

Irving Berlin: A New Home, A Lasting Contribution

Grade Levels: 3-5

Duration: One class period (approximately 40-50 minutes)

Note: Optional Texas Extension is not included in this time.

Master Text / Core Resource

God Bless America: The Story of an Immigrant Named Irving Berlin by Adah Nuchi, illustrated by Rob Polivka

Lesson Key Concept

People come from different places, and individuals can contribute to their communities in meaningful and lasting ways.

Theme Connection (Character / Behavior Focus)

Belonging, fairness, contribution

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TEKS Alignment

Grade 3

Social Studies: 3.2A, 3.4B

ELAR: 3.6E, 3.7C

Grade 4 (Texas History emphasis)

Social Studies: 4.2.A, 4.14A, 4.15B

ELAR: 4.6.E, 4.7.C

Grade 5

Social Studies: 5.2.A, 5.25D

ELAR: 5.6.E, 5.7.C

Station Connection Note (Teacher Planning)

This lesson may be used as a standalone read-aloud lesson or integrated into a station within the Jewish American Heritage Month Station Experience. Use the guidance below to determine the most appropriate placement. It is recommended that this lesson be paired with a Foundational Connection or a Strong Connection.

Connection Key

- Foundational Connection: Best fit for this lesson
- Strong Connection: Clear alignment to station goals
- Supporting Connection: Indirect or partial alignment

- Not a Primary Pairing: Not recommended for this grade band

Station Pairing Guidance (ordered from strongest to weakest)

- **Jewish American Stories (Foundational Connection):** This lesson focuses on Irving Berlin as an American whose music became part of American life.
- **Jewish Culture Today (Strong Connection):** Students analyze how music can shape and reflect American culture over time.
- **Jewish Traditions (Not a Primary Pairing):** This lesson does not focus on traditions or practices.
- **Standing Against Antisemitism (Supporting Connection):** This lesson includes a clear and accurate reference to antisemitism as a reason Irving Berlin's family left Russia. This supports students' understanding of immigration and historical context, but it is not the central focus of the lesson.

Caution for Teachers: This is a supporting connection. Teach it clearly at the moment it appears, but do not expand beyond what is needed for context.

Framing Context / Teacher Notes

Irving Berlin came immigrated to the United States from Russia as a child and became one of the most influential songwriters in American history. His work, including "God Bless America" and *White Christmas*, reflecting both his personal experiences and his connection to his new country.

This lesson focuses on:

- Immigration and new beginnings
- How personal experiences influence contributions
- How one individual work can reach a national audience

Jewish identity should be introduced as part of who Irving Berlin was.

Teacher Language Support: Jewish Identity (Use as Needed)

If students ask questions, teachers can respond using simple, factual language and then return to the lesson focus.

- "Jewish people are a group of people who share traditions, history, and holidays.
- "Being Jewish can be about family, traditions, community, and religion."

Teacher Note: This lesson is not teaching religious beliefs or practices. It is helping students understand that being Jewish is one part of Irving Berlin's identity.

Grade 4 Note (Texas Connection): An optional Texas connection is included at the end of this lesson. Teachers may choose to briefly introduce Frances Rosenthal Kallison to reinforce that contributions occur at both national and local levels.

Timing Note: The extension is optional and does not count toward the total lesson time. It may be used as an add-on if time allows, as a standalone mini-lesson, or as a follow-up on second day to deepen understanding.

Teacher Materials / Resources (Prepare Before Teaching)

- Book: *God Bless America: The Story of an Immigrant Named Irving Berlin* by Adah Nuchi, illustrated by Rob Polivka
- Audio or video clip of Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America” (*YouTube or school-approved source – always prescreen*)
[YouTube: Irving Berlin "God Bless America" on the Ed Sullivan Show](#)
or [YouTube: Sing-Along: “God Bless America” by Irving Berlin \(Kate Smith\)](#)
- Device for audio or video playback (computer, speakers)
- Printed or displayed lyrics to “God Bless America”
- (Optional) Map Visual (Russia → United States)
- (Optional) Image of Irving Berlin
- (Optional) Image of Francis Rosenthal Kallison (if using extension)
- (Optional) Chart paper or board space for comparison activity (if using extension)

Student Materials

- Student worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*
- Pencil
- Optional extension chart: Two Paths of Contribution (if using extension)
- Optional structured drawing template (if using extension)

Enduring Understanding

Individuals from different backgrounds shape communities through their ideas, talents, leadership, and contributions.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- I can identify why Irving Berlin left his home country.
- I can explain how his experiences influenced what he created.
- I can analyze why his song mattered to people across the country.
- I can evaluate what his story shows about belonging in the United States.

Lesson Steps

Step 1: Hook (Opening Activity: 3-5 minutes)

Materials Used: Audio/Video clip of Irving Berlin's God Bless America

[YouTube: Irving Berlin "God Bless America" on the Ed Sullivan Show](#)
or [YouTube: Sing-Along: "God Bless America" by Irving Berlin \(Kate Smith\)](#)

Printed or displayed lyrics

Teacher Directions:

- Display or distribute lyrics
- Play approximately one minute of the song
- Students follow along

Ask:

- "What message does this song communicate?"
- "Which words or phrases stand out to you?"
- "Why might this song matter to people?"

Teacher Moves

- Turn and talk
- Pick only one question for students to explore
- Call on 2-3 students
- Push students to reference specific words from the lyrics in their responses

Instructional Note: Providing the lyrics supports comprehension and allows students to move beyond general impressions to text-based observations, strengthening analysis later in the lesson.

Step 2: Link to Learning (Read Aloud: 2-3 minutes)

Materials Used:

- (Optional) Map Visual (Russia → United States)
- (Optional) Image of Irving Berlin

Teacher Script:

"Today we are learning about Irving Berlin. He was born in Russia and moved to the United States as a child. He was Jewish, which is part of his identity."

Turn and Talk: "What are some reasons people move to a new place?"

Step 3: Read-Aloud / Core Engagement (15-20 minutes)

Materials Used:

Book: *God Bless America: The Story of an Immigrant Named Irving Berlin* by Adah Nuchi, illustrated by Rob Polivka

Purpose: Students explain how Irving Berlin’s experiences shaped his life, analyzed the impact of his work, and evaluate what his story shows about belonging.

Teacher Planning Note:

Plan stopping points in advance.

You do not need to use every pause during the read-aloud. Choose 3-4 key pauses based on your time and your students’ needs

Prioritize these pauses:

Pause 1: Introduces antisemitism and context

Pause 2: Builds cause and impact

Pause 4: Pushes purpose

Pause 6: Highest-level thinking

Use additional pauses only if time allows or if students need more support.

Before Reading:

“As we read, we are focusing on how Irving Berlin’s experiences shaped what he created and why his work mattered.”

Read-Aloud Pause and Prompt Chart

Pause	Thinking Level (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	Student-Facing Question	Teacher Clarification (Say to Students)
1	Explain	“Why did Irving Berlin’s family leave Russia?”	“Jewish people in Russia were often treated unfairly and were not always safe. This is called antisemitism. This is one reason families chose to leave.”
2	Explain → Analyze	“How might moving to a new country have shaped Irving Berlin’s?”	“Moving to a new country can change a person’s opportunities and daily life.”
3	Explain → Analyze	“What did Irving Berlin learn to do, and how did his life experiences help him?”	“He became a songwriter, and his experiences may have helped shape his ideas.”

4	Analyze	“Why do you think he wrote ‘God Bless America’?”	“What in the story makes you think that?” “How does that connect to his experiences?”
5	Analyze	“Why did so many people connect to this song?”	“The song talks about ideas many people share, like caring about their country and feeling connected to others.”
6	Evaluate	“What does Irving Berlin’s story show us about belonging?”	“Think about what happened in his life and what he contributed. Use that to explain what belonging means in this example.” “What does belonging look like based on his experience?”

Transition to Processing Protocol Activity (1-2 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Now we are going to think about what we learned. We will use our process: Read, Think, Talk, Write using evidence. Using evidence means you find a part of the story or the song that supports your thinking. This is not about getting one right answer. It’s about explaining your thoughts and showing where you got your idea from. When you write, make sure you:

- Answer the question
- Use something from the story of song
- Explain your thinking”

Optional Quick Check (10-15 seconds)

“What are the three parts your answer needs?”

Students respond: Answer, Evidence, Explanation

Step 4: Processing Protocol (10-15 minutes)

Grade 3-5: Read – Think – Talk – Write Using Evidence

Purpose: Students explain how Irving Berlin's experiences influenced what he created, analyze why “God Bless America” mattered to people, and write a short response using evidence from the story or song.

Teacher Note: About Read – Think – Talk – Write Using Evidence

This lesson uses a structured routine called Read – Think – Talk – Write Using Evidence to

help students move from discussion to written explanation.

This protocol:

- breaks thinking into clear steps
- gives every student time to think and speak before writing
- prepares students to write with evidence
- supports short constructed response skills

Using evidence means students find a moment from the story or song that supports their thinking. This is not about finding one “right” answer. It is about making a clear interpretation and showing where that idea came from.

Teacher Guidance: Keep each step brief and guided. This is not fully independent work. Students should use the read-aloud, lyrics, partner discussion, and board notes to build a stronger written response.

Students complete this activity using the **student worksheet**, which follows the Read → Think → Talk → Write Using Evidence process.

All questions and writing are completed on the worksheet.

The worksheet is the primary tool for this step.

Materials Used:

- Student worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*
- Pencil
- Printed or displayed lyrics “God Bless America”
- Board or chart paper for class notes

Teacher Script (Brief Recap):

“We are going to think about what we learned step by step. Irving Berlin left Russia because Jewish people were not always treated fairly or safely there. He came to the United States, became a songwriter, and wrote ‘God Bless America.’ Now we are going to explain why his song mattered using evidence from the story or the song.”

Read – Think – Talk – Write Using Evidence Routine Chart

Step	Teacher Moves / Support	What Students Do (Purpose of the Step)
Read	Say: “We are going back to the story and song to find evidence.” Briefly review key ideas from the read-aloud and display the lyrics. Point students to the text/lyrics and say: “Evidence is a part of the story or song that supports your thinking.”	Revisit key ideas from the story and song. Look for a moment, detail, word, or phrase that connects to the question.

Think	Display the questions: “Why did Irving Berlin write ‘God Bless America’?” “Why did the song matter to people?” “What does his story show about belonging?” Give quiet thinking time. Say: “Before you talk, choose one idea and one piece of evidence that supports it.”	Think quietly. Choose an idea and evidence from the story or song.
Talk	Students turn and talk using this frame: “I think ... because ...” Call on 2-3 students. Record strong ideas on the board in two columns: Idea and Evidence	Share ideas with a partner. Practice explaining their thinking with evidence.
Write Using Evidence	Say: “Now you will write your response. Your answer should include three parts: Answer, Evidence, Explanation.” Point to board notes and lyrics.	Write a short-constructed response using evidence.

Teacher Moves During the Protocol

- Direct students to the worksheet questions
- Direct students back to the text or lyrics for evidence
- Record 2-3 strong ideas on the board only as support (not as the answer)
- Circulate and prompt:
 - “What part of the story supports that?”
 - “Can you explain your thinking more clearly?”
 - “How does that connect to his experience?”

Student Task

Students complete the worksheet.

Teacher Expectation

Student responses must include a clear response to the question, evidence from the story or song, and an explanation of how the evidence supports their thinking.

Transition to Step 5 (1-2 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Now that you have used evidence to explain your thinking on your worksheet, we are going back to the song. This time, you will listen and look more closely at the words to understand why people connected to it.”

Step 5: Apply the Learning (5-8 minutes)

Purpose: Students connect Irving Berlin's experiences, the lyrics of the song, and its meaning for others.

Materials Used:

Audio/Video clip of Irving Berlin's God Bless America

[YouTube: Irving Berlin "God Bless America" on the Ed Sullivan Show](#)

or [YouTube: Sing-Along: "God Bless America" by Irving Berline \(Kate Smith\)](#)

Printed or displayed lyrics to "God Bless America"

Teacher Directions: Display the lyrics again. Replay a selected portion of the song or reread key lines.

Teacher Says: "Listen carefully and follow along. Look for words or lines that help explain how Irving Berlin felt about the United States and why people connected to this song."

Ask:

- "Which words or lines show how Irving Berline felt about the United States?"
- "How do those words connect to his life experiences?"
- "Why might people across the country have connected to this song?"

Teacher Moves

- Require students to reference specific words or lines
- Push students to connect lyrics back to Irving Berlin's experiences
- Ask students to explain their thinking

If students struggle, guide with:

- "Look for words that show care, pride, or connection."
- "Think about his move to the United States."
- "How might those words feel to someone starting a new life?"

Exit Ticket (Measure Understanding of SLOs) (3-5 minutes)

Students complete the final question on their worksheet or respond to a short prompt provided by the teacher.

Prompt

"What does Irving Berlin's story show about belonging?"

Expectation

Students should include:

- A clear answer
- One idea from the story or song
- A brief explanation

Closing Statement (Reinforce the Learning) (1-2 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Irving Berlin came to the United States as a child and used his experiences to create music that many people connected to. His story shows that people from different backgrounds can contribute in meaningful ways and help shape the communities they belong to.”

Formative Assessment (Ongoing Check for Understanding)

Teachers should monitor student understanding throughout the lesson using the following:

- During Read-Aloud
 - Student responses during pauses
 - Ability to explain why Irving Berlin's family left Russia
 - Ability to connect experiences to outcomes
- During Processing Protocol
 - Students use the worksheet appropriately
 - Students identify relevant evidence
 - Students connect evidence to their ideas
 - Students follow Answer → Evidence → Explanation
- During Apply the Learning
 - Students reference lyrics directly
 - Students connect lyrics to Irving Berlin's life
 - Students explain why the song mattered

Teacher Look-Fors

Students understand that:

- Irving Berlin's family left Russia because Jewish people were not always safe or treated fairly
- His experiences influenced what he created
- His song mattered because people connected to it
- Belonging includes contributing to and connecting with others

Differentiation and Extensions

Important Note

Differentiation and extensions should be developed by the educator unless they are explicitly included in this lesson.

Differentiation

- Provide sentence stems aligned to the lesson content:
 - “Irving Berlin wrote the song because...”
 - “One part of the story/song that supports this is...”
 - “This matters because...”
 - “His story shows belonging because...”
- Allow oral rehearsal before writing
- Provide small group support
- Highlight key lines in the lyrics for students who need support
- Allow students to answer one question deeply instead of all questions

Extensions

- Ask students to move beyond simple responses and develop their ideas using evidence:
 - “Why do you think people still sing this song today? Use evidence from the lyrics or the story.”
 - “What message in the song helps people connect to it? Explain your thinking.”
 - “How did Irving Berlin’s experiences influence the meaning of the song?”
- Students write a letter from Irving Berlin’s perspective describing why he wrote “God Bless America”
- Students create a visual representation of the song’s meaning
- Students design a “song meaning poster” showing key words from the lyrics, what those words represent, and how they connect to Irving Berlin’s life
- Students create a comic strip showing part of the story in more detail
- Students highlight or underline important words or phrases in the lyrics and annotate what they mean
- Students create a list of ways people contribute to a community, then categorize them (music, leadership, work, etc.)
- Students participate in a short discussion on what makes something meaningful to many people
- Texas Connection (lesson plan included)

Optional Extension: Texas Connection (Grade 4+)

Frances Rosenthal Kallison: Two Paths of Contribution

Time: 10-15 minutes

Note: This extension is optional and is not part of the 40–50 minute core Irving Berlin lesson. It may be used as an add-on, a standalone mini-lesson, or a Day 2 follow-up.

Materials Used:

- Infographic: Frances Rosenthal Kallison
- Student comparison chart: Two Paths of Contribution
- Pencil
- Optional: structured drawing template

Teacher Direction (Instructional Flow):

This activity follows a **model** → apply structure:

- First, the class models thinking using Irving Berlin
- Then, students apply the same thinking to Frances Rosenthal Kallison

During the Kallison portion, students follow:

Read (View) → Think → Talk → Write Using Evidence

Step 1: Model with Irving Berlin (3-4 minutes)

Materials Used: Comparison chart (projected or student copy)

Teacher Script: “We are going to organize what we learned about Irving Berlin first. We will fill in this chart together before we look at someone new.”

Ask:

- “What did he do?”
- “Who did it impact?”
- “How did it help people?”

Teacher Note: Keep this brief. This is the modeling step.

Step 2: Read/View Kallison infographic (3-4 minutes)

Materials Used: Infographic

Teacher Script: “Now we will use the same thinking process to understand a new example. We are going to use this infographic to learn about Frances Rosenthal Kallison. Pay attention to the different parts of her story—who she was, what she did, and why it mattered.”

Teacher Moves

Read and explore the infographic with students

Direct attention to:

- Who she was
- What she did (ranching, Business, leadership)
- Her impact (community, history, leadership)
- Recognition (National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame)

Ask:

- “What do you notice?”
- “What stands out about her work?”

Step 3: Think (2-3 minutes)

Materials Used: Comparison chart

Students independently complete the Kallison side of the chart.

Teacher Moves:

Circulate and prompt:

- “What part of the infographic supports that?”
- “What do you see that shows her impact?”

Step 4: Talk (3-4 minutes)

Students turn and talk:

- “How is her contribution similar to Irving Berlin’s?”
- “How is it different?”

Teacher Moves

Require students to reference the infographic and comparison chart.

Prompts:

- “What evidence supports your idea?”
- “What is different about how they helped people?”

Step 5: Write (2-3 minutes)

Prompt:

“Why are both Irving Berlin’s and Frances Rosenthal Kallison’s contributions important?”

Expectation

Students must include:

- A clear idea
- One example from Irving Berlin
- One example from Kallison
- An explanation

Optional Visual Add-On (If Extending Further)

Students may create a two-part visual:

- Irving Berlin: music, connection, shared experience
- Kallison: leadership, ranching community

Students label:

- What each person did
- How they helped people

Closing Statement

“Irving Berlin and Frances Rosenthal Kallison contributed in different ways. One used music to connect people across the country. One used leadership and responsibility to support her community in Texas. Both contributions are important.”

Teacher Materials

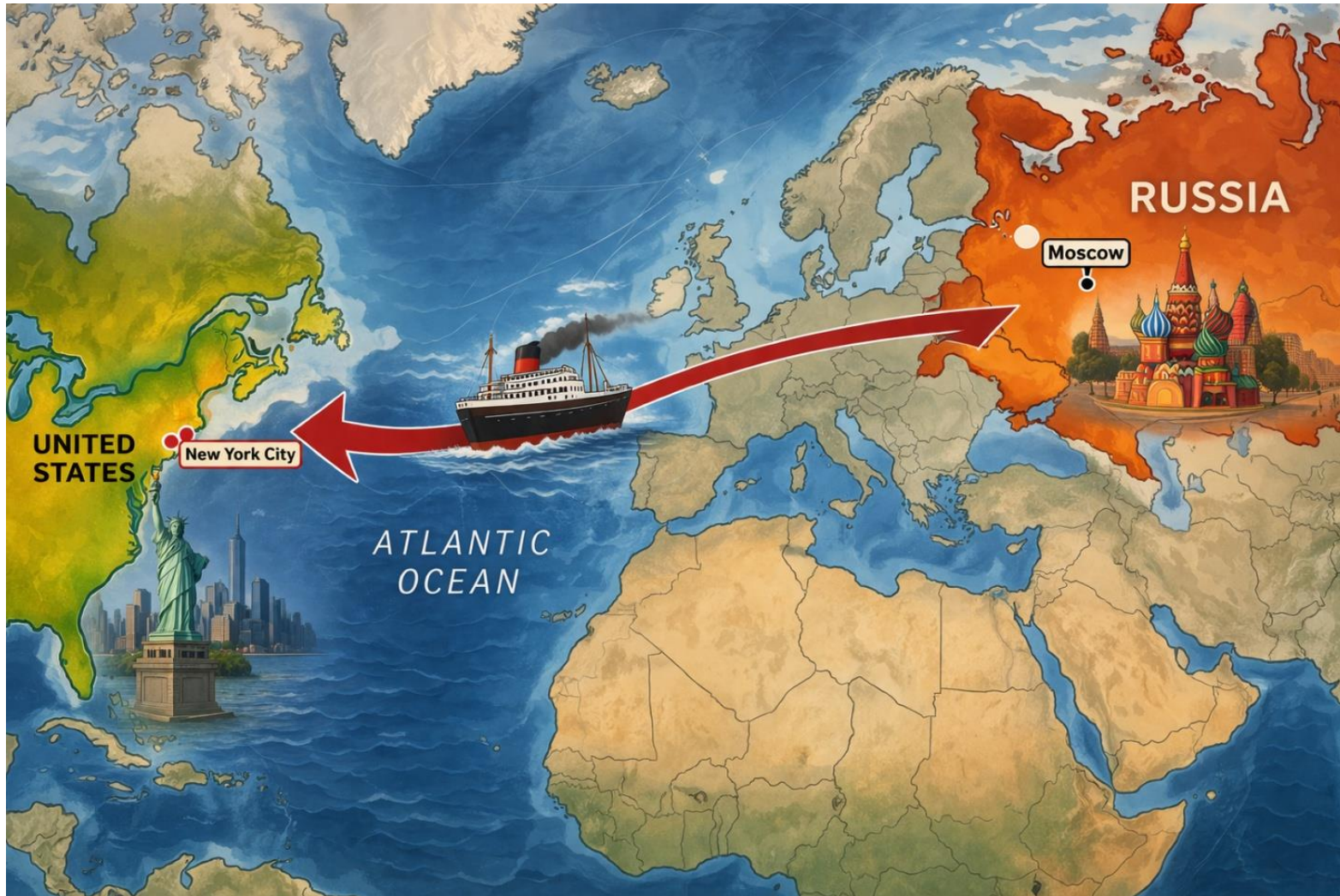
- (Optional) Map visual (Russia → United States)
- (Optional) Image of Irving Berlin
- Lyrics to “God Bless America”
- Teacher guide for the Student Worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

For Kallison Extension

- Infographic: Frances Rosenthal Kallison
- Teacher guide for student handout: Two Paths of Contribution
- Optional image(s) of:
 - Frances Rosenthal Kallison
 - Ranching



(Optional) Map Visual (Russia → United States)



(Optional) Image of Irving Berlin, 1911 (age 22-23)

Berlin wrote "*God Bless America*" in 1918.

Image courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, photograph by Pach Brothers Studio.

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Teacher Resource:

Lyrics to Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" on the Ed Sullivan Show

God Bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home.

God Bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her and guide her
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home.

Teacher Guide for Student Handout: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

Directions: Use what you learned from the story and the song “God Bless America.” When you write, make sure you:

- Answer the question
- Use something from the story or song
- Explain your thinking

Think

Take a moment to think about these ideas:

- Why did Irving Berlin write “God Bless America”?
- Why did the song matter to people?
- What does his story show about belonging?

Talk

Talk with a partner. Use this sentence frame: “I think _____ because _____.”

Write

Choose ONE question to answer:

1. Why did Irving Berlin write “God Bless America,” and why did it matter to people?
2. What does Irving Berlin’s story show about belonging?

Your Response:

Irving Berlin wrote “God Bless America” because he felt thankful for living in the United States. In the story, it says that he came from Russia and started a new life here. This shows that he appreciated his new country.

The song mattered to people because it helped them feel connected and proud. In the lyrics, it talks about loving and protecting the country, which many people could relate to. This shows that the song brought people together and made them feel like they belonged.

(Optional) Infographic: Frances Rosenthal Kallison

(Optional) Image of Frances Rosenthal Kallison



(Optional) Image of Ranching



Teacher Guide for Student Handout: *Two Paths of Contribution*

Directions:

Use what you learned from the story and the infographic.

Fill in the Irving Berlin side with your class

Complete the Frances Rosenthal Kallison side on your own

Use information from the story or infographic

Compare Their Contributions

Irving Berlin	Frances Rosenthal Kallison
<p>What did he do? He wrote songs, including “God Bless America.” He used music to share his ideas.</p>	<p>What did she do? She helped run a ranch and a business. She was also a leader in her community and helped preserve history.</p>
<p>Who did it impact? His songs reached people all across the United States.</p>	<p>Who did it impact? She helped people in her local community in Texas and San Antonio.</p>
<p>How did it help people? His music helped people feel connected and proud of their country. It brought people together.</p>	<p>How did it help people? Her work supported people’s daily lives and helped keep important history remembered.</p>

Write

Why are both contributions important?

Both Irving Berlin and Frances Rosenthal Kallison made important contributions in different ways. Irving Berlin wrote music that helped people across the country feel connected and proud. Frances Rosenthal Kallison helped her community through leadership and her work in Texas. This shows that contributions can be different, but both can help people and make a difference.

Student Material(s)

- Student Worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

If using the Frances Rosenthal Kallison Extension

- Student Worksheet: *Two Paths of Contribution*
- (Optional) Drawing Two Paths of Contribution

Your Name:

Date:

Irving Berlin and His Song

Irving Berlin and His Song

Directions: Use what you learned from the story and the song “God Bless America.” When you write, make sure you:

Answer the question

Use something from the story or song

Explain your thinking

Think

Take a moment to think about these ideas:

Why did Irving Berlin write “God Bless America”?

Why did the song matter to people?

What does his story show about belonging?

Talk

Talk with a partner. Use this sentence frame: “I think _____ because _____.”

Write

Choose ONE question to answer:

1. Why did Irving Berlin write “God Bless America,” and why did it matter to people?
2. What does Irving Berlin’s story show about belonging?

Your Response:

Your Name:

Date:

Two Paths of Contribution

Directions:

Use what you learned from the story and the infographic.

Fill in the Irving Berlin side with your class

Complete the Frances Rosenthal Kallison side on your own

Use information from the story or infographic

Compare Their Contributions

Irving Berlin	Frances Rosenthal Kallison
What did he do?	What did she do?
Who did it impact?	Who did it impact?
How did it help people?	How did it help people?

Write

Why are both contributions important?

Your Name:

Date:

Drawing Two Paths of Contribution

Direction:

Draw and label how each person contributed.

Show what they did

Show how they helped people

Add labels to explain your thinking