

THE GOLDEN LAND

Lee S. Justice

Samuel and his family are on their-way to America. As you read, ask yourself questions about their trip. "What is America?" Samuel liked to ask Mama. " America is the golden land," Mama always answered

Samuel's father was in America. Samuel has not seen Papa for three long years. Samuel remembered Papa's hugs and the soft feeling of his beard. Papa was working in America. He was saving money so that he could bring his family to the golden land. One day, a letter came. Papa had sent the tickets at last! Mama cried. Grandmother cried, Samuel cried. Even Samuel's older brother, Myer, wiped tears from his face. Trey were all happy. Yet there was an empty feeling too. Grandmother was not commg with them. A

wagon took the travelers to the train. Samuel watched the family's house get smaller and smaller. Then the road curved. The house was gone. Samuel had always wanted to ride on a train. It was bumpier and noisier than he had thought it would be. The houses and fields came, then went. At last, the train reached a busy port . A ferry took them to a big building. Inside were so many people! Samuel held onto Mama's coat as if he were a little boy. They waited in line. Men put chalk marks on people's coats. A chalk mark might mean that someone was ill and would have to stay there until he or she got better.

"Look strong and healthy!" Mama said. Samuel pushed his chest out. Myer stood tall. No chalk mars! They waited in line. They waited on benches. Samuel hopped on one foot. Then he hopped on the other. So much waiting! When their name was called, Mama would have to answer questions. Samuel helped her get ready. At last, Mama's turn came. She answered the questions. Then a man pointed

her to ~ ...a-stairway. "We are in America now," Mama said with a smile. Samuel realized that Mama had not smiled for a very long time. . -They reached the bottom of the stairs. "There he is!" cried Mama. "Papa! I shouted Myer. Papa looked different now.' But his hug felt just the way Samuel remembered it. First, all the travelers were checked for signs of sickness. "Only healthy people go to America," Myer said. ; J

The ship looked even grander than the one in the postcard Papa had sent. Samuel felt proud to climb aboard. During the long boat ride, Samuel played tag 'on the deck and listened to people talking. They spoke all kinds of languages. Samuel liked to listen to the strange sounds. Samuel felt lucky that he did not get seasick like Myer. "Ooooh," poor Myer moaned. Mama held Myer's head. tI'hey slept below with many other passengers. I Ji: was stuffy and smelled bad. Soon we will be in America," Mama said over and over. On the tenth day, everyone ran to the top deck.

"Look!" they shouted. "There she is!" People cheered and wept. A man picked Samuel up so he could see. . Samuel blinked at the golden sunlight gleaming off the statue's crown. "She is welcoming us," Mama said softly.