

# Our Town's History: A Gift For All Times

## Sample Pages



A Choral Reading  
by Judith C. Kaiser

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written by  
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and for choral reading performance.  
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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This choral reading was written in conjunction with a project entitled *Fredon, NJ Past to Present: It's Place in our World*. It is a project designed to teach curriculum through a historical approach.

This project is about one community and how it has persevered through hundreds of years of change, weaving a history of its own into our state, country, and world's fabric. It is about the people who have inhabited this land from the time of the Lenape, the first Dutch, German, and English settlers to today's melting pot of citizens.

Fundamentally, it is about the basic needs of all these peoples—food, clothing, and shelter—and how these needs, through different periods of history, have successfully been met. It is about people who, when basic needs were met, were able to govern themselves, create beauty with their art, music, and dance and then find ways to have fun in various recreational pursuits.

Lastly, it is about the spirit of all these people who through their wisdom, their spiritualism, and their crises have left us a historical legacy to be preserved. Even as we proceed into the twenty-first century and weave new history, there are children in our school who are direct descendants of original landgrant families. Their story needs to be told and preserved for all future generations.

Judith C. Kaiser

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Judy Kaiser wrote **Our Town's History: A Gift For All Times** for use in her third grade local history curriculum. Her town, Fredon, is a small rural town in northern New Jersey. Her choral reading performs exceptionally well. According to Judy, her students memorized their parts agreeably. According to our first-hand observation, her students did a marvelous job in their performance, quite obviously enjoying themselves. The news of this successful performance didn't take long to spread, and Judy soon found herself and her feeling-like-celebrities students performing in front of other schools and local gatherings.

This choral reading is a good basis for a local history study. It will perform well, just as it is, but don't forget, you have the opportunity to adapt it to accommodate your own area's history. Suggestions are made throughout to assist you in this endeavor. Any study of local history, naturally, is improved through specialized local research. If the Lenape once walked on your town's soil, this choral reading will work for you!

The natural correlation between local and state studies is exceptionally evident in the preparation for and performance of this choral reading. Hence, **Our Town's History** can be incorporated into your state studies curriculum, if you prefer.

We elected to designate "town" to represent the various types of localities, e.g., city, village, township, etc. It seems appropriate. After all, "town" has been used to indicate smallness (as in Smalltown, USA) and also used to refer to one of the biggest cities in the world—New York City.

Any way you use it, you and your students are sure to find **Our Town's History: A Gift For All Times** a pleasant and effective learning experience!

# Sample Pages

## OBJECTIVES

1. To give an adequate knowledge of the geography and history of students' town and a better understanding of their town today.
2. To learn that their town is made up of different land forms (such as mountains, hills, valleys, water bodies, and fertile, mineral-rich lands).
3. To learn that people who lived in earlier times of their town had the same basic needs, desires, and drives that we do.
4. To understand that the first people of their town made provisions for government, recreation, schooling, and worship, as well as, for the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.
5. To learn that their town's earlier inhabitants have helped shape their own way of life.
6. To learn that good transportation is uppermost in the growth of a community.
7. To learn that they, as individuals, through work and service, can make history that goes beyond their own lifetime.

## APPRECIATIONS

1. Appreciation of the basic necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter throughout their town's history.
2. Appreciation of the dependence of family, friends, and neighbors upon each other.
3. An awakened awareness of their town's history and their relationship to it.
4. A feeling of kinship with people who do or ever did reside in their town.
5. Appreciation of man's continued efforts to improve his way of life.
6. A growing appreciation of their town's heritage in relation to the history of the world.

# Sample Pages

## GENERAL DIRECTIONS AND NOTES

Approximate performance time: 20 minutes

The allocation of lines is based on students standing in 3 rows.

### PREPARATION

The most productive integration of the performance of this choral reading into your curriculum will be to precede it with a unit on local or state history. The earlier pages in *On The Go In New Jersey* are a good start. Don't forget to consult with your local service groups, long-time town residents, town halls, and historical societies. A unit on or review of the Lenape and colonial/revolutionary times is also in order. (Afton has materials to assist. See our web site: [www.aftonpublishing.com](http://www.aftonpublishing.com) and the last page of this booklet.) Produce props as you progress in these units or use the construction of the props as your means for review.

### PROPS

Part I: animal skins, artifacts, braided corn, clay pots, baskets, drums, flutes

Part II: large bell, old iron pit, seeds, old tools, Bible

Part III & IV: no props; rely on hand and body movements

**ADAPTING TO YOUR OWN LOCALITY:**

You can replace the general terms of America or New World with your town name. As you read through, you will probably find other lines that you can adapt to apply more specifically to your own locality.

Another idea to distinguish your own town is to compose a verse using local names. This was done in **Fredon's History: A Gift For All Times**. You may be able to adjust some of the names and make the verse suit your town. It followed the second verse in Part II and read as follows:

*Our names were Shafer, Coursen, Cole, and Snook.  
Hunts, Budds, Roys, and Andersons came to look.  
Condits, Cummings, and Hankinsons, too;  
Hardins, Griggs, and Smiths to name a few.  
If you look back into your ancestry,  
Perhaps you'll find one in your family tree!*

**SUGGESTED SIGNS:**

Part I: LOVE OF LAND  
TRADITIONS

Part II: PERSEVERANCE  
COURAGE  
FAITH

Part IV: WISDOM  
CHARITY  
SERVICE  
LOVE

**COSTUME BOX:**

Have each child decorate a cardboard box in which they will keep their necessary changes of costume and props. The addition of their name adds a nice touch. This box can stay at their feet throughout the performance. The minor costume changes necessary between parts will be accomplished easily, accompanied by music. Be sure to advise your audience not to clap during these intervals as it will break the mood and continuity of the performance.

**COSTUMES:**

Part I: Indian headbands with  
student-selected Indian names

Part II: Boys - dark vests and tri-corn hats  
Girls - white duster caps & aprons

Part III: Hats with town name; shirts with  
school or town name

Part IV: Hats with FUTURE printed across front;  
question mark stands up from the band

**SUGGESTED ENDING:**

Introduce your young group of townspeople by using a name especially invented to identify a member of your town, e.g., New Yorker. If there is not yet one, make one up, e.g., Fredonian. In order of family's arrival to the town, each child stands up, says his or her own name and the year his or her first family member settled in the town.

**THE SCRIPTS:**

There are two versions of the script.  
The following eight pages are for content.  
The next eight pages are photocopyable  
with blank lines to assign parts.

# Sample Pages

# OUR TOWN'S HISTORY: A GIFT FOR ALL TIMES

by Judith C. Kaiser

## I. THE PAST

(music, children enter)

All: Brr, it's a cold time . . . (slowly, drearily)  
Brrr it's a frigid time . . .

Solo: The wind is blowing;

Solo: The snow is snowing;

Solo: A child is crying;

Solo: An aged one dying;  
And yet we come, we come, we come. (with feeling)

Trio: A proud people are we,  
of faith, hope, and destiny.  
We'll weave a place into your heart (point to audience)  
and your history.

Quartet: Searching, always searching,  
for a peaceful land of our own  
Where maize, love, tradition,  
and families are grown.

# Sample Pages

All: The Lenape are we—a people of an ancient race.  
Lenapehoking we'll call this bountiful place.

Trio: Listen, my children, and listen well,  
For we are Lenape storytellers  
with much to tell.  
Our stories—yes, our stories—  
my young friends,  
Recount a love of this land and  
our proud traditions.

Duet: These are our gifts—yes, our gifts to you.  
It's how we lived, it's what we knew.

Solo: Love of land, how we've loved this land! (with feeling)

Solo: This Mother Earth of ours provided well;  
It's of her gifts that we must tell. (emphasize *her*)

Solo: Animals for food and fur, (hold up skins)  
An abundance of fish—all gifts from her.

Solo: Fine clay to mold into a pot— (hold up clay pots)  
Which worked quite well to keep food hot!

Solo: Many plants for varied needs— (hold up baskets)  
 Colors from berries, baskets from reeds.

Solo: Strong stones we used to make our tools— (hold up stones or artifacts)  
 No easy task; there were no schools.

Solo: Corn! (We called it maize.) (hold up corn on the cob)  
 It kept us strong through all our days.

Quartet: Trees provided lumber, logs, and bark.  
 We kept warm in wigwams and longhouses, too,  
 Then traveled on water by dugout canoe.

Solo: Music to our ear and heart,  
 Mother Earth played her part:

Solo: . . . a flute of elder (flute-player)

Solo: . . . a whistle, too

Solo: . . . a drum of skin (drum beat)

Solo: . . . a voice within

Solo: . . . the song of the bird  
 . . . always heard.

All: Treasure these gifts that we give: (say slowly—with strength & feeling)  
 The gift of land,  
 The gift of tradition.

All: Good-bye and remember!

Good-bye and remember! (wave)

## Sample Pages



(music - costume change)





#### IV. THE FUTURE

- All: Look at us and you will see (point to self)  
The history that is yet to be.  
We are the future standing here;  
We've heard the past, loud and clear.
- Solo: We see the work that has been done. (emphasize *we* each time)
- Solo: We know the battles that you have won.
- Solo: We've touched aged hands of those that know;
- Solo: We've trusted the values that they bestow.
- Solo: We've felt the needs of those around.
- Solo: We've loved this precious country's ground.
- All: We need your guidance along our way—  
There're so many choices for us today!
- Trio: Help us ne'er forget the Lenapes' gifts  
Of love of land and of tradition;
- Trio: Recall the pioneers' gifts of the past  
For what they bestowed must certainly last:
- Solo: . . . Dignity of hard work and might
- Solo: . . . Courage to always do what's right
- Solo: . . . Perseverance we're all to find
- Solo: . . . Faith that keeps us strong, well, kind
- Solo: In body, spirit, heart, and mind.
- Duet: Now it's our turn for gifts to give—  
Ones that in the future will live,  
Ones that can be passed along,  
Ones to keep our children strong.
- Solo: We do not know what lies ahead, (emphasize *Hopes*)  
So, what we give are *Hopes*, instead.
- Trio: We hope for *Wisdom* to see and solve (emphasize *Wisdom*)  
The many problems that will evolve.
- Trio: We hope for *Charity* toward those with fears (emphasize *Charity*)  
To help them and to soothe away their tears.

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