

## ***Fiona's Lace***

Written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco

Patricia Polacco shares the immigration story of her great-great-grandmother Fiona and how a timeless family tradition saved their lives and is still honored in their family today.

Trigger warning: This story highlights the journey of an immigrant family to America as domestic servants. With acknowledgment that not everyone came to this country of their own free will or received a welcome similar to what is described in the story, this is the experience of some, and their stories are also worthy of being shared.

### **Strategy Instruction Possibilities**

#### **Comprehension**

- Set purpose for reading: Readers increase their focus, engagement, and comprehension when they decide why they are reading the text.
  - March: Irish American Heritage Month, celebrating the achievements and contributions of Irish Americans to the United States.
    - March 17: Irish Heritage Day
  - June: Immigrant Heritage Month, honoring the contributions of immigrants to the United States and celebrating their profound impact.
- Back up and reread: When meaning breaks down, going back and rereading can help readers understand the meaning of the selection and/or words or parts that didn't make sense.
  - "While reading, you might find yourself becoming confused or missing the meaning of the text. At this point, you would back up and reread a section to gain clarity before continuing the story."
- Use prior knowledge to predict and connect with text: Readers bring what they already know from their experiences with the topic, type of text, and purpose for reading to connect with what they are reading. This increases their understanding of the text and helps them anticipate what will happen next.
  - This text highlights the traditions of an Irish family. Before reading, ask students to think about their family or friendship traditions that are passed down as an act of love.
  - "The mother of this family teaches the daughters how to make her lace pattern. What's a skill you've learned from someone you love that you can carry with you when you are older?"
  - "The family ventures out to America for a new opportunity. Have you ever moved to a new city, state, or country? Do you remember how you felt going to someplace new?"
  - "The Hughes family traveled to America using a horse and wagon, steamer (boat), and train. What forms of transportation have you used to travel to different places? What was it like for you?"
  - "The family traveled a long way to their new home, which wasn't exactly what they were expecting. Many things weren't exactly what they expected. Can you

think of a time when you experienced something new that didn't meet your expectations?"

- "The grown-ups in this family work two jobs, one during the day and one at night. Do you know anyone who works more than one job?"
- After-reading reflection/connection questions:
  - "Fiona and Ailish quickly gathered their things and ran when they learned about the fire. What do you think about their exit strategy? How would you respond to a fire?"
  - "Fiona used the lace in an unexpected way, similar to how their mom did when making a trail home. Think of a time you could use something you love in an unexpected way."

### **Expand Vocabulary**

- Tune in to interesting words: Readers build word awareness and understanding by focusing on words that are interesting and unique in the text. This author writes using the vernacular of their family from Ireland, and some of the language usage will need context to comprehend.
  - A few words from the text to consider: *Limerick, Ireland; depended; textile mill; chirped; blazed; parlor; contract; domestic servant; homestead; wearily; conductor; Lake Michigan; frocks; flat; shabby; rickety; levying; muttered; slaughterhouse; posh; Mass; and All Hallows' Eve*