Thanksgiving, observed in the United States on the fourth Thursday of November of each year, had its origins in the state of Massachusetts. The surviving Pilgrims and over 90 members of the Eastern Woodland Tribes (Wampanoag and Patuxet Tribes) celebrated together after the severe winter of 1621. Through the generosity of these Native Americans, the Pilgrims were able to reap a bountiful harvest. They taught the Pilgrims how to plant maize (corn) and to use fish known as alewives for fertilizer. This first Thanksgiving was decreed by then Massachusetts Gov. William Bradford. After this celebration, there were many attempts to formalize the celebration with a specific date.

In the 1800s a woman by the name of Sarah Josepha Hale, then editor of the Boston Ladies’ Magazine, convinced President Abraham Lincoln to designate a day for thanks on the last Thursday of each November.

In 1941 the holiday was officially designated as a national holiday by the U.S. Congress.

Although about the Thanksgiving holiday, the true event in this picture book is the immigrant journey from the “other side,” or as my very own Nana noted, “the old country.”

This picture book depicts a special day from a special perspective. Thanksgiving is the special day and the point of view is that of immigrants to the United States of America. Molly’s mother is from Russia.

**Themes**

The immigrant journey
(Coming to a new country as well as coming to a new school.)
Belonging and trust
Prejudice and mistrust
Narrative

Episodic Structure

The Narrative stage of Molly’s Pilgrim is Interactive. A story is at the Interactive stage if there are at least two episodes, an obstacle for the main character and a character who influences change. There are several episodes in this story and some are embedded within others. The teacher changes the behavior and attitudes of the students in the class, making this story Interactive in nature.

Some kick-offs are “universal,” because they have been encountered by waves of immigrants to this and other countries over the ages. Immigrants’ families, homes, and memories of “the other side” or “the old country” help them, as “first generation” to adjust and fit in to the new land. The feelings and mental states brought about by the Kick-Offs below were common to most of our families as they came to the United States as immigrants.

There are several “universal” Kick-Offs in this picture book:

1. Molly is having trouble with the girls in her new school making fun of her, her looks, and her way of talking. (Immigrant children are often different in their dress, customs and speech.)

2. The new story about Thanksgiving. (Background information on the “American Holiday,” Thanksgiving, is missing on the part of Molly.)

3. The teacher assigns a project to make a Pilgrim for a project to be made at home.

   Her mother makes a Russian Pilgrim Doll out of a clothespin for Molly but it doesn’t look like the one in the book at school. (Language and customs often differ with those of the mainstream culture and text books.)

4. Molly presents her Pilgrim at school. Molly, the girls and the teacher all react to Molly’s Pilgrim. (Teachers often recognize opportunities to empathize with some students as well as teach lessons of life to others.)

Molly experiences several feelings throughout the book. The initiating events (Kick-Offs) are the reasons for the changes of feelings from beginning to end. Many state level tests ask the question:

“How do ____________’s feelings change from the beginning to the end of the story?”

In this picture book it is important to look at Molly’s body language on almost every page.
**Episode #1: Abbreviated Episode**

*Character:* Molly (and her classmates)

*Setting:* Winter Hill

She has to attend school to attain an education, a concept foreign for girls in Russia.

*Kick-Off:* The girls are making fun of the way she looks and speaks.

"Jolly Molly,
Your eyes are awf’ly small.
Jolly Molly,
Your nose is awf’ly tall."

*Internal Response:* She feels very upset. We can find sentences showing her feelings: “When I got to our apartment, I burst into tears. It was all right. I could cry in front of my mother.”

“In this third grade, there aren’t any other Jewish children. I don’t talk like the other girls. They make fun of me. I hate going to school.”

*Mental States:* She knows her mother does not look like the other mothers and hardly talks English at all. When her mother told her she would speak to the teacher about Molly’s problems, Molly said “It’ll be all right.” She knew it wouldn’t be all right, but was concerned about how her mother might appear to the teacher if she went to see her. (inference)

*Plan:* Molly wants the girls to stop but there is no way at present to make that happen. (Inferred from mental state discussion above.)

*Direct Consequence:* As a result, she continues to go to school each day.
Episode #2: Abbreviated Episode

**Character:** Molly and her classmates and teacher

**Setting:** The third grade classroom in November.

**Kick-Off:** Molly's turn to read aloud results in her coming across a word that she does not know. The teacher asks for help and Elizabeth provides the word “Thanksgiving,” adding “I thought everyone knew that.” She snorted: “You don’t even know about Thanksgiving? I guess you people don’t celebrate American Holidays.”

**Internal Response:** Embarrassment and building resentment toward Elizabeth (These comments are examples of how things were not “all right” reflected in Molly's thought communicated by the inferred mental states in following sentences: “I dragged myself back to that school day after day (I knew I had to go to school. Schooling was not available to girls in the old country.) Nothing changed, but I didn’t say another word about it to Mama.” (I realized Mama did not understand the ways of the American School.)

**Direct Consequence:** As a result, Molly continues to read until another student is called upon.

Episode #3: Abbreviated Episode

**Character:** Molly and her mother

**Setting:** At home. As usual, Mama asks Molly if she has any homework.

Molly communicates the facts about the Pilgrim project to be done at home Mama asks Molly to do her homework and offers to make the doll for her later that evening.

Homework is a routine occurrence and would be considered part of the setting in this instance.

**Kick-Off:** Molly sees the Pilgrim in the morning. It is a girl, as requested, but the Pilgrim looks like her mother did when she was a girl, not as the Plymouth Rock Pilgrims.

A colleague of Maryellen’s is a Counseling Psychologist who uses the Critical Thinking Triangle of the Story Grammar Marker® in her sessions with children who are anxious. They often cannot identify the Initiating Event or label it with a feeling. They can, however, tell how their body feels when they experience the anxiety. Molly’s comment about her face feeling “as hot as fire” is indicative of such description.
Internal Response: Molly is shocked and rather dismayed (inferred). Molly managed to compliment her mother’s work. The word “managed” communicated much here. What is Molly thinking when she says this? What is Mama thinking when she says:

“A Pilgrim is someone who came here from the other side to find freedom. That’s me, Molly. I’m a Pilgrim.”?

Plan: To make the best of the situation: “All I could do was take the only one I had to school with me.” (What is Molly thinking and realizing here?)

Direct Consequence: As a result, Molly went to school with the Pilgrim Mama made.

This Direct Consequence, with an addition, becomes the Initiating Event for the next episode, making this an embedded episode. It would not have occurred if the previous episode had not occurred.

The Initiating Event is both the act of taking the Pilgrim to school and also the response of classmates as the teacher inspects each student’s doll: “Elizabeth taunted,” “Elizabeth giggled again,” etc.

Internal Response: “My face felt as hot as fire.” This sentence, in response to the girl classmates initial reaction to the doll. It communicates a physical feeling resulting in a label of embarrassment, resentment, anger, etc.

The expression on Molly’s face in the classroom scene where the teacher is looking at the dolls is indicative of sadness and dejection. (What is Molly thinking here?)

Plan: Molly wants to explain the origin of her Pilgrim to the teacher and the class. This plan shows that Molly has courage.

Attempt: She looked up at the teacher and said “This doll is dressed like Mama. Mama came to America for religious freedom, too. Mama said she’s a Pilgrim.

This Attempt to explain results in a reaction from the students. This reaction is stated in the following sentence:

“Elizabeth hooted. She wasn’t the only one.”

Direct Consequence: Molly’s explanation is the reason for more ridicule.

Notice the teacher’s face as she ponders the classmate response to Molly’s plight.
Episode #5

*Character:* The teacher (Teacher's Perspective).

*Setting:* The classroom where the teacher is observing the intolerance of Molly's classmates. Such intolerance is what the Pilgrims sought to avoid in coming to America.

The teacher's face is indicative of such an observation. Ask the students to contrast the teacher's face, Molly's face and those of the classmates.

*Kick-Off:* The behavior of the classmates and Molly's distress.

*Internal Response:* Miss Stickley communicates her feelings by...

∑ “marching” up to the front of the room
∑ her body language (crossed arms, in front of the classroom)
∑ her loud voice
∑ her salutation to the class: “Listen to me, Elizabeth.” “Listen to me all of you.”

She is distressed about the classmates’ attitude and feels empathy toward Molly.

*Plan:* There is a need to make the classmates understand the true meaning of a Pilgrim.

Her plan is to teach the children a lesson in the true meaning of Thanksgiving and Pilgrims. (What is the teacher thinking?)

*Attempts:* Molly’s mother is a modern Pilgrim.

Explains how the Plymouth Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving. It came from the Bible passage about the Jewish harvest holiday.

Asks Molly to allow her to put Molly's Pilgrim on her (the teacher’s) desk for all to admire.

Miss Stickley asks Molly to invite her mother to come to school to meet her. This demonstrates to the students that the teacher values Molly's mother as a person.

*Direct Consequence:* As a result of her intervention, Miss Stickley accomplishes her plan to help the class understand Molly's plight and the true meaning of “Pilgrims.” Also, Molly begins to see things change. A classmate, Emma, sits near Molly and admires her Pilgrim.

*Summary:*

Often, the task in third grade is to summarize a story of many episodes. A summary can be shown by presenting the Beginning and the End of an episode. However, the Middle (Attempts) has to be represented by a sentence or two discussing the details as a whole.
Thus:
Molly, daughter of immigrants to America, is taunted by her classmates because she is different in looks, speech and in the type of Pilgrim Doll she brought to school. Molly is devastated but knows she is required to go to school.

The teacher, Miss Stickley, noticed the plight of Molly while observing reactions of the students to Molly's different Pilgrim and through a series of actions, helped the class understand the true meaning of the word Pilgrim and was able to help Molly become socially accepted.

Lesson Learned: “It takes all kinds of Pilgrims to make a Thanksgiving.”

Conjunctions: but, when, so
When I got to our apartment...
if, then, where
Where? I’m going to put this beautiful doll on my desk, where everyone can see it all the time.

Mental State Verbs:
As noted in the Episode Analysis above, there are many scenarios where mental state verbs would have to be inferred. The situation is given, but the “thinking process” needs to be identified in discussion.

For example:
Internal Response: Molly is shocked and rather dismayed (inferred). Molly managed to compliment her mother’s work. The word “managed” communicated much here. What is Molly thinking when she says this. What is Mama thinking when she says:

“A Pilgrim is someone who came here from the other side to find freedom.. That’s me, Molly. I’m a Pilgrim.”

Plan: To make the best of the situation: “All I could do was take the only one I had to school with me.” (What is Molly thinking and realizing here?)

One day, who knows, they would have burned us.
I had known right along we couldn’t go back to Russia.
I thought everyone knew that.
(continued)
You don’t even **know** about Thanksgiving? I **guess** you people don’t celebrate American Holidays. I **think** she’s the best so far. Perhaps Molly just didn’t **understand**. Miss Stickley **ignored** Elizabeth. I **searched** for the words to explain. Do you **know** where the Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving? I **knew** that holiday. It will **remind** us all that Pilgrims are still coming to America. I **know**.

*MAny times, planning words are considered mental state verbs:*

I **decided** if Miss Stickley actually invited her, it was alright for Mama to come to school. I **decided** something else, too. I **decided** it takes all kinds of Pilgrims to make a Thanksgiving.

*Elaborated Noun Phrases:*

All her friends, big soft cushion, this third grade, other Jewish children, poor tenement house, this nice apartment, our old house, another word about it, long black corkscrew curls, the sand table at the back of the room, ten arithmetic problems, dark brown yarn, long, full red skirt, tiny black felt boots, bright yellow high necked blouse, yellow kerchief embroidered with red flowers, the Pilgrim woman in the picture in my reading book, little paper bag, people who don’t do their homework, my desk top, a person like that, doll dressed like Mama, her own way, Jewish harvest holiday of Tabernacles, this beautiful doll, most beautiful doll of all

So many feathers, a magnificent headdress. She felt like a big, soft cushion. They have to grow up ignorant like donkeys. My face felt hot as fire. May they grow like onions with their heads in the ground.

*Linguistic Verbs: said, singing, asked, suggested, snapped, interrupted, repeated, snorted, sounded excited, frowned, explain, asked, replied, added, muttered, taunted, sighed, allowed, cried, explained*

*Adverbs: quickly, slowly*
### Word Level

#### One Syllable Words

- aren't
- arms
- asked
- bell
- best
- bet
- blouse
- books
- boots
- boys
- bright
- brown
- burned
- burst
- called
- can't
- changed
- chest
- church
- class
- closed
- course
- cried
- curls
- desks
- dolls
- don't
- dragged
- dressed
- dumb
- eyes
- faced
- far
- Fay
- felt
- friends
- front
- frowned
- full
- fun
- girls
- God
- grade
- gray
- hair
- hands
- hates
- heads
- I'd
- I'll
- I'm
- it's
- Jews
- job
- kinds
- knew
- known
- knows
- last
- late
- laugh
- leaned
- lets
- liked
- looked
- loud
- low
- marched
- meet
- mine
- miss
- most
- mouth
- moved
- need
- nose
- Oi
- our
- page
- peace
- please
- poor
- pulled
- pushed
- raised
- rang
- red
- rich
- row
- rung
- sand
- sat
- searched
- seats
- seemed
- seen
- set
- shared
- she'd
- she'll
- she's
- shook
- show
- sighed
- silk
- since
- sing
- skirt
- small
- smile
- snapped
- soft
- song
- speak
- stare
- sticks
- still
- such
- sure
- takes
- talked
- tall
- tears
- that's
- they're
- third
- true
- turned
- voice
- we'll
- were
- what's
- word
- works
- yarn
- York
- you'd
- yours

#### Two Syllable Words

- added
- ago
- ahead
- aisle
- allowed
- announced
- answer
- any
- Arthur
- awf'ly
- began
- begin
- Bible
- bother
- Brodsky
- cardboard
- carried
- city
- clothespins
- coming
- corkscrew
- Cossacks
- couldn't
- covered
- cushion
- daughters
- didn't
- different
- doesn't
- donkeys
- during
- either
- Emma
- empty
- English
- explain
- feathers
- flowers
- followed
- freedom
- giggled
- going
- goodness
- gorgeous
- hadn't
- halfway
- handed
- harvest
- haven't
- headdress
- Hilda
- homework
- hooted
- houses
- idea
- ignored
- it'll
- Jewish
- jolly
- kerchief
- Kitty
- later
- lovely
- Mama
- managed
- matter
- Michael
- model
- modern
- Molly
- mothers
- Mr.
- murmur
- muttered
- myself
- nodded
- onions
- opened
- papa
- people
- perfect
- perhaps
- person
- Pilgrims
- Plymouth
- pointed
- Polish
- problems
- pumpkin
- purpose
- reading
- recess
- remind
- replied
- Russia
- Russian
- Sally
- saying
- schoolyard
- several
- Shaynkeit
- shoulder
- slowly
- snorted
- sounded
- started
- Stickley
- stumble
- Sukkos
- taken
- taunted
- teacher
- teasing
- tiny
- title
- tonight
- tossing
- turkeys
- village
- walking
- wasn't
- without
- worship
- yellow
- Yiddish
Three Syllable Words

admired       anyone       apartment       beautiful       celebrate
decided       embroidered  excited         factory         Goraduk
holiday       ignorant     Indians         invited         Malkeleh
November      peppermint   photograph      religions       repeated
satisfied     sentences    September       suggested       Synagogue
tenement      terrible      Thanksgiving    thirty-two      tomorrow
understand    whispering

Four Syllable Words

Actually       America       American       arithmetic      celebrating
decorating     Elizabeth     especially      exercises       interesting
interrupted    naturally     magnificent    Massachusetts   Paskudnyaks
Tabernacles

Sentence Level

Repeating Sentences:

All the sentences chosen require the student to use different tones of voice. Some are taunting, others are soothing, still others require a lamenting tone. The narrative is told in the first person making the following sentences very personal. For some you may want to incorporate the use of body language appropriate to the sentence as well as tone of voice and word repetition. In order to use the appropriate tone of voice and body language, previous sentences (in italics) should be read to set the mood.

“I didn’t like the school in Winter Hill. In Winter Hill, they laughed at me.”
“Elizabeth laughed most of all.” (5 words)
(The word “laughed” gives a clue.)

“I don’t talk like the other girls. They make fun of me.”
“I hate going to school.” (5 words)
(A comment made in the safety of her mother’s embrace.)

“It’ll be all right,” I said. “I’ll talk to Miss Stickley myself.”
But of course I didn’t. (5 words)
(This is one of Molly’s thoughts concerning a talk with the teacher.)

“Thanksgiving?” I repeated. “Thanksgiving? What’s Thanksgiving?”
Elizabeth snorted. “You don’t even know about Thanksgiving? (6 words)
(The linguistic verb “snorted” gives a clue. Also, the character saying the comment gives a clue as to the tone.)

“This doll is dressed like Mama,” I explained slowly.”
“Mama came to America for religious freedom, too.” (8 words)
(The linguistic verb and adverb “explained slowly” give clues.)
“I’m going to put this beautiful doll on my desk,” Miss Stickley announced, “where everyone can see it all the time.”

“It will remind us all that Pilgrims are still coming to America.” (12 words)

(Since the teacher makes this comment, a “teacher tone” should be used.)

**Word Level**

Use the bolded sentences above and ask the students to count the number of words using a strip of graph paper and a pencil. Each word of a particular sentence would get a sequential check in a box along one horizontal line on the grid.

Allow enough lines to skip one between the sentences. Be sure that there are at least 12 boxes per line to accommodate the longest sentence.

**Word Parts (Morphology) Activity**

Read the words, one at a time, from the One Syllable list. Tell the students that the focus will be verbs in the list with the past tense morphological marker /ed/.

Provide an example: called. Call is a verb and /ed/ makes it past tense.

Ask the students to write the /ed/ on a small card. Each time they hear a word with the /ed/ at the end, they hold up their cards. Record the verbs on the board or chart paper.

As an extension, you may want to ask the students to look at the written words on the board or chart paper. Ask them to work in pairs and say the words to determine whether the /ed/ makes a /t/ or a /d/ sound at the end of the word. They may connect speech to print by folding a paper in half lengthwise and writing /d/ and /t/ at the top of each column and writing their responses in the appropriate column. Drawing attention to phonological changes such as these, sharpens students’ phonemic awareness.

The concept of voicing could be heightened through this activity by having the students feel the sound as they articulate the word, having their hands atop their larynx:

/d/

burned called changed closed dragged frowned leaned
moved pulled raised seemed shared sighed

/t/

asked dressed faced looked marched pushed searched
Phoneme Level

Ask the students to listen to the present tense of the verbs from the lists on the previous page from which you separated the onset from the rime.

*Say:* /c/ all (with a pause between the onset and rime)

Then ask the students to say the word the fast way:

<table>
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</table>

If you wish, you could ask the students to identify the final sound in each word. For instance, in the word “raise,” the final sound is /z/ (a voiced consonant). In the word “push,” the final sound is /sh/ (a voiceless consonant…also known as a diagraph!)

See map on page 96.

**List:** Types of building
- apartment
- tenement
- synagogue
- house

**Cause/Effect:**

*Kick-Off:* behaviors of third grade girls in Winter Hill
*Effect:* Molly didn't feel that she “fit in”

**List:** Behaviors
- name calling
- criticism of school work
- singing of derogatory song

**Problem/Solution:**

*Character:* Molly and her mother and family
*Setting:* United States of America.
*Kick-Off:* Molly's family could not worship as they wished in Russia.
*Internal Response:* They felt distressed but hopeful.
*Plan:* So they decided to come to America for freedom of religion and a better life.
*Attempt:* First they came to New York City.
*Attempt:* Then they moved to better living conditions in Winter Hill.

(*Molly’s Pilgrim* takes place at this point of the family’s immigrant journey to America)
The immigrant journey is so much a part of the cultural histories of all ethnic
groups in the United States. We are a nation of immigrants coming to America
in search of freedoms, religious and otherwise. Historically, the immigrants, as
well as the children of immigrant parents, face many adversities as they make
their way in American society.

This book has an intergenerational connection. While reading it, connections
between the text as well as the current lives and memories of those reading it
can be made. The role of the teacher in Molly’s Pilgrim underscores the impor-
tance of creating community, understanding and empathy within our schools.
The teacher’s facial expressions and comments throughout the book give clues
to her growing desire to teach valuable life lessons.
They could not worship as they wished in Russia...

So they decided to come to America.

First, they came to NYC, then, they moved to better living conditions in Winter Hill.

Molly’s Feelings

behaviors of third-grade girls in Winter Hill caused Molly to feel that she didn’t “fit in”

Molly’s Family

They could not worship as they wished in Russia...

So they decided to come to America.

First, they came to NYC, then, they moved to better living conditions in Winter Hill.