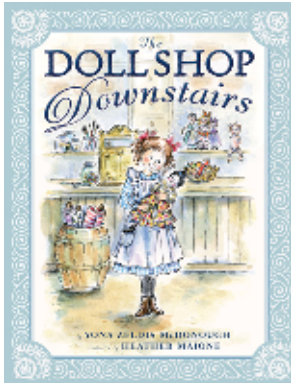


LESSON ABOUT HISTORICAL FICTION TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE DOLL SHOP DOWNSTAIRS



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Illustrated by Heather Maione
(HC) 978-0-670-01091-2 • \$14.99
Ages 6 up • Grade 1 up
Viking Children's Books

Aim: To identify and understand historical what fiction is, what function it serves, and how it is created

Method: Have the class go through the book and pick out the elements they think really took place and which did not. Some questions to ask:

- Which things in the story are based in fact?

[World War I, Embargo against German products, details about immigrant life on the Lower East Side, FAO Schwartz, religious practices and observance]

- Which things in the story were invented?

[The Breittlemann family, their friends and neighbors, the story of the dolls]

- Historical fiction is a *blend* of fact and fiction. Do you think reading historical fiction is a good way to learn about history? Why or why not?

Other Topics for Discussion

- Where did the Breittlemanns come from originally?
- Anna's family ran a doll repair shop. What other types of businesses existed in her neighborhood?
- What did you learn about Jewish customs and observances from reading this book?
- Can you describe the apartment Anna and her family shared? How does it compare with your apartment or house?

Related Activities

- The girls in the story come up with suggestions for making dolls. Have the children in

the class draw/write about their own suggestions for a doll.

- Anna finds that writing a letter is a good way to deal with her feelings of sadness, loss and separation. Ask the students if they have ever used writing in this way, and if so, what form it took (diary, letter, dream log). If they have not used writing to articulate their feelings before, assign activities that can help facilitate such a use. Some examples:

- * Write a letter to someone far away or no longer alive

- * Begin a diary and continue writing in once a day for a week

- * Begin a dream journal and keep a record of dreams for a week

- * Write a short poem about something that happened today

- In the story, Anna receives a very special gift from Miss MacKay, an older woman who is not a family member. Why does Miss MacKay give Anna the gift? Is there an older person in your life who has given you something special? Write about your relationship to this person.

- Anna's family came from Russia to the United States but during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people emigrated from many other countries as well. (Ireland, Italy, Germany, and China are just a few examples) Have a discussion about family roots and have each child write a brief paragraph about where their family members come from, and any stories they might know about their early experiences in America. Also bring up more recent waves of immigration, from Puerto Rico, the

Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Korea. These backgrounds, experiences and cultures can be discussed as well.

For Older Readers: The Role of Research

- How does an author create a work of historical fiction? Does she/he make up the entire story? Discuss the various research methods available, including:

Libraries/books/magazines

Internet

Films/television programs

Interviews

- Which of these methods have you used in your own research? Which ones do you think are most effective and why?

- Why is historical research important? What does it teach the writer? What does it teach

the reader?

- Do you think reading historical fiction is a good way to learn about history? Why or why not?
- At the back of the book, there is a timeline. What kinds of information can be found there? Why do you think the author chose to include it? Do you think it is helpful? Why/why not?
- Author's Note: What does this tell us about the origins of this story? Did you like learning about the author's inspiration? Why/why not?