

Boxes For Katje

**Written by Candace Fleming
Illustrated by Stacey Dressen-McQueen**

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Running Time: 18:30
Spoken Arts Video - 9703**

Story Summary

After World War II, there is little left in Katje's town of Olst in Holland. Her family, like most Dutch families, must go without soap and milk, and must patch and repair their old, worn clothing. Then one spring morning, when the tulips bloom thick and bright, Postman Kleinhoonte pedals his bicycle down Katje's cobbled street to deliver a mysterious box from the 'land of plenty' – America!

The box has been sent by Rosie, a girl from Mayfield, Indiana. The package is part of a goodwill effort to help the people of Europe. What's inside Rosie's package so delights Katje that she immediately sends off a letter of thanks, beginning an exchange that swells with so many surprises that the girls, as well as the townspeople of Olst and Mayfield, will never be the same.

Inspired by the true experiences of the author's mother, this strikingly original picture book shows how simple seeds of friendship and hope can grow into something extraordinary.

Before viewing the video:

Tell the children that after World War II, many people in Europe were so poor that they didn't have many of the things Americans had. Ask them to imagine what they would miss the most, and what kinds of things they would need. Especially in winter, the need would be the greatest. What kinds of things would they want to send to others who are in such need?

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. What were some of the things the people of Olst ate after the war?
2. What did they do without?
3. How did Postman Kleinhoonte get to Katje's house with the package?
4. What was in the box?
5. Why did someone send the box to Katje?
6. What did Katje call America?
7. What was in the first box?
8. With whom did Katje share her first box?
9. How many children did Mrs. Deland have?
10. What did Katje share with them?
11. How did Rosie get so much to send to Katje?
12. Why did Katje send the tulip bulbs to her friend, Rosie?

Activities

1. Using a Venn diagram, compare the two girls, Rosie and Katje. List ways in which they are alike, and ways in which they are different.
2. The art in this video is beautifully detailed. We see the town of Olst, the people and the clothes they wear. Ask the children to fold a piece of paper down the middle. On one side, they can draw a scene from Olst, with houses, people, etc., and on the other side, a picture either of Rosie's town, or their own.
3. Ask the children to pretend they are townspeople from Olst. Ask them to write stories for the town newspaper about things going on after the war. Ask some of them to write about events other than Katje's boxes.
4. Especially during the holidays, there are many requests from communities that need help. Try to find a community that has reached out in need, and see what the class can do for them. Sometimes, even letter- writing is appreciated.