

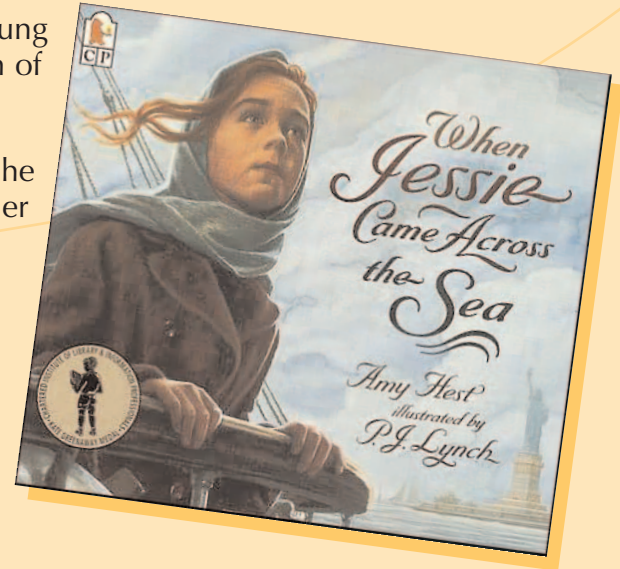
# SCHOOLWIDE BOOK REVIEW

**When Jessie Came Across the Sea by Amy Hest**

Candlewick Press, ISBN: 076361274X

Amy Hest poignantly portrays what it might have been like for a young girl to emigrate from a poor village in Europe to America at the turn of the century. Your students will sympathize immediately with young Jessie and the difficult decision she makes. At her beloved grandmother's urging, Jessie leaves the old woman and everything she holds dear to pursue a new life in New York City where she helps her cousin Kay in her dressmaking shop.

Hest beautifully captures the feeling of being torn from a loved one and a familiar world, and what it might have been like to be transported into an entirely different world full of hard work in a new city of strangers and strange ways. Jessie's skill at making lace, which she learned from her grandmother, is applied at the dress shop with great success. One day, Jessie attaches lace to some white dresses and designs a stunning bridal gown. Customers begin to flock to the store for Jessie's creations!



Intertwined with the story of Jessie's new life is a love story between Jessie and a young shoemaker she meets on the voyage to America and eventually marries. The sadness and loneliness Jessie (and readers) experience initially, give way to excitement and hope for a bright and better future. P.J. Lynch's illustrations vividly convey the emotional range of this tale.

## **In the Classroom**

Explore how a writer can take a nonfiction topic or historical theme and weave a fictional narrative around it like Hest does in the award-winning *When Jessie Came Across the Sea*. This book is a good model for students who desire to write their own narratives based on factual events. Narrative elements of character, dialogue, and plot can be examined and modeled from this text. In addition, students will be motivated to find their own interesting facts from their lives or the lives of their friends and family who may have traveled "across the sea" to start a new life. If your students want to know more about the immigration experience, this book can be used as a touchstone or mentor text for their writing and research.

Use this book for a vocabulary study. For example, students will learn that Jessie prepares for her *journey*, and then they will read about how she stands at the *rail*. The ship pulls away from the *dock* and moves into the *channel*. We find out that she stays on this ship through stormy weather and through her own illness. Many students will have no concept of what the physical toil of a trip like this entails, nor will they have been around water or ships to get a sense of what enduring the elements in such a vessel might be like in foul or fair weather! Upon arrival at Ellis Island, Jesse briefly takes us through the *inspection* that was a common experience for immigrants. The inspection included asking information about each immigrant's background and making sure no diseases were being carried into the country. This book provides the opportunity for students to learn new vocabulary learn new vocabulary that has content-relevancy beyond the pages of the book. After studying vocabulary in this book, when your students begin to learn about related immigration stories in social studies, many words will be familiar.

This versatile text is a great addition to your classroom. Look for *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* as a featured text in our forthcoming Testing Fundamentals Program.