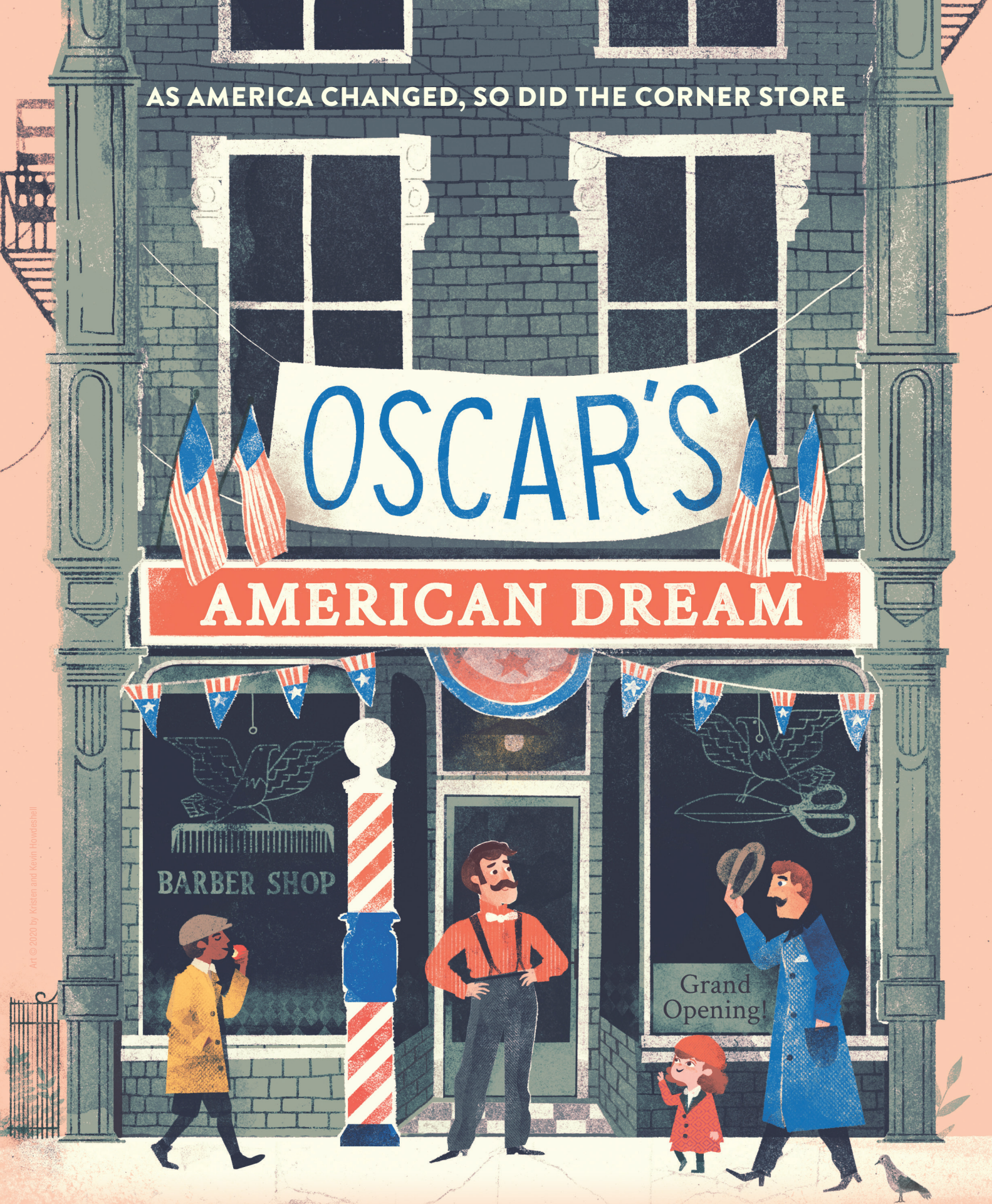


AS AMERICA CHANGED, SO DID THE CORNER STORE



Art © 2020 by Kristen and Kevin Howdeshell

BARRY WITTENSTEIN ★ KRISTEN & KEVIN HOWDESHELL

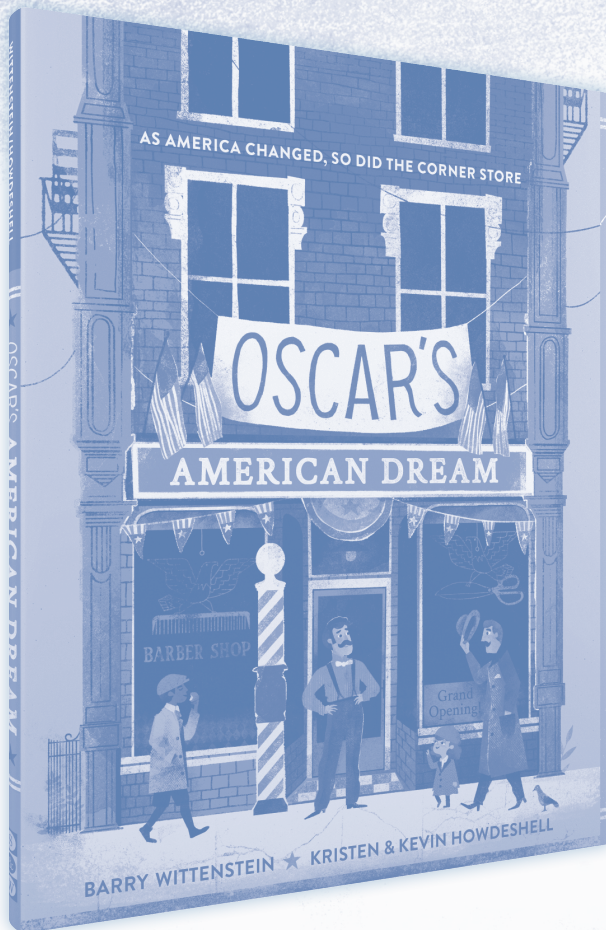
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# OSCAR'S AMERICAN DREAM

## Storytime Activities



It all begins with an immigrant named Oscar who arrives at Ellis Island to live his dream and open a barbershop. Then Oscar moves on and his barbershop becomes Nettie and Yetti's clothing store . . . then Moises's Bodega Suprema . . . and many other types of stores as the twentieth century unfolds before our eyes.

by Barry Wittenstein  
illustrated by Kristen & Kevin Howdeshell

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### About the Author

**BARRY WITTENSTEIN** is the author of *A Place to Land*, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, which received five starred reviews and was praised by the *Washington Post* as a book “with enormous heart.” His other books include *Sonny's Bridge*, *Waiting for Pumpsie*, and *The Boo-Boos That Changed the World*, which was named a *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year.

### About the Illustrators

**KRISTEN AND KEVIN HOWDESHELL** are a husband-and-wife illustrator duo. They have their own studio, the Brave Union, and have taken on the freelance world of illustration, working on projects for magazines, packaging, T-shirts, educational materials, and now, children's books.







## Projects for before, during, and after reading *Oscar's American Dream*

### Picture This Year

Picture a place like the one in the book, only in today's world instead of the past. What would it look like now? Ask children to draw and color a picture of a street corner from recent times. It should contain people, businesses or organizations, forms of transportation, and other details. Some aspects should be modern; for example, someone could be speaking on a cell phone. Others may be similar to those in the story, such as people carrying shopping bags. Have students share their pictures and explain the choices they made.

### Their American Dream

Invite children to explore one of the American dreams in the book. Have them choose one of the shops, businesses, or organizations that occupied the corner store, and think about the people who ran them. Why would someone open a dress store? Or run a soup kitchen? Or sell candy? Have the student write a letter from the perspective of the proprietor to one of the proprietor's friends or relatives. The letter should describe the business or organization, why they got involved with it, who they serve, and what they hope for it. It should explain what makes their venture an American dream.

### Advertise That Dream

Shops usually need some kind of advertisement to draw in customers. Even organizations like soup kitchens and recruitment offices want people to know about the services they offer! Students should take the business or organization they wrote about in the last activity, or choose a different one, and create an advertisement that could be put up in a different part of the city. The poster should use a combination of words, pictures, and ornaments, such as a border, to convey information in an attractive way.

### Timeline of a Century

*Oscar's American Dream* spans the twentieth century, from 1899 to 1999. Have students create a timeline and divide it into the ten decades. As a class, find information in the book related to specific years or decades, such as the 1960 television debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Ask students to add those years and events to the timeline with sticky notes. Then have students choose a decade and research three other events to add.

# Speak Up

Put on a performance as the characters in *Oscar's American Dream*. Ask each student to pick a figure in one of the illustrations, even someone who's pictured but not described in the narrative, and create a line or two of dialogue for that character. For example, one of the children standing outside the candy store could say, "I love skateboarding and candy. This is my favorite shop." Ask students to line up in the order their characters appear in the book.

Start the performance with a narrator, who will give an overview of the book. The first character from each time period should describe that time, along with their written lines.

For example, "World War Two is now over." A narrator should also provide a conclusion. The lines below give each student space to write what they are going to say. They can also note down the person who will go before them and after them.

Put on a performance for another class.

Person who speaks before me: \_\_\_\_\_

My lines: \_\_\_\_\_

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Person who speaks after me: \_\_\_\_\_





# Getting Around

The illustrations show many forms of transport in and around the city, including driving, riding a bike, or using a wheelchair. As a class, name all the forms of transportation in the book. Then have students choose one that interests them. Have each student choose and research one that interests them. They should look for facts such as when their form of transportation was invented, when it became popular, and whether it is still used. Other topics could include who invented it, the basics of how it works, and its power source.

Ask students to describe where the mode of transport appears in the book, share at least four facts about it, and on a separate piece of paper, have them draw a picture of the form of transportation.

Form of transportation: \_\_\_\_\_

Where it appears in the book: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact # 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Fact #4: \_\_\_\_\_

