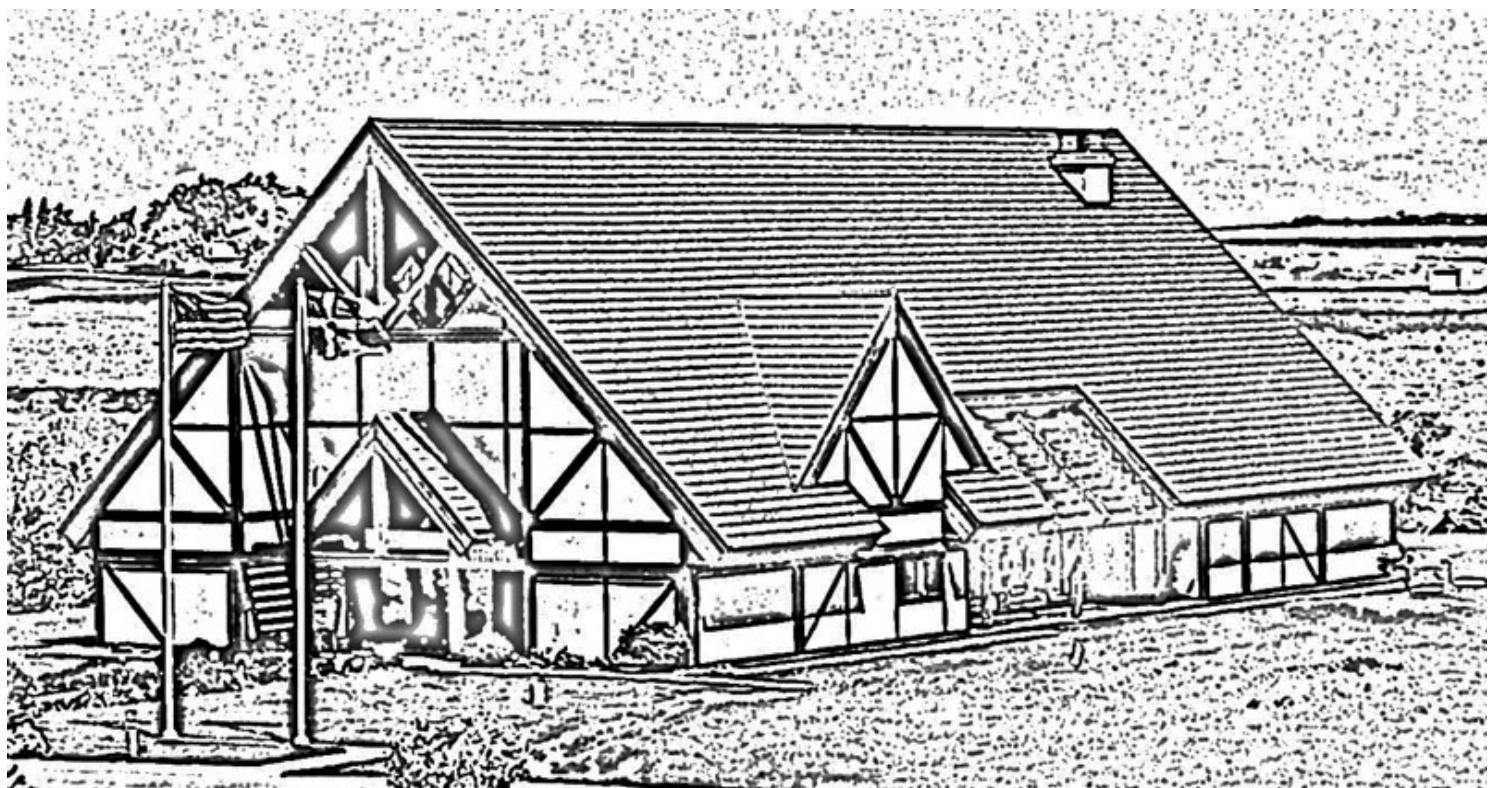


THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM - AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTER

Activity book



# An Immigrant Story



The story of Jens Jensen and his journey to America in 1910.



The Danish Immigrant Museum  
2212 Washington Street  
Elk Horn, Iowa 51531  
712-764-7001  
[www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org)

Name of traveler



9

This is Denmark. From here you start your journey as an emigrant towards America. Denmark is a country in Scandinavia which is in the northern part of Europe. It is a very small country only 1/3 the size of the state of Iowa. It is made up of one peninsula called Jutland and 483 islands so the seaside is never far away. In Denmark the money is called *kroner* and everyone speaks Danish. The capital is called Copenhagen and is home to Denmark's Royal Family and Parliament. The Danish royal family is the oldest in Europe. It goes all the way back to the Viking period. Many famous people have come from Denmark including Hans Christian Andersen who wrote *The Little Mermaid*. He was born in Odense and moved to Copenhagen.



Can you draw a line from Odense to Copenhagen? Did he have to cross the water to get there?

This is Jens Jensen. He lived in Denmark on a farm in 1910. That was a little over a hundred years ago. You can color him in.

In 1910 Denmark looked much like it does today except that most people were farmers; they would grow wheat and rye, and raise pigs and cows.

Jens is a farmer too and lives with his family on their farm in a town called Ålborg. He has two older brothers named Claus and Peter. Claus is the oldest so he will one day inherit the family farm. That means there will be nothing left over for Peter and Jens to inherit. They will have to find jobs on another farm or do something else. Peter has already gone to America because he could not find a job anywhere in Denmark.



He has sent letters home to Jens telling him that the U.S. is a fantastic place to live and that you can get any job you want there. Letters like that are also published in the news paper almost every day. They are sent by other people who have emigrated. They make America sound like a land full of opportunities, so Jens has decided to move to America too.

Deciding to emigrate was not easy. It was a long, dangerous and expensive journey and you might never see your family again. Many people died on the way or never had enough money for a ticket home again.

**Can you think of anything other than a new job which would make a person want to emigrate?**



\*Immigrating means moving in to a new country.

\*Emigrating means moving out of a country.

**Here is a letter that Jens wrote home to his parents about his travels.**



*"Dear Mom and Dad*

*I am writing to you from Elk Horn, Iowa. I have seen so many things and met a lot of people since I said goodbye to you on the farm back home in Ålborg, in Denmark.*

*After I said goodbye to you, I took the train to Århus and from there I took the ferry to Copenhagen. It is a very big city and when I sailed into the harbor I could see towers and turrets everywhere just like I have always heard. Since it was summer I was able to go into the Tivoli Gardens and see the fountains. That was a lot of fun. They have a pantomime theatre now and I saw a performance there. It was really amazing.*

*As you know, I had heard there were more jobs to be had in the big city and I needed to work to earn money for the boat ticket to America. I asked at the shipping office in Nyhavn (New harbor) and they said that a 1st class ticket is about \$100 in U.S. money, for that kind of money; you could get a cabin all to yourself and meals served every day. You could also use the music room. I have to buy a 3rd class ticket on a steam ship which costs about \$20, which is 100 kroner. On 3rd class you don't get a cabin and you eat in a dining hall. I decided to buy a 3rd class ticket for the America line. It travels directly from Copenhagen to New York and ticket for the train west is included.*

*To earn the money I got a job working as a garbage man, and I was paid \$2 a day. Besides earning money for the steam ship ticket, I also had to buy a passport and get a vaccination. You need a vaccination certificate in America to prove that you don't have smallpox.*

*I also had to have \$25 when I arrived in New York to show that I could support myself.*

**If a ticket is \$20 and Jens is paid \$2 a day and it costs him \$0.50 a day to live how long will it take him to save up for the ticket?**

**How long would it have taken him to buy a 1st class ticket?**

**A passport is 50 kroner and a smallpox vaccination is another 50 kroner.**

**How long will it take Jens to save up for the ticket and the passport, the vaccination and the train ticket?**

Jens uses some words that may be difficult to understand. Here is what they mean:

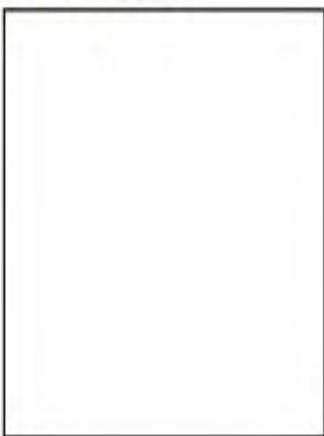
\*A pantomime theater is a theater in which the characters dance but do not speak. The Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen is one of the oldest amusement parks in the world.

\*Kroner is the Danish money.

\*Smallpox was a very dangerous disease. Fortunately it does not exist anymore because so many people were vaccinated against it.

\*Vaccination is when a doctor injects you with a mild form of a disease to make you immune to the more dangerous form of the same disease.

If you want to travel with Jens Jensen on his journey, you too must have a passport. Try making one for yourself. It must have a description of you including hair and eye color and it must have your signature and a picture of you. If you do not have a picture you can draw one.

**PHOTO****NAME:****PLACE OF BIRTH:****COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:****DESCRIPTION****SIGNATURE:****HAIR COLOR****EYE COLOR:****HEIGHT:**

The Passport is already stamped by the Ålborg police in Denmark. However, you still need to have it signed by a proper authority.

You can ask your teacher or your parents to sign it.

You can also decide to have one of your classmates be the immigration official. He or she should check all the passports to make sure they are accurate descriptions of the owners and stamp and sign them if they are legal.

To help Jens find the way, draw the journey that he has to take from Ålborg to Copenhagen on the map of Denmark on page 1.

"Now I have earned enough money for a ticket on the steamship from Copenhagen to New York. However, I was only allowed to bring one trunk, so I packed it with things that would be useful for me here in the U.S. and things from home that I would miss."



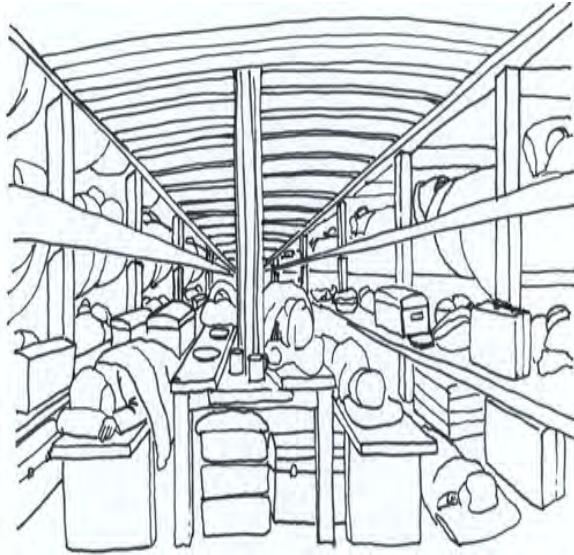
Here is Jens Jensen's trunk. There is not very much room and it is heavy.

**What do you think he should put in it?**



You can cut out the pictures and put them in the trunk or just draw lines from the objects to the trunk, but you can only bring 10 items.

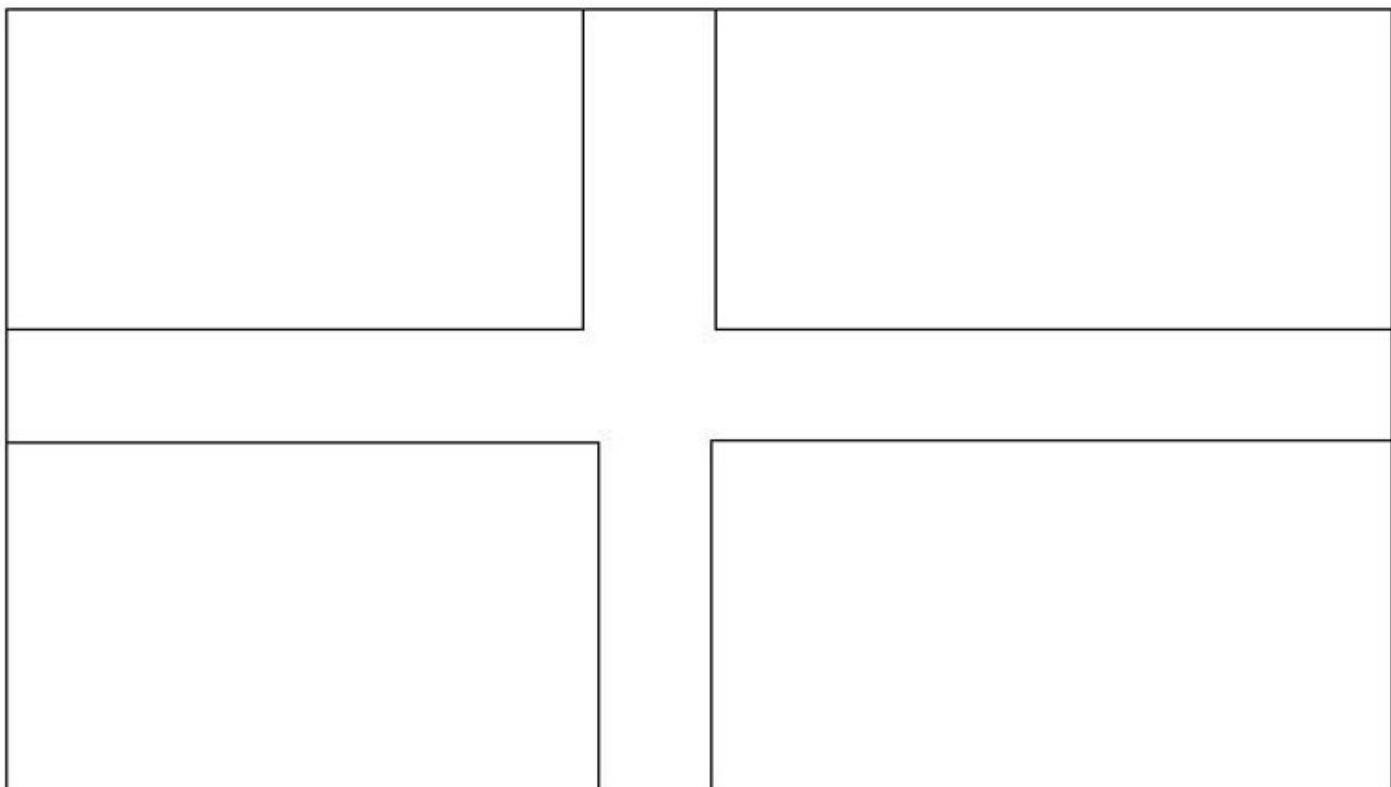
**What would you bring with you from home if you had to emigrate? Make a list of 10 things from your home you would like to bring. Remember that they cannot be too heavy as you would have to carry them on board the boat.**



On the steamship I had to share a small cabin with 5 other men, and we were all sleeping in bunk beds. There was a small mirror hanging on the wall between the beds and under it was a wash basin that we had to share. I became very good friends with one of the men. He was called Lars. He told me that he was from Ringsted and wanted to own a farm in America. Like me, he could not get a job in Denmark and he did not have a place to stay, therefore he wanted to start a new life in the U.S. Lars got sick with a fever and died after 4 days. It was a very sad day when we buried him at sea.

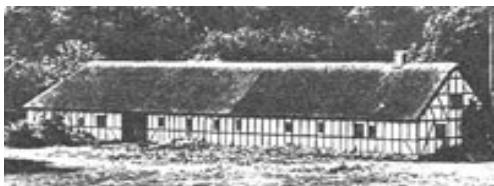
It was very crowded on the ship and very boring although we played cards. I only got seasick once, but there was a strong wind sometimes and it rained so some of the other passengers were seasick every day. When the weather was fine I went up on the lower deck and I could see the first class passengers upstairs on the upper deck in their expensive clothes. We were not allowed to go up there. We had our meals in the dining room where the stewards served it. We couldn't all sit down at once and we had to eat in shifts, but I got to eat with most of the men in my cabin. The first class passengers ate in their own dining room and the food was much better. I left Copenhagen on April 21 and arrived with the steamship in New York 12 days later. I was very excited to see the U.S. I had all my clothes washed on the boat and tried to look my best.

**Oh no, Jens has washed his Danish flag and it has lost its colors. Can you help him by coloring it in correctly?**

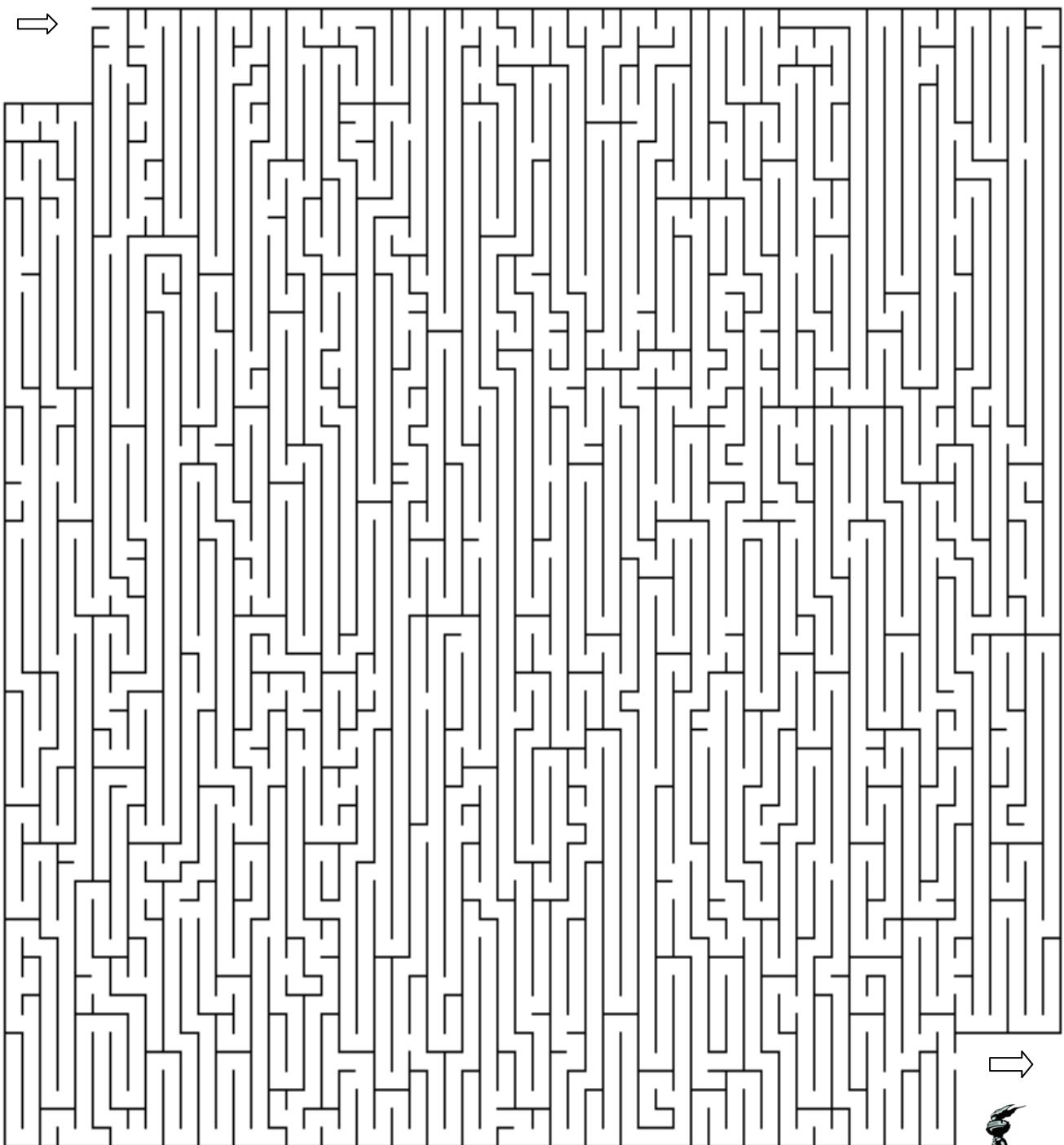


**Did you know that the Danish flag, Dannebrog, is the oldest flag in the world?**

**It was a very long journey and Jens got lost a few times along the way.  
Can you help him find his way to America?**



The farm In Denmark



New York



I could see New York from the ship and the Statue of Liberty. It is bigger than anything I have ever seen before. To my surprise we did not sail all the way to New York but instead stopped at a place called Ellis Island. Here the first class passengers got off the ship first; it seems like we waited a long time before all of the 3rd class passengers were allowed to go ashore.

At the immigration building on Ellis Island I was very scared because it was very busy and confusing. First they asked me my name and looked me up on the ships manifest. Then I had to tell them where I came from, if I had ever been in prison, if I had any money of my own, where I planned to live and if I had a job waiting for me. I had a lot of trouble understanding the questions because my English is not so good yet and I couldn't find anyone who spoke Danish. I told the clerk behind the desk my name and he spelled it wrong three times. First he wrote Ian lanson, then Jens Janson and then Jens Jensson. It was lucky I spotted it and I told him how to spell it correctly.

Finally they let me through and I was sent upstairs for a medical examination. They looked at my eyes and listened to my heart and I showed them my vaccination card. They would not have let me in if I hadn't had my vaccinations. One poor woman who was standing in line behind me didn't have one and they took her away to be isolated. One man in front of me, I think he was Italian, was coughing and looked sick so they took him to the hospital.

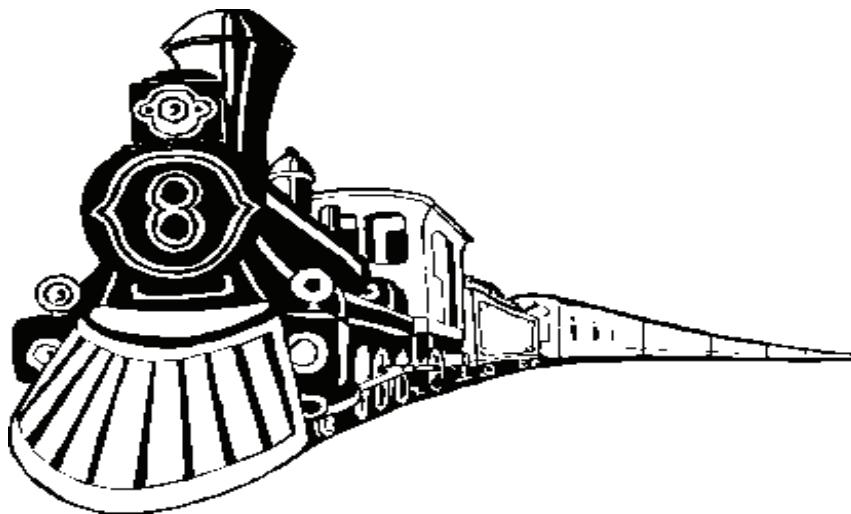
Fortunately I am very healthy so they let me through and I continued on my journey.



**Game:** One student has to find the word "Birthday" in a dictionary of a different language. Now the student has to say it clearly to the class and the other students must write it down as it is said. How many got the spelling right?

I went to the railroad office on Ellis Island and showed them the contract I had bought in Copenhagen with my boat ticket. They in turn gave me a ticket for a train leaving the next morning. They also took my trunk and sent it on to Elk Horn station. They gave me a brass token so that I could reclaim it when I got there. I took the ferry across the water to New York City. When I got off there were lots of people there, some had come to greet their family members, others were trying to sell things. I walked past all of them and got my first look at the city. It's amazing. New York is an even bigger city than Copenhagen! There are many different people there and they all speak different languages.

By now it was very late in the evening so I had to spend the night in New York. I saw that young men were sleeping under wagons so I did the same thing. I could barely sleep, because I was so afraid that the police would arrest me for sleeping outside. They do that in Copenhagen. However I must have fallen asleep because the next morning I was woken by the sound of wagons and people passing by.



I got up and found my way to the train station. Before I left New York I bought some fruit from a vendor and a loaf of bread from another. They were very expensive, a whole dollar just for 8 apples and a loaf of bread. The train I took is called the Immigrant Train. It stopped in Chicago where I was supposed to change to the Missouri River line. The trip to Iowa was supposed to take 43 hours, much longer than the trip from Ålborg to Copenhagen. Soon we left the ocean behind us and traveled through forests and past mountains. I had never seen a mountain before so I was very impressed. I slept on the train that night and we stopped in Chicago the next day. The buildings there are very tall and there were a lot of very nice parks. I bought some more bread there because the one I had bought in New York turned out to be moldy. It was much cheaper here. I only paid 50 cents for the bread and some more fruit. Chicago is right next to an enormous lake which was very calm when I got there. It is so big that when we first saw it I thought we had gone too far and had reached the ocean again. After that I traveled west again across the prairie. There were lots of fields.

I was very happy to see all the fields as I had decided to go to Iowa because I had heard from my brother Peter that it was a good place to settle if you wanted to farm and that there were a lot of Danes living in the town of Elk Horn.



**Map out the journey that Jens took from New York to Elk Horn.**

I arrived in Elk Horn early on the morning of the third day after I left New York and Peter met me at the train station. I was very happy to see him as we had not seen each other for almost 2 years.

I began to look for a job at once and just like Peter told me in his letter it was very easy to find one. I got a job working for a carpenter that Peter knows. The carpenter lives in a house made of wooden boards, not bricks like we have in Denmark. The house is on the edge of town. In the back is the carpentry shop and my room is above it. I earn \$2 and one meal a day, so now I can save some money. I hope that I can save enough money so I can afford to build my own farm in a few years. I like working as a carpenter but I really want my own farm. The carpenter I work for is an old gentleman. He and his family came over from Denmark 5 years ago and have a daughter called Marie. She is very pretty. Once I own my own farm, we will get married and start a family.

**Not all immigrants became farmers. Some stayed in the cities or worked on the railroads.**

**What do your parents do?**

**What did your grandparents do?**

This is a picture of Marie. Marie is a very common Danish name. You can color her in.



**Most Danish last names end in -sen. Like Jensen or Hansen. It means son of Jens or Hans. Do you know anyone who has a name that sounds Danish?**



*The first thing I noticed about Iowa was that the landscape looked a lot like the landscape in Denmark, only bigger. The hills, the trees and the fields look the same. The only thing that is different is that you can't see the sea beyond the hills like you can at home.*

*Like in Denmark, Iowa has a lot of pigeons, squirrels and rabbits. There is also an animal here called a raccoon, which we do not have at home. The farmers here grow wheat and corn but I have not seen any barley or rye.*

*In the winter, I was told, it is very cold and there is more snow than in Denmark. In summer it gets hotter because the wind doesn't blow in from the sea all the time. I am looking forward to that.*

*There are a lot of Danish people here so I have someone to talk to, actually many people here don't speak English at all. The church services are in Danish and so are the newspapers. Some days I feel like I haven't really left Denmark. I am still going to school as often as I can, however, to learn English because I want to be able to talk to people outside Elk Horn too.*

*I like it very much here in the U.S. and I am very glad that I settled here. I already have a job and a fiancée and one day I shall be an American citizen and have a farm of my very own. I see Peter quite often but I miss you and the rest of my friends and family in Denmark. I hope that one day I will be able to save up enough money so I can visit Denmark and see you again. I wish we could all be together for Christmas. Did you know that Americans celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December? I think that is very strange. Here in Elk Horn we will be having traditional Danish Christmas on the 24th in the evening with æbleskiver and rice pudding to eat and mulled wine to drink. We will also dance in a circle around the Christmas tree and sing Christmas songs. I will think of you all doing the same at home.*

*I hope you are all doing well, and I am looking forward to hearing from you, please write to me soon.  
Your loving son Jens!*

Æbleskiver are a type of round Danish pastry. They are typically eaten around Christmas time, as is rice pudding. There are lots of different types of Danish foods and traditions.

### **What hollidays do you celebrate?**

**Do you eat any special foods for the hollidays?**

**Does your family eat any foods that you think might come from another country?**

**Do you think that is something your ancestors brought with them? Ask your parents or grandparents.**

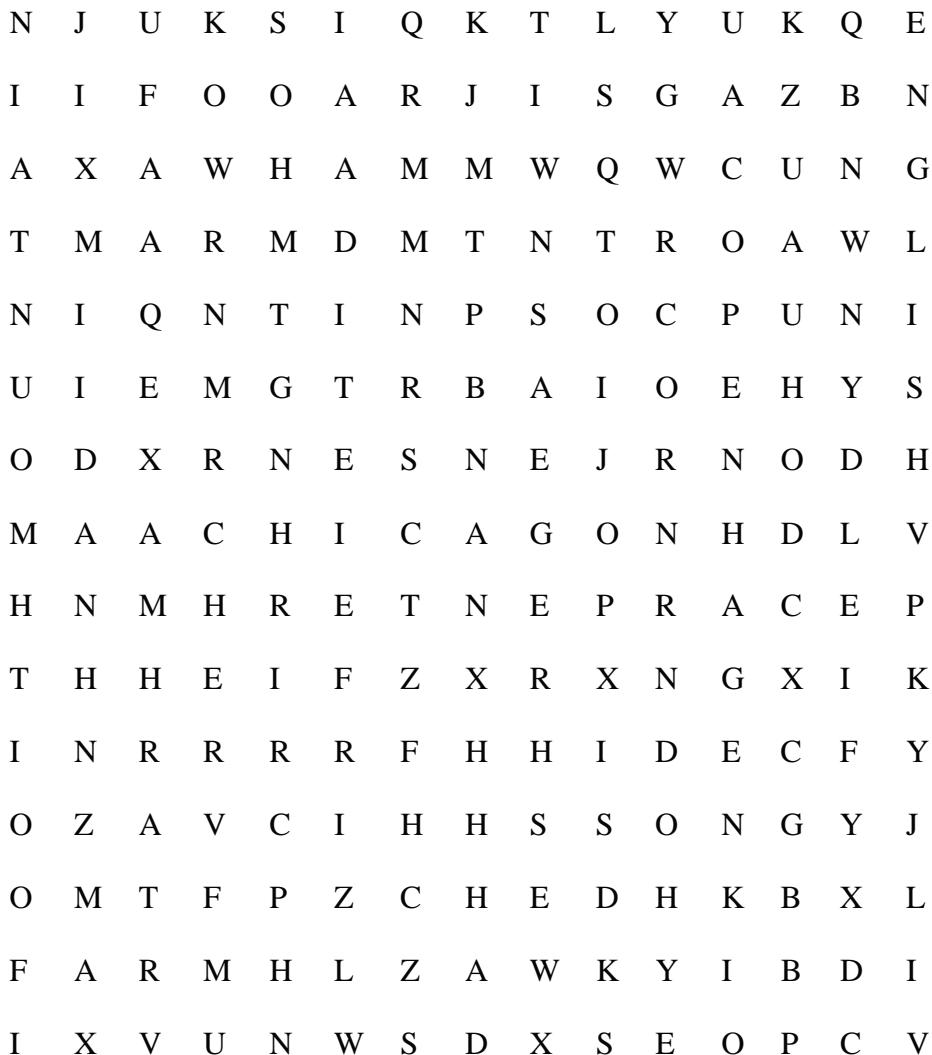
**Did your ancestors come from a different country? You can ask your parents or grandparents where they were born if you don't know.  
Can you draw the flag of the country they came from?**

Many Immigrants wrote letters home to tell their families how nice it was in their new country, often the letters were meant to encourage the rest of the family to join them.

**Imagine you are an immigrant in the U.S. today and write a letter home to your family to tell them all the things you think they should know about America.**

**Play the Word Search game to tell Jens Jensen's story over again from the beginning.  
The words can be either up or down or backwards or crossways.**

# Jens Jensen's Journey



AMERICA  
CHRISTMAS  
DANISH  
FARM  
IOWA  
MOUNTAIN

CARPENTER  
COPENHAGEN  
DENMARK  
FIELD  
JENSEN  
SHIP

CHICAGO  
CORN  
ENGLISH  
IMMIGRANT  
MARIE  
TRAIN

**Advanced Questions:**

The letter from Jens Jensen to his parents is a primary source. That means it is a firsthand account of a historical experience or event told by someone who was there in person. Other Primary Sources include official documents like birth certificates and marriage licenses. To explore more primary sources go to the Danish Immigrant Museum website and look under "View Through the Lens: Visual Resources". **What types of documents are in the category labeled Primary Sources?**

**What do you think is the biggest difference between a primary source (a contemporary account) and a secondary source (a later account)?**

**Read the Jens Jensen letter again. How is it different from the introduction on page 1 and 2?**

**What can you learn from Jens' letter that is different from the introduction?**

**How many states does Jens Jensen pass through on his way to Iowa from New York?**

**What differences do you think he noticed between the states?**

**How is Iowa different from other states you might have visited?**

**What do you think it would be like if you had to move to a different country?**

The Danish Immigrant Museum  
Elk Horn, IA

I traveled with Jens Jensen in the activity book.

Name:

Age:

Ticket for 1 free entrance for 1 family  
(two adults & children in the same household)  
at the Danish Immigrant Museum, Elk Horn, IA.

Now that you have heard the story of Jens Jensen you can come to the Danish Immigrant Museum to see what the immigrants really brought with them in their trunks and how they lived and what they did when they got to the US. You can cut out this ticket and use it to visit The Danish Immigrant Museum for free with your family.

On the museum website you can learn many interesting things about Denmark and Danish immigrants. Go to [www.danishmuseum.org](http://www.danishmuseum.org) to learn more about the history of Denmark and immigration. You can also visit us on Facebook where we answer questions about Denmark and the Museum.

**For more teaching tools on immigration you might want to visit these sites:**

For the New York Tenement Museum: [www.tenement.org/education\\_lessonplans.html](http://www.tenement.org/education_lessonplans.html)

For lesson plans about Australian immigration:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/education/>

For lessons on Canadian immigration: [www.pier21.ca/schoolsandkids](http://www.pier21.ca/schoolsandkids)

For the history of German immigration:

[www.ballinstadt.net/BallinStadt\\_emigration\\_museum\\_Hamburg/](http://www.ballinstadt.net/BallinStadt_emigration_museum_Hamburg/)



In this activity book the story of a typical Danish immigrant, Jens Jensen, is told through pictures, letters and artifacts from our immigrant trunk program. The students may color the pictures and cut out the objects to place them in the trunk. There are also several games that can be played in class. While concentrating on Danish immigration the book is an excellent introduction to the subject of immigration in general.

The children learn through interaction with the objects and by helping Jens Jensen prepare for his journey across the Atlantic. Each segment of the program is complemented by questions that promote the understanding of the immigration experience.



For further questions and comments please contact:  
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