



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES

## The American Mosaic

“Remember, remember always, that all of us... are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.” —Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Subjects:** Social Studies (U.S. History, Civics) Social Science, Language Arts

**Overview:** The immigrant experience in America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries underscores America’s fickle attitude—a mix of pride and ambivalence—toward a growing influx of the foreign born.

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

### Objectives

Students will:

- Determine reasons people emigrate to the United States
- Note several of the nations from which people emigrated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
- Chart patterns of immigration throughout America’s history
- Describe the experiences of those immigrants arriving at Ellis Island
- Recognize the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty in the immigrant experience
- Explore life and work in America at the turn of the 20th century.
- Examine policies and laws that sought to limit immigration.

### Materials

- Materials about the overall immigration experience during the late 19th and early 20th centuries
- Background information on the groups that emigrated most during this time period: Scandinavian, Irish, German, Polish, Italian, Greek, or Russian (Jewish)
- Sample food recipes from each of the groups noted above
- Materials about Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty
- Copy of *The New Americans* (To purchase: Home Vision Entertainment: 888-572-8918)
- A variety of visuals depicting the immigrant experience during the above-noted time period
- First person immigrant narratives that detail coming to and settling in America
- Manila folders (one per student)
- A notebook or journal (one per student)



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES

## Procedure

1. Have your students think about how they have felt when they had to move to a new town, and/or when they met someone who just moved to their hometown. Explain that as they have indicated, moving can be both an exciting adventure and a scary experience; when the journey involves moving to a new country, it can also be the beginning of a whole new way of life.

2. Ask students to think about the following: Between 1892 and 1954, over 12 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island on their way to becoming part of America's "melting pot." Even though the trip was very difficult, people still considered America the land of opportunity. What made America seem so good? When the immigrants arrived, there were many things they needed to do, including learning the language and American customs. Did Americans always welcome immigrants?

3. Ask students to think about and record all of the things they know about the immigrants who came to America from 1892 to 1945. Discussion questions include:

- What countries did they come from?
- Why did they come to America?
- Were they welcome here? Explain.
- What did they do when they arrived? Where did they live? Jobs? Housing?

4. Supplement student knowledge with additional background about emigration from 1892 to 1945, for example, primary countries from which people emigrated, numbers of immigrants arriving in the United States, why people left, where many ended up—with particular reference to Ellis Island, the significance of the Statue of Liberty. It might be useful to develop a fact sheet to provide a concise overview. Students may conduct additional research on the topic to become more knowledgeable.

5. Divide the class into groups of four to six students. Tell students they are going to role-play a fictitious immigrant family traveling from the "Old World" to the "New World." Instruct each student to assume the character of one family member. The families may be multi-generational and extended. For example, there may be a grandmother, a mother, a father, a teenage son and a young daughter. Families should come from one of the major immigrant groups of the time: Scandinavian, Irish, German, Polish, Italian, Greek, or Russian (Jewish). (Be sure to maintain balance among student selections. If possible, students can document an actual family's journey.)



## THE NEW AMERICANS

6. To keep track of their “family’s” journey, have students create a portfolio (distribute the manila folders) that contains:

- A journal (distribute the notebook or diary) of the family’s travels, activities, thoughts and new life experiences in America. The journal must include an account of the trip to America, the family’s impression of their first look at the Statue of Liberty, an account of their experience at Ellis Island, particularly the admittance process and a description of their early days as they established a new life in America
- A list of items the family has taken from their homeland to begin their new life in America
- A food recipe from the family’s homeland
- A U.S. map that indicates the region where most people from the family’s homeland settled

Each family will be responsible for turning in a portfolio. Team members should work in pairs or individually to find one or two elements of the assignment information. The team can then share all the information that they have found to individually create their journals and bundles.

7. Ask students what the significance of such a portfolio might be, particularly from a historic perspective. Explain that it is a valuable primary document that gives first-hand insight into the immigrant experience. It is such material that has provided poignant and useful background into the lives of those who emigrated to the United States.

8. Students may refer to these questions to frame their research of their “family’s” journey.

### Focus questions

The answers to these questions should help you play out your fictitious family’s travels. As you respond, keep your family in mind.

### Why Immigrants Left Home

Why did immigrants leave their homelands?

What things and customs did they bring with them?

Many immigrants could only bring a small bundle of belongings with them. What was typically in these bundles?



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES**Ellis Island**

Where is Ellis Island located?

When was it in operation as an immigrant processing center?

Why were immigrants processed through Ellis Island?

What was the approximate total number of immigrants who passed through Ellis Island?

What were the years of Ellis Island's peak immigration period?

Did all passengers disembark from the ships at once? Did all passengers have to go through Ellis Island?

Some immigrants had to undergo medical inspections at Ellis Island. If the doctors there diagnosed a person as having something wrong, they would put a chalk mark on their clothes. Why?

Do you feel that immigrants were treated fairly during their Ellis Island inspections?

What were the main countries of origin for Ellis Island immigrants?

What proportion of Ellis Island immigrants stayed in New York City rather than moving on to other parts of the country?

How many Ellis Island immigrants were deported? What were some of the reasons that they were deported?

What were some of the reasons that Ellis Island immigrants decided to come to America?

How did immigrants react to Ellis Island?

**The Statue of Liberty**

What did the Statue of Liberty represent for new immigrants?

How did they feel when they first saw it?

**Building a Life in America**

How did immigrants begin their new lives in America?

Did they remain in New York City or move to other areas of the country?

What kind of housing could they find?

What kind of jobs did they do?

What elements of their old life did they keep (food, holidays, games)?

Did they make any significant contributions to America?

9. Invite each "family" to present and display its portfolio. Have the class discuss similarities and differences among the family stories as they relate to the immigrant experience.



## THE NEW AMERICANS



## Assessment

- Review journals to determine whether the student:

Adequately covers subject matter.

Uses variety of resources.

Correct grammar and spelling—makes few or no mechanical errors.

Develops the assigned topic in an interesting and imaginative way.

Demonstrates a logical plan or organization and coherence in the development of ideas.

Shows skillful use of sentence variety.

Uses specific, vivid language.

Assess student cooperative learning group participation, determining whether the student worked well with teammates, contribute to team effort, and shouldered work equally.

- Students can self-assess, honestly answering the following questions:
  - Did you do your best?
  - Did you work hard, enjoy the project, and feel good about what you completed?
  - Did you contribute to the group's project?
  - Did you finish your work on time?
  - If you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?
- Each group will produce a portfolio containing:
  - Research notes
  - Map showing distribution of immigrants in U.S. by 1930;
  - Journal documenting journey to America and settling in new home; and
  - List of items contained in immigrant's "bundle."

Use the following rubric content to assess the portfolio:

Excellent

Portfolio is complete, organized and neat.

Information in the journal and items selected for bundles reflect sound research and accurate content knowledge.

Shows creativity and imagination.

Show synthesis and integration of historical resources and concepts.



## THE NEW AMERICANS

**Good**

Portfolio is adequate but is missing some elements of organization or neatness.

Information in the journal and items selected for bundles reflects some content knowledge and adequate research.

Shows some synthesis and integration of historical resources and concepts.

**Fair**

Portfolio needs minor reinforcement or revisions.

Information in the journal and items selected for bundles reflects weak content knowledge and research, misinformed inferences, hypothesis and conclusions.

Shows little synthesis and integration of historical resources and concepts.

**Poor**

Portfolio is incomplete.

Information in the journal and items selected for bundles reflects a lack of content knowledge and inadequate research.

Shows no integration of historical resources and concepts.

**Unacceptable**

No project completed.

**Extensions**

Students can:

- Research their family origins and construct a family tree that traces their ancestry back to 1900 (or as far as they can).
- Find out if anyone in their family emigrated to America during the 20th century. If so, they should find out where they entered the country and what type of inspection or interview they had to undergo. Students could compare these experiences with those of others who arrived at Ellis Island.
- Research the history of America's immigration laws, then write an essay in which they compare anti-immigrant sentiment to the debates over illegal immigration taking place today. Students could explain the dichotomy of America priding itself on being a "melting pot," and its long history of opposition to immigration.
- Interview a recent immigrant and compare his or her experience with that of immigrants of 100 years ago.
- Create a "mosaic" collage of images that depicts some aspect of the immigration experience or that represent the various ethnic groups that came to America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Compose 10 math problems featuring facts about the Statue of Liberty.
- Compare and contrast the period of immigration from 1880–1920 with present immigration trends.



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES  
A PLACE  
OF OPPORTUNITY

## Related Resources

### Web sites

**American Experience: America 1900**

<http://www.pbs.org/amex/1900/>

**Ellis Island: through America's Gateway**

<http://www.i-channel.com/education/ellis/>

**Ellis Island Photos**

<http://www.rockyhill.org/Lower/ellisland/ellisland.html>

**Immigration at the Turn of the 20th Century**

<http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/history/projects/immigration/>

**Statue of Liberty Facts, News and Information**

<http://www.endex.com/gf/buildings/liberty/liberty.html>

**Tenement VR**

<http://www.wnet.org/archive/tenement/virtual.html>

### Books

*Tales Of The Elders: A Memory Book of Men and Women Who Came to America as Immigrants, 1900-1930.* Silver Burdett Press, 1993.

Bode. *New Kids on the Block: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens.* F. Watts 1989.

Bresnick-Perry. *Leaving for America.* Children's Book Press, 1992.

Brown. *The Struggle to Grow: Expansionism and Industrialization, 1880-1913.* Twenty-First Century Books 1993.

Caroli. *Immigrants Who Returned Home.* Chelsea House, 1990.

Freedman, Russell. *Immigrant Kids.* Dutton, 1960.

Harvey. *Immigrant Girl: Becky of Eldridge Street.* Holiday House 1987.

Hesse. *Letters From Rifka.* Holt, 1992.



## THE NEW AMERICANS

Kurelek. *They Sought A New World: The Story Of European Immigration To North America*. Tundra Books, 1985.

Lawlor, Veronica. *I Was Dreaming To Come To America: Memories From The Ellis Island Oral History Project*. Viking, 1995.

Lee. *Tracing Our Italian Roots*. J. Muir Publications, 1993.

Leighton, Maxine. *An Ellis Island Christmas*. Puffin, 1994.

Levine, Ellen. *If Your Name Was Changed At Ellis Island*. Scholastic, 1993.

Levinson, Riki. *Watch The Stars Come Out*. Dutton, 1985.

Maestro, Betty. *Coming To America : The Story Of Immigration*. Scholastic, 1996.

Moscinski. *Tracing Our Irish Roots*. J. Muir Publications, 1993.

Moscinski. *Tracing Our Polish Roots*. J. Muir Publications, 1994.

Polacco, Patricia. *The Keeping Quilt*. Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Pryor. *The Dream Jar*. Morrow Junior Books, 1996.

Reef. *Ellis Island*. Dillon Press, 1991.

Reimers. *A Land Of Immigrants*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1996.

Sagan. *Tracing Our Jewish Roots*. J. Muir Publications. 1993.

Sandin, Joan. *The Long Way To A New Land*. Harper & Row, 1981.

Sandler, Martin W. *Immigrants*. HarperCollins, 1995.

Silver. *Tracing Our German Roots*. J. Muir Publications, 1993.

Stein, R. Conrad. *Ellis Island*. Childrens Press, 1992.

Watson. *The Butterfly Seeds*. Tambourine Books 1995.



## THE NEW AMERICANS

**Correlation to National Standards**

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

**United States History**

- Understands massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.
- Understands how immigration affected American society in the antebellum period (e.g., the connection between industrialization and immigration, how immigration intensified ethnic and cultural conflict and complicated the forging of a national identity).
- Understands the background and experiences of immigrants of the late 19th century (e.g., how the immigrants differed from those of the early 19th century in numbers motives, origins, ethnicity, religion and language; how Catholic and Jewish immigrants responded to discrimination; attitudes toward immigrants).
- Understands challenges immigrants faced in society in the late 19th century (e.g., experiences of new immigrants from 1870 to 1900, reasons for hostility toward the new immigrants, restrictive measures against immigrants, the tension between American ideals and reality).
- Understands the spread of progressive ideas and the successes of the progressive movement (e.g., how intellectuals, religious leaders, and writers alerted the public to the problems of urban industrial society;
- Progressive social reforms in education, conservation, and the “Americanization” of immigrants).
- Understands the various social conflicts that took place in the early 1920s (e.g., how the restriction of European immigration affected Mexican American immigration).
- Understands changes in the workplace and the economy in contemporary America (e.g., the effects of a sharp increase in labor force participation of women and new immigrants; the shift of the labor force from manufacturing to service industries).
- Understands demographic shifts and the influences on recent immigration patterns.
- Understands various influences on American culture (e.g., the desegregation of education and its role in the creation of private white academies; the influence of the media on contemporary American culture; how ethnic art, food, music and clothing are incorporated into mainstream culture and society).

**Civics**

- Understands the formation and implementation of public policy.
- Knows how diversity encourages cultural creativity.
- Knows a variety of forms of diversity in American society (e.g., regional, linguistic, socioeconomic).



## THE NEW AMERICANS

**Language Arts**

- Uses a variety of resource materials to gather information for research topics (e.g., magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, schedules, journals, phone directories, globes, atlases, almanacs).
- Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways (e.g., time lines, outlines, notes, graphic representations).

**Author**

Lesson by: Pioneer and Birch Lane School, Davis USD for SCORE Re-published here courtesy of Schools of California Online Resources for Education, History, Social Science Project