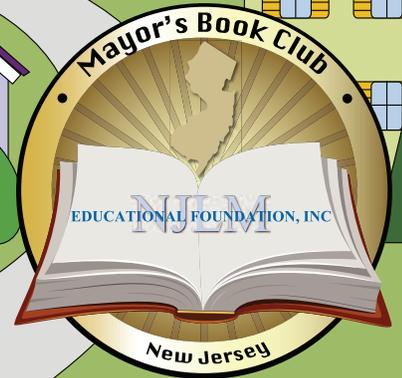
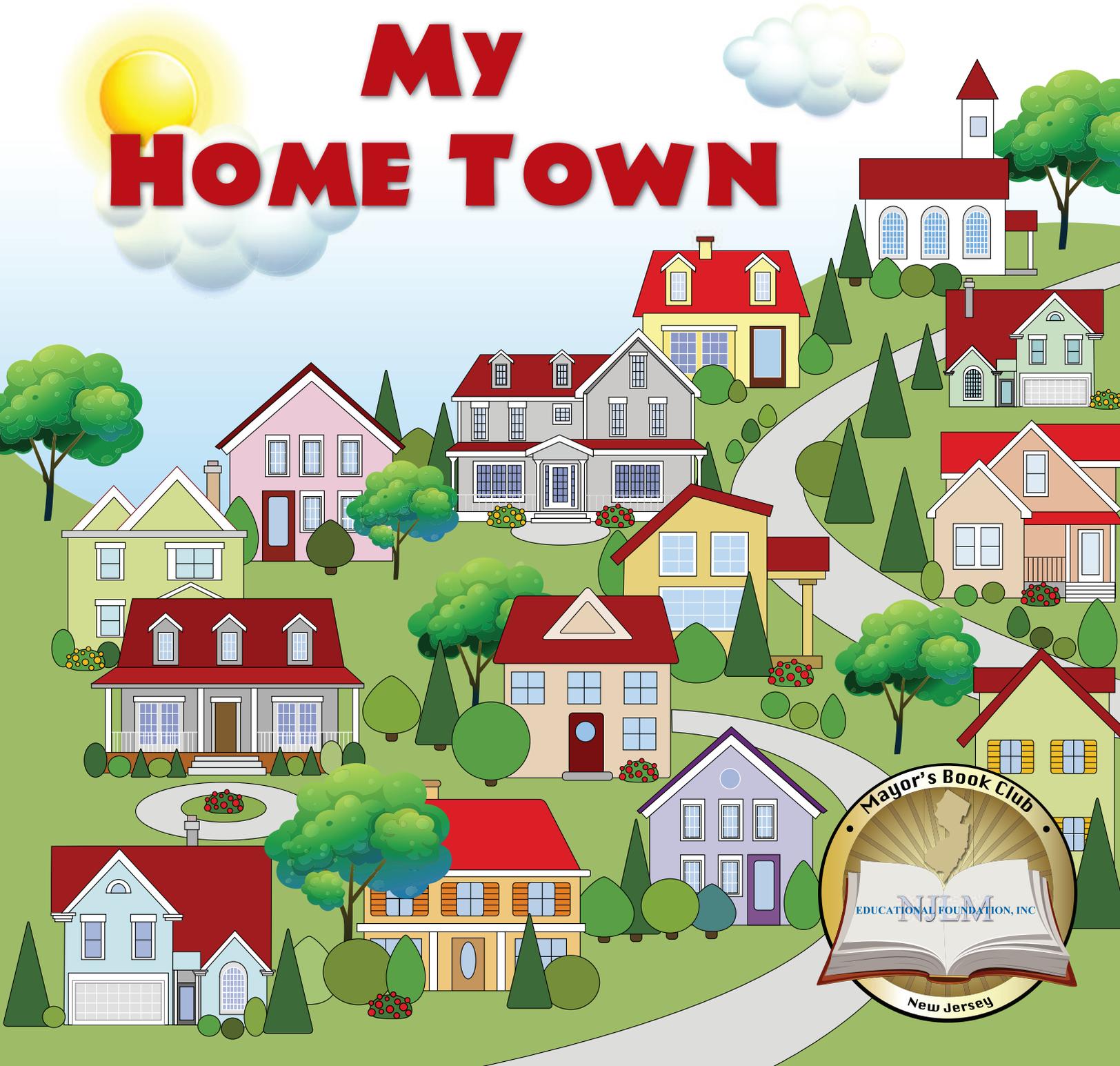


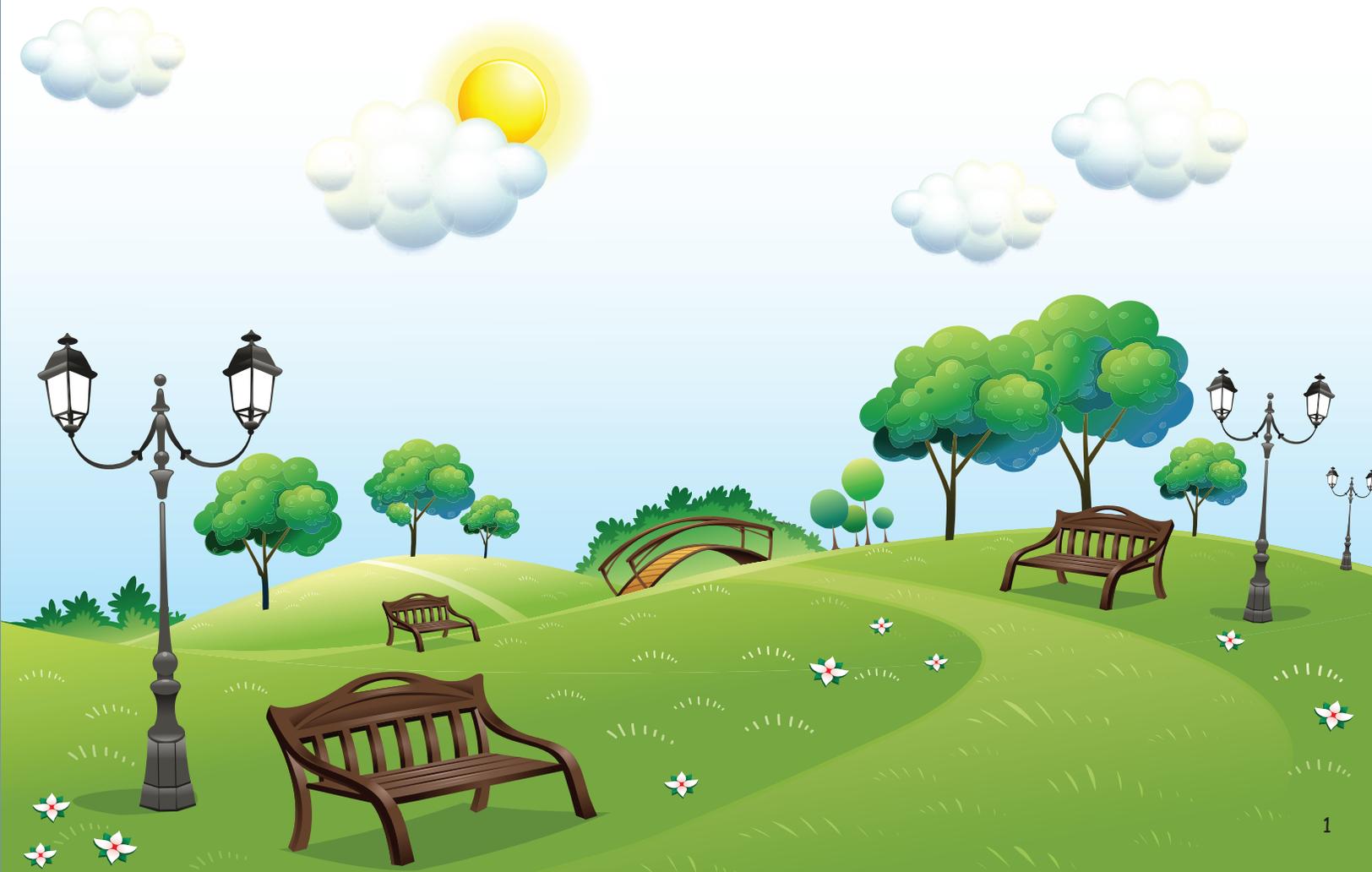
MY HOME TOWN



This book belongs to:

"My brother Anthony and I are very excited today!" said Mary. "We are going to the town picnic with our Grandma. Grandpa is on the committee, and he will be cooking the hot dogs."

The picnic is at the very large park near our house. Mom told us she used to go to the park often with her cousins. We still live in the town but not close to that park. We play at our neighborhood school yard with our friends.

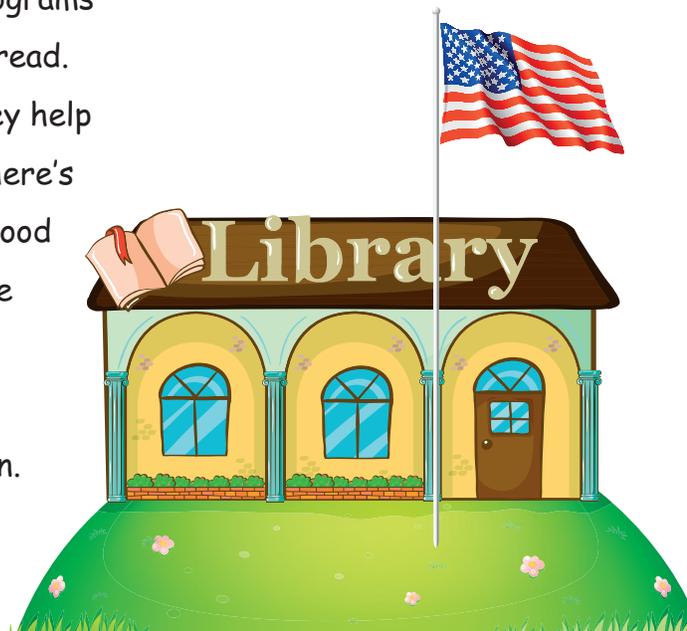


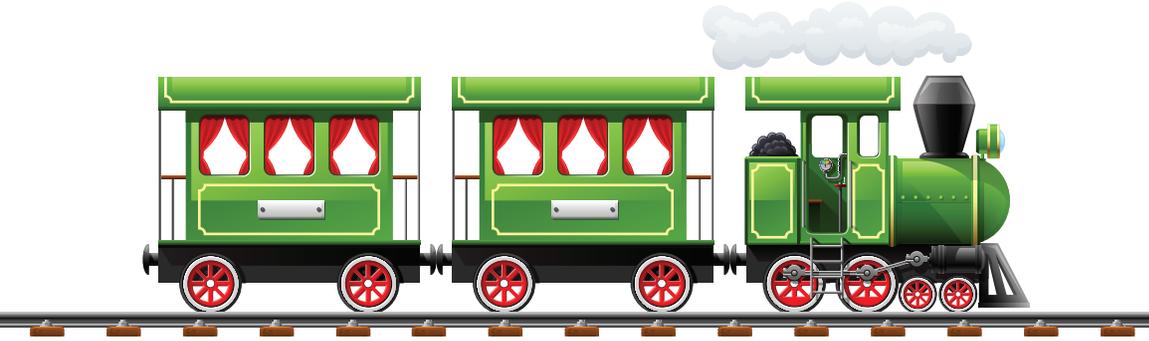


As we walk to the park Grandma holds us by the hand to make sure we are safe crossing the street. We pass the grammar school that Mommy attended. It is a very nice old building with a basketball court. Our older cousin takes us there when they visit for the holidays, and later we have a great big dinner to celebrate.

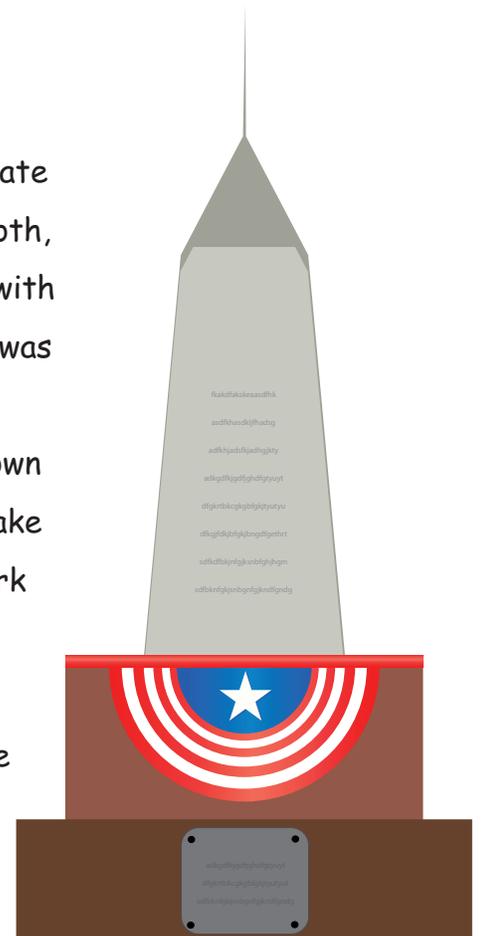


Not too far from our grandparents' home is the Public Library, where we go many times to take out books and to see programs for kids. Our parents both tell us how important it is to read. The people who work in the library are very nice, and they help us to find fun books. Well, we are almost there. Wow! There's a train ride to go on, and I can see the smoke from the food being cooked! Anthony and I ask if we can run over to see Pop-Pop. Grandma says, "Okay, but be careful, and I'll be right behind you." There is the hot dog stand! Our grandfather is volunteering for the local American Legion. They are selling the food at the picnic.





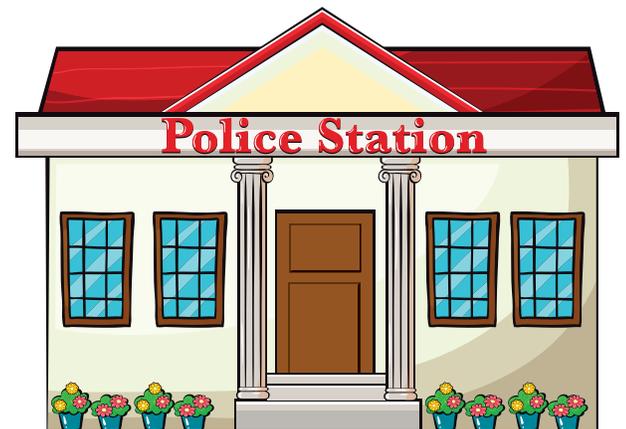
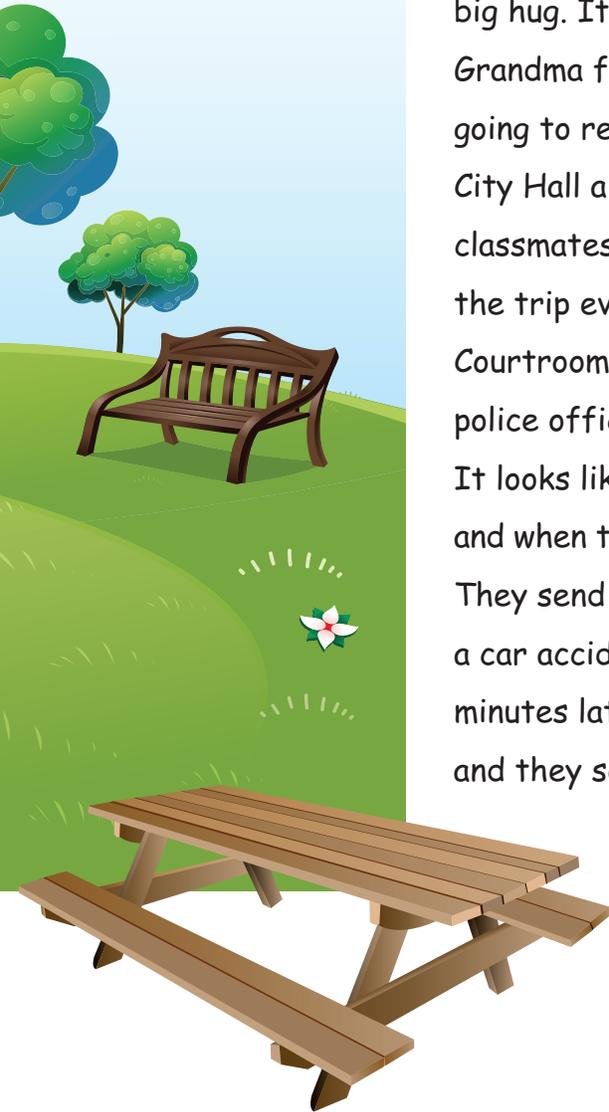
Anthony sees Johnny from school, and Dad and I see my classmate Ava in line for the train ride. Grandma is just getting to the booth, and we want to go on the train ride! Grandma goes on the ride with us. She said that our Mom used to come to the picnic when she was young. There wasn't a train ride, but they had contests for the kids who came, and there were trophies for the winners. The town Recreation Department ran all the events. Today's events will take place at two o'clock. Grandma looks over to the front of the park and points out the War Monument that was dedicated to the brave men who went to war for our freedom and lost their lives overseas. Grandma tells us about David, who was the first to die from our town, and how she was in elementary school with him. She was very sad but proud about what she called our neighborhood hero!





The train ride is coming to an end. We head toward Pop-Pop's stand, and Grandma buys us hot dogs. Next to Pop-Pop and the American Legion is the local Rotary Club stand. They are selling soda and water. We all get a soda on this special day and go with Grandma to a picnic table area. Grandma tells us that the Mayor is in the park, and she will make sure we say hello to him. She told us he went to the same school as our Mom. Everybody in the neighborhood knows him and voted for him!

As we are about to sit down Grandma and a lady give each other a big hug. It is the lady in City Hall who collects the taxes. She knows Grandma from when they were little girls. She tells Grandma she is going to retire from her job this year. Mary and Anthony know about City Hall a little because the Mayor gave them a tour with their classmates from school. Miss A., their third-grade teacher, makes the trip every year with her classes. City Hall is a big building with a Courtroom and is next to the Police Department. On the class trip the police officers let us see the room where they answer the phones. It looks like the inside of a spaceship! The Dispatchers answer quickly, and when the call is 9-1-1 they say, "What's your Emergency?" very fast! They send Police, Fire, or EMS to the emergency. That day there was a car accident near our High School, and the police were sent. A few minutes later there was a sick person at the Senior Citizen Housing, and they sent an ambulance. It is very interesting.

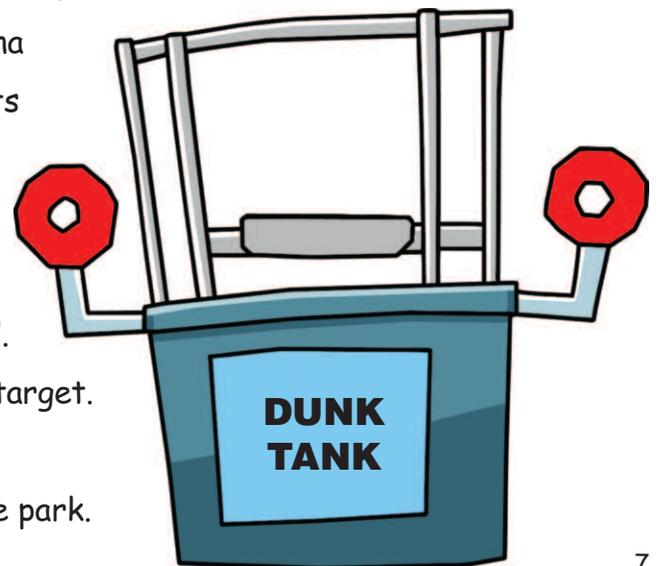


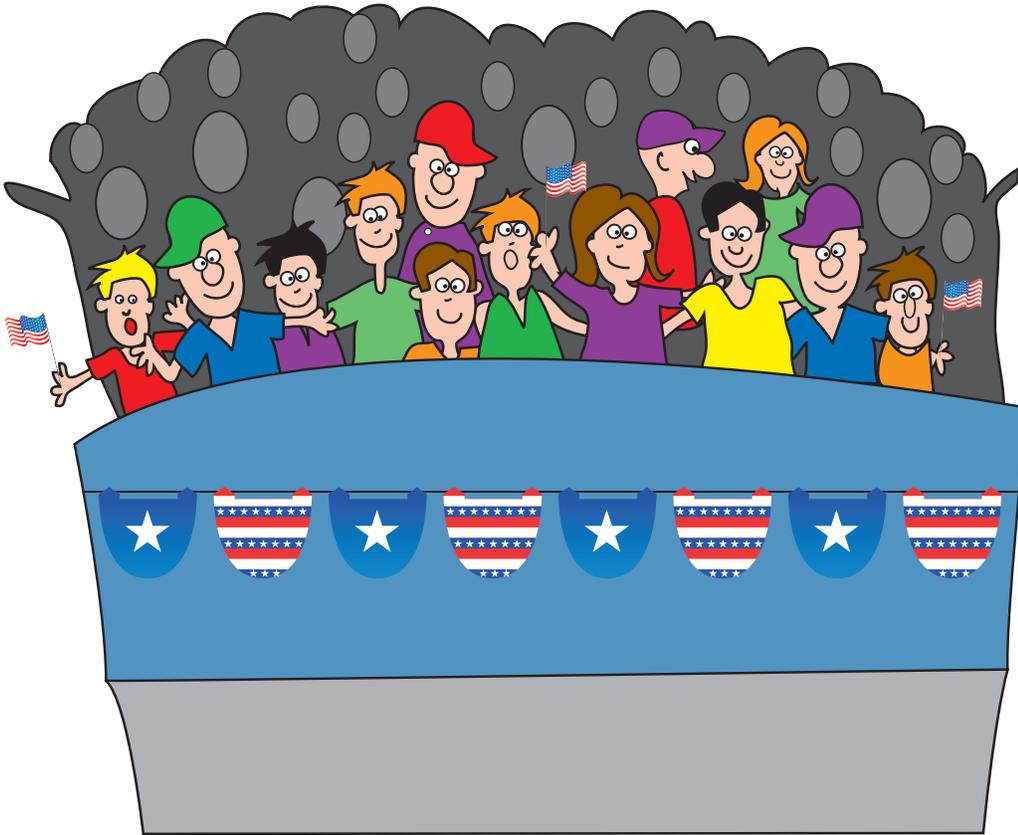


The Mayor tells us that the City was mostly farms many years ago, and from the time Christopher Columbus landed on the shores of the future United States only Native Americans lived on the land. Now we are all people from all countries of the world. We might be descended from someone who came on those first ships or we might be from a family who just arrived in America this year. People came to this, the greatest country in the world, for freedom and a better life. And they still come.



The park has many people selling food and other items. Zeppole, pierogi, empanadas, cheeseburgers, nachos, cotton candy, snow cones, ice cream, shish kebab, and much more! There are Bryan and Brianna from our youth group! Grandma knows their grandparents from the days Mom was in school and they were part of the PTA. They have come with their mom and dad to the annual City event. Mary looks over to the dunk tank where one of the Town Council members is being dunked. You pay a dollar to throw the baseball and try to hit the target. When you do, you knock the Councilperson in the water! The money raised will help pay for a new swing set in the park.





It is getting darker, and everyone is getting ready to watch the fireworks. They have the City Community Band playing music until dark, and then the kabooms begin! Mom and Dad and our aunt and uncle will watch the fireworks with us. Grandma is looking out for them while Pop-Pop is helping to clean up the hot dog stand with the other members of the American Legion. Anthony sees them coming. We all get on line and take our places to watch the fireworks. When Pop-Pop gets here he will buy us ice cream! In a little while we see our grandfather with a box full of ice cream, and we all have some.



The band is playing a lot of fun songs. We have learned some of them in school. Grandma says she learned many of the same songs when she was in school. Everyone is having a great time. Our City worked hard so that we would all have a great day! The band finishes playing, and a high school girl named Joan stands up and sings the National Anthem. Everyone joins in with their hand over their heart. Pop-Pop takes off his hat and puts it over his heart.





Everyone sits down. There goes the first firework! The whole crowd cheers louder and louder as each one explodes in the air. Red, white, and blue ones, bright white ones, and large booms! So exciting! Hundreds of people are watching. The last group of fireworks is louder and bigger than all. Now we all go home, walking past the school where Mom went as a child and up the hill to Grandma and Pop-Pop's house. Before leaving, Grandma tells us she will take us to see City Hall and the Police Station when we are off from school. Maybe we will see the Mayor or the Police Chief!



This is our first week of summer vacation. Grandma is watching us this week, so off to the City Hall and Police Station we go! Grandma asks if we want to walk to City Hall. She said it isn't too far, and we can have lunch at the local grill after the visit. Off we go!

When we get to City Hall Grandma shows us the place dedicated to the victims of 9/11. They are the innocent people who lost their lives when evil people flew planes into the Twin Towers in New York City. She pointed out one name of a young Policeman, John, who grew up in town. Grandma said that he was a wonderful young man who tried to save people but got killed when the building collapsed. It was so sad, but she told us he was a special hero. A hero of the whole United States!





Well, we are now at *City Hall*! In the front, big doors that are very high welcome us. Grandma goes in and holds the door for us. Our first look at *City Hall*! There is a sign in the front hall telling us where to go. Grandma says our first stop is the Tax Collector. She takes out her tax bill and pays the new lady who took her friend's place with \$100 bills! The lady puts her bill in the machine and thanks Grandma. Grandma said, "I'll see you in three months!"



Next we go to the Recreation Office. They have a lot of information about fun things to do. Grandma wants to know about the concerts in the park. The nice lady gives Grandma a list of the dates and times. She also says to remember the special concert of the Veterans at the school auditorium. Grandma says Pop-Pop will be there with the men from the American Legion. Before we leave, the lady reminds Grandma to bring us to the Halloween Parade in October. After this, we stop to renew the dog license for our dog, Babe. This year the license is red. Last year it was green.



Now we journey down the steps, and standing there is the Mayor!
He says hello to Grandma and tells us he'll see us at the parade!
Grandma tells the Mayor to continue to do a good job. Grandma
explained that the Mayor is the head of the City and has to make
lots of hard decisions. He works with many others in City Hall to
make sure good things happen. We ask Grandma, "What good things?"



Grandma told us there was a big problem with a flood in the street, and City Hall sent the Department of Public Works to fix it. And she told us some of the things we do everyday, like going to the Library or playing in the Park, all come about from the hard work at City Hall. The Mayor works to keep us together as a town. Grandma tells us how much she loves our home town. After seeing all these good things, we kids do too!



The End

"The Mayor's Book Club was established to create a highly literate community that embraces learning as a lifelong lifestyle that can improve the quality of life for all residents of New Jersey."

Tim McDonough, *Mayor Hope; Past President, NJLM;
Founder, Mayor's Book Club*

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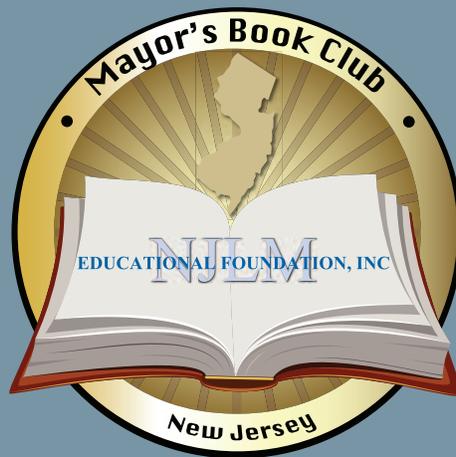
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NJLM Educational Foundation
222 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
(609) 695-3481

www.njlmef.org