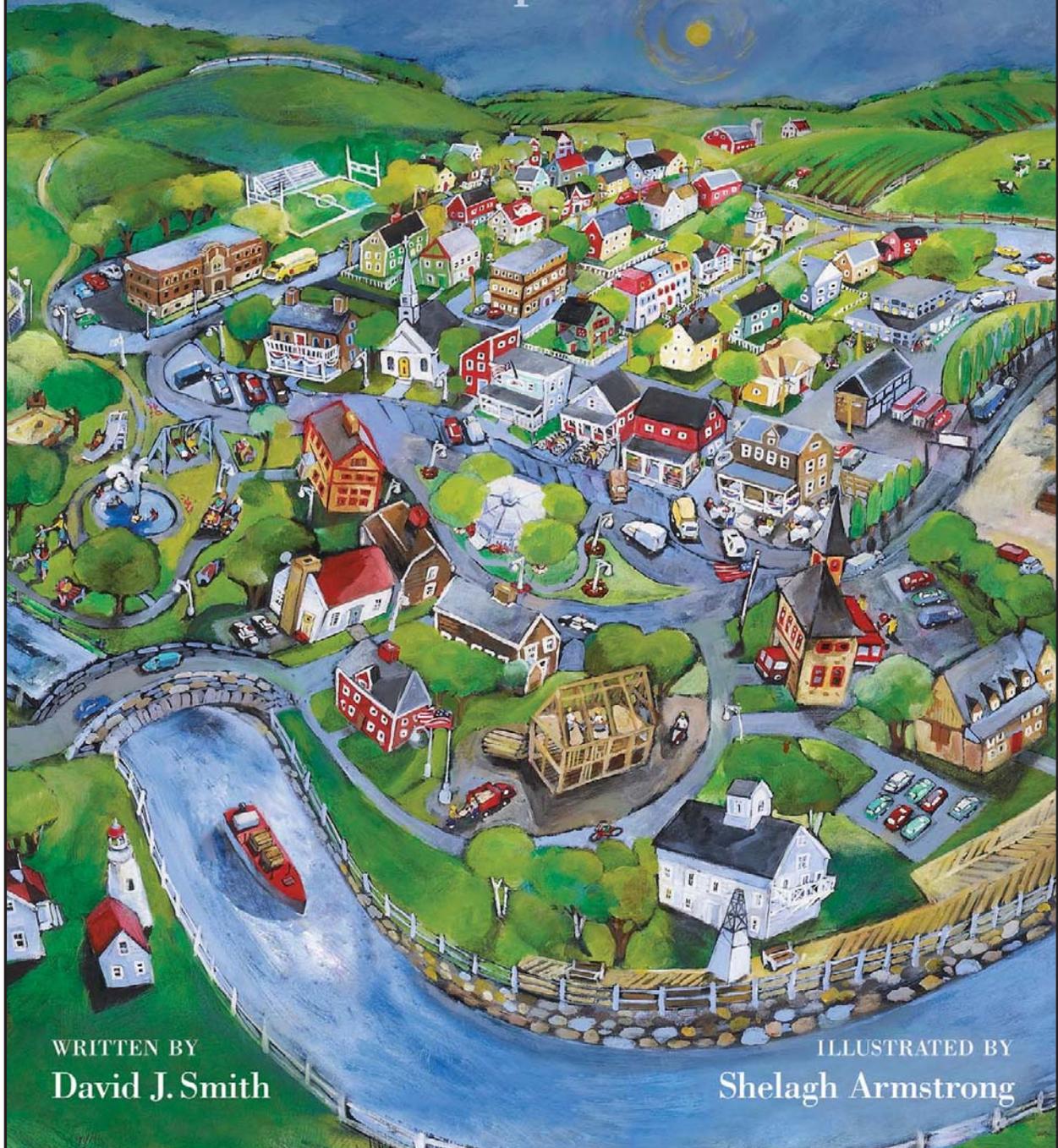


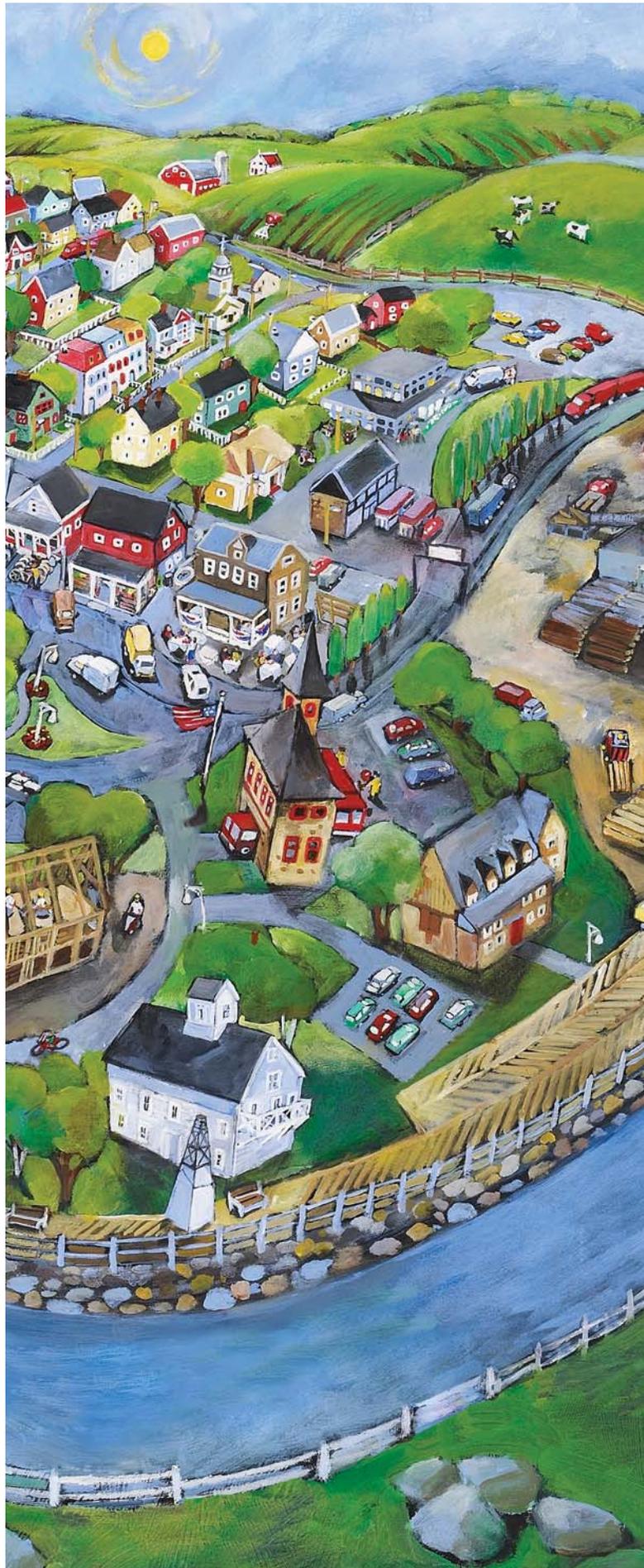
# If America Were a Village

A Book about the People of the United States



WRITTEN BY  
David J. Smith

ILLUSTRATED BY  
Shelagh Armstrong



## About *If America Were a Village*

There are more than 306 million people living in America. This number is difficult to grasp, especially for a child. But what if we imagine America as a village of just 100 people? *If America Were a Village* uses a simple metaphor to capture a snapshot of America — past, present and future — and helps readers of all ages better understand their own place in the global village.

## About the Author

David J. Smith is a teacher with more than 25 years of experience and the author of *If the World Were a Village*. He is also the creator of the award-winning curriculum “Mapping the World by Heart.” Now a full-time educational consultant, he travels the world conducting workshops for schools and professional associations.

## About the Illustrator

Shelagh Armstrong has been illustrating since 1987. This is her fourth children’s book and her second with David J. Smith.





## Activities

The following activities support the primary and elementary curricula in social studies, mathematics, and language and visual arts.

### 1. Where Are You From?

In “Where do we come from?” (page 8), students read about the ancestry of Americans. Mount a large world map on the wall and ask students to place a pin or other marker to indicate the country their parents, grandparents and (if known) great-grandparents came from. How do the class’s ancestries compare to America as a whole, as outlined in the book. Are they roughly the same or very different? If they are different, discuss with your students why local patterns of immigration lead to these regional differences

### 2. Create a Postcard Map

One common type of tourist postcard shows a map of a state. These map postcards include major cities, bodies of water and sometimes state birds and flowers, historical sites and more. Have students pick a state name out of a hat and design their own map postcard for that state. The postcards can be larger than regular postcards and can include a “wish you were here” message on the back.

### 3. “You’re a Grand Old Flag”

Compare the U.S. flag to the flags of other countries. How many use the same colors (red, white and blue)? How many use

stars? What do the different elements mean on the U.S. flag? On other flags? Compare the current U.S. and state flags with earlier versions of these flags. Track and explain the changes.

Flag etiquette is fascinating. Have students investigate how to fold the flag and when and how to display it.

### 4. The School Travel Agency

Set up groups of 4 or 5 children to be travel agents. Have parents, teachers or older children request trips to historical sites, interesting cities, national parks and so on. Let the travel agents plan the trip, using maps, airline Web sites, etc. How do you travel from your city to San Francisco or the Badlands or the Grand Canyon? How long does the trip take by air? By car? What interesting stops are there along the way? The final “itinerary” should include maps and a travel plan with what to see each day.

### 5. Do the Math

There are more than 306 million Americans in the U.S. today. We have reduced this huge number to a village of 100. That means that each person in the village represents 3.06 million people, or 1% of the total population. Have students calculate the actual numbers of people from one of the lists in the book. For example, in “How wealthy are we?” (page 20), students learn that 5 of the 100 people have more than half the wealth. That means  $5 \times 3\,060\,000$  or a total of 15 300 000 people. We also learn that 60 people have a tiny share of the wealth. Those 60 people add up to  $(60 \times 3\,060\,000)$  183 600 000.

Besides calculating numbers, students can use the data for fractions, percentages and all kinds of graphing. For example, on page 14 students read about the various religions in America and in the world. Have them do a pie chart for both sets of statistics, either manually or using a program available from the following Web site:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/default.aspx>



## 6. Write a Commonplace Book About America

What is a commonplace book? In a way, it's the original blog. It's a scrapbook filled with all kinds of information including: pictures (original art, pictures of paintings or photos); advertisements and images from magazines; poems (original or from others); "letters to" or "letters from"; quotations; proverbs or interesting thoughts; recipes; short essays; speeches. Often a commonplace book is arranged around the letters of the alphabet.

As a class, brainstorm topics about America that cover the letters of the alphabet. For example, B might be for Black Americans. T might be for Transportation. Once you have agreed on the list of 26 topics, divide the class into groups and give

each group several letter-topics and one large piece of paper for each topic. When all 26 pages are done, bind them together with rings or ribbon and a cover to make your Commonplace Book of America.

## 7. A Changing Picture

Countries change; America changes. This activity, for older children, encourages them to note the changes. Have students collect newspaper clippings or news reports on the Internet about statistics on birth rates, health, employment and so on in America. Or have them compare other facts about America at different times in its history — birth rates, where immigrants came from, what jobs people did and so on. Many Web sites (see note below) can help you understand the growth of the country over time.

### Go online for more information:

Visit David Smith's Web site, [www.mapping.com](http://www.mapping.com), for some great Web site links that will help you learn more about American history, geography, people, cultures and lives.

