

Irving Berlin: A New Home, A New Song

Grade Levels: K-2

Duration: One class period (approximately 30-40 minutes)

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.

Theme Connection (Character / Behavior Focus)

Belonging, fairness

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Last Updated: 04/06/2026

TEKS Alignment

Kindergarten

Social Studies: K.2.A, K.10.A

ELAR: K.6.B, K.6.E

Grade 1

Social Studies: 1.2.B, 1.9.B

ELAR: 1.6.B, 1.6.E

Grade 2

Social Studies: 2.3.B, 2.13.A

ELAR: 2.6.B, 2.6.E

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 was widely shared across the country. This is a foundational connection because the lesson centers on an individual and his contribution to American life.
- **Jewish Culture Today (Strong Connection):** This lesson includes an example of a Jewish American contributing to American culture through music that is still widely known today. This is a strong connection because Irving Berlin's songs continue to be part of American cultural life.
- **Jewish Traditions (Not a Primary Pairing):** This lesson does not focus on traditions or practices. This is not a primary pairing because the text does not provide content to support instruction in this area.
- **Standing Against Antisemitism (Not a Primary Pairing):** This lesson does not focus on antisemitism for this grade band. This is not a primary pairing the topic is not developed within the text or lesson activities.

Framing Context / Teacher Notes

Irving Berlin came to the United States as a child from Russia. In the United States, he grew up and became a well-known songwriter. He wrote several songs, including “God Bless America” and “White Christmas.” This lesson introduces Irving Berlin as an example of a Jewish American whose work became part of American life. The focus is on his contribution through music and how one of his songs became widely known across the country.

Teachers should focus on:

- his move to the United States
- his work as a songwriter
- how his song was shared across the country

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

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

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

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.

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

Student Materials

- Student worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song* (used in Activity 2 and Exit Ticket)
- Pencil

Enduring Understanding

People from different places help shape communities, and individuals contribute in different ways.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- I can tell where Irving Berlin came from
- I can explain why he wrote “God Bless America”
- I can describe what happened when people heard his song

Lesson Steps

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

Materials: 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 \(Kate Smith\)](#)

Play approximately one minute, or entire clip (~2:40).

Ask:

“Have you ever heard this song before?”

“What do you notice about this song?”

“How does this song make you think or feel?”

Teacher Moves

Quick turn and talk for first question

Call on 2-3 students

Step 2: Link to Learning (Read Aloud: ~1 minute)

Teacher Script:

“Today we are going to learn about a boy named Irving Berlin. He was born in a place called Russia. He was Jewish. Jewish people are a group of people with their own history, traditions, and religion.”

Turn and Talk: “What is something your family celebrates or does together?”

“When Irving was a child, he moved to America. When he grew up, he wrote songs. The song we just heard is one song he wrote. As we read, we will learn why he wrote this song and what happened when people heard it.”

Step 3: Read-Aloud / Core Engagement (10-15 minutes)

Purpose: Students listen to understand why Irving wrote his song and how it was shared by many people.

Materials:

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

(Optional) Map Visual (Russia → United States)

(Optional) Image of Irving Berlin

Teacher Planning Note:

Plan stopping points in advance.

If time is limited, prioritize Pause 1, Pause 5, and Pause 6.

Before Reading, Say:

“As we read, listen for:

Why he wrote the song

What happened when people heard it”

Pause and Prompt Chart

Pause	Teacher Question & Student Action	Teacher Move / Key Point
1	<p>“Where did Irving Berlin live when he was a child?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choral response 	<p>“He lived in Russia.”</p> <p>(Optional: point to Map Visual (Russia → United States))</p>
2	<p>“Why did his family move?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn and talk Call on 1-2 students 	<p>“They moved to find a better life and be safe.”</p>
3	<p>“What did Irving do when he grew up?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call on 2-3 students 	<p>“He wrote songs.”</p>

4	<p>“What song did he write?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choral response 	“God Bless America.”
5	<p>“Why did he write this song?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn and talk • Call on 2-3 students 	“He wrote it because he loved his new country.”
6	<p>“What happened when people heard the song?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn and talk • Call on 2-3 students 	“People across the country sang it.”

Transition to Activity 2 (1-2 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Now we are going to think about what we learned. We will use Read, Think, Talk, Write.”

Step 4: Processing Protocol (10-15 minutes)

Grade K-2: Read – Think – Talk – Write/Draw

Purpose: Students explain why Irving Berlin wrote the song and describe what happened when people heard it.

Teacher Note: About Read – Think – Talk – Write/Draw Processing Protocol

This lesson uses a structured routine called Read – Think – Talk – Write/Draw to help students process what they learned.

This protocol:

- breaks thinking into clear steps
- gives every student time to think and speak
- supports both speaking and writing (or drawing for younger students)

Students first hear or revisit the information, then think about it, talk with a partner, and finally record their ideas through writing or drawing.

For younger students, drawing is an appropriate way to show understanding.

Teacher Guidance: Keep each step brief and guided so students stay focused on the lesson goal. This is not independent work; it is supported thinking with teacher direction at each step.

Materials:

- Student worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*
- Pencil

Teacher Script (Brief Recap):

“We are going to think about what we learned step by step. Irving came to America. He wrote a song because he loved his country. People sang the song.”

Read – Think – Talk – Write/Draw Routine Chart

Step	Teacher Moves / Support	What Students Do (Purpose of the Step)
Read	<p>Say: “We are remembering what we just learned.”</p> <p>Optional: Invite 1-2 students to share what they remember.</p> <p>Restate key ideas: “Irving Berlin lived in Russia. He moved to America. He wrote a song.”</p>	Recall key ideas
Think	<p>Say and display the questions:</p> <p>“Why did he write the song?”</p> <p>“What did people do when they heard it?”</p> <p>Write key questions on the board. Read and point to the key questions.</p> <p>Give quiet thinking time. (<i>Optional: set a short timer.</i>)</p>	Think quietly
Talk	<p>Turn and talk using the same questions:</p> <p>“Why did he write the song?”</p> <p>“What did people do when they heard it?”</p> <p>Call on 2-3 students to share.</p> <p>As students share, record key ideas on the board in two sections:</p> <p>Why he wrote the song.</p> <p>What people did when they heard it.</p> <p>Example: “Loved America,” “people sang it”</p>	Share ideas
Write / Draw	<p>Distribute the student worksheet</p> <p>Say: “Now you will show what you learned. You can use the ideas on the board.”</p> <p>Point to both sections of board notes.</p> <p>Give prompts based on grade:</p> <p>K-1: “Draw to show why he wrote the song or what people did when they heard it.”</p> <p>Grade 2: “Draw and write to show why he wrote the song and what people did when they heard it.”</p>	<p>Draw or write to show understanding</p> <p>K-1: Draw (labels options)</p> <p>Grade 2: Draw and write</p>

Transition to Activity 3 (1-2 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Now you used your ideas to show what you learned about Irving and his song. Next, we are going to listen again. This time, you will listen for a part of the song that shows his love of his country, the United States.”

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

Purpose: Students understand that Irving Berlin’s song was one way he contributed to his community and that many people shared it.

Materials: 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 \(Kate Smith\)](#)

Teacher Says: “Listen carefully. Can you find a part of the song that shows he loved the United States?”

Play the song again

Teacher Asks: “What part of the song shows he loved his country, the United States?”
Turn and talk → call on 2-3 students

Teacher Move (Support if needed)

If students struggle, guide with:

“He is asking for the United States to be blessed.”

“He is showing he cares about his country.”

“He is describing the beauty of the United States.”

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

Students finish the work on their student worksheet.

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

Teacher Script:

“Irving Berlin came from another place and made a life in the United States. He wrote a song because of his love of his country. His song became part of American life, and many people still sing it together today.”

Formative Assessment (Ongoing Check for Understanding)

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

- Read-Aloud
 - Student responses during pauses
 - Ability to answer why he wrote the song and what happened when people heard it
- Read-Think-Talk-Write/Draw (Processing Protocol):
 - Student participation in partner discussions
 - Student ability to explain ideas using prompts

- Student contribute or recognize key ideas as they are written on the board
- Students begin showing understanding on the worksheet
- Students use board notes as support

Teacher Look-Fors

- Students understand that Irving wrote the song because of his love of his country, the United States.
- Students understand that people across the country sang the song.
- Students can express ideas through drawing, words, or simple sentences.

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:
 - “He wrote the song because _____.”
 - “When people heard the song, they _____.”
- Use the board notes from Activity 2 as a visual reference during Write/Draw
- Allow students to respond fully through drawing with optional labels (K-1)
- Provide small group or teacher-guided support during Think and Talk to restate the question and model responses
- Reduce cognitive load by focusing on one idea (why he wrote it *or* what people did) for students who need support

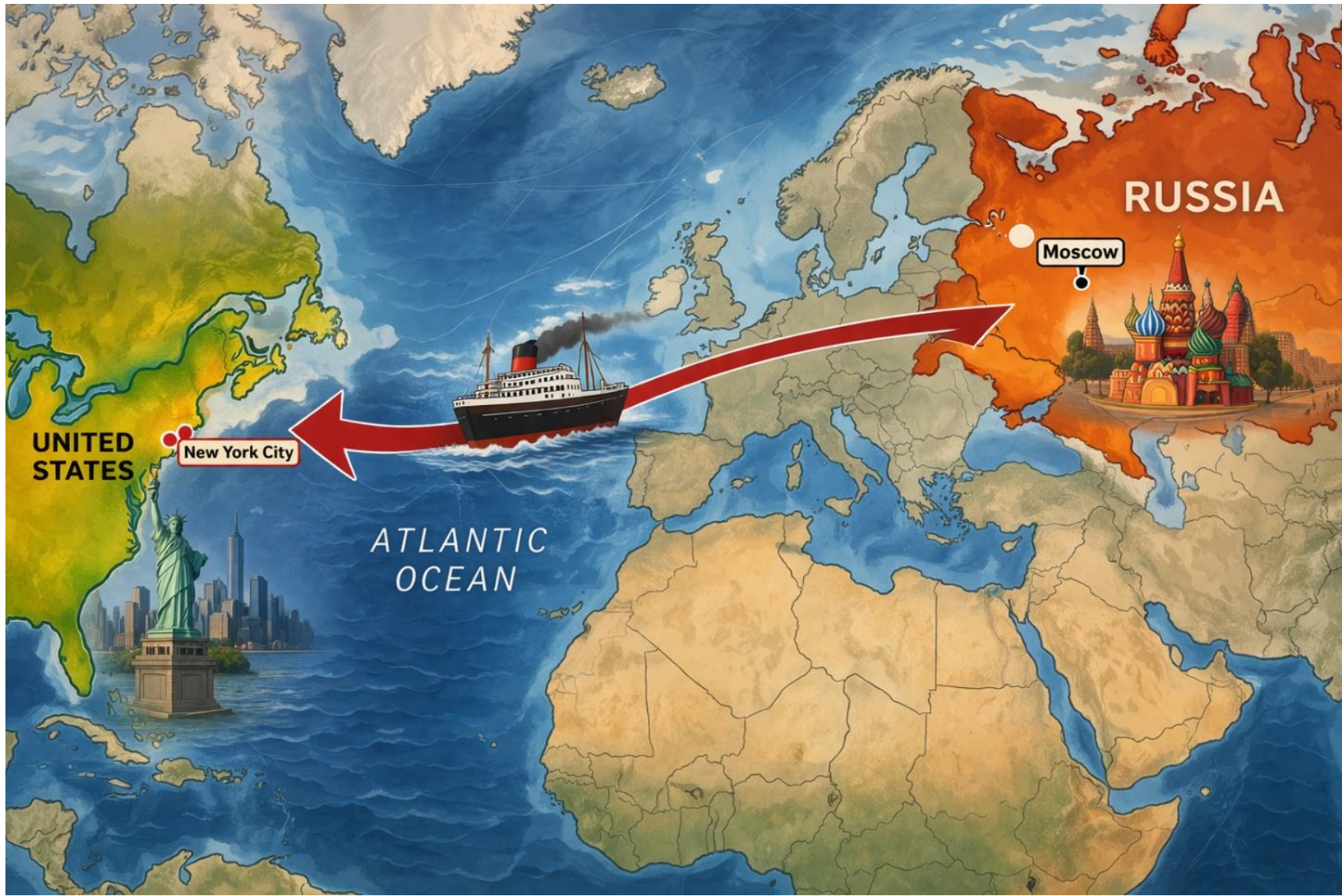
Extensions

- Ask students to explain their thinking in more detail:
 - “Why do you think people still sing this song today?”
 - “How can a song become important to many people?”
- Have students connect to their own experience:
 - “Have you ever sung a song with other people? What happened? How did you feel?”
- Invite students to add a sentence to their drawing explaining their thinking (Grade 2)
- Students share their drawings and explain their ideas to a partner

Teacher Materials

- (Optional) Map Visual (Russia → United States)
- (Optional) Image of Irving Berlin
- Teacher Guide for the Student Worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

(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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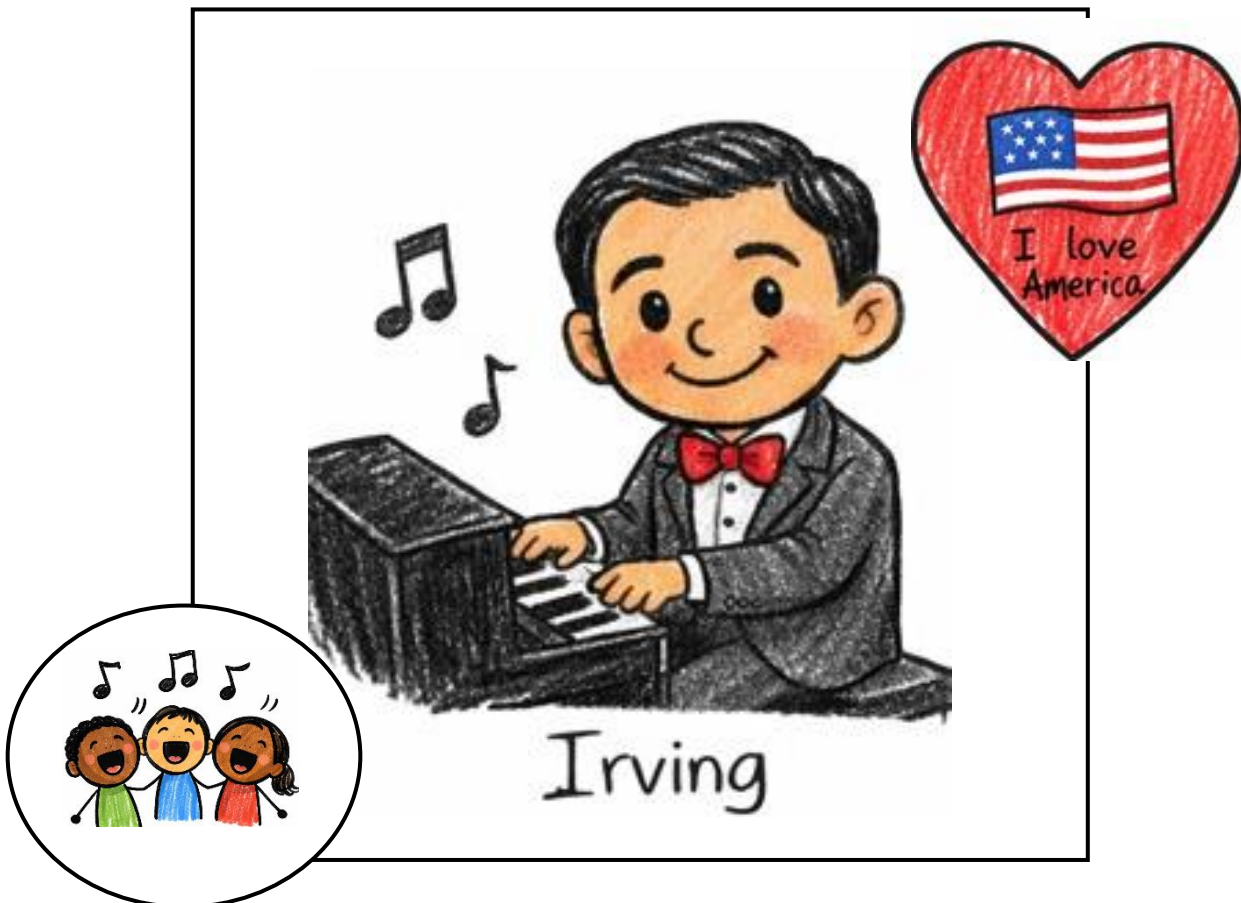


Teacher Guide for the Student Worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

Student Work (What to Look For and Support)

Students may include all or some of the items listed in the “What to Look For” column to demonstrate understanding.

Section	What to Look For (Evidence of Understanding)	Optional Additions Students Might Draw or Add
Square: Irving Berlin	A person representing Irving Berlin A connection to music (piano, music notes, or singing) Irving engaged in making music (writing or playing)	Piano Music notes Irving at a piano or writing music Background (stage, room, audience) Label: <i>Irving</i>
Heart: Why he wrote the song	A feeling such as love, care, or pride A connection to the U.S. (country, place or people) A recognizable national symbol (e.g., flag or Statue of Liberty)	Background (outdoors, landscape, people) Labels: <i>love, America, United States</i>
Circle : What people did	One or more people singing Open mouths or music notes to show singing	Background (stage or gathering) Label: <i>sing</i>



Student Material(s)

- Student Worksheet: *Irving Berlin and His Song*

Name: _____

Irving Berlin and His Song

Draw or write to show what you learned.

- Draw Irving Berlin in the square
- Draw or write why he wrote the song in the heart
- Draw or write what people did when they heard the song in the circle

