NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

The Blessing Cup

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Abstract

The Blessing Cup, by Patricia Polacco, may be used to provide insight into the lives of the Jewish as they were embattled and forced to evacuate Russia. This lesson seeks to probe students’ thinking for their understanding of the difference in primary and secondary sources and how they are useful for teaching and learning about historical events, people, their cultures, and their family traditions. Students work in small groups to research Jewish culture, traditions, and religious rites as noted in the book, as well as examine how the tea set serves to teach primary sources within a text. Students identify primary sources to describe their own history.

Book Title

The Blessing Cup (2013)

by Patricia Polacco.


Recommended for Ages 4-8


Recommended for grades 2-3.
This lesson plan will require 30-45 minutes per day over the span of 2-3 days.

Book Summary

Anna is a young Jewish girl in Russia in the early 1900s, under czarist rule. Anna always questions why the czar’s soldiers are grouchy and mean to people. One night, Anna’s father tells the family the czar has ordered all Jews to leave Russia. They cannot take many of their belongings, so Anna’s parents choose to only take their holy books, menorah, and the tea set her parents received as a wedding present. The tea set was thought to be magical, bringing anyone who drinks from it blessings from God. Anna’s
family immigrated to the U.S.A. over time, staying for a time with a doctor, Dr. Pushkin, whom they affectionately called Uncle Genya. Anna’s family brought the tea set with them to America but eventually gave it to Uncle Genya as a blessing on his life and a thank you for paying for their travels to America. *The Blessing Cup* is a story of culture, family tradition, love, and antiquity. Based on a true story, the tea cup from the original tea set is still in Patricia Polacco’s family today.

**NCSS Standards**

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections

**Materials**

- *The Blessing Cup*
- Chart paper and markers
- Computers with internet access
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Colored chalk
- Crayons
- Construction paper
- Colored cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue
- Students’ primary sources
- Samples of primary sources from the teacher
- A test set
### Objectives

1. Students will use the text to define one aspect of Jewish culture by researching the menorah, shofar, tallis, the holy books, salted bread, and all other terms mentioned in the text.

2. Students will examine the meaning of family traditions via context clues from the text and then use the tea set as a means to compare to examples of their own family traditions.

3. Students will identify primary sources.

4. Students will identify and describe the historic events surrounding the czar ordering the Jews out of Russia and demonstrate through natural conversation how these historical concepts are easier understood via the use of primary sources.

### Procedures

1. The teacher will set out a tea set on a large floor rug and call for “tea time,” which will naturally allow curious conversation to ensue by the students. While demonstrating the use of the tea set, the teacher will then stimulate students’ thinking with open-ended questions about it such as: inquiring if the students have ever used a tea set, when, where, why, if they have any family members who own a tea set, and why

2. Tell students, “We are going to read a story about a Jewish family and a tea set.”

3. Read *The Blessing Cup* by Patricia Polacco.
4. Using provided flow chart, a map, globe, and the text, outline with students via a discussion, crayons, markers, and pencils, the events in history related to the czar mandating the Jews leave Russia. Appendix A.

5. Orally review students’ pictures with them to ensure they grasp the historical concepts.

6. Briefly review the text aloud. Place the following items in front of the students in a whole group setting on the floor so all of the students can see the items: a globe, a tea set, a Christmas ornament, a dreidel, a postcard, family photos, and a piece of jewelry.

7. Discuss the concept of teaching and learning with primary sources by explaining the use of the objects on the floor and asking the students to pick the objects that most closely relate to the text. Oral question-and-answer with the students will serve as an informal assessment.

Closure
1. As a review, students will provide examples of family traditions from the text by drawing them on construction paper to turn in to the teacher.

2. Students will then draw pictures of family traditions evident within their own families and turn those in to the teacher.

3. The teacher will assess the accuracy of the pictures based on the students’ knowledge of family traditions noted in the text.

4. The teacher will take all of these individual pictures, laminate them if possible, and assemble them into a classroom “family tradition” quilt to be displayed in the school.

1. Students will work in groups of three to identify three examples of family traditions from the text and three examples of primary sources from the text.

2. Students will present these findings to the whole class, by drawing and labeling them on chart paper to share with the class; students will verbally identify what makes their family traditions such and their sources primary.

3. Lesson summary which includes the history of the Jews leaving Russia, a discussion of the importance
of family traditions, and using primary sources in learning history.

5. The teacher will assess the oral presentations and content as either family traditions or not and primary sources or not.

**Expansion**

**Assessment**

1. Students will work in small groups (no more than three, if possible) to identify four items that could be used as primary sources for teaching the time period in history identified in the text or teaching the Jewish culture.

2. Students will present these findings to the whole class, by drawing and labeling them on chart paper to share with the class; students will verbally identify what makes their sources primary.

3. Students will share their results with the class.

4. The teacher will assess the students’ oral presentations and content as either primary or not.

**Suggested Extension**

**Activities**

1. Students will reflect on their own family traditions again and ask their grandparents or other family relatives about items in their family that can assist in teaching their family history. Appendix C.

2. Students will identify three primary resources to teach their family history or traditions to the class.

3. Students will present these sources to the class.

4. The teacher will assess the students based on accuracy of primary sources or not.
Additional References


Additional References and Web links


Appendix A

Jewish Immigration from Russia to America; History through a Flow-Chart Discussion

https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/alt/polish5.html

Historical Facts

In the late 1800s, Jews lived in Russia and were in danger of being killed by the Czar (like our President of the United States) and his soldiers.

In the 1880s, the Jews faced a state-wide massacre in which they would all die in Russia if they did not escape to another country.

Draw a Picture as a Reminder

Draw a Picture as a Reminder

Draw a Picture as a Reminder

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