Exploring the Immigrant Experience

Theme

Immigration has played and continues to play an integral role in shaping American society and culture. An examination of the history of immigration is a telling reminder that history does not follow a set course; rather, it is the result of decisions made by real people in response to the world around them.

An exploration of the roots of Lowell's immigrant past can help clarify some of the misunderstanding arising from such questions as:

- what is an "American"?
- where do "Americans" come from?
- what kinds of immigration issues will affect the future of the United States?
- what relevance does immigration have to my life?

Objectives

After using this curriculum guide and participating in Exploring the Immigrant Experience, students will be able to:

- identify experiences common to all immigrant groups;
- state reasons why so many immigrants chose to come to Lowell;
- think critically about what immigration policy has been in the past and what it should be in the future;
- explain the relationship between immigration and the shaping of America; and
- articulate a personal definition of what it is to be an "American."

Program Description

Exploring the Immigrant Experience is a 60 to 90 minute hands-on program focusing on immigration. Using the words and feelings of actual immigrants to Lowell, Massachusetts, the program explores themes common to immigrants: the decision to leave; the journey over; initial hardships; preserving culture; and becoming an "American." Students use primary source quotations from oral histories to take on the roles of immigrants, and present their findings to the class. Exploring the Immigrant Experience is recommended for students in grades 5 through 8.

Why Lowell?

What happens when you put your hand under a running water faucet? Think how much stronger the sensation would be if an entire river were coming out of the faucet. Now imagine that the water is falling not three inches, but more than thirty feet, the height of a three-story building! It is this power--falling water--which led to the birth of Lowell and the American Industrial Revolution.

The Merrimack River

The Merrimack River begins in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and flows south and east for 116 miles to the Atlantic Ocean. This is not very long for a river, but there is a lot of water in it. At a spot near Chelmsford, Massachusetts, there is a major waterfall: the Pawtucket Falls.

For colonial Americans, the waterfall was a nuisance, something which made river travel more difficult. A group of men dug a canal around the falls in the 1790s.

Francis Cabot Lowell

Francis Cabot Lowell was a wealthy merchant in Boston in the early 1800s. He took a trip to England in 1810. Supposedly he was just travelling for pleasure, but he had a secret purpose. He wanted to find out as much as he could about the machines used in England's textile (cloth) mills.

The world's first industrial revolution began in England in the 1780s. The first industry was textiles. English inventors built machines to card, spin, and weave cotton and wool into cloth. Some of these machines existed in the United States in 1810, but there were no power looms to weave thread into cloth.

Francis Cabot Lowell watched power looms at work. They had hundreds of parts, but he was able to memorize the design. When he returned to Boston, he and engineer Paul Moody built their own power looms. Some people think that Francis Cabot Lowell was the world's first industrial spy!

Planning an Industrial City

There was no elecricity in the early 1800s, so Lowell and Moody had to build their mills at a place where there was natural power. This meant finding a waterfall. They built their first mills beside a small waterfall on the Charles River in Waltham, Massachusetts. It was a big success!

Francis Cabot Lowell died in 1817, but Moody and others began looking for a bigger waterfall. In 1821, they visited the Pawtucket Falls, and knew that it could make them all very rich. They built their first mills near the falls in 1823, and named the town Lowell. These mills were even more successful than the ones in Waltham.

Lowell's First Workers

Machines need people to operate, so it was necessary to attract workers to the new city. There were not very many people in the US in 1820--only 9.6 million. How could thousands of workers be found? The mill owners decided to recruitYankee women to do most of the jobs. There were several reasons for this. First, most men already had other jobs. Second, women already knew how to make cloth. Third, women could be paid less than men, because they had almost no rights at the time.

At first, working in the mills was not a bad job. Mill owners provided good food and housing in company-owned boardinghouses. The pay, though low, was higher than a woman could find in any other job. It was also a chance to get away from an isolated farm, and see a city for the first time.

After a while, however, other mill cities were built. More and more cloth was made. This caused the price of all cloth to go down. Mill owners did not want profits to shrink, so they made workers operate more machines, made the machines run faster, and cut workers' wages. Women protested and went on strike, but the owners would not give in. By the 1840s, fewer and fewer Yankee women were willing to work in Lowell.

Immigrant Workers

Many Irish people moved to Lowell in the 1820s and 1830s to help build mills and dig canals. They were usually not allowed to work in the mills, however, and lived in a poor neighborhood called the Acre. The situation changed in the 1840s. Mill owners were desperate for workers, and the Irish were ready to work. More were arriving daily, fleeing the potato famine in Ireland. By 1860, about 1/4 of the 37,000 people in Lowell were Irish.

Lowell continued to grow during the 1800s, and more and more workers were needed. Beginning in the 1860s, thousands of French-Canadians moved south from Quebec. Later, many more thousands of immigrants moved to Lowell from Greece, Portugal, Poland, and many other European countries.

All of these immigrants were looking for a better life in the US. They came to Lowell because they had heard that there were jobs in the mills. It was true that there were jobs, but it was not pleasant work. The day was long: 10-12 hours per day, six days a week. The conditions were dangerous: injuries and serious illness were very common. The pay was low: whole families often had to work in the mills to make ends meet. People kept coming, though, because life was even worse in the old country.

Outside the mills, immigrants formed strong ethnic communities. Churches, coffee houses, market-places, and social clubs helped ease the change to a new culture. Life was hard, but many immigrants told fond stories of the close communities they lived in.

Immigration is still part of the story of Lowell. Today, people come from places like Cambodia, Laos, and Puerto Rico. Their experiences of hope and hardship are very similar to those of earlier immi-grants.

Tough Choices: Leaving Everything Behind

The United States is one of the few nations on earth where nearly every-one is descended from immigrants. Many millions of people have asked this difficult question: do I pull away from my roots and leave everything behind, or do I stay? Usually, there was no turning back: most immigrants never saw their native lands again. Why did they come?

• During the third year of our marriage, I did extensive planting, and this cost me a pretty penny. On August 8, we had a frost which killed everything, even the potatoes; all the crops were ruined, which left us in the direst poverty.

Felix Albert
born in Quebec, 1843
immigrated, 1881

• In my village there were forty or fifty families and now there are at least two hundred. The land has not changed but it has to feed more mouths. That's why most of us left our country. My uncle had fields . . . but when his children grew up, they had to divide it and each one got a small share of the land. They had to earn their living from the soil. There were very few factories; there was a small silk factory nearby, but not enough for all of us.

Demetrios Palavras
born in Greece, 1893
immigrated, 1912

• When I was [in Russia] the boys between ten and twelve acted as lookout for the self defense that every community had. Defending themselves from the Russians, who, whenever they felt like it, made a little pot-run or a larger pot-run, which means just attacking Jews. And first it started breaking their windows, then breaking their skulls and this is what they did.

Nathan Cohen
born in Russia, 1897
immigrated, 1912

• So my father and his father, about seven people . . . went in one car. I don't know where they go, you see he didn't tell me. After he went, about three hours, I got someone who lived in the place he went to. He said, "Well, your father was killed." Say, what happened? I have to go there and find out what happened. . . . So I went there. I saw by my eyes. There were seven people, my father and his father, all killed by the gun.

Narin Sao
born in Cambodia, ca 1950
immigrated, early 1980s

Brigid O'Donnell and children, after being evicted from their cottage in Ireland in 1849.

Questions for Discussion

• Pretend that you are an Immigration Official who must decide who will be allowed to enter the United States. You may only admit two people. Which of the four people quoted on page 4 will you admit? Explain your **reasons** to the two people you do **not** admit.

• Is there anything that would cause you to **leave** the United States, **never** to return? Make a list, and compare lists with the class.

• Leaving everything behind is a scary thing to do. What would **you** be most afraid of if you had to **leave** the country?

• Most immigrants to the US have come for **economic** reasons: they wanted a better life for their families. Other immigrants are **refugees**, running away from war, religious persecution, or other difficulties. Do you think that refugees should be treated differently from other immigrants? **Explain** your reasons.

From Border to Port: The Journey Over

People have been travelling great distances to make the US their home for hundreds of years. They come by foot, ship, train or airplane. The journey was long and difficult. Ships were often crowded and filthy. For some, it was even dangerous. For all, the trip means leaving friends and family behind. What might cause you to set out on such a journey?

• My father had come to America before us, but by the time there was enough money for us to come over, he was killed. So it was through my uncle that we came to America. I do remember my mother saying that she was ill during the whole trip. . . . I remember my mother always staying in the bunk, because she was too ill to get up. . . . There was so many people that were ill, and everybody was just waiting to see shore. . . . The ordeal of being at Ellis Island, not knowing whether they would pass or not, because they were rejected for vision and different ailments that people had. But luckily we got through. . . . When we did come out of Ellis Island my uncle was there to tend to us. . . . [We] came to Lowell into his home.

Mary Podgorski
born in Poland, 1907
immigrated, 1911

• I left my country when I was seven years old, with my mother, four older sisters and three brothers. We all had to walk in a straight line, to avoid stepping on land mines. I was almost barefooted, and I remember that the hot sand hurt my feet. At the same time, we had to avoid both the Vietnamese and the Pol Pot soldiers. It took us two nights and two days to get to the Thailand border. It was very difficult for me as a little boy, because we hardly rested at all.

Tithdary Saing
born in Cambodia, 1972
began immigrating, 1979

• I left Greece, and I took the train and I went to Patras. And, from Patras, I took the boat, and it took me about thirty days to come here. . . . The boat was not like the boats we got now, see. Was just . . . one floor. All kinds of beds there, and we had to sleep all on the
. . . same place. . . . The boat was not clean. Lots of bugs there. . . . They took us to [Ellis Island]. And from there . . . I came to New York, and from New York I took a ferry . . . to Newport, Rhode Island. . . . From Newport I took the train and came to Lowell.

Spiro Los
born in Greece, ca. 1890
immigrated, ca. 1910

Questions for Discussion

• Imagine that you must leave the US tomorrow, and are not sure if you will ever return. You have one small suitcase, most of which is filled with clothes and other things you need. It is not possible to hook up electronic devices in the country where you are going. You are only allowed to carry three things that you want to bring. What are they? Explain why.

• Consider the travel conditions described by the immigrants on page 6. In each case, would you be willing to travel under the same conditions to reach the US? Explain why or why not.

• The US government has been setting policy for immigration since 1819. Look at the Immigration Policy Timeline on page 16, and list three reasons why someone might be excluded from entering the US. For each example, list the date, the restriction, and whether you agree with the reason for keeping the people out.

Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island with all their possessions on their backs. After weeks of living in dirty, overcrowded conditions, they were happy to arrive in the US.

Strangers in a Strange Land: A Hard Life

For most immigrants, life in the new land is very hard at first. Immigrants usually do not speak the native language, and often face discrimination. Other hardships include low-paying jobs, unsafe working conditions, and crowded housing. How would you feel if you were a stranger in a strange land?

• We stayed in Centerville [Centralville] for most of my life. . . . There was a large number of Polish people in Centerville . . . our church . . . stores. There were a lot of Irish in Centerville [also] and they gave us a hard time . . . there was plenty of name-calling. I don't know what the resentment was . . . [because we were] more or less all in the same boat . . . . Perhaps they were here a little earlier than some of us.

Mary Podgorski
born in Poland, 1907
immigrated, 1911

• My mother worked in the spinning room and the cotton was so thick that their nostrils would fill up with cotton. They'd be throwing up. They'd come home throwing up cotton, from their nose . . . their mouths . . . it was terrible. The conditions were really bad. . . . Most of them, in the early years [got] tuberculosis.

Cornelia Chiklis
born in Lowell, 1909
daughter of Greek immigrants

• I felt very self-conscious, not speaking English. People made fun of you. A lot of times I wouldn't even raise my hand . . . because I was afraid I would say it wrong. . . . I never knew that's why I had to stay back in the sixth grade, because I was so bad with my English. I was terrific in French. . . . I think it does a job on you, if you can't speak the language and everybody else does. I can imagine how the Hispanics feel.

Victoria Rondeau
born in Lowell, 1920
daughter of French-Canadian immigrants

• I was looking for an apartment in 1972. I don't have an accent. I saw an ad in the paper for an apartment. . . . I called, and they said, "Sure, come on down.". . . I really liked it. But the lady was kind of rude. . . . I said I was very much interested in the apartment. She said she would let me know in a couple of days. . . . I called her and she said, "I'm sorry, it's been rented." But two days later [it's] in the paper again.

Lucy Rivera
born in Puerto Rico, 1948
moved to Lowell, 1956

A Lowell tenement in 1939. Fifteen families lived in this building. There was no running water. They shared toilets in the basement.

Questions for Discussion

• The working conditions that Cornelia Chiklis describes were typical for all mill workers. The temperature was kept at 90 or 100 degrees, and the humidity was close to 100%. This kept the threads from breaking, but it also meant breathing polluted air. Why do you think that people put up with these conditions?

• The Irish were the first immigrants to settle in the city of Lowell. Why do you think they resented the Polish or Greek immigrants who came later on? Think of immigrants who are arriving today. Do you think people resent new immigrants coming into their town and cities today? Explain.

• Most immigrants must learn a new language if they hope to succeed in life. Our native language is part of our identity, and part of the way we think about the world. How would you feel if you had to learn a new language in order to survive?

Settling In: How Can We Preserve Our Culture?

"Culture" is a word we use to describe everything we have ever learned from our family and friends. It includes our traditions, religion, food, music, and entertainment. Perhaps the most important part of our culture is the language we speak. If you had to leave the US tomorrow, never to return, would you want to preserve your culture?

• New Year's. French people celebrate New Year's. Christmas we'd get together, but it wasn't like New Year's. My mother used to make all kinds of things—pork pies and everything. . . . The way they were brought up they'd celebrate New Year's and everybody used to come up to the house.

Germaine LeBlanc
born in Lowell
daughter of French-Canadian immigrants

• It was very important to me for my children to learn the Greek language and culture. We sent them to the Hellenic American school. All of my children speak Greek and go to the Greek church. My sons and daughters can cook Greek food, too.

Katherine Speronis
born in Greece, 1899
immigrated to Lowell, 1916

• I didn't even know there was other nationalities. Around little Canada, they were all French—every one of them. You didn't have Italian, Portuguese, or anything like that
. . . . We never, never had company at home that weren't French.

Victoria Rondeau
born in Lowell, 1920
daughter of French-Canadian immigrants

• Well, it [the coffee house] was really a social center for men, too. Many of them would come by my father's store and pick up a lamb's head and also some Greek cheese and olives, and go to the coffee houses to see their friends and enjoy a meal. This was a ritual for many of them on Saturday afternoons. They'd talk politics, pass the time of day, talk about their families and any problems they might have.

Aristides Coravos
born in Lowell, 1918
son of Greek immigrants

Questions for Discussion

• Pretend that you are immigrating to another country. What American traditions would you want to preserve? Make a list and rank the American traditions which are most important to you.

• It was (and still is) common for immigrants to settle in neighborhoods with other people from their country. Why do you think that people want to live near other immigrants? Make a list of some good things and some bad things about ethnic neighborhoods.

• Which holidays are most important in your family? What types of food do you like best? Take a poll of your classmates, and share the results with the class.

Music is an important part of any culture. This fiddler shares his music and keeps his culture alive for younger generations.

Home at Last: Who Are These Americans?

Becoming an "American" means different things to different people. Learning the language, customs and traditions of a new country are all part of the long process. For many immigrants, becoming a citizen is the final step. Some immigrants are satisfied with financial success, either for themselves or their children. Some will always feel like outsiders. Still the question remains: What is an "American"?

• I became a citizen in 1924. It takes five years. . . . First you get your first papers, and then you wait for the second papers. . . . I had to learn to read [English]. . . . . You have to know about the government, and you have to know who is president, and you have to know the Senators, and so forth. I was prepared. So when my time came . . . the judge told me, "You get in with the others to take the oath." He didn't ask me a question—nothing at all.

Charles Antonopoulos
born in Greece, 1886
immigrated, 1907

• I wanted to learn English, that's why. I used to go to the Rialto. . . . You used to pay ten cents and those days it was not talking movies, they used to show the pictures and I used to write them down on a board. And I used to read all the time what I studied. . . . Those days they used to have a night school for anybody come across. . . . I wanted to learn fast.

John Falante
born in Portugal, 1904
immigrated, 1920

• This is my country now, here. I go visit, I see my relatives. I have wonderful relatives over there. They write to me all the time to go. I have a good time when I go, wonderful people, but I couldn't stay there. I miss this old house, I miss this country. . . . I love Greece, my old country, but I love this one, too.

Theodora Cheras
born in Greece, 1903
immigrated, 1915

• After a while . . . other people, other nationalities used to join the crowd, you know. Like, we had a Polish and then we had Portuguese, and more Polish. Then we had a few Irish guys. And then some Greeks started to come in. . . . . After awhile it got better, and now everyone is all together.

Henry Paradis
born in Lowell, 1918
son of French-Canadian immigrants

In the early 20th century, many private companies encouraged their employees to become "Americans." This company offered classes in "Americanization."

Questions for Discussion

• Becoming an American citizen is an important goal for most immigrants. It is also a very long process. It takes five years, and the immigrant is required to pass several tests on American history and government. Why do you think the government makes it so difficult for immigrants to become citizens? What do you think the requirements for citizenship should be?

• Do you think it is important for immigrants to become "Americans"? Explain your reasons. Can you think of any problems that could arise if there is too much pressure on immigrants to "fit in"?

• Imagine that you are on a committee that will select the winner of the "Americanization Award." The finalists are Charles Antonopoulos, John Falante, Theodora Cheras, and Henry Paradis. Decide what the rules for measuring "Americanization" should be, then choose the winner. Explain the reasons for your decision.

Ship's Manifest Activity

Introduction

The activity on the next page challenges students to think critically about immigration policy. What rules determined who was allowed to immigrate in the past? How did these rules change over time? What are some possible reasons for the newer (always more restrictive) changes? Most importantly, what should immigration policy be today? What is fair, given what has happened in the past?

Background

There were no restrictions at all on immigration until 1875. Beginning that year, convicts and prostitutes were barred from entering the US. Over the next 50 years, many laws were passed which prevented certain people from entering the country (see page 16). The purpose of this activity is to allow students to discover that many of these restrictions would have kept out their own ancestors, and to encourage them to consider what that means for immigration policy today and in the future.

Manifests

A manifest is a passenger list which ships have traditionally kept (it has been required by US law since 1819). It is a questionnaire, and asks for quite a bit of personal information. It is completed before a person is allowed to board a ship, and a steamship company can deny passage to a person if it believes that the person would not be admitted at the port of destination.

As US immigration laws became stricter, the questions asked to prospective immigrants became more intrusive. Many people who wished to come to this country were never allowed to board a ship. These people are not counted among the 250,000 people deported from Ellis Island. No one will ever know their numbers.

At first, the government only required a passenger list, but as years went by and restrictions on immigration increased, the steamship companies screened passengers more closely. Any immigrants barred from entry were returned to their homelands at the company's expense.

Using the Manifests

Ask students to fill out the questions on the Manifest. Explain what it was, but do not let students know that it was meant to exclude people.

Some of the questions are designed to dictate answers: students can all read and write, for example, but many immigrants could not, so we arbitrarily require some students to be illiterate. The italicized passages after some questions were not part of the Manifests; they are meant to require some students to give answers which bar their entry.

Use the completed manifests to discuss immigration policy: Who should be allowed into the country? What is fair? How should immigration decisions be made? What would have happened to your ancestors? etc. The Immigration Timeline on page 16 will help students to understand past immigration policy.

Ship's Manifest

Notice to all persons wishing to travel to the United States of America. Answer all questions truthfully. Persons who are dishonest will be denied passage by this Steamship Line, or deported upon arrival.

Name: _____

Age: _____ Years _____ Months Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

Occupation (If you have an R or N in your first name, you have never worked outside of the home. Otherwise, make up a trade or occupation for yourself.)

_____

Can you read and write? (If you have a T or a J in your last name, answer no. If not, answer yes.)

_____

What is your nationality? (If you have a P or C in your last name, answer Chinese. If not, write the name of a country you think your ancestors came from.)

_____

Do you have $25.00? (If you were born in the January or February, circle no.)

Yes No

Are you a polygamist? (Circle yes if you have an August birthday.)

Yes No

Are you an anarchist? (Circle yes if you are wearing red today.)

Yes No

How is your health? Write your answer below. (If your birthday is in April, you have trachoma, an eye disease. If your birthday is in August, you have tuberculosis, a lung disease. Otherwise you are OK).

_____

Immigration Policy Timeline

1819 The federal government requires that all immigrants be counted and recorded.

1875 The first federal restrictions on immigration. Prostitutes and alien convicts are banned.

1882 The first Chinese Exclusion Act prevents the immigration of most Chinese.

1885 Contract laborers are banned.

1891 Congress takes control of immigration policy and practice. Immigration stations are authorized. The first station opens in 1892 on Ellis Island. Soon after, immigrants suffering from trachoma, tuberculosis, and other diseases are banned.

1903 Polygamists, anarchists, and other radicals are banned.

1907 Congress bans several categories of immigrants: people with physical or mental defects who might not be able to earn a living; people with tuberculosis; orphans. The US and Japan also agree to the "Gentleman's Agreement": most Japanese are banned.

1910 Immigration officials frequently require immigrants to produce $25 to enter the country. This policy is enforced in an uneven way for several years.

1917 Literacy test. Immigrants 16 or older must be able to read in some language.

1922 Congress passes the first immigration quota law. Annual immigration from every country is restricted to 2% of the number of foreign-born from that country, based on figures from the latest census. Immigration numbers sink rapidly.

1924 The Johnson-Reed Act continues the quota system, but changes the "benchmark" to the 1890 census: immigration from each country is limited to 2% of the people from that nation who were in the US in 1890. This almost eliminates immigration from southern and eastern Europe, including Italy, Poland, Russia, and Greece.

1930 President Hoover puts pressure on immigration officials to ban any immigrant "likely to become a public charge."

1943 Congress lifts ban on Chinese immigrants. China is a US ally in World War II.

1952 The McCarren-Walter Act continues national quotas, but gives preferences to people with relatives in the US, and to those with skills needed in the US.

1962 The Migration and Refugee Assistance Act makes it easier for refugees to enter.

1986 The Immigration Reform and Control Act makes it possible for some illegal aliens living in the US since 1982 to become citizens.

1990 New immigration law concentrates on reuniting families.

Student Activities

Cultures in Conflict

Step One: Establish your own ethnic background. Speak with your parents or other older relatives, asking what countries your ancestors came from. Choose the one or two which seem most important to you.

Step Two: Do some research about your ancestors, and the country or countries they came from. The best place to start is to ask your own older relatives, especially grandparents, if possible. Otherwise, any older relative is a good source for information. Make a file for each ancestor. Subjects in each file should include:

- Name
- Year of birth
- Country of birth
- Year of immigration
- Reason for leaving the old country
- Where in the US this person settled
- What was the first job this person found in the US

Step Three: Examine your own feelings. Think about how you feel about different groups of people. Do you tend to think about people in terms of what group they belong to? For example, when you decide whether or not you like someone, does it make any difference to you if that person:

- is Irish?
- is Italian?
- has only one parent?
- is black?
- has a serious medical problem or disability?
- is Hispanic?
- is Cambodian?

Write a few notes in answer to these questions. Explain briefly why you feel the way you do.

Step Four: In one sentence, give a brief definition of the word "prejudice."

Step Five: Imagine that your ancestors came to Massachusetts with the Pilgrims on the Mayflower in 1620. Your family has been living happily until about 1900, when immigrants from Italy, Poland and Greece moved into your community. How do you think your family (and you) would react? Explain your feelings.

Step Six: Share the results with your class.

Who Should Be Allowed into the US?

You are members of the US Senate Subcommittee on Immigration. The time is here and now. The Senate has recently voted to scrap all existing rules and regulations concerning immigration, and write new ones. You have been selected to write the new laws.

The basic issue which you must decide is who will be admitted into the US. Should we limit the number of people who are allowed to immigrate here? If so, how do we decide who gets in and who is turned away?

The Senate has debated this issue, and it has decided that there are five possible answers to the question. Your subcommittee (class) should divide into five small groups, and each brainstorm one of the solutions. You will then make a report back to the whole subcommittee. Be prepared to defend your ideas.

These are the six proposed solutions to the question:

- No restrictions at all. Anyone at all who wishes to move here from anywhere in the world should be allowed to do so.
- People would be admitted based upon how many people from their country are already in the US. For example, if 2% of all Americans are of Greek background, then 2% of all new immigrants would come from Greece each year.
- People would be admitted based on the bad economic conditions which they face at home. In other words, people who are fleeing from terrible poverty in their homelands would be given preference.
- People would be admitted based on persecution in their home country. This means that people who are refugees from war, religious oppression, or other forms of discrimination should be given preference.
- People should be admitted based on the skills they possess. For example, if the US has enough auto mechanics, but not enough rocket scientists, preference should be given to the rocket scientists.
- People should be given preference if they have relatives living in the US. For example, the parents or children of a US citizen might be given first preference. The brothers and sisters of a citizen could get second preference, and cousins third preference. People with no relatives in the US would get any remaining slots.

In real life, all of these reasons have been used in deciding who gets preference in getting admitted into the US. There are no right or wrong answers to this question. Divide into five groups and discuss your issue.

After discussing your topic, report back to the class. Have a debate about which method of regulating immigration is the best. Keep in mind that the laws on immigration have changed many times, and will no doubt change again in your lifetime.

See if the class can reach a consensus on this issue. If they do, that's fine. If they don't, that's alright, since public opinion is very divided.

Researching My Family's Immigrant History

What will I do?

• Research your family's immigrant history to trace back to one or more ancestors who immigrated to the US.

How do I start?

• Begin by talking to family members. The memories and photographs of older members of your family will be most helpful in tracing back to your immigrant ancestors.

• Ask key questions:

- Who in my family first came to the US?
- When and where was s/he born?
- Where did s/he live in the "old world"?
- Whom did s/he marry?
- When and where did s/he die?
- Why did s/he decide to immigrate to the US?

What other places should I research?

• Check the census records for the city or town where the person lived.

• Check to see if the person became a citizen of the US. You can get this information from the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington D. C. (Ask your teacher for an address).

• Check ship records or passenger lists from the port of entry of your immigrant relative(s). These records are stored in the National Archives in Washington, D. C. (Ask your teacher for an address).

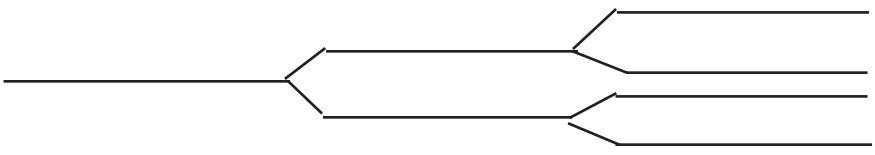
• Did the person have a passport? If so, the National Archives will have a record of it.

How do I present this information?

• Display a photograph of your immigrant relative(s) and write a story about how this person came to the US. Describe what his/her life was like in the early years.

• Write you own family history dating from the immigrant(s) researched to the present.

• Create a flow chart to show the relationship between you and the family member(s) who immigrated to the US. Be sure to include the name, birth date, place of birth, and date and place of death (if applicable). See sample below.



Enrichment Activities

Geography Activity

• Place a large, flat world map on the bulletin board. The entire class will complete this activity using one map.

• Cut a long piece of colored yarn for each student.

• Write your last name, the name of your immigrant ancestor, and date of immigration on a small label and tape it to the piece of yarn.

• Using thumbtacks, attach one end of the yarn near a point on the map where you live, and the other where your ancestor was born.

• Discuss the patterns of immigration you see as you view the map.

Polling and Graphing Activity

• The purpose of the poll is to find out the ethnic makeup of a particular class or grade at your school.

• As a class, decide what questions you will ask to determine the ethnic background of the people you poll. Word the questions carefully.

• After taking the poll, make a graph of the results.

• You may want to categorize the responses when making the graph. For example, you might want to group responses based on geographic regions.

Photograph Display

• As a class, create a display of family photographs based on the research in the Family Immigrant History activity (page 19).

• Bring in or make copies of photographs of your family's ancestors.

• Label and date each photograph. Write a paragraph about each person. Refer to the key questions on page 19.

Terms

Acculturation - the process of cultural exchange between different cultural or ethnic groups in close contact with one another; the influence of different cultures on one another.

Acre - section of Lowell first settled by Irish in the 1820s; later it became home to Greeks, and is today settled by Hispanics and Southeast Asians.

Assimilation - the process by which a minority culture adopts and adapts traditions of the dominant culture.

Boardinghouse - large dormitory-style building owned by mill owners; factory workers, primarily women, lived in boardinghouses in early Lowell.

Chain migration - a phenomenon where members members of one ethnic group follow others from the same group in immigrating to a new place.

Corporation - a company which makes cotton cloth or other products; in Lowell, each corporation owned several mill buildings.

Emigrate - to leave your native land with the intention of not returning.

Ethnic group - a group of people, usually from the same country, who are united by common customs, traditions, and language.

Immigrant - a person who moves to a new country to settle permanently.

Immigrate - to enter a new country with the intention of staying.

Industrial Revolution - the period in history when people started making products using machines, instead of making things by hand.

"Mill girls" - young women who were recruited to work in the mills in the early part of the Industrial Revolution; most came from farms in New England.

Speed-up - to increase the speed at which machines operate, in order to increase production.

Stretch-out - to increase the number of machines assigned to each worker, in order to increase production.

Tenement house - crowded, often dirty wooden apartment building located close to the mills; originally built by mill companies to house new immigrants.

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