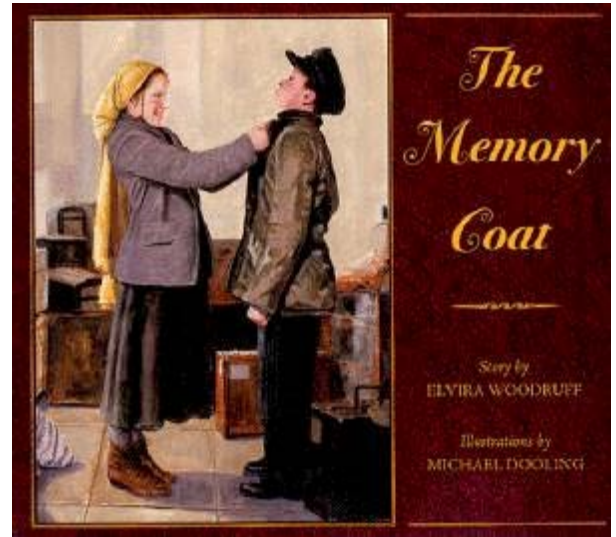


The Memory Coat

By Elvira Woodruff

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 5-8
 Time frame: 45 minutes
 Central value: Family love and support (*Shalom Bayit*)
 Blessing of remembering (*Zakhor*)



Synopsis

When the Cossacks raid Russia, a Jewish family must immigrate to America. However, Grisha's worn-out coat might jeopardize their trip. Grandma Bubba tries to convince her grandson to leave behind his old coat that might prevent him from being accepted at Ellis Island, but he refuses since the coat is lined with wool from the coat of his deceased mother. When they arrive at Ellis Island, Grisha is threatened with deportation until his cousin Rachel comes up with a plan to save him! This story gives a great introduction to European immigration and shows the power of familial love.

Goals

- Introduce families to Eastern European Immigration
- Reflect on and connect the major theme of this book to our own family roots
- Encourage families to think about the things that really matter to them
- Involve families in an ongoing memory project that they can do together
- Encourage families to think about new ways to interpret the mitzvah of *bal tashchit*

Submitted by

Kitty Wolf – Tidewater, VA
 Kittywolf18@yahoo.com

Plan in advance

Prepare Paper Bag Coats

Materials

- Large, plain grocery bags or large cardboard coat cutouts for each child or family
- Markers and crayons
- Decorative materials (buttons, jewels, ribbons, glue on shapes)
- All-purpose Glue
- Scissors
- Tables where families can sit together and work

Prepare “It’s what’s on the Inside” Activity

Materials

- Drawing utensils: markers, crayons, etc.

Prepare Family Memory Box

Materials

- Empty shoe box or any 12 inch+ box with a lid for each family (Families can be told to bring boxes with them)
- Paint, markers
- Decorative materials
- Glue and scissors



Prepare a Snack Activity (Optional)

Materials

- Hard tack crackers
- Tin cups for water
- Water



Introduce with an activity

Make Paper Bag Coats

Intro the Story

Today we will be reading a story about a very special coat. But the story is about much more than a coat. It is the story about a family's long journey from their home in Eastern Europe to this country and how hard it was for them to get here and to stay together.

- Have families introduce themselves with the places from which their family originally came.

At the turn-of-the century, many Jewish families in Eastern Europe were forced to leave their homes and journey across the sea to a new home in America because they were very poor and the people in their country were very cruel. The trip was long and expensive, and they could only bring a very few things with them. They had to choose carefully! The boy in our story, Grisha, had a very special possession that he insisted on bringing with him even though it was old and ragged. It was his coat.

Does anyone here have a special item of clothing or other favorite thing that would be important to bring on a long journey? (Listen for answers).

- Unless young participants have had a personal experience with immigration, it will be the connection between a sentimental or favorite item he or she could not part with and the character's need to hang onto the coat that he or she relates to.

Now, let's go back to the coat in our story. We are going to make coats like Grisha's to wear while we listen to our story. There are big grocery bags to use to make our coats on each table as well as buttons, markers, glue and other things to use to decorate the outside of the coat.

Coat Directions

1. Cut a neck hole at the bottom of a brown grocery bag.
2. Open the bag up by cutting a line from the neck hole in the center of one side of the bag to the top of the bag.
3. Cut an armhole on each side of the bag.
4. Have the children color and decorate the outside of the coat.
5. Encourage children to wear their coats while listening to the story

Adaptations for Older Children

Older children may prefer to use a pre-drawn coat outline or design their own coat on a piece of heavy construction paper. Have participants draw and color their coats and optionally decorate with buttons, etc. Then cut out the coat. The back of the coat cutout should be blank.



Read the story

Props

- Children can wear the coats they have made and/or put on headscarves (squares of scrap material or bandanas) for girls or visor caps for boys to get the feel of how boys and girls dressed at the turn of the century.
- Large pictures of an Eastern European shtetl, a steam ship, on board a steamship, and Ellis Island. (See sample pictures that can be copied and enlarged below)

Intro

Let's all move over to our story telling area and sit together as I read the book. As we read, I'm going to show you some of the pictures from the book that show places in the story, so you can get an idea of the setting.

Encourage Participation

This book should be read through without pause for listener participation in order to get the continuity and strength of the story. However, if you have a group that is restless or who is used to participating in story-telling, there are a number of places where you can stop and ask for clarification and comments. Make large copies of the attached picture to show to the children.

Follow Up activities and resources

It's What's Inside That Really Matters!

Intro Words

Everyone should now turn their coats to the inside or back. Our story taught us that what is on the inside is often what really matters. You all have made beautiful coats... on the outside. Now, it is time to put something very special on the inside. What are some of the experiences you have had with your family that make you warm ... that give you a good feeling, when you think about them? What special things do you want to remember always?

Directions

1. Draw a picture or write about these experiences on the inside of your coat. Let families complete this activity together.
2. When they have finished, ask if anyone would like to share their warm feelings.

Make a Family Memory Box

Intro Words

Our story tells us how important remembering is and how having something that reminds us of a special person helps us with our memory. We are going to make a special box where we can keep all of our favorite memories. You can take it home and fill it with pictures and items that remind you of people you love and help you remember important events in your lives. You can make copies of photographs and documents to put in the box so that little hands can look and touch without damaging the originals. When you get home, look for things you can put in your box, like pressed flowers, ribbons, handprints, drawings, ticket stubs, clippings, scraps of fabric, seashells, rocks and other trinkets.



Directions

1. Pass out empty boxes and begin to talk about how they will decorate it and what things they will put in it.
2. Allow families time to discuss and begin decorating. They can take the boxes home to continue decorating and begin filling if time is short.

Story Telling and Illustrating

Intro Words

In our story, Rachel and Grisha both entertained and comforted each other through stories. Rachel would tell them and Grisha would draw pictures to illustrate them. Stories and pictures are a great way to pass on memories and traditions. Let's try it here.

Directions

1. In your family group, pick one person in your family to tell a special story and the rest of you draw pictures about the story while it is being told.
2. Allow about 10-15 minutes for this activity. Ask families to share their stories and pictures.
3. Tell families that the pictures are great to put in the memory boxes.

Snack / Food Sample Activity

Intro Words

The journey over the ocean was very long and hard. Because Grisha and Rachel's family was poor, they have to stay and sleep in the bottom of the ship. This is called steerage. Food and water were rationed- that means there was just a little bit for each person. Toward the end of the voyage, there were no more fresh vegetables or other perishable food and they often had a diet of crackers called sea tack that they washed down by a very small ration of water served in a tin cup. Here, have a taste!

Directions

1. Give each participant a hardtack cracker and a very little bit of water in a tin cup.



Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Memory Boxes at Home

The memory boxes are meant to be a transitional tool to for families to continue their discovery of their roots and to develop a useful way to keep family memories alive. Encourage families to put things in their boxes right away and continue to add to them. The boxes should be readily available to the children and families should be encouraged to go over the contents together from time to time.

Suggested Books for Further Family Reading

- Polacco, Patricia. *The Keeping Quilt*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998. From a basket of old clothes becomes The Keeping Quilt, passed along from mother to daughter for almost a century. For four generations the quilt is a Sabbath tablecloth, a wedding canopy, and a blanket that welcomes babies warmly into the world. Ages 4-8
- Levinson, Riki. *Watch the Stars Come Out*. Puffin, Unicorn. A reading Rainbow selection. This picture book tells the immigrant story in simple terms for the beginning learner. A little red-haired girl curls up by her grandmother to hear how, long ago, another little girl and her brother crossed the Atlantic and came to America. Well-done illustrations and a happy, inter-generational ending. Ages 2-5
- Taylor, Sydney. *All-of-a-Kind Family*. New York: Yearling, 1980. This classic series about an immigrant family is geared towards elementary school children. They are good books to read aloud to the entire family- even the very young get caught up in the stories!

Online Sites to Visit

- Immigration: Stories of Yesterday
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm>
- Lower East Side Tenement Museum
<http://www.tenement.org>
- Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation
<http://www.ellisland.org>

Pictures to Show During Story

Eastern European Shetl



Old Steam Ship



On Board the Ship, in Steerage



Ellis Island



Waiting at Ellis Island



Eye Exam at Ellis Island

