When it comes to history, people often think it is all facts and dates. But history is also about thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Sometimes you can gain a better understanding of the past by making a personal connection to learn how others think or believe. After reading Woven Traditions, answer the following questions.

**Woven Traditions**

Mai Phrakornkham is a weaver who moved to Winfield in 1980. She was born and raised in Laos where her parents were farmers. Mai came to the United States as a refugee. When Mai left Laos, she brought very few belongings with her. One thing she did bring was her weaving loom.

In Laos Mai’s mother taught her to weave when she was only seven years old. In Kansas Mai spends a lot of her time weaving fabric for skirts. Most of the fabric Mai weaves is used to make festival clothing for Laotian women living in Winfield or Wichita.

The designs Mai weaves into fabrics are traditional and come from her memory. She uses no patterns. Mai has taught her daughter and son to weave these Laotian designs. She wants her children to learn because “They should know what it is to be Lao.”

**Think About It**

Why do you think it is important for Mai to teach her children how to weave?

What would happen to her designs if she hadn’t taught them to her children?

What traditions have you learned from family members? (Do you dye eggs at Easter? Eat turkey at Thanksgiving? Tell stories at family dinners? These are traditions you have learned from your family.)

How does it make you feel to learn a tradition from your family?