

Trees of the Dancing Goats Unit Study

Book by Patricia Polacco

Unit study by Ami Brainerd

SOCIAL STUDIES

Geography: Michigan

The setting of this story is on a farm in Union City, Michigan. Find Michigan on your United States map. Make a story disk to place there this week.

Michigan Fast Facts

11th largest in the United States in size

capital city: Lansing

the only state to be separated by water

it is made up of two peninsulas (connected by the Mackinac Bridge)

it was the 26th state to join the union on January 26, 1837

it was the birthplace of the automobile

80% of the economy revolves around the car industry

Michigan is 50% forest, and there is a large lumber industry

state bird: robin

state flower: apple blossom

Geography: Ukraine and Soviet Georgia

Trisha's Babushka and Grampa are not from the United States. They immigrated from the former Soviet Union (Ukraine and Soviet Georgia). Discuss the term *immigration* if your student is unfamiliar with it (to come into a foreign country to live).

Research option: In the story Grampa mentions that they could never return. Help your older student research and find out why (possibly a Jewish/WWII connection).

Culture: Jewish Holiday

Hanukkah is observed by millions of Jews around the globe, commemorating the victory of faith over tyranny and, more specifically, the triumph of Jewish rebels

over their Syrian rulers more than 2,000 years ago. Although Hanukkah is technically a minor Jewish festival, it is the only holiday for which Jews exchange gifts. It is celebrated in the Jewish month of Kislev, which usually falls in December. Hanukkah is not "the Jewish Christmas"; it is a festival with a rich history and tradition of its own.

The celebration of Hanukkah goes back to 165 B.C. At that time, the Jews of Judea had lived for many years under the oppressive hand of Syria, whose rulers outlawed Jewish worship and desecrated the temple in Jerusalem. Even though they were outnumbered, the Jews took up arms to defend their lifestyle and religion. They overwhelmed the Syrians in two decisive battles. Their leader was Judah Maccabees, whose mythic strength earned him the nickname "The Hammer."

When the Jewish army entered the temple to consecrate it, their first task was to rekindle the Eternal Light, a sacred oil lamp that was left burning continuously. The Maccabees had only one jar of oil, enough to keep the flame lit only for a single day. They sent out a messenger to find and bring back more sanctified oil, and it took the messenger eight days to return. Miraculously, the Eternal Light continued to burn those eight days. Hanukkah, which also is called the Festival of Lights, celebrates that miracle.

Library List

The Borrowed Hanukkah Latkes by Linda Glaser

Chanukah Lights Everywhere by Michael Rosen

A Hanukkah Treasury by Eric Kimmel

The Stone Lamp: A Hanukkah Collection: Eight Days of Dark, Eight Nights of Light by Karen Hesse

Latkes and Applesauce by Fran Manushkin

The Power of Light by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Eight Tales for Eight Nights: Stories for Chanukah by Peninnah Schram and Steven M. Rosman

Judah Who Always Said "No!" by Harriet K. Feder

The Story of Hanukkah by Amy Ehrlich

Character Building: Sharing

Grampa had hand-carved wooden animals for Trisha and Richard including the dancing goats. Their mother suggested that they use the animals to decorate Christmas trees for their neighbors. At first Trisha was disappointed. Discuss the saying, "it is better to give than receive." Is this true?

At the end of the story, what happens? The neighbors make a menorah for Trisha's family complete with some of the wooden animals that were given away! So, in the end, Trisha *did* get some of the animals.

Character Building: Enjoying Work

"[Babushka] hummed as she dipped, never seeming to tire of the long process." Is it possible for us to enjoy work?

I have a quote on my kitchen window sill that says, "To be happy, don't do what you like...like what you do!" What does this mean? Can we learn to find joy in any task that we have to complete? The next time you and your student have to complete chores or mundane household tasks, try humming songs or whistling why you work. Try to find things to be thankful about (that you have able hands that can work), instead of things to complain about.

Human Relationships: Teamwork

This family really worked together to make a special holiday for their sick neighbors. Make a list together of what all was done and who helped complete each job.

Discuss how your family works together as a team. If this is an area that needs improvement, consider making a list of things you can do to foster more teamwork in your household.

Human Relationships/Bible: Neighbors

A neighbor is usually thought of as a person who lives near another, but the word can also be defined as a fellow human being. So, who is your neighbor? Everyone! The Bible commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39, Leviticus 19:18). How did Trisha's family put this principle into action? How can you show love to your neighbors during the holiday season?

Family History

Patricia Polacco knows a lot about her family history. If you've read many of her other stories together, you know this is true. What is a family history? Does your

student know where her ancestors are from? What countries did your student's ancestors immigrate from? Why? Pass these stories down to your student. You may even want to help your student record some family history this week.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Vocabulary

anticipation- pleasurable expectation (waiting for something with excitement!)

tarnished- to become dull, dim, or discolored

mimicking- to imitate (note: you may have to demonstrate)

dreadful- very disagreeable, unpleasant, or shocking

scurried- to move briskly

flickered- to burn unsteadily or with a constantly changing light

bolted- to move suddenly, rapidly, or nervously

cherished- to hold dear: feel or show affection for

bustling- to move about busily or noisily

pale- light in color or shade

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is when an author gives the reader a hint or suggestion of something that is yet to come. Grampa says, "Miracles can happen even today."

This is an example of foreshadowing; it gives the reader a clue that there will be a miracle in this story. Can your student recall the miracle at the end of the story? (The candles in the menorah haven't burned down at all.)

Language: Russian

Patricia mentions that her grandparents both speak Russian. You may want to see if your library has *Teach Me Russian* and/or *Teach Me More Russian* by Judy Mahoney; these CDs are a gentle introduction to the Russian language.

APPLIED MATH

Geography and Math: Mapping Skills and Measurement

Using an atlas of the United States, show your student how to find Michigan...then

show your student how to find Union City and Battle Creek. Find a route from Union City to Battle Creek. Measure the mileage. Determine how many miles Momma had to travel each day (from Union City to Battle Creek and back again). Discuss what the term *round trip* means.

You may want to find other routes from Union City to Battle Creek. Can you find a shorter route? How many miles difference is there between the two routes?

Story Problem

How many days total will it take for Trisha's family to prepare and celebrate Hanukkah? ("We would have a week to prepare and eight days of Hanukkah festivities"-- 15 days total.)

SCIENCE

Health: Staying Healthy in Winter

What are some habits that help us to stay healthy through the winter?

1. Washing our hands before we eat and after we use the restroom.
2. Taking supplements and vitamins such as Vitamin C.
3. Eat fruits and vegetables—especially those that are high in Vitamin C.
4. Dress for the weather. Remember to wear your coat, gloves, and especially your hat. When you are cold, your immune system gets worn down, and it's harder for your body to fight off germs.

Illness: Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever

Trisha's neighbors had scarlet fever. What is this? Scarlet fever is a disease caused by an infection of the throat. It starts at strep throat and leads to scarlet fever.

Symptoms

Sore throat

Fever

Vomiting

Rash on neck and chest

Rough "sandpaper" feel to the skin

Swollen, red tongue (strawberry tongue)

Chills

Headache

Generalized discomfort

Abdominal pain

Muscle aches

Transmission

Scarlet Fever is a bacteria spread by direct, close contact (coughing, sneezing) with an infected person.

Common Treatment

The treatment of scarlet fever is the same as the treatment of strep throat-- antibiotic therapy to eliminate the bacteria that causes this infection from the throat. This is crucial to preventing rheumatic fever, the most feared complication of strep throat and scarlet fever.

Vocabulary introduced in the story

contagious- able to be passed on by contact between individuals

epidemic- spreading widely and affecting many individuals at one time

quarantined- the period during which a person with a contagious disease is kept isolated (as not to pass the disease on to others)

Research Option: Have your older student research viral and bacterial infections. What are the differences?

Candle Making

In the story, candles were made for Hanukkah. You may want to try making some hand-dipped candles with your student. Please see science connections at the bottom of the lesson.

Materials:

paraffin blocks

2-8 thin metal cans without paper labels (tennis ball cans are the perfect size); you will need more than one can if you plan to do more than one color candle

broken crayon fragments sorted by color (labels peeled off)

cotton string for wicks, cut into 18" lengths (or you may purchase wicks from a

craft store)
very cold water
wooden stirring sticks (paint stirrers work great!)
newspaper
old potholders
deep pot for boiling water (The paraffin is never melted directly over the heat source! Always create a "double boiler" effect as described below.)

Break up one block of paraffin in each can. Add a generous amount of crayon pieces, a different color in each can. Set the cans upright in a deep kettle (or kettles) of boiling water, so that the level of the water is halfway up the side of the cans. Stir and break up paraffin and crayon wax until it is entirely melted and the color in each can pleases you.

Fill one can with very cold water.

Give your student a wick, a wax can, and a water can. Leaving about six inches untouched by wax to hold on to, have your student dip the string first into wax, then immediately into cold water. Then again into the wax. Then back into cold water. Repeat the process for about five minutes. After the first few dips, you may need to carefully straighten out the wick if it curls in the hot wax. Each layer of wax on the wick is hardened by the cold water and allows the next layer of wax to adhere. Gradually, the candle begins to thicken and take shape. When it is about 12 inches long and 3/4 inch in diameter at the bottom, let the candle sit in the cold water for about 30-60 seconds to firm.

You may want to discuss why the candle is thicker at the bottom and thinner, or "tapered" at the top. Your student may be interested to learn that in authentic candle dipping, double-length wicks were used, held in the middle, so that two candles at a time could be dipped on one wick. Many double wicks were suspended from a dowel and a dozen candles could be made at one time! They were hung to dry by the exposed bit of wick between the two candles and snipped apart later. You may be able to find fine handmade candles today that are made this way.

(adapted from scholastic.com)

Drawing Scientific Conclusions

your older student may want to delve into more of the scientific aspect of candles/burning candles

Remember to make predictions before you try these experiments.

Does wax color affect the burning time of the candle? Comparisons can be made between white and colors or between different colors.

Does the room temperature affect burning time?

Does the shape affect burning time? Compare the burning time of two or more candles that weigh the same but have different shapes.

ART

Painting Wooden Ornaments

Get some wooden ornaments from a craft store and let your students paint them. Your students may even want to give them as gifts to neighbors, friends, or relatives.

Colors of the Soviet Union

Grampa painted the carved ornaments "with the colors of his homeland"

Get a box of crayons (the bigger the better) and let your student match the crayons to the colors Grampa used to paint the woodcarvings. Give your student an outline map of the Soviet Union; let him crayon the map with the colors of Grampa's homeland.

Woodcarving

If your student is fascinated by Grampa's woodcarvings, try this idea.

Draw an outline of an animal on a piece of Ivory soap. Put the soap in the refrigerator overnight to make it hard. Then carefully, using a knife, with a parent present at all times, carve the bar of soap.

JUST FOR FUN

Play Dreidel (a Hanukkah game)

Materials Needed:

1 dreidel

Objects for the pot such as chocolate coins (pennies, raisins, Hershey kisses, buttons, etc.)

Evenly divide the betting objects among all players. Before each spin of the dreidel, each player antes up by placing one item into the pot. The first player spins the dreidel. There are four possible outcomes. If Nun comes up, the player gets nothing and the next player takes a spin. Gimel means the player takes the whole pot. If Heh comes up, the player takes half the pot. Shin means he or she puts another item in the pot. All players ante up again before the next person spins. Whenever the pot is empty or has only one object left in it, each player has to ante up again before the next spin. The game is over when one player has everything and everyone else is cleaned out.

Nun נ - Player does nothing

Heh ה - Player takes half the tokens in the pot

Gimel ג - Player takes all the tokens in the pot

Shin ש - Players add one token to the pot

COOKING

Latkes

Note: They are fried in oil to remember that miraculous jar of long-burning oil.

Ingredients

2 cups peeled and shredded potatoes

1 tablespoon grated onion

3 eggs, beaten

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup oil

Directions

Extract as much moisture as possible from the potatoes (use a cheesecloth and wring). In a medium bowl stir the potatoes, onion, eggs, flour and salt together. In a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until hot. Place large spoonfuls of the potato mixture into the hot oil, pressing down on them to form 1/4 to 1/2-inch-thick patties. Brown on one side, turn and brown on the other. Let drain on paper towels. Serve hot with toppings to choose from such as chopped green onions, sour cream, and applesauce.

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