

**RL 3.6 Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:** identify the speaker or narrator in a selection

During World War I, some citizens of Russia fled the country in search of a better life. *Letters from Rifka* is a novel written in the form of letters from a young girl to her cousin about her adventures as she travels to America. This passage describes her feelings as she enters New York Harbor.

October 1, 1920  
Entering New York Harbor

*Dear Tovah,*

- 1 Today we will arrive at Ellis Island. Today I will see Mama and smell her yeasty smell. Today I will feel the tickle of Papa's dark beard against my cheeks and see my brother Nathan's dimpled smile and Saul's wild, curly hair. Today I will meet my brothers Asher and Isaac and Reuben.
- 2 Already I am wearing my best hat, the black velvet with the shirring and the brim of light blue. I'm hoping that with the hat, Mama will not mind my baldness. I've tucked Papa's tallis into my rucksack, but Mama's gold locket hangs around my neck.
- 3 The captain said his company notified our families and they are awaiting our arrival. I must pass a screening on the island before I can go home with Mama and Papa. Papa wrote about Ellis Island in his letters.
- 4 He wrote that at Ellis Island you are neither in nor out of America. Ellis Island is a line separating my future from my past. Until I cross that line, I am still homeless, still an immigrant. Once I leave Ellis Island, though, I will truly be in America.
- 5 Papa said in his letter that they ask many questions at Ellis Island. I must take my time and answer correctly. What's to worry? I am good at answering questions. Even if they ask me a thousand questions, I will have Mama and Papa near me, my mama and papa.
- 6 Just one week ago, I did not think I would ever make it to America. We drifted on the sea for days, helpless, waiting for the ship to come and tow us. I assisted with the cleanup as best I could, doing work Pieter would have done if he were there.
- 7 Then, once the tow ship arrived, it took so long between the securing of the ropes and the exchanges between the two ships, I thought we would never begin moving. At last, when we did, the other ship pulled us so slowly. I could swim faster to America.
- 8 In Russia, all America meant to me was excitement, adventure. Now, coming to America means so much more. It is not simply a place you go when you run away. America is a place to begin anew.
- 9 In America, I think, life is as good as a clever girl can make it.
- 10 Very soon, Tovah, I will be in this America. I hope someday you will come, too.
- 11 *Shalom, my cousin,  
Rifka*

P.S. As I was finishing this letter a cry went up from the deck. When I went out to see what it was, I found all the passengers gathered on one side of the ship, looking up. They were looking at Miss Liberty, Tovah, a great statue of a woman standing in the middle of the harbor. She was lifting a lamp to light the way for us.

**Who is the speaker in this passage?**

- A** Tovah
- B** Rifka
- C** Mama
- D** Papa