

# WE CAME TO AMERICA

Faith Ringgold

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Vibrant illustrations and lyrical words celebrate the rich diversity of America and the people who have come here from around the world, bringing their music, stories, dances, food, and fashion. Some people were already here, while others came in chains or fled from danger and injustice. As the book concludes, however people came to be here, "We are all Americans, just the same."

## NOTE TO EDUCATORS

*We Came to America* fits well in curriculum units about immigration, emphasizing the reasons people came to this country and what they have contributed. At the same time, it speaks to the world refugee crisis that saw more than 900,000 people seeking refuge in Europe in 2015. Depending on the age of your students, this could be a timely discussion topic that ties into *We Came to America*.


## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Why do people today want to come from other countries to live in the United States? Why did they want to come in the past?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

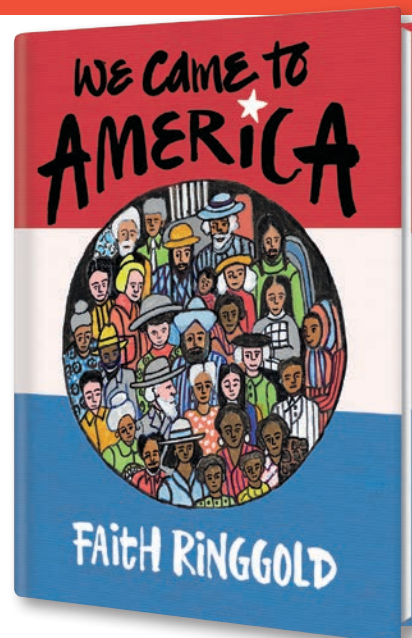
1. The book shows that people have come to America from around the world for different reasons. Find reasons in the text, and then add thoughts of your own on the topic.
2. What does the book show that people brought with them? If you were moving to another country, what would you want to take with you?
3. What forms of transportation are shown or mentioned? What are other ways people arrive in America? Share stories you've read or heard about immigrants and how they traveled here. If you moved to the United States from another country, how did you travel?
4. Others "came running/From injustice, fear, and pain." What is *injustice*? Why would it motivate people to leave their country? Share any examples you know of people who came to America because of problems in the country they left.
5. Some people were "brought in chains/Losing our freedom and our names." Who are these people? How did they lose their freedom and names? Compare them to others in the book who chose to move to America, and discuss how each group might have felt.

 Correlates to Common Core Standards for Reading Literature: K-2.1, K-2.2, K-2.3, K-2.4

## ACTIVITIES

### Looking Closely

Assign pairs of students a two-page spread from the book to study closely. They should discuss or write down everything they can glean from the words and pictures, including details as basic as the colors and shapes used. Then have each pair report back to the class on what they observed. Talk as a class about what illustrations add to picture books. Read the text aloud without showing the pictures and have students discuss that experience.



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### Tell Me More

Have each student choose a page and compose a story about the person or people on the page, imagining where they might be from, why they left, and what their new life is like. This can be written by the student or dictated to the teacher. Create a bulletin board of these stories and have students discuss where they got their ideas.

### From Around the World


Have the class collect stories and songs from around the world. This could mean finding folktales and songs in the library or online, or bringing them from home, including family stories related to their heritage. Have them share the stories, either by telling them or reading the book version aloud. If possible, have the class learn at least one of the songs to sing together.

### My Favorite Part

After reading the book aloud, have students spend some time re-reading or looking through it again. Then have them write or dictate the answer to the prompt, "I like the part when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." Have them share their answers in small groups and discuss the book in more detail.

### Endpaper Inspiration

Colorful decorations on the endpapers correspond to shapes found throughout the book. Have students find those connections, and then draw and color their own original decorations inspired by Faith Ringgold's art. Use them to decorate a display or bulletin board.

 Correlates to Common Core Standards for Reading Literature: K-2.1, K-2.7; Speaking & Listening: K-2.1, K-2.5; Writing: K-2.3, K-2.7