



LOCAL STORIES & IMMIGRANT VOICES: 1-PAGE SUMMARY

PARTNERS

National Endowment for the Humanities



ISSUE SUMMARY & PROMPT

Since the 17th century, immigrants have shaped communities across the United States. Some come to the US in search of religious or political freedom, others through labor contracts and slavery. Many are fleeing famine, poverty and war to find work or improve their living conditions. How have the experiences of immigrants and migrants changed throughout U.S. history?

THEME GOAL

Make a game about the immigrant experience in the U.S. that relates the past to the present.

QUICK AND EASY ACTIVITY (10-15 minutes)

- Ask class to consider: Which times in U.S. history might there have been more (or less) immigrants.
- Show students the Migration Policy Institute's interactive chart on [Legal Immigration to the United States, 1820-2014](#). The chart shows the number of immigrants coming to the US per year going back to 1820.
- Invite students to suggest a year (or time in history) and move sliders to review detailed data from those dates. Explore a variety of dates, asking students to consider the lives of immigrants during certain key points in history (colonial settlement, slave trade, turn of the century, post WWI, today) and discuss.

FULL SAMPLE LESSON (40-60 minutes)

OBJECTIVES:

- Engage in active listening about race, ethnicity and identity through oral histories
- Explore what race is and how it shapes our identities.

MATERIALS:

- Brooklyn Historical Society's [selection of oral histories](#)

ACTIVITIES:

- (10 mins) Group Brainstorm: Introduce immigrant stories as a topic and invite students to suggest aspect of life that would be challenging and exciting for new immigrants. Write two lists on a whiteboard for all to view.
- (5 mins) Discuss Oral Histories: Explain to group that an oral history is a recording of an individual's life story. Show class the Brooklyn Historical Society's [selection of oral histories](#)
- (15 mins) Explore Oral Histories: Invite students to listen to 3 different oral histories and make note of how the three people they select are similar and the same in how they view their age, gender, religion, family size, cultural values, integration, race, ethnicity, and identity.

- (15 mins) Document Ideas: Individually, students document a) how each of their three people differed, 2) how they were similar, 3) how they might create a game that might reflect these different stories.
- (15 mins) Present Ideas: As a class, play a “show and tell” game during which each group presents their ideas to the group and wraps up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would a world without political borders inspire more immigration? How do the cultures mix and mingle?
2. How could schools prepare students to be truly “global” citizens?
3. What community resources could an immigrant use when arriving in your/our community? Who might help them out? What might get in their way? What opportunities might they have?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Chronicling America - Search America's historic newspaper pages from 1789-1924 or use the U.S. Newspaper Directory to find information about American newspapers published between 1690-present. (Library of Congress and the NEH) <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

Texas Originals radio episodes - A radio series profiling individuals who have had a profound influence upon Texas history and culture. Developed in partnership with Houston Public Media, the program is available to other public and commercial radio stations in Texas. Please contact Humanities Texas if you're interested in bringing the program to your community. (Humanities Texas) <http://www.humanitiestexas.org/programs/tx-originals>

HERB database - Primary documents, classroom activities, and other teaching tools in U.S. history , includes approximately 300 items on immigration including political cartoons, background essays, teaching games, statistical analysis activities and worksheets. (ASHP at CUNY) <http://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/> (*search for Immigration then filter by categories)