

# Immigration: Research, Organize, and Present

**Grade Level:** Sixth Grade

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**Length of Unit:** 10 – 20 Lessons

## I. ABSTRACT

This project will support the development of lessons and activities spanning the period of early immigration to America. To increase students' understanding of the difficulties newly-arrived immigrants faced when they reached America, students will learn to formulate central questions, locate information, and thoughtfully synthesize their learning. Teachers will work with artists from the Cambridge Middle School Drama Collaborative (*CMSDC*) to help students develop their "voice" as researchers, writers, and performers. Through drama and visual evidence, students will integrate tableaux, first-person narrative, and radio play activities into a master project and presentation.

## II. OVERVIEW

### A. Concept Objectives

1. Students will acquire the ability to frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research; to collect, evaluate, and employ information from primary and secondary sources, and to apply it in oral and written presentations. They will understand the many kinds and uses of evidence; and by comparing competing historical narratives, they will differentiate historical fact from historical interpretation and from fiction.  
[Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework Learning Standard 3: Research, Evidence, and Point of View]
2. As a vast nation, the overwhelming majority of whose population derives from waves of immigration from many lands, the United States has a citizenry that exhibits a broad diversity in terms of race, ethnic traditions, and religious beliefs. Students will be taught the distinct contributions that immigrants from various lands and of various creeds have made to our nationhood.  
[Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework Learning Standard 4: Society, Diversity, Commonality, and the Individual]
3. Students will write with focus and organization for a range of audiences and a variety of purposes.  
[Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Learning Standard 19, 20, 21 & 24 ]
4. Students will learn and use effective strategies for listening, speaking, and presenting in formal and informal contexts.  
[Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Learning Standard 1, 2, 3, 18, 26 & 28]

### B. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence* (p. 142):

1. Waves of new immigrants from about 1830 onward
2. Great migrations from Ireland (potato famine) and Germany
3. From about 1800 on, many immigrants arrive from southern and eastern Europe.
4. Immigrants from Asian countries, especially China
5. Ellis Island; "The New Colossus" (poem on the Statue of Liberty, written by Emma Lazarus)
6. Large populations of immigrants settle in major cities, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, San Francisco
7. The tension between ideals and realities
8. The metaphor of America as a "melting pot"

9. America perceived as “land of opportunity” vs. resistance, discrimination, and “nativism”
  10. Resistance to Catholics and Jews
  11. Chinese Exclusion Act
- C. Skill Objectives
1. Students will develop a variety of learning strategies, including time management skills to enhance learning.
  2. By accessing resources in the history and social science classroom, resource room, and library media center, students will use research skills to acquire knowledge about significant historical events.
  3. Students will be required to use information effectively, organize information, and justify conclusions.
  4. Students will understand the chronological order of events during the period of early immigration to America.
  5. Students will collect, evaluate, and incorporate significant information from primary and secondary sources.
  6. Students will use creative writing skills, complete historical narratives in the form of journal entries, and write and apply research from print and nonprint materials to support scripted scenes.
  7. The team will develop assessment techniques that encourage students to thoughtfully synthesize their learning to create a master project.

### III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For Teachers:
1. Blank, Carla & Jody Roberts. *Live On Stage!: Performing Arts For Middle School (Teacher Resource Book)*. Palo Alto, CA: Dale Seymour Publications, 1997. ISBN 1-57232-209-8.
  2. *Cambridge Public Schools – K-12 Language Arts Benchmarks Document (DRAFT), Fall, 2000*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Public School Office of Curriculum and Instruction, 159 Thorndike St., Cambridge, MA 02141.
  3. Hurst, Carol Otis & Rebecca Otis. *In Times Past: An Encyclopedia For Integrating US History with Literature in Grades 3-8*. New York: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 1993 ISBN 0-7829-0155-7.
  4. Andrews, Becky S., ed. “A Rip-Roarin’ Report-Writing Adventure”. *The Mailbox The Idea Magazine For Teachers (Intermediate)*. North Carolina: The Education Center, Inc., 1999-2000 Yearbook). ISBN 1-56234-381-5.
- B. For Students:
1. Blank, Carla & Jody Roberts. *Live On Stage! - Performing Arts For Middle School (Student Edition)*. Palo Alto, CA. Dale Seymour Publications, 1997. ISBN 1-57232-209-8.
  2. Levine, Ellen. *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1993. ISBN 0-590-46134-6.
  3. Maestro, Betty. *Coming to America: The Story About Immigration*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1996. ISBN 0-590-44151-5.

### IV. RESOURCES

- A. Students will use all available resources needed for this immigration project: books, encyclopedias, almanacs, periodicals, almanacs, dictionaries, electronic encyclopedias, search engines, and immigration web sites.

- B. Additionally, the Cambridge Middle School Drama Collaborative (*CMSDC*) and our participating artist, *Ms. Lesley Bannatyne*, will collaborate with the team in the planning, development, and implementation of this unit.
- C. The team will design and distribute research material that will support students' learning throughout the unit of study.
- D. Samples will include poster-sized signs to remind students of good research techniques, strategies for answering questions, and brainstorming.
- E. Color-coded reference books will be made for use in computer research areas providing easy access to information on web searches, sites, downloading, notetaking, and moving information into applications.
- F. Research kits will include organizational items such as highlighting tape, index cards, correction tape and templates/graphic organizers for good notetaking, outlining, thesis statements, and correlating questions.
- G. Materials will provide increased access to information, including a variety of print and non-print materials, interviews, web searches, and other electronic resources.

## V. LESSONS

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  - 1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will acquire the ability to frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research; to collect, evaluate, and employ information from primary and secondary sources, and to apply it in oral and written presentations. They will understand the many kinds and uses of evidence; and by comparing competing historical narratives, they will differentiate historical fact from historical interpretation and from fiction.
    - b. Students will be taught the distinct contributions that immigrants from various lands and of various creeds have made to our nationhood.
    - c. Students will write with focus and organization for a range of audiences and a variety of purposes.
    - d. Students will learn and use effective strategies for listening, speaking, and presenting in formal and informal contexts.
- B. *Materials*
  - 1. Specialized reference materials: books, encyclopedias, almanacs, periodicals, dictionaries
  - 2. Online resources: electronic encyclopedias, search engines and immigration web sites
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
  - 1. alien - a person who is not a citizen of the country he is living in; an unnaturalized foreign resident of a country (1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 18, intro & reflections)
  - 2. allegiance - loyalty to a government, country, or ruler (intro & reflections)
  - 3. application – a written form used in making such a request (1, 2, 3, 4, 11)
  - 4. anarchist - any person who promotes disorder or stirs up revolt (intro & reflections)
  - 5. anarchy - political disorder and confusion; absence of any cohesive principle, such as a common standard or purpose (intro & reflections)
  - 6. anti-Semitism - hatred and persecution of Jews (intro & reflections)
  - 7. assimilate - to be absorbed into the main culture group (17, 20, 21 & intro & reflections)
  - 8. citizenship - the status of being a citizen, including its rights, duties, and privileges (1, 2, 3, 4, & intro & reflections)
  - 9. deport - to expel from a country (3)
  - 10. deportation - expulsion from a country (3)

11. destination - the place to which one is going or directed (1, 2, 3, 4, 11, intro & reflections)
12. detainment - to keep from proceeding; delay or hold back (5)
13. disembark - to go ashore from a ship or airplane (1, 2, 3, 11)
14. emigrate - to leave one country or region to settle in another (1, 2, 3, 4, intro & reflections)
15. emigrants - person who leaves his place or country to live in another country (1, 2, 3, 4, intro & reflections)
16. entry - the act or instance of entering (1, 2, 3, 11)
17. ethnic - sharing the same language and culture (intro & reflections)
18. examination - a checking and testing of the body or part of the body, as by a dentist or physician (3, 10)
19. exchange - to give and receive reciprocally; interchange (3)
20. exclude - to prevent from entering; keep out; bar (3)
21. extortion - an obtaining of money or another valuable thing by threat or force (3)
22. famine - a drastic, wide-reaching food shortage (13, intro & reflections)
23. genealogy - a record or table of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or ancestors; a family tree (intro & reflections)
24. immigrate - to enter and settle in a country or region to which one is not native. (1, 2, 3, 4, intro & reflections)
25. immigrant - a person who enters a new country to live in another . (1, 2, 3, 4, intro & reflections)
26. indenture - a contract that binds a person, such as an apprentice, to work for another person for a stated period of time (intro & reflections)
27. indentured - to bind a person by such a contract: *an indentured servant* (1, 2, 3, 4, intro & reflections)
28. inspection - a formal or official examination, to look especially for errors, faults, or flaws (1, 2, 3, 4, & 10)
29. labor - persons who do manual work for a living, as a group (intro & reflections)
30. literacy - the ability to read and write (1, 2, 3, & 4)
31. nationality - a group of people sharing the same language, culture, and history (intro & reflections)
32. native - a person who was born in a particular place or country; an original inhabitant of a region or country (intro & reflections)
33. origin - the source from which something begins or comes; parentage; ancestry: *country of origin* (6, 8, intro & reflections)
34. passage - the right, permission, or freedom to pass, go, or travel; a journey or voyage, especially by sea or air (11)
35. permit - a written order or license granting permission to perform some action (1, 2, 3, 4, & 11)
36. prejudice - hatred or intolerance of a particular group, such as members of a particular race or religion (intro & reflections)
37. pogrom - the organized persecution or massacre of a minority group, especially of Jews (intro & reflections)
38. polygamy - the practice, custom, or condition of having more than one spouse or mate at a time (3)
39. reality - the totality of all things possessing actuality, existence, or essence (intro & reflections)
40. resistance - to remain firm against the actions, effects, or force of; withstand (intro & reflections)
41. roundtrippers - people who planned to return to their homelands (intro & reflections)

42. screening – to examine carefully or systematically, especially so as to make a selection and determination (5)
43. steerage - formerly, the portion of a passenger ship occupied by those passengers paying the cheapest fare. (11)
44. sterilization - the act or process of sterilizing; not able to reproduce (5)
45. undesirables - persons thought to be undesirable; objectionable (intro & reflections)

D. *Procedures/Activities*

Introduction: The Constitution of the United States begins: “We, the people of the United States...”.. Yet, we know that the United States is made up of many immigrants who arrived in the United States in the 1800’s. Coming from many nations, these immigrants brought their own ethnic customs, traditions, and values to our shores. In this unit, we will examine the myriad of experiences these immigrants faced when they arrived in America and the reasons why many immigrants chose -- and in some instances were forced -- to leave their homelands. We will examine these immigrants’ arrivals in America, their adjustments to their new land, and how their contributions helped form our young nation.

1. Students will read the play, *Ashore on Ellis Island* published by Curriculum Associates, an account of a fictional Italian family and their immigrant experience at the turn of the twentieth century.
2. Students will read excerpts from selected immigration resources; listen to stories about the experiences of immigrants as they passed through Ellis Island; draw upon excerpts from first-hand accounts, stories, and poems; and discuss feelings associated with being an immigrant.
3. Students will look at pictures; e.g. eye exam at Ellis Island, a crowded ship, arriving on Ellis Island from a transfer barge, an immigrant girl given a psychological test as her family watches anxiously, immigrant men undergoing physical examinations, standing room only on a ship to America, a family waiting for direction, men exchanging currency.
4. Students will look at a variety of documents; e.g. newspapers, letters, census reports reflecting this period of history.
5. Teachers will share information pertaining to contagious diseases, sterilization, methods of screening, and detainment.
6. Students will examine photographs and share their thoughts about what they see depicted in the pictures; e.g. kinds of immigrants, origin of country/region, socioeconomic background, emotions/actions/observations. Utilizing graphic organizers, students will list the people, objects, and actions in each photograph.
7. Students will use their own bodies to create photographs to represent the moment in history depicted. Who is there? What are they doing? What are they wearing? How are they feeling? How can you show that in your tableau?
8. Students will examine documents noting such attributes as: type of document, the date and origin of the document, the author and the projected audience for whom the document was written, and any interesting unique physical characteristics; e.g. interesting letterhead, handwriting, illustrations.
9. Students will determine why this document is important and why it may have been written; e.g. for a specific time, circumstance, or place.
10. Students will cite facts from the document, state inferences/opinions, and write questions pertaining to the period of time; e.g. why was passing an eye exam required on medical documents?
11. Students will examine Cunard Line ticket applications and be asked to comment about the questions the application contains.

12. Students will conduct mock “Immigrant Interviews”. A list of questions will be developed and/or distributed by the students to help them with their interviews. Students will share each immigrant story with the class. Students will be encouraged to draw information and experiences from real-life immigrants they may know.
13. Students, writing in the first-person, will depict their early days as a new immigrant in America. Student writing will be formatted like a journal with each journal entry dated. The use of authentic materials and the inclusion of members from all socioeconomic classes will be encouraged. Students may choose to model a real historical person that lived during this time.
14. After students have done their research, they need to begin to keep daily journal entries that reflect on how the events of these days have influenced their lives. Students will write what they think, feel, fear, hope, and dream.
15. It is the year 1924. You’ve just arrived in Ellis Island in New York City. You only know a few words in English. You are frightened but also excited. Then, someone grabs your bag with everything you have brought to this foreign land, including the little money you have. Now you wonder whether you made the right decision to leave that old familiar place, called home. Describe your experiences during your first week in your newly-adopted country. Some of these experiences may be humorous, others sad, frightening, strange. How do you feel about the things that happen to you? How can you help yourself? Is there anyone to turn to for help during your first week in America? Be creative and imaginative in explaining how you started your new life in America...
16. Imagine that... You have been approved to proceed through customs, but your brother was found to have a disease, detained, and then sent back to Ireland. Write a letter to your brother at home describing what new trials you've been through in your first week. Write about where you are living, where you think you might get work, who you've met so far. *(CMSDC)*
17. Imagine that... You are miserably homesick for your family in (country). Compare and contrast your current (American) environment with what you remember of your home country as an entry in your journal. *(CMSDC)*
18. Imagine that... You are a thief, convicted in your homeland, who has escaped on a freighter to America. You have eluded the law at home, but now what? Create a new identity for yourself and pass yourself off as this new person as you go through the paces at Ellis Island. Write down how it all went in your journal. *(CMSDC)*
19. Imagine that... Your trunk has been lost en route. You must describe everything in it to an immigration officer. Write up the exchange in your diary. *(CMSDC)*
20. Imagine that... You have now been in the United States for one year. Write a diary entry on day one, day 100, and now, showing how your life has changed. Are you working? Where? Have you met anyone you feel especially close to? Have you hooked up with relatives you'd never met before and what are they like? Can you get around without help? How's your English? *(CMSDC)*
21. Imagine that... You are an eleven-year old immigrant from (country) and you have just spent your first week in an American school. The kids there are teasing you terribly, and yesterday you were involved in a fight on the way home from school. Write how you feel about this new "land of opportunity" in a diary entry. *(CMSDC)*
22. Students will respond to script-starters, such as the A/B dialogue begun with teacher-developed first sentences; e.g. “Hey! That's my trunk!” or “I think we have a case of pinkeye here”. Students will then work in pairs to take turns adding sentences. With a prompt on seven sheets of paper, students have everyone write at once. *(CMSDC)*

23. Photos will instigate writing, diary-style. Using a photo, students will be assigned different people in the photos and then write from their assigned person's point of view. In this way, students will end up with multiple viewpoints derived from the same photo. These diaries will then be used and recorded as a 'scene' in a ready-made, rough draft radio drama. (CMSDC)
24. Each student will be assigned sections of written material to transcribe into dialogue. A narrator may be inserted and extra dialogue added to ensure the scene is making sense. (CMSDC)

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

Students will be assessed based on alternative assessment criteria adapted from published materials and *Cambridge Public Schools K-12 Language Arts Benchmarks*:

1. Utilizes multiple strategies to explore and narrow a topic, including graphic organizers, note-taking, outlining, and generating questions.
2. Uses journalistic questions/style.
3. Shows evidence of research and contains accurate, historical references.
4. Uses many resources in addition to primary source materials.
5. Shows a creative balance of narration, dialogue, and accurate character portrayal in both writing and presentation.
6. Shows evidence of knowledge of the period in which the document was written.
7. Identifies the key issues and main points included in the primary source.
8. Understands the author's goal and the author's audience.
9. Interprets author's intent and tone noting repetition, irony, analogy, and sarcasm.
10. Describes artistic choices in the development of presentation.
11. Performs plays and readings using effective oral presentation skills (gestures, body language, voice).
12. Sound effects are realistic.
13. Prepares a presentation that reflects knowledge of basic acting skills, which demonstrates consideration of audience and purpose.

**VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

- A. Students will write and produce a radio play, featuring historical fictional accounts of immigrants. Students will portray different roles and characters within scenes; e.g. a young man arriving by ship in New York, the point of physical examination, the point of legal inquiry, a conversation among deportees, etc. Students will conduct radio coverage to include on-the-spot interviews of fictional immigrants, news bulletins, and commercials. The style and language will simulate a radio broadcast, include sound effects, and project a feeling of immediacy to make the event real.
- B. Reflections; Golden Door or Island of Tears? - Students will draw conclusions about how difficult it was for immigrants to leave their homelands and start life in a new country. After landing on the shores of Ellis Island, immigrants such as these endured many difficulties before they were given the opportunity to enter the United States. Was the immigrant experience better for some people than for others? As a student of American History, you need to understand what induced thousands of free and indentured immigrants to leave their homes. Why would they risk the hardships of coming to a new land and were they successful?

**VII. CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

None

**VII. STUDENT WORKSHEETS/HANDOUTS**

None

## VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Resources for Teachers

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Cullum Albert and David A. Almeida. "Ashore on Ellis Island". *American Moments: Classroom Drama*. MA: Curriculum Associates, Inc., 1996. ISBN 1-55915-817-4.

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Sims, Glenda J. *Immigration Theme Series: Literature-based Activities for Thematic Teaching Grades 4-6*. Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press Inc., 1992. ISBN 0-30554-02461-0.

### Books

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ISBN 0-688-05824-8.

Sandler, Martin, *Immigrants: A Library of Congress Book*. New York, New York: Harper Collins  
Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0-06-024507-7.

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House Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0-7910-2176-9.

### **WebSites**

National Park Service  
<http://www.nps.gov/stli>

Ellis Island Home Page  
<http://www.ellisland.org/>

History Channel  
<http://www.historychannel.com/ellisland/main.html>

Photographs of Ellis Island  
[http://cmp1.ucr.edu/exhibitions/immigration\\_id.html](http://cmp1.ucr.edu/exhibitions/immigration_id.html)

CRLS Library Research Guide – Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
[http://www.cps.ci.cambridge.ma.us/crls/Library/Research%20Web%20Site/research\\_guide\\_contents.htm](http://www.cps.ci.cambridge.ma.us/crls/Library/Research%20Web%20Site/research_guide_contents.htm)