

Destination: America: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

Is immigration a guaranteed right? Neng Lor left war-ravaged Vietnam and entered America legally. Miguel Delgado survived a frightful crossing of the U.S.-Mexican border. This video gives students a rare opportunity to hear the intimate first-hand stories of two immigrants. The challenges they face spark debate on population swells and the welfare of America's immigration policies.

Onscreen Questions and Activities

- Pre-viewing questions:
 - Why do you think American life is so attractive to immigrants?
 - For what reasons do you think immigrants choose to leave their homelands?
 - As you watch the program, pay attention to why immigration has increased over the years. Consider the arguments for and against reducing or even eliminating immigration.
 - Post-viewing questions:
 - Immigration in the United States was unrestricted from the Civil War until the 1920's. Discuss how and why immigration laws were changed after this period.
 - How did the new laws alter the social fabric of the nation? Discuss what the United States would be like if immigration had never been encouraged.
 - Activity: Design a collage of your cultural history. Display the diversity of your origins using family artifacts such as maps, flags, stories, and photographs. Then piece your collage together with your classmates' to create a "heritage quilt."
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Discuss issues surrounding immigration and understand that it can be a controversial issue.

- Read and write a book review for a fiction or nonfiction book about immigration to the United States.

Materials

- *Destination: America* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Selection of fiction and nonfiction books about immigration (see Procedures)

Procedures

1. Tell students that since Europeans and then others first started coming to this country many have written fiction and nonfiction about the immigrant experience. Ask students to name some works they know of related to immigration.
2. Next, explain that for much of our country's history, there has been debate about how many – if any – immigrants should come into the United States each year. Explain that after an initial class discussion, students will read a book related to immigration, write a review of the book, and then hold a follow-up discussion on the topic.
3. Lead a discussion about immigration that can include both students born in the United States and students who have immigrated here. You might focus the discussion on the following questions:
 - Why have people come to the United States in the past?
 - Why do people come to the United States today?
 - What are the benefits for immigrants and for the country when people from other lands settle here?
 - What complications sometimes develop for immigrants and for the country?
4. Take an informal poll based on the following questions:
 - How many students think that the United States today should allow anyone to immigrate?
 - How many students think that the United States today should not allow anyone from another land to move here permanently?
 - How many students think that the United States should put a quota, or limit, on how many people come here from other places?

Explain that you and the class will subsequently return to the results of this poll.

5. Give each student an opportunity to select and read one of the titles on the following annotated list. You may wish to add other titles or consult your school's librarian or media specialist for suggestions. If you do not have multiple copies of a title, consider letting a circle of students take turns reading one book to one another.

Fiction

Ellis Island: Land of Dreams; Ellis Island: Land of Hope; Ellis Island: Land of Promise, by Joan Lowery Nixon

Young adult literature: three novels about immigrant girls from an earlier generation

Journey of the Sparrows, by Fran Leeper Buss

Young adult literature: the story of a teenager fleeing from El Salvador to the United States

Lupita Mañana, by Patricia Beatty

Young adult literature: the story of a thirteen-year-old Mexican girl and her brother, who must sneak into the United States to work

Journey to Topaz, by Yochiko Uchida

All ages: an eleven-year-old Japanese American's experience of interment after Pearl Harbor; based on the author's life

Nonfiction

Arguing Immigration: The Debate over the Changing Face of America, Edited by Nicolaus Mills

Essays written for adults: An anthology of wide-ranging opinions on the topic of immigration, including pieces by Toni Morrison and Francis Fukuyama

The Lost Garden, by Laurence Yep

Young adult literature: A book about the Chinese American author's youth in San Francisco

Our Beckoning Borders: Illegal Immigration to America, by Brent Ashabranner

Young adult literature: A survey of illegal immigration, including interviews with immigrants; considered balanced and factual; focuses on the Mexican border

6. As students read the books, make sure they keep a journal, detailing their own attitudes toward immigrants and immigration and noting any changes or complications in their views.
7. Direct students to write, individually or in groups, reviews of the books they read. Have them write according to guidelines you've put together, or ask them to follow one of the outlines below. (They can find critics' opinions on the book jacket, in a reference book, or from an online book seller.)

Outline for Fiction Book Reviews

Introduction

- Title
- Date
- Opinion from one or more published reviews
- Awards or prizes

Body

- Setting
- Time and place
- Appropriateness

Characters

- Names and descriptions
- Realism of portrayals

Plot

- Summary
- Realism of story line

Conclusion

- Your overall opinion
- Your recommendation, if any, to others for a nonfiction book

Outline for Nonfiction Book Reviews

Introduction

- Title
- Date
- Opinion from one or more published reviews
- Awards or prizes

Body

- Discussion of author's central message
- Evaluation of support author gives for central message

Conclusion

- Your overall opinion
- Your recommendation, if any, to others

8. Return to the earlier class discussion and the poll you conducted. Repoll the class on the following questions:
 - How many students think that the United States today should allow anyone to immigrate?
 - How many students think that the United States today should not allow anyone from another land to move here permanently?

- How many students think that the United States should put a quota, or limit, on how many people come here from other places?
9. Whether the poll turns out the same as earlier or different, close the lesson with an acknowledgment that citizens and immigrants will continue to debate the issue.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some valid benchmarks that indicate whether an immigrant has assimilated into American society? Why do these particular benchmarks signify assimilation?
2. Immigrants were presumably more welcome in the United States 100 years ago when there was a wilderness to be populated and a need for cheap labor. What arguments can be made for why immigrants should be welcome in the United States today?
3. Immigration laws became much more restrictive in the 1920s. Evaluate global and national affairs and the economy of that time. Develop a hypothesis about the reasons that Congress believed it was in the national interest to close the door on immigration at that time in history.
4. Another major shift in U.S. immigration law occurred in 1965, when the policy was relaxed to enable many more immigrants to enter the country. Why was it in the national interest then to reverse the previous restrictive immigration policies? What do you think might have precipitated the shift, given the global and national issues of the time?
5. Debate whether immigration to the United States should be considered a right or a privilege.
6. One common argument against immigration is that a government should use its resources to take care of "its own" rather than care for those from other countries. Evaluate the validity of this argument. How much does a democratic government owe "its own"? What responsibility, if any, does that same government have to other citizens of the world?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student's book review reflects complete outline; includes strongly cohesive, unified paragraphs; includes prose that is free of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 2 points: Student's book review reflects most of the outline; includes moderately cohesive, unified paragraphs; includes some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 1 point: Student's book review reflects incompletely to outline; lacking paragraph cohesion and unity; includes many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Vocabulary

assimilate

Definition: To absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group.

Context: The desire to learn English is one indication that an immigrant wants to assimilate into mainstream American society.



emigrate

Definition: To leave one's place of residence or country to live elsewhere.

Context: After 14 years in refugee camps, the Cambodian family was finally able to emigrate from Southeast Asia.

Hmong

Definition: A member of a mountain-dwelling people inhabiting southeastern China and the northern parts of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

Context: A large community of Hmong from Cambodia has settled successfully in Minnesota.

infrastructure

Definition: The underlying foundation or basic framework (as of a system or organization).

Context: Supporters of less restricted immigration claim that not much infrastructure is necessary to help immigrants adjust to life in the United States.

mandated

Definition: Made mandatory or compulsory.

Context: American laws passed in 1962 mandated restrictions on immigration.

referendum

Definition: The principle or practice of submitting to popular vote a measure passed on or proposed by a legislative body or by popular initiative.

Context: California held a referendum to vote on whether certain benefits should be withheld from immigrants.

refugee

Definition: A person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution.

Context: Refugees often spend a long time in camps before they can enter America.

verification

Definition: The act or process of establishing truth, accuracy, or reality.

Context: Some say a heightened verification system is needed to weed out illegal aliens and employers who exploit them.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:



- Civics – What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?: Understands the meaning of citizenship in the United States and knows the requirements for citizenship and naturalization.
- Civics – What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?: Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.
- U.S. History – Contemporary United States: Understands developments in foreign policy and domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies.
- U.S. History – Contemporary United States: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.
- U.S. history – The Development of the Industrial United States: Understands massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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