

THE KEEPING QUILT

K-3

Written and Illustrated by Patricia Polacco

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For Young Readers

Story Summary

When Patricia's Great-Gramma Anna came to America as a child from Russia, the only things she brought along with her were her dress and the babushka she liked to throw up into the air when she was dancing. Anna outgrew the dress and her mother decided to incorporate it and the babushka into a quilt. Anna's mother used items from other family members to create a quilt that would be passed down from generation to generation. This quilt was used as a Sabbath tablecloth, a wedding canopy, and as a blanket to welcome each new child into the world. This quilt ties together the lives of four generations of an immigrant Jewish family and remains a symbol of their enduring faith and love.

Objectives

1. To develop the concept of "generations."
2. To develop the concept of an "heirloom" object.
3. To develop an understanding of which things change and which things remain constant through generations.
4. To develop an understanding of methods used to remember individuals who have lived before us.

Before viewing the video

Tell the children that they will be viewing a video about the author's family. This family came to America several generations ago from Russia. Explain what is meant by a "generation." Tell them to take notice of the way in which the author has illustrated this story and keep in mind how she let's you know that the items that are sewn into the quilt are very special. Ask them to think about how this family changed and how they remained the same over the years. Some vocabulary words

that might be reviewed beforehand include “babushka,” “huppa,” “Sabbath,” and “quilt.”

Questions to ask after viewing the video

1. What did Great-Gramma Anna bring to America that was so special to her?
2. Why did Anna’s mother want to make the keeping quilt?
3. What did this quilt look like when it was finished?
4. What were the Sabbath traditions that the family observed each week?
5. Gifts of gold, flower, salt and bread were important to the family. What did these items signify?
6. Anna and Sasha were married under a wedding huppa. Why was this huppa so special?
7. When Anna was old, how did she use the quilt?
8. What were the happy times during which the quilt was used? What were the times that were not so happy?
9. How did telling the story of this quilt help the generations connect to each other?
10. What were some of the family traditions that remained the same over the years? Which traditions changed?
11. Do you think that the story of the Keeping Quilt will continue? Why?

Activities

1. Have a class discussion about how the keeping quilt tied these four generations together. Ask the students to bring an object in to school that has been passed down for several generations in their family. Prepare an oral presentation telling the story of one’s own “keeping-----
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2. Create your own “keeping quilt” bulletin board. Have each child bring in something that is typical of them to add to the classroom “quilt.”
3. Develop the concept of “generations” by encouraging discussion about the generation before and after. Who will be in the generation that comes next?
4. Have a creative writing activity about family customs. What are the traditions that make your family special? If there are family members

available to come in for an afternoon to talk about traditions and how they were started, extend an invitation to speak to the class.