

Gittel's Journey

written by
Lesléa Newman

illustrated by
Amy June Bates

{ What does “home” mean to you? }

An Epic Journey

Gittel is leaving home. Her destination? America, the land of freedom. But her journey takes many unexpected twists and turns. Gittel's story (based on two true stories) is just a small glimpse into what this historic journey might have been like for the millions of immigrants who came to America in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Many of them were Jewish, and were leaving their homes because their countries were no longer safe for Jews. America was a refuge, a place where they could practice their way of life openly and find better opportunities for their families. Catching sight of the Statue of Liberty for the first time must have felt like nothing short of a miracle. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/gittelsjourney.

Weeks at Sea

A typical voyage across the Atlantic Ocean took two or three weeks—a trip that was physically and emotionally exhausting. Everyone, young and old, wondered what their new lives would be like. To pass the time, passengers would find companions who spoke the same language, and talk, sing, and play games together, just like Gittel did with her new friends. They would also interact with the handful of items they were able to bring along—reading books and prayer books, diaries, and in Gittel's case, her mother's Shabbat candlesticks and her rag doll, Basha.

The Righteous Thirty-Six

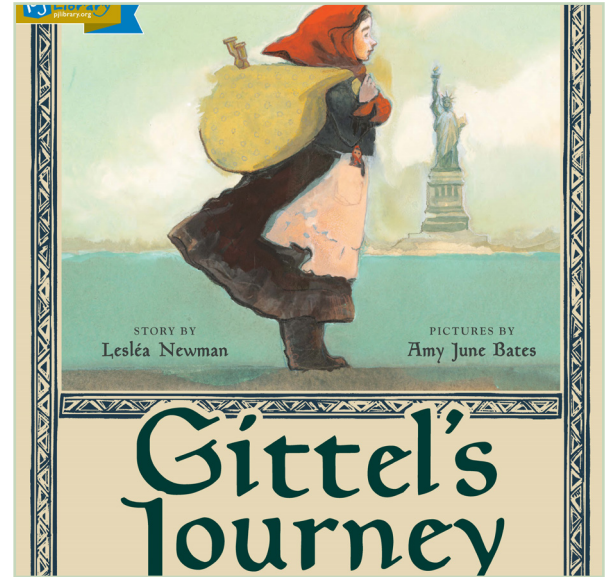
A Jewish legend says: In every generation there are 36 righteous souls in the world (called *Lamed-Vavniks*, Hebrew for “thirty-sixers”), and it's because of their kindness that the world is sustained. No one knows who they are! When Gittel arrives in America, a kind translator helps her. He consoles her, amuses her, takes care of her, and finally, finds her American relative. Was this man one of the legendary 36? Who knows?

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

What do you think it would be like to move to a different country?

If you were leaving and could only take a few items with you, what would you take?

Can you think of a time when a stranger helped your family?



HANDS ON!

Make Salt-Dough Candleholders



Gittel carefully carried her family's candlesticks across the sea when she came to America. You can make beautiful Shabbat candleholders for your family, too.

Supplies

(makes four candleholders)
1 cup flour
½ cup salt
½ cup warm (not hot) water
Cookie cutters
Candles
Nontoxic paint



Mix flour and salt together in a medium bowl, then add water and stir to combine. Knead the dough for about five minutes.

When the dough is fully kneaded, divide it into four balls, and place the balls on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Flatten the balls into circles, then use a cookie cutter to shape each one—you can make hearts, Stars of David, whatever you like. Press a candle into the center, wiggle it, then remove it; you'll be left with a candle-shaped hole.

Bake the candleholders in a 250 degree oven for three hours, or simply leave the candleholders out overnight to dry.

When candleholders are fully dried, paint them however you like. Line the holders with foil before lighting. Shabbat shalom!