

Christmas Tapestry

Grades 1-5

Written and Illustrated by Patricia Polacco

Published by Philomel Books

Spoken Arts Video - 9692

Running Time: 27 minutes

Story Summary

When a bad leak ruins the sacristy wall in his father's church, Jonathan Jefferson Weeks thinks his family's first Christmas Eve service in Detroit will also be ruined. Luckily, he and his father find a beautiful tapestry for sale in a secondhand shop – just the thing to cover the damaged wall and give the church a festive look! But there is more to the tapestry, as they discover when an old Jewish woman, visiting the church, recognizes the lovely old cloth. It is her discovery that leads to a real miracle on this unforgettable Christmas Eve.

Objectives

Children will learn a little about the Holocaust

Children will make a connection between seemingly random events and their purpose

Children will compare two stories with a similar idea.

Before viewing the video

Sometimes things happen, and it's hard to find a reason for this to have happened. Sometimes, we can't see the purpose. Ask the children to think of something that has happened either to them or to someone they know. Something that is hard to understand while it is happening, but later, the reason for it becomes clear.

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. Why was Jonathan unhappy when his family moved?
2. What happened to the wall in the church?
3. Why did Jonathan and his father take the bus and not the car?
4. What did the old woman at the bus stop share with Jonathan and his father?
5. Why did the old woman gasp when she saw the tapestry?
6. How did she know the tapestry was the very one she had made as a young girl?
7. What happened to her in Germany?
8. Why was Mr. Zukor, the plasterer, able to come to the church on Christmas Eve?
9. Why was Mr. Zukor so upset when he saw the tapestry?
10. What did Mr. Zukor think had happened to his wife, Rachel, so long ago?

Activities

1. Make a list of all the things that happened that seemed to happen for no reason.
2. (They moved to Detroit, the plaster fell, the car wouldn't start, it was so cold they had to share tea with the old woman). Discuss why these things all had to occur for this story to have taken place.
3. The tapestry in this story had beautiful flowers in it. Sometimes, a tapestry tells a story through its art. Have the children use large art paper and paints, and draw their own tapestries. If they tell a story through the art, let them write stories about their pictures.
4. Before seeing this video, we talked about not understanding why something happens until later, the meaning becomes clear. Have the children write stories with this theme.
5. If appropriate, talk about the Holocaust, how families were taken from their homes, separated from their loved ones, put in concentration camps. What other stories have the children heard about this?
6. Show the video, **The Three Questions** (Spoken Arts - 9690). This story also focuses on the idea of seemingly random events and the purpose which can become clear. Make lists of the events in both stories, which seem to have no purpose, and then list what happens because of these events.

Related Spoken Arts Titles

The Butterfly - SAV9658

The Diary of Anne Frank (Book/cassette) - SAV6768
(Book/CD) - SAV4108