

TITLE: IMMIGRATION: A VISION & A DREAM

Grade Levels 7 through 12

Subject Areas Social Studies, Language Arts

California State Standards <http://www.cde.ca.gov/board/>

History 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

History 12.8 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the influence of the media in American political life.

Grade 7 Reading Comprehension (focus on informational materials) 2.4 Students identify and trace the development in text of an author's argument, point of view or perspective.

2.6 Students assess the adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of the author's evidence in support of claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping.

Grade 8 Reading Comprehension (focus on informational materials) 2.3 Students find similarities and differences between texts in the treatment, scope and organization of ideas.

Overview

In this lesson, students will explore issues surrounding immigration, assimilation and maintenance of cultural identity. They will read articles that contain divergent viewpoints on assimilation in American culture and explore their own opinions on the subject. They will also discuss why people immigrate to another country, research the immigration process, and design an idealized version of an immigration center that provides support for newcomers.

Learning Objectives

To enable students to:

- learn about the Dominican Republic.
- evaluate varied perspectives on cultural identity.
- compare and contrast varying viewpoints on immigration.
- summarize reasons for immigrating to another country.
- explain the process required to immigrate to the United States.

Time

Two to five 50-minute class periods

Materials

Videotape - *MY AMERICAN GIRLS: A DOMINICAN STORY* by Aaron Matthews

Internet access

Writing materials

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Activity One

The purpose of this activity is to help students develop background knowledge about the Dominican Republic before they view the film.

1. Divide the class into small groups to conduct research on the Dominican Republic. Ask each group to collect 20 to 25 facts. As a class, compile the information into categories.
2. Have the students create a class exhibit on the Dominican Republic. Ask each small group to choose one category and work on a presentation for the class exhibit. Provide large pieces of chart paper and drawing and writing materials for each group. Some possible categories include geography, culture, transportation, tourism and so forth. Some possible presentation ideas include drawings, maps, brochures, dioramas, music and so forth.
3. Invite an audience to view the class exhibit.

Some good Web sites to begin research include

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html>
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html#Govt>
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html#People>
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html#Econ>
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/dotoc.html>
<http://caribbean-supersite.com/domrep/history.htm>
music <http://www.mindspring.com/~adiascar/musica/>
<http://www.hg.org/guide-domrep.html> (On the site, scroll down to the section entitled "The Dominican Republic From Columbus to the 1990s: A Brief History")
<http://www.amcham.org.do/chamber/history.html>

Activity Two

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn about the filmmaker's reasons for creating the film.

1. Prior to viewing the film, read, as a class, an interview with the filmmaker at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/myamericangirls/thefilm.html>. Choose different students to read the questions and answers aloud. Ask the students to briefly write in their journals their responses to these questions
 - What do you think the film will focus on?
 - What do you think will be the most interesting aspect of the story?
 - Which character do you think will be most compelling?

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Activity One

The purpose of this activity is to get students to clarify their thoughts and values regarding assimilation into American culture and maintaining cultural identity.

1. Ask students to share their responses to these quotes.

"America is not like a blanket– one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture and the same size. America is more like a quilt– many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread... all of us fit somewhere."

– *Jesse Jackson, July 16, 1984, speech to the Democratic National Convention.*

"The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind."

– *Maya Angelou from the book I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

"What we have to do is find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities."

– *Hillary Rodham Clinton, May 18, 1993, speech at the graduation ceremony of the University of Pennsylvania*

2. Have students read the article entitled "America's Racial and Ethnic Divides- Immigrants Shunning Idea of Assimilation." The article is from *THE WASHINGTON POST* series The Myth of the Melting Pot and can be accessed from <http://washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/national/longterm/meltingpot/meltingpot.htm>.

3. Use this article as a springboard for discussion of the melting pot metaphor, which describes how immigrants of a variety of races and ethnicities have become assimilated into American culture.

4. Present to the class another metaphor of cultural identities in a society, that of a tossed salad. In this metaphor, varied ingredients are mixed, yet each retains its own distinctive flavor.

5. In their writing journals, have the students briefly reflect on which metaphor most closely describes their view of American society today.

6. Divide the class into pairs and have them share their choice of metaphor with each other. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the larger class.

7. Share this motto with the class. Be sure they know it is found on the seal of the United States, which was adopted on June 20, 1782.

E pluribus unum (Out of many, one).

Ask the students if they think that this motto is still a valid representation of America's cultural diversity. Have the class brainstorm some alternative mottoes and discuss the values each represents in terms of diversity.

Activity Two

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn about various issues people face when they immigrate to the United States.

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Have each group read stories written by an immigrant to the United States. Stories can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/kcet/newamericans/3.0/personalstories.html>.

Compare and contrast these stories to those portrayed in the video. What are issues that seem common to all immigrants? What issues are particular to immigrants from the Dominican Republic?

2. Divide the class into two groups. Have the first group summarize the myths and counterpoints about immigration that are found on: <http://www.pbs.org/kcet/newamericans/4.0/4.03misconceptions.html>.

Have the second group summarize the myths and counterpoints about immigration that are found on <http://www.nwrel.org/cnorse/booklets/immigration/3.html#myth>.

3. Compare and discuss the differences between the two sites. Include an analysis of the authors, the viewpoints and the underlying perspective each suggests about immigrants to the United States.

Activity Three

The purpose of this activity is for students to reflect on some of the reasons people choose to immigrate to the United States and to learn about the details of the immigration process.

1. Break students into small groups for this activity. Ask groups to brainstorm reasons people want to leave their country of origin, as well as reasons people want to go to a particular country (the push/pull factor).

2. Send students to the Country Profiles section of the CIA World Factbook Web site.
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/indexgeo.html>

Ask students to find and record the following information about the Dominican Republic and the United States.

- Life expectancy at birth
- Infant mortality rate
- Literacy level
- Population below poverty level
- Unemployment rate

3. After students have recorded the information, ask them to compare the statistics from the two countries and discuss these questions.

- What do you notice when you compare the statistics from these two countries?
- How do you think these statistics might influence someone's decision to immigrate to the United States?
- What are some of the pros of leaving the Dominican Republic to come to the United States? What are some of the cons?

4. Ask students to answer the questions listed below. (To do so, they will need to gather 10 immigration facts.) These two Web sites may be helpful for this activity.

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm>

<http://travel.state.gov/dv2002.html>

- How does a person immigrate to the United States?
- What is a visa?
- What does the term "status" mean?
- What are the details of the Immigration Act of 1990?
- What are some reasons for refusal of admission into the United States?
- What are 10 immigration facts that you learned in your research?

5. After the students have finished their research, discuss these questions.

- Do you think the process of immigrating into this country is confusing? How do you think the process would be for a person who doesn't speak English?
- What do you think the Statue of Liberty stands for in the United States? What does it mean to you on a personal level?
- Do you think the United States should have immigration levels? If so, do you think the current levels are too high, too low or just right?

6. Imagine that you are a person who wants to immigrate to or has recently immigrated to the United States. Write a diary entry in which you describe your thoughts and feelings about immigration.

Activity Four

The purpose of this lesson is for students to synthesize the information from activities 2 and 3 and to use this knowledge to create an ideal immigration center.

1. Share this scenario with the class.

Imagine that you have just landed in America from your homeland, the Dominican Republic. You are with your parents, your four brothers and your aunt. You are the only person in your family who speaks English, although you are not very proficient.

Ask the students to reflect on these questions in their writing journals.

- What concerns do you think this immigrant family has?
- How do you imagine they feel?
- What do you think this family's needs are?

2. Divide the class into small groups. Tell the students that they are going to design an ideal center for immigrants to California. Their design must include:

- a mission statement that clearly describes the center's essential goals.
- a name for the center.
- a floor plan or a model that illustrates all the different places that will be part of the center and a description of the reason you included each place.
- how would decisions be made about who would be allowed to legally immigrate. This must take into consideration that the budget and staff are limited and that there is a cap on the number of immigrants into the country annually.
- how would the center be publicized.

A good resource to begin research is the Web site of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization, <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/faqs.htm>.

3. Have each group present their work to the whole class.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Activity One

1. Have the class create a collection of stories about people's experiences with the education of immigrant children. For information for their stories, have students interview immigrants of different age groups, asking the immigrants to share their experiences.

Activity Two

1. Read the article entitled "Whose Culture Is This? Whose Curriculum Will This Be?" found at the Web site of California Tomorrow at <http://www.californiatomorrow.org/files/pdfs/whosecurriculum.pdf>. Divide the class into groups and have each group summarize the important parts in the various sections. Ask each group to create a list of the most important questions raised in this article.

2. Provide time for each student to respond to the article in their writing journal. Ask for student volunteers to share their responses.