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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2014 Volume III: Immigration and Migration and the Making of a Modern American City

Neighborhood as Palimpsest: An Examination of Chicago's Back of the Yards Neighborhood Through Urban Historical Geography

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by Molly Myers

Place is essentially about people and how people make meaning of their locations. This unit uses a local history approach to examining the geographical concept of sense of place. Using census records, foreign language newspapers, housing reports, settlement house papers, and other primary sources from 1900-1920, students will examine the Back of the Yards neighborhood of Chicago in order to identify how different groups of migrants and immigrants encountered one another and shaped the built environment around them. The Back of the Yards neighborhood located adjacent to the Union Stockyards was the entry point for many ethnic groups seeking employment in Chicago's industrial landscape. The years between 1900 and 1920 represent the high point of immigration from Europe and migration of African Americans from the South. Chicago can serve as an excellent case study about how industrialization, ethnicity, race, and space connect.

This unit uses strategies that align with the Common Core reading and writing standards as well as incorporate the historical/geographic thinking strategies that helps students make meaning on their own. The unit walks teachers through how to create this kind of unit for their own cities and neighborhoods that can be used for Human Geography, U.S. History, Sociology, and possibly English courses that are using Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* as a primary text.

(Recommended for United States History, Grades 8-12; Sociology and Chicago History, Grades 9-12)

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