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Who Were The Three Stooges?



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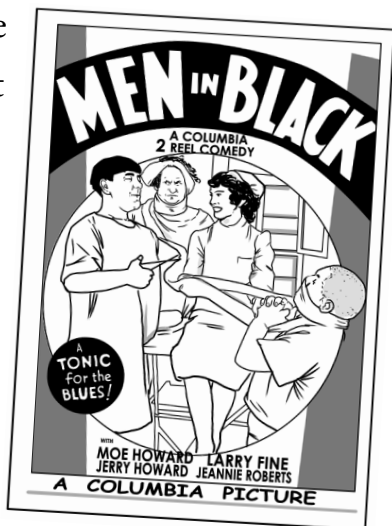
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On September 28, 1934, a new film premiered at the Carthay Circle Theatre in Los Angeles. It was only eighteen minutes long—short enough to be shown before the main feature.

The movie was called *Men in Black* and it had three unusual stars. Their names were Moe Howard, Larry Fine, and Curly Howard. Together they were called the Three Stooges. They were a strange-looking trio. Moe had straight black hair that sat like an upside-down bowl on top of his head. Larry's frizzy hair stuck out on all sides. Curly had a head like a cue ball—he had no hair at all!



Moe had a tough face like a gangster that he scrunched up when he made a fist and barked things like, “Why, I oughta . . .”

Larry jumped whenever he was frightened.

Curly ran around in circles—sometimes even while lying on the floor, like a human pinwheel. He made funny sounds—“Nyuk nyuk nyuk!” and “Woo woo woo woo!” When he spoke he had a high, squeaky voice. “Soitenly!” Curly said in his thick Brooklyn accent when he was sure about something. “I’m just a victim of soi-cumstance!” he said when he wasn’t.

In the movie, Moe, Larry, and Curly played doctors—but they didn’t cure many patients. They rode bicycles, horses, and tiny cars through the halls of the hospital. They broke windows and knocked people over the head with mallets. Mostly they fought with one another.

“Why, I oughta . . . !” Moe growled before slapping Curly on the head and poking him in

the eye. Larry shrieked as Moe pulled him by the hair. “Nyuk nyuk nyuk!” Curly said. Then he ran down the hall, hooting, “Woo woo woo woo woo woo woo!”



None of the Three Stooges were hurt in their fights. It was all part of their comedy act. The three men would do anything for a laugh. And the audience loved it.

Men in Black was the official movie debut of the Three Stooges. But the three men had known one another for years. Curly was Moe's little brother. Larry was practically part of the family, too. They would go through good times and bad in their lives, but they always stuck together. They were closer than brothers—they were Stooges!

CHAPTER 1

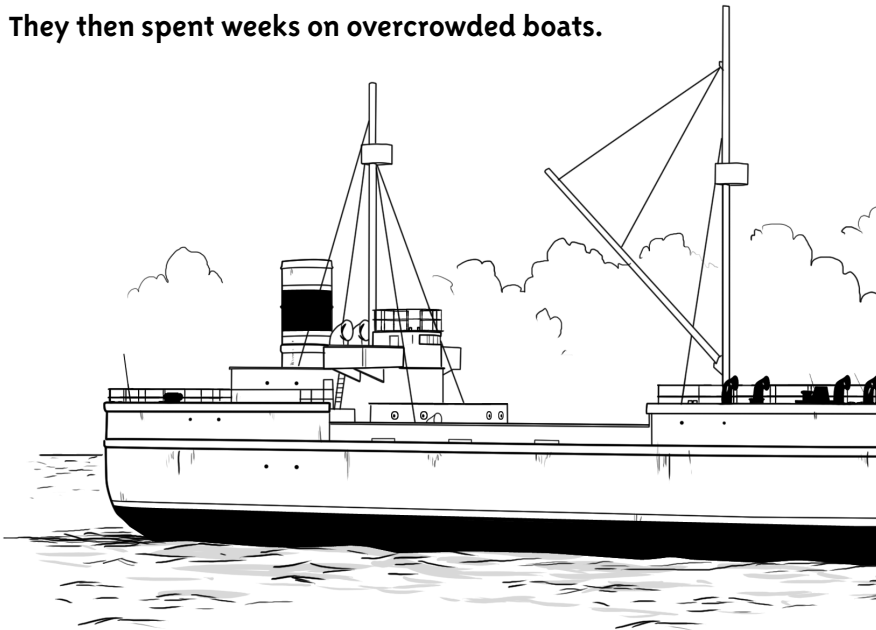
A Brooklyn Beginning



In 1897, Brooklyn, New York, was a city full of immigrants—people who had come from other countries to make a new life in America. Jennie and Solomon Horwitz had traveled by boat from Lithuania to New York City.

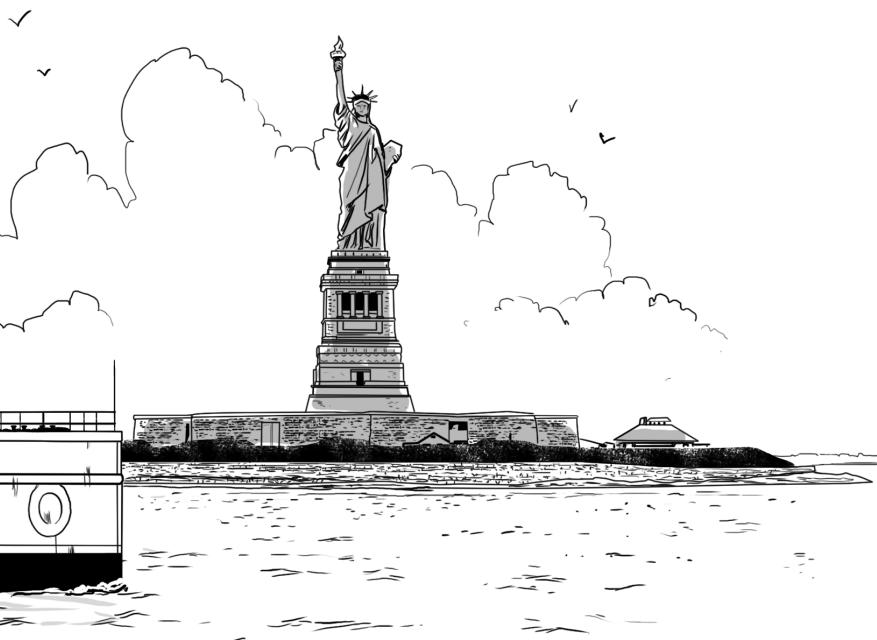
Immigrants in the United States

Between 1815 and 1915, about thirty million people arrived in the United States from many European countries, including Italy, Ireland, and Poland. It was not an easy trip. Many people traveled miles on foot or by river to get to a steamship in their home port that would bring them to the United States. They then spent weeks on overcrowded boats.



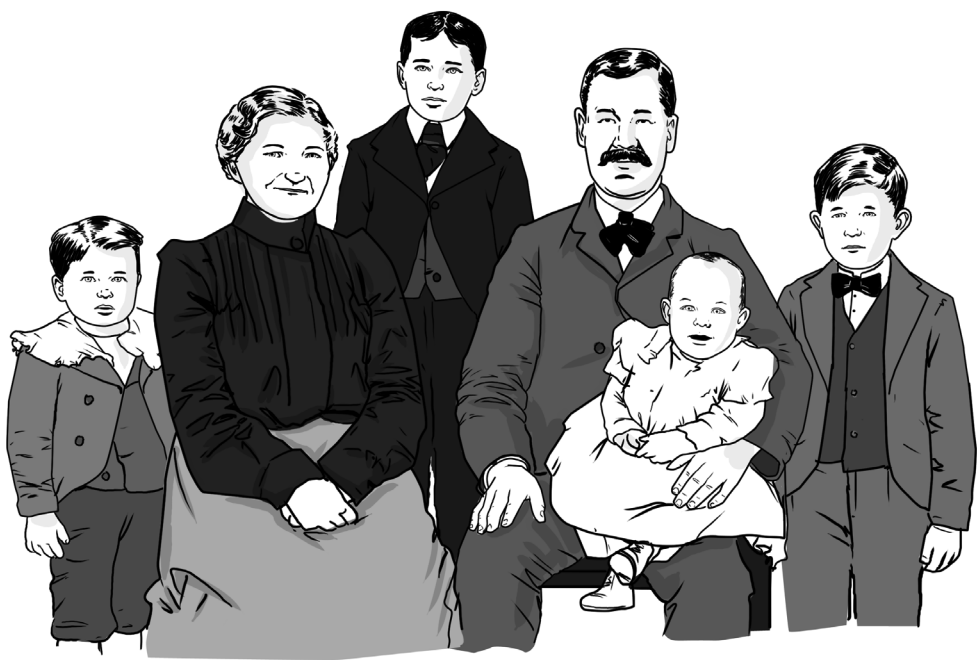
Many immigrants were escaping poverty. Some were looking for religious freedom. All hoped to start better lives in America.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, immigrants made up more than 40 percent of the population of New York City.



When Sol wasn't working in a clothing factory, he spent as much time as he could at the local synagogue, studying the Jewish holy books and praying. Jennie was a woman ahead of her time. She made most of the money for the family, renting out rooms and later becoming a successful real estate agent.

When Moses Harry Horwitz was born on June 19, 1897, he already had three older brothers: Irving, Benjamin (known as Jack), and Sam.



Sam, who was two years older than Moses, was always known as Shemp because of the way his mother pronounced his name in her Lithuanian accent. Moses quickly became known as Moe.

Jack and Irving were well-behaved children. Shemp was the clown of the family. In school he was always getting in trouble for making funny faces and drawing pictures. His mother was constantly getting called to the school to talk to Shemp's teachers about his behavior. She spent so much time there that when Shemp graduated from sixth grade, the principal announced (as he gave Shemp his diploma) that "This young man did not graduate . . . his mother did."

Shemp's little brother Moe had his own problems in school: bullies. As a little boy Moe had long hair that fell in fat curls to his shoulders. His mother loved getting up early to curl his hair for school.



The other kids thought Moe's hair made him look funny. Both boys and girls teased him. Not a day went by when he didn't get into a fight. Even the principal called him the "student with the beautiful hair."

Moe never told his mother about the fights. He knew how much she loved his hair, and he loved her.

On October 22, 1903, when Moe was six, Jennie had another son. His name was Jerome. Moe nicknamed him Babe. Shemp and Moe were thrilled to have a new brother. Not long after he was born, they took him out for a walk in his baby carriage.



To make the ride more fun for the new baby, they took the carriage to the top of a hill and prepared to let it go down at full speed. Luckily, their parents arrived just in time to stop the wild ride.



At school, Moe was still fighting off bullies on his own. One day when he was eleven, a boy began to pick on him. Another boy jumped in and punched the bully in the nose. He made him apologize to Moe.

After school Moe went over to his new friend's house. The boy's bedroom was full of pictures of boxers and boxing equipment. Moe looked at himself in the mirror. His new friend looked like an ordinary boy. But Moe still had long curls. At that moment Moe made a decision. He picked up a pair of scissors from the dresser. With his eyes closed, he clipped off his curls one by one. When he opened his eyes again the curls were lying on the floor. Moe's hair was flat against his head, the ends crudely chopped. He wasn't going to be bullied anymore.

