

## Sharing Immigrant Experiences

Introduction	Assuming the persona of the immigrant they portrayed in the immigration workshop, students create letters or journal entries imaging their experience of immigrating to America. This lesson is a suggested follow-up to the Tsongas Industrial History Center’s Yankees and Immigrants program.
Time	One - two class periods (depending on length)
Lesson Preparation	Student Role Card information worksheets 1 Role Card per student, from the Immigration Workshop Journals or writing paper Optional: materials for journal making
Background Information	See “Immigration to America,” “Immigration in Lowell,” and “Immigration Time Line.”  Knowledge of a specific immigrant’s story from the Immigration Workshop role cards.
Vocabulary	<b>Assimilation:</b> The process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group or nation.  <b>Culture:</b> Shared beliefs, customs, practices and social behavior of a particular nation or people.  <b>Ethnic Group:</b> A group of people, usually from the same country, who are united by common customs, traditions and language.  <b>Hardships:</b> Difficulty or suffering caused by a lack of something, especially money or familiarity.  <b>Homeland:</b> The country where someone was born or grew up; native country.  <b>Immigrant:</b> Person who moves to a new country to settle permanently.  <b>Journey:</b> A trip or expedition from one place to another, to travel to a place.
Anticipated Student Preconceptions/ Misconceptions	Students may believe all immigrant experiences are the same. Students may believe people immigrated to America in history but immigration does not continue today. Students may have stereotypes about certain immigrant or ethnic groups.
Frameworks	<b>Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks</b>  <b>Regions of the US: 4.16:</b> Identify major immigrant groups that live in Massachusetts and where they now live in large numbers (e.g., English, Irish, French Canadians, Armenians, Greeks, Portuguese, Haitians, and Vietnamese).  <b>History/Geography: 4.1:</b> Use map and globe skills to determine absolute location of places.

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	<p><b>New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks</b></p> <p><b>Geography: SS:GE:4:4.2:</b> Describe the types of historical patterns of human migration, e.g., chain migration or slave migration (Themes— C: People, Places, and Environment, I: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction).</p> <p><b>SS:GE:4:4.3:</b> Evaluate the effects of migration on the characteristics of place, e.g., cultural awareness of food choices. (Themes— E: Cultural Development, Interaction, and Change).</p> <p><b>Common Core</b></p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3:</b> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3:</b></p> <p>A: Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.</p> <p>B: Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.</p> <p>C: Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.</p> <p>D: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.</p> <p>E: Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.</p>
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<b>Guiding Question</b>	Why do immigrants come to America? What was the immigration experience like – from deciding to leave and traveling, to assimilation and preservation of culture?
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify reasons why people immigrate to America.</li> <li>• Describe the experiences people have as they immigrate and settle into a new place.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Lesson sequence:</p> <p>Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students to share what they experienced on the field trip to the Tsongas Industrial History Center. Pass out the role cards collected at the end of the immigration workshop. Student should use the same role card that they had during the workshop. Remind students that cards tell real stories of real people who immigrated to America.</li> <li>• Pass out “Role Card Information Sheets” to each student. Explain to students that each role card will not have all of the specific information necessary to</li> </ul>

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	<p>answer every question, but they should use their background knowledge, the information on the card and their imagination to answer the questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher, or students, should choose one of the following activities to do using the completed the information sheets.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep a journal as if you are the person on your role card. Write three journal entries: the first as if you are in your homeland deciding to leave and making preparations to go to America; the second as if you are on your journey over; and the third as if you have arrived. (Directions for creating journals: <a href="http://www.howcast.com/videos/308367-how-to-make-your-own-book-or-journal/">http://www.howcast.com/videos/308367-how-to-make-your-own-book-or-journal/</a>.)</li> <li>2. Write a letter to a friend or family member in your homeland describing your new life in America and persuading them to join you, or discouraging them from coming to America.</li> <li>3. Using the items from the luggage you unpacked in the workshop, make a list of what the person on your role card might have brought with them when they came to America. What does each of these items tell us about the culture of the person on your role card? Write a paragraph, as if you are the person on your role card, describing your culture. Include what you might do to preserve or maintain that culture now that you are in America.</li> </ol>
Assessment	Use writing activities to assess student learning.
Differentiated Suggestions	<p>Writing activities can be shortened or simplified by choosing one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write one journal or diary entry, as if you are the person on your role card, about your experience immigrating to America.</li> <li>• Write about one item the person from your role card might have brought to America, and why your person may have brought that item.</li> </ul> <p>Teachers can have students get in pairs and interview each other to share the information from their role card. Use the questions from the role card information sheet as the interview questions.</p>
Adapting the Activity for Other Grades	Ask students to research the country where the immigrant on their role card is from and use the information they find to augment the writing activities.
Bibliography	<p>Denenberg, Barry. <i>So Far From Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl</i>. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1997. Fictional diary account of a fourteen-year-old girl's journey from Ireland in 1847 and her work in a mill in Lowell, Massachusetts. Grades 4-8.</p> <p>Farrant, Robert and Strobel, Christoph. <i>The Big Move: Immigrant Voices from a Mill City</i>. Lowell, Massachusetts, Loom Press, 2011. The book features nine oral histories of men and women in Lowell, Mass., whose stories capture the essence of the</p>

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	immigrant and refugee experience not only among people in the United States but also those who have made 'the big move' anywhere in the world. Grades 6 – 12 (short passages can be adapted for younger grades).
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# Role Card Information Sheet

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I was born in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(home country)

I came to America in \_\_\_\_\_ when I was \_\_\_\_\_ years old.  
(year)

Reason for Leaving:

I came to America because ...

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Journey Over (how I traveled, who I came with):

I traveled to America ...

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Three facts about my new life in America:

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Things I brought with me to America:

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Why I brought this:

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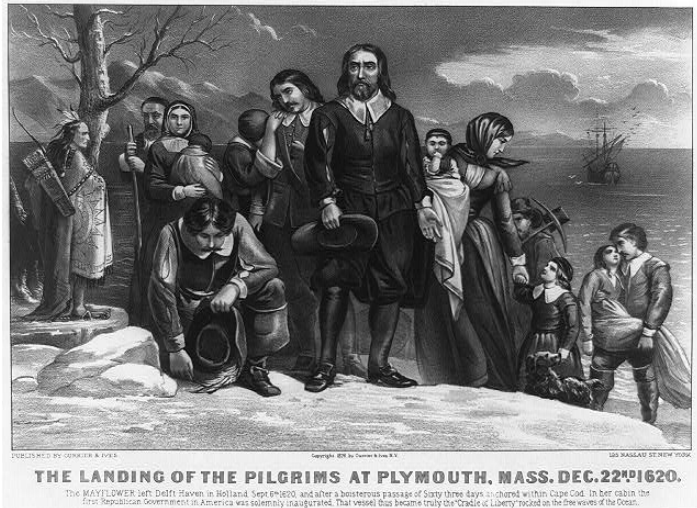
Choose one of the following writing activities to complete. Try to include the information from your role card in your work.

1. Keep a journal as if you are the person on your role card. Write three journal entries: the first as if you are in your homeland deciding to leave and making preparations to go to America; the second as if you are on your journey over, and the third as if you have already arrived.
2. Write a letter to a friend or family member in your homeland describing your new life and persuading them to join you, or discouraging them from coming to America.
3. Make a list of what the person on your role card brought with them when they came to America. What does each of these items tell us about the culture of the person on your role card? Write a paragraph as if you are the person on your role card describing your culture. Add a paragraph about what you might do to preserve or maintain that culture now that you are in America.

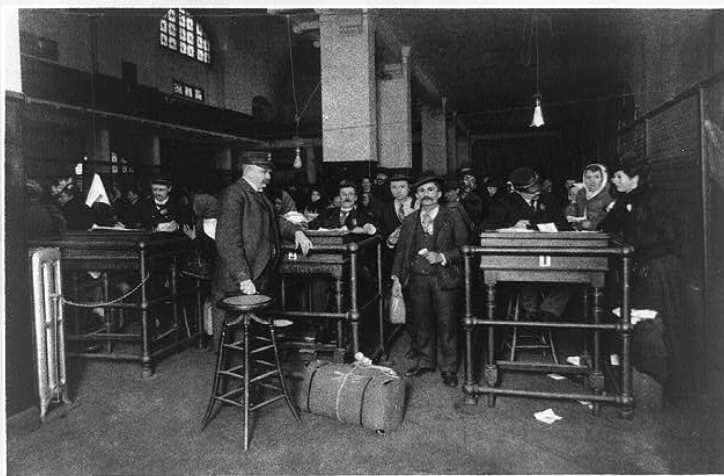
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### Immigration to America

From its beginnings, America has been a nation of immigrants. Europeans, led by the Spanish and French, began establishing settlements in the 1500's on land that would become the United States. In 1607, the English started the first permanent settlement in America at Jamestown, Virginia. In 1620, English pilgrims fled religious persecution and established a colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts. A larger group seeking religious freedom, the Puritans, who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony, followed them.



While some immigrants came to America in search of religious freedom, others arrived during the 19<sup>th</sup> century seeking economic opportunities. Many of these immigrants came from northern and western Europe, with large numbers coming from Ireland where they were experiencing a famine. By the 1840's almost half of America's immigrants were from Ireland. Usually these impoverished Irish immigrants settled near their point of arrival in cities along the east coast where jobs were available. Between 1820 and 1930, 4.5 million Irish migrated to the United States.



By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of arrivals were from central, eastern and southern Europe. In the 1890s, 600,000 Italians migrated to America, and by 1920, more than four million had entered the United States. Jews from Eastern Europe fleeing religious persecution also arrived in large numbers. In 1907, the peak year for admission of new immigrants, approximately 1.3 million people entered the United States.

However, in the following century, immigration patterns shifted due to laws, war, and economic factors. With the outbreak of World War I, immigration to the US declined. By 1917, the government passed laws requiring immigrants over age 16 to pass a literacy test. In the 1920s immigration quotas, the number of people allowed in, were established. Again, immigration decreased during the age of the Great Depression of the 1930s and during World War II.

In 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act, which removed quotas. This act and subsequent legislation resulted in the nation experiencing a shift in immigration patterns. Today, the majority of U.S. immigrants come from Asia and Latin America rather than Europe.

Excerpted from: <http://www.history.com/topics/u-s-immigration-before-1965>

Photos from: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

General Immigration Timelines:

<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/files/documents/immigration.pdf>

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/alt/timeline.html>



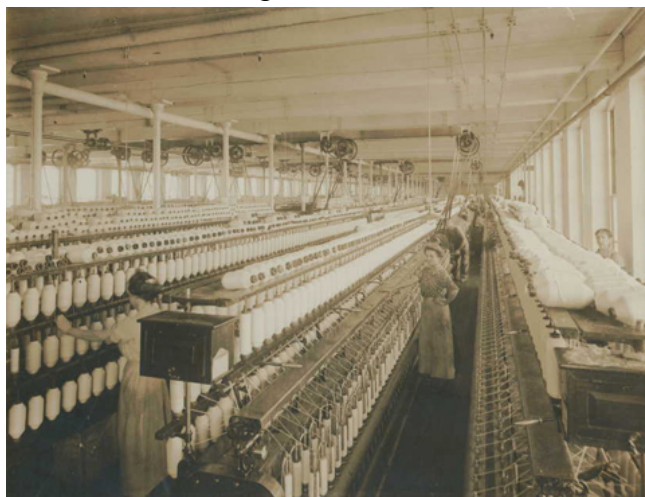
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### Immigration in Lowell

In the 1820s and 1830s, Irish people moved to Lowell to help build mills and dig canals. They typically did not work in the mills and lived in a neighborhood called the Acre. The situation changed in the 1840s. Mill owners needed 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, as more and more workers were needed.



Beginning in the 1860s, thousands of French-Canadians moved south from Quebec. Later, thousands of immigrants moved to Lowell from Greece, Portugal, Poland, and other European countries. All of these immigrants were looking for a better life in the United States. They came to Lowell because they had heard that there were jobs in the mills. 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 and whole families often had to work in the mills to make ends meet.



Immigrants kept coming, though, because life was even worse in their home country. Outside the mills, immigrants formed strong ethnic communities. Churches, coffee houses,

marketplaces, and social clubs helped ease the change to a new culture. Life was hard, but many immigrants told fond stories of Lowell's close communities they lived in.

Immigration is still part of the story of Lowell. Today, people emigrate from places like Brazil and Cambodia, and refugees arrive from Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, Ghana and many other countries. Their experiences of hope and hardship are very similar to those of earlier immigrants.



Images: *Lowell National Historical Park*  
See also: *Lowell Immigration Time Line*



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### Lowell's Immigration Time Line

- 1822** Led by Hugh Cummisky, 30 Irishmen walk from Charlestown to Lowell to build canals and mills. They camp near their work in an area called the "Paddy Camp Lands." This area is known later as the Acre.
- 1823** Mill agents begin recruiting young women and men from New England farms to work in the mills. They live in boardinghouses run by the corporations for which they work.
- 1831** St. Patrick's Church opens in the Acre. It is the first ethnic and first Catholic Church in Lowell.
- 1840s** Waves of Irish immigrants come to Lowell fleeing starvation from the Potato Famine in their homeland. Irish immigration continues throughout the nineteenth century.
- 1844** The Ten Hour Movement begins. Workers petition the state legislature to pass a law limiting the workday to ten hours.
- 1850s** "Know Nothing" movement flourishes in northern states. This nativist backlash against immigration is caused by Protestant fears about increased numbers of Catholic voters.
- 1865** Mill agents send recruiters to Quebec to find new workers. Starvation and lack of work cause French Canadians to leave their homeland and immigrate to Lowell in large numbers. Many go back and forth between the US and Canada.
- 1882** Congress passes Chinese Exclusion Act. Virtually no Chinese are admitted to the United States until its repeal in 1943.
- 1890s** The first Greek immigrants to work in the mills arrive. Most are young, single men living in tenement houses in the Acre. Many hope to save money and return to Greece, but few do.
- 1892** Ellis Island opens. Annual immigration to the US averages about 1,000,000 over the next two decades.
- 1890s** Polish immigrants begin to arrive in Lowell. Fleeing starvation and mistreatment, many hope to return to their homeland. They settle in tenement houses near the mills, and are forced to take low-paying jobs because they do not speak English.

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- 1905** Greek women, brought over by their fathers and brothers, begin to settle in Lowell. Many single women take jobs in the mills. Once married, most work in the home, raising children. The Greek community grows stronger.
- 1910s** Portuguese immigrants begin arriving in large numbers. Most are from the Azores Islands, and settle in the Chapel Hill neighborhood of Lowell.
- 1914-1918** World War I disrupts ocean travel and dramatically decreases immigration.
- 1921** Congress passes law restricting immigration. Annual quota is about 150,000.
- 1924** Congress passes National Origins Act, drastically reducing immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe (14% of 150,000, or about 20,000 annually).
- 1950s** People from Puerto Rico begin their migration to Lowell.
- 1960s** People from Columbia begin immigrating to Lowell. Many are skilled textile workers recruited by the few remaining mills.
- 1970s-1980s** Southeast Asians, including Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese begin to settle in Lowell. Most are refugees forced to leave their homelands because of the Vietnam war.
- Today** Newcomers arrive weekly, adding to Lowell's diverse immigrant community. Many immigrants still come from Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Others arrive from India, Central and South America, and Africa. Lowell continues to be home to many immigrants and refugees. The immigrant/refugee/migrant experience continues to shape Lowell and the nation.