

To: Sen. Curry, Rep. Roberts, and Distinguished members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee

Fr: Rebecca Graham, President Emeritus, Maine Ulster Scots Project, Edgecomb ME

Re: LD 2164 -*An Act to Establish the Maine-Ireland Trade Commission and Improve Collaboration with Ireland*

Date: February 6, 2024

Sen. Curry, Rep. Roberts and distinguished members of Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am writing in my personal capacity as past president of the Maine Ulster Scots Project (MUSP) in support of LD 2164 with a request for modification in the mission and title of the effort.

While Northern Ireland is politically a separate country from the Republic of Ireland, they share joint efforts to market tourism, advance cultural learning and build peaceful communities for the future. For these reasons, and because Maine has a very long and deep history as a place of settlement from all areas of Ireland, and particularly present day Northern Ireland, I am respectfully asking the committee to consider small amendments that would broaden the mission, scope and impact of the proposed effort. The proposed amendments are attached, and the importance of these changes cannot be understated, not only to honor our history but advance what our esteemed former Senator, George Mitchell originally began 26 years ago.

The Maine Ulster Scots Project was established in 2006 with a mission of saving and sharing the stories and history of the individuals who left what is present day Northern Ireland, then Ireland, and settled in Maine beginning in 1718. These individuals and their descendants have played a consistent role in shaping Maine culture, politics, and legal structures for more than 300 years. The connections are not only mirrored in places names like Belfast, Bangor, and Newry, but their names can be found in this legislature today with one famous descendent currently living in the Blaine house – also a gift of one of the decedents, James G. Blaine whose grandfather originated from banks of the river Foyle.

In 2018, the Maine Ulster Scots Project, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Bureau, The Ulster Scots Agency, and the Scottish Government USA held a 3 day conference at Bowdoin College bringing scholars and enthusiasts from around the globe to share their research and stories of the people from the north of Ireland who settled here and the 300 years of flow from the shores of the north coast of Ireland that continued to settle here. At the end of the conference, we renewed our commitment to build stronger ties between our regions through education, research, and cooperation.

During the conference, the descendent of John Mitchell, and Ulster decedent, who drafted the maps that formed the Aroostook border settling the 1839 Aroostook war through the Webster-Ashburton treaty, presented MUSP with his original copies now held at the Osher Map Library at the University of Southern Maine. Mitchell's maps were also referenced in the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the American Revolution.

Then the pandemic hit, and we tragically lost our biggest champion, former Northern Ireland Bureau director, Norman Houston. While efforts were already underway for a much larger celebration

connected to Maine's Bicentennial, they shifted radically to the use of virtual tools that connected year 5 & 6 pupils from Northern Ireland to students in Maine sharing early migration stories in their own communities and providing virtual tours to settler archaeology sites in Maine that offered touch stones to build contemporary learning on. Students were asked to ponder what forces were necessary to make individuals leave everything familiar to travel to a place very different and hostile, with no chance of return, as a way of introducing contemporary migration issues. A copy of the graphic novel the students produced is attached to this testimony.

A significant gift was commissioned to honor the Bicentennial and the 300 years of connects between our shores that could only be celebrated through the use of the same virtual tools, and turned into a short movie instead that has yet to have it's Maine follow up created. You can view the story of the Maine Drum here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ns5qLO-VmQ>

The opportunities in Northern Ireland and Ireland are equally important for Maine and pursued collectively, trade efforts would be empowered more robustly because of their different political governance. The film industry, educational opportunities and exchange grants are supported through the British Council, and several all-Ireland Funds that otherwise would not be accessible.

More importantly, our own history mirrors the complexity of the waves of immigration from the island presenting an opportunity to model a tangible program that honors Maine's role in peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and offers us lessons to address our own needs to address the frontier past with our indigenous communities. By building an all- Ireland Trade Commission, Maine will truly be a leader.

For all these reasons, I hope you will consider broadening the impact and approach of the proposed commission that honors Maine's history, and the island's complexity appropriately.

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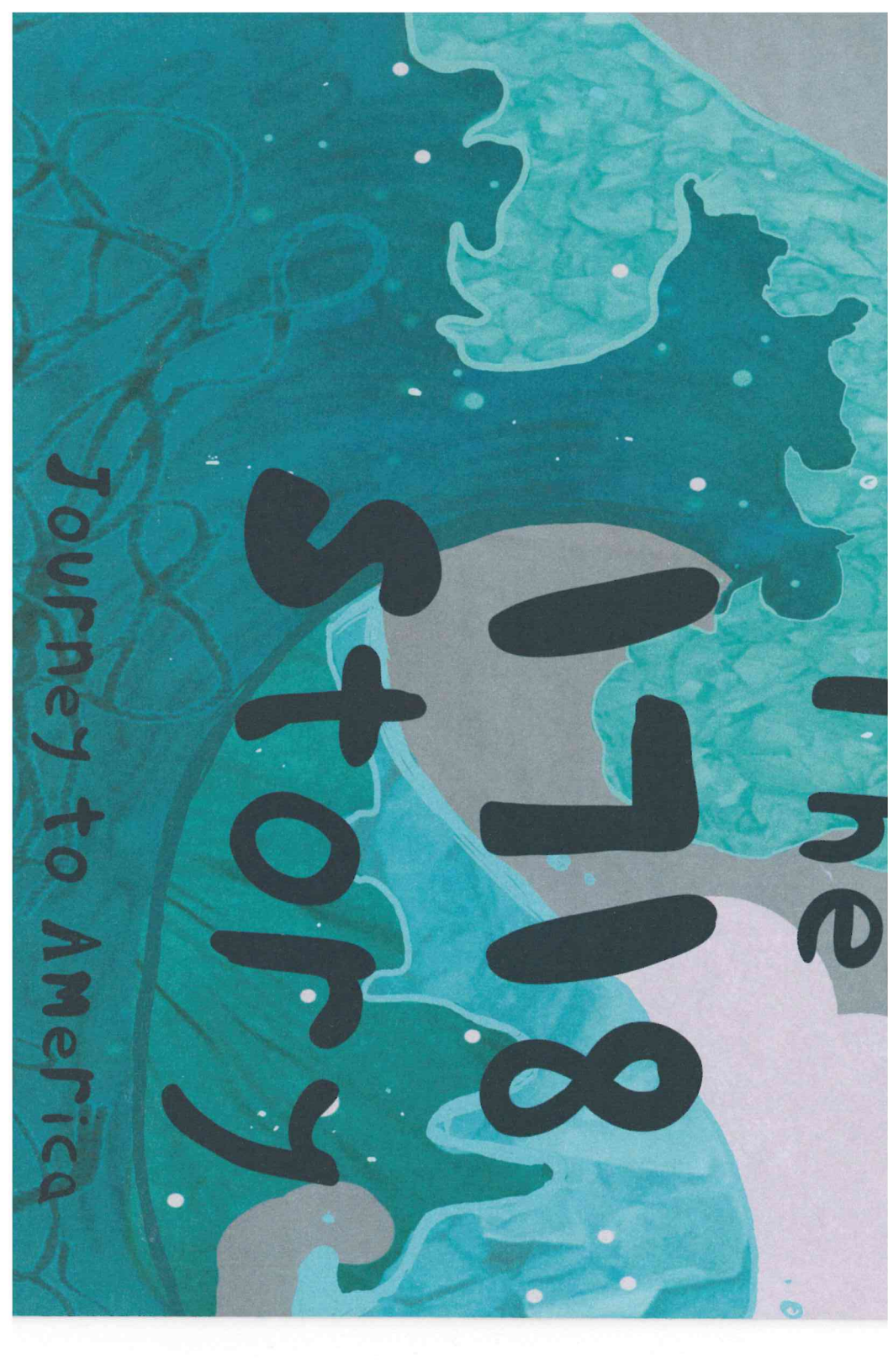
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The 1482 Story

Journey to America

A Story by

Ballyhackett & Bellarena Primary Schools



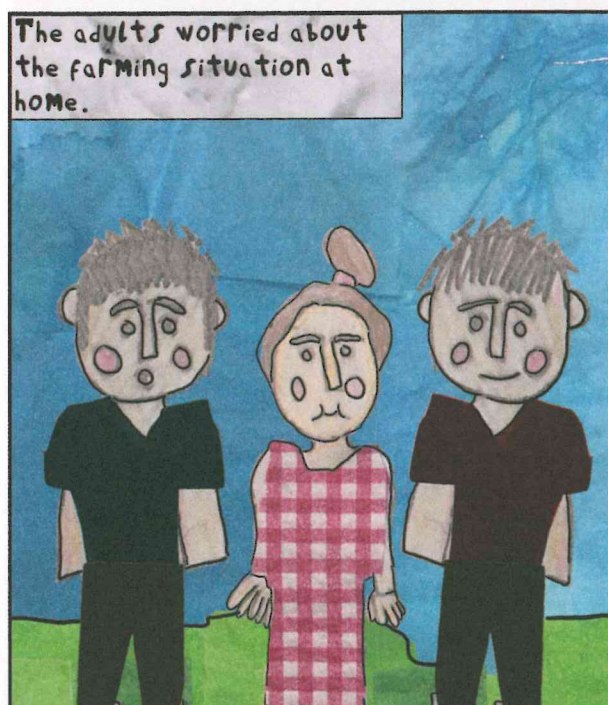
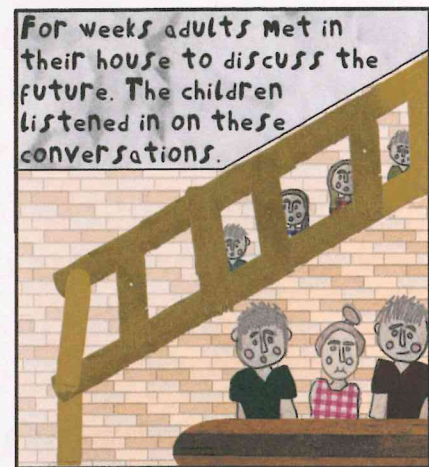
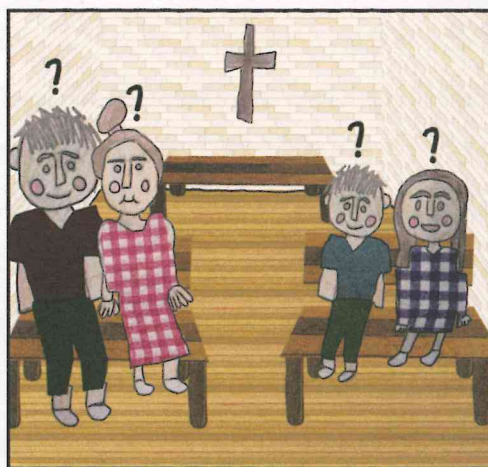
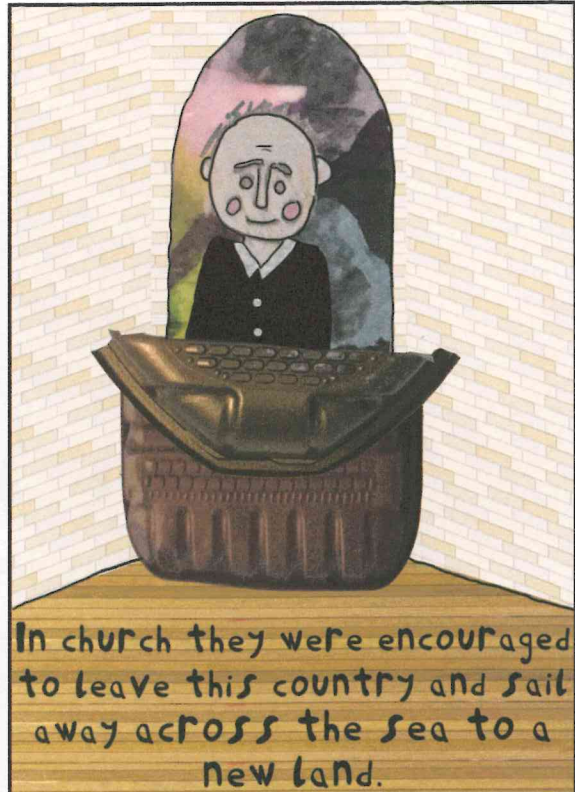
The 1718 Story

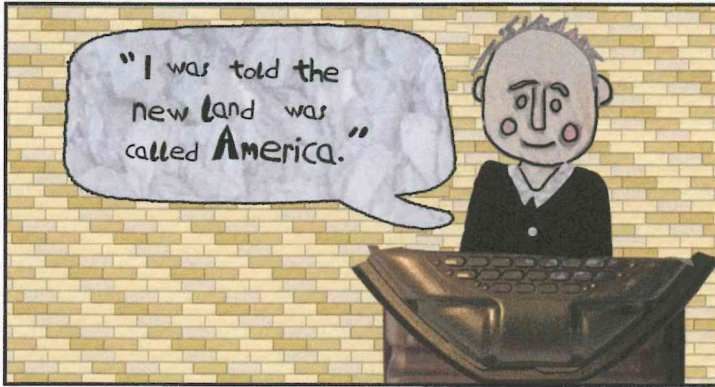
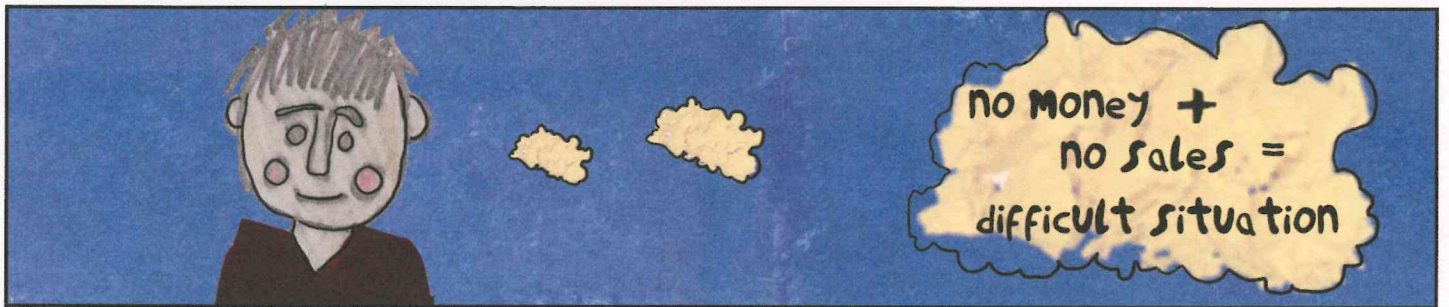
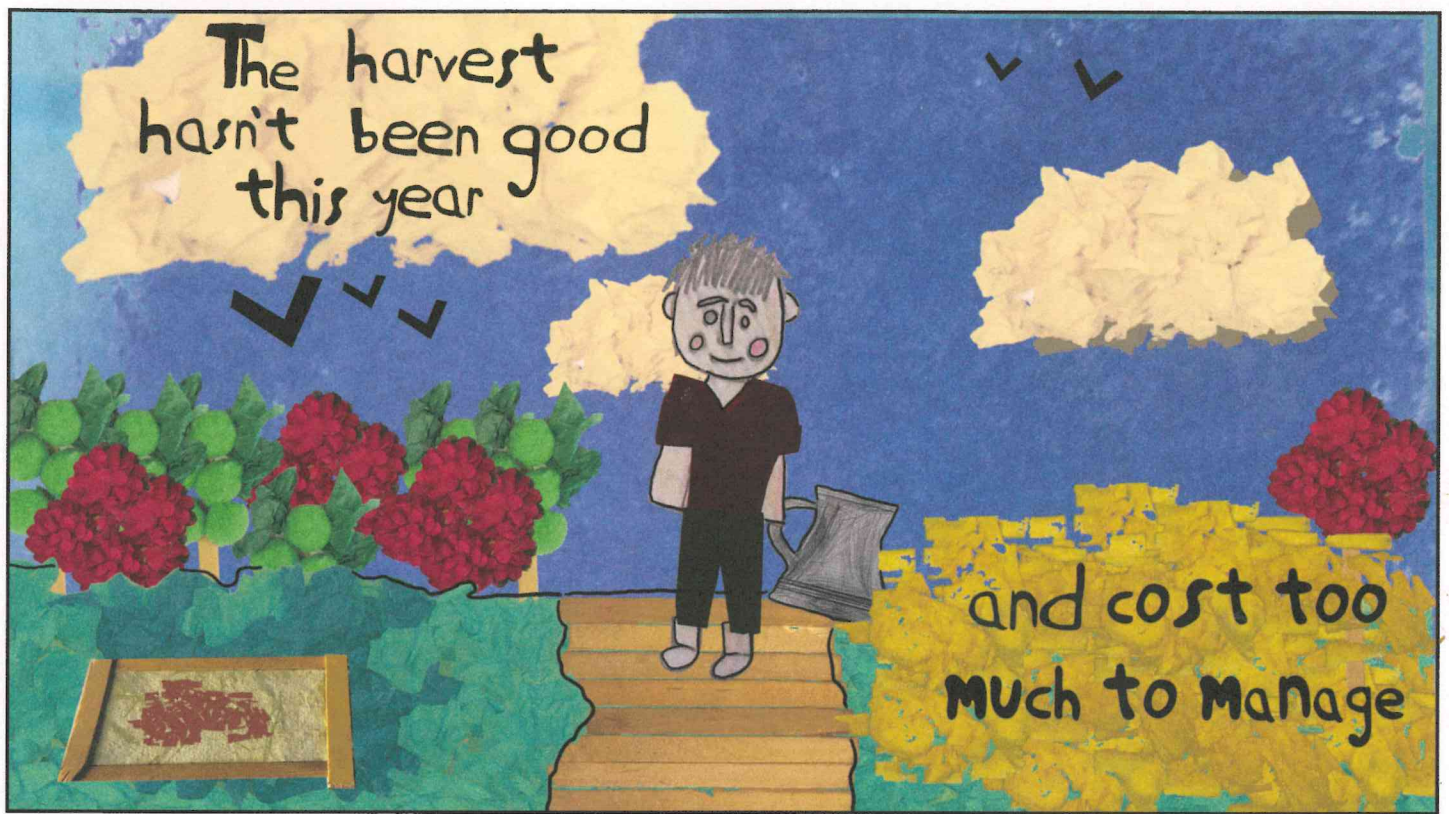
Recognised as the first major organised migration of Ulster-Scots Presbyterians to the American colonies, the 1718 migration was comprised largely of people from The Bann Valley, County Londonderry. It reveals significant connections in terms of history, heritage, language, culture and identity to the area, within which exists a unique and rich narrative detailing the experiences of those arriving in America, but also of those left behind. Indeed, it would not be possible to fully understand and explore the lives of the Ulster-Scots community in Ulster and America without tracing the journey made by so many to the New World.

Often cast as both the 'people with no name' and as a community imbued with a migratory spirit, the Ulster-Scots are synonymous with mass emigration to foreign shores from the 17th Century onwards. Their journeys underscore the 'push' and 'pull' dynamics of migration, propelled by a desire to seek happier, freer lives across the ocean.



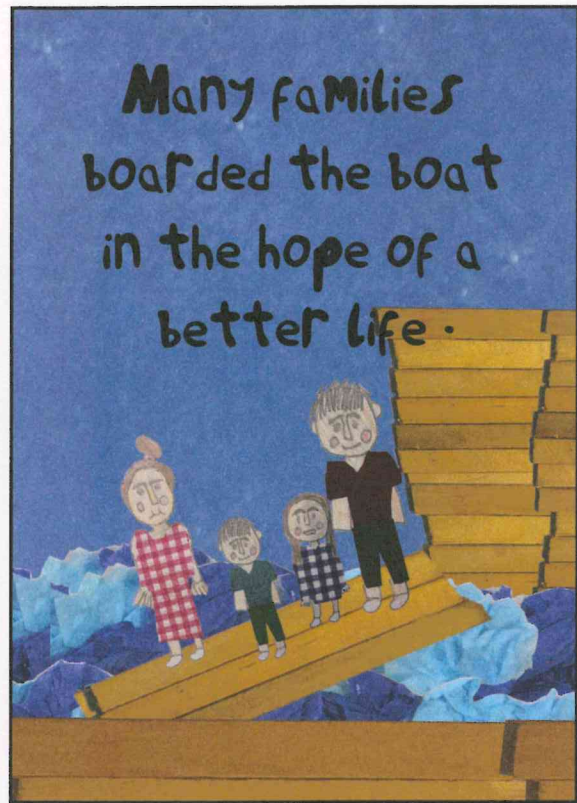
During the 18th Century, people from the Bann Valley were encouraged to find new lives in America.



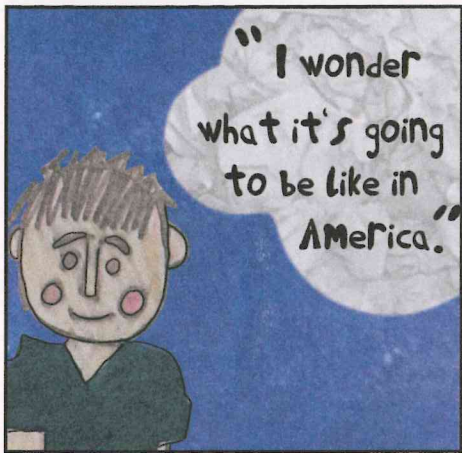




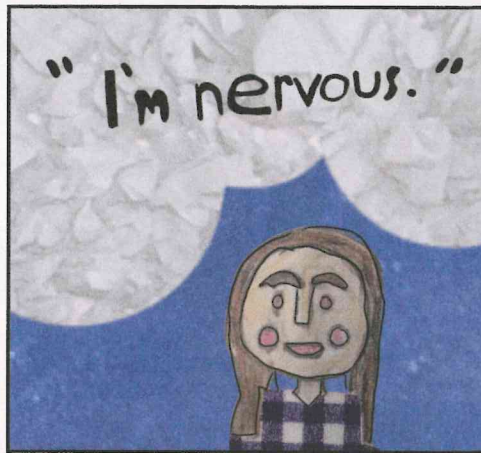
I'm very excited about the boat journey.



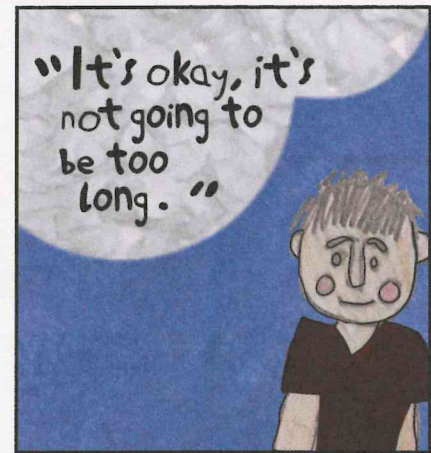
Many families boarded the boat in the hope of a better life.



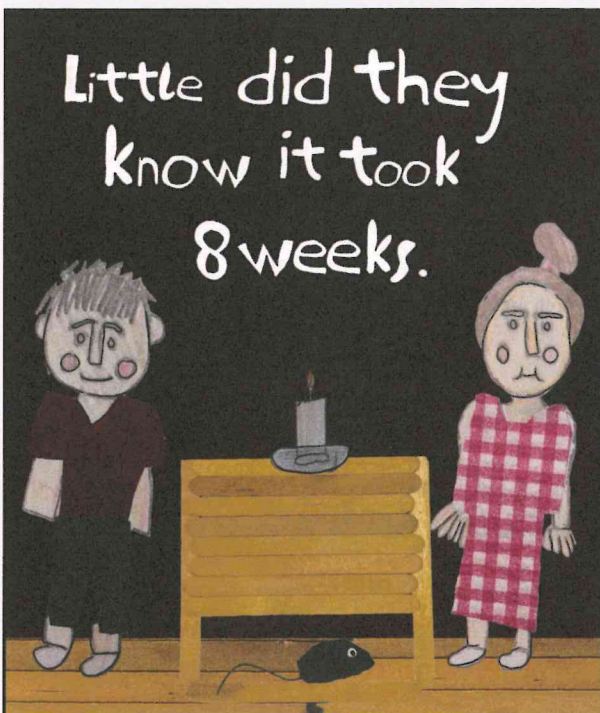
"I wonder what it's going to be like in America."



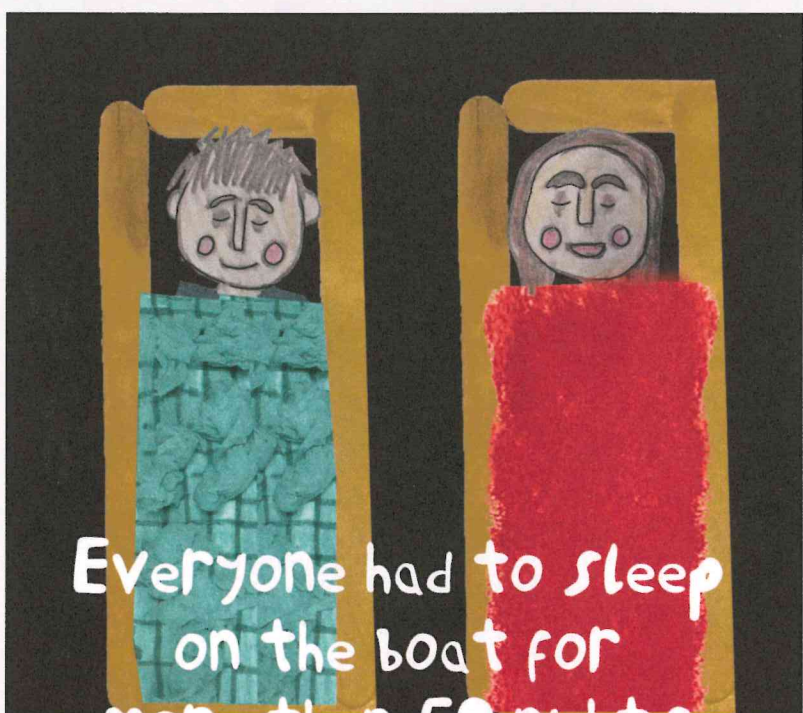
"I'm nervous."



"It's okay, it's not going to be too long."

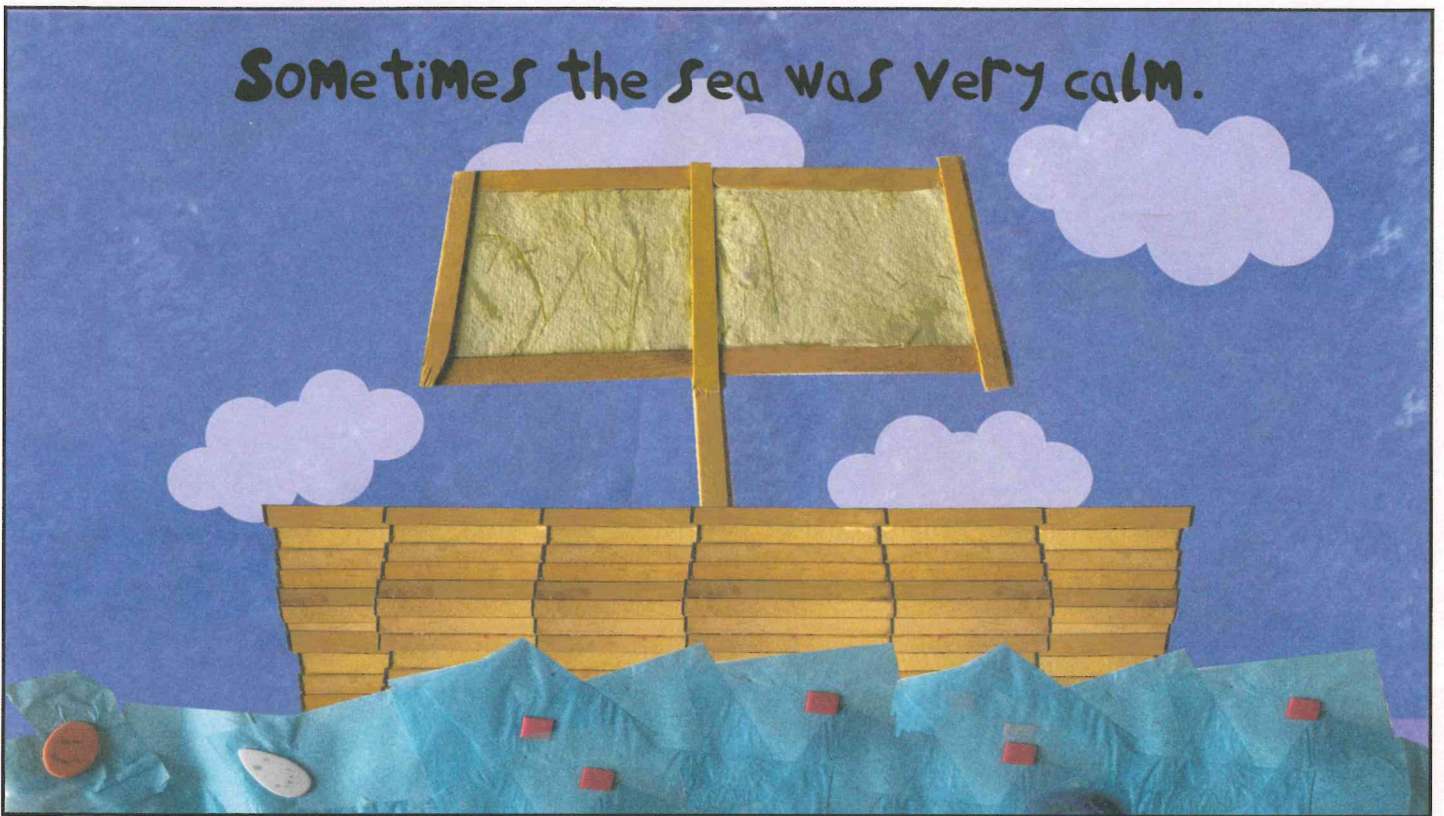


Little did they know it took 8 weeks.



Everyone had to sleep on the boat for

Sometimes the sea was very calm.



Then their exciting new adventure took a turn for the worse.



CRASH



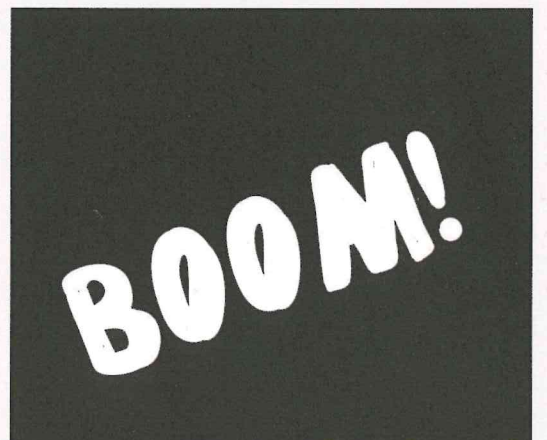
"What was that?"

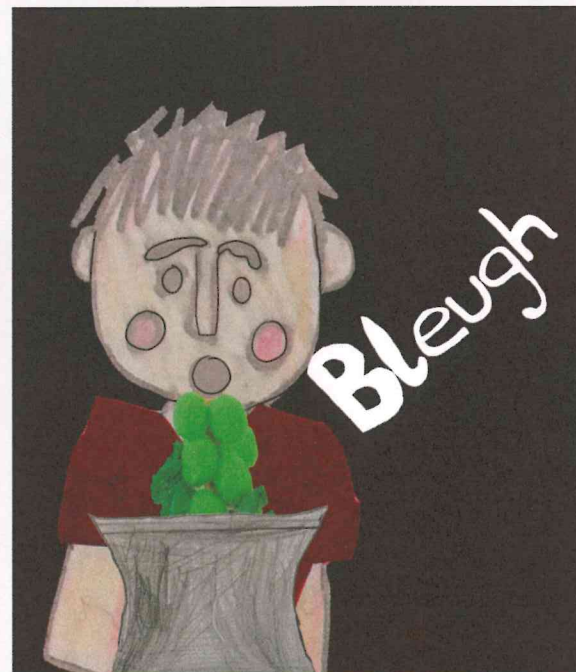
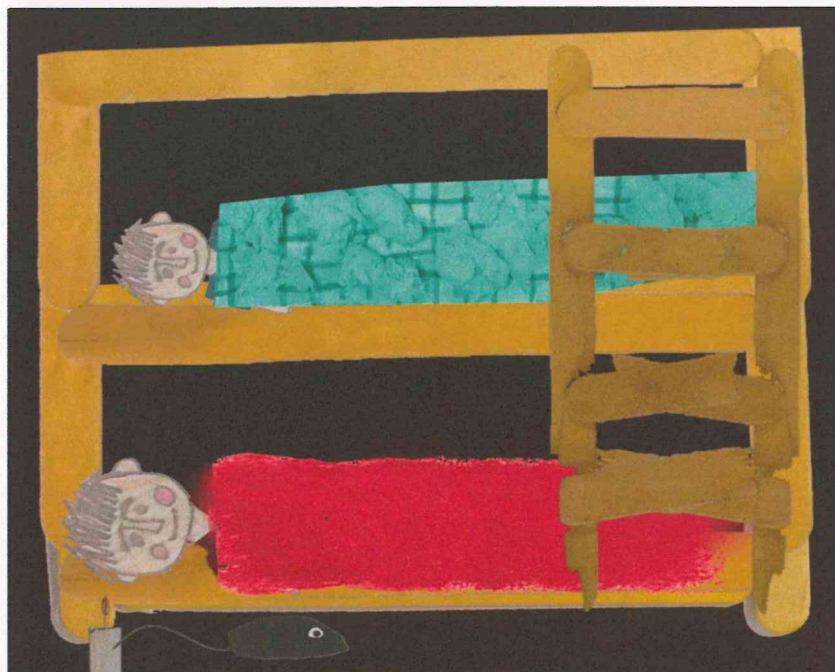
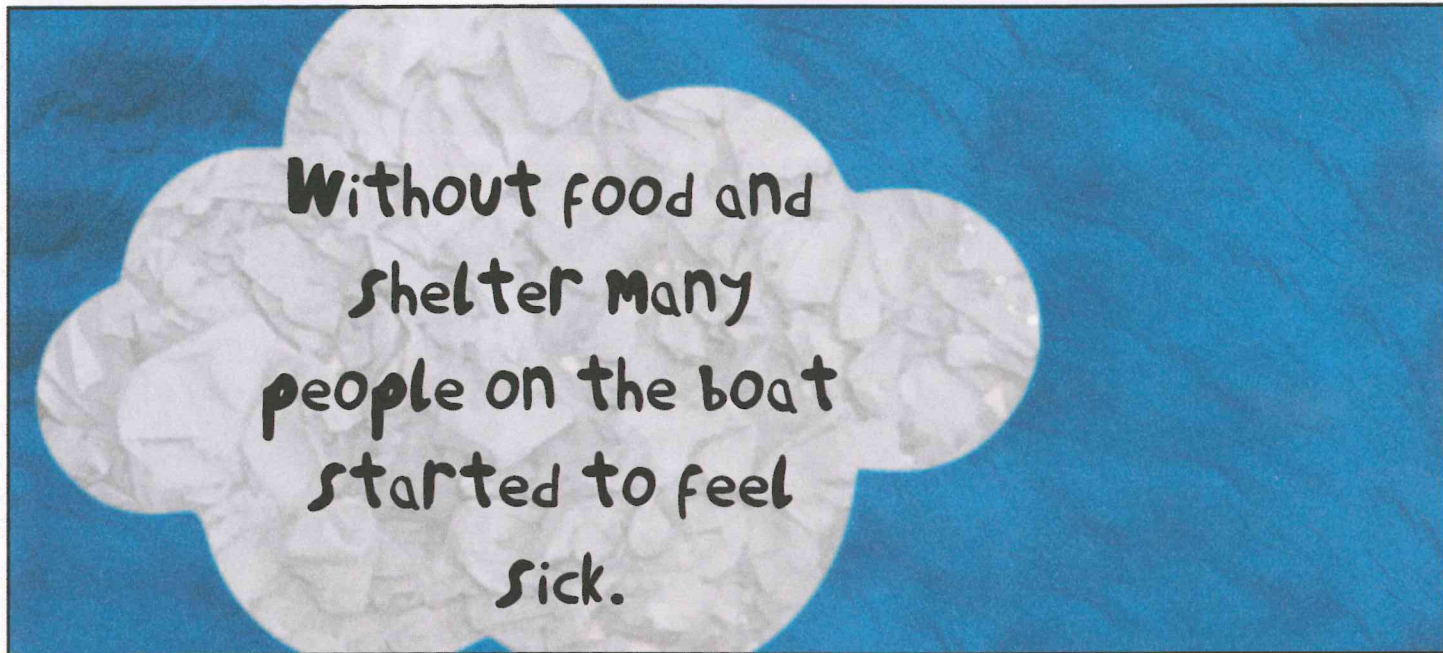
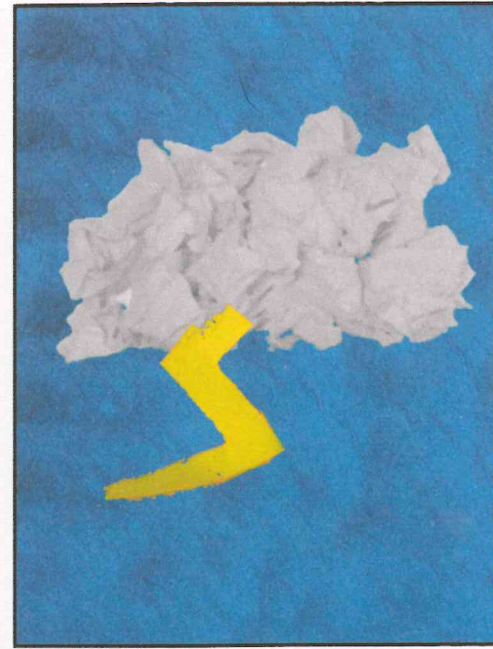
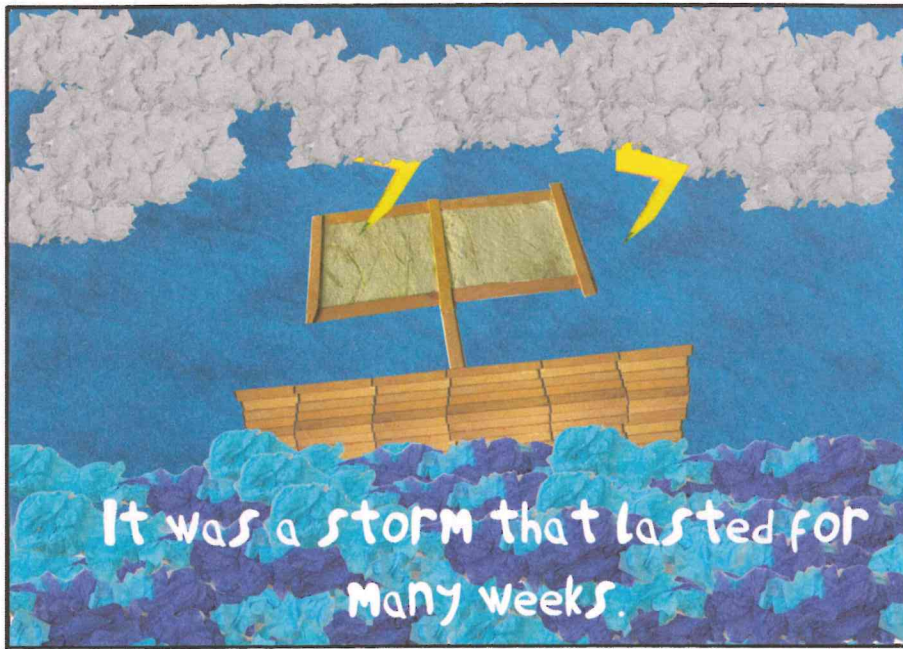


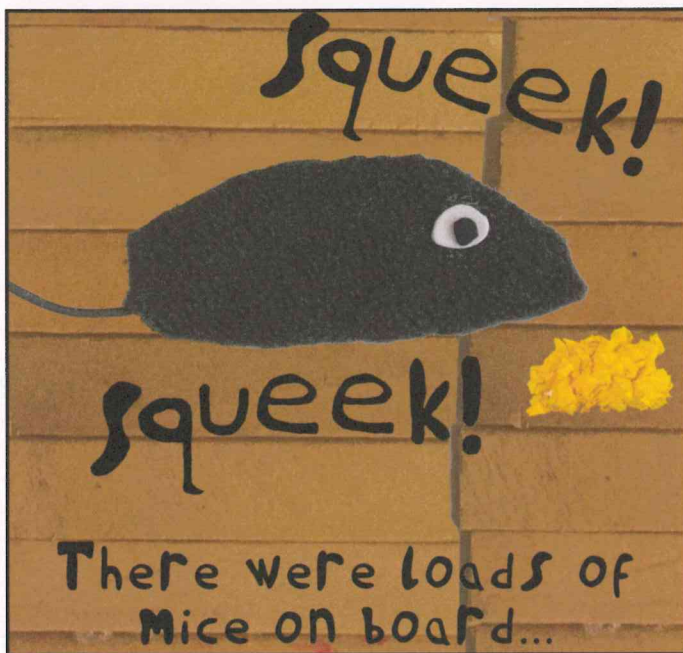
"I don't like this."



BOOM!



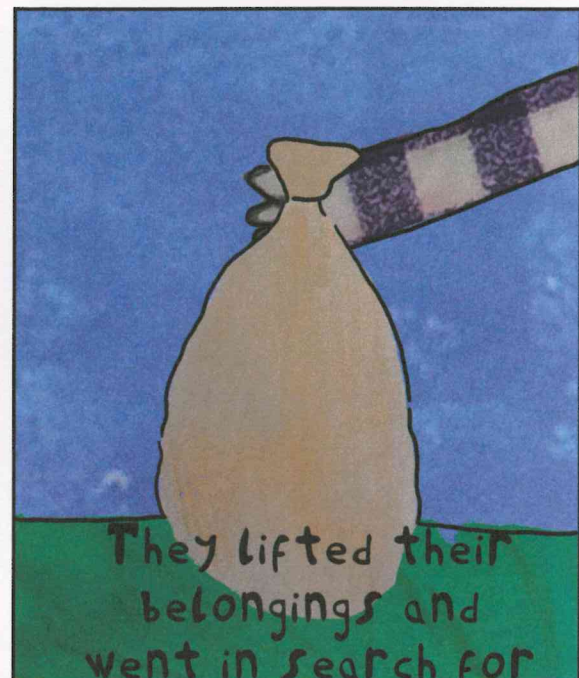
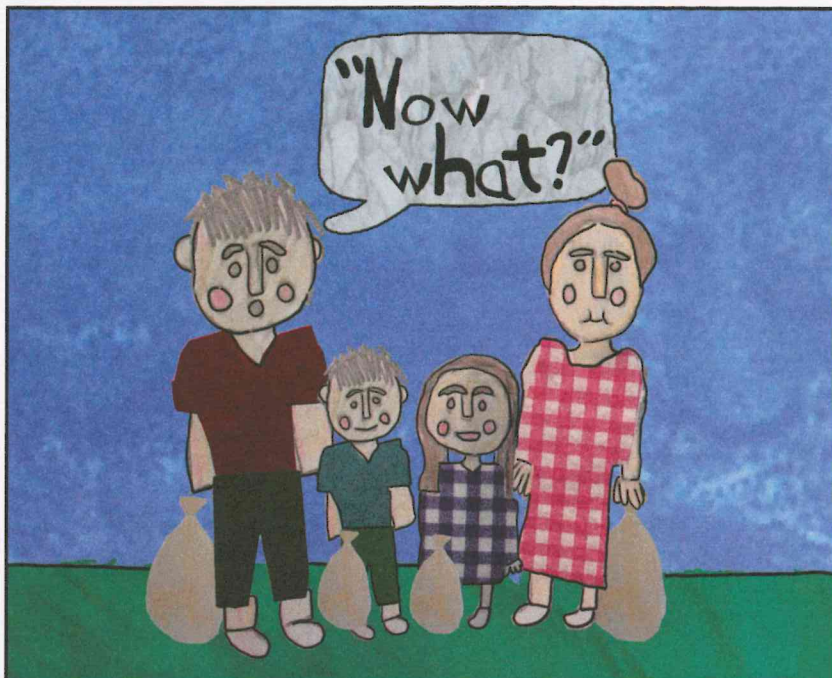
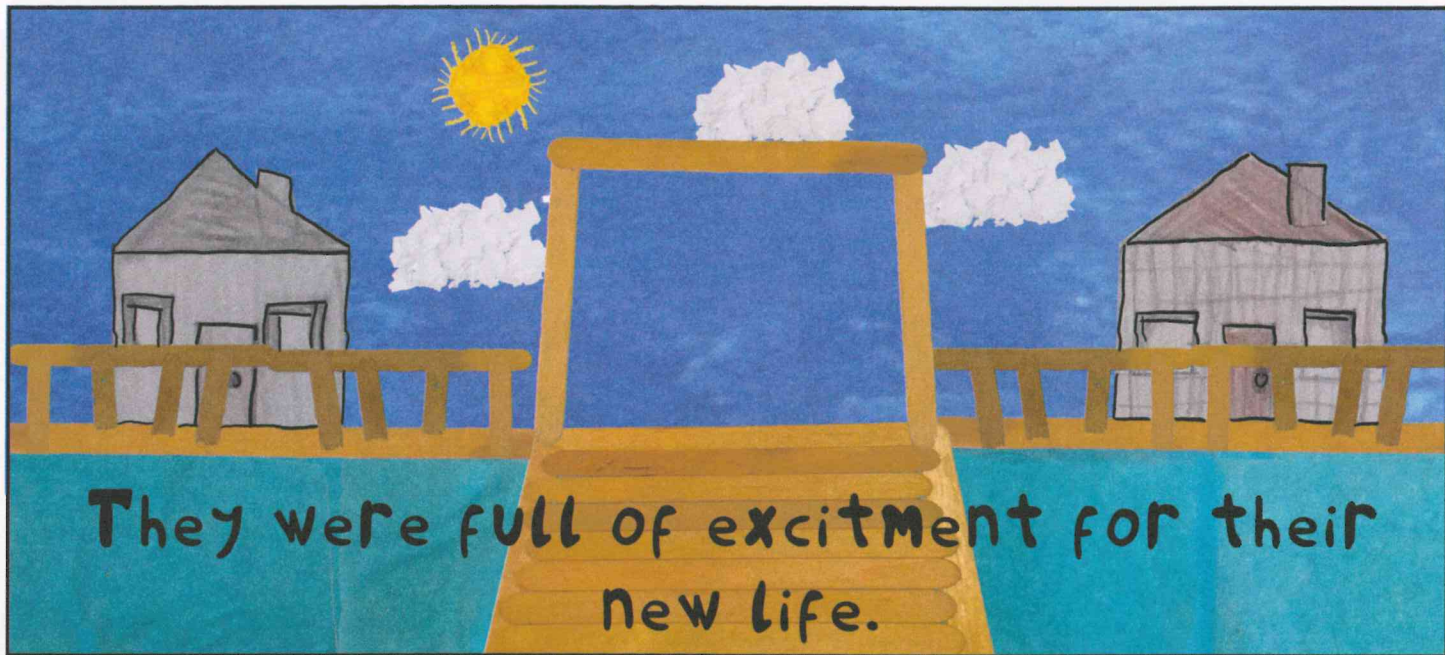


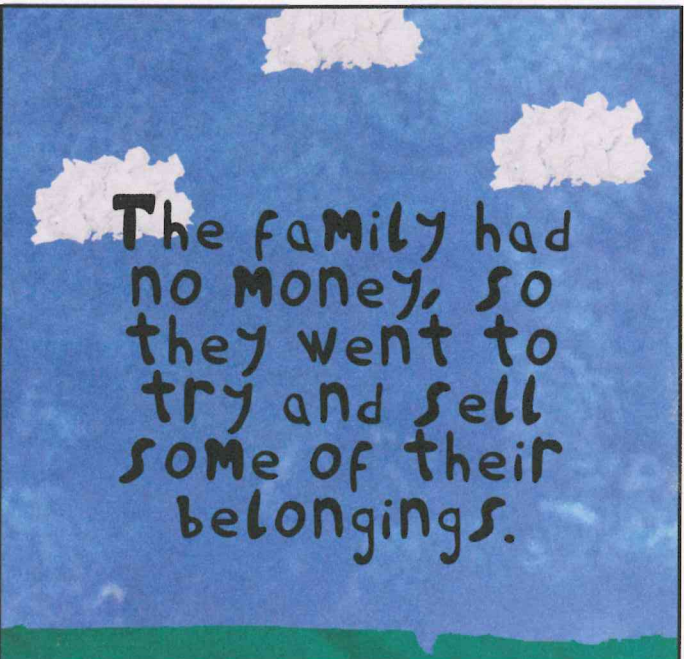
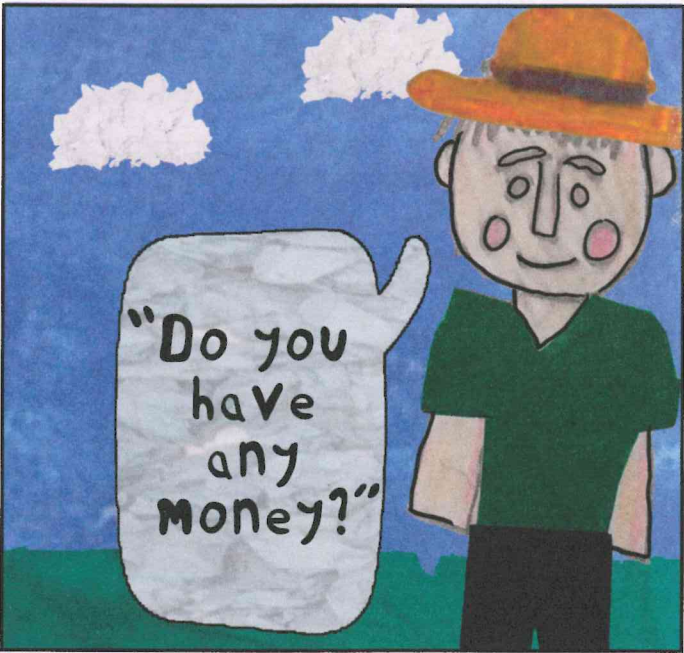


Everyone wanted to get off the boat. They all wondered if the journey was worth it.



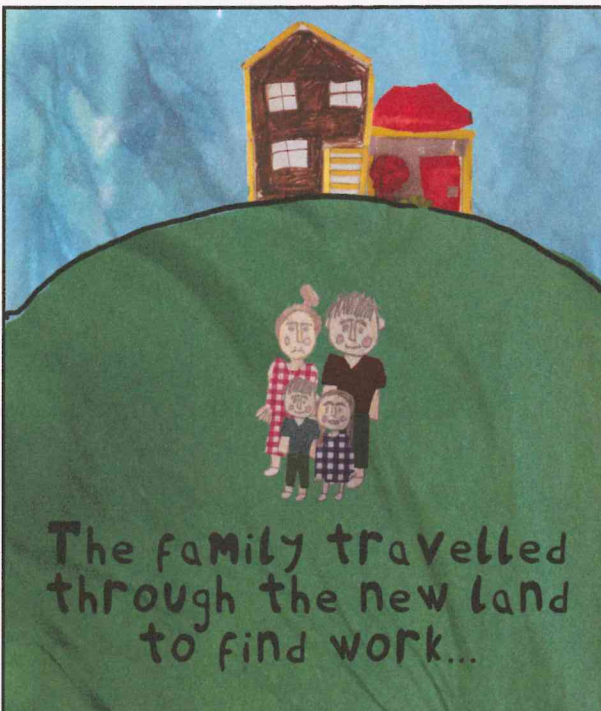
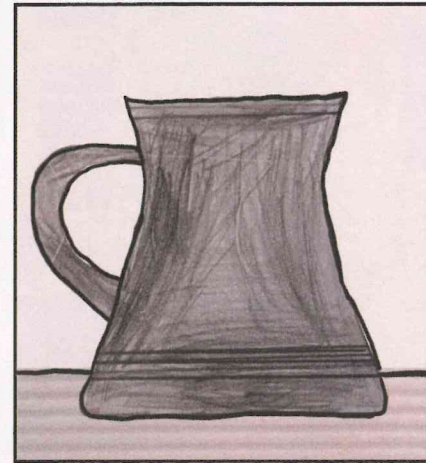
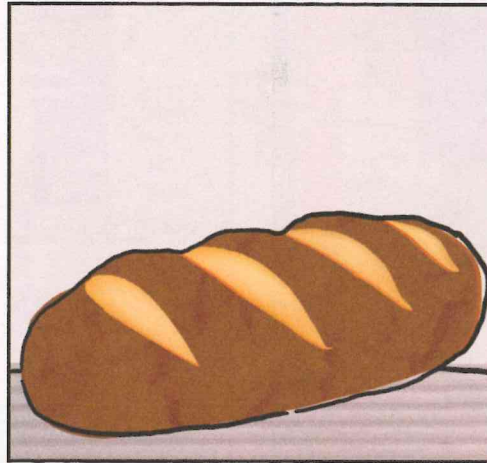
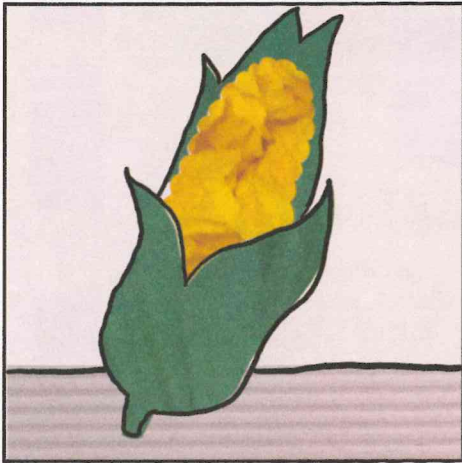
The families
were relieved
to arrive.







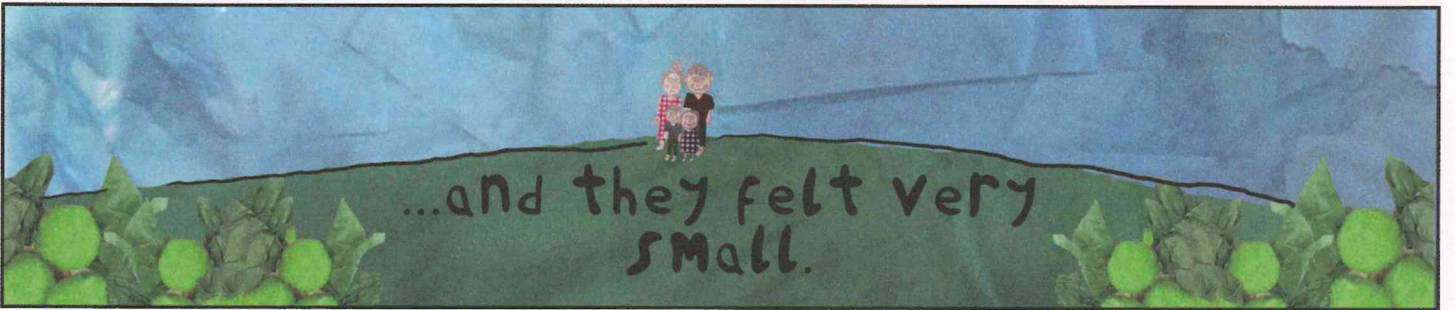
They traded the ring so they could buy food & drink.



The family quickly discovered that
America was a very large place...



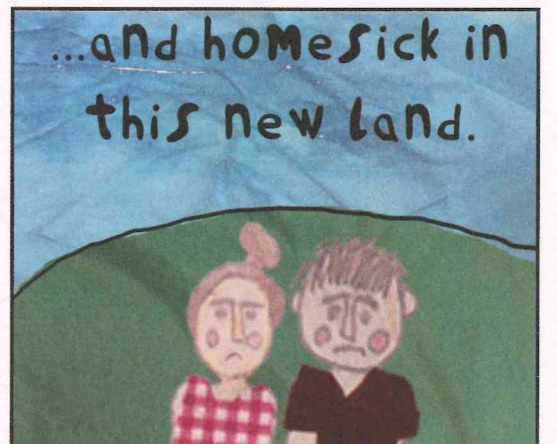
...and they felt very
small.



The family
travelled far to
find work.



...and homesick in
this new land.



As they
travelled
through
America to
the frontier...

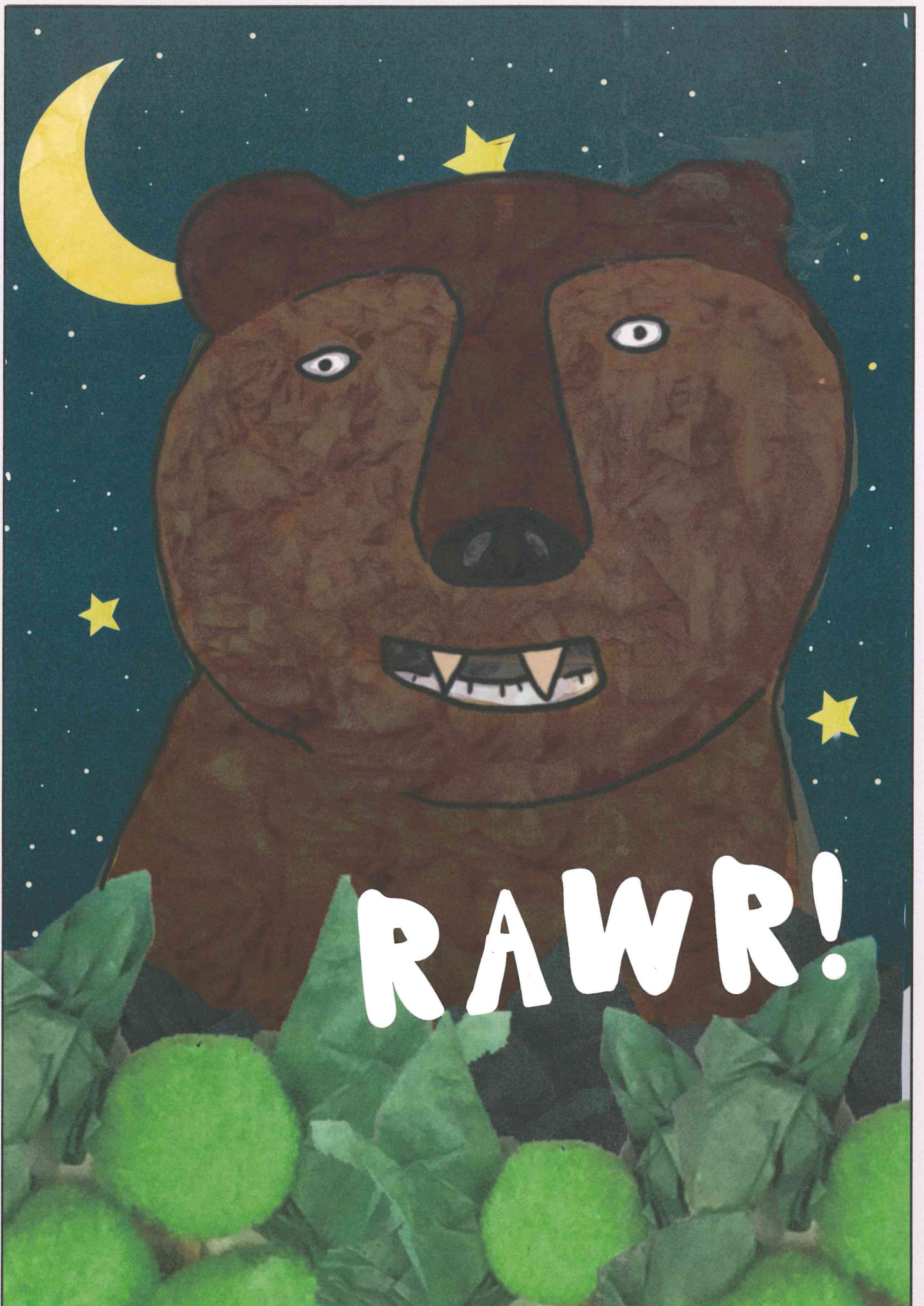
...they discovered...

...New foods

...New landscapes

And even
new Animals!

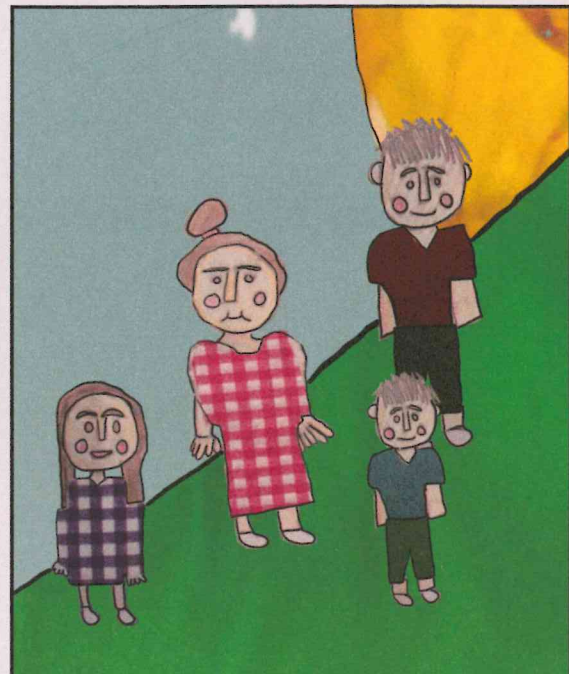
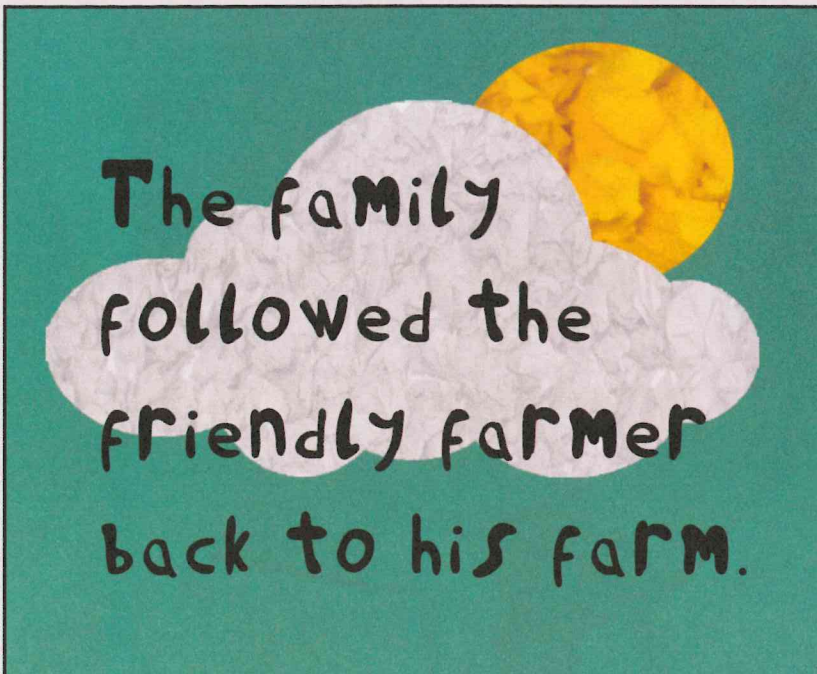




RAWR!

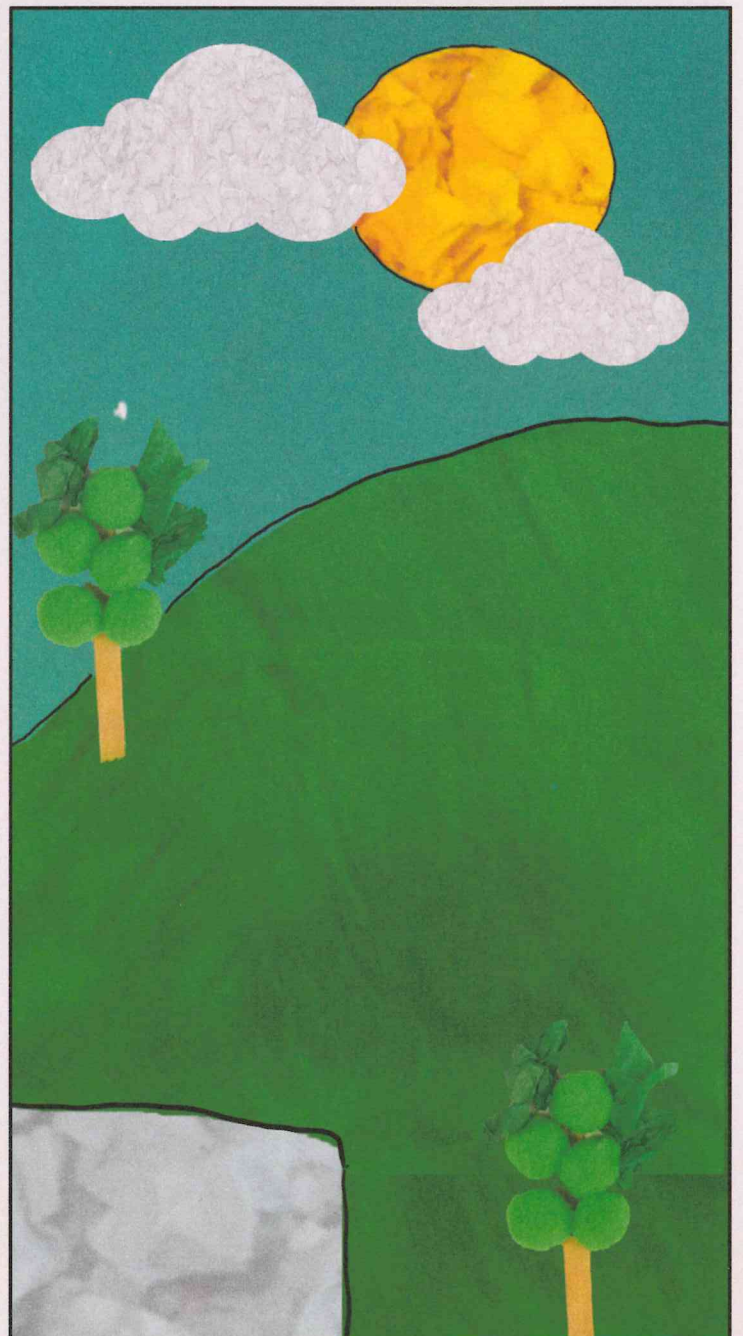
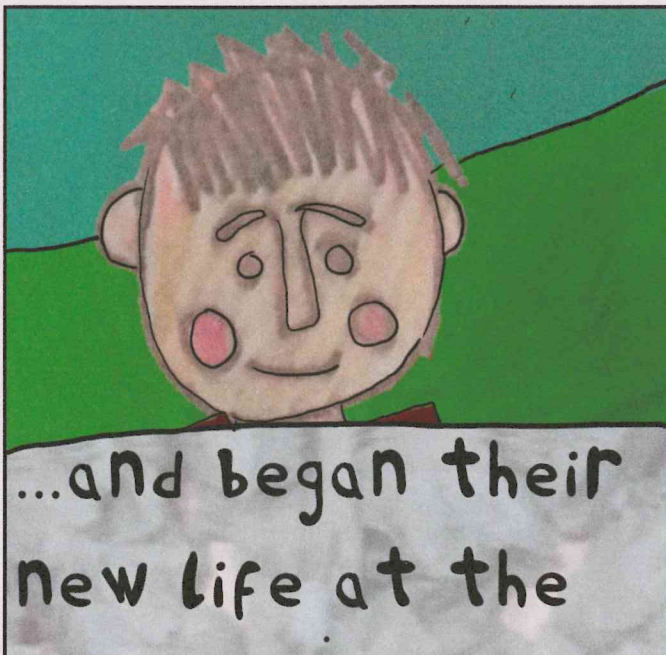


Some people they met along the way were happy to help.



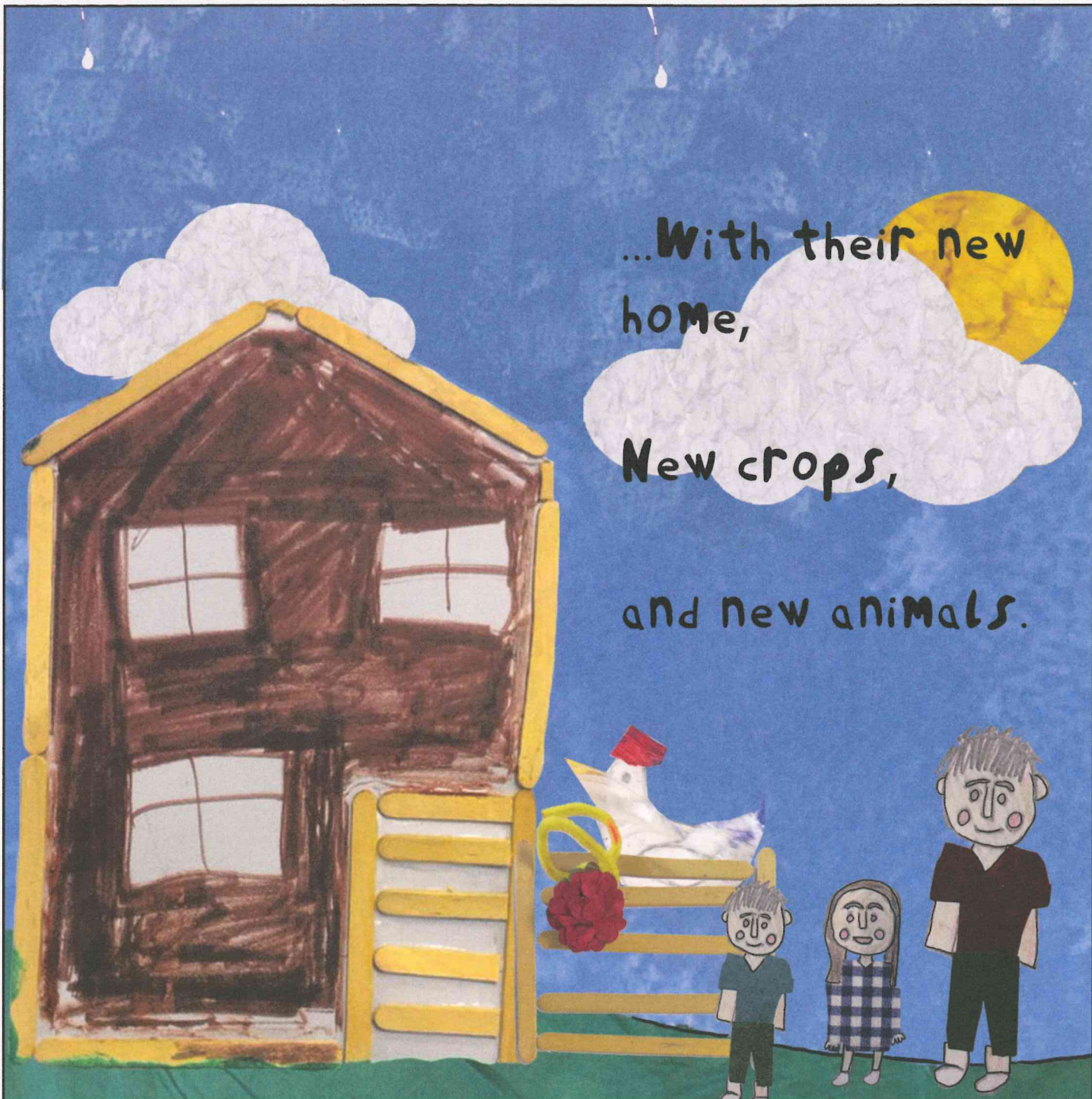


They found work on the farm...





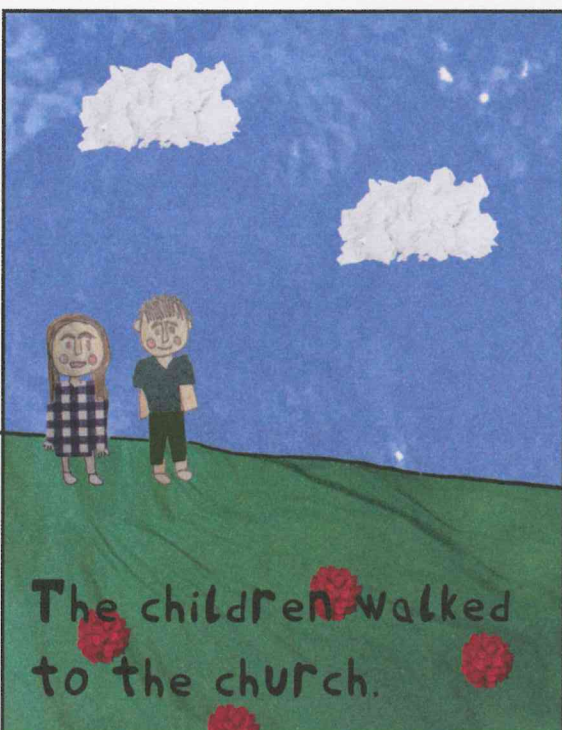
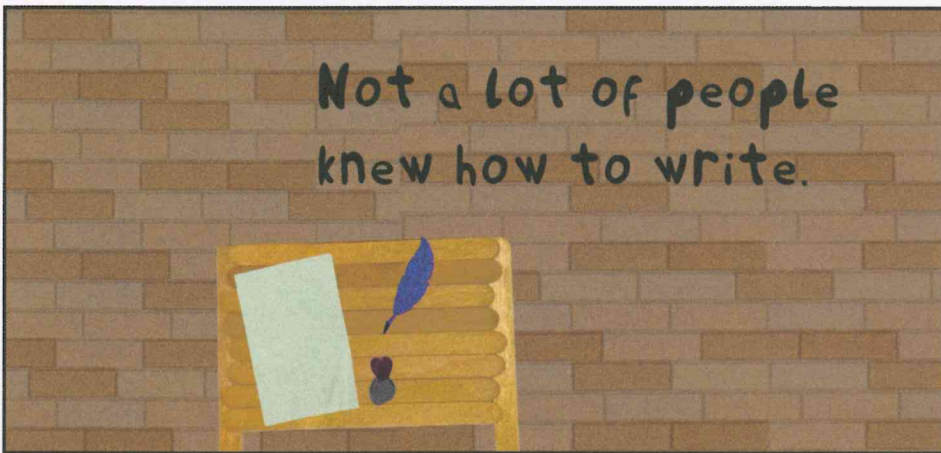
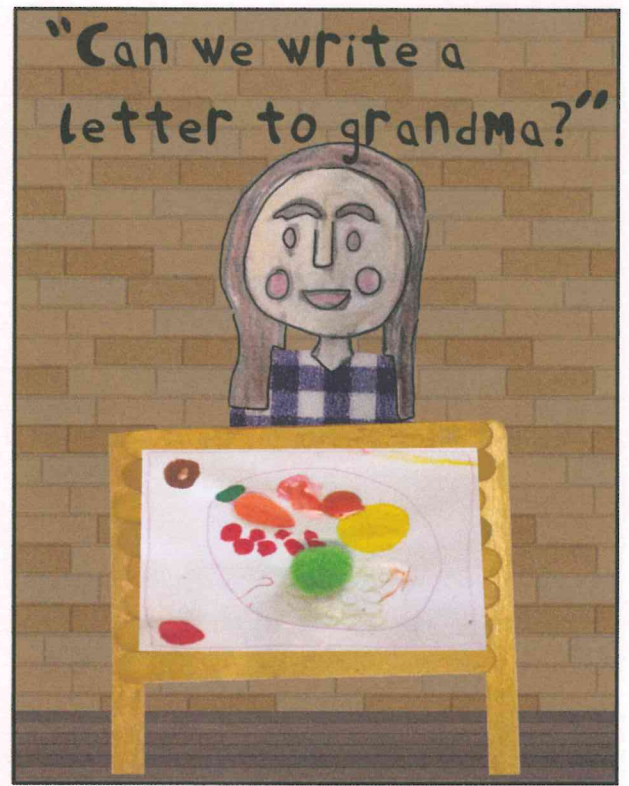
Finally the family was enjoying their new life in America...

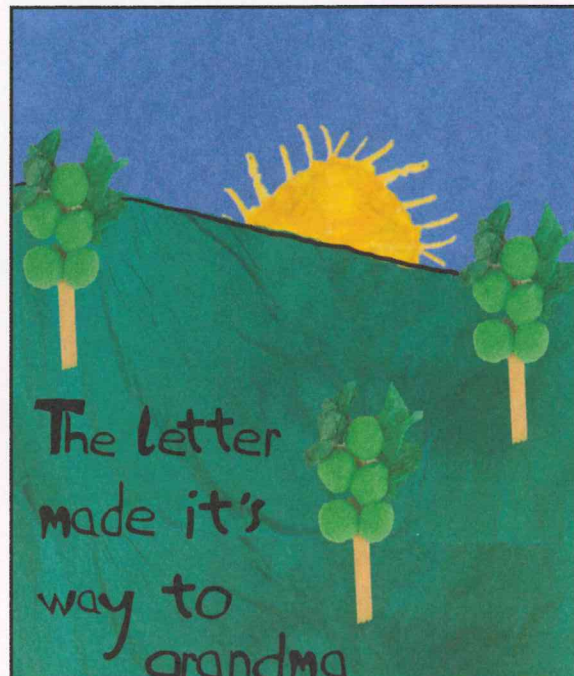
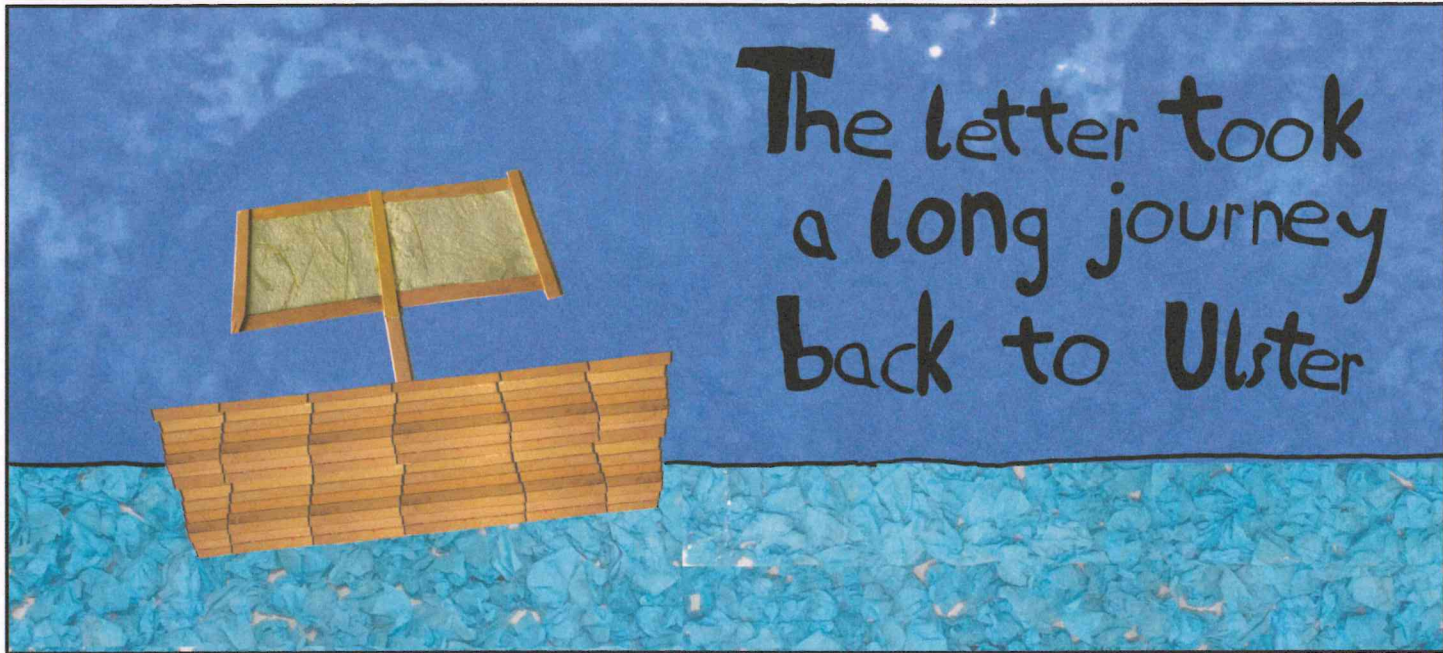
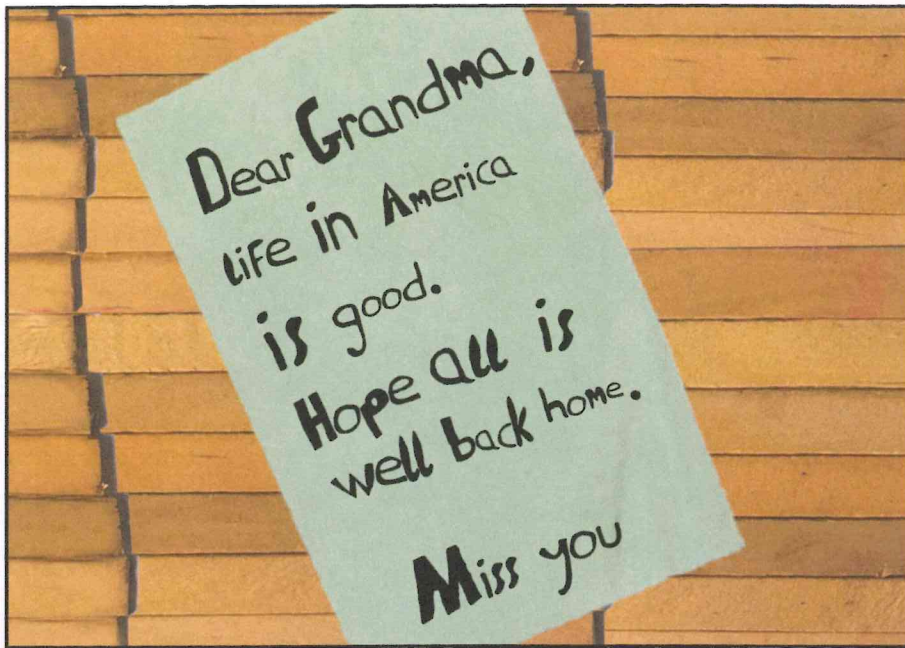


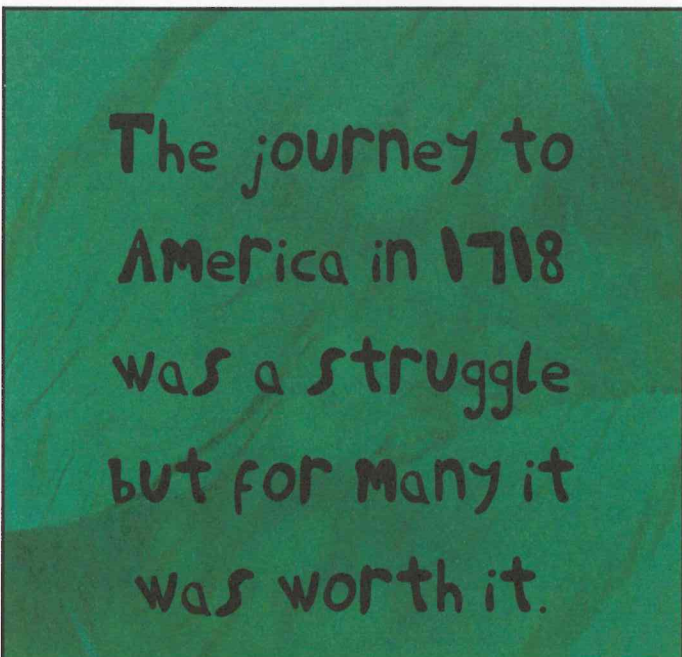
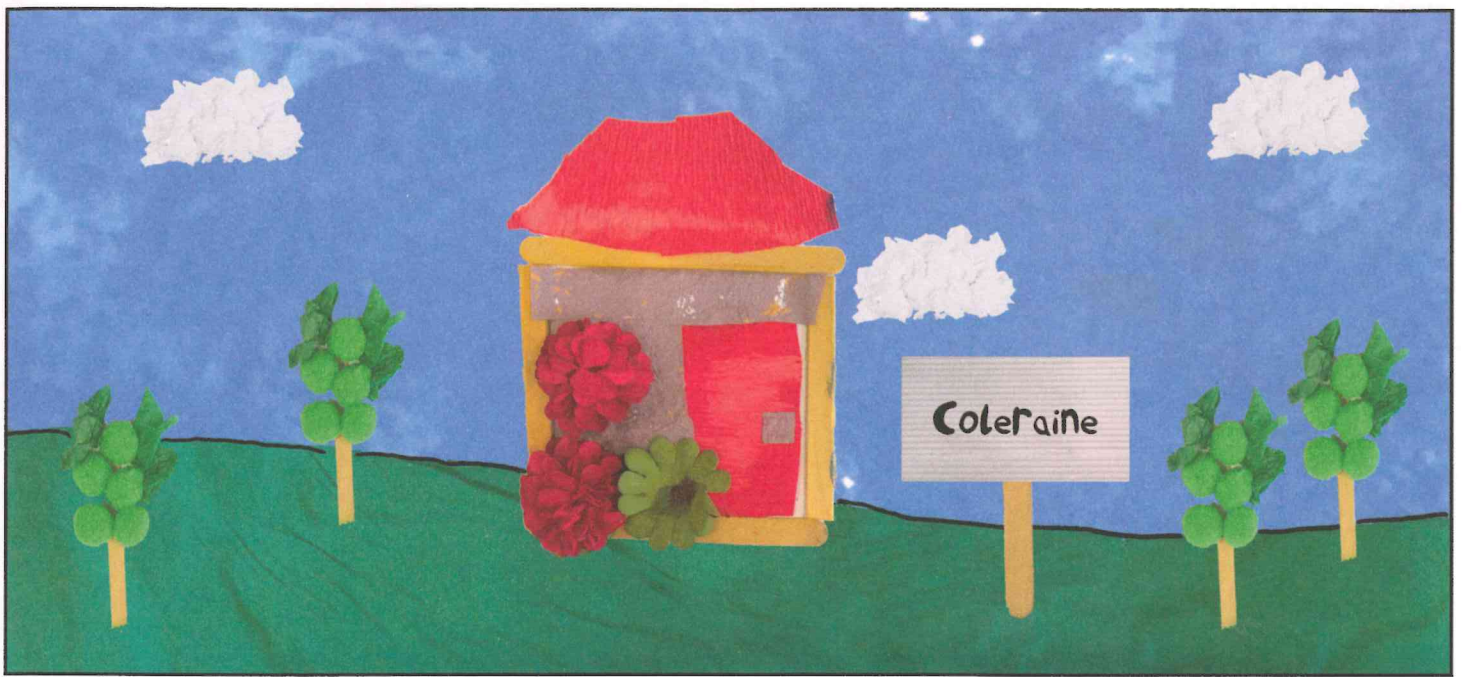
...With their new home,

New crops,

and new animals.







The 1718 Story

Journey to America

This graphic novel recounting the story of the 1718 migration has been created by primary school children from Ballyhackett P.S. and Bellarena P.S. in Co. Londonderry. The generation of the graphic novel, was facilitated by a co-creation model of project development between the school children and Interactive Media students from Ulster University's School of Communication and Media.

The 1718 Storytelling Project by Coleraine Ulster Scots Regeneration Group is part of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council PEACEIV Understanding our Area programme. This initiative is part of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's PEACEIV Local Area Action Plan, funded by the European Union's PEACEIV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, which is providing £3.5 million for community projects across the borough.



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**



**Ulster
University**



Peace
Northern Ireland - Ireland
European Regional Development Fund