

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

### Packet 5: The Volga Germans: Religious Conduct and Christmas Customs

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Sequence</b>
<p>1. Why do you think religion played such an important part in the Volga German's life?</p>	<p>There was little social life on the plains, particularly for a people who were isolated from other groups by land and space as well as by language. Church meetings and activities provided an otherwise non-existent social atmosphere. It was also another common bond among these people. They looked to their God for comfort and for taking care of those things which they were not able to count on or provide for themselves.</p>
<p>2. Compare and contrast the way in which you celebrate religious and non-religious holidays in your home.</p> <p>How are your celebrations today at home similar or different from the Volga German celebrations?</p>	<p>List holidays on the board and then discuss whether their origin is religious or non-religious and if they are celebrated in a religious or non-religious way.</p> <p>Answers will vary. However today, we have more special observances than they had (Groundhog Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.)</p>
<p>3. What special occasions did your your parents or grandparents celebrate that we do not celebrate today? Do we observe special days that they did not? How have the celebrations changed?</p>	<p>Encourage children to talk to their older relatives, even older children in the family, to see what they do differently now from five or ten or fifty years ago. Help them draw conclusions about how special days and celebrations have changed and developed.</p>
<p>4. Look at the two photographs of families in the packet. What can you tell about Volga Germans and their family lives by just looking at the pictures?</p>	<p>Large families were the norm, religion was very important (Mrs. John Staab displays a rosary in the photograph with her), and they probably got along quite well for themselves after the first few years (the Mermis family looks relatively well-to-do and the photograph looks a bit newer than many of the others, leading one to believe this was taken some years after arriving in Ellis County and that they had been able to make a good living for themselves).</p>