

My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts

Director: Torill Kove

Producers: Marcy Page, Lars Tømmerbakke

Torill Kove's grandmother often told her stories. One in particular revolved around ironing shirts for the King of Norway.

And what if that intriguing detail was just the tip of the iceberg? Perhaps she also worked covertly in the Norwegian resistance... Maybe she even spearheaded a campaign to create an unprecedented brand of guerrilla warfare!

Treating history as a fabric woven from personal stories, animator Torill Kove follows a thread of family history, embroidering it with playful twists along the way. In **MY GRANDMOTHER IRONED THE KING'S SHIRTS**, she imaginatively renders her grandmother's life and work in Oslo, especially during World War II. Sharp and whimsical, her story combines her grandmother's tales with historical events and fantasy, and shows how a cherished anecdote can come to acquire a mythical status.

MY GRANDMOTHER IRONED THE KING'S SHIRTS is about an ordinary woman with a revolutionary instinct. With sharp humor it explores storytelling, myth-making and the important contributions that are possible through the most humble means.

All Ages / 10 minutes 35 seconds
Subject Areas: Storytelling, Language Arts

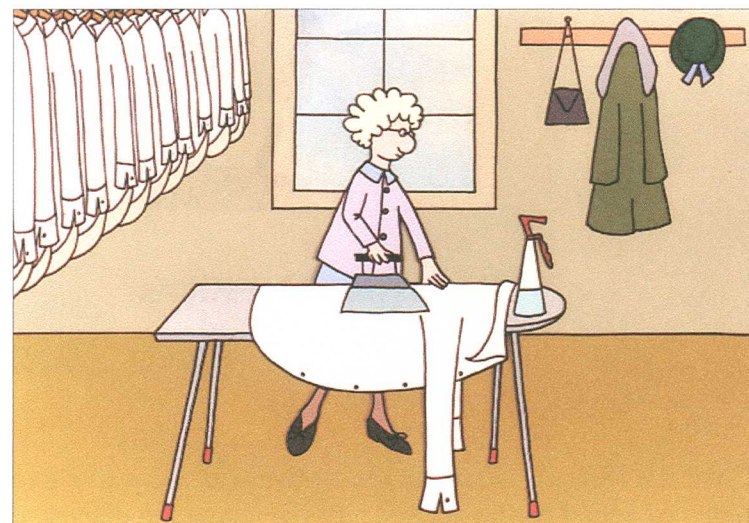
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Discussion Questions

For general viewers:

1. Ask the viewers, What do you think? Was this a true story? Did the photos of actual people tucked into the animation dispose the viewers toward their opinion?
2. Discuss the uses of hyperbole in storytelling, discussing which parts of the account might have been exaggerated a bit for dramatic and comedic effect (for example, the unexpected aside about Tonya Harding's skate laces and the 1994 Olympics). While resisting Nazi occupation with burnt shirts might be a bit much, does this not illustrate how acts of resistance, no matter how small, can collectively win the day? Discuss this idea.
3. Ask the viewers for accounts of older relatives' histories - especially stories about relatives who lived through WWII. Gather stories about the homefront as well as war stories with an eye to what both the men and women did in that time.

For younger viewers:

1. Ask the children if they think burning holes in the soldiers uniforms was enough to chase them back to Germany. Discuss how this idea makes the story pretty funny.
2. Ask the children what stories they know about their grandparents. Was their grandfather or grandmother in military service? What do they know about how their grandparents met and married? If the children do not know these details, encourage them to simply make up a happy and silly story about these events.
3. At the end of the film, the narrator says her grandfather told her that his ancestors were Portuguese gypsies who, "to escape forced labor on Vasco da Gama's ships," traveled by horse all the way from Lisbon to Oslo. Ask the children to tell a story about that prodigious ride. In preparation, use an atlas and trace the journey, listing what countries they might have gone through. What adventures do the children imagine these ancestors had. For example, how did they get the horses, how did they feed themselves, where did they sleep, how long did the trip take, why did they choose to go to Norway? Ask, too, what might have happened if they had stayed in Portugal and worked on Vasco da Gama's ships. Explain that Vasco da Gama was a Portuguese navigator and explorer who opened up the sea route to Asia and who lived from 1460 to 1524.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



Born in Norway, Torill Kove studied animation at Concordia University in Montreal, where she won the Kodak Award for her quirky films **All You Can Eat**, **Fallen Angel**, and **Squash and Stretch**. She has worked in a variety of roles on several NFB productions, and as a scriptwriter for Studio Magica in Oslo. **My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts** is her first professional film.