

**File Name: I5R Letters From Rifka**

**Informative/Explanatory**

**Grade 5**

**Range of Writing**

### **Letters From Rifka**

Have you ever been determined to do something? In the book, Letters From Rifka, the main character was determined to leave Ukraine to get to America. Rifka, a 12 year old girl, is forced to leave Russia because if she doesn't she will be killed. Along the way she is determined and that determination helps her to get to America. Rifka never gave up hope. In other words she had indomitable spirit. **Uses precise language**

**Introduces the topic clearly** by providing relevant information about the text

**Provides a general observation and focus**

In the beginning, at the Polish border when Rifka got off the train, the guards force her and her family to take off their clothes for the Doctor. They did this because the Doctor wanted to see if she had a disease. Her determination enabled her to stand there naked, even though it was an uncomfortable, humiliating situation.

**Develops the topic with concrete details, relevant information, and examples**

Another time was when she was on the ship to America. She nearly drowned and lost a friend when a tempest hit. She goes into the hold which really smells. After the storm ends she looks for her friend, Peter, and learns that he has been lost at sea during the storm. Rifka returns to her cabin in tears. A few hours later, when she hears people ooing and ahing up on deck as the statue of Liberty comes into sight she realizes she still wants

**Links ideas within and across categories of information using words and phrases**

to go to America. Her determination gave her the power to endure the emotions she had and then gave her strength to carry on without her friend.

Another example is when Rifka is in the hospital wing at Ellis Island. A Doctor asks Rifka to take off her kerchief so he can check her for ringworm. Rifka realizes that if he finds something wrong with her she can be sent back to Ukraine. She was so determined to get to America that she stood up to an American doctor. Other people that didn't have as much determination might not have done that because they would be too frightened to stand up to someone who could send them back to their old country.

So as you can see, determination can get you anywhere. It got Rifka to America. How? It gave her the strength to carry on even though the obstacles were hard to overcome. Determination can help you achieve your goals too.

**Provides a concluding section related to the information presented.**

**Groups related information logically, discussing each example in a single paragraph.**

This well-crafted, fifth-grade informative/explanatory piece uses evidence from the text to develop the stated focus—that Rifka’s determination helps her get to America. The writer provides three examples of this determination; each is explained in a well-elaborated paragraph grounded in the text. The essay is clearly organized with an introduction that briefly introduces the story, body paragraphs that provide evidence from the story, and a conclusion that reflects on the significance of the information presented (“*Determination can help you to achieve your goals, too*”). The body paragraphs are also well-constructed. Each begins with an appropriate transition (“*In the beginning*”, “*Another time*”, “*Another example*”), explains the example given using concrete details (“*A Doctor asks Rifka to take off her kerchief...*”), and concludes by connecting the example to the focus (“*She was so determined to get America that she stood up to an American doctor.*”). Linking words and phrases (“*Another example*”, “*So as you can see*”, “*How?*”) smoothly connect ideas within the piece. The ideas and examples given in this piece are clear and easily understood, even by a reader who is not familiar with the text. This writer shows a well-developed awareness of purpose and audience for a fifth grader.

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**Revised and Edited for Student Use**

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In the beginning, at the Polish border when Rifka got off the train, the guards force her and her family to take off their clothes for the Doctor. They did this because the Doctor wanted to see if she had a disease. Her determination enabled her to stand there naked, even though it was an uncomfortable, humiliating situation.

Another time was when she was on the ship to America, she nearly drowns and loses a friend when a tempest hit. She goes into the hold which really smells. After the storm ends she looks for her friend, Peter, and learns that he has been lost at sea during the storm. Rifka returns to her cabin in tears. A few hours later, when she hears people “ooing” and “ahhing” up on deck as the Statue of Liberty comes into sight she realizes

she still wants to go to America. Her determination gave her the power to endure the emotions she had, and then gave her strength to carry on without her friend.

Another example is when Rifka is in the hospital wing at Ellis Island. A doctor asks Rifka to take off her kerchief so he can check her for ringworm. Rifka realizes that if he finds something wrong with her she can be sent back to Ukraine. She was so determined to get to America that she stood up to an American doctor. Other people that didn't have as much determination might not have done that because they would be too frightened to stand up to someone who could send them back to their old country.

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