

The Immigrant Experience

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Part One – The Past

SET (Personal Connection/Advance Organizer)

To engage students and connect to prior knowledge, use the Immigration Lesson PowerPoint to ask students about their own family histories with immigration. From there, develop and discuss the key elements of immigration (i.e. push/pull factors, hardships, successes, life) and its role in building the nation.

ORAL HISTORIES

Now that the students have a framework for understanding the basics of the immigrant experience, select and play one or more of the oral history interviews from the Lincoln Legacy Project:

[Fernando Aguirre](#)

Former Chairman and CEO of Chiquita Brands International Fernando Aguirre is interviewed by his son Fabrizio. He explains how he used the adversity he received from being Hispanic as motivation to succeed. He also shares with his son why being bicultural can be an advantage in both business and society.

[Annette Lantos](#)

An interview with Annette Lantos; a holocaust survivor and chairman of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, and her granddaughter Sunday Swett. Annette discusses her experience in Hungary, her proudest moment, among other things.

[Filomena DeSimone](#)

Filomena DeSimone was a teenager when she immigrated to the US from Italy during wartime. She believes that her children were given an incredible opportunity by growing up in America.

[Dikembe Mutombo](#)

Dikembe Mutombo is the Chairman and President of Dikembe Mutombo Foundation, Inc. and a former NBA Center. Listen as he reflects on the challenges of growing up in a Congolese society where opportunities were limited, and how coming to the US provided him with a newfound sense of freedom and opportunity.

[Patrick Burke](#)

Patrick Burke is the NHL Director of Player Safety and Head of 'You Can Play' Campaign. Listen as he emphasizes the importance treating others the way you want to be treated, focusing on what you bring to the table, and working hard to leave a positive legacy for the next generation.

[Dorothy Kittaka](#)

Dorothy Kittaka discusses the impact of the arts on her life and the opportunities they provided her growing up. She is the co-founder of FAME (Foundation for Art and Music in Elementary Education) and ambassador for Fort Wayne Sister Cities.

Use the questions on the Immigration Lesson PowerPoint to discuss their stories. Feel free to use as many of these clips as needed.

CREATE A POSTCARD

Using information provided by your textbook, supplemental resources, and/or primary sources, students will role play an immigrant to the United States by creating a postcard that shares their story of coming to America. Use the Postcard Instructions (PDF) handout to guide students.

TALK SHOW

Using information provided by your textbook, supplemental resources, and/or primary sources, students will role play an immigrant to the United States through a talk show simulation. Use the Talk Show Instructions (PDF) handout to guide students.

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HOMEWORK

As an end to part one of the lesson, students will be asked to complete two homework questions. The homework prompt is part of the Immigration Lesson PowerPoint.

Question One: Find an article from a newspaper or the Internet that addresses a current issue or topic regarding immigration today. Read the article and detail what the article is about and explain the issue at hand. *Question Two:* Create a list of ten questions you would ask an immigrant if you were interviewing an immigrant in order to find out and detail their story.

Part Two – The Present

AGREE/DISAGREE Statements

Begin part two of the lesson by having students either working individually or in parings, read ten statements on immigration and tell whether they agree or disagree with each. Feel free to conduct a classroom discussion regarding their findings and beliefs. Use this discussion to then introduce and discuss a relevant issue regarding immigration in America today. Here is a list of potential topics:

- Border Security
- Assimilation
- Deportation
- Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants
- Quotas/Limits
- Political Influence
- Economic Influence
- Displaced Persons (Refugees)
- Naturalization Process

LETTER TO CONGRESS PERSON

Based upon the discussions on current immigration issues, have students select an issue of concern, develop a position, and write a persuasive letter to a congressperson that details the students belief and recommends actions from the politician. Use the Letter to a Congress person Instructions (PDF) handout for guiding students.

Part Three – Adding to the Legacy

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

As a culminating activity, students will be given an opportunity to conduct and record oral history interviews with an immigrant from their family or community. Use the Oral Histories Interview Instructions (PDF) to guide students in this activity. Follow the instructions on the Lincoln Legacy website to upload your videos.



Agree/Disagree

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DIRECTIONS:

Read each of the following statements. Do you AGREE/DISAGREE? Explain why you feel that way. Justify your viewpoint.

1. The United States is a “melting pot.”
2. Immigrants must become “American.” (“Love it or leave it”)
3. Everyone living in the United States must speak English.
4. The owner of a restaurant in the U.S. is completely justified in denying service to those who do not speak English.
5. The government should limit the number of immigrants that come to this country each year, especially those coming from the Middle East in order to prevent the possibility of domestic terrorism.
6. Our borders should be tightly guarded and heavily defended.
7. Illegal immigrants should be hunted down and deported immediately, and law enforcement officials should be given all tools and resources necessary to do this.
8. Illegal immigrants take jobs from Americans and hurt our economy.
9. The children of illegal immigrants should not become American citizens.
10. The immigrants of the past better understood the values of hard work, perseverance, and sacrifice than those people who come to the United States today.

Talk Show

The Immigrant Experience

OVERVIEW

The United States is a nation of immigrants. From crossing a land bridge over the Bering Sea to traveling by steamship across the Atlantic Ocean, everyone in this country originally came from somewhere else. And, everyone who has come has their own unique and interesting story.

Daytime talk shows continue to be a staple of American TV today. Ellen DeGeneres, Live with Kelly and Michael, Dr. Phil, The View, The Talk, and Jerry Springer dominate the airwaves from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on network television. A highlight of all of these shows is their in-depth and often intimate interviews with people who have fascinating stories.

In this activity, the class will stage its own talk show on 'The Immigrant Experience.' Students will role play recent immigrants to the United States in order to share their stories with the audience. The teacher, or a student, will serve as the host and interviewer. And, to ensure high ratings, the guests will be joined by a "nativist" who isn't too thrilled with his new neighbors. Read the directions below carefully.

DIRECTIONS

- **Assign Groups and Roles:** For this activity, you will be placed in one of the following groups: Immigrant 1, Immigrant 2, Immigrant 3, Immigrant 4, Immigrant 5, Nativist, and Host.

IMMIGRANTS

- **Select a Country.** You will be role playing an immigrant to the United States. Select a country that your immigrant is from. Possible choices of countries or regions include Ireland, Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, China, Japan, Mexico, Central America, and Africa. The choice will really depend on what time period is being covered in the class.
- **Research.** Using your textbook and online resources, research the experience of an immigrant from your chosen country or region. You are encouraged to find a primary source of an immigrant's story. If you cannot find an actual story from an individual, look at the general experiences of a person who came to the United States from your chosen country or region.

Consider the following questions:

- Why did you come over to the U.S.?
- What was the journey like?
- Where did you settle in the U.S.? Describe.
- What were your first few months like?
- What exciting new things did you see?
- What hardships, difficulties, or challenges did you face?
- What kind of job did you find? Describe.

- **Talk Show Guest.** Now that your group understands the experiences of an immigrant from your chosen country, build a character that will appear on the class talk show. Create an appropriate name. Jot down some notes on an index card that provides the basics of your character's story. Choose one member of your group who will feel comfortable up in front of the class in the talk show. The other group members will serve as supportive friends and family in the audience.

NATIVISTS

- **Research.** Using your textbook and online resources, define "nativist." Research the various beliefs and principles that such a person held in the past and today. Consider the following questions:
 - What is your opinion of immigrants? Why?
 - What do you believe in or value?
 - What negatives do you associate with immigrants? Why?
 - What are you doing about all of this?
- **Talk Show Guest.** Now that your group understands the beliefs of a nativist, build a character that will appear on the class talk show. Create an appropriate name. Jot down some notes on an index card that provides the basics of your character's story. Choose one member of your group who will feel comfortable up in front of the class in the talk show. The other group members will serve as supportive friends and family in the audience.

Talk Show

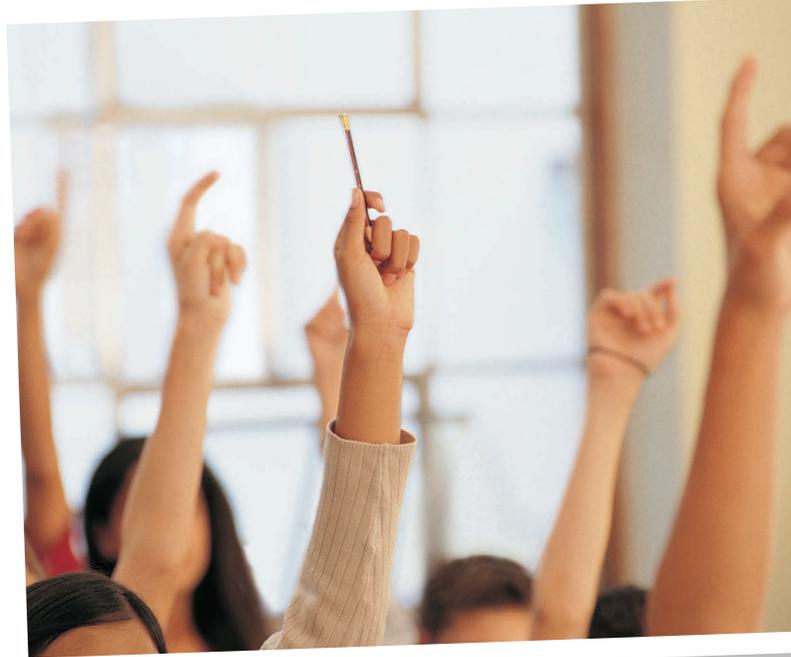
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HOST

- **Build Your Questions:** Either the teacher or a group of students will serve as the host. You must create a list of 15-20 questions to drive the talk show. The questions can be specific to a certain immigrant group or general to the immigrant experience. For example, you might want to ask a sweeping question of “what has been the most difficult thing about living in America so far?” Write the questions on an index card to guide you during the show.
- **Host:** Begin your talk show by welcoming the audience and giving an overview of the topic for today’s show. Then, introduce each of your guests (name, where they came from) and allow for audience reaction. Break down your questions into segments for the show. Ask the questions to move the show along. You can even ask for questions from the audience. Wrap up the show with your “closing thoughts”.

DISCUSSION/DEBRIEF

After the talk show is over (20-30 min.), the class should discuss what they learned about the immigrant experience. Students could write a paragraph that synthesizes what they picked up about immigration. Or, students could simply list 3 ideas that they acquired from this activity in an exit slip.



Postcard from an immigrant

The Immigrant Experience

OVERVIEW

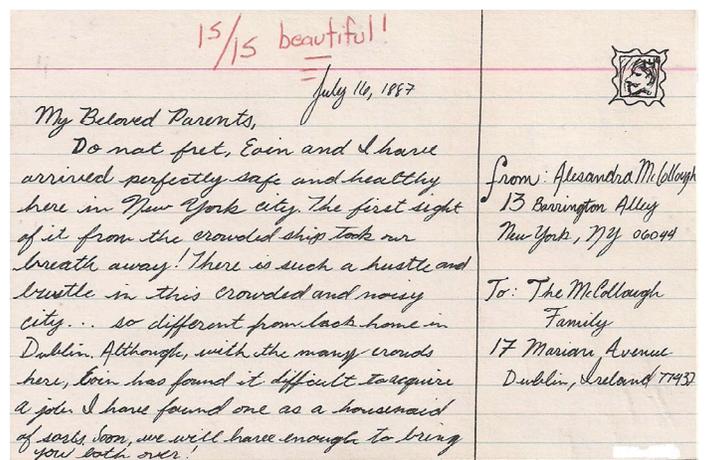
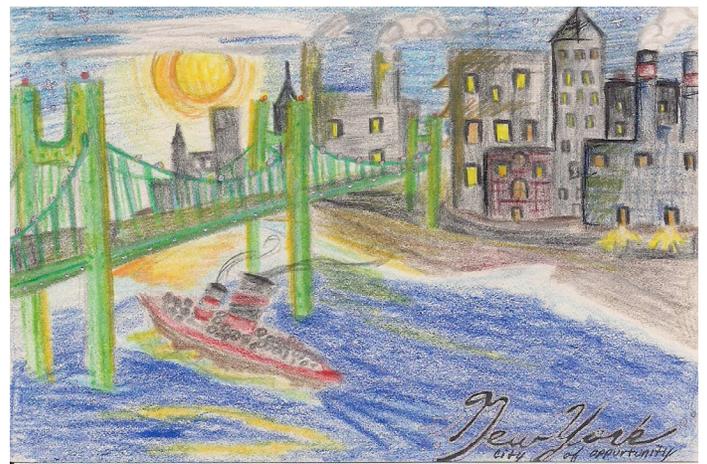
The United States is a nation of immigrants. From crossing a land bridge over the Bering Sea to traveling by steamship across the Atlantic Ocean, everyone in this country originally came from somewhere else. And, everyone who has come has their own unique and interesting story.

In this activity, you will be role playing a recent immigrant to the United States by creating a postcard that shares your story of coming to America. **Read the directions below carefully.**

DIRECTIONS

- **Select a Country.** You will be role playing an immigrant to the United States. Select a country that your immigrant is from. Possible choices of countries or regions include Ireland, Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, China, Japan, Mexico, Central America, and Africa. The choice will really depend on what time period is being covered in the class.
- **Research.** Using your textbook and online resources, research the experience of an immigrant from your chosen country or region. You are encouraged to find a primary source of an immigrant's story. If you cannot find an actual story from an individual, look at the general experiences of a person who came to the United States from your chosen country or region. **Consider the following questions:**
 - Why did you come over to the U.S.?
 - What was the journey like?
 - Where did you settle in the U.S.? Describe.
 - What were your first few months like?
 - What exciting new things did you see?
 - What hardships, difficulties, or challenges did you face?
 - What kind of job did you find? **Describe.**
- **Create a Postcard.** You have just arrived in the United States. After a few weeks to get settled, you have decided to send a postcard to your family back in the old country to share what life has been like. The postcard could be on any size index card. Be creative.

- **Back:** Write a brief paragraph covering the information you found in your research on the back of the card leaving room for the name and address of your family member back in your country.
- **Front:** On the front of the card, draw a picture of your new home or find a photograph to attach from the Internet (use an actual photo from the time period). An example of a completed postcard is attached.



Taking a stand— Letter to Congress

Issues in Immigration Today

OVERVIEW

Immigration has been a contentious and often controversial issue in the United States for the past 200+ years. People argue passionately for their side and demand that actions be taken by the government. Much of this debate centers on how different citizens view this country and its founding principles, but the following continue to be the biggest issues surrounding immigration:

- Border Security
- Assimilation
- Deportation
- Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants
- Quotas/Limits
- Political Influence
- Economic Influence
- Displaced Persons (Refugees)
- Naturalization Process

In this activity, you will focus on one of these key issues and write a persuasive letter to an elected official. Read the directions below carefully.

DIRECTIONS

- **Choose an Issue:** Which issue from the list above are you most interested in or passionate about? On which issue do you have a strong opinion? Select an issue that you will want to learn more about.
- **Build Your Position:** Using your textbook, supplemental resources, and the Internet, research your issue in-depth. What is the issue? What are the sides? Who are on each side? What arguments are offered in support? And, most importantly, where do you personally stand? Gather as much evidence (i.e. statistics, personal stories) as possible to support your position. How can you persuade someone to join your side?

- **Write a Letter:** Now that you have your research and evidence completed, write a persuasive letter to a government official that gives your position on this issue and the action you want to be taken. Follow the guidelines for good persuasive writing. Consider the counterargument and how you can refute it. Present your evidence clearly and connect it to your point. Make sure the politician understands why you feel that particular way and offer recommendations as to what he/she can do to make a difference.
- **Find Your Congressperson:** Use the following websites to acquire contact information (mailing address, email) for your particular congressperson.
 - House of Representatives (<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>)
 - Senate (<http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>)
- **Send the Letter:** Submit your letter to the appropriate congressperson through the mail or the Internet. Most elected officials will reply to letters from citizens. If you receive a reply, bring it in to share with the class.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Adding to Lincoln's Legacy

OVERVIEW

The United States is a nation of Immigrants, each with unique stories and experiences. In this activity, you will select an individual that has immigrated to America from a foreign nation/area and conduct an interview that allows the individual to tell their particular story.

Directions

- **Select an Individual.** You will be interviewing an immigrant to the United States and allowing them to tell their story. The immigrant can be a family member or can come from your local community.
- **Develop Questions.** Once you find an immigrant to interview, you need to create a list of questions that will guide the interview. This interview is designed to allow the immigrant to tell their individual story, so remember to tailor your questions around it. Please consider the following questions:
 - For what reasons did they leave their native area?
 - Why did they choose to come to America?
 - What did they experience on the trip to America?
 - What did they experience in the short term and long term as an immigrant and new US resident?
 - How has their life changed and evolved due to their immigration?
 - What does America mean to them?

- **Conduct the Interview.** Once you select an immigrant and create a list of questions to be asked, the next step is to carry out the interview. Find a proper place to conduct the interview. Interviews can be transcribed or filmed. If the interview is filmed as an oral history, it can be downloaded onto the Lincoln's Legacy website for future and further viewing. If filming the interview, please use a third person (if needed) to film the interview. Make sure the interview is conducted in a place that will provide a sound environment for audio/visual recording. Use the "how to" video from the Lincoln's Legacy website to guide the process.

Optional Wrap Up Question

After the interview is finished, in one paragraph explain what you learned from the immigrant's story.

