

A Place Called Galveston

By Andrea Shapiro | Illustrated by Valerya Milovanova

READING GUIDE

About the Book

Highlighting an underrepresented part of Jewish-American history, this poetic nonfiction picture book tells the collective stories of the immigrants who came through the port of Galveston, Texas in captivating prose.

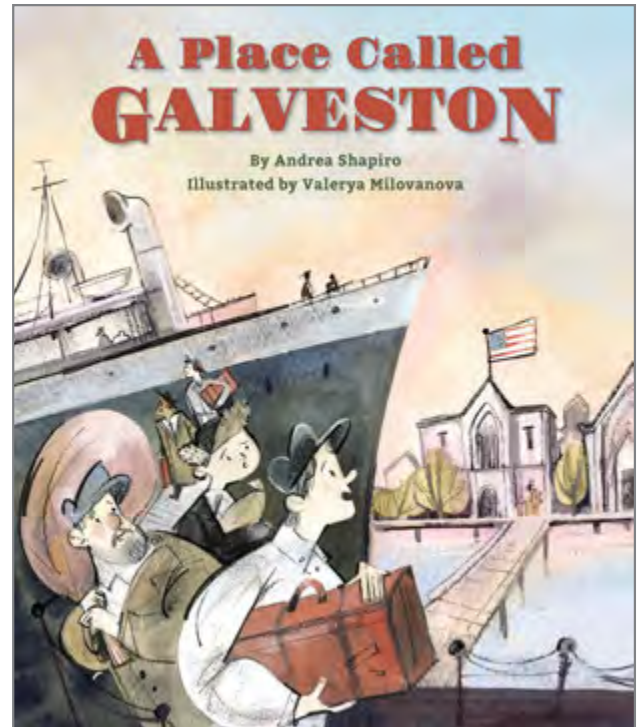
In the early 20th century, thousands of Jews escaped antisemitic Russia to immigrate to the U.S. They faced long journeys across oceans, often leaving family behind. But they didn't arrive at Ellis Island, as many others had. They were welcomed instead through the port of Galveston, Texas, on the Gulf Coast.

Galveston had sweet air and wide-open space. The newcomers built temporary communities, havens of people offering help, food, and shelter, to ease the loneliness and fear of a new country with a new language. And then they ventured into the vast Midwest searching for jobs and safer futures.

In an end note, the author shares her family's story of coming to America from Russia and further details the history of Jewish immigration, the organizations that helped facilitate the journeys, and how Galveston became a popular port.

Andrea Shapiro writes children's literature with a focus on narrative nonfiction and historical fiction, including *Two Thousand Miles to Happy*. Andrea also co-writes musical theater with her husband, including *Commedia Las Vegas* and *Party at the Parthenon*. She lives outside Washington D.C.

Valerya Milovanova, originally from Russia, moved to the UK for university and graduated from the University of Hertfordshire in illustration and graphic design. She is a proud participant of the MORS Illustration Festival 2023 and her children's picture book, *I Am Upset*, was shortlisted for the Batsford Prize and the Unpublished Picturebook showcase. She lives in Hatfield, UK.



Key Themes:

Immigration, the American Dream, Antisemitism, 20th Century Jewish-American History

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Ages 6–8 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- Read the title out loud and look carefully at the cover illustration. Have you ever heard of Galveston? What country do you think Galveston is in? Why do you think so?
- Look at the faces of the people on the cover, and what they are wearing and carrying. What emotions do you think they are feeling? Why do you think they might be having those feelings?
- Look at the endpapers - the artwork before the story starts. It shows a map, arrows, and the names of two places. What does that art tell you about what the story might be about?

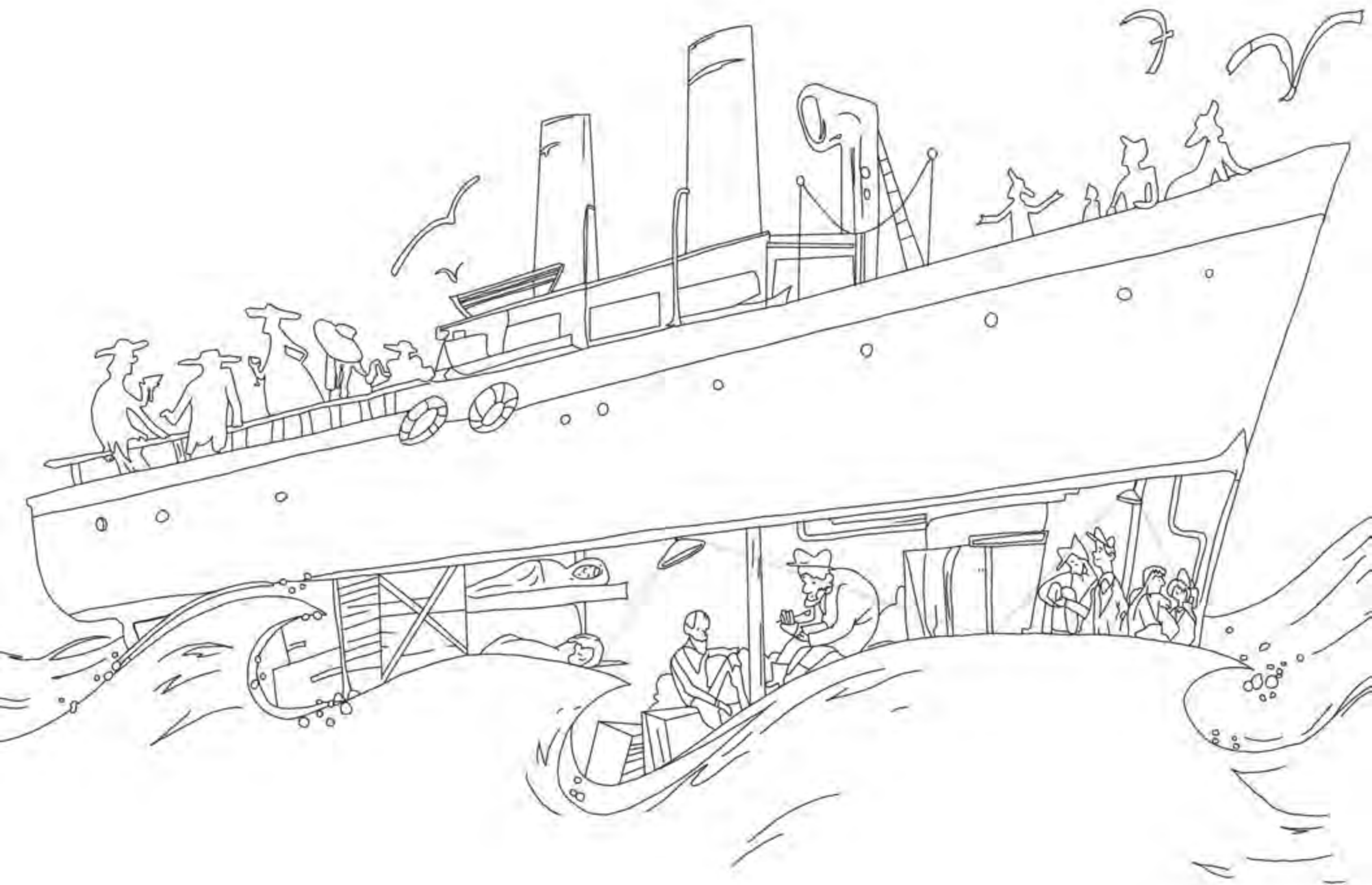
After Reading

- The last page of the book explains that this story takes place in the early 1900s. Think about what you know about how people lived in those years. In what ways do you think their lives were different than yours? In what ways do you think they were the same?
- The book explains that the people who left Russia had to leave without their family or friends. It also says they were separated for "two years or four, maybe more". Have you ever spent time away from your family and friends? How long were you apart? How did you stay in touch?
- Rabbi Henry Cohen and others helped the new arrivals. In what ways did they help them? Why do you think they chose to help the immigrants?
- At the end of the story, it says that the new arrivals found the "American Dream." What do you think that means? How do you think they would describe the "American Dream?"

Optional: Extension Activity

Invite a person you know who came to the United States from somewhere else, or whose family (like their grandparents or great-grandparents) came from somewhere else to share their story with you. Ask them:

- What country did they or their family come from?
- Why did they choose to leave that place?
- Why did they choose to come to the United States and not a different country?
- When they arrived in America, what kind of work did they do? Where did they live?
- Were there people who helped them? If yes, in what ways?





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Character Cut Outs

