

LATINO AMERICANS

Digging at the Roots of My Family Tree (Best used with *Stories of Arrival* lesson)

Lesson Overview

In this activity, students reflect on their own family's arrival to the United States by filling in a family tree with as many generations as possible. Students research and fill in as much information as possible on the names and birthplaces of themselves, their parents, grandparents and so on. Next, they plot the names and birthplaces on a **World Map**. More important than establishing the exact detail of their family tree is the process of understanding the migration/settlement story of those that came before them. Students complete reflective questions that compare and contrast their family's story of arrival with the rich arrival stories of characters from the documentary. Two extensions are available.

Grade: 4 – 12+

Time: 1 class period with family research assigned as advanced homework

Materials

- Handout: **Family Tree Organizer and Reflection Questions**
- Handout: **World Map**
- Atlas or online maps
- Web access for video segments (*See Stories of Arrival Clips*)

Lesson Objectives

- Conduct personal historical/genealogical research.
- Plot birthplaces of ancestors on a map.
- Construct and identify their own “narratives of arrival” to the United States.
- Compare and contrast their family story with that of various Latino Americans.

Lesson Procedure

NOTE: Tracing personal family history can be a sensitive subject for some students and their caregivers. Exercise sensitivity to any issues that may arise with students who are adopted, in foster care or whose families do not want to disclose their stories of arrival.

Pre-Lesson:

This lesson works best as a response to another Latino Americans lesson, *Stories of Arrival*. If that lesson is not used, be sure to select one of the arrival stories referenced in the handout as a hook and consider asking students to think about what it means to be “American.” Note that, with few exceptions, most of us have roots in other parts of

the world. Assign students to investigate their family trees as homework by asking elders or using other genealogy resources, public records, etc.

Upon completing family research:

As prompted in the **Family Tree Organizer and Reflection Questions** handout, students write down as much information as they can with regard to the names and birthplaces of their families: themselves, their parents, grandparents, etc. The goal is not to create a complete record of all family members; rather, it is to get a sense of the migration/settlement story behind each student.

Next they plot out the birthplace locations on the **World Map**. Print out enough world maps for each student to plot their family migrations. Or, if there is greater computer access, consider having the students complete the map work digitally using PowerPoint or Google Earth.

To conclude, have students complete the reflection questions in writing or discussion format, individually or in small groups. Students will need web access to view the videos of Latino American stories of arrival so that they can compare and contrast their own family stories with those of characters in the documentary.

DIGGING AT THE ROOTS OF MY FAMILY TREE

1.) Using the space below, write down as much information as you can about yourself and previous generations of your family. Fill in what you can, even if you don't have a complete name or exact location.

2.) Use the **World Map** to plot the birthplaces of various people in your family. Make a dot for each person using the following colors:

RED = you

ORANGE = great grandparents

BLUE = parents

PURPLE = great-great grandparents and beyond

GREEN = grandparents

PERSON	NAME	BIRTH CITY/TOWN	COUNTRY
You			
Mother			
Father			
Maternal Grandmother			
Maternal Grandfather			
Paternal Grandfather			
Paternal Grandmother			
Maternal Great Grandmother 1			
Maternal Great Grandmother 2			
Maternal Great Grandfather 1			
Maternal Great Grandfather 2			
Paternal Great Grandmother 1			
Paternal Great Grandmother 2			
Paternal Great Grandfather 1			
Paternal Great Grandfather 2			
Other Ancestor			
Other Ancestor			

PART II: Analyzing My Family Tree

- What is one new thing you learned about your family history?
- What was unexpected or surprising as you traced the family story and plotted it on a map?
- Do you have a clear understanding of when your family arrived to the United States? If so, explain your family's story of arrival. If not, list some of the questions you would ask to get a detailed understanding of your family's story of arrival.

Using the clips from **Latino Americans**, compare your family's story of arrival to at least two of the following individuals:

- Eligio Peña
 - Carlos Vaquerano
 - Juan Villaseñor (Journey from Mexico)
 - Juanita (Ortiz) Sanabria
 - Gustavo Pérez Firmat
 - Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo
 - Bernardo Vega
 - The Capo Family
 - Julia Alvarez
 - Apolinaria Lorenzana
 - Juan Seguí
 - Gloria Estefan
- How is your story similar or different from these stories?
 - How do your story and the stories of characters from **Latino Americans** confirm or contradict assumptions we have about who "Americans" are or what it means to be American?
 - Why is it erroneous to suggest there is a single version of how Latinos arrived to the United States?

EXTENSION I: Our Migration History

Mount a large world map in the classroom, where the whole class can document their family trees as well as those of characters they studied from **Latino Americans**. As an alternative to a physical map, consider using PowerPoint, Prezi.com or Google Maps to complete this activity digitally.

EXTENSION II: Citing History

A letter has been sent to your city's newspaper complaining how Latinos have arrived in the United States "overnight." Write an editorial that responds to this letter and challenges the notion that Latinos are only recent arrivals to the United States. Acknowledge different points of view and then cite diverse stories of arrival from **Latino Americans** and from your own family experience. (Teachers, draw on [Common Core Standards for Writing in History and Social Studies](#) appropriate to your grade level to structure and evaluate student writing.)