



MUSICUNITESUSSM

Lesson Plan: Immigration in America

Overview:

This lesson has been written specifically to prepare Waltham County 4th grade students for the December 2005 musical performance entitled “Immigration in the United States” by the Lydian String Quartet, which will focus on the varying musical traditions that immigrants bring to the United States. The lesson covers the two class periods immediately preceding the performance and also offers extension ideas for one lesson after the performance.

This lesson, along with the Lydian String Quartet performance, specifically aims to create awareness and appreciation of the immigrant experience while challenging students to give thoughtful consideration to the injustices many immigrants confront as well. Immigration is essentially defined as the moving of one’s home from one place to another, and students are encouraged to explore their own memories of moving (or to imagine what it might be like) in an effort to view immigration from an immigrants’ perspective. Through the use of specific examples of the artistic, culinary, linguistic, and musical heritage of immigrants, students also expand their appreciation of what we can all learn from those who move to our country.

Goals:

Content:

- concept and definition of immigration
- factors that encourage or necessitate immigration (“push” and “pull”)
- difficulties that immigrants face
- legal vs. illegal immigration
- examples of how immigrants add to American culture

Skills:

- working in pairs/small groups
- expressing thoughts in paragraph form
- interviewing in order to learn about someone else’s experience
- developing empathy by reflecting about experience from someone else’s point of view
- critical thinking about how all citizens can make our country a more receptive and just place for immigrants

Relevant Frameworks:

Grade 4 Learning Standards

4.15 Describe the diverse nature of the American people by identifying the distinctive contributions to American culture of:

- B.** African Americans and recent African (e.g., Ethiopian) immigrant

groups

C. major European immigrant groups who have come to America in the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g., English, Germans, Italians, Scots, Irish, Jews, Poles, and Scandinavians).

D. major Spanish-speaking (e.g., Cubans, Mexican) and Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese) immigrant groups who have come to America in the 19th and 20th centuries.

4.16 Identify major immigrant groups that live in Massachusetts and where they now live in large numbers (e.g., English, Irish, Italians, French Canadians, Armenians, Greeks, Portuguese, Haitians, and Vietnamese).

Time: Two classes, with extension possibilities for a third.

Materials:

Copies of the “My Home!” worksheet (attached) for each student

Markers or colored pencils for drawing (optional)

Chalk and blackboard

World map



Lesson Outline

Day 1:

- *Warm-up Activity and Advance Organizer: What is home?* (15 minutes)

Introduce the concept of immigration by first asking the students to think about the concept of home. What is home? What makes someplace home? Is it the people, or the place? If you have ever moved your home, what did you miss most? The food? The music? The way people celebrate holidays?

Distribute copies of the “My Home!” worksheet and ask the students to reflect individually by answering the questions on the worksheet. Encourage students to draw other things that remind them of home on the worksheet as well.

- *Pair activity: Interviews* (10 minutes)

Divide the students into pairs. Using the questions on the worksheet as a guide, students should take a few minutes to learn a little bit about his or her partner’s home and what he or she thinks is most special about it. If possible, students who do not have the experience of moving a significant distance should be paired with those who do.

- *Whole class discussion: What did we learn about home?* (10 minutes)

Bring the students back to a larger group discussion. Ask the students about the information that they gathered during their interviews and record that information on the blackboard in list or chart form, especially emphasizing the qualities or items that students list as the things they most like about home and the things they would most miss if they had to move.

- *Connection to Immigration: Expanding the concept of home* (15 minutes)

Ask students if they can define immigration. Explain to them that immigration is essentially the act of moving one’s *home* from one country to another, especially for the purpose of settling permanently there. Have students close their eyes and imagine what it would be like to move to a new country with a new language, new culture, new food, etc. For those students who are immigrants themselves, have them recall that experience. Then ask the students to consider their worksheets again. What pieces of home would they want to bring with them if they moved? What would they have to leave behind? What would make them happy? What would make them sad? If there are any immigrants or children of immigrants in the classroom who are comfortable speaking about their experiences, ask them to share with the class what the experience can be like.

Homework Assignment:

Assign students a one-page letter addressed to a 4th grade immigrant to Massachusetts welcoming her to her new home. The immigrant should be from one of the major immigrant groups in Massachusetts (good examples are the Dominican Republic, Italy, India, and China – see attached resources). The letter should describe what she should expect in her new home and express excitement for at least two things that the immigrant might bring with her from her old country. *Enrichment:* for students who struggle with writing, drawings may be assigned in its stead.

Day 2:

- *Warm-up Activity: Reading letters aloud* (5 minutes)

Students again form pairs and take turns reading each other the letters they wrote for homework. (This should only take a couple of minutes but should remind them of the previous day's conversations as well as the concept of immigration.)

- *Free-write: Contributions of immigrants* (15 minutes)

Ask the students to think about all of the positive things that immigrants bring to the United States, pulling examples from their letters. In particular, help them to focus upon the cultural heritage of immigrants. Give them some examples of immigrant contributions to our culture, such as pizza, soccer, stir-fry, or reggae music. (Other examples: Albert Einstein, ballet, bowling, salsa music/dance, hummus, the idea of democracy.) Then ask them to free-write for 5-10 minutes, depending on their capacity, about how they think immigration makes the United States a better place. Emphasize that the free-write is very "free" and can include drawings if the students would like.

- *Getting More Specific: Why Do People Migrate?* (15 minutes)

Keeping the students in pairs, ask them to brainstorm about reasons why people might migrate. Examples such as war in their native country or a hope for a better life might help them get started. After they have brainstormed for a few minutes, ask them to contribute their conclusions to the whole class and record their answers on the board. Divide their answers into two columns, one labeled "push," and one labeled "pull." Ask whether the students can figure out the difference between the two lists. Essentially "push" factors are those that push people out of their native countries: war, famine, natural disasters, poverty, political instability, or even slavery. "Pull" factors are those that pull people to new homes elsewhere: hopes for a better life for their children, better educational prospects, a better job, opportunities to be close to other family who have moved. Ask students to close their eyes and think about the difficulty of the choice to migrate. Even when immigrants are "pulled" to the United States, they are essentially deprived of their home communities, their language, and often the opportunities that come with being a citizen.

Discuss the distinction between legal and illegal immigration. Explain, using examples of "push" factors, why some people migrate even though they are not guaranteed "legal" status. Discuss the plight of some Haitians who have arrived in boats on the coast of Florida without legal status. Do these people have the same rights as American citizens and legal immigrants? Are they guaranteed minimum wage or education for their children, for instance? (See the websites listed below for further information.)

- *Critical Thinking: How have the things I have learned changed how I think?* (15 minutes)

Ask students to return to their worksheets from the first lesson period. Remind them that immigration, as we have defined it, is simply the act of moving one's home from one country to another. Ask them to look at their worksheets and recall what qualities or items they identified most with home. Ask them how they better understand the experience of immigrating. Discuss what it might feel like to be deprived of home. Ask

them whether these thoughts make them want to treat immigrants differently. Are the ways we treat immigrants in America fair? Are we always just?

Finally, remind them that during the next day's performance of "Immigration in the United States," by the Lydian String Quartet, they should actively think about the life experiences of the people who have brought us this music. *Do the things we have learned change the way we think about immigration?*

Assessment:

These two days of work and homework provide ample opportunity for informal assessment. The teacher should evaluate the students' working knowledge of immigration as well as their ability to connect it to the Advance Organizer topic of "home." In particular, the class brainstorming sessions and pair activities help the teacher gauge how the students are progressing. Both the written homework assignment and the class "free-write" at the end of the second day, on the other hand, provide a more formal assessment of the students' work.

While the teacher may wish to evaluate the ongoing development of students' writing skills or ability to work in pairs, it is also important to evaluate how well the students achieve the stated lesson plan goals: awareness and appreciation of the immigrant experience, as well as thoughtful consideration of the difficulty of the experience and injustices immigrants may confront. The final question, "Do the things we have learned change the way we think about immigration?" provides the ultimate test as to whether this lesson and the class discussion has challenged each of our assumptions about immigration.

Optional extension:

Hurricane Katrina: an example close to home.

Hurricane Katrina has forced the largest migration within the United States in the nation's history; it provides a relevant and recent example of "push" migration in which people have no choice but to leave their homes. There are two articles in the attached resources packet that chronicle this movement, one that focuses on Massachusetts and the refugees this state has received, and one that covers the migration as a whole.

Attached Resources:

"My Home!" worksheet
Charts of immigration statistics
Immigration articles

Helpful Websites:

http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/usadom/usadom0501-04.htm#P189_29093

This website has detailed case studies of real illegal immigrants and the injustices they confronted in the United States; any one of the case studies would make a powerful impression if read to a class.

<http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=14332>

This website offers some general statistics on the economic impact immigrants have on the United States economy.

Helpful Texts:

Dublin, Thomas. *Immigrant Voices: New Lives in America 1773-1986.*

Morrison, Joan and Charlotte Fox Zabusky. *American Mosaic: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It.*

Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. *Soundscapes: Exploring Music in a Changing World.*

About the Author:

ShIPLEY Salewski is currently pursuing her Masters in Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School. Previously, she taught in the Religion and Philosophy department at Stuart Hall High School in San Francisco. She welcomes your feedback:

srobertson@hds.harvard.edu