical Stories, Artifact Papers, and Bibliographies



The History of Immigration

The Education Cooperative

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Grade 3/4 Immigration Project:
Immigrant Treasures and Immigration Stories
by Beth Garry, Kate Hughey, and Pollyanna Sidell

Introduction and Rationale

The following mini-unit is in two parts. The first is an addition to the Russia unit taught by the third grade in Wellesley, MA. The lessons use the artifacts collected by the people we interviewed for Part 1 of this project to enable the students to make personal connections to the challenges and choices that come from being an immigrant.

The second part is a reworking of an existing unit taught by one of the fourth grade teachers involved in the project. The original lessons were focused on family stories without explicit connections to the social studies themes in fourth grade. In this collaboration between one third-grade and two fourth-grade teachers, we have expanded and revised the lessons to include our interviews with friends and family and the knowledge and experience acquired through the Teaching American History Immigration coursework and readings.

The Wellesley 3rd and 4th grade curricula are full of opportunities to connect to and explore issues of immigration. The third grade studies Boston Then and Now, which looks in part at how different ethnic groups have changed the character of Boston and its surrounding neighborhoods. They also study an extensive unit on Russia, which at the Upham School includes a visit from two recent Russian immigrants who come to share their stories. And their author study is on Patricia Polacco, whose picture books often reflect her Ukranian and Russian background and relationships with her immigrant grandparents. In fourth grade there is an immigration piece in the year-long study of People and Regions of the United States.

The mini-unit related to the artifacts we describe connects directly to the third grade study of Russia and to its author study of Patricia Polacco. In searching for a way to connect this project across the grade levels, however, so that it would have a more far-reaching impact, we realized that any lessons we created could not be confined to one of the social studies themes, which would necessarily limit our use of it to either the third or fourth grade. Therefore, for the mini-unit related to our interviews, we chose to create lessons related to one of the literacy frameworks found at both grade levels - the study of biography - which would then allow each of us to connect the unit to and make it relevant for our respective social studies units. In these units, we introduce the lessons by sharing the artifacts we describe in this project and our biographies of the immigrant stories we collected during the course. Students are asked (in third grade) to collect artifacts that have been passed down through their family or to decide what they would carry with them when immigrating to another country, and (in fourth grade) to interview adult family members about the family's own immigrant stories (or lacking that, any important family story that has been passed down - how grandparents met, for example, or their experiences during WWII) and then create a picture book of that story. This second unit is followed by lessons using artifacts to preserve and understand history.

Since in our biographies we highlight Russian immigrants (two living immigrants who immigrated in the 1990's, one deceased great-grandparent who lived in Tsarist Russia), and in our artifact papers we describe pieces those people carried with them from the Motherland, the third grade can easily connect this to their study of Russia and incorporate ideas of how the push/pull factors affecting immigration have **changed over time** and what **causes** people to immigrate in the first place. By putting their family

stories into picture book form, students become like Patricia Polacco and can relate to that author's inspiration. Students who have families who immigrated to the Boston area become living components of "Boston, Then and Now".

Because students study immigration in fourth grade, they are able to focus more closely on the **complexity** involved in deciding to immigrate and can put their own family stories into the **context** of American immigration as a whole. They can also compare their stories to others' in the class to again explore how immigration has **changed over time** and the varied and **complex** events that caused their family members to immigrate in the first place. At this grade level, it might also be possible for them to explore ideas of **contingency** - how might their lives have been different if those family members hadn't immigrated? This might be limited to those students who want to extend their learning and research life in other countries.

PRIMES

It can be challenging making the PRIMES accessible to an elementary school audience. However, elements of each can be found and explored in most immigration stories, especially in the "push" and "pull" factors that caused each person or family to immigrate.

Political: What political events were happening in this country and the home country that made immigration desirable and/or necessary? What was happening with the home country's government?

Religion: What were the religious experiences and affiliations of the immigrants, and what effect did those experiences have on the family's or individual's immigration and assimilation experiences? *Artifact:* Does the artifact have religious significance? Do

students have crucifixes, menorahs or other religious artifacts that are precious to them and their families?

Intellectual/Technological: Did the family member or interviewee immigrate for college? For a job in a skilled field?

Military: Was a war being fought that necessitated immigration? *Artifact:* the artifacts shared by Sasha and Valentina have tremendous military significance. Do students' families have medals or other military honors to share or to pass down?

Economic: Did family members leave due to a famine, recession or depression? To look for better jobs or other opportunities? To be able to send money home? *Artifact:* Do the pieces students have represent wealth or luxury items?

Social: How did the family or individual assimilate into American culture? Did they find America welcoming? What kind of social networks did they have? Did they live among other immigrants from the same country? *Artifact:* What uses did the candlesticks serve in the family? Are students' artifacts related to social mores or customs?

Part 1: *The Keeping Quilt* – Using Artifacts to Preserve Family Memories and Traditions

The following 2 lessons use Patricia Polacco's book, *The Keeping Quilt*, to introduce a discussion on immigration and the importance of maintaining family traditions and culture, sometimes through objects or other artifacts. Students will be asked to think about what they would bring with them if they were immigrating to another country and how their choices might affect future generations' understanding of their life in America.

Lesson 1

Overview: The picture book is about an immigrant mother and family who arrive in the US. The mother uses old clothes from Russia to make a quilt. The quilt gets passed along for four generations from mother to daughter, encountering a different use for each generation. Author Polacco used the quilt as a blanket for her children. The class discussion around immigration, holding onto family heirlooms and passing along traditions will activate students' thinking about what they might take with them if they were to emigrate somewhere. (Showing the slideshow of only the illustrations will get the students thinking by activating prior knowledge. This will give us the opportunity to discuss how pictures alone can tell stories.)

Begin lesson with slideshow of only the illustrations from *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco. Have students discuss their observations and predict the story's content. Then, read the book aloud and as a class, discuss immigration and traditions passed from one generation to another.

Materials:

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco

Slideshow with each picture from *The Keeping Quilt*, without the text

Whole Class Activity:

Prior to reading the book, show class a slideshow of illustrations without text. Using SIGHT, have students discuss and predict what they think the picture is depicting.

Read aloud the book, *The Keeping Quilt*

Discuss why Polacco may have written the book

What messages do we, the readers get? (There is great value in family; there is an importance of traditions- both are shown through a family's story of love, faith, and endurance)

What were the traditional gifts given on special occasions? What did they signify? How might these traditions compare to the gifts in your family?

What things in story would have changed if Anna's family had not emigrated to the US?

What if Anna had not learned to speak English?

What if the family had returned to Russia?

Review the illustration slideshow. Discuss how Anna's family looked when they first came to the US, what kinds of clothes they wore, and how the pictures show **change over time**. Discuss the sepia colored figures and how the only true color used in the illustrations is the fabric used in the quilt. Discuss how this helps set the mood of the story.

Ask students what things have been handed down in their family. Have them think about important object/artifacts at home that have been passed from generation to generation. Can anyone name one or more items that they know about?

Homework

Students are going to talk with their parents about an heirloom or family tradition. Students need to think about what they might take with them if they were to emigrate somewhere. (See attached homework sheet)

Possible Extension

Can be adapted for other classes, but teachers will need to locate local immigrants, artifacts, and photographs.

Before the visit of immigrant friends, show a power point slideshow of the scanned photographs of their lives as children and adults in their homeland. Using SIGHT, have students look critically at the pictures and share observations. Explain who Sasha and Valentina are (biographies are included in our "People" essays.) Together, see if the children can tell a story about the Kimelfelds. If time permits, photographs of the artifacts can also be shown – and then when Sasha and Valentina visit, they can be shared.

Name _____

Date _____

Follow Up Activity to the *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco

Today in class, we read *The Keeping Quilt* aloud. We discussed the importance of family traditions and heirlooms and why a family might choose to pass items on from generation to generation. We also talked about when a person emigrates it is likely that they need to choose between what meaningful objects to bring.

For homework, have a discussion about the book we read, and about your family's cherished possessions. Then answer the following questions:

1. What is something that has been passed on from another generation to you and your family? Tell what it is and use details to describe it and why it has been passed on.

2. Imagine that you and your family are going to immigrate to another country. There is limited space for you to bring everything so your parents have told you that you may only put into your backpack five things. You need to think about what is most important to you and to your family, because you may only have five items. Think about and talk with your parents about the items. Make a list of the items below:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

If possible and practical, put the items into a backpack or small bag and bring the bag to class. If this is not possible, please take a picture of each item and send those in on a disk or flash drive. You can also email them to me (make them small, please!)

Keeping Quilt Lesson 2

Overview:

Students will use their chosen items and create a 5-slide Powerpoint presentation that highlights each item. They will write scripts and do voiceovers for each slide that explains why each item was chosen.

Note: Recruit parent volunteers to take pictures of items and organize them for students either on CDs or on a computer in separate folders that can be easily accessed. Also take advantage of any technology specialists working in the building and have them come into class to work with students. You might also want to include parents familiar with technology during the lessons. It is always helpful to have several adults in the room when using technology.

Materials:

- Backpacks with items or pictures of items
- Computers with Powerpoint or Appleworks slideshow software
- Writing paper and pens for scripts
- Earphones for final presentations

Procedure:

In advance:

- Prepare a one or two slide presentation of your own items with a voiceover explaining the significance of each item. Voiceovers do not need to be long or elaborate. Have a copy of a written script for your voiceovers to show students.
- Teach students (or have the tech specialist teach students) how to create a slide in Powerpoint or Appleworks, whichever program you will be using. They need to know how to add a picture and a title. You can teach voiceover recording later.

Each part may take several days, depending on your class and the time you have in a day.

Part 1:

- Once students have collected their items and brought their backpacks to school, gather together in a circle and have the students share one item, explaining why they chose it and how it represents their family's culture, traditions or values.
- Explain that they are going to be creating Powerpoint presentations (or Appleworks slideshows, depending on your school's technology and your own knowledge) to showcase the items they chose. Each slide will have a picture of one item, perhaps with a title naming the item, and a voiceover of the child describing each item the way they did with the group (explaining why they chose it and how it represents their family's culture, traditions or values).
- Show your prepared Powerpoint as a model. Show the script you wrote and explain that the words on the script are the ones they just heard you read aloud.
- Send the students off to write their scripts. While they are writing, have parents or other volunteers take pictures of the students' items and download them onto

computers (in Wellesley, pictures can be put into each student's individual folder on the server).

Part 2:

- Have students read their scripts to a partner, edit and revise them. Then have them practice reading it over out loud several times until it can be read fluently.
- Once they have practiced, they can create their slideshow presentations using their pictures. They may want to include a title slide, as well. Depending on the number of computers you have, you may have ½ the class working on their scripts while the other ½ works on the slideshow and then switch.
- Once the slides are created and in the order the student wants, they can record their voiceovers. This is the most challenging part in terms of space, time and personnel, as a quiet space is needed for each student to do his/her own recording. Parents can come in and supervise students in empty offices or classrooms, you can schedule students to come in before or after school. In any case, this procedure will take several days and some creativity and flexibility to complete.
- **Alternatively**, if time and space do not allow for voiceovers, you can have students type their descriptions and include the text in each slide with the picture. The presentations will not be as dynamic, but it will save a great deal of time and can all be done together in the classroom.

Part 3:

- Sharing – set up several computers around the room with 4 or 5 presentations on each, or, if resources allow, set up one computer for each student. Be sure to provide earphones if you have done voiceovers both because laptop speakers are often inadequate and because all the presentations playing at once would be loud and confusing. Have students rotate around stations to view each others' presentations – as many as time allows.
 - Bring the class together for a final discussion about the items – were there similarities? Themes? What kinds of things were most often chosen? How does a person decide what they want to have for the rest of their lives?
-

Part 2: Using Immigrant Biographies to Make Connections and Inspire Writing

Curriculum Content: Social Studies/Reading/Writing

Lesson 1: Two Week Homework Assignment: Finding an immigration/family story

Overview: This lesson is the starting point of the immigration focus of the grade 3 Boston Unit. Children are assigned homework in this lesson about a family member's immigration history.

Materials:

Individual Immigration Worksheet

Story Map

Teacher created Immigration Worksheet

Personal immigration stories, picture books, chapter books, or share one of the attached immigration stories

Activity:

1. After reading an immigration story aloud (suggestions below), discuss the reasons that different people might leave their country and move to a new country. What are some of the problems they might encounter? What would be hardest for the students if they had to move to a new country?
2. Review the immigration worksheet and assign it as homework. Let students know that they will need a grown-up family member's help to complete the worksheet, as the worksheet asks for some research regarding family history. Point out that at the bottom of the page there is a paragraph that talks about oral history and mentions how stories are passed down through generations.
3. This home assignment will take two weeks to accomplish. The job is for students to work with parents to answer the questions at the top of the worksheet.
4. For the bottom of the sheet, students will interview a parent or another grown-up family member about an immigration story. (If an immigration story is not available or accessible, a family story or tradition can take its place)
5. Explain that not all families know their immigration story. *Nory Ryan's Song* has an author's note at the end of the book that explains how Patricia Rielly Giff wrote this story and how her family's true immigration story was lost because mothers, fathers, aunts, and uncles just wanted to forget the pain of having to leave a country they loved but had to because of the conditions. They just wanted to start a new life in America.

Suggested Immigration Stories

Write/share a personal family immigration story, or share one of ours (attached)

**We Came Through Ellis Island* by Gare Thompson

**Coming to America: The Story of Immigration* by Betsy Maestro and Susannah Ryan

**If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island* by Ellen Levine and Wayne

Permenter

**The Memory Coat* by Elvira Woodruff and Michael Dooling

**Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say

How Tia Lola Came to (Visit) Stay by Julia Alvarez

So Far From Home: Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl by Barry

Denenberg

Molly's Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen and Daniel Mark Duffy

Nory Ryan's Song by Patricia Rielly Giff

*Represents Picture Books that Could be Read Aloud

Lesson 2: Comparing Immigration Stories

Overview: Teacher and students will share immigration stories and will make a whole class comparison to that of the state of Massachusetts.

Materials:

Completed Individual Student Immigration Worksheets

Composite Immigration Worksheet (one per student)

Chart Paper/Marker

Activity:

1. Read the questions and share the answers to each question by recording the different answers on chart paper.
2. Share how different students/teachers have different backgrounds. (Compare to all of MA discussion)

Lesson 3: Identifying Important Events in Immigration Stories

Overview: In this lesson children will be identifying the nine most important chunks of their immigration story. Then they will chart their immigration stories and write 3-4 sentences about each time period (chunk).

Materials:

Completed Story Map Assignment (bottom half of the individual immigration worksheet)

8.5 x 11 paper, one per student

Chart Paper/Marker or transparency and overhead projector or document projector and paper divided into 9 boxes

Card Stock (at least 60# paper), 9 sheets per student

Part I Activity: Planning Story Map and Sequence

1. Students watch as the teacher models turning a story map into a sequence map/storyboard. This is very important because students need to be able to think of their immigration story in logical chunks.
2. Fold an 8.5X11" piece of paper into thirds both directions, creating 9 boxes.

Draw lines on the fold marks and number each box as shown below. The paper will be used to transfer the story map onto the sequence map/storyboard.

page 1	page 2	page 3
page 4	page 5	page 6
page 7	page 8	page 9

3. The teacher should model placing their own immigration story, divided into 9 important "chunks" on the sequence map/storyboard. Complete the box labeled page 1 and then the box labeled page 2. Each box will only contain the idea.
4. Students will do the same with their immigration stories. Then they will sketch or write about a scene/setting (an illustration idea) to go with the text idea on the page.
5. As taught and noticed from reading other stories, students will fill in the remaining boxes as the story reaches the climax between the 2nd and 8th pages.

Part 2 Activity: Writing the Text

1. Students will write 1-4 sentences* for each box using their word processors.
2. When printing text onto card stock, consider will the book be portrait or landscape? A one-inch gutter needs to be applied to the left side to account for the book binding.

*Given the timing and students dependence on parental story content, the student can write the 1-4 sentences of text for each box at home and bring them into school or the entire project can be completed in class.

Lesson 4: Exploration of setting the mood of picture books through use of color

Overview: Students experiment and explore how colors can "set the mood". (The book: *Yesterday I Had the Blues* is a great read aloud to help with this)

Materials:

Completed Sequence Map/Storyboard

2”X1” sticky notes (white if possible) approximately 9 per student

Pastel Paper Chalk, 1 set per table group

12X18 Drawing Paper, one per student

Chart paper

Activity: Exploration in Color

1. Title the drawing paper “Color Sets the Mood,” take this time to place a name on the paper also.

2. Students explore the medium of pastel paper chalk (15 minutes). Teacher first models on drawing paper how holding the chalk different ways reveals different textures and lines, blending with different materials produces different effects also, and that different colors give a feeling.
3. Students should try different colors to see how each color makes them have different feelings. The titled drawing paper then becomes a sample pad for exploring different colors and textures.
4. At the end of the sampling period, teacher collects observations that students made during the exploration time on chart paper. Keep the list up so students can use the ideas as a tool when illustrating their books later.

Activity: Identifying the Mood

1. Using the sticky notes, students will cover each of the 9 boxes on the sequence map/storyboard. The sticky note will identify the overall mood that should be portrayed to the reader on that page of the picture book.
2. Pastel Paper Chalk will be used to match the mood the student wants to portray in the story.

Lesson 5: Identifying Context of immigration stories

Overview: This first part of this activity helps student understand the context and the time period of their family's immigration story. The second part of this activity is when the students illustrate their text pages.

Materials:

Completed Sequence Map/Storyboard with attached stickies
Resource Books and Internet
Text for each story page printed on card stock
Pastel Paper Chalk sorted by warm, cool, neutral shades
Aqua Net® Hairspray or any inexpensive aerosol hairsprays
File folders

Part 1 Activity: Setting Research – Understanding Time

1. Students will use books and the Internet to find images of people and landscapes that fit their story's location and time in history. This will give students the context required for illustrating their drawings.
2. Exploration through the immigration picture books that are being read will help students to understand how color is used to support the text in a story, as well as provide an opportunity for students to revisit other immigration stories.

Part 2 Activity: Illustrating Final Pages

1. Students illustrate card stock pages that contain text using pastel paper chalk. Place sorted chalks in three separate areas. Students are forced to think about how they will add color as the walk between stations. This will slow them down and allow for some forced think time.

2. After illustration is complete for each page, the page should be sprayed with Aqua Net hairspray. The hairspray acts as a “fixent,” helping the chalk to set into the paper.
3. Pages need drying space. Aqua Net has a high alcohol content so they pages dry relatively fast.
4. Students should store pages in a file folder to keep them organized and neat.

Lesson 6: Compilation of Immigration Story Picture Books

Overview: These activities are the final steps/stages of the immigration story picture books.

Materials:

Final illustrated and dried cardstock book pages

Book Board 1” larger length x width* than cardstock pages, two per student

Acid Free Glue in tubs and brushes for application

Drawing Paper, 4 pages per student

Acrylic paint and wall paper glue 2:1 mix for each color (separate color stations as previous chalk use), brushes, scrapers and various texture-embedding materials

Tissue Paper, cut into a variety of shapes and sizes

Cups of water for rinsing brushes

Pipe cleaners/ribbon/yarn/beads for binding

Paper drill

Awl

Bone

*see drawings attached

Activity: Preparing Book Cover Papers

1. Students paint two pages of the drawing paper using acrylic paint mixture. These will become the outside covers for the book.
2. Coordinating colors should be used to allow for continuity.
3. Allow for paper drying time.
4. Cut drawing paper leaving 1 ½” margin on all sides using the book board as the sample size.
5. Apply acid free glue to the paper and the book board and fold edges as shown in the diagram attached (will scan and attach Friday, 5/1)
6. Align the paper and the book board and attach. Use the bone to smooth out ridges, air pockets, and bumps working from the center to the outside.

Activity: Preparing Signature Pages

1. Signature pages are the blank pages between the hard cover and the content that aid in the binding process.
2. Students use water and tissue paper to color the drawing paper that will later be used for signature pages.
3. Coordinating colors with the acrylic paints use should be considered to allow for continuity.

4. Allow for paper drying time.
5. Cut water colored drawing paper ½” smaller than book board
6. Apply acid free glue to the water color paper and the book board
7. Align the paper and the book board and attach. Use the bone to smooth out ridges, air pockets, and bumps working from the center to the outside.
8. Book boards must be dried for several days with weights on them so they do not curl on the edges. ½” Plywood squares and adjustable clamps work well. Art teachers typically use 50# boxes of clay – but that is what they have lying around.

Activity: Binding the book

1. Create two templates – one for drilling the cover holes, and one for the 9 book pages. You need to different templates because the covers are larger than the inner pages.
2. Use the hand drill to make the holes in the book and that text pages. Using paper clips to stop the text pages from sliding around as you drill.
3. Assemble the book in the proper order and align the holes.
4. Use the desired binding material (I prefer pipe cleaners) to string through the holes. Do not tie the binding too tight or the book will not open easily. Test the opening before tying any final knots.

Possible Extension/Culminating Activity: Scanning picture books onto the computer for a Power Point Slideshow

Overview: Students will scan each page of their picture book onto the computer. Once each slideshow is scanned, students will record their voice while reading the picture book aloud.

Activity

Enlist the help of the librarian and/or parent volunteers and assist students with scanning their picture books. Once pictures are scanned, students can sit with an adult and record their voice while reading each picture book page. Compile all immigration stories and create a slideshow.

Invite parents, family members, and friends to come into the classroom for a celebration. Show the Power Point presentation to share and to celebrate the variety of family immigration and family tradition stories.



Dreams of Freedom: Boston's Immigration Museum
Worksheet 1: Where Does My Family Come From?
Suggested Grade: Elementary School

Name: _____

Class: _____

About my Family:

1. My mother and her family came from: _____
2. What language(s) did they speak? _____
3. When did they come to America? _____
4. How did they get here? Plane Boat Car Train
5. Why did they come to America? _____
6. My father and his family came from: _____
7. What language(s) did they speak? _____
8. When did they come to America? _____
9. How did they get here? Plane Boat Car Train
10. Why did they come to America? _____

About Me:

1. Do you speak any languages other than English? If so, which one(s)? _____
2. Do you know anyone who was not born in America? What is their name and where are they from? _____

A Family Story:

An oral history is a story told about a person's life and experiences. All families have stories. Family stories can be about anything-- how people met, a funny thing your mother or father or grandparents did, or something interesting that happened to you. Record a family story.



Dreams of Freedom: Boston's Immigration Museum
Worksheet 2: Where Does Our Class Come From?
Suggested Grade: Elementary School

Name: _____

Class: _____

1. List all the countries where your classmates and their ancestors came from:

Country: _____

Language(s) spoken in that country: _____

Region of the World: _____

2. List the number of students in your class whose families came from:

North America: _____

Central America: _____

Caribbean: _____

South America: _____

Africa: _____

Middle East: _____

Europe: _____

Australia and Oceania: _____

Asia: _____

3. List all of the languages spoken by students in your class:

Language: _____

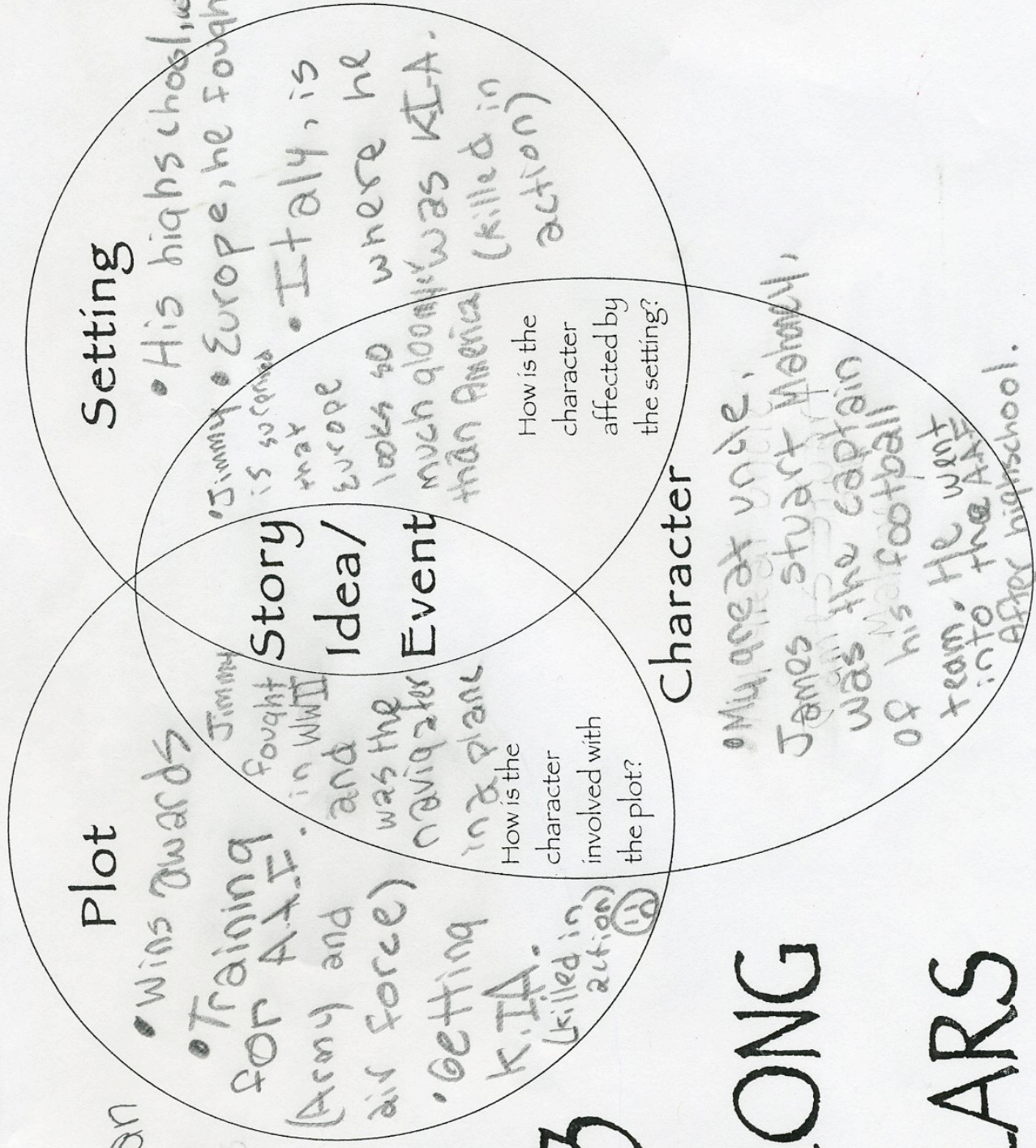
Number of students who speak it: _____

IMMIGRATION
STORY PLAN

NAME: Donian

DATE: 2/13

PLAN DUE:
FEBRUARY 13



3

STRONG

PILLARS

August
17, 1945
Japan
May 7, 1945,
Germany
surrendered

My Great Uncle,

James Stewart Mahone

My great uncle, Jimmy,
was his nickname was born
on November 20th 1924.

In highschool, he was the
star of his football team
and won many awards!

Soon later, he went into the

military* He was in the ~~AAF~~
A.A.F.** (Army and air force)

* ~~He~~ He was my grandfathers
big brother. It was the last
time he ever saw him ~~again~~ before
~~when~~ he left for the military.

He survived in the war
for almost the whole time!
But, in 1945 he was K.I.A***
(killed in action) by flying in his
airplane, he was shot down by
one of the germans. My family
keeps his memory alive by talking
about his and keeping pictures
of him in our house. I also
have an uncle named Jim, after
him.

The end

** in
WW II.
He was
the navigator
on a
plane.

September 2,
1945 the
surrender
ceremony

April 10,
1945

My Great Uncle, James Stuart Mahoney

By Dorian [redacted]

= chunk

1 This is a story about my Great Uncle, James Stuart Mahoney, who was born in Taunton, Massachusetts on November 20th, 1924. His nickname was Jimmy and he was my grandfather's older brother. Jimmy really loved sports! In high school he was the captain of his football team. He was also the star of his track team. I have one of his blue ribbons from the 100 yard dash!

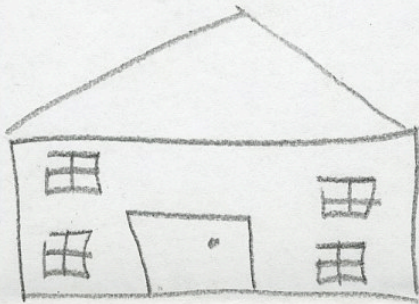
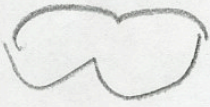
3 In July 1943, a few weeks after high school graduation, he joined the A.A.F (army and air force) and fought in World War 2. Before he left for the war, a photographer took a picture of him and his family in front of their house. This was the last time my grandfather ever saw his brother Jimmy alive.

Jimmy became a flight officer in November of 1944 and was assigned to a B-24 "Liberator" crew as a navigator. A navigator is someone who keeps an airplane going in the right direction. I have his training manual from navigation school in Monroe, Louisiana.

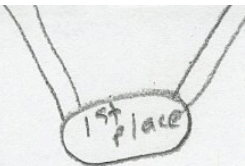
Jimmy went to Europe in February of 1945 with his B-24 crew.

8 Jimmy went to Europe in February of 1945 with his B-24 crew. On April 10th, 1945 his plane was shot down by the Germans at Foggia Airfield in Italy. Some crew members survived, but he was K.I.A. (killed in action). We keep his memory alive by talking about him and keeping pictures of him in our house!!!

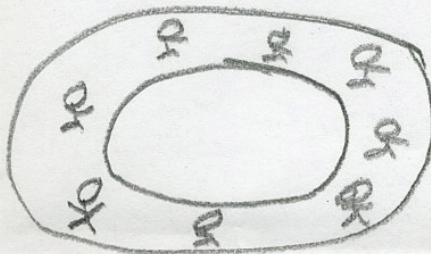
James Stuart Mahoney has a square named after him in Hyannis, Massachusetts in Cape Cod.



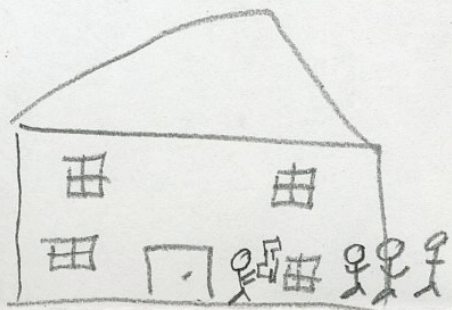
4



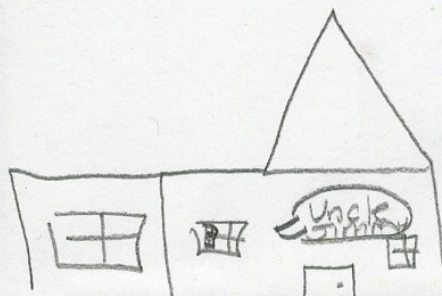
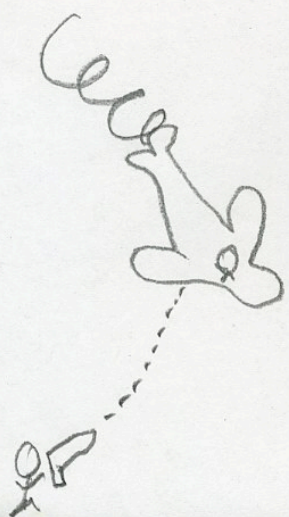
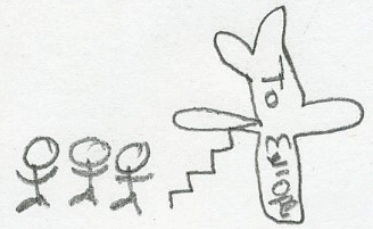
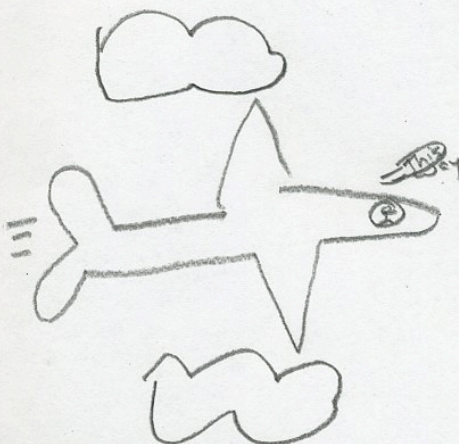
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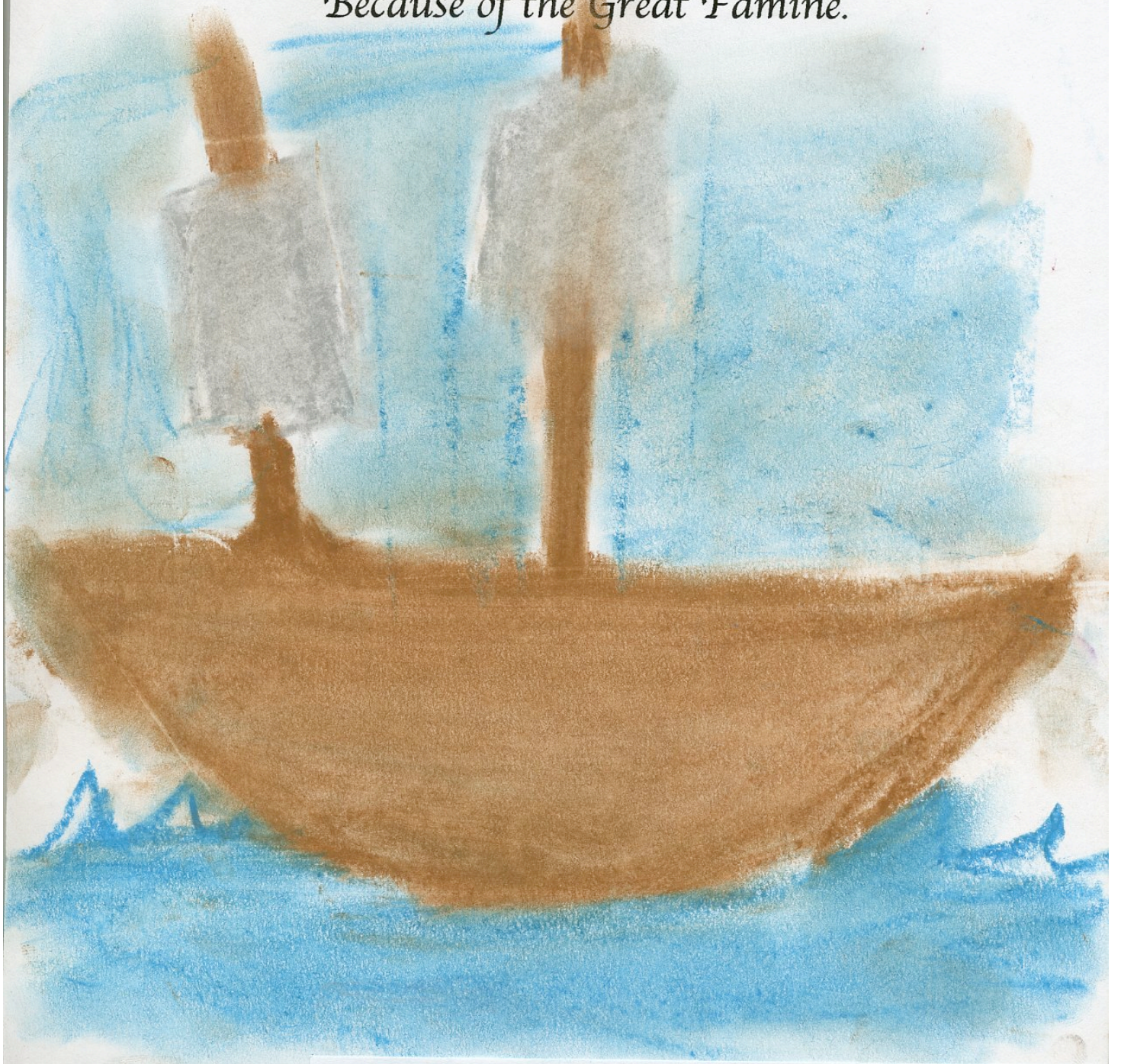
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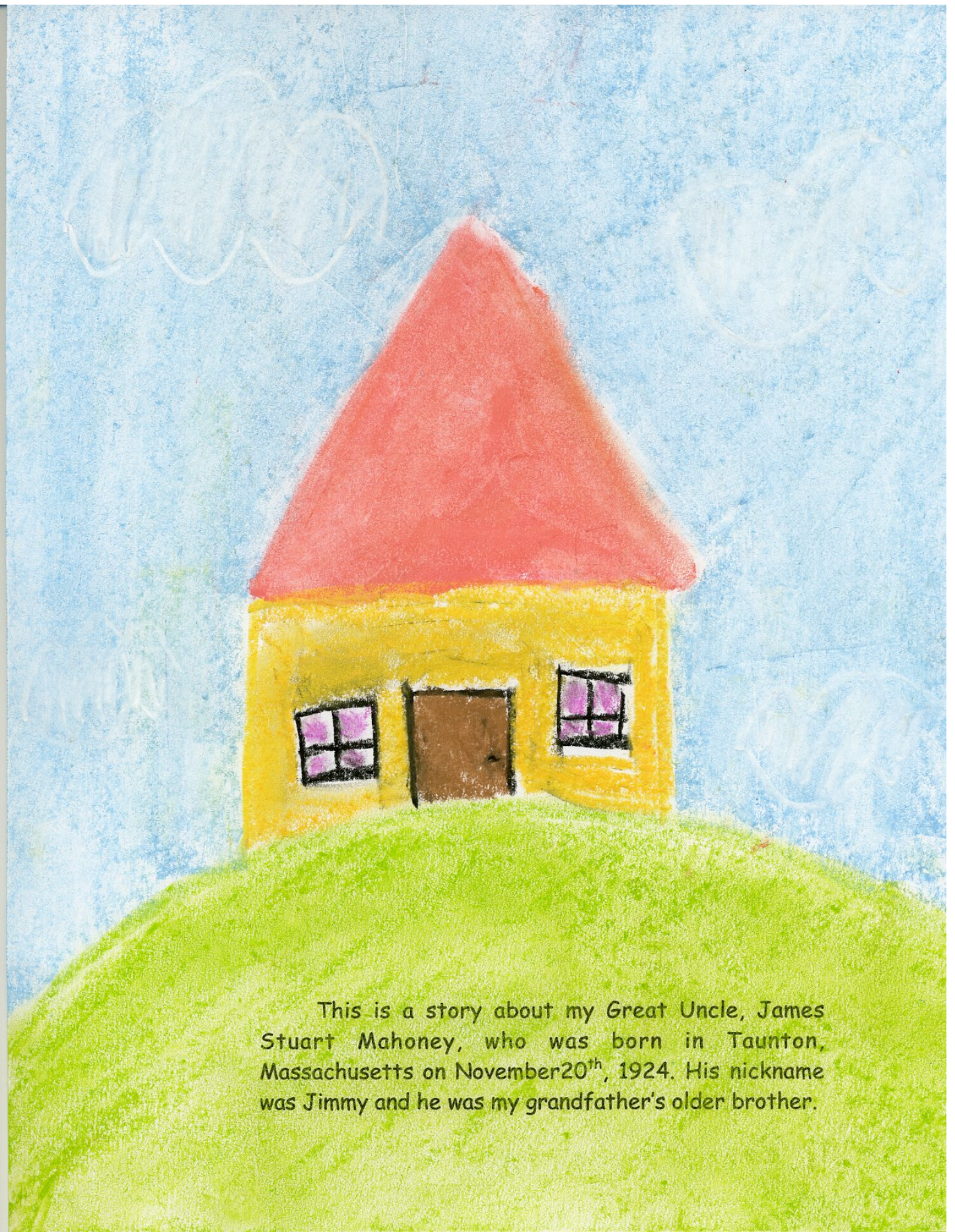
7



Because of the Great Famine.



By Dan



This is a story about my Great Uncle, James Stuart Mahoney, who was born in Taunton, Massachusetts on November 20th, 1924. His nickname was Jimmy and he was my grandfather's older brother.

Discovering the Artist Within...

Making the Book Covers

The following is for a finished book 9.5" tall and 12.5" wide. The front cover will have a 'bending' section for easy opening and binding of the book.

Materials:

- Bookboard (The Paper Source in Wellesley or Cambridge) precut
 - Back cover cut to 9.5" x 12.5"
 - Front cover cut 9.5" x 1.25" and 9.5" x 11" (2 pieces)
- Handmade paste papers on heavyweight 12" x 18" paper
 - Will need four papers to cover both sides of each cover, can also use magazine photos
- Collages or watercolor papers for inside covers
- Sandpaper
- Bookbinding glue (PVA glue at Paper Source or YES glue)
- Book bone
- Scissors, ruler, pencil
- Wide brushes for applying glue

Step One

- Sand corners of precut bookboard lightly to round the edges and prevent tearing of corners of the book
- Lay back bookboard on top of underside of both the front and back cover papers. Trace the outline of the finished cover size with a pencil. Allow a good inch all around the finished size and trim the paste paper with this extra allowance for wrapping around the outside edges of the cover.
- Trim the four corners of the paper diagonally to eliminate too much bulk but make sure to leave a good half inch to wrap around the outside corner (**see attached illustration**)

Step Two

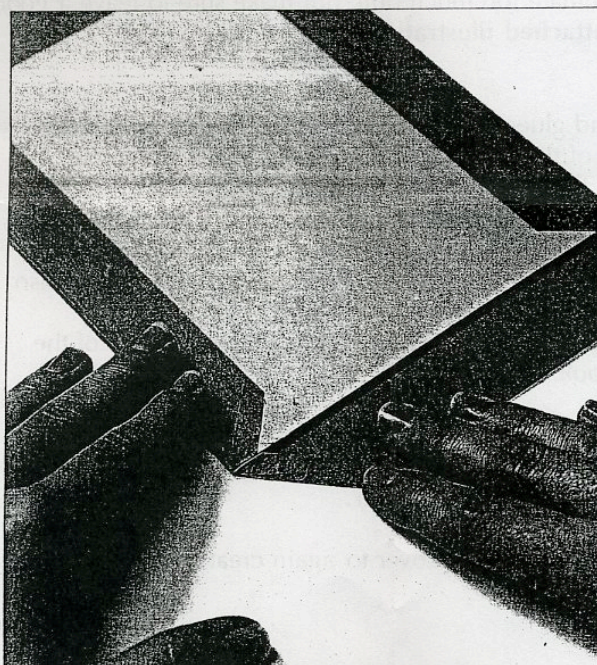
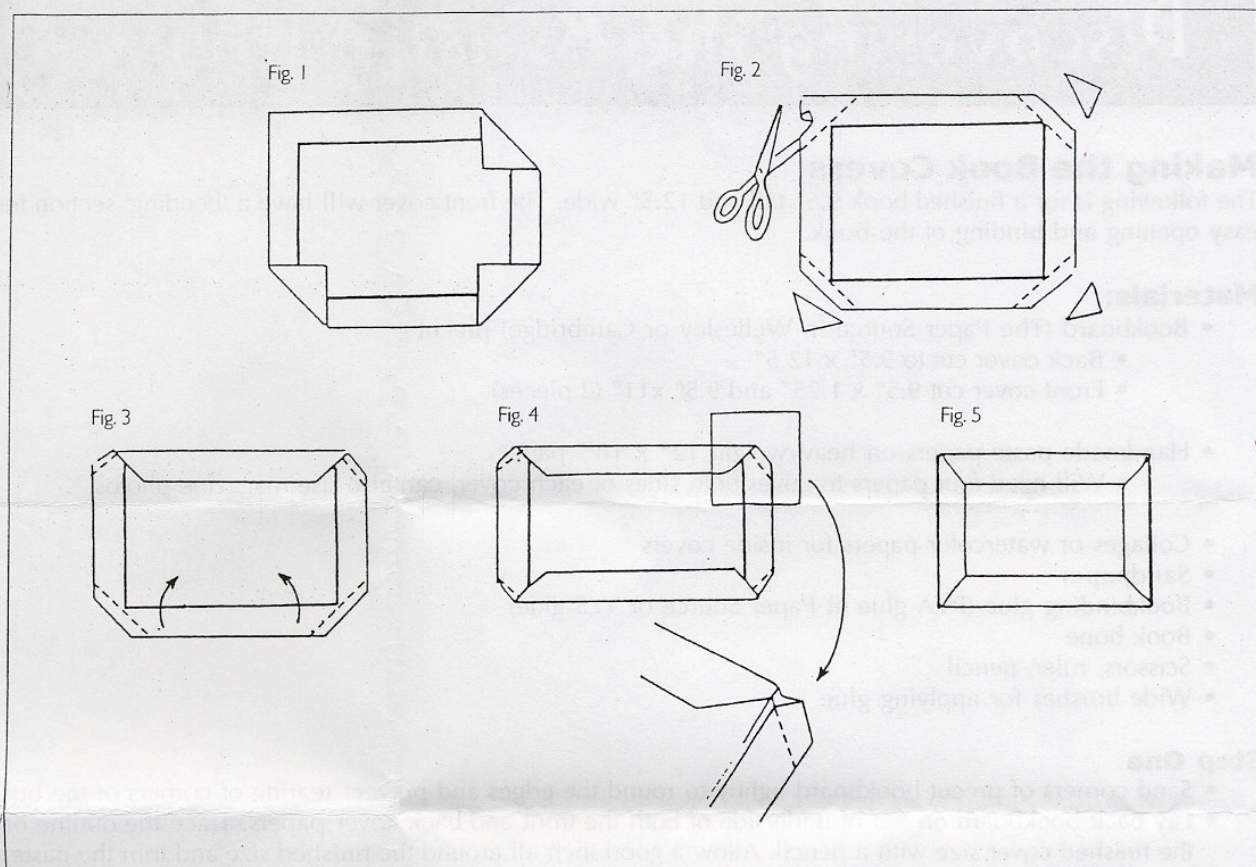
- Glue the back cover first. Use the wide brush, spread glue evenly on the back of the paper **and** the bookboard. Place the board glue side down on top of the glued backside of the paper. Be careful to align it with the penciled outline. **Press firmly over the whole board surface.**
- Glue, fold and wrap the paper directly around the outside corners first of the board. Then working one side at a time, glue, fold and wrap each side until it lies flatly and neatly. Finish gluing all four sides. Use the book bone carefully to create a clean outline and **eliminate any air bubbles**. It is best to also feel and press the entire cover surface with your hands to insure even adhesion.
- To finish, cut the inside cover paper to 9" x 12". Glue the inside cover paper aligning it on top of the four outside cover edges to provide a professional look.

Step Three

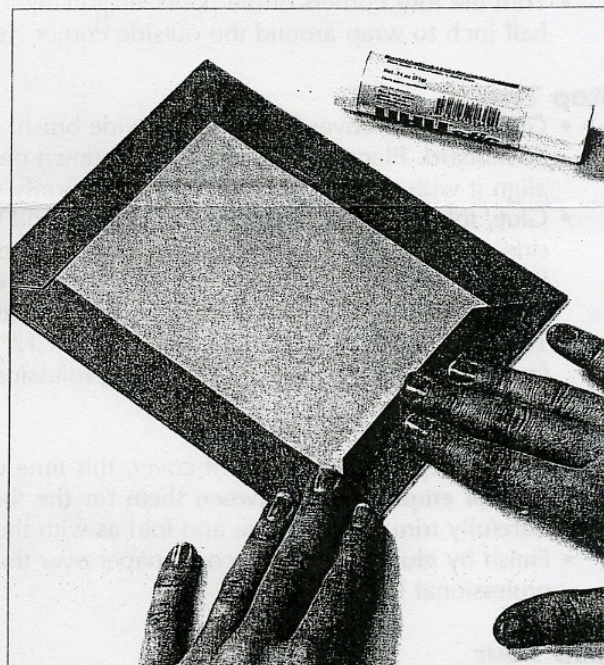
- Repeat Step Two for the front cover, this time using the two separate bookboard pieces and **leaving 1/4" of empty space between them for the 'bending' part of the cover.**
- Carefully trim corners, glue and fold as with the back cover.
- Finish by gluing the inside cover paper over this finished outside cover to again create a finished professional look.

Step Four

- Place the two covers separately between wax paper and weight overnight until completely dry and flat.



7 Before gluing down short sides, fold over a tiny pleat at each corner and rub-down with the bone folder. (Fig. 4 & Fig. 5)



8 Fold over short sides and glue down. Add more adhesive if necessary. This forms perfect bookbinding corners.

Part 3: Using Artifacts to Preserve and Understand History

Previously students collected stories with their families about immigration or a family memory/tradition. As students begin to record their oral stories and interviews in narrative form, students are also considering what illustrations will accompany their narrative. Artifacts can be introduced as another way to capture and understand history. The introduction of artifacts will help students to think critically as to what images they would like to capture to support their narrative while maintaining historical integrity.

Initial Lesson

Overview: The Massachusetts Adventure is a textbook students are familiar with, from their study of Lowell and immigration. This book will be used to review and identify the different types of primary sources historians use to understand the lives of individuals and culture in an area of the world.

Learning Goal: Students will be able to identify different types of primary sources.

Materials:

The Massachusetts Adventure textbook (one book for every two students)

List of various types of primary source definitions (one per student)

Activity Sheet: *Primary Source Scavenger Hunt* (one per student)

Homework Activity Sheet: *Finding a Family Primary Source*

Whole Class Activity:

1. Begin lesson by reviewing what was previously studied in Chapter 10 of The Massachusetts Adventure.
2. Define* Primary Sources for students and show samples of the different types of primary sources.
 - **Documents:** unpublished documents and personal papers – personal letters, diaries, journals, calendars, eMails, wills, correspondence, notes, speeches, drawings.
 - **Oral Histories and Interviews:** spoken words passed from one generation to the next – we did these with our own families and I shared my husband's family story.
 - **Paintings, Photographs, and Prints:** visual documents that record history – capturing an event, objects, moments in time, portraits.
 - **Maps:** also a visual document and for fourth grade purposes we are only comparing how different maps show information – we studied this at the beginning of the year.
 - **Cartoons:** political cartons as satires or graphic commentaries about government decisions, public figures, and current events.

- **Sound Recordings and Films:** These are not a part of Chapter 10 but explicit examples have been used in Music Class. See your specialist for examples and artifacts (these may include This Land Is Your Land, Star Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, and Mozart). As an alternative, the Theodore Roosevelt Film Library has great films that can be downloaded from the Internet to share Ellis Island and Castle Island footage.

**Definitions are taken directly from Using Primary Sources in the Classroom.*

3. Hang the definitions with examples around the classroom, so students can reference them as they work on the scavenger hunt activity.
4. Share the double-sided Student Sheet: Definitions on front, Worksheet on the reverse. Students work with a partner using Chapter 10 in The Massachusetts Adventure to locate examples of primary sources.
5. Circulate around the room making sure you visit each group. You may choose to have students work in threes to ensure you meet with each group. Check over each student's work as you meet. Students will use these sheets as references to help with homework.

Homework

Students have already collected an oral history or interview from their family. Students will now discuss with their parents primary sources in their home to share with the class. (See attached homework sheet)

Possible Extensions

Using Primary Sources for the Classroom offers many different ways to introduce primary sources – from both an artifact and acquiring skill point of view. The lesson above extends into these areas:

- Using documents and maps to compare and contrast life today with the past. How does the area of today compare to the past? Is the difference in the picture something that is missing or is there something that was there and has changed or even gone? Do the maps match? How have the maps changed? Does the comparison of the maps show how we think differently about that part of the world today? Are there parts of the map misrepresented? Do letters or journal entries describe people and places differently than how we see them today?
- Using paintings, photographs, prints and/or cartoons to use SIGHT to critically observe and examine figures. What do you know about where and when this figure was created? Ask what details do you see? Look at the faces. Look at the clothing. Look at the objects in the background. What do you think you know about these people? Based on your schema, does what you know about the time and the place match what you see? What else would you like to know to help you better understand what is happening? Is there a theme in the figure?

- Exploring the differences between primary and secondary sources. Comparing primary sources – letters and journal entries with secondary sources –newspaper articles, textbooks, and encyclopedias, can show perspective in an event. In addition, students could compare textbooks from different parts of the world regarding the same event or compare events in current US textbooks those written earlier.
-

Student Sheet:

Types of Primary Sources

- **Documents:** unpublished documents and personal papers – personal letters, diaries, journals, calendars, eMails, wills, correspondence, notes, speeches, drawings.
- **Oral Histories and Interviews:** spoken words passed from one generation to the next – we did this when we shared our personal family stories.
- **Paintings, Photographs, and Prints:** visual documents that record history – capturing an event, objects, moments in time, portraits.
- **Maps:** also a visual document showing land use at a certain point in time.
- **Cartoons:** political cartons as satires or graphic commentaries about government decisions, public figures, and current events.
- **Sound Recordings and Films:** These are not a part of our Chapter 10 Scavenger Hunt but explicit examples have been used in Music Class. These may include *This Land Is Your Land*, *Star Spangled Banner* (document and film), *America the Beautiful*, and *Mozart* (film).

Name _____

Date _____

Primary Source Scavenger Hunt Student Sheet

Supplies: The Massachusetts Adventure, Chapter 10.

Directions: Each team member should have their own recording sheet and is responsible for filling out their own student sheet. Look at the pages that contain Chapter 10 in the textbook. Look for examples of each of the following primary sources. Discuss with your team why you feel that the object you found is a type of primary source we discussed today.

Documents

Page Number: _____ Object Title/Description: _____

Explain why it belongs in this category: _____

Paintings, Photographs, and Prints:

Page Number: _____ Object Title/Description: _____

Explain why it belongs in this category: _____

Maps:

Page Number: _____ Object Title/Description: _____

Explain why it belongs in this category: _____

Cartoons:

Page Number: _____ Object Title/Description: _____

Explain why it belongs in this category: _____

Name

Date

HOMEWORK:

Follow Up Activity to the Primary Source Scavenger Hunt

Today in class, we looked at many different types of primary sources. We discussed the importance primary sources play in capturing and understanding history. We also talked about where these items are found, and how the objects were once personal belongings before they became a part of public history. Saving personal items helps future generations to understand past life and culture.

For homework, have a discussion about some of the items you found on today's scavenger hunt, and about your family's treasured belongings. Then answer the following questions:

1. What is the primary source you have in your family? Choose two to three primary source objects. Perhaps it is a new treasure or it has been passed down for generations. Tell what type of primary source it is and use details to describe it and why it is an important historical primary source that shows your family's life or culture. Don't forget to include the year (or about what year) the primary source object is from.

OBJECT 1

OBJECT 2

OBJECT 3

2. If possible, put the item or items into a backpack or small bag to bring and share with the class. If this is not possible, please take a picture of each item and send those in on a CD, flash drive, or via eMail.

Follow Up Mini-Lessons

Overview:

Students will use their family primary sources to create a ten-minute sharing activity. Students will write a script and present their personal primary sources to the class at the start of each writing and/or social studies period. Students will be prepared to take and respond to student.

Note: After objects are presented, move them to a museum space in the classroom where students can observe them later.

Learning Goal:

Students will be able to identify primary sources and justify what makes an artifact have historical significance.

Materials:

- Backpacks with items or pictures of items
- Writing paper and pens for scripts

Procedure:

Part 1: Preparing Presentation

- Prepare a script to explain the primary source object (this may take several days)
- Have students read their scripts to a partner, edit and revise them. Partners should generate questions other students might ask about the object. Record answers to questions generated.
- Students should read the scripts over many times over a few days to ensure knowledge and fluency. Students should give the questions to a family member and ask them to ask a question so they are practiced at answering a question also.

Part 2: Museum Preparation

- Students determine how the space will be arranged using the primary source object.
- Students use PowerPoint to create museum placard, including an artifact title with name of the artifact, the type of primary source, the year it was “created,” and the historical significance of the object.

Part 3: Presenting

- As students complete their work, sign them up for a date to share their primary sources.
- At the beginning of each class, introduce the period’s primary source presenter and ask them to teach the primary source mini-lesson for the period.

Part 4: Summarizing

- Bring the class together for a final viewing and discussion about the primary source objects – were there similarities between objects students chose to share? Does anyone notice any themes among the objects? What types of objects were

most often chosen and why do you think that is? How does a person decide what they want to hold-on-to for the rest of their lives?

- Use chart paper to list types of primary sources gathered by students. Discuss why there are differences between the types of primary sources and why there are more in some categories and none in others. Did anyone find something that was difficult to place in a category?

Conclusion

We believe this unit will have a significant impact on student learning by providing many and varied opportunities for cross-curricular connections at both the third and fourth grades. We are sure that as the lessons are taught by different teachers at the Upham and Hunnewell Schools (and hopefully eventually throughout the district) that connections we haven't thought of will be made and expanded. An even greater impact will be evident as students become part of living history and see how historical concepts such as "immigration" have had a direct impact on their own lives - their stories, their traditions, the food their family eats, the holidays they celebrate, etc. Writing their own family stories will enable the students to put their own lives and experiences into a greater historical context. The unit has the added benefit of strengthening the home-school connection by asking parents, grandparents and other family members to be an integral and vital part of the project.

Adding specific and authentic artifacts to our original unit will bring our lessons more to life. In some cases, students will hear immigrant stories from primary sources, our immigrant friends themselves. Students will view a power point slideshow and participate in SIGHT and whole group discussions. Asking students to observe, analyze, and tell a story from the photographs will further develop their critical thinking skills. Hearing immigrant stories firsthand, or ones passed through generations, will assist students with the depth of understanding that in fact, we all have family stories, we all have family traditions that started before our time/s, and often times there are stories behind artifacts hidden within our collective homes. Participating in this project has certainly broadened our respective knowledge. It has caused each of us to not just

observe what we see, but to ask questions and investigate further, and to seek answers to the inquiry.

By working together on this unit, we learned the value of cross grade-level collaboration and the importance in understanding where our students are "coming from" and where they are "headed". While the Wellesley Learning Goals are publicly available, reading them over is no substitute for working closely with teachers who are creating content in their classrooms and can explain what those Learning Goals look like in everyday practice. It is exciting to think that students will come to fourth grade with a background knowledge specifically tailored to the fourth grade study of immigration and to know that the work started in third grade in understanding immigration and its effects on our lives and families will be continued and deepened in fourth grade.

Part 4: Member Contributions
Biographical Stories, Artifact Papers, and Bibliographies

Biography on Sasha Kimelfeld

By Beth Garry

Preface:

I first met Sasha Kimelfeld four years ago. He is a student of an ESL class at Framingham State College where June, a colleague and friend of mine, teaches. In 2004, June offered to ask Sasha to visit my classroom to share information about Russia, a third grade unit of study. She felt this would also be good opportunity for Sasha to practice his English.

In taking TEC TAH's Immigration class, writing a biography about Sasha was a natural connection between my Russia curriculum and this assignment. I sat with June, Sasha, his wife, Valentina, fellow cohort teacher Kate Hughey, and two other ESL Russian immigrants, Ira and Maria. On two occasions, we sat and discussed their lives in Russia as children, both during and after World War II, and the reasons for and experience with immigrating to the United States. Our second meeting was at the dinner table when Sasha and Valentina prepared a delicious traditional Russian meal, which included Sasha's eggplant caviar (made from eggplant from their garden), and Valentina's fish and meat cake peirogis, tender fried potatoes and onions, and then to finish the meal we enjoyed Ira's cake and Maria's gooseberry dessert.

Our Russian friends continue to attend ESL classes to practice their English. Though June, their ESL teacher, was there to help us translate and bridge the language gap, there remained a few gray areas of their history. Out of respect of Sasha and Valentina, and to not impose or intrude, I decided not to ask for clarification on their first marriages, or why they are seemingly estranged from their children. (I am not sure if they were divorced or widowed, nor am I exactly clear as to how often they see their children).

The language barrier caused me to do extensive research on US history, Russian history, and on the location of several towns and regions of Russia. I have not only learned a

great deal about Russian history, World War II, and the Cold War, a newfound friendship has developed. I am thankful that I have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of who Sasha is and from where he has come.

Alexander Kimelfeld

Alexander Kimelfeld, or “Sasha”, to those who know him, was born in Moscow, Russia in October of 1932. He was the first born to Russian Jewish parents who were factory workers in Moscow. Sasha had one younger brother who is now deceased. Sasha remembers his early childhood warmly, but that changed when he was seven or eight years old. His family photographs reveal a cute boy who was well fed, well dressed, and seemingly happy. However, starting in 1941, the events of World War II drastically changed his life.

On June 22, 1941, three million soldiers (Germans and their allies) began an attack on the Soviet Union. Some historians believe that it was out of fear of Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe that Adolf Hitler made the decision to overtake the Soviet Union by surprise.

Theoretically, with Russia’s disadvantaged state, the war was to be over in a matter of months, but ended up lasting four years. According to professor Richard Overly, it was this battle that “...grew into the largest and most costly conflict in all history.” The attempt to seize the Soviet Union did in fact take Russian leader Joseph Stalin by surprise, though the Red Army had enough reserves to stop the German Army. As the German Army fought to take over the rich oilfields of Caucasus, they were met with great resistance and were eventually forced to retreat. This battle kept the German Army from reaching the great city of Moscow. With a sparkle in his eye and with great pride for the Soviet Army, Sasha spoke of the battle in Caucasus, “This battle saved Moscow.”

During our interview, Sasha pulled out two books about the Battle of Caucasus. The thick volumes list the 34,000 soldiers killed. It was at this point when Sasha raised his glass of wine and offered a toast in memory of all those lost in the battles. As we went to clink glasses

he explained, “It is Russian tradition that when we drink in memory, we do not say, ‘Cheers’, nor do we pat glasses.” We proceeded to hold our glasses up in memory of those who lost their lives in war; this included his wife’s father.

During World War II, Sasha lived in the Caucasus region. For five months, the Germans occupied Caucasus. Many Russians, particularly the Jews, lived in fear of the Germans. They had heard that the Germans were murdering Polish Jews in cold blood, in public executions in North Poland. The German Army told the Russian Jews that to stay safe, they needed to get on a train and go to Hungary. Sasha and his family believed what were they told, so they gathered their cherished possessions and went to the train headed to Hungary. On the way, Sasha ran into one of his neighbors, a Russian teacher. She told them, “Do not go. They will kill you.”

Sasha’s grandmother had her deceased husband’s passport with her. She showed it to a Gestapo soldier. The German soldier told her that, because she had the passport, Sasha did not need to get on the train. “I do not know why he said I didn’t have to go. Maybe he knew,” Sasha recalled. That night, the family readied for Sasha’s departure. At the age of eight, he and his grandmother went by train to a town south of Caucasus, called Kislovodsk. Later, Sasha learned that the German army had searched his house looking for him.

When asked what Sasha remembers about his youth and life during the war, he referred to a storybook from his childhood. The book was about a character that was poor, hungry and wore ragged clothes. He recalled, “I was hungry. I know what it is like to have nothing to eat and to live hungry, to have no money, and rags for clothes, just like the character in the storybook.

At first, I just wanted to eat, always. Then it was the smell. The smell of foods would just come to me, as if the food was right in front of me. I would remember my grandmother’s

bread or peirogi, and even though those foods were not there for me to eat, I would smell them and imagine myself eating them.”

To this day, Sasha clearly remembers the distinctive pangs of hunger. He recalls how the smell of food would get his taste buds going so that he actually felt as if he was eating. His mind and senses played a trick on him; much like an oasis might appear to one dying of thirst in the desert. At the young age of eight, he was forced to live a difficult life. “It was a hard time. I became an adult very quickly. I had no choice but to find food to eat. I even had to wear the same clothes from the time I was eight until I was twelve.”

Sasha and his grandmother lived hungry for many years in Kislovodsk, though somehow they survived. Around the age of twelve, Sasha’s grandmother put him on a train back to Moscow to go find his family. His grandmother asked the passengers to help take him to Moscow. He hid in the overhead compartment, surrounded by suitcases. Normally, that train ride would take twenty-four hours, but because the war was still going on, it took five days. Those riding the train helped keep Sasha hidden because soldiers checked all of the passengers on the train. They did not discover Sasha!

Once back in Moscow, Sasha was met by his mother. He remembers her holding clothes for him. In spite of mal nutrition, he had grown a lot. He was in desperate need of new clothes. The next memory Sasha shared was that of “Victory Day” on May 9th. With a smile, he recalled the end of the war. Within minutes of this recollection, he tells of a recurring dream that he still has. “I dream of the war. I still dream of a German soldier shooting me. BANG. BANG. BANG. It was a hard time even after the war.”

After May 9, 1945, Sasha lived in Moscow with his mother, father, and brother. Sasha remembers “Victory Day” very well. He recalled that the first part of his life, through the age of twelve was during the Soviet Famine and World War II. Once the war was over, things were a little better, though Stalin was no hero. From the age of twelve on, he lived through the

Cold War, the tension and competition between the world powers of the Soviet Union and the United States.

When asked if he “hated” the United States and/or Americans he said emphatically, “No. Reagan called The Soviet Union an ‘Empire of Evil’ and I agree/d with that.”

Sasha continued, “Stalin was evil. Those who spoke against him were killed or put into prison. At the time, no one knew what he was doing.”

According a 1999 PBS bio of Joseph Stalin, “Although the Soviet Union boasted that its economy was booming while the Capitalist world was experiencing the Great Depression, and its industrialization drive did succeed in rapidly creating an industrial infrastructure where there once had been none, the fact is that all this was done at exorbitant cost in human lives. Stalin’s reign forced the resettlement and murder of the majority of successful peasants as counterrevolutionary elements. The discovery of a source of cheap labor through the arrest of millions of innocent citizens led to countless millions of deaths from the worst man-made famine in human history and in the camps of the Gulag.”

As a young adult, Sasha attended school and upon graduation, he worked as an engineer. He married and had two children. In 1986, Sasha married Valentina. They have been married for the last twenty-three years. Sasha’s children came to the United States to work. It was through employment that his children each received US Citizenship. In 1999, Sasha and Valentina immigrated to America. For them, the reason of immigration was the “pull factor”. They had family here and wanted to be closer so they felt the pull to live in the United States. Five years after coming to the United States, Sasha and Valentina became US Citizens. When asked if they miss Russia their answer is, “Yes, but America is our home now. This is where we want to stay.”

Upon their arrival to Massachusetts, Sasha and Valentina did not seek out support from fellow Russians. They remained connected to one another and to their children. Over

time, they have developed relationships with other seniors who live at their complex. Through ESL classes at Framingham State College, Sasha and Valentina have become friendly with a few other Russian immigrants/US Citizens, as well as with many other American Citizens.

Sasha does not hold negative feelings towards Russia at all. He and Valentina visit their home country every year. Each year they travel for four weeks to see family and friends. They stay in Moscow and visit with Valentina's family, and they vacation at the Baltic Sea at a resort, a place where they both spent time as children and as adults.

In Russia, gardening was an integral part of their lives. Out of necessity, their families reaped and sowed their provisions. They lived on whatever they produced. Now, in Massachusetts, they continue to garden not for need but for pure pleasure. They grow and enjoy many of the same vegetables here as they did in Russia.

Comparing photographs of Sasha and Valentina's gardens in Russia with their gardens here in Natick, Massachusetts, one may note many similarities. Apparent in each are hard work and dedication, as both reveal an abundance and fruitfulness. Each reflects an amount of pleasure. Much the same can be said about Sasha and Valentina's life journey. It has been a long, hard road but one that continues with success, prosperity, and happiness.

Artifact Assignment, by Beth Garry
August 2009

The following artifact, a photograph of one volume of 17 that lists soldiers killed in the Battle of Caucasus, is a cherished reminder of loved ones lost. Valentina Kimelfeld (Sasha's wife) lost her father in this battle. He is listed amongst the thousands killed.

When they emigrated in 1999, Sasha and Valentina did not bring with them many mementos of their lives. However, this thick volume of books came with them. To this day, sixty-six years later, it evokes a mixture of sadness and pride. It was a battle that was pivotal in the closing stages of USSR's and Germany's conflict, and sadly one that took Valentina's father away from her.

ARTIFACT



Moscovities

*A photograph of one of seventeen volumes, which lists the
34,000 soldiers killed in the Battle of Caucasus*

The Battle for the Caucasus was a series of military operations in the North Caucasus Mountains carried out by the Armed Forces of USSR and Germany. It began

on July 25, 1942, and ended on October 9, 1943. The Caucasus or Caucasia is a region in Eurasia bordered on the south by Turkey and Iran in Asia, on the west by the Black Sea, on the east by the Caspian Sea, and on the north by Russia. Caucasia includes the Caucasus Mountains and surrounding lowlands.



*"Caucasus: location." Online Map/Still. Britannica Student Encyclopedia. 19 Aug. 2009
<<http://student.britannica.com/eb/art-54732>>*

During World War II, the Caucasus stood high on Hitler's expansionist agenda because the oil-rich region would pave the way to the Middle East. The German command devised a several-point plan to capture the oil deposits of the Caucasus and get access to the much-needed fuel. The Caucasus was populated by many nationalities and, according to the *Kaucasian Knot: Encyclopedia*, "The plan aimed at splitting up the mountaineer communities and cultivating hatred towards Russians." The Nazi German command set down to put this into action in July 1942.

By the end of July, the Germans entered by force the Don and Kuban steppes region (located in the extreme southwest of Russia) and pointed their infantry at the oil-

rich areas of Maikop, Grozny, Baku. The Soviet troops, though suffering severe losses, resisted at the base of the Caucasus on the Terek River. They held out persistently against the enemy's ambush. According to the author of *A Road to Victory: The Voice of Russia*, the Commander of the German tank army Colonel-General Kleist wrote in his diary, "The Terek River, offering a good defense opportunity at all times, was fortified by the Russians as an absolutely impenetrable shield blocking the way to Grozny oil fields and Ossetian and Georgian army motorways." The Nazi general was met with great resistance on the ground as well as a forceful one from the air.

A cold spell ceased military operations in the mountains. For the five months the defense of the Caucasus lasted, the Soviet troops caused the German army to be unresponsive and they prepared the ground for the counter-offensive. This was initiated in January of 1943 and ended in October with the liberation of the North Caucasus.

The success of the Soviet forces in the Caucasus coincided with the victory on the battle of Stalingrad, in which a major German group was crushed. The Nazi defeat in the Caucasus had extensive political consequences. Some feel that was the "beginning of the end" for the Nazi's in USSR, as they were not able to take over the oil rich fields and acquire the much needed resource. Since the key battles in the spring and summer of 1943 went on beyond the N. Caucasus, other regions were freed. The last German formations were evacuated from the Taman Peninsula on October 9, 1943. This date is considered the end of the Battle for the Caucasus.

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Valentina Vasilyeva, The Story of a Life in Russia and Later Immigration to America, by Kate Hughey

Preface:

Sasha Kimelfeld, his wife Valentina, and fellow Russian immigrants Maria and Ira ("Ear-ah") are students in an ESL class that June, a colleague and friend of Beth Garry and mine, teaches. Since 2004, at June's suggestion, Sasha and Maria have visited Beth's third grade classroom during the class' Russian study to share information about their lives in Russia. I met and got to know these four lovely people over two sessions where we sat, together with June and Beth, and discussed their lives in Russia from childhood, through World War II, the Cold War and perestroika and finally through their immigration to the United States. For our second meeting, we were honored to be invited into Sasha and Valentina's home for a traditional Russian meal which included Sasha's eggplant caviar (made from eggplant from their garden), Valentina's fish and meat pierogies, tender fried potatoes and onions, with cake and gooseberries for dessert. After these discussions, which were primarily led by Sasha, who is most comfortable speaking English, Beth and I decided to focus our work on Sasha and Valentina.

Despite their living in the U.S. for 10 years and continuing to study English through ESL classes, communication was often difficult and it was not always possible to gain a complete understanding of their lives and experiences. Out of respect for Sasha and Valentina's privacy, we chose not to ask for clarification on their first marriages, or why they are seemingly estranged from their children. We are not sure if they were divorced or widowed, nor do we know how often they see their children - Valentina's who are still in Russia and Sasha's who live here in Massachusetts.

My intention with this paper is to take what I learned of Valentina's life in Russia and place it into the context of the complex, tumultuous and sometimes distressing history of her home country.

Valentina:

In 1932, Russia was in the midst of serious social upheaval. After Lenin's death in 1924, a long and tumultuous struggle for power in the communist party finally ended with the emergence of Joseph Stalin as the leader of the party and of Russia itself. Under Stalin, agricultural lands were collectivized, and industrial development was pushed along at a phenomenal rate, surpassing that of Germany and Japan ("History of Russia"). Art and literature become subject to much tighter government control, and religion was violently repressed. Churches were closed, destroyed, or converted to other uses ("The Soviet Era"). Stalin had hundreds of thousands, eventually millions, of scholars, scientists and cultural and religious leaders arrested as "enemies of the people" ("Genocide in the 20th Century") and anyone who opposed him, his policies or the Communist party was at risk of disappearing into the Gulag system. It was into this era of violent repression, fear and upheaval that Valentina Vasilyeva was born, on October 4th, 1932.

Valentina was born and lived in Moscow, Russia, where her parents were engineers. Unlike in the U.S., as early as the 1920's girls were encouraged to secure an education and pursue a career in the factory or the office. ("History of Russia"). Valentina was an only child.

As the 1930's continued, and the Nazis were conquering more and more of Eastern Europe, Valentina moved with her family to her grandparents' farm outside of Moscow to a more rural area where her family hoped they would be safe from German

invaders. In 1939, Stalin believed that he had forged an understanding with Hitler and made Russia safe from Nazi aggression ("Joseph Stalin"). This fragile peace with Germany abruptly ended with the invasion across the Soviet border by German forces in June of 1941, when Valentina was 9 years old. Germany quickly took control of the Ukraine and Leningrad and controlled these regions for more than a year ("History of Russia). Attempts to capture Moscow were successfully repelled by the Red Army, although the Nazis did get very close to Moscow. One of Valentina's most vivid memories of this time was being forced to live in a hole dug by her grandfather with 16 family members and neighbors, including her grandparents and very young children, for months at a time as the German invaders roamed the woods and countryside around their farm. They had to melt snow for water to drink and clean with. Valentina recounts with bemusement the time that a German soldier appeared at their hiding place and requested to borrow some precious tea and sugar. When asked what they did with this surprising request, Valentina answered, "We did not have tea, but we gave him sugar." The German soldier replied, "We will give you tea tomorrow in Moscow!" an arrogant reference to the German army's upcoming doomed siege on the city. While ultimately considered victorious, World War II ended with the deaths of between 26 and 27 million Russians and left behind a decimated population and economy. One of those killed was Valentina's father, a colonel who died protecting a weapons stockpile from the German army. When Valentina's husband brought out a book thick with the names of the killed, she looked away and said, "I don't like that book." In fact, two of the very few personal mementos Valentina carried with her from Russia were letters from her father and the record of her father's monthly pension the family received after his death.

In 1945, Stalin was one of the "Big Three" (the others being Churchill and Roosevelt) to meet for the Yalta Conference to determine the fate of Germany and Poland in the aftermath of the war, among other things. Stalin demanded that the part of Eastern Poland already annexed by Russia be kept as part of the Soviet state in order to secure Soviet security from any further invasions from the West ("Yalta Conference"). Not long after this, conflict arose again between Stalin and the Western powers and by 1949, the Cold War was in full effect. Europe was divided into Western and Soviet blocks and Russia successfully tested its first atomic bomb ("History of Russia"). The arms race that would find 1950's American children diving under their school desks during bomb drills was underway. Russia gained superpower status.

In 1954, when Valentina was 22 years old, she married and soon after had two daughters. Stalin had died the previous year and a new "collective leadership" took over leadership of the USSR ("Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev: Soviet Leader"). This leadership ushered in an era of "destalinification" in which Stalin's policies were denounced and much of the institutions he put in place, including the Gulag system, were dismantled or reorganized. The Gulag was a network of labor camps, started in the early 1900's but greatly expanded under Stalin's leadership, where Stalin's "enemies of the people" were sent and forced to work long hours with little food or rest ("The Real Gulag"). According to Janet Rogers ("The Real Gulag"), many older people in Russia today "believe that the millions that disappeared during Stalin's rule went to the labor camps as "volunteer workers" and that Russians "do not like to talk about the Gulag." When she was asked about Stalin and Communist rule, it was clear that Valentina did not want to talk about it, that it was a painful subject, but even in her limited English she

made it clear that she fully understood the horror and injustice of the labor camps, even though they were not even fully aware of the extent of Stalin's decimation of the population until Khrushchev took power. She was under no illusion that these camps were manned with "volunteers".

The post-Stalin years were lead by Nikita Khrushchev (1958-1964) and Leonid Brezhnev (1964- 1982) Under Khrushchev, "legal procedures were restored, the secret police became less of a threat, concentration camps and many forced-labor camps were closed, and some greater degree of meaningful public controversy was permitted. The new atmosphere of relative freedom constituted a great change from the days of Stalin." ("Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev: Soviet Leader"). It was Khrushchev who was in power when the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 and Khrushchev who removed the missiles from Cuba in 1962, effectively ending the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1964, Khrushchev was ousted and the power went to Leonid Brezhnev, who was head of state during the acceleration of the arms race, the Soviet invasion of and subsequent war with Afghanistan, and the election of Ronald Reagan, who called the Soviet regime "The Evil Empire".

During this time, Valentina was living back in Moscow and working in a factory as a chemical engineer. She lived and worked through the building of the Berlin Wall, through the war with Afghanistan, through all the tensions and uncertainties of the Cold War. She often vacationed in a small town near the Black Sea, and went on ski trips with friends. She exemplified the idea that while governments rise and fall, the people live their lives as best they are able. When asked if she had hated the U.S. or Americans during this time, Valentina insists that she did not. As her husband Sasha explained, they

agreed with Reagan's assessment of the Soviet government. In 1986, she married Sasha, her second husband, with whom she immigrated to the U.S. in 1999.

By 1991, when the Soviet Union was dissolved, Valentina was a pensioner (retiree) living in Moscow. Throughout the 1980's Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost" or "openness", and perestroika (the restructuring of the Soviet economy) had the unintended consequence of giving social problems wider attention and undermined the Communist Party's authority ("History of Russia"). The reforms Gorbachev attempted to put into place, both economic and social arguably exacerbated already existing social and economic tensions within the Soviet Union. What followed was economic chaos that helped empower organized and allowed for an ever-widening gap between the few fabulously wealthy and the majority of people living on far less ("Perestroika"). This began the downfall of the Communist Soviet Union and opened Russia to Western influence. In December of 1991, most of the 15 Soviet republics agreed to the dissolution of the Soviet state and Gorbachev ceded power to Boris Yeltsin, who became the president of Russia ("Belavehza Accords").

Valentina and her husband, Sasha, emigrated to the United States in 1999 to be closer to Sasha's children, who had come earlier for school and work. Valentina was 67 years old. They, unlike many in Russia under Communist rule, were not "pushed" from their home country for political, religious, economic or social reasons; they lived comfortable, satisfying lives in Moscow. Rather they were "pulled" to the U.S. by family. They settled in Natick, MA, in an apartment complex where other older Russian immigrants also lived and they could find comfort in familiar language, food and customs. Valentina found America welcoming and Americans helpful and

accommodating. Both Sasha and Valentina became citizens in 2004. When asked if they miss Russia their answer is, "Yes, but America is our home now. This is where we want to stay." Still, Valentina has concerns about the future of her home country and the well-being of her children back in Moscow. In a follow-up letter, I said, "We know very little about Russian history. What other major events do you think it is important for us to include in our project?" Valentina replied, "Perestroika. How will live my children?"

In researching this paper and talking with Valentina, Sasha, Maria and Ira, I gained a deeper understanding of life behind the Iron Curtain and a new perspective on Russia and Russians. I am grateful for the time and trust these four gave to us and the glimpse into their lives in a country I grew up thinking of only as "the Evil Empire".

Memories of her Father – Valentina's Treasured War Mementos, by Kate Hughey
August 2009

When Valentina emigrated with her husband, Sasha, from Moscow in 1999, she was retired and following the “pull” of her children who had previously moved to and settled in to life in America. They did not bring very much of their previous life with them— some family recipes, some cherished photographs and a few treasured mementos.

Two of these treasured artifacts Valentina carried across a continent and an ocean were mementos of her father’s service in the Red Army during World War II (or The Great Patriotic War, as it is known in Russia). She has his identification papers and the record of the monthly pension paid to her family after his death in the Battle of Caucasus. When we initially asked Valentina and Sasha what they had brought with them from Russia, they both said, “Nothing,” or “Not really anything.” Then, with obvious great tenderness and pride, Valentina pulled these yellowed and worn documents from a drawer and carefully placed them on the table. The language barrier could not disguise the tremendous pride she took in sharing these items with us.

Once one understands even a little about the life of a Red Army soldier and the tremendous accomplishment of that army in defeating the Germans, it is easy to understand Valentina’s pride and her choice to carry these items to America above all others. Russia’s contribution to the defeat of the German army cannot be underestimated. As described in the essay, “World War II: Combatants and Casualties”:

“Invaded by Germany in June 1941, the Soviet Union fought a lone, heroic struggle on the European mainland against Nazi Germany and her allies from that date until the opening of the Second Front in the D-Day invasion in June 1944. She suffered by far the greatest casualties of any country on either side. By 1943, in the wake of the climactic victory at Stalingrad, the Red Army drove the Germans out of Russia in a series of giant offensives that ended with the capture of Berlin in May 1945. It may fairly be said that in “bleeding the German army

white" the Soviet Union made the greatest contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany.”

It is more challenging to find information on the day-to-day life and existence of a Red Army soldier. There are a few sources from which one can make inferences about what Valentina’s father’s life was like as a member of the army. The June, 1946 *Intelligence Bulletin*, wartime information on foreign military forces published for Allied soldiers, in its article, “The Red Army Infantryman”, describes the Red Army soldier as “a hard, determined, courageous individual who is eager to defend Russia”. Pride was instilled into each soldier through lectures where “he hears much of heroic acts of the Red Army and of individual Red Army soldiers”.

We know that the workdays were long and that many soldiers were insufficiently trained for their duties. In June, 1940 the country switched to seven days of work per week, then work hours increased too, first to 10 hours per day, then to 12. The penalty for not producing a required quota or even for being late to work was years in prison (“Russia in World War II”). “The Red Army Infantryman” also describes this increased work day, and alludes to the reduced training of the soldiers: “Before World War II, the [non-commissioned officer] school lasted for 9 months. During the war, the time was reduced to 3 months. The working day was increased however from 8 hours to 10 to 12 hours.”

This reduced training time necessitated by Stalin’s demands for more men on the front lines was not limited to NCOs. Nikolai Litvin, in his memoir *800 Days on the Eastern Front*, a rare first-hand account of the life of an average Red Army soldier, writes, “At this point in time, lend-lease vehicles from America were beginning to arrive

in large numbers. The Red Army needed more drivers for all these vehicles, so I wound up in a driver instruction course. Within four or five days the training instructor had to leave, and they left me in his place to teach others how to work with a carburetor. From that point on, I was in fact the instructor.”

Litvin’s memoir, although primarily focused on troop movements and the details of the daily fighting, also gives us great insight into the daily life of a Red Army infantryman. Russia took care of its army and their families. When speaking of his schooling prior to joining the army, Litvin writes, “Incidentally, when the war started, training at the technical school became no longer free, but I didn’t have to pay: education was free for the children of *frontoviki* [frontline soldiers]”. The army was generally well-fed and provisioned, although there was one instance Litvin accounts during the 1942 winter offensive, when there were no food supplies. His company found and lived off a dead horse for two weeks until fresh supplies finally arrived. He also writes of his fair treatment under the army’s officers:

“Regulations demanded unquestioning subordination in the Red Army. But all the commanders and officers under whom I had the occasion to serve and fight behaved properly and treated their subordinates with respect. There were, of course, petty tyrants as well...but in my personal experience [officers always gave orders] reasonably, courteously, without any arrogance. We carried out such orders more quickly. In general, our commanders were good men, worker-peasants who had risen through the ranks.” (126)

The only information I could find on the compensation and benefits paid to soldiers in the Red Army was found in the “The Red Army Infantryman”:

“The Red Army soldier has, like his American counterpart, been granted many benefits as a veteran. During his active service career, however, his pay appears to be a pittance by U.S. standards. The Red Army private receives a total of 600 rubles per year, which is very difficult to access in U.S. dollars, since purchasing power of the ruble to the average Soviet citizen is almost nil. Pay scales range from that of the

private to that of a General of the Army, which is 60,000 rubles per year. The equivalent of a private first class receives 1,000 rubles per year; a corporal, 2,000 rubles; a sergeant, 3,000 rubles; a first sergeant, 4,200 rubles. The discrepancy between officer and enlisted pay is great. The first lieutenant receives 12.5 times the pay of a private, or 7,700 rubles per year. (The Red Army Infantryman)

Certain extra pay benefits are given those who hold decorations. Decorations also carry with them other benefits, such as free transportation on public conveyances and one round trip ticket per year on the railroads.

As a part of his pay, the soldier receives, in addition, a ration of cigarettes and vodka, movie and theater tickets, and free toilet articles.”

Litvin confirms that they were given a daily ration of cigarettes and vodka, especially when there was a need to boost morale during particularly difficult or long operations.

Serving in the Red Army and taking part in the “Great Patriotic War” that saved Russia from tyrannical German rule (albeit leaving it under tyrannical Stalinist rule – better the monster you know than the one you don’t) were sources of tremendous pride not only for the soldiers themselves but for their families and loved ones. It is no surprise that, of all the pieces collected over a lifetime, Valentina chose these to save, carry with her and share.





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All of the following works cited can be used by adults or upper high school students (11th and 12th grade) interested in building or acquiring background knowledge on Russia's complex, complicated and often brutal history. Books and Web sites on Russian history for elementary and middle school children seem to be in short supply, and we were not able to find any.

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<<http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/stalin.htm>>. This page specifically outlines the history of Stalin's forced famine on the people of the Ukraine. While not directly related to Russian history, the page includes some valuable information about Stalin's rule in Soviet Russia as it relates to his policies and actions in the Ukraine in 1932-33.

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Russia#Soviet_Union>. This wikipedia page is chock-full of information created by users around the world. Although many teachers steer their students away from using wikipedia, studies have shown that its content is as accurate or more so than the Encyclopedia Britannica. It is a little overwhelming if you are looking for a little information on a specific topic, but for those looking to deeply expand their understanding of Russian history, this is an excellent resource.

"Joseph Stalin." *Joseph Stalin*. PBS, 1999. Web. 28 Apr. 2009.

<http://www.pbs.org/redfiles/bios/all_bio_joseph_stalin.htm>. This page from the PBS "Red Files" is a detailed summary of Joseph Stalin's life from childhood through the Yalta Conference and the end of World War II. While not justifying or excusing Stalin's repressiveness and violence, it does humanize him by putting his life and actions in an emotional and psychological context. This site is useful for looking at Russian history through the existence of one person who most damagingly and irrevocably directed that history.

Litvin, Nikolai. *800 days on the Eastern Front: A Russian soldier remembers World War II*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2007. Print. A rare, first-hand account of life as a Red Army soldier in WWII. Litvin takes you through several operations with painstaking detail about battles that were instrumental in defeating the German

army. A great resource for war historians and those interested in another perspective on what Russians call "The Great Patriotic War".

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<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika>>. Another Wikipedia page that takes you through the era of "perestroika" when Gorbachev's attempts at social, political and economic reform unintentionally led to the downfall of the Soviet republic. The information here is clearly organized and easy to follow.

Rogers, Janet. "The Real Gulag." *Russian, Ukranian and Belarus History - Suite 101*. 6 June 2007. Web. 2 May 2009. <http://russian-ukrainian-belarus-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_real_gulag>. This brief article gives an outline about the history and abuses of the Gulag system of labor camps in Russia. It includes information on why people were arrested, how they were treated and the numbers of people thought to have been affected by it. Includes resources for further research.

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<<http://www.2worldwar2.com/russia.htm>>. This essay provides an analysis of new insights and proofs from newly available Russian documents into Russia's pre-war readiness and preparedness and events following Germany's initial invasion. It is an interesting counterpoint to many previously published histories of WWII Russia.

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<<http://www.geographia.com/russia/rushis07.htm>>. This comprehensive web site covers Russian history through ancient Russia, through the Mongols and the Romanovs up to the Soviet Era. Pages are clearly marked and easy to read. It is not a detailed exploration of Russian history, but rather a well-organized framework that gives an overview of a rich and complex history.

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yalta_Conference>. This wikipedia page goes into more explicit detail of the particulars and outcomes of the Yalta conference in which Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met after the end of combat with Germany.

Pollyanna Sidell
Biographical Assignment
May 2009

The Immigration of Harry Presson

Introduction – This is the almost lost story of Harry Presson, the grandfather to Joel Sidell, my father-in-law. Tracing the story is difficult. *As Joel puts it, “When they came to America, they became Americans. The rest was not told. There was no admitting they were Russian Jews fleeing from persecution. When Harry Presson’s foot stepped on American soil for the first time, he became an American.”* It was not until November 26, 1945 that Harry Presson became a Naturalized American Citizen. He was 60 years old. According to Hingham, leaving behind the Russian forced unitary acceptance of the dominant language, dominant church, and dominant culture caused unbearable stresses on minorities. Upon arriving in America, immigrants were able to keep their cultural heritage but still adhere to a national life.ⁱ This acceptance and freedom to embrace cultural heritage made it easy for immigrants to want to assimilate and to become a part of the nation.

Joel Sidell thinks it was 1911 when Harry fled Russia and arrived in Boston, but admits that he is not sure of the year. He was told as a child that Harry was a tailor for the Czar. The Presson family knew that Czarist Russia would soon be coming to an end. The Lenin uprisings were becoming more frequent and soon there would be some type of revolution. Harry and his family knew he needed to leave Russia or they would die when the revolt occurred. Anyone connected to the Czar would be killed, and Harry and his family were lucky to leave when they did. Harry’s Russian passport was issued in 1900. The entire passport is in Russian and is difficult to read. According to Joel’s oral history

and Harry's US Naturalization Certificate, Harry would have been 16 years old in 1911. Before Harry left Russia, he married Rose and they traveled together across Eastern Europe. Rose was pregnant with their daughter. During their time in Russia, the Pogroms were attacking, pillaging, destroying, massacring Jews, and forced conscription to the military. Although the czar, said he would persecute those responsible, little was ever done to stop the raids. The Czar's military needed more soldiers, so "bounty hunters" were paid to capture young Jewish men and children at least 12 years old to become soldiers.

It is not clear whether Harry lived in the Pale, as set by the legal definition, by Czar Nicolas I or if his family lived in a shtetl. The town the Presson family lived in is known phonetically as "Shi-pit-off-cha." My geographical research has not been successful in locating this town in the Russian Empire. However, if we are to believe that as Russian Jews the family was forced to live by the Russian Empire decrees, Harry would have lived in the Pale and would have needed to have a special resident permit to travel to and from work. The Pale was originally established to lessen economic strife between social classes, in Poland. Later, Czar Nicolas I expanded the decree forcing all Jews in the Russian Empire to live in the Pale as a means of levying even more taxes and conscription of Jewish soldiers. Anti-Jewish sentiments increased as years passed and more and more Jews left the Russian Empire. According to Professor Ronald Stockton, "from 1901 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when the pogroms were at their worst, 150,000-160,000 Jews per year escaped from Eastern Europe, mostly from the Pale of Settlement."ⁱⁱ

Joel goes on to explain that at the time staying in Russia could not be a choice for the Presson family. The chaos and uprisings in the area were becoming more commonplace. Many people knew that political change in Russia was eminent. Czar Nicholas II's engagement in the war with Japan was very unpopular with Russian citizens and became an enormous drain on the economy and resources of the Empire. As an act of settling the people Nicholas recognized and made concessions to the Social Democratic Party. This first sign of Czarist Reign losing power occurred in 1905. Nicholas continued to loose power over two more reforms in 1912 and 1914, which caused the Social Democratic Party to split into two factions: the radical Bolsheviks and the comparatively moderate Mensheviks. By February 1917, the economically and industrial unpreparedness of the Russian Empire and World War I in their backyard caused a mutiny and Czarist Russia came to an end.ⁱⁱⁱ Harry and Rose had left Russia 12 years prior to these events, but it seems that the general feeling of power in Russia had been shifting for many years prior to Lenin's rise to power and the revolution.

Joel adds that Harry and Rose boarded a French ship on a journey, stopping first in the U.K. and then landing in East Boston. While traveling on the ship, they endured very harsh conditions that nobody would later talk about, but Joel is sure they traveled via steerage. Rebecca, Harry's and Rose's daughter, was born on the passage over between the U.K. and America. Steerage would not be an ideal location to keep a newborn child, nor would it have been, a healthy place to bring a child into the world. Upon entry to America, she would be considered a French citizen, having been born on a French ship. Although in 1894, the Merchant Shipping Act changed conditions for steerage passengers traveling from the UK to America. The shipping act was

implemented to give passengers rights as they traveled.^{iv} The act set limits as to how many people could travel in steerage and forced shipping companies to place steerage passengers in cabins as opposed to barrack-style sleep rooms. This is not to say that all ships adhered to the Merchant Ship Act by 1911, however Harry and Rose never complained about the travel from Russia to America or of giving birth on a ship in minimally sanitary conditions. Perhaps this is because even the worst of conditions throughout their travels always got them one step closer to an America that would be a better place than Mary Anton's description of the Pale, the place Harry and Rose left behind.^v

The ship entered Boston Harbor, and docked in East Boston. Harry and Rose had no idea where they would be going, for they were the first in their family to arrive in America. The new family of three soon learned that Jews in the area tended to leave East Boston to reside predominantly in Chelsea and Revere. Later, they would learn that Jews also lived in Boston's West End, Dorchester, and Roxbury. However, they would all come to gather weekly in Boston's only synagogue at the time, Temple Ohabei Shalom.

Harry quickly found work as a pattern maker and began saving money to bring the rest of the family over. Only two years had passed when Harry's brothers, Max and Hymie, arrived in New York. Later, the brothers would collect their savings and buy passage to Boston for Nathan and Mindel, their parents, Joel's great-grandparents.

Harry bought a multi-family house on Florence Avenue in Revere where the entire family could live together in their new Jewish community. Congregation Tifereth Israel opened its doors to serve Orthodox Jews living north of Boston and Temple Ohabei Shalom moved to its current location on Beacon Street in Brookline.

At about the same time, Harry, Max and Hymie started Prestige Apparel out of a warehouse in South Boston. This company would be passed down to the nephews for two generations as it reinvented itself and spun-off sister companies as the family grew three times. Finally, operating as a women's apparel manufacturing company in the United States became impossible to operate competitively and Prestige Sportswear, closed its doors for the last time in October 2007.

Harry and Rose arrived with very little. They carried their Shabbat candlestick holders and Rebecca off the gangway onto the dock in East Boston. They immediately embraced America with a strong nationalistic attitude. They easily let go of their Russian roots, and found an accepting nation that embraced their minority Jewish culture. Harry worked very hard to bring his family to America. Rose took care of the house and all its inhabitants. Harry and Rose, his brothers: Max and Hymie, and their parents all learned to speak English in a masterful way. In the house, they spoke their native tongue, Yiddish. The synagogue allowed the family to openly embrace their cultural heritage. For the first time in their lives, the Presson family was in a nation that accepted them and the nation accepted the people even if they were a minority. So, they did not find it difficult to embrace this nation, this nation that showed them respect, this nation that allowed them to live the slogan "Many Peoples, But One Nation," and to later accept the belief of "America First." The sense of humanitarian sympathy that Frances Kellor tried to instill in aliens in order to "Americanize"^{vi} the Pressons played well for them. For the messages the Pressons heard became the values by which they led their lives. It seemed that Americanization was easy for the Pressons to accept, because Russia had never been loyal and observant of the needs and desires of Russian Jews. Mary Antin described

leaving Russia behind and embracing America in a way that describes the Presson family sentiment,

“So it came to pass that we did not know what my country could mean to a man. And as we had no country, we had no flag to love. It was by no far-fetched symbolism that the banner of the House of Romanoff became the emblem of our latter-day bondage in our eyes. Even a child would know how to hate the flag that we were forced, on pain of severe penalties, to hoist above our housetops, in celebration of the advent of one of our oppressors.” Furthermore, “So a little Jewish girl in Polotzk was apt to grow up hungry-minded and empty-hearted; and if, still in her outreaching youth, she was set down in a land of outspoken patriotism, she was likely to love her new country with a great love, and to embrace its heroes in a great worship. Naturalization, with us Russian Jews, may mean more than the adoption of the immigrant by America. It may mean the adoption of the America by the immigrant.”^{vii}

Epilogue – Since telling this story to me, Joel Sidell has had a renewed interest in finding his Russian history. This is a dramatic change from when I first met him and even two years ago when Joel’s grandson asked him where he was from and Joel replied he was an American and would always be nothing else but an American. Joel and his wife searched the stored papers. The found naturalization certificate and passport have been to a documents restoration expert and he continues to bring up the subject so that we could exchange newfound information and historical stories.

Pollyanna Sidell
Artifact Assignment
August 2009

The following artifacts represent important memories in the Presson household. There are two different artifact types represented. Physical objects, that can be held – the candlesticks and a public place, the photographs of Shirley Avenue, a location that cannot be personally owned but are a strong memory of life and the history that happened there.

SHABBAT CANDLESTICKS ARTIFACT

Lighting candles one hour before sunset on Friday night signifies the beginning of Shabbat in the Jewish faith. This is an important time-honored tradition in many Jewish households, regardless of an individual's level of ritualistic observance. Many Jewish families gather at sunset to light the candles of Shabbat. More Orthodox Jews then attend service at synagogue and come home to eat a meal. Others may go out to a movie or make it "family game night." It all starts out the same for many families around the world. It has been this way since the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem. Biblical scholars record history as G-d having commanded the Jews not to restore the Temple again but to bring G-d in to each family's home by lighting candles (The Rabbinic teaches the lighting of two or more candles which must burn for at least one hour and cannot be moved or extinguished).



***Brass Candlesticks
Brought from Russia***

This represents the burning of the sacrificial animal that occurred at the beginning of each Shabbat. Today the lighting of the candles represents the setting aside of the workweek from a day of rest.

The Presson Family carried these ten-pound brass candlesticks across Eastern Europe and eventually across the Atlantic Ocean to America. These candlesticks have little monetary value, but the history that they hold is irreplaceable. The candlesticks represent the generations before that celebrated Shabbat in The Pale of Russia. Every Friday night the family would gather in the two-family house to celebrate Shabbat and share a family meal. Joel, Rebecca's son, remembers coming home from college for Shabbat dinner. The table would be set in the finest linen and the Matzah Ball Soup would have been simmering on the stove for hours. Uncles and cousins would gather for the ceremonial welcoming of Shabbat as Rebecca would light the candles and all would sit down for a meal, together.

Joel inherited the candlesticks and they have since, been passed down to his son Scott. The candlesticks live in a prominent location where the children go and place candles in them and await their Mother's lighting of the candles, welcoming Shabbat as mothers of generations past have done freely in America and in fear in Russia. Whenever we light the candles in Bubbie's (grandma's) brass candlesticks, there is always a moment of awe and silence as the dull brass reflects the history that it carries; stories that have been lost, but thoughts that have never vanished.



Photo Credit: Craig, W. Images of America Revere

SHIRLEY AVENUE ARTIFACT

Shirley Avenue runs perpendicular from Revere Beach up through the center of the neighborhood streets and connects to a main thoroughfare, Route 1A. This easy access to Shirley Avenue, via car or street trolley, made Shirley Avenue a shopping mecca.

Pictures from long ago show Shirley Avenue with the same immigrant feel as today. Then, Kosher butchers and bagel shop storefront signs were written in English

and Hebrew. Today the same storefront signage has been replaced with English and Cambodian letters. Some stores show



***Above Left three full color photos of Shirley Avenue, Revere, MA 2009
Above Right in Sepia Shirley Avenue, Revere, MA Long Ago (circa 1920)***

Brazilian flags in windows. The corner grocer is now an Oriental American Market. The stores and people congregating on the corners are a tribute to the diversity that still

permeates the City of Revere's culture. (Photos of Shirley Avenue in the 1920's are available but the scanned photographs are not as clear as the originals).

In the 1830's, Chelsea petitioned the state to become its own city and in that change, Revere, Winthrop, and Lynn separated from Chelsea. By the late 19th century, the city transit system, now known as the MBTA or "The T," laid trolley car tracks that allowed for easy access to Revere Beach (the first public beach in America) and the residential areas of Revere. The beach was established with the intent of making recreation accessible to common people. The city rapidly gained popularity. The accessibility made the city an ideal community for immigrant communities looking to spread out of the crowded City of Boston.

In the early part of the 19th century, Italians and Eastern European Jews moved to the Revere area. By 1917, more than 176,000 Jews ^{viii} entered the United States with intent to move to Massachusetts, and by 1929, 5,000 ^{ix} of these Jews located themselves in Revere. Synagogues were established, the Boston Archdiocese established Catholic Churches, and Shirley Avenue became a seven-day per week shopping haven. Revere changed from vacation homes for the wealthy to a family-friendly neighborhood where immigrants found refuge from the increasingly hostile environments in the overcrowded neighborhoods of Boston. It should be mentioned that this photo comparison is only one of many stops as Joel Sidell and his son Scott took me on a tour of their Revere neighborhood. In each case, we would stop at a building and take pictures of the location. Meanwhile, Joel and Scott would explain what used to be there and how the building influenced the way they lived. At each stop, the building was old but the façade had changed. The name on the outside and the goings-on on the inside were different,

but the cultural impact was the same. The Kosher butcher is now an Oriental market.

The Jewish Community Center is now the social hall for after school programs and the elderly, and home to a Head Start agency.

Pollyanna Sidell
Bibliography Assignment
May/August 2009

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- ^{iv} Johnson, S.C.
- ^v Antin, M.
- ^{vi} Higham, J. p245-6.
- ^{vii} Antin, M. p179.
- ^{viii} Sarna, JD. p69.
- ^{ix} Sarna, JD. p151.

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Antin, M. *The Promised Land*. Penguin Books: New York. Book. 1997. p5. Course Text: A narrative text about the life of a Russian-Jewish immigrant living in early-20th century America. The text is a great example of the struggles immigrant families go through as they try to navigate a new life while living in two different cultures.

Artson, BS. *It's a Mitzvah!: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living*. Behrman House Rabbinical Assembly: West Orange, NJ. Book. 1995. p12-13.
This text offers ways to start living a Jewish life or to bring Judaism into a home by taking baby steps. This book is written by a Conservative Jewish Rabbi. It give a deeper understanding of Jewish traditions from practicing them at home and in the synagogue and offers a variety of manageable tips for making Judaism a stronger part of family life. As public school educator and a Jew, I have found this book to be a great resource. Many Jewish students have come through my classroom and questions always come up around the holidays in the fall and spring. This book has allowed me to see the diverse practices that many Jews

observe and to remind students that even though we label ourselves as being of the same culture, It does not mean we are all exactly alike.

Craig, WJ. *Images of America: Revere*. With the Revere Society for Cultural and Historic Preservation. Arcadia Publishing: Charleston, SC. Book. 2004. p7-8, 29-40, 67, 98.

If you have to teach a specific town or city, make sure the title in this series is on your shelf. The book is a historic assembly of primary source photos and captions bookend with an introduction and a “who’s who” conclusion that will fascinate you and your students. An excellent way to get to know a community in depth. www.arcadiapublishing.com list all the cities and towns they have brought to publication and Barnes and Noble carries a large selection of local titles from all over Massachusetts and the adjacent states. I literally had to pull this book out of my family’s hands so I could finish my work here. My grown up husband became a kid again perusing the photographs of his old school and restaurants now gone. Meanwhile, his children kept asking him to tell more and pointed out sites they recognized seeing recently.

Eban, A. *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*. Summit Books: New York, NY. Book. 1984. p248-249.

This is a detailed history of Jewish culture and how the culture touched other cultures around the world. The detailed narrative covers the Mesopotamian Era through the creation of the State of Israel. The book includes wonderful primary and secondary sources beyond Jewish art. It is a great companion book to a secular world history book offering a Jewish point of view on world events.

“Bolshevic Russian Political Faction.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Web. 2009. 5 May 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/72272/Bolshevik>. Online Encyclopedia resource.

This resource is a great place for students to collect initial information about a topic and then use keywords offered to collect further information.

Higham, J. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick. Book. 1983. p234.

Course Text: Discusses the United States political position on nativism over time, 1860-1925, giving reasons regarding why and how it evolved. This text is very helpful in beginning to understand the political climate in the US during this period. Special consideration needs to be given to who the author is and that the viewpoint from which he writes is somewhat narrow. This book should be used in conjunction with other texts to help balance the political nature of the time.

Johnson, S.C. *A History of Emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912*. E.P. Dutton and Co., University of Michigan. 1914. Web. Digitized Oct 21, 2008. 5 May 2009. p 123-129.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=0OGNAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=ship+steerage+conditions+1912&source=bl&ots=RL64m5Xg9P&sig=ieKg>

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This book has been scanned and released on the Internet. It is a history about the emigration from the United Kingdom to America between 1763-1912. The text is primarily economics-based, but explains clearly the reasons for and repercussions of emigration. The book is lacking in follow through as to how policies set changed emigration behaviors later. There is a wonderful description of how steerage class was physically organized and laws governments established to make accommodations better for passengers in steerage class.

Ouaknin, MA. *Symbols of Judaism*. Barnes and Noble Books: New York, NY. Book. 2003. p54.

This book allows a reader to dip into the fundamentals of Judaism looking at rituals and symbols. The basic “why” questions are answered here covering holidays and feasts. A basic book that is good for initial understanding from a Reform perspective. The answers to the “why” or “how” question greatly differ which explains the difference between Hassidic, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Constructivist Jewish practices.

Sarna, JD., Smith, E., Kosofsky, SM. *The Jews of Boston*. Yale University Press and Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston: New Haven, CT. Book. 2005. p69-82, 116, 151-152, 164, 166.

This book is a historical look of Jews in Boston and surrounding communities from Colonial Boston through the 20th century. I was a bit disappointed that the book concentrated mostly on the expansion of Jews into the Western suburbs. The text does talk about Chelsea Jews and how they migrated up the North Shore, but virtually ignores the deposit in Revere and continues to discuss other North Shore communities. I also noticed some other information left out of the Brookline history. This was my first experience with this text. I had thought so highly of it and had always wanted it to live on my bookshelf. I have since changed my mind and consulted other publications that also supported my analysis of the *Shirley Avenue Artifact* and the movement of Jews into Revere. I would have a difficult time recommending this as a well-represented resource in the future.

Stockton, R. *The Jewish Situation and Jewish Nationalism*. University of Michigan-Dearborn. Web. November, 1993. 5 May 2009.

As quoted by Grossman, Max Elijah
http://grossmanproject.net/The_Pale_Of_Settlement.htm. This site is a genealogical research on the name Grossman and its roots throughout Russia. Dr. Ronald R. Stockton specializes in Jewish and Middle Eastern Relations, and historical anti-Jewish sentiments. He works at the University of Michigan, Dearborn where the second largest Jewish-American population resides. Dr. Stockton is a well respected professor who is often quoted by the media regarding Middle Eastern concerns. His views are generally liberal. The Grossman web

site is a genealogical tracing of Jewish ancestry in Russia. Although created by a graduate student on “sabbatical” at his grandfather’s request, the site has become a central depository for Russian Jews to connect with others to follow the roots of an otherwise undocumented group of people. This web site is continuously changing and growing and has caused more prominent Jewish organizations to start collecting genealogical information to share with the community.

Vest, K. *Using Primary Sources in the Classroom*. Shell Education: Huntington Beach, CA. Book. 2005. p4-9.

This book needs to be on every social studies teacher’s desk. The definitions, skills, mentor lessons, and resources are invaluable tools and will make any teachers planning and execution of lessons painless. The lessons allow students to interactively engage in history.