



## On-line Lessons

# “Imagine That!”

Immigration &  
Communities  
Grades K-8

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### Question:

When people share stories of their lives, they are called oral histories.

They can tell about neighborhoods long ago, and where people went in their communities to try to do things.

If you listened to someone's descriptions of where they went in their neighborhood, could you imagine what it looked like.

### Try This:

Have someone read oral history stories from Gemma Cacciolfi, who moved to Schenectady from Italy when she was eight years old. Use the following page to draw a picture or make a collage of Gemma doing something from her story in her neighborhood.

### Ask these questions:

- Where are some of the places she went as a child? Imagine being Gemma in her new neighborhood.
- Where are the places you go to in your neighborhood to shop, play, and learn?
- Where else do you go to do things with your family or your friends?

### More to Explore:

Explore the Shaping Schenectady exhibit at the museum to find pictures that show us how the community looked long ago when Gemma was a girl.

### Things to Think About

People who are special to you can tell you stories about what they did and where they lived when they were a child like you. Ask them what they liked to do and where they went in their neighborhood.

Can you draw a picture of their story? Can you video tape or do an audio tape of your interview?

### Fun Facts

Every adult was once a kid just like you - BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

### People:

Alex Haley, a famous writer listened to and recorded many hours of stories to find out about his ancestors that were only passed from one generation to the next by storytelling. His book was entitled "Roots."

### What's This All About?

Oral history, family history, communities and storytelling.

### Web Links for More Information

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/immigrat/seymour/chap1.htm>

## **Gemma Cacciolfi**

The following excerpts are from the researcher's log of a taped conversation with a lifelong community resident of the Front Street neighborhood of Schenectady, New York. The excerpts relate the experiences of an Italian immigrant named Gemma Cacciolfi who came from a farm outside Naples, Italy and moved to Schenectady in 1938, as an eight year old girl.

Note: The researcher is TC, the immigrant is GC.

### **STORY ONE**

*TC says the neighborhood was very strongly Italian, though Polish people were here too.  
Did GC feel it was more Italian? GC says*

"I did, because that's all we hung around with was the Italian families. You know, across the street from us were Italians, on the other side of use were Italians. So when we came from Italy, we relied on those kids to help us, because they all spoke Italian too. So we didn't feel out of place. They were able to help us. To go to school, they used to take us to school with them and everything. So that helped. But there was more Polish people too. I said, we happened to be Italian, so we hung around with the Italian kids."

### **STORY TWO**

*TC asks about GC's first impression of the neighborhood, having come from Italy.  
GC says she really liked it, but her sister did not.*

"My sister didn't like it. She's the one that wanted to fo back to Italy. She ran away a couple of times, because she didn't want to stay here ... she just missed home. Italy was home to her, even though my mother was here. But Italy was home. But like I say, we came in an Italian community, we had all these Italian friends. So I didn't really miss, I didn't miss Italy at all. Cause I had more friends here than we did in Italy, really."

### **STORY THREE**

*TC asks what they brought with them.*

"Yea, we had a trunk filled with, mostly clothes, and uh, bedding. You know, tablecloths and napkins, that my mother had brought from Italy. And that's it ... somebody had made them for her, or she made some herself. And she wanted to keep them."

### **STORY FOUR**

*GC talks about social life*

"...Every Saturday night we'd meet at someone's house. Most of the time it was ours, because our father made wine, he played the accordion, people used to like to sing... that's one thing we did bring from Italy, though, was that accordion. That's one thing that was in that trunk, that my mother brought over. So it's still in the family."

GC says her brother has the accordion.

**Using this square, make a drawing or a collage for one of the stories.**



**My Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Story** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

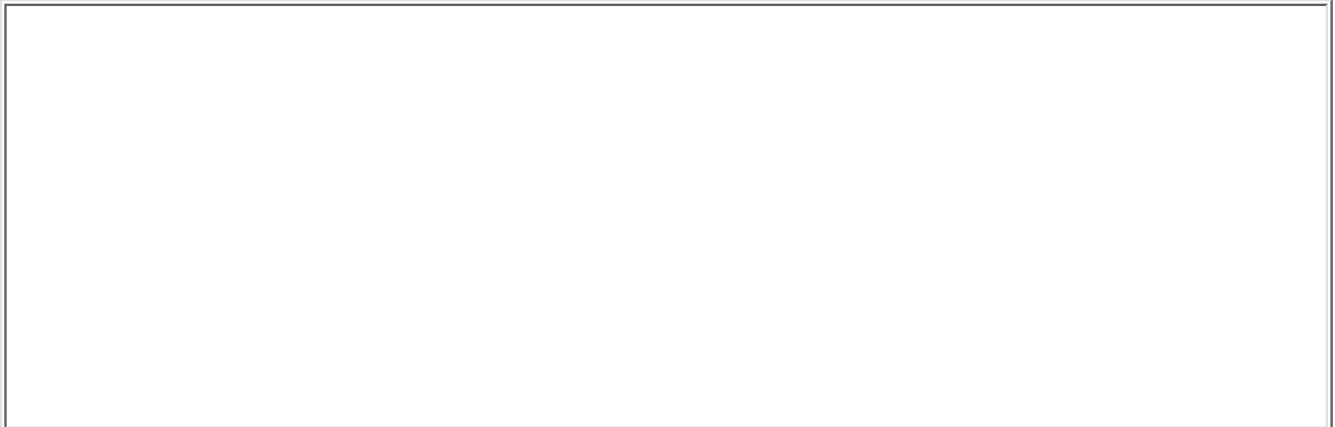
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**Using this square, make a drawing or a collage for one of the stories.**



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