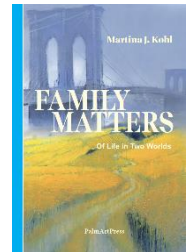


FAMILY MATTERS – Of Life in Two Worlds

Chapters 1 Preface & 2 Life in a Frame: Teaching Suggestions

by Christine Meißner, Berlin



Pre-reading Activities

- ➔ Do some research on the genre of “life writing”/“creative non-fiction”. What do you expect from such a book?
- ➔ Study the book cover. Speculate on what the two worlds are that are told about in the book.

Martina J. Kohl follows the traces of a German family that, over generations, continues to cross the Atlantic in both directions.

- ➔ Look at German immigration to the U.S. (various materials, e.g. Green Line Oberstufe chart p. 119; list of links in Martina J. Kohl’s *Teaching Tips*)
- ➔ Before you read *Chapter One - Preface*, fill in the anticipation guide.

FAMILY MATTERS Anticipation Guide

- ➔ Read through the statements and circle either *agree* or *disagree* in the **Before reading** section. Then discuss the statements and give reasons for your decision.

Before reading	Statement	After reading
Agree/disagree	At the beginning of the 20 th century big department stores selling mass-produced clothing destroyed small tailor businesses.	Agree/disagree
Agree/disagree	When you emigrate you cannot take much with you.	Agree/disagree
Agree/disagree	It is okay to lie if you want to avoid being recruited for fighting in a war.	Agree/disagree
Agree/disagree	“Language is power.” (Martina J. Kohl)	Agree/disagree
Agree/disagree	The US influenced Germany more than any other country after WW II.	Agree/disagree

“Old country” and “New World”

→ Read *Chapter One - Preface*.







While-reading, think about the following questions:

- Why would you return to the old country when you had made it in the New World?
 - How did one journey from Europe to the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century?
 - How did occupiers become allies?
- Look at the anticipation guide again and circle the respective verb in the right-hand column. Are there any changes? If so, explain why.

Literary Dice :

→ To sum up , play “Literary Dice”. Roll the dice and start your assessment of with the corresponding phrase.

Rolling the dice literature

-  I liked
-  I disliked
-  I was fascinated by
-  It confused me that
-  I would like to know
-  I didn't understand

Pre-reading Chapter Two *Life in a Frame*:

→ Create a story using these phrases:

to enroll in	not exactly lady-like
to admit female students	to practice every day
school with a pompous name	to pay off
not to charge tuition	

- ➔ Read them out/create a gallery walk. What is the focus of your stories?
- ➔ Do some research: Who is *Camilla Urso*? Find out about the architect of Brooklyn Bridge.
- ➔ Chapter Two is called “Life in a Frame”. Speculate on this title.

Read pp. 15-17:

- ➔ How does the author keep us hooked?
- ➔ From whose perspective is the story told?
- ➔ What kind of narrator tells the story?
- ➔ Is she/he credible? Why (not)?

What if ...?

- ➔ Continue reading Chapter Two.

Two sisters, both so different. . . Life’s choices, it was all life’s choices. Or was it chance?

- ➔ Discuss the different paths Elizabeth and Clara have chosen and the consequences of their decisions.
- ➔ Underline/make notes on Big Henry. Use them to characterize him. Do you find Big Henry a likeable character? Give reasons for your assessment.
- ➔ How does the author depict Big Henry’s worries?

“... because in a story, even if it’s framed, everything is meant to be perfect. A framed life in two still pictures. How did their story continue?” p. 27

- ➔ What is the significance of the pictures? Why are they mentioned so often?
- ➔ What are the “what-ifs” in Chapter Two? Discuss possible options.
- ➔ Did Elizabeth have a choice?

Topics that can be further discussed when reading the complete book:

- Migration
- Search for belonging
- Uprooting
- Suffragettes
- War brides
- Taking the other road: Robert Frost’s poem [The Road Not Taken](#)
- Consequences of making decisions vs. not making them
- Pursuit of happiness