



Using Stories and Film in the English Language Learner Classroom to Teach Immigration History

Curriculum Unit 09.01.01, published September 2009
by Darlene M. Anaya

Introduction

Global movements of people, both immigrants and migrants, have been a reality in the world since ancient times. The United States has been characterized as a nation of immigrants and indeed has a long history of immigration. The first immigrants were the Spanish and English settlers who arrived on the shores of the country in the 16th and 17th centuries, followed by waves of immigration from Europe and Asia in the 19th century, and finally Spanish speaking immigrants, as well as others, who arrived in the 20th century. It is an essential element of the American myth and dream; and, at the same time, it is a contemporary issue reported in the media and a theme depicted in film and literature. It is hotly debated in legislatures and on street corners. And in classrooms across the country, teachers ponder and fret about how best to teach our newest wave of immigrants: our young new students. The idea for this curriculum unit is an outgrowth of this need, this desire to effectively teach our newcomer immigrants. Immigration is the common thread that binds all of my students. And the stories, poems, and films which are included in the curriculum unit have themes of migration, immigration, loss, identity, and cultural heritage among others. The strategies and methodology took shape as I viewed films in a seminar course, Storytelling around the Globe, led by Dudley Andrew at the Yale National Initiative.

Immigration has been and is a controversial topic. The "melting pot" is used as a benevolent description of the assimilation of immigrants into America. In commenting on immigration, Theodore Roosevelt once said:

In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American....We have room for but one language here and that is the English language....and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.¹

More recently, illegal immigration has become the focus when immigration policy is discussed. People who immigrated in the nation's early years were generally welcomed because employers welcomed new workers during this period of industrialization. By the late 18th century, a series of laws defining immigration policy

began with the passage in 1790 of the Naturalization Act which explicitly excluded non—white immigrants from the possibility of citizenship. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1924, the Immigration Act established quotas that virtually banned immigration from all countries except European countries. By the 1970's a complicated visa system had been established that placed restraints on Mexican immigration. Meanwhile, Mexicans and Central Americans began crossing the border in great numbers searching for economic and educational opportunities. At this time, the Supreme Court, swayed by arguments that the undocumented alien problem was worsening, gave more flexibility to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. For example, in a ruling in 1976, the 4th Amendment's protection against unreasonable search and seizures was suspended to allow INS raids; to permit checkpoints along US highways in the southwest; and to randomly and arbitrarily stop people for questioning. The large number of undocumented immigrants has resulted in it becoming a political issue. President George W. Bush in addressing the nation commented on illegal immigration saying:

"Once here, illegal immigrants live in the shadows of our society....Illegal immigration puts pressure on public schools and hospitals, it strains state and local budgets, and brings crime to our communities. These are real problems. Yet we must remember that the vast majority of illegal immigrants are decent people who work hard, support their families, practice their faith, and lead responsible lives. They are a part of American life, but they are beyond the reach and protection of American law. We're a nation of laws, and we must enforce our laws. We're also a nation of immigrants, and we must uphold that tradition, which has strengthened our country in so many ways. These are not contradictory goals."²

Overview

I teach at Newcomer High School, a San Francisco inner city public school which serves newcomer immigrants from all over the world. They have recently arrived in this new country, at times against their own wishes. All are teenagers in transition—to a new country, a new school, a new language and a new life. Some students are at risk and are suffering from culture shock. Some remember harrowing experiences of their journey to the United States. Others mourn the life, friends, relatives, and home that they have left behind. Some experience racism, ridicule, and rejection and feel a sense of alienation. I see that my students come to school to learn, to be safe, to be respected, and to find their identity and realize their dreams in the United States.

Newcomer is made up of multicultural, multilingual international students. Some have been in the United States one week; some have been here for one year. Students enter the school throughout the school year—a rolling admissions policy. Students stay at this school for a maximum of one year, transferring to a comprehensive high school either at the end of the first semester or second semesters.

The composition of the classroom is continually changing. Students at Newcomer typically come from the Asian countries of China, Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia, Burma, Mongolia, India, Philippine Islands, Thailand, Korea, and Indonesia. From Europe, students come from Italy, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. And from the Americas, students usually come from the countries of Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, Columbia, and Brazil. Other countries typically represented are Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. The rich diversity in the classroom is an asset that facilitates and shapes instruction. It is indeed a global community of children and therefore it

affords a unique opportunity to promote understanding and acceptance. Students can begin to understand and respect each other and to recognize the universal nature of humanity.

There are multiple challenges in this international classroom where 100% of the students are English Language Learners. Many students have interrupted schooling in their home countries and may have attended school for three or four years and are just barely literate in their primary language. Others come with a transcript that demonstrates high achievement in typical high school course work. When registering, there is no diagnosis or assessment for students to determine a need for special education or gifted services. Therefore, students in the Newcomer classroom are mixed ability levels from preliterate to grade level and speak little or no English.

My focus in this curriculum unit will be on the bilingual (Spanish—English) history and primary language arts classes made up of Spanish speaking immigrants. It should be noted that among the Spanish speaking students there are those students who are indigenous, usually Mayan, whose primary language is not Spanish, but an indigenous dialect. Therefore, the poetry readings and short stories are either Spanish or English, as are the films. However the basic unit could be adapted to any classroom by the selection of English literature and a variety of international films with English subtitles.s.

Rationale

The rationale for this curriculum unit is twofold: to address both the academic standards in respect to immigration as well as to provide support, access, and equity for the students as they adapt to their new lives. The vehicle for the instruction will include short stories, poetry, and film.

My school district, San Francisco Unified School District, has developed a new Strategic Plan³ which places equity, social justice, and accountability at the forefront. Fundamentally, it affirms that every child has the right to be well educated and that the transformative power of access and equity will ensure that each student is provided a rich and rewarding education—regardless of race, ethnicity, class, language, or economic status. Our strategic plan has three major goals:

1. Access and Equity—Each child has access to quality teaching and learning regardless of background, neighborhood, and income level. All students have the right to respect, to be treated with dignity, to have access to all school resources and the right to a 21st century curriculum.
2. Achievement—Every student graduates from high school ready for college and/or career with the tools necessary to succeed.d.
3. Accountability—We will keep our promises to students and families.s.
4. he immigrant English Language Learner students are, as a group, part of the achievement gap that persists in the San Francisco Unified School District— the gap which we educators are trying to close or at least narrow. The rationale for this unit addresses the strategic plan of San Francisco Unified by providing the needed support and curriculum mandated by SFUSD.USD.

The school district is also under court mandate, the Lau Decree, to provide equal educational opportunity for English Language Learners. In 1974, the Supreme Court found that San Francisco Unified School District had erred in not providing equal educational opportunities for English Language Learners thereby violating the

Civil Rights Act of 1964. Newcomer High School is one of the schools established to target the needs of ELL students in San Francisco. It is one of the schools that can provide bilingual education because the passage of Proposition 227⁴ virtually banned bilingual education in California schools except for a one—year sheltered immersion program, such as the one offered at Newcomer.

Objectives

The goals of instruction are to teach United States immigration curriculum—using film and literature as a component while generally orienting students to the American educational system as well as to the American culture. There is always an English Language Development standard since all students are English Language Learners and it is a shared school objective that our students become proficient in English which is essential for my students to succeed in school as well as to function in their adopted country. Speaking up in class is exceptionally difficult. Students feel self-conscious that they will misspeak, mispronounce, and fear that someone will laugh at them. Empowering students to overcome this feeling and to develop self-confidence is an attitudinal goal that will play a role in student learning.

One way to address the twofold unit goals is for the students to tell their stories, to share their experiences, and to gain understanding of the history of immigration in the United States. As immigrants, it is possible to preserve their language and heritage while learning how to live in the new culture. At times the old customs and traditions come into conflict with those of their new country; yet many people have a deep need for some sense of identity with their national heritage. Film and stories, incorporated into the curriculum, can be powerful tools in the education of these newly arrived students. As they read poetry, stories, and view films, they experience the lives, journeys, triumphs, and trials of others who, like them, are travelers and risk takers. Moreover, it is essential to also be aware of and address the emotional and socio—economic needs of these young immigrants.

Strategies

Learning to question, to analyze, to make deductions, to examine ideas and themes from multiple perspectives is a fundamental goal of education. A variety of strategies can promote and reinforce learning and can help students to learn to make judgments about their country and themselves. This unit will be an interdisciplinary unit with standards across the disciplines of social studies, language arts, technology, and English Language Development (ESL). I see this as a variety of activities, lessons, viewings, and projects that will constitute an introductory unit of four weeks. There will be five strategies central to the curriculum unit:

- Expository readings, lectures, and activities
- Fictional readings from poetry and short stories with activities
- Films which depict the themes addressed in the unit
- Personal experiences of the immigrant students
- Use of mapping, charting, and graphic organizers

Expository Readings, Lectures, and Activities

The first section of the unit will address the history of immigration and the experiences of immigrants. Though the focus is on American immigration, a brief look at global migration patterns will be included. A few facts from a National Public Radio source, "Debunking Global Migration Myths,"⁵ states that globally there are 200 million migrants—defined as people living for at least one year outside their home country. This figure does not include people moving within a country. For example, in China, at least 100 million people in search of work have moved from rural areas to big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Half of all international immigrants are women, and the percentage grows each year.

An overview of United States immigration will help the students to see their own immigration in the larger context of overall immigration. The United States has a much larger immigrant population by far than other countries. The US has 35 million foreign—born residents. One can think of immigration coming in waves. The earliest were the colonists of both English and Spanish descent in the 16th and 17th centuries. The next major wave was composed of mostly Irish and German immigrants in the mid 19th century (1820—1850), The next wave was made up of immigrants from northwestern Europe and China (1860—1880). The period from 1890 to 1920 saw the arrival of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. And finally, 1920 to current times, saw the arrival of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. By the late 1980's, the countries of Europe accounted for only 10 percent of the arrivals

Historically the concept of "push—pull" factors has been used to explain the causes of immigration. The "push" factors are the conditions inside the homeland that cause a person to want to leave. The "pull" factors are the conditions the would—be immigrant hopes to find in the new country. Students will explore what are some of the factors such as s "a better life", "economic opportunities", "freedom", "safety" "to reunite the family", "to escape war and death".

Students will also view images of immigrants and will complete an activity on political cartoons. Since this is a visual activity that uses the computer and internet, it will give students an opportunity to learn and/or expand their technology skills. There will be some brief readings and lectures which will also include some maps and graphs.

This introduction will help students to have an overview of immigration history so that they can begin to grasp the dialogue and trends that make up the contemporary discussion on immigration. This will also help them to see what their future might be and to understand the issues that surround immigration today, especially illegal immigration. Those who are undocumented live in a shadowy world without a legal ID, without a social security number, without a driver's license. Their sense of belonging and their very identity is blurred.

Fictional Readings from Poetry and Stories

I have selected four poems for reading and analysis. I am using a book, *Poetry Like Bread*,⁶ which is a collection of poems from poets of the political imagination and many of the poems are translated from the language in which they were originally written into English. The number of poems can be expanded, but I will begin with four poems including *Patria abnegada*, *El otro lado*, *Lo mayor de dos lados*, and *Nostalgia*. These poems have themes of immigration, loss, survival, and political repression.

The first of the poems is a poem by Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú T entitled *Patria abnegada* (My Martyred Homeland). It is written in Spanish and translated into English. There are four stanzas written in the

first person. Each stanza begins with an expression of having crossed the border and not knowing when I will return. The everyday objects and events of the homeland village are remembered: the first rains, the stars, the fields in bloom, the calloused hands that harvest the honey.

"Crucé la frontera amor" "I crossed the border, my love"

The martyred homeland is Guatemala. This poem is of the genre of political poetry and describes a forced immigration, a flight from political repression. The poem passionately describes the massacres, the terror and the flight. Students will respond to questions about voice and mood. The voice could be that of the author. The tone and mood of the poem changes from stanza to stanza but ends on a hopeful note that there will be a homecoming

"Crucé la frontera amor. Volveré mañana, cuando mamá torturada" "I crossed the border, my love. I will return tomorrow, when my tortured mother...." The students will be able to pick out many images that are familiar to them and students from Guatemala will especially identify with the poem. Students will learn that refugee status is one of the classifications of immigration in which immigrants may petition to enter the United States or other countries based on their fear of political repression which could end in death or torture.

The second poem is entitled *El otro lado (The other side)* by Sylvia S. Lizarraga. This short poem expresses a spectrum of emotions which describe the other side. Students will point out that the other side is the United States. The poem begins with a mood characterized by desire and hope. These are the first steps of entering, arriving, taking risks, working. It moves to a final reality characterized as misery, discrimination, and exploitation. For some immigrants the poem aptly captures their feelings. The poem is also a poem that can be used as a model for students to write their own poetry because it is very structured. Each first line is a noun, followed by three descriptive words.

Lo mejor de dos lados (The best of both sides) by Juan José Gloria Rocha is a comparison that relates the crossing of a river and being on the other side. It laments what is lost while recognizing what is gained. But asks the rhetorical question: why?

In addition to the poetry, students will read short stories and one short novel (134 pages). The novel is *Cajas de Cartón* by Francisco Jiménez. (This story is also published under the name, *The Circuit* in English.) It is a poignant tale of a family of migrant farm workers and is based on the life of the author. It is set in the 1940s and details the travels of this Mexican family from Guadalajara, Mexico to the central California valley. In some respects it is a coming of age story. We see Francisco as a young child, a spectator watching the adults work in the fields. Later he, too, is working in the fields. The narrator is a child who sees life as an endless stream of upheavals as the family moves from one harvest to another. The family lives in the sparsest of conditions but the family is bound by loyalty, a strong work ethic, and perseverance.

"Kike" by Hilda Perera is a short story which relates the experience of immigration through the eyes of eight year old Kike who is leaving Havana, Cuba to live with his grandfather in Miami, Florida following the Cuban Revolution. He is on the airplane and looks wistfully down at his parents, who stay behind and remembers his grandmother running after the car, crying, "My son, my son". It has many humorous moments and appeals to students.

Films which Depict Themes of Immigration and Migration

In my Seminar class, Storytelling around the Globe, led by Dudley Andrew at the Yale National Initiative,⁷ I

viewed many international films which featured children, origin legends, and storytelling. The films are rich tales from Africa, Ireland, China, France, Japan, Cuba, and Iran. They are delightfully insightful films which portray life, culture, and humanity in an endearing, unforgettable fashion. I have not previously used films in presenting the topic of immigration but have been inspired to do so during this seminar. I sought out films which have immigration or a migratory movement theme, which feature children or teenagers, and which were in Spanish or featured Latin American culture or themes. As with the literature and poetry selections, students will be looking at the film critically and will be analyzing the films from the perspective of point of view, tone, voice, symbolism, and theme. They will look at the artistic elements of the film. I will include several films in the unit. Some films they will view in their entirety and for other films they will view clips or trailers.

The films that I am considering using include *El Norte*, *Viva Cuba*, *Sin Nombre*, and *Into the West*. As I become more experienced with film and the art of critical analysis, I will add other films to the repertoire of films. I will also add films from other countries and in other languages that will reflect the diversity of my school.

The Films

El Norte

Director: Gregory Nava

Country: United States, 1983

139 minutes long, DVD

In *El Norte*, two indigenous siblings, Enrique and Rosa, flee Guatemala to come to the United States after their father is murdered and their mother disappears as a repressive government seeks to kill the native villagers. They are political refugees who flee to come North to safety and a better future in the United States. There are three parts: Part I in Guatemala, Part II El Coyote, in Mexico, and Part III, the North. The dehumanizing hardships of illegal immigrants are vividly portrayed as Enrique and Rosa suffer betrayal in Mexico, endure a horrendous border crossing, and ultimately are defeated in their quest for the American Dream as Rosa dies and Enrique compromises his commitment to family when he puts employment before family.

In reviewing the film, Tom Charity, in *Sight and Sound* describes the film as low—budget realism with elements of epic fable, melodrama, and folktale. He notes that Director Nava, , "ties the hardships of immigration to the "kill—or—be—killed success ethic that drives American capitalism.alism."

The film is melodramatic; however it does portray many of the hardships that illegal immigrants experience in coming to and living in the United States. Like Enrique and Rosa, my students have described border crossings in which they questioned whether they would live through the experience. They will identify with the hardships of looking for work and going to school to try to learn English.

Sin Nombre

Director: Gary Fukunaga

Country: Mexico, 2009

96 minutes long

Soon to be released on DVD

Spanish with English subtitles

Sin Nombre is also a tale of desperate people trying to enter the United States illegally. It displays the risks that people are willing to take to escape abject poverty and violence. It centers on two teenagers whose paths cross and weaves their two stories into one. Sayra is from Honduras. Her father has returned to Honduras to take her back to New Jersey. It will be a harrowing trip through Guatemala, Mexico, and then across the border into the United States. The second story is that of Willy, nicknamed Casper, who is from Southern Mexico. He is a member of the Mara Salvatrucha gang (MS13)—an ultra violent gang that preys on immigrants passing through Mexico on their way North. The movie displays much of the gang culture of the MS13 gang which thrives in Honduras and El Salvador and has become an international gang with members here in the United States. When Sayra falls prey to the gang, Willy intervenes and saves her and their lives become intertwined. However, by defying the gang, Willy is now a target for death. Sayra, the only one left of the trio who started out from Honduras, and Willy are now traveling together.

The images of the immigrants traveling on top of the train cars, lying down flat with the villages and countryside passing in the background is visually arresting. The images and tales of the MS13 gang members, heavily tattooed, fiercely loyal and dangerously violent is startling. The risks that desperate people must take is disconcerting.

Because of the violence and the gang element, this is a movie where I would show only the trailer or highly selective parts of the movie. Gangs are a fact of life in San Francisco and I see MS13 written on the walls of my school. Nonetheless, the film has a message about contemporary immigration.

Viva Cuba

Director: Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti

Country: Cuba, 2006

80 minutes long, DVD

Spanish, English subtitles

Malú, age 11, and Jorgito, age 12, are best friends and have a strong bond. The families are neighbors with socioeconomic and political differences and the mothers disapprove of the children's friendship. When Malú's mother plans to leave Cuba, Malú and Jorgito run away to find Malú's father to ask that he not give his permission for Malú to leave. The children have many adventures, both humorous and scary, as they make the perilous journey from Havana in the north of Cuba to Camaguay in the south. The end of the movie is ambiguous. As the children reach the lighthouse in Camaguay, the parents also all arrive and begin to fight. The children hold hands and turn to face the sea, and there's nowhere else to escape to.

The perspective in *Viva Cuba* is that of the children. It makes a statement about the cynicism of adults and the innocence of children and the beauty of friendship. It also speaks to the matter of emigration. Malú is not asked if she wants to leave Cuba and the effects on Malú of leaving home and friends is not a consideration of the mother. There are many beautiful images: the magical sky that the children look up at and see the stars light up, singing on the bus. It is a light hearted look at childhood and students will learn from and enjoy this film.

Into the West

Director: Mike Newell

Country: United States, 1993

97 minutes long, DVD

English

Into the West is set in Ireland and is told from the perspective of two brothers, Ossie and Tito who live in Dublin with their single father. He and his deceased wife had been part of a group of Travelers who lead a nomadic life in the west of Ireland. However, the father has taken the children to live in Dublin, where they live in a crowded apartment. When the children's grandfather comes to the city, he is followed by a white horse, Tir na nog, Ossie mounts the horse to the surprise of all, saying: "He likes me because I like him." There are humorous moments as when the children take Tir na nog into their apartment and into a movie theater. They lose the horse to an unscrupulous man who sees potential in the horse's ability to jump. The children reclaim the horse and run away to the West.

This is a delightful film. The children go through many adventures as they try to evade the police. The horse takes them to the mother's grave and Ossie sees that his birthdate is the same as his mother's date of death. The horse Tir na nog is taking them back to their roots. Being pursued by police, they reach the end of land and Tir na nog, with Ossie on his back goes into the sea. In the sea, as Ossie struggles, we see a hand reaches out to save him. Here we see that Tir na nog symbolizes the mother and is trying to bring the children back to the traditional land and way of life of the Travelers. There is also redemption for the father.

Some of the themes in the film include the freedom in the life of the Travelers as opposed to the constraints of life in the city. As in *Viva Cuba*, we see the innocence of children and the sometimes evil nature of adults. Another parallel in the films is the ending at the ocean which suggests ambiguity or "no where else to go." The theme of migration, movement of people, is also present. Internal migration from the rural countryside to the cities is commonplace today and presents its own set of problems as people become anonymous in the urban setting.

Pedagogy and Modifications for English Language Learners

This curriculum unit will be an introductory unit presented at the beginning of the school year. The rationale for this timing is to facilitate and ease the adjustment of my immigrant students to their new life and their new school. Immigration is an experience which is common to all of the students and presents a unique opportunity to reflect on and study immigration issues. This unit will serve to be both an ice breaker unit and an introductory unit to American curriculum. Students will be more able to open up and participate in a variety of activities which relate to immigration and will hopefully build a sense of community and mutual respect and understanding. These students will be provided with a chance to tell their stories and to hear other students' stories and reflect on these experiences. This dialogue and exchange will hopefully promote understanding and tolerance. We live in a global world of interconnectedness of economies, of people, of cultures, and of governments and this study of immigration factors will highlight this reality.

English language development is a continuum that begins with being completely unfamiliar with the language and continues to a point where students can be completely fluent in respect to speaking, reading, and writing. Many of my students are at the beginning of the continuum, that is, they are at a—silent or receptive phase—listening, but speaking very little. Some are at the social fluency stage. They can speak to their friends and make themselves understood in very basic terms. Language is also dependent on age. The language needs of a five year old starting out in kindergarten are quite different than those of a seventeen year old in high school. The latter student has a much higher bar to reach to attain English proficiency. Pedagogy must include many modifications that focus on language acquisition and on core curriculum.

All my students are English Language Learners and the unit takes into consequence the unique instructional needs of these students. They need to learn English, both academic and social, while also taking classes in the core curriculum that will enable them to progress in the goal of graduating from high school. Learning new content in an unfamiliar language is very challenging so it's important for teachers to make certain pedagogical modifications for English learners. Some of these are aimed at building English proficiency and some are designed to give students greater access to academic content.

Following is a discussion of some of these modifications. (1) The selection of immigration as the opening unit of instruction is one of these instructional strategies: immigration is content that students are familiar with which makes the content more comprehensible. (2) The use of visual representation of concepts, and not just language—based explanation is another instructional modification. The incorporation of the films is an example. Films are an important component of the teaching process in this unit. The films movingly and powerfully demonstrate the many aspects of immigration and migration and capture the angst, hopes, challenges, and dreams especially as these relate to youth. Students can readily access these visual representations of immigration. (3) Vocabulary and explicit teaching of words is enhanced with multiple exposures to and uses of the words in numerous contexts. The strategic use of primary language translation of key words is also effective. Many students have electronic dictionaries with translators and use these aides extensively. This previewing of language both teaches vocabulary and facilitates acquisition of content. (4) Another instructional modification is the use of the primary language to introduce new concepts for clarification and explanation. Explaining or clarifying concepts in the home language can help English Language Learners access what is going on in the classroom. This is referred to as "frontloading" the new learning in the students' primary language and following it with a lesson delivered in English when the students are somewhat familiar with the content. The content is then more comprehensible to the students and they also learn English as well as the content. All of the above modifications are predicated on the teacher being bilingual and that a bilingual approach is permissible in the classroom. In the San Francisco Unified School District, program design clusters students where there are bilingual primary language teachers in the most commonly spoken languages so these modifications can be utilized.

In the English only classroom, as well as in the bilingual classroom, additional scaffolds and supports can be implemented, including the following: (1) A consistent use of visuals such as easy—to—read lists, diagrams, maps, and charts (2) Graphic organizers that make content and the relationship among concepts more comprehensible (3) Charting, highlighting and clarifying difficult words and passages within texts to facilitate comprehension (4) Adjusting the rate of speech by speaking slowly and enunciating words crisply and carefully (5) Incorporating choral reading in the classroom to enable students to practice oral language (6) Reading content to the students, stopping to check for comprehension, and paraphrasing passages that students do not understand. (7) Re—teaching and presentation of content in multiple formats. This repetition reinforces learning of content curriculum and facilitates the learning of English in all strands of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Modifications for English Language Learners will be needed until students have developed fluency in academic English. This is the highest level of English proficiency and is in the range of equivalency to an English native speaking student. The modifications and strategies discussed above are incorporated into the lesson plans and activities discussed in the following section of lesson plans and activities.

Lesson Plans and Activities

The time frame of this unit is about four weeks but it can be shortened or lengthened to accommodate the scope and instructional sequences mandated. The activities and lesson plans will be presented in a time frame of past or historical context of immigration, the present issues surrounding immigration, and the future perspective of what might the future hold in terms of immigration.

Lesson Plan One—Opening activities that set the tone and establish the historical context of the study of immigration

Activity 1—The e "Tea Party"

This opening activity is an experiential icebreaker that is useful for the beginning of the school year and/or for the immigration unit. It focuses on the challenges of the newcomer immigrant. It taps into the students' personal immigrant experience and stimulates speaking and writing on a topic with which the student is already familiar. It also helps to develop community and reduces the isolation and anxiety that students feel at the beginning of the school year. A safe environment facilitates language acquisition. I will begin the lesson with a 5 to 10 minute quick write in which students quickly jot down thoughts, experiences, and emotions that come to mind when they think about their immigrant experience—words and phrases are adequate. The quick write will serve to focus their attention on their feelings and experiences. Using a pair—share format, each student will be given one index card on which is written a brief statement which verbalizes the feelings of a student.

Objective: The objective is to access the information and experiences that students have regarding the unit topic of immigration and to get them thinking about the unit topic. There is always a language objective of facilitating English language acquisition in a safe environment in which students are supported and have an opportunity to interact in a low anxiety environment.

Materials: Index cards with student quotes which are expressions of what students are feeling and thinking: Each student should have an index card with a quote.

1. "I can speak English really good. People don't know we speak Spanish at home. I never tell my parents when they are supposed to come to school because they don't understand English." 7th grader
2. "I am an immigrant. If I want to fit in the American way, I have to talk like American people in English all the time. If I talk Spanish ever, they make fun of me." 10th grader
3. "I'd get so tired, my head would hurt. All day, I sit in classes and hear English, English, English, but I do not understand as hard as I try." 11th grader

4. "I feel very bad. Everyone was talking in class and their English was better than mine and they had friends. I feel like I will never be able to speak like them. 10th grader

Procedure: Each student will read aloud his quote to his partner and share what his feelings are regarding the quote. Students will then talk about their experiences as newcomer immigrants and about the challenges that they face learning a new language in their new school. The initial pair—share and providing students with a quote is a less intimidating format for English Language Learners. After practicing with their partner, there is a general classroom discussion where students share their quotes and experiences.s.

Activity 2—Historical contextxt

Students are presented with a general historical background for the study of immigration and are asked to consider how migration has affected their lives. Organizing questions include: What is immigration? Why is it important in your life? Why do people migrate? How can we categorize migrations?

Objective: Students will learn the definition of immigration and migration and will gain an awareness of the basic concepts of immigration studies and learn the categories of immigration. They will identify reasons why immigrants leave their countries. They will compare and contrast immigration issues throughout history. They will consider how immigration has affected the make up of the United States and learn to appreciate the contributions that immigrants have made and make to the culture of the United States.

Materials: Introductory reading handout, Four Question cards

Procedure: Students will be grouped in groups of four. Students will be given an introductory handout which discusses migration, reasons for migration, and categories of migration. Each group will be given a Four Questions card. As a group they will discuss the questions on their card and will consider what the answers are, using their reading handout as a resource. Each group will report out on one question to the whole class.

Activity 3—Mapping immigration flows to the United States and mapping personal migrationon

Objective: In this graphic, hands on activity, students will map the immigration flows to the United States and will learn the time span and the places from which the immigrants migrated. Hopefully, this activity will also have a bonding effect as all students will graph their personal migration on a single class map.

Materials: blank world maps, colored markers, graph showing the waves of immigration on a transparency, projector

Procedure: Each student is given a blank map and will trace immigration waves to the United States and will note the time frame of the immigration. The instructor will have shown students a transparency of the graph showing the major waves of immigration to the United States Subsequently, students will graph their own migration route. The culminating step for this mapping activity will be a whole group participatory activity in which students will graph their migration on a single map so that the class has a snapshot of the entire class' migration history.

Lesson Plan 2—Teaching immigration through the lens of cinema a

Objective: Students will consider and analyze the personal perspectives and motives of young immigrants who endure hardships and difficult travels to achieve their goals and dreams. Moreover, students will learn to see how films can have a bias, stereotypes, and images that can be used to present or create the filmmaker's

message. Students will view several fictional films which depict immigration themes, the reasons for migrating, or depict children and youth as they struggle to find their way and their voice. Cinema, since it is visual and visceral, is an effective teaching tool for English Language Learners.

Materials: DVDs including *El Norte*, *Sin Nombre*, *Viva Cuba*, *Into the West* Additional films can be added to the repertoire of films to meet the needs of different classroom populations. Worksheets and a sheet of paper divided into four sections

Procedure: The films will be interspersed throughout the curriculum unit rather than being shown as a continuous series. Some films will be shown in their entirety while only clips or trailers will be shown of others. Before viewing the film, the teacher reviews some basic information to use in film analysis and reviews a worksheet that students will use to analyze the films. During the film, students will be asked to jot down notes on their sheet of paper regarding imagery, emotions evoked, characters, and physical qualities of the film. After the film, there will be a class discussion to help clarify students' thoughts. This will be followed by completion of a worksheet. Some of the worksheet questions include: What is the mood or tone of the film? How does it affect emotions? How did the film make you feel? What is the main message or theme of the film? Is the film effective in communicating its message? Does the filmmaker have a bias? From whose point of view is the film told? What does it tell you about life? What period in history is depicted in the film? What ideas or concepts are conveyed in the film? Who are the characters? What were the physical qualities of the film—such as music, narration, scenery, and lighting?

Lesson Plan 3— Teaching immigration through stories and poetry

Objective: Through their readings of poetry, short stories, and a short novel, students will learn to hear the voices of immigrants and will analyze and interpret these voices in order to gain understanding of the process and experience of immigration. The students will also focus on their personal identity as an immigrant and the implications that that status holds in their lives. Immigrants will encounter unique conflicts and barriers beyond the universal struggles that all individuals encounter in their lives.

Materials: Handouts of four poems: "Patria abnegada", "El otro lado", "Lo major de dos lados", and "Nostalgia". Handout of the short story "Kike" and the short novel *Cajas de Carton*. Handouts of graphic organizers and worksheets. These poems have themes of immigration, loss, survival, and political repression.

Procedures: All of the readings have some reference, either directly or indirectly, to immigration or the impact of immigration. For the poetry, the lesson will begin with a volunteer reading a poem to the class. In a jigsaw formation, each group of four students will analyze the poem assigned to the group. They will identify and discuss literary elements and complete a worksheet in which they note point of view, conflict, voice, mood, symbolism, voice as well as figurative language in the form of similes, personification, hyperbole etc. Each group will perform an oral presentation to the class beginning with the recitation of the poem.

The reading of the short story will be an oral exercise in which all students will participate in the reading. Students will jot down notes regarding the literary elements and story. With a partner, students will discuss and analyze the reading. There will be additional analysis of the child Kike and his emotions regarding his migration from Cuba to Florida. Students will be asked to compare their migration to that of Kike.

Each student will read the novel individually and silently as a beginning of the class silent reading endeavor. Immigrants will encounter unique conflicts and barriers beyond the universal struggles that all individuals encounter in their lives. Students will complete a Venn Diagram in which they compare the immigrant

experience with that of the native born citizen and will note the commonalities as well as the unique experiences of each.

Lesson Plan 4—Current Context

Objectives: Students will learn about contemporary immigration issues. They will investigate and analyze current immigration policies.

Materials: Computer and internet services, printer

Procedures: Students will select articles, images, or political cartoons that depict immigration, using an Internet search engine. The teacher will review the types of questions that they should ask regarding the cartoon, image, or article. For non—fiction text, students will answer the who, what, why, when, where questions on a chart in order to analyze the article. For images, students will comment on who or what are the objects or people in the image, what are they doing? What emotions are displayed? What is the action, if any, in the image? What is the message? For political cartoons, students will complete a Cartoon Analysis Worksheet. Students will address both the visuals and words in the cartoon. Who is in the cartoon? What symbols are used? What do they mean? What emotions are portrayed? Are there any dates? What period of immigration is depicted? What is the message of the cartoon? Do you agree with the message?

Lesson Plan 5: End of the unit

Objectives: Students will synthesize the readings, films, articles, cartoons to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topic. This requires them to relate these activities thematically and to make connections between differing readings and films. It also requires them to demonstrate their knowledge of literary elements by applying them to their own writings. And finally students will gain understanding of their own identity and place in society as a new immigrant and will recognize the challenges that lie ahead. Having studied immigration from many perspectives, students will be better able to grasp the dialogue surrounding immigration in today's political climate.

Materials: Project materials will vary

Procedures: Students will complete a project assessment such as designing a political cartoon, creating a poem, or writing an autobiographical segment in which they discuss their journey or status as an immigrant.

Notes

1. Theodore Roosevelt, personal letter, January 1919—several years after serving as U.S. president
2. President George W. Bush, speech on immigration, May 15, 2006
3. San Francisco Unified School District, five year Strategic Plan adopted May 28, 2008
4. Proposition 227, a California Initiative, passed in June, 1998, restricted the use of primary language instruction to one year
5. "Debunking Global Migration Myths, Eric Weiner, June 6, 2007—NPR Community

6. *Poetry Like Bread*, anthology of poetry, 2000

7. Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in the public schools, established 1978 at Yale University

Bibliography

Chan, Sucheng. *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882—1943*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1991. For a look at immigration policy that targeted Asian populations, this is a good source book.

Cornelius, Wayne A. "Impacts of Border Enforcement on Unauthorized Mexican Migration to the United States" *Border Battles: the U.S. Immigration Debates*. 26 Sept. 2006, 5 July 2007 <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Cornelius/> This is an online source for learning what is happening on the southern border in terms of border controls to deter illegal immigration.

Daniels, Roger. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990. When constructing the waves of immigration to the United States, this book provides a comprehensive overview and timeline especially in reference to race and ethnicity and quotas.

Espada, Martín. *Poetry Like Bread*. Connecticut: Curbstone Press. 2000. This anthology of poems includes many foreign language poems that are in the original language as well as in an English translation. The subtitle is *Poets of the Political Imagination and the* anthology includes many poems of a political bent.

Hing, Bill Ong. *Defining America Through Immigration Policy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. This book is an excellent source book for examining United States immigration policy and the impact of race on this policy. It is a recent publication and covers more contemporary dialogue.

Jimenez, Francisco. *The Circuit*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1997 This book is also published in Spanish as *Cajas de Carton*. It relates the life and challenges of migratory farm workers. A short novel that is accessible to middle school age students and is highly readable for any age.

Jones, Maldwn. *American Immigration*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992. This book provides a general look at immigration in the United States.

Perera, Hilda. "Kike". Madrid, Spain: Demco Media, 1984. This short story relates how Kike, a Cuban refugee, is sent to live with his grandfather in Florida. The grandfather is unable to care for children and eventually Kike ends up in a foster home. This story demonstrates how children are sent against their wishes to live in an unstable situation with unforeseen outcomes. Highly readable.

The Internet Public Library. <http://www.ipl.org/div/pf/entry/48539> This internet site is a good general site for both teachers and students. It provides the URL address for dozens of internet resources on immigration.

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use