

THREE CHEERS FOR CATHERINE THE GREAT!

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by Cari Best, illustrated by Giselle Potter
(DK Publishing)

Themes: Families, Feelings, Friendship,
Multicultural History, Neighborhoods

Grade Level: K—5

Running Time: 17 minutes

SUMMARY

When Sara's grandmother announces she wants **NO PRESENTS** for her birthday, the people who love her know they must give extra-special gifts from deep in their hearts. Grandma Catherine is a special person who came to America a long time ago and still speaks Russian, and a little English. As Sara, her mother and their neighbors get ready to celebrate, Sarah struggles to come up with the perfect gift. At the birthday party, the guests eat Russian food, present Grandma with her **NO PRESENTS** and then give three cheers for Catherine the Great. Sara's **NO PRESENT** is to teach Grandma to read and write English, but by the end of the story Sara is learning to read and write Russian as well.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and hear a story about a Russian immigrant family and their neighbors.
- Children will identify and describe ways of giving to others that do not involve spending money.
- Children will explore and express their feelings about their own family heritage.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Start by discussing the title of the program, especially the name "Catherine the Great." Ask children to recall what kinds of people in history usually have names like that. Explain that Catherine the Great was an empress of Russia, and locate Russia on a globe. Show the cover art, and ask children if these people look like Russian royalty. Since they obviously do not, what do the children think the story is about? What qualities besides royal blood might earn someone the title "the Great"? Encourage children to watch for those qualities as they view the program.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Lead a class discussion on why Sara's grandma deserved the title Catherine the Great. Recall details about her life, where she traveled from, how she helped her neighbors and how Sara and others feel about her. Talk about Grandma's idea for a **NO PRESENT** birthday. Ask children to explain what was valuable about each gift Grandma received..

Use this excellent opportunity to help children distinguish between real value and monetary value. Encourage students to make **NO PRESENT** lists of no-money gifts they'd like to receive and give. For example, help children plan and present **NO PRESENT** bouquets, with small offers of help written on individual paper flowers. Discuss ways that people could exchange such gifts, and how changing the way we give things might change our everyday lives.

As part of an art, science or social studies activity, suggest that children draw cross-sections of apartment buildings in their neighborhoods, like the drawings they saw in the program. Encourage them to show what the people inside the apartments are doing. Students might also draw cross-sections of office buildings, shopping malls and other structures.

Connect the story to American history by discussing the experience of immigration and resettlement in America. Encourage children to explore immigration within their own families and to share and compare what they have learned. Display results of student explorations in a study center, including student-made posters, big books and displays.

With the help of parents or local restaurants, arrange a "Taste of the Neighborhood" nibbling feast, featuring snacks from the various ethnic groups who have settled in your area. Make a pot of Catherine the Great's Russian Borscht for the main course. If you can't arrange for the food itself, collect restaurant menus, photographs of ethnic feasts, dishes, table decorations and other festive objects and display them in a study center.

Other videos and films about friendship available from Weston Woods include:

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