

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: IMMIGRANTS

White man: *It's time to reclaim America from illegal immigrants!*

Native man: *I'll help you pack.*

We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us!

(slogan often heard during immigration-related events, especially in the Southwest)

Operating within the law to support enforcement of the law.

(slogan of the Minutemen Project)

...we must have a rational, humane guest-worker program that rejects amnesty.

(2006 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush)

The debate surrounding undocumented immigration to the U.S. is often framed in isolated, "black and white" terms, much the same way we in this country too often frame most issues: good vs. bad, "you are with us or against us," pro-life vs. pro-choice, Republicans vs. Democrats, etc. Many reading this will probably identify with one or more of the phrases above. Yet, what is needed is not to boil down immigration to simple catch phrases, or to paint an over-simplified picture of causes and effects, but rather to complicate the issue, to explore the many interdependent factors that lead to reasons why people risk their lives to journey to this country, and how their presence here affects all of our lives.

This edition of **With Eyes to See** attempts to make immigration clearer to our students by muddying the waters of the many issues that surround it, in hopes that we will all keep asking questions of those who set immigration policy, enforce laws, and judge immigrants, and of ourselves and how we see the "other." Yet, who is the "other"? Many of our students are first generation immigrants themselves, undocumented or "legal," with incredible stories to tell; and for those of us who are not indigenous to this land, we are all immigrants.

The following pages are organized by key questions that can be asked to better understand immigration today, including some exercises and resources to explore each question.

With Eyes to See for this 2006-2007 school year will focus on the movement of people, both within and across borders. This first of three editions is focused on immigration to this country; the second will look at the lives of displaced peoples and refugees around the world; the third and final edition of the year will explore the cultural richness in this country as a result of immigrants. It is good to be with you again for a another school year. Con paz.

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

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CONCERN AMERICA

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Two Excellent Resources for Studying Immigration

1. **The Line Between Us: Teaching about the Border and Mexican Immigration**, by Bill Bigelow, explores the history of U.S-Mexican relations and the roots of Mexican immigration, all in the context of the global economy, and it shows how teachers can help students understand the immigrant experience and the drama of border life. The book is about imaginative, creative, and critical analysis teaching that gets students to care about the world through role plays, stories, poetry, improvisations, simulations, and video. (www.rethinkingschools.org, 1-800-669-4192)

2. PBS has created a series entitled **New Americans** that includes videos, lesson plans, an informative quiz, profiles of various “new Americans,” and more. There are many online links (categorized by topic) which make it easy to create lessons around specific aspects of immigration. (www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans)

Why do at least 8,000 migrants cross into the U.S. every day?

Key to understanding why so many people risk their lives to come to this country without permission is to look at the realities they face in their home countries. By putting a human face on migrants, even though they have “broken” our laws by crossing the border illegally, makes it harder to simply say “they are illegals so they should be deported.”

- Why did our own families come to this country? Compile the data from the students to give a personal, class-based answer to this question.
- The materials from both the *Line Between Us* and the PBS *New Americans* materials have good information on this topic. With internet access, students can quickly read about five different immigrants/families: www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/newamericans.html

What is the journey like for migrants coming to the U.S.?

Many narratives exist which tell the stories of migrants and their journeys to this country. One way to learn about migrants is to have students create narratives using the Storyline Method. The Storyline Method was developed by teachers to connect with students’ emotions and “bring the whole of him-herself to the table of learning.” This is a great way to help students explore the lives of others, including undocumented immigrants.

- 1) Start with questions like, “What words come to mind when I say ‘Immigrants?’,” and “Why do you think people migrate here illegally?”
- 2) Each student becomes a “character” in the story (a migrant), creating her/his person physically (art) and through a biography (writing). Each shares her/his character and they all begin to interact--a community is created.
- 3) To stimulate discussion, more questions are posed like “Today you leave your village to travel north. What will you take with you (that will fit into one bag)?” Students share answers and discuss each others’ choices. Use various questions over several days.
- 4) Eventually, students may want more information about immigration and can invite someone to speak with them (an immigrant, immigrant rights worker, etc.).
- 5) In the end, students have been able “to explore their own worries and fears about social issues that impact their own lives,” and, in the process, have begun to see “immigrants” as real people with many of their same fears, joys, families, and hearts. There is much more information about Storyline easily found on the internet (search using the key words “storyline method”). (Hutchinson, Jaylynne N. and Romano, Rosalie M. *Teaching for Social Justice*. 254-269; adapted from *With Eyes to See*, December 2000)

“Give me
your tired,
your poor,
your
huddled
masses
yearning to
breathe
free, the
wretched
refuse of
your
teeming
shore,
send
these, the
homeless,
tempest-
tossed, to
me: I lift
my lamp
beside the
golden
door.”
Emma
Lazarus
(inscribed
on the
Statue of
Liberty)

What is the effect of immigrants in the U.S.? In the home countries of migrants?

It works well to start exploring these questions by brainstorming answers with the students. Their responses can then be juxtaposed with what they find doing research.

- On the cultural level, we can all name many influences in this country that come from other places, in our food and music, for example. In small groups, have students talk about the music they listen to, favorite foods, or clothes they wear, and to think about the origins of some of these (like rap music with lyrics in Spanish).
- On the macroeconomic level, there is a raging debate as to whether or not immigrants, and undocumented immigrants in particular, help or hurt the economy of the U.S. What do the students think? After brainstorming, have them develop plans for answering this question and then do the research (internet searches are a quick and easy way to do this). Groups of students can present their findings in the form of policy recommendations to the government; be sure they cite and share the sources they used. For an important twist, what is the economic effect on the countries migrants leave behind? Use terms like “remittances,” and “brain drain” to focus research.
- On a microeconomic level, how does immigrating here economically affect the migrants themselves? The families they left behind? Again, small groups can brainstorm these questions and then research answers.

“I keep many ties, because a piece of my heart is still there.
Mantengo muchos lazos, porque parte de mí continúa allá.”
Anonymous

Where do immigrants in the U.S. come from today? In the past?

Some recent figures relating to immigration might surprise us, especially considering the stories we hear in the news. For example, it is estimated that in 2002 there were about 1.4 million immigrants who came to the U.S., though only 1/3 of which were undocumented; 40% of undocumented immigrants cross the U.S.-Mexico border, though 85% of border enforcement is concentrated there.

- Once again, ask the students to make educated guesses as to the origin of today's immigrants, and do the same looking at 100 years ago. The PBS *New American's* web site has good links to U.S. census data on this topic at:
www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_lesson_plan_04.html

“In times of shrinking expectations,... everyone feels like a victim and pushes away outsiders to defend his own corner.”
Oscar Handlin

What words do we use to talk about immigration?

The words we use say a lot about how we view a subject, and immigration is no different. Understanding the terms that are used to talk about immigration and immigrants will help us be more critical of what we hear in the media and in our communities.

- Ask the students to make a list of the terms they associate with immigrants and immigration. Divide up the list, and ask small groups to define the words, and whether or not they would use them when talking about immigration. Examples are:

- illegal immigrants	- migrant
- illegal aliens	- asylum
- illegals	- citizenship
- aliens	- deportation
- criminals	- visa
- guest workers	- amnesty
- refugee	- green card

A good site with many definitions is www.uscis.gov/graphics/glossary2.htm#I.

RECOMMENDED

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

"To be born in a new country one has to die in the motherland."
Irina Mogilevskaya

RESOURCES

1. **The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child** (in Spanish, **Cajas de Cartón**), by Francisco Jiménez
This book of short stories follows a migrant family through its "circuit" of farmwork: cotton, strawberries, carrots, etc., focusing on the tension between work and school for the child at the center of the book. (6th-12th grades)
2. **The Devil's Highway**, by Luis A. Urrea
Urrea's book follows the ordeal of 26 Mexican migrants who entered the scorching "Devil's Highway" in Arizona, simply attempting to find better-paying jobs than were available at home in Vera Cruz; of the 26, only 12 survived. (9th-12th grades)
3. **¡Sí, Se Puede!/Yes, We Can!**, by Diana Cohn, and illustrated by Francisco Delgado
This children's book highlights the 2000 Justice for Janitors strike that involved 8,000 mostly immigrant workers, through the experiences of a boy's *mamá*. See Rethinking Schools article "Justice for Janitors: Making the Invisible Visible" (www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/17_02/Read172.shtml) for ways of working with this story across grade levels. (K-12th grades)

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Colombia, Mozambique, and Western Africa.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in California which include:

- * The St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * School and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Feel free to contact the Education Coordinator at Concern America for more information on any of these projects.

We hope you join us for Concern America's Next WALK OUT OF POVERTY, March 31, 2007! Call Sandra at Concern America to get information, walk packets, posters, flyers, and/or to schedule a presentation for your group. The Walk provides education for the participants and a sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, while raising money for Concern America's development work in Latin America and Africa.

Setting the Table, Craft Sales, Adopt-a-Volunteer: Are you looking for a good service project? Have students who need service hours? Concern America offers various ways to get involved in the world and the work of the organization. **Setting the Table** provides a meaningful theme for hosting a dinner to remember people from around the world; sell fairly traded **crafts** from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Bangladesh; **Adopt-a-Volunteer** enables you to support a Concern America volunteer and learn through her/his work with communities in Latin America or Africa.