

Web Unit Plan

Title: Destination America: Our Hope, Our Future

Description: Students travel back in time to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they experience life through the eyes of a European immigrant who first steps foot on U.S. soil.

At a Glance

Grade Level: 6-8

Subject sort (for Web site index): Social Studies

Subject(s): American History

Topics: Immigration

Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Synthesis, Metacognition

Key Learnings: Push and Pull Factors, Ellis Island, Immigration Quotas

Time Needed: 3-4 weeks, 1 hour daily

Background: [From the Classroom in California, United States](#)

Unit Summary

History comes alive for students as they develop immigrant personas and become immigrants who make the journey from Europe to the United States. Once on American soil, they experience the immigration process as they participate in a simulation of the Ellis Island immigration station. Throughout this process, students create multimedia portfolios that illustrate their experiences. Students then assume the roles of their immigrants and share their experiences with the class. This exercise in creating historical fiction enables students to understand the motivations of immigrants and the challenges they faced. This is part of a larger immigration unit where students also study the experiences of other immigrant groups.

Curriculum Framing Questions

- **Essential Question**
Why take the risk?
- **Unit Questions**
What was it like for immigrants as they traveled to, arrived at, and lived in the United States?
How did the immigration experience differ for different immigrant groups?
- **Content Questions**
Why did immigrants leave their homes to come to the United States between 1870 and 1930?
How did the United States try to restrict immigration between 1870 and 1900?
What is immigration and emigration?

Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered [assessments](#) are used in the Destination America: Our Hope, Our Future Unit Plan. These assessments help students and teachers set goals; monitor student progress; provide feedback; assess thinking, processes, performances, and products; and reflect on learning throughout the learning cycle.

Instructional Procedures

Prior to Instruction

Compile resources (textbooks, encyclopedias, printed materials, and Internet resources) on European immigration from 1870 through 1930. Select primary source materials to help students learn about the “push” and “pull” factors that influenced immigration, such as government records, economic reports, and newspaper articles. Ships' registries and diaries will help students identify with individuals as they develop immigrant personas and engage in simulations.

Prepare student journals for students to use throughout the project to document research, relevant findings, and other responses to questions and discussions.

Getting Started

Discuss the Essential Question, *Why take the risk?* Engage students in a discussion about experiences in their lives or other people's lives that have motivated them to change.

After a class discussion, have students individually reflect on the question in their journals.

Introduction to the Unit

Next, discuss the question, *Who is an American?* As a group, write an operational definition of *American*. To illustrate the rich heritage in the classroom, compile a list of all the countries students represent ethnically. Locate and mark the countries on a world map. For students are uncomfortable with this or do not know where they come from, be sure to include the United States.

Explain that between 1870 and 1930 approximately 30 million immigrants came to America from all over the world. Many of them were fleeing poverty, oppression, or disease in their native countries. Tell students that they are going to assume the role of a European immigrant who came to the United States during this time.

Share the project, explaining that students will choose an immigration group and conduct research about the group's immigration experience. Based on this research, each student creates an immigrant profile and uses a personal journal to document and prepare for the journey to America. After preparing for their journey, all fictitious immigrants participate in a simulation of an immigration station. Once in their new country, immigrants reflect on their immigration experience and send letters home sharing their stories.

This may be a good time to set expectations by sharing the [student project rubric](#) with students. After the rubric is reviewed, allow students time to set up their own project timeline based on the discussed expectations. Students are required to complete all the projects but use the student project rubric to monitor and self-assess one of the following projects: family heritage interview, immigrant persona, or letters home. Use the [teacher project rubric](#) to assess the project each student chooses.

Show an interactive timeline of different waves of immigration at [The Peopling of America](#)* Web site. Focus students on the waves of immigration that occurred during

the nineteenth century, and introduce the idea that migration has two parts—*emigration* (leaving a place) and *immigration* (entering a place).

Discuss how the factors that influenced migration in the latter half of the nineteenth century included *pushing* factors (such as economic depression; climactic conditions, such as drought; social unrest; and overpopulation), and *pulling* factors (such as government incentives, personal opportunity, and free expression).

Have students begin thinking about the country of origin they would like to study. Introduce students to the human face of immigration through Seymour Rechtzeit's story at [Scholastic's Immigration Page](#)* or other stories at [Family Histories](#)* on the Ellis Island Web site.

Homework Assignment

To begin exploring the Unit Question, *What was it like for immigrants as they traveled to, arrived at, and lived in the United States?* have students interview family members to find out as much as they can about their origins and record the responses in their journals. If this is problematic for students, they can also interview teachers or friends. Questions might include, *Where did our ancestors come from? When did they come to this country? Why did they leave their country?*

Encourage students to examine family artifacts that can teach them about their heritage—artifacts include items such as photographs, war medals, old letters, and documents.

Provide sharing time in class the next day.

Immigrant Persona

Have each student select a national origin. They can choose the groups from which they actually descended or pick groups that they would like to learn more about. Choices may include German, Irish, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Russian, Czech, Slovak, or Polish.

Using the Internet and other library resources, students should research their selected groups and create profiles of themselves based on the history of their groups. The profiles should be historical fiction. When researching information about immigrants from a selected country, each student should explore and record relevant findings in a journal. Students can use the following questions to guide their study:

- *Why did the group leave their native land?*
- *In what years did the majority of people leave?*
- *What was it like for the immigrants as they traveled to, arrived at, and lived in the United States?*
- *How did the immigration experience differ among immigrant groups?*
- *What was life like in the group's "old country"?*

The following Web sites are good places to start gathering immigrant information:

- [Immigration: The Living Mosaic of People, Culture, and Hope](#)*
- [The Second Wave: European Immigration from 1850-1920](#)*
- [150 Years in Brooklyn: A Family History](#)*

Based on research, students should create an immigrant persona about their lives in their native countries. Each persona should include the following:

- Name
- Age
- Family history
- Occupation and work experience
- Education
- Health history
- Description of life in the old country
- Reasons for wanting to leave the old country
- Reasons for wanting to enter the United States
- Plans once in the United States (*How will the immigrant persona contribute to America?*)

Encourage each student to prepare to journey to the United States by compiling fictitious documents, such as birth certificates, passports, health records, and so forth.

Immigration Station Simulation

Through this simulation experience, students begin to discover their answer to the Unit Question, *How did the immigration experience differ for different immigrant groups?* Students learn about European immigrants' first stop in America—Ellis Island—through a simulation. Because this takes quite a bit of organizing, you may choose to teach about the Ellis Island experience without doing the simulation. Many Web sites provide a detailed look at the immigration station, including the following:

- [Interactive Tour of Ellis Island](#)*
- [History Channel](#)*
- [Ellis Island Museum: The Immigrant Experience](#)*
- [International Channel Ellis Island Overview](#)*

In preparation for the simulation, ask other adults to act as immigration inspectors. Set up a room with different areas, such as a waiting room, medical inspection area, interrogation area, detaining area, money exchange booth, and cafeteria.

Be sure that each student is familiar with the character he or she will be portraying. Explain to students that they will be going through a mock physical and psychological medical inspection where a doctor will look for medical and physical defects, and for signs of disease. Students will be interrogated by a legal inspector. If granted permission to enter the United States, the students will be administered the Loyalty Oath, or they will be deported.

Specific details for organizing a simulation of Ellis Island are available in Gateway, a simulation curriculum offered by [Interact](#)*.

Letters Home

After students have been through the immigration process, revisit the Curriculum-Framing Questions: *Why take the risk?*, *What was it like for immigrants as they traveled to, arrived at, and lived in the United States?*, and *How did the immigration experience differ for different immigrant groups?* As a class, discuss students'

answers to these questions and how their answers may have changed with their new perspectives.

Students can now share their experience with family members back in their countries. They do this by writing letters to relatives or friends in their old country. In their letters, each student should share details and feelings about the crossing, Ellis Island processing procedures, first impressions of the new country, challenges faced by new immigrants, and so forth. Have students get peer feedback before final revisions are made to their letters.

Multimedia Presentation

Share and discuss the [presentation scoring guide](#). Have each student combine his or her work into a multimedia presentation about the immigration experience. The [student example](#) shows the immigrant persona and letters home. The multimedia slides can be used to support an oral presentation, in which each immigrant dresses in character and tells his or her personal immigration story.

Wrapping Up

Have students revisit the Essential Question, *Why take the risk?* and respond in their journals based on their research and experiences.

Prerequisite Skills

Differentiated Instruction

Resource Student

- Make modifications as dictated in the student's IEP
- Preselect Web sites and other research material appropriate for the student's reading level
- Assist the student with note-taking techniques by making photocopies and having the student first highlight important information and then record that information in note style

Gifted Student

- Have the student compare the immigration experiences at Ellis Island and Angel Island
- Call upon the student to assist with setting up the simulation to help make it a realistic experience
- Have the student read the book *Letters from Rifka*, about a young girl's immigration experience

English Language Learner

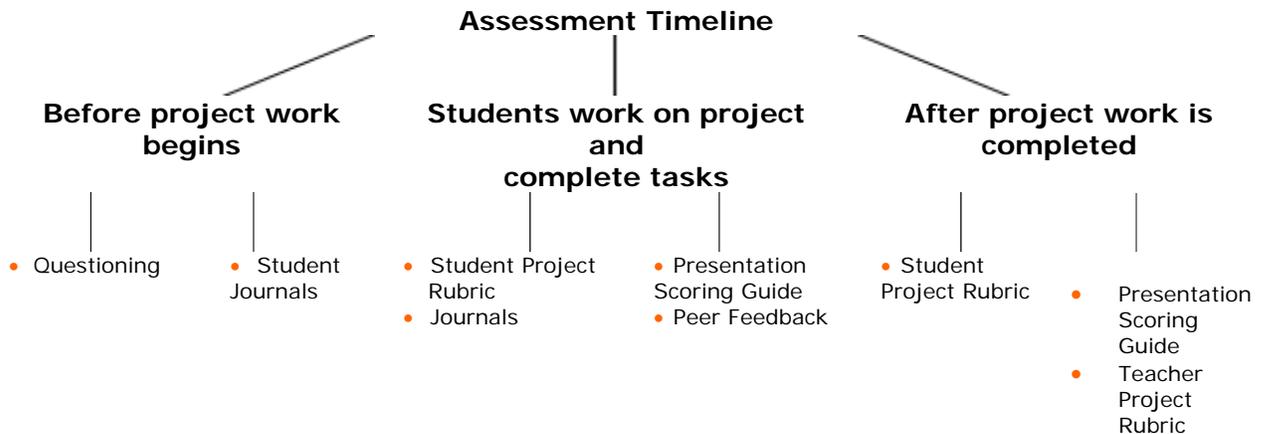
- Create templates to help the student with the immigrant profile
- Review the interrogation questions with the student before the simulation
- If possible, have the student share immigration stories and call upon the student as a resource and "expert"

Credits

Karen March participated in the Intel® Teach Program, which resulted in this idea for a classroom project. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

THINGS YOU NEED

Assessment Plan



Teacher questioning throughout the unit engages students in discussions and encourages students to think at higher-levels. Students keep journals to record their research findings and note any questions they develop. The journals can be collected and used as a way to keep informed about the progress of students and any difficulties they are having. Journal entries can serve as a springboard for class discussions. The [student project rubric](#) sets expectations and helps students to keep track of assignments. The [teacher project rubric](#) is used as a final assessment. Students and teacher use the [presentation scoring guide](#) to assess final presentations. Students collaborate with peers to review and revise letters.

Content Standards and Objectives

Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

United States National History Standards

The Development of Industrial America (1870-1900)

Standard 2: Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.

Standard 2A: The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants.

- Trace patterns of immigrant settlement in different regions of the country and how new immigrants helped produce a composite American culture that transcended group boundaries. [Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration]
- Assess the challenges, opportunities, and contributions of different immigrant groups. [Examine historical perspectives]

Student Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the wave of immigration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the eyes of an immigrant
- Identify the “push” and “pull” influence on immigration
- Describe an immigrant's journey and entry to the United States
- Describe the immigration processing experience
- Describe living and working conditions for new immigrants during the nineteenth century and the challenges they faced
- Analyze the effects of immigration on one immigrant group in the United States
- Compare the immigration experiences of different immigrant groups

Technology and Resources

Printed Materials

Immigration/Ellis Island

- Freedman, R. (1992). *Immigrant kids*. New York: Scholastic.
- Hesse, K. (1993). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.
- Lawlor, V. (1995). *I was dreaming to come to America, memories from the Ellis Island oral history project*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Levine, E. (1993). *If your name was changed at Ellis Island*. New York: Scholastic.
- Sandler, M. (1995). *Immigrants: A Library of Congress book*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Stein, C. (1992). *Ellis Island*. New York: Children's Press.
- Takaki, R. (1989). *Strangers from a different shore*. New York: Little Brown & Co.
- Thompson, G. (1997). *You are there: Immigrants coming to America*. New York: Children's Press.
- Young, D. (2000). *Saving America's treasures*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.

Angel Island

- Angel Island Association. (2001). *A teacher's guide to Angel Island immigration station*. Tiburon, CA: Angel Island Association.
- Chetin, H. (1982). *Angel Island prisoner 1927*. Berkeley, CA: New Seed Press.
- Lai, H. (1980). *Island: Poetry and history of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- McCunn, R. (1979). *An illustrated history of Chinese in America*. San Francisco: Design Enterprises.
- McCunn, R. (1988). *Chinese American portraits*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Yung, J. (1986). *Chinese women of America*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Yung, J. (1982). *Unbound feet: A social history of Chinese women in San Francisco*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Publisher.

Internet Resources

Immigration/Ellis Island

- Ellis Island: The Immigrant Experience
www.ellisland.org/Immexp/index.asp*
A Web site with two relevant areas—"The People of America" is an interactive timeline of the history of immigration to the United States, and "Family Histories" are family stories about immigration
- Scholastic Immigration
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/seymour/index.htm>*
The story of an immigrant's journey from Poland
- Immigration: The Living Mosaic of People, Culture, & Hope
<http://library.thinkquest.org/20619/index.html>*
A WebQuest that explores the history of different immigrant groups
- The Second Wave: European Immigration from 1850-1920
www.memory.loc.gov/learn/educators/workshop/european/wimmlink.html*
An immigration resource page with links to many other Web sites
- 150 Years in Brooklyn: A Family History
www.geocities.com/Heartland/Ranch/7589/index.htm*
A personal story of a family's immigration experience
- Scholastic's Interactive Tour of Ellis Island
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/index.htm>*
An audio, video, and pictorial tour of Ellis Island
- History Channel
www.historychannel.com/ellisland/index2.html*
The History Channel's online exhibit of Ellis Island
- International Channel Ellis Island Overview
<http://old.internationalchannel.com/education/ellis/overview.html>*
The story of immigration through Ellis Island
- Interact Simulations
<http://www.highsmith.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Production/Search.jsp?catalogId=10050&storeId=10001&langId=-1&N=796>*
The immigration simulation, Gateway, is available from Interact Simulations

Angel Island

- Angel Island Immigration
www.angelisland.org*
Historical and current information about Angel Island
- Angel Island Poetry and Photographs
www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/angel/angel.htm*
Information about the poems found on the walls of Angel Island
- Angel Island Immigration History
www.angel-island.com/history.html*
Stories from immigrants who were detained at Angel Island

Technology—Hardware

- Internet connection for persona research

Technology—Software

- Multimedia software for creating slideshow presentation
- Encyclopedia on CD-ROM for research
- Internet browser