



MARVEN OF THE GREAT NORTH WOODS

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In the early 1800s, scores of German Jews came to America to find good land and a better life. Like many Americans who were moving westward, German Jews ventured into new territory as well. That wave of immigration took place between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many settled on the Lower East Side of New York City, but others traveled further to join Jewish communities in the Midwest. Marven of the Great North Woods is a true story of one such family.

KASHRUT

Kashrut refers to Jewish dietary laws that instruct what one should and should not eat and how foods should be handled and prepared. Marven is faced with a dilemma when, in the logging camp, the food is not in accordance with these teachings. He makes a choice, one faced by many Jews of his time, to be true to his customs to the best of his ability.

It may be hard for your children to imagine some of the struggles Marven faced: a flu epidemic, traveling alone to an unknown place, living with strangers, and determining what foods to eat while respecting his family's religious practices. Many of our relatives faced similar challenges when they came to America. Your children will enjoy hearing those stories and will surely appreciate being reminded that times are quite different now, and that they are safe with you at home!

Be sure to look at the author's note at the end of the book. Then look at a world map or atlas to see the history of Marven's family's moves, from Russia to Duluth, Minnesota, to the great north woods of the same state. Remind your children that the author is the real Marven's daughter!

This story shows special relationships between Jews and non-Jews. Talk with your children about other interfaith friendships, both in your life and in your children's lives. Ask your children what made Marven's friendship with Jean Louis so special.