



Immigration and the Narrative Voice: Analysis of Image and Sound in Film and Its Connection to the Immigrants' Stories

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Introduction

Henry C. Lea Elementary is labeled as a failing school within the School District of Philadelphia. According to the School District of Philadelphia's School Profile, only 30 percent of our students scored proficient on the PSSA ELA and Math tests. These numbers are way below district average. For the past two years, this school has been in transition. In 2013, Henry C Lea absorbed students from a smaller school that was closed by the District due to budget cuts. During the 2013 school year, teachers experienced overcrowded classrooms, an influx of haphazard resources that were not inventoried or deemed credible, and teachers were receiving rushed professional development on the Common Core Standards.

Most of the students in my seventh and eighth grade classes were new, just as I was. We made significant gains. My students improved in their reading and writing levels. The eighth graders were accepted into magnet high schools due to their writing portfolios and interview skills. My seventh graders transformed into analytical thinkers and debaters. I introduced them to Current Event Friday and Writing Workshop Wednesday. We were becoming analytical thinkers of informational and fictional texts that fostered social justice debates.

After just one year of being at Lea and all of our hard work, we are still a failing school. I know that it was nearly impossible to improve on performance indicators when we were going through so much, but we worked really hard. People still see us as a failing school, and I worry the students see it as a failing school as well. In the summer of 2014, Dr. Harrison left Lea and became Assistant Superintendent of the North Region within the School District of Philadelphia. Our current principal, Ms. Jennifer Duffy, was interviewed by a committee of teachers and parents at Lea Elementary and was offered the job within the same month.

This current school year, I taught two sixth grade English classes and two sixth grade Social Studies classes. Reflective practices became part of my teaching, and I noticed a change in the tone of my class. We were succeeding or failing together. Group projects and cooperative pairs became the core of our instructional practices. By the end of the year, only one sixth-grade student didn't present a final project, whereas nine students had not presented their midterm projects. Our test scores were increasing, teacher retention was still low but better than the previous year, and students were completing their final projects. Yet we were still deemed a failing school at the end of the year.

This curriculum unit is designed for students in a sixth or seventh grade English Language Arts class. Students will analyze and trace the journey of immigrants through informative and narrative tone in various mediums. Students will evaluate the perception of immigration in two very different films: *Hester Street* and *West Side Story*. *Hester Street* is a black and white movie, which depicts the domestic compromises made by many Jewish families assimilating into Lower East Side New York City. *West Side Story* is a bright and colorful theatrical movie with a central theme of star-crossed lovers failing to bring peace to their neighborhood. Throughout the unit the students will reference the different styles of film and how different styles tell a story.

Students will also synthesize these perceptions and descriptions in current debates, especially in speeches about immigration from mayoral and presidential candidates. It is important for students to develop an awareness and understanding of how and why one immigrates to another country, because we are a nation of immigrants. We have many undocumented immigrants in this country and to many voters and politicians being an undocumented immigrant is unacceptable for many reasons. Students need to be able to take a stance, form an opinion based on facts, and analyze how immigration is perceived in the media.

Rationale

My classroom is very diverse. We have students from several different countries, and we have students on various reading and writing levels. Most of my students are African American, but we have a growing population of other cultures. Just within one classroom, I have students from Albania, Mexico, India, Kenya, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. When we read current events from various newspapers on Fridays, we connect to each of the students' cultural backgrounds and discuss how these backgrounds affect who they are today. Most of my students from different parts of Africa and the Middle East do not speak much English. They recently moved to the United States, but we have never really explored why. Why do people decide to leave their country of origin and move to a different country, like America? What defines an immigrant? What is the purpose of immigration and why are we so afraid of every generations of immigrants? Are people still trying to pursue the American dream?

I will be looping with the sixth graders with whom I taught last year. I teach two periods of English for two hours every day. In my earlier years of teaching, I was timid to approach this topic of immigration and how immigrants were discriminated against and abused. I learned that it was my responsibility as a teacher to create a safe space for a child to question and read history. It is a far greater injustice not to discuss and learn about our past. If a student becomes upset, frustrated, or embarrassed by what he or she discovers or reads, then we can work through those moments together. We should embrace and learn about our culture from our ancestors. We wouldn't be in America without them.

Another important reason to discuss and debate the issue of immigration is that both mayoral and presidential debates for the 2016 elections will focus on it. As the presidential candidates were announcing their bid for the presidency, reporters repeatedly asked them to describe his or her view on undocumented immigrants going to college, about how would they structure immigration reform, and whether undocumented immigrants pose a threat to our national security. Democratic candidates are seeking the Latino vote to help their chances in the Electoral College. My students love politics and social policy and they love debating right alongside the candidates. Sometimes I think my students' arguments make more sense, but in these debates students learn how to argue a point with respect and factual evidence.

Further, we will also explore this topic of immigration through the medium of film. The films will be the crux of our study; they will become the mentor texts for plot development and character analysis. I selected *Hester Street* and *West Side Story*, because these two films explore the issues of assimilating into a new culture of America through two different ethnic groups. *Hester Street* is in black and white, while *West Side Story* is a theatrical performance filled with color and music. I think it is important to start with *Hester Street*, because it sets a foundation for analysis. If you started with *West Side Story*, the students would focus on the music, dancing, and costumes and would not analyze how immigrants adjust in a new city. Supplementing the films, students will read informational articles, speeches given by prior presidents and current presidential candidates, narrative short stories, and excerpts from *West Side Story* relating to immigration.

Students will have to develop background knowledge about immigration and why people leave their current homes to pursue another life in a different country. In terms of domain specific vocabulary, students will explore the differences between “refugee” and “immigrant.” Students will evaluate whether or not perception and laws are developed differently in terms of immigration and seeking asylum. How students will present this information will vary. Some students might develop a podcast--individually or as a cooperative pair-- that reflects on their ancestral heritage and what it means to be an immigrant. Other students might develop a three to four paragraph essay about their family or neighborhood based on the essential questions of the unit.

Students will write analytically throughout the entire four-week unit, but also produce expertise in many different forms of social media. When students utilize these different forms of media, they are promoting social action and social justice. It is a means of communicating with other students their age and their family members about what they

are learning in school and how their learning is impacting their outlook on the world. In the culminating unit assignment, I do not limit or restrict how they present their information and response to the essential questions, because they often produce superior work.

Overarching Understandings and Questions to Keep in Mind for the Development of the Unit

Week One: What is immigration and who is an immigrant?

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Define immigrant, emigrant, migrate

Categorize the reasons for immigration

Trace and explain historical events (war, famine, depression) surrounding immigration for Jews and Puerto Ricans

Compare and contrast “refugee” and “immigrant”

Week Two: How does the film portray characteristics of an immigrant class and are those

portrayals accurate?

Objectives: Students will be able to

Identify and describe the elements of the plot diagram in *Hester Street*

Analyze the internal conflict and external conflict experienced by Jake

Argue and understand the important use of dialogue within the film

Judge how the director uses single scenes depicting cultural aspects of immersing into a new culture

Week Three: How does a director structure a scene in order to tell the character's story and develop conflict?

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Identify and describe the two social classes in *West Side Story*.

Analyze the development of the Puerto Rican characters in terms of plot

Analyze the development of the Caucasian characters in terms of plot

Judge how the director uses sound and color to depict cultural aspects of the Puerto Rican characters

Judge how the director uses sound and color to depict cultural aspects of the Caucasian characters

Week Four: Will the mayoral and electoral elections challenge candidates to take a stance on immigration reform?

Objective: Students will be able to...

Define and analyze the different theories of immigration: "contributionism," "nativism," "melting pot," and "nation of immigrants."

Analyze the Immigration Act of 1924 and compare the law to Immigration Act of 1965

Critique Bill Clinton's commencement address at Portland State University in 1988

Analyze and argue what the text says explicitly: quotes from Herman Melville about immigration

Critique Marc Rubio and other Republicans' stances on immigration and immigration reform

Trace and evaluate the process an immigrant by law must complete to live in the United States as a documented citizen.

Demographics

Henry C. Lea Elementary is located in West Philadelphia. It is a neighborhood school; children must live within a certain radius to attend Lea Elementary. Eighty percent of our students are African Americans. Eighty percent of our students do not have an IEP, with 20 % our student population has an IEP. Eleven percent of our students are English Language Learners (ELL.) Our entire student body population matches the criteria for CEP Economically Disadvantaged state funding: free breakfast and lunch and enrollment into after school program. Our teacher attendance (88%) is way below the district's average (94%). We do have a high number of suspensions and serious incidents. Currently, the 2015 PSSA scores have not been released. Last year, my seventh graders improved 21 % and my eighth graders improved 10%. Parental involvement is low. Within my homeroom of 30 students, five to six parents will show up for parent conferences to pick up report cards.

Content: Hester Street

The first film the students will analyze and critique is *Hester Street*. *Hester Street* was directed by Joan Micklin Silver and released in 1975. The film is based on Abraham Cahan's novella called *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, which was published in 1896. During this time in the 19th century, Russian Jews immigrated to America to escape religious and political persecution. By 1924, close to two million Eastern European Jews had immigrated to America's shores.¹ The assimilation for many Jewish immigrants from Russia, Poland, and German vary in degree. The film addresses this conflict with poignant scenes in various contexts: social, labor, domestic, and religion.

Silver starts the film with the main character Yankle (whose American name is Jake) who is dancing with various women at a dance academy in the Lower East Side of New York City. The viewer sees right away the dance instructor is encouraging the patrons to learn new dances and meet new people. Silver develops the importance of social context with the different close-ups of interested men and women looking at each other from across the room. Each close-up reflects the shy nature of the women as they try to learn the new dances. Each close up of the men reflects a different tone. Jake is eager to meet women and glances at several women. Jake has a romantic dance with Mamie, yet the camera pans so that the viewer can see that other potential suitors are close and eager as well. Jake dances Mamie into Mr. Lippman, a very wealthy businessman who is attracted to Mamie. This scene is purposeful, because it is the subject of conversation in the next scene.

The intimacy Silver creates with Mamie, Jake, Joe Peltner, and another woman sitting at a café table after the dance lesson is beautiful and alluring. The camera presents this double []date as if we the viewer are sitting at the table, listening and arguing each character's point. The lighting on Jake and Mamie is aesthetic, yet the irony in their words attempts to break that intimacy. Jake says, "In America, you marry for love, that is all." Jake presents love as an ideal. Yet, as soon as Jake turns to Mamie and rests his eyes on her, she becomes frazzled and mentions she has saved money. Silver has to establish that money is more important to these characters than they think. It is the driving force of the plot.

Mamie remarks that she saved money and wants to contribute financially to a marriage so that her identity is

upheld. Silver develops this conflict authentically, because Mamie is a beautiful and articulate woman who left Poland at age 17. For six years, her assimilation into America was based on pride and independence. Her hat and fan are fashionable; her dress is contemporary. She is flirtatious and confident with Jake in the hallway and on top of the roof. Silver depicts her in this way to show the stark contrast in Jake's wife's appearance when she first arrives in America later in the movie.

"I have a bed all to myself" is the first lie of many Jake tells Mamie. Jake is married with one child. His wife and son did not arrive in America until after Jake's father dies. Jews, more than any other European group, historically migrate with families.² The family bond was important to Jewish families, because they have great respect for their ancestors and lineage. This value was tested by immigration, because fathers and husbands went to America first to find a job and place to live. Silver wanted to portray a story in which assimilation into America for Jake allowed him to take advantage of being a bachelor. If Silver then had Jake abandon his family, his story would be over. The character would be weak and one-dimensional. Yet, Jake is quite defensive when many of his friends and coworkers were astonished by the fact that he has a wife and child. "I never said I was single!" shouts Jake. Silver allows the tone and arrogance of his voice to dominate, because we can easily detect the phoniness in that rebuttal. All of Jake's actions speak to the contrary.

Another crucial scene in Silver's faithfulness to the story of Jewish immigration is America in the 1890s is when the group welcomes and scorns a new character. This new character is a young man who just arrived to America and Mamie says right away, "scared to death." She is shaming the new immigrant. Silver has the camera positioned so it looks like Mamie already has her back to him, waving her fan and swatting him away like a fly. The woman across from Mamie at the table holds her nose alluding to the young man's odor. Jake takes off his hat in a very assertive manner. "How do you like America?" asks Jake. Of course the young man knows very little English and only wants to find his cousin, but the characters around the table do not help him. They proceed to make fun of him. Jake forgets that the young man cannot drink his tea without his hat on his head and without saying a prayer. His prayer in Yiddish is beautiful and simple and utterly mocked by Jake and the other people at the table. This scene is a testament to the fact that Jake has forgotten his beliefs and religious practices. Silver wants to develop this tone of arrogance and perceived wealth to contrast with the arrival of Jake's wife, which is the turning point of the film.

Jake's wife, Gitl, is the most fascinating character within the movie. It is no surprise that Carol Kane, the actress playing Gitl, received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1975. Gitl is so happy to see her husband when she first arrives in America with her son. She has on a wig, plain dress, and no makeup. Her husband is unhappy and withdrawn. Proving their marriage to the immigration officer is painful and discriminatory. Silver presents the immigration officer like a judge, as having too much authority and power. Jake barks at Gitl and wants her to present the marriage certificate that is eloquent and written entirely in Yiddish. Once alone in the apartment, Jake has his back turned to Gitl. She is trying to be intimate and loving, but Jake makes fun of her appearance immediately. Yet, Gitl is in awe of her husband's appearance. "I didn't know you at first. I thought you were a nobleman," says Gitl to Jake in Yiddish. The whole scene is shot with the actors' backs facing the camera. Silver creates a sense of yearning and premonition that Jake's back will always be turned to Gitl and the viewer. He cannot forego his bachelor life with Mamie and New York City despite the arrival of his wife and son.

Gitl is smart and knows that her husband is not the same man [] she married in Russia. At first, she tries to attract his attention. She becomes "more American." She takes English lessons from Mr. Bernstein, a man who lives with them in their apartment and works with Jake at the sow shop. The most amazing scene is the one in which she tries on a corset and hat with feathers. The hat is sitting high on top of her wig. When Jake doesn't

come (the viewer knows he is with Mamie), she walks into the room and rips off her corset and hat. Then she takes a deep breath and sits in front of the mirror on her bed. This is exceptional, because Silver has Gitl really see herself for the first time. Gitl laughs at herself. We laugh along with her. The moment is made clear: she knows that her husband is cheating, she knows that she is unhappy, and has to figure out how to make this work.

Gitl's final attempt to save her marriage is when she shows Jake her real hair for the first time. In biblical Judaism, the rule was that married women cover their hair. The Talmud, oral law of Judaism, is followed strictly by Orthodox Jews. Jake erupts and tries to physically rip the hair from Gitl's head. Silver wants to establish that there is nothing left for Gitl to do. Jake doesn't love her. It is a violent scene, because we know how much effort Gitl has put forth to win back the approval of her husband. Jake throws kitchen objects and Gitl is sobbing and fixing her hair. The film interrupts this domestic fight with the presence of their son, landlady, Mrs. Kavarsky, and Mr. Bernstein. Divorce is inevitable.

Silver took a risk with this twist in the plot. Mamie sends a lawyer to Gitl's home to convince her to accept a divorce from her husband. Mamie wants to marry Jake and offers Gitl \$50.00 at first. Gitl doesn't budge. The lawyer continues to raise the amount as the awkward stare and silence of Gitl continues to scare him. The viewer is skeptical, because this scenario seems implausible and challenges the authenticity in Silver's representation of Jewish immigrants assimilating into New York City. Why would Gitl talk to a lawyer who is representing Jake's mistress? Gitl accepts the divorce from her husband, but she receives the \$300.00 from Mamie. Under Jewish law, the man must initiate a divorce, but Silver adds this complication to the plot to develop situational irony.

Situational irony is when the unexpected happens. Jake has no idea that Mamie bribed Gitl with money and has no idea how much money Gitl received. Jake is marrying Mamie for her wealth and savings and maybe not for the idealism of love he so strongly expressed in the first scene at the coffee shop. Silver took a risk in developing this irony, yet it serves a greater purpose and allows a more analytical discussion of the character's weaknesses.

In terms of discretion, teachers have to make a decision whether or not to show the whole film. In our seminar, our leader, Brigitte Peucker stated that it is important to show the whole film. It is a complete story, and the film's integrity is slighted if the viewer does not see the whole film. Yet, teachers are responsible for the decorum of their classrooms. Silver really wants the viewer to understand Jake's flaws and his complete schism from his wife and family. Jake sleeps with a prostitute. Teachers will have to make a decision about whether or not to show this scene. Silver had to develop this scene; it completely destroys any empathy we might have for Jake towards the end of the film. Students will be able to trace Jake's demise without viewing the scene. I teach seventh grade. I won't show the scene. It is not crucial in our discussion and analysis of how immigrants adjusted to life in America in the 1880s. I often find that my students will watch films that we watch in class on their own, so I might have to draft a parent letter stating this reason for cutting the scene from our classroom discussion.

Content: West Side Story

West Side Story first premiered as a Broadway play in 1957. The movie was produced four years later. It is interesting to note that Jerome Robbins directed and choreographed both mediums: the theatre production and movie. When you watch the movie, the viewer feels as if he or she is watching a theatrical performance. The first aerial scenes of the city are completely forgotten when camera zooms in on the Jets leaning against a playground fence and snapping their fingers to the rhythm of the music. It is captivating and mesmerizing. It

is like seeing the performance at a theater house in New York City in the 1950s. Even when the actors stop dancing, the vibrant colors of their clothes and the aesthetic city streets continuing draw the reader into this theatrical performance.

Again the teacher needs to determine whether or not the whole film can be shown to the class. The violent scenes are theatrical. There are not scenes that I would think are inappropriate for my sixth or seventh grade students. It is a long movie with many musical numbers that do not reflect or develop the themes of assimilating or adjusting into a new culture. Yet, the music and performances are powerful and beautiful that a teacher could decide to show the whole movie after school or in the auditorium as private showing. For the purpose of this unit, I selected four scenes that are important for the students' analysis and evaluation of immigration for Puerto Ricans in the 1950s in Manhattan, New York City.

The first scene for analysis is when we first met Anita and Maria in the sewing shop. Maria is pleading with Anita to lower the neck of her dress. The rapport between the two characters is harmonious and charming. Maria announces "Bernardo, it is most important that I have a wonderful time at the dance, because tonight is the real beginning of my life as a young lady of America." Students interpret and suggest why Maria says this with such confidence and delight. This is the first time we see the importance of the film medium and its ability to let the characters turn a scene into something magical. Wise and Robbins transform Maria into a kaleidoscope as she twirls by herself, clearly adoring her new dress made by Anita. It is in that moment that we are magically brought into the dance in the gym. It is an example of how film is highlighting the appeals of a theatrical performance.

The dance is a choreographic delight. The dance is developing a narrative style for the characters by allowing them to tell their story of rival gangs in choreography. It is entertaining yet demonstrates the schism felt by the two different gangs: Sharks and Jets. Two gangs are opposite each other on the dance floor wearing two different color schemes. Most of the students will be in awe of this theatrical performance, but Wise and Robbins focuses on Maria and Tony's first meeting with the absence of sound. When sound and music fill a screen and are then taken away, it is a powerful moment in the development of the plot. Viewers know that this is a turning point for the characters. Wise and Robbins fade away the background of the dance to emphasize Maria and Tony walking towards each other and being attracted to each other for the first time. The film only does this once. The background of the city streets and other characters never fades away again, because you cannot hide or run away from who you are or where you live despite falling in love.

The third scene for analysis is when the Sharks are on the rooftop after the dance. Stephen Sondheim wrote the lyrics and Leonard Bernstein composed the music to "America." The alternating bars of six eighth-notes in two groups of three with three quarter notes is a unique characteristic of the song and tempo which is a trait of Huapango, which is a Mexican folk dance.³ Anita is praising America because it offers her more opportunities than she had in Puerto Rico. "Buying on credit is so nice," sings Anita. Bernardo rebukes with "One look at us and they charge twice." Students will have to determine which character is correct in their interpretation of Puerto Ricans living in Manhattan in the 1950s. Over 4,200 Puerto Ricans were estimated to have arrived in the United States each year in the period between 1946 and 1956, 85 percent of whom would settle in New York City.⁴ Most immigrants worked in manufacturing companies, which was different than the farm labor they left behind in Puerto Rico. The musical number is describing the discrimination felt by many Puerto Ricans in the 1950s when they migrated to various metropolises, like New York City. The choreography is designed to show the boys versus the girls and their opposing viewpoints plays upon the frame story concept: a story within a story; a fight within a fight.

The final scene for analysis is the concluding scene with Maria finding Tony's dead body on the basketball court. There is one essential understanding about immigration students will interpret: gang violence. Dr. Lewis Yablonsky, a criminologist and sociologist who worked with gang members in the 1950s, says West Side Story was an accurate reflection of gang conflict.⁵ Gang violence was a result of feeling misunderstood and forced to live in certain areas of the city where clean housing, adequate hospitals, and high performing schools were not accessible. Maria and Tony's love story happened more often than perceived and the Daily News, the New York Mirror, and the New York Herald Tribune reported an increasing number of shootings and stabbings. In this scene, Maria changes from a young girl who is innocent and hopeful about her chances for a happy life in America to a broken and hateful widow who has hate for her community. In this culminating scene, there is no dancing or singing. Maria is wearing red, which represents her passionate nature and all members of each gang circle Maria crying over Tony's body.

Teaching Strategies

I am an English teacher, and I follow the Children's Literacy Initiative Framework that was adopted by the School District of Philadelphia for teaching reading and writing in a middle school classroom. This Literacy Framework is part of my formal observation by my principal that she completes twice a year.

Shared Reading: Whole Group Instruction

The teacher reads out loud and models close reading based on the objective and standard. Sometimes, the students have the text in front of them and sometimes they do not, it depends on the length of the text. Teachers model for students repeatedly through this shared reading approach. I will model repeatedly a shared reading of the films with film vocabulary, the authenticity of the immigrant's story, and analysis of conflict for the character.

Collaborative Reading: Whole Group Instruction

The teacher and students read out loud excerpts of the text and share their close reading interpretation and analysis about the text to the whole class. Students are highlighting, making notes on the side, and can foster a debate. The teacher is a facilitator and calls on students to read and share their interpretation. Teacher might also ask clarifying questions and reiterates the objective and purpose of the lesson.

Cooperative Pairs and Guided Reading: Small Group Instruction

Teachers assign students a cooperative pair based on reading level and skill ability. For example, a teacher will pair a student with similar reading levels and comprehension abilities to work with each other on a text. While students are working with their partners, a teacher can have a guided reading section with four to five students. Again, this guided reading group is a combination of two cooperative pairs that need additional support with the main idea, vocabulary, or summarization. A teacher presents a different mini lesson for each guided reading group based on the need.

Independent Assessment and Independent Reading: Individual Instruction

Once a week, students are assessed based on the objective and standard. During this time, students are

reading independently a text at their reading level. Students respond to the content of the text and answer assessment questions that are developed based on the objective and standard. Teachers should select texts that reflect the same theme or central idea being studied in the unit, but that is at the discretion of the teacher.

The Children’s Literacy Framework for writing follows the exact same format for writing. A teacher will use a mentor text for a particular writing style and demonstrate the skill to the whole class first. There is an emphasis on revising and editing with your cooperative pair and through a writing conference with your teacher. Students are independently assessed with a final draft.

Classroom Activities

One activity that is very helpful in determining whether or not the students understand the content is the daily journal. Students write in their daily journals once a day. Sometimes, the students will start the class writing a response to a prompt or they will reflect in the journal towards the end of the class. Either way, the teacher checks their understanding of the content and how they are analyzing the content through the objective. Below are examples of writing prompts that students will respond to throughout the unit.

Are you an immigrant? Explain why or why not. Who is an immigrant in your family?

Identify and describe the differences between a citizen, a refugee, and an immigrant.

Argue whether or not you think a citizen, a refugee, and an immigrant, should all have access to the same rights, especially if they live in the United States.

Explain why Jake wanted a divorce from Gitl in *Hester Street*. Do you think if he stayed in Russia would he still be in love with his wife? Do you think America changed him? Explain why. Cite evidence from the movie to support your explanation.

Identify and describe the similarities and difference between the Sharks and the Jets in

West Side Story. Are both groups happy to be in America? Cite evidence from the movie to support your explanation.

If you could develop a film about an immigrant group, who would it be and why? What time period would you describe? Would your film be a theatrical performance like *West Side Story* or would it be more like *Hester Street*? Develop your response with evidence from your own personal research about film.

While watching the two different movies, students will be encouraged to take notes. Some students will need an outline for note taking: characters, camera movement, setting, facial expressions, sound, and music. These notes will help the students organize their thoughts before they have to write an informative paragraph or sharing their analysis with their cooperative pair. This form of note taking is very similar to close reading of texts. When the students are reading about the causes for immigration or speeches given by presidents or policy makers about immigration reform, the teacher and students will close read texts. Close reading occurs

when the students and teacher highlight central ideas that matches the objective and writes notes on the actual text. Students will highlight or underline words they do not understand and look for context clues within the reading.

For their writing portfolio, students will write an informative four to five paragraph essay about immigration reform. Through the writing process, students will research, brainstorm, outline, write a rough draft, edit with a partner and teacher in a writing conference, and publish a final draft. There are several specific topics about immigration reform that students can pursue. Teacher can encourage students to focus locally on immigration reform within their own city. Students can reach out to their local immigration center and ask to shadow for the day or interview the director or manager of the immigration office. In West Philadelphia, there is a field office seven blocks from our school.

In addition, students can interview an adult who has just gone through the immigration process. They can access whether or not the process was efficient and successful. Lastly, students will refer to one or two mediums we studied in this unit: *Hester Street*, *West Side Story*, mayoral and presidential speeches about immigration reform, or informative articles by major news outlets. The purpose of the informative paper is for students to present a central idea about the process of becoming a United States citizen and how that process is expressed in many different forms.

Bibliography/Teacher and Student Resources

Bernstein, Leonard, and Arthur Laurents. *West Side Story: A Musical*. New York:

Random House, 1958.

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 6th ed. New York:

McGraw Hill, 2001.

This is a very informative text for teachers who want to build their background knowledge on film and how to view film. It will also help teachers build vocabulary for film for the students.

Cohen, Sarah Blacher. *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage*

and Screen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

This is an analytical piece for teachers and students. The teacher can pull excerpts that match the essential questions of the course.

Fleegler, R. (2013). *Ellis Island nation: Immigration policy and American identity in the*

twentieth century. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Fleegler reviews the impact the 20th century had on immigration reform and how different views were developed in terms of new immigrants coming to America. Depending on the reading level of your students, excerpts from this book are accessible for students on a seventh-to-eighth grade reading level.

Gates, H. (n.d.). *Finding your roots: The official companion to the PBS series*.

This is a very popular television series on PBS. The book is about ancestral heritage and why it matters to understand your ancestral roots. This is a very accessible source for students in middle school and there are many stories about how different people from different backgrounds assimilated into America. Some of my favorite accounts are from daughters and sons of immigrants. The children who are first generation American reflect on how they lived in both worlds, especially when it came to religion and marriage.

Hester Street. Denmark: Midwest Films, 1975

Korrol, Virginia Sanchez. *The Story of the U.S. Puerto Ricans-The Great Migration at*

Midcentury. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 2010.

Lehman, Ernest, and Jerome Robbins. *West Side Story: Screenplay*. Place of Publication

Not Identified: MGM Home Entertainment, 2003.

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia :*

Language, History, Theory. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Common Core State Standards for Pennsylvania

Key Ideas and Details: Text Analysis

Standard - CC.1.2.6.C

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

This standard will drive instruction. Students will read and write with this standard. There are many individuals for students to analyze with evidence from the different mediums. The idea is immigration reform and how students can break down the process.

Craft and Structure: Vocabulary

Standard -CC.1.2.6.F

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in grade level reading and content, including interpretation of figurative language in context.

Informative texts are filled with domain specific language that the students need to define with context clues. Being able to identify the context clues within the passage is a very different skill to master and students need to use formal vocabulary in their writing and discussions with peers and adults.

Informative/Explanatory Content

1.4.6.C: Develop and analyze the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other

information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

This standard is for the student's writing portfolio. Students will write a four to five paragraph essay about one specific topic regarding the immigration process and/or immigration reform. The goal is for students to interview managers of local field offices or people who went through the immigration process to help develop their informative paper.

Notes

1. Golden, Jonathan and Jonathan Sarna, *The American Jewish Experience through the Nineteenth Century: Immigration and Acculturation* (p. 12).
2. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/usjewfamily.html> (accessed July 13, 2015)
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