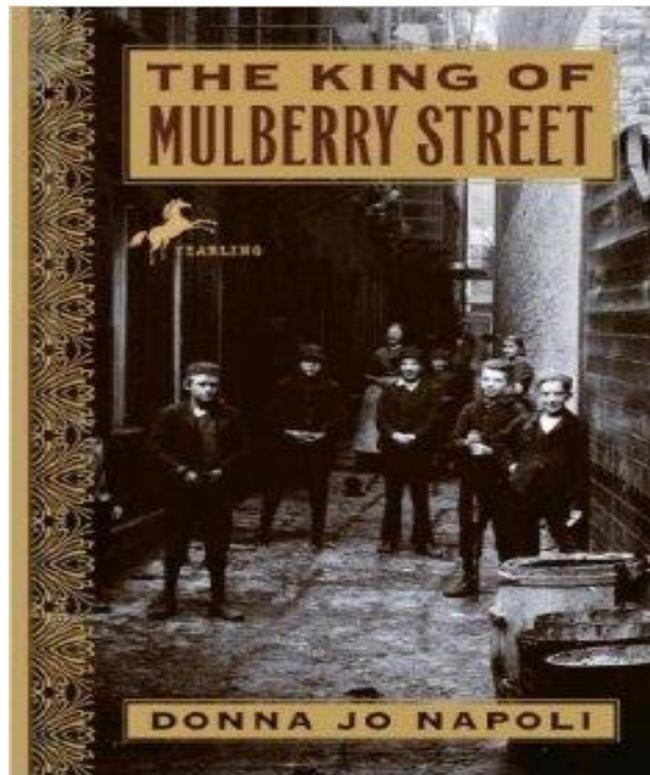


# The King of Mulberry Street

by Donna Jo Napoli



This novel shares the story of Beniamino, a nine-year-old Jewish boy from Napoli, Italy, whose mother smuggles him aboard a cargo ship heading to America in 1892. Shortly after his departure from the Italian port, Beniamino learns that his mother did not join him onboard. Upon reaching America, he vows to return to Napoli as soon as possible, but a series of events complicates his plans. Beniamino, assuming the name Dom, finds himself on the Lower East Side of New York City. The story unfolds with details of his newfound friends and their many adventures, and over the course of his experiences, Dom accepts New York as his new home and realizes that he was sent there for hopes of a better life.

**Directions:** After reading each of the following selections from King of Mulberry Street by Donna Jo Napoli, answer the following short-answer questions. **All answers need to be in complete sentences. Remember to paraphrase your answers unless directly quoting the text.**

### Questions

1. During what period does the novel take place? What was happening in America during this period that relates to Beniamino's Story?
2. Why do you think Beniamino's mother sends him to America alone? Do you think she made a good decision? Why or why not?
3. Beniamino's mother also gave him new shoes for his journey. Why did she give him this gift?
4. While on the ship, Beniamino decides to change his name to Dom. Why does he choose to change his name?
5. What did Dom's Nonna teach him about receiving and giving? How does he put her teaching into action?
6. Survival is a central theme in the novel. What aspects of survival are discussed?
7. In the novel, Dom struggles with his Jewish identity. In what ways does Dom struggle to maintain his Jewishness amidst his Italian surroundings?
8. At the end of the novel, we learn that Dom feels more comfortable on Mulberry Street than on Eldridge Street. Why do you think this is the case? Please use evidence from the story to support your ideas.
9. In what ways do Dom's attitudes toward America change over the course of the novel? What helps to facilitate this change?
10. In what ways do Dom's attitudes toward his family change over the course of the novel? How does his perspective at the end of the novel differ from his perspective when he arrived at Ellis Island? What factors contributed to his change of heart?