



THE NEW AMERICANS



America: The Land of Career Opportunity

Grade Level: 8-12

Subjects: Social Studies (U.S. History)

Summary: Many immigrants view the United States as the land of opportunity because it presents them with life options they may not have had in their countries. Employment that could lead to economic stability is a big draw that foreign-born Americans pursue diligently. However, language, educational and cultural factors can impede immigrants' success, even for those with professional credentials earned in their homelands.

Standards: This lesson addresses the following national content standards established at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and discuss the financial factors that propel immigration
- Speculate and recognize actual immigrant career obstacles and accomplishments
- Examine immigrant status in the U.S. labor force
- Describe the factors that impede or propel immigrants' career achievement in America
- Establish mock federal policy to support immigrants' career mobility



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WELCOME
TO THE UNITED STATES

Materials Needed

- Television and VCR
- Videotape of *The New Americans* (To order: Home Vision Entertainment: 888-572-8918)
- Chalkboard and chalk
- Chart paper and markers
- Articles:
 - "Immigrant professionals find many hurdles to successful transition into community"
<http://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/stories/2002/06/17/story1.html?t=printable>
 - Ethnic Network Helps Immigrants Succeed"
<http://www.careerjournaleurope.com/myc/diversity/19980318-takahashi.html>
 - "Immigrants Account for Half of New Workers"
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A61586-2002Dec1?language=printer>
 - "Immigrants Driving Economic Growth"
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/12/02/national/printable531433.shtml>
- Additional print and online resources on immigrants in the U.S. labor force

Procedure

1. Ask students to list ten reasons people emigrate to America. Divide students into groups, in which they share and synthesize their individual lists to create a group list of ten items. Invite each group to share its list. Chart each group's contributions, and instruct the class to eliminate overlap and arrive at a class list. Have students analyze and discuss the items. Among these should be reference to employment and income.

2. Have students discuss how job and income influence a person's decision to immigrate. Probing questions to pose include: What economic conditions in other countries propel immigration? What does America seem to provide immigrants with regard to career and financial opportunity? Does America meet immigrants' expectations in this regard? If yes, in what ways? If no, where does it fall short? What types of jobs do the majority of immigrants tend to get?



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3. Provide students with background on the status of immigrants in the labor force and issues associated with upward career mobility. (Refer to “Immigrants Keep U.S. Economy Supple” <http://www.numbersusa.com/text?ID=1259>, which describes immigrant contributions to the workforce, but which also underscores the types of jobs immigrants take; can make for an analysis of immigrant need of support that would boost their career mobility.)

4. Have the students consider some of the characters’ stories presented in *The New Americans*.

For example, Anjan Bacchu, the Indian technical worker, who hopes to be able to apply his computer programming skills to a job in the U.S. (Episode Three http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/newamericans/indian_intro.html). Students can read the following and then discuss the likelihood of his getting a job in the field. What would be his chances if he did come to America?

In the crowded city of Bangalore, India—known as the country’s Silicon Valley—Anjan Bacchu, a successful computer programmer, is planning to apply for a job in the U.S.

“I have about five years of experience in India,” he says. “It started to dawn on me that the scope of my career would be helped if I take it to the highest peak. I’d like to become a kind of expert in all the technologies so that I can use it when I come back to India.”

Anjan is especially interested in the Internet and e-commerce. “The amount of knowledge that can be shared so cheaply by lots and lots of people is really amazing,” he says. “And I feel that the Internet can make a lot of difference to India...”

Or, the story of Mexican immigrant Pedro Flores, who works as a meatpacker, perhaps more representative of the type of work many non-professional immigrants take on (Episode Two http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/newamericans/mexican_intro.html). What are his chances of career mobility and economic success while living in America?

Pedro Flores spends a lot of time on buses and even more time away from his family. He has been separated from his wife, Ventura, and their six children for the past 13 years, seeing them only twice a year for short visits.



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Pedro works as a meatpacker in Garden City, Kansas. The Floreses' six children, five girls and one boy, live with Ventura on an impoverished ranch near Guanajuato, Mexico—1,200 miles and a hostile border away from Garden City.

"I want to see my family. Sometimes when I come home [to Mexico], I don't feel like going back up there. But out of necessity, I have to go back."

Pedro lives as frugally as possible in a Garden City boarding house, trying to save money so that his family can legally migrate to the U.S.

Today, Pedro is on his way home from work. He hopes that when he returns, his family will come to Kansas with him.

5. Divide students into eight small groups. Per two groups, distribute one of the articles listed in the materials section (every two groups receives a different article). Instruct groups to critically analyze article content to answer the following:

- What is the status of immigrants in the U.S. labor force?
- In what ways do immigrants bolster the workforce?
- Do these contributions provide opportunities for immigrants to grow professionally and gain career mobility? Explain, with examples (actual or deduced).
- What obstacles do immigrants encounter when seeking meaningful employment?
- What are the factors that impede employment opportunities?
- How do immigrants find employment? Who assists them?

6. Ask each group to summarize its article and findings in response to Step 4 questions. Invite the class to review the cumulative findings, and to analytically discuss the nature of immigrants in the workforce. Have them list the outstanding barriers to immigrants' career mobility and for each one, brainstorm potential ways to dissolve these barriers. (Students may create a two-column graphic organizer for this activity.)

7. Instruct the groups to assume the role of a mock federal department overseeing immigrant and/or labor force issues. Based on their discussion and ideas, tell them to establish a U.S. policy that would make provisions to improve immigrant status in the workforce so they not only continue to make important contributions to the U.S. economy, but also to give them opportunities to advance professionally. Invite each group to share its proposal.



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**Assessment**

A student-written editorial that refers back to concepts raised during their research, the reading of the articles and classroom discussion can be used to assess what students have absorbed and how they have applied this information. Students can assess their peers' mock federal policy, highlighting its unique ideas and questions raised that the policy does not address.

Extension

Students can invite community immigrant business owners, workers and professionals to participate on a panel discussion about the status of foreign-born Americans in the labor force. Speakers can discuss their experiences: the challenges they encountered when seeking employment, the assistance they received from immigrant networks and/or from Americans and U.S. agencies, and their recommendations for enhancing immigrant status in the workforce.



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A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

Related Resources

Meet The New Americans: The Indian Story

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/indian_intro.html

Meet The New Americans: The Mexican Story

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/mexican_intro.html

The New Americans: Learn More | Immigration

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/learnmore_immigration.html

Newshour: Immigration Reform

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/jan-june04/immigration_reform_02-04.html

Newshour: Legalizing Illegals

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/law/jan-june04/workers_1-7.html

Taxi Dreams: Meet the Cabbies

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/taxidreams/meet/index.html>

Nation's Immigrants Account for Bulk of Labor Force Since 2000-2003 (PDF)

http://www.nupr.neu.edu/01-04/immigration_jan.pdf

Immigrants and the American Work Force

<http://www.fte.org/teachers/lessons/efiah/histles7immame.htm#>

Census Briefs (*focus students on foreign-born data*) (PDF)

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>

Foreign Immigrants Filling Jobs in Small Towns

http://www.theindependent.com/stories/070903/new_immigrants09.shtml

How do Immigrants fare in U.S. Labor Market? (PDF)

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1992/12/art1full.pdf>

Census Brief 2000 Coming to America: A Profile of the Nation's Foreign Born (PDF)

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf>



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**Correlation to National Standards**

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

United States History

31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States

Author

Michele Israel has been in the education and non-profit fields for over 20 years. As an independent consultant and writer, she has produced myriad written and online instructional materials, including lesson plans, teacher and discussion guides, articles, newsletters and training curricula. Among her clients are *Newsweek*, WETA, Teacher Source, CNN, various affiliates of the Public Broadcasting Service, as well as numerous New York City-based non-profit organizations.