



## **Current Refugee and Immigrant Policy in the United States: How Do They Impact Your Community?**

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*“Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me...”*

Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” 1903

(on a plaque mounted inside the Statue of Liberty)

### **Introduction**

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I have always been fascinated with family connections, relationships, and feeling attached to roots, culture, and issues of identity. I am positive this is because I am adopted, and my adoptive family’s European background was so different from mine. I am half-Asian; my biological father was from India. Not only did I not look like my fair-haired immediate or extended family members, my ethnicity and race were different enough that I often felt that I did not belong to them, even though I knew they loved me and they were vocal to me about their feelings. I craved a connection to this family that I bore no resemblance to, and also to myself and my developing conceptions of self and identity.

During my childhood, my family moved to several different geographical areas in the Midwest, one of which was made up of overwhelmingly Caucasian demographics. The region we settled in when I was ten years old was also far from any type of urban center; the nearest shopping mall was over an hour away, and an airport was a three-hour drive in one direction. There were no people of color in the area and I struggled to answer my new classmates’ questions of where I came from, and what I was. I was uncomfortable being singled out,

and also did not know how to articulate my background and how I myself felt about it.

As I got older, I decided to find my biological parents, and discovered that for over a dozen years, my birth father had been living only 15 minutes from me in my new home of metropolitan New York City. Unfortunately, he had already died, but as time went on, I found out more about him from his sons, my half-siblings: He had immigrated to the United States from India to get a PhD, and was a sociology professor at various higher-learning institutions in Wisconsin and New York. Social equality meant a great deal to him; indeed, he had authored a study of and argued for the need for higher education opportunities for first-generation, low-income high school students.<sup>1</sup> I began to wonder about his experiences as a foreigner in the United States: What biases or difficulties had he dealt with? What was it like getting a job here as an academic? What did he teach his children, all born here and therefore, automatic citizens? If I got the chance to sit down and have a conversation with him, I would want to know, among other things, what he would think about the current political climate and attitude toward immigrants, and if he thought he would be welcomed into the country today. And if he were still alive, what would he teach his students about equity for immigrants, identity, and civil rights?

I am sure these experiences and musings have impacted my decision to teach English as a Second Language (ESL), a career in which I have taught students of all ages from all over the world. I feel connected with their efforts to find the right place and sense of identity in a completely new country, with its own cultural, linguistic, behavioral, familial and social expectations and norms. As a result, as a teacher I have tried to increasingly seek out units of study and reading materials that touch on these themes and also reflect the prevailing political realities that exist for immigrants and refugees to the United States.

## Background

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I am an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at George Read Middle School in New Castle, Delaware, which is in the Colonial School District. Students at George Read come from diverse backgrounds and face many challenges in their school and home environments—over one-third of its 788 students are identified as being low income.<sup>2</sup>

About 11% of the student population are English Learners (ELs), with Spanish being the first language of the majority of them. In addition, about 28% of George Read’s students are Latino, and a high percentage of those students are bilingual in Spanish and English.

The EL students I see are those with intermediate to high English skills who are placed in the same section of an ELA class in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. I usually have about 17 ELs in each section of those classes, and I also service some 6th and 7th grade ELs who are additionally identified as Special Ed, and who have been placed in a Special Ed ELA class. I typically service about 50 ELs each year in grades 6-8. A few of the students I teach have been transitioned out of the Colonial School District’s “Newcomer” EL program for middle school that is housed at McCullough Middle School and taught by my ESL colleagues there. Students in grades 6-8 who are new immigrants or migrant students with limited English proficiency (as identified by the WIDA Screener for English proficiency<sup>3</sup> and the HMH Reading Inventory<sup>4</sup> ) are recommended to the Newcomer program at McCullough, regardless of their district feeder middle school. They are in a sheltered classroom all day for all content areas that are taught in English, and are not transitioned out into mainstream classes or

back to their feeder middle schools until their English test scores have risen, and they demonstrate the academic, social, and emotional skills that would indicate success in the general school population. I often receive students at George Read who have been transitioned from the McCullough Newcomer Program; they usually need more linguistic support and help getting acclimated to a new school.

My ELs come from an array of countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, as well as Mexico. The students in my classes represent many facets of the EL population: first-generation English learners who have been in the United States for about three years; students who were born in the United States or another country speaking a language other than English and who are now bilingual; and those born in the United States into bilingual or multigenerational families. Students in the latter group may have the least exposure to their families' native language(s) and countries, and may express that they do not speak a language other than English very well, or that they have never met many of their extended family members. I also have a few students who are in the ESL program though their only language is English; most of them are from countries in Africa or the Caribbean, and speak what is termed "non-U.S. English."

Regardless of their language knowledge and whether they are conversationally bilingual, all students grapple with the increasing rigor of academic English and the demands of state and English proficiency tests. Many of them struggle to express themselves verbally and especially in writing, and their WIDA ACCESS writing and speaking scores are often what keeps them in the EL program.

## Rationale

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From my experience, my students, as immigrants or the children of immigrants, are attracted to social justice and equity issues; their immigrant communities have been increasingly impacted by today's notions of justice, equality, and freedom. They and their families and friends have been touched by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),<sup>5</sup> immigration law and detention centers. Many of them have had family members who have been deported, they have seen fellow students and their families be forced to return to their native countries, and I know a well-regarded teacher in my district who is a "DREAMer."<sup>6</sup> At this writing, President Trump has announced that Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will conduct raids on undocumented immigrants<sup>7</sup> over several days, which will undoubtedly have repercussions for my students. Students are often reticent to reveal the realities of their immigrant statuses and do not volunteer in class to tell their stories or give details about how they came to the United States. As Sumaryono and Ortiz note, this is often intentional because students want to integrate as much as possible into their new culture and school environments, and want to ignore what makes them different from their peers.<sup>8</sup>

When my students come into my classroom and get settled for the beginning of class, I often hear snippets of conversations between them about politics: how the leaders in power right now "don't like people like us," and that immigration laws are not fair or that they do not understand the laws. Sometimes they mention that an absent classmate is in immigration court with their family members. Much of what I hear them saying is not accurate or fact-based, and is predicated on others' opinions or misinformation. As these topics are not part of my regular ELA curriculum, I must suspend the conversations and delve into my scheduled content. However, I have often thought that studying these questions and issues could be part of a valuable and engaging course of study.

This past academic year, all seventh graders across our school district's three middle schools read the novel *Refugee*<sup>9</sup> by Alan Gratz, which tells the stories of three refugee protagonists over three different historical timelines: Josef, a Jewish teen fleeing Germany and Hitler's oppression in 1939 with his family; Isabel, a young Cuban girl who takes a homemade boat from Cuba to Florida with friends and family in 1994 to leave riots and economic uncertainty; and Mahmoud, a Syrian boy whose family escapes civil war and hopes to travel to freedom and asylum in Germany in 2015. While the book is historical fiction, my students learned a considerable amount about these three time periods, including politics, geography, and the factors that caused these situations. Several characters in the book died, sacrificed themselves, or were simply lost as the families traveled through various countries. I have never seen the level of engagement with a novel that my students displayed during our reading of *Refugee*, and they were universally upset and angered by the actual or perceived injustices in the refugee and immigrant policies that were in place for the books' characters, as those laws were—and in some cases and countries—still are the law today for millions of real people.

For example, the character Josef was on the S.S. *St Louis*, a real-life cruise liner that left Germany in 1939 for Cuba with over 900 passengers aboard who hoped to eventually start new lives in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Armed with visas they had purchased in Germany, the passengers arrived in Cuba only to find out that their visas had been invalidated; denied entry by the Cuban government, they left for the United States a few days later but were turned away there as well. No one wanted them. Forced to return to Europe, over 250 of the ship's passengers later died in the Holocaust. I watched my students react to Josef's plight with indignation and outrage

At the end of the book, the author, Gratz, suggests donating money to UNICEF or Save the Children to help refugees around the world. My students were so touched by the fictional stories in the novel and the plight of actual refugees—as well as their own experiences—that they suggested having a whole-school fundraiser; we donated the money we raised to UNICEF. This upcoming school year, I am hoping to expand the fundraiser to additional days and money-raising options after finishing the book.

From an educational standpoint, my ELs' experience has been that they are “*limited* English proficient” and deficient in the academic learning and standards (especially writing) that are required of them in the United States. Many of my students come to me as ELs who have attended several schools in more than one country, or who have interrupted educations. Even if my students have been in our school district for a few grades, it has no formal, established writing curriculum at the elementary level. Students arrive to middle school lacking writing fundamentals and often are exasperated with the writing process and assignments.

Furthermore, it is very difficult for them to see how academic vocabulary and writing a thesis and supporting details will aid them in the future, because several of them already work in family businesses and have expressed that they will not need to continue their secondary educations in favor of working for their families. I would like them to get an opportunity to find out more about the immediacy of the issues that their communities are facing, and research and create a writing project that is more reflective of their life experiences. In doing so, it is my goal for them to feel more connected with and enjoy the writing process.

Taking all these factors into account, I would like to develop a curriculum unit centered around helping my students understand current immigration and refugee laws in the United States, and how they and their communities have been affected by them. Students need to know the laws that impact them, so they are well-informed and can begin to advocate for themselves and their communities. After finishing reading *Refugee*, the district's unit map requires that students write an informational writing piece that incorporates Common Core State Standards. We would touch on DACA and DREAMers as I know that students have direct knowledge

in their home and school communities of people affected by this legislation and its status in legal limbo, and then explore current immigration law. I would invite in guest speakers with firsthand knowledge of both situations: the teacher in my district who is a DREAMer and has been waiting for a DACA ruling, and a good friend of mine who is an adult ESL teacher at the University of Delaware and an immigrant from Libya whose family is no longer allowed to visit her in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

It is my hope that through this mandatory writing assignment, they will learn more about the communities they are part of, and can begin to think about their larger roles in the world. As seventh graders, they will be able to vote in less than a half-dozen years, and I feel it is imperative for them to be knowledgeable about their rights and the legislation that directly impacts them.

## Unit Objectives

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This unit is designed for middle school students, but could be modified for high school students based on the lexile level of *Refugee*. It is a writing project in which students must inform the reader of current legislation on refugees and immigrants, based on the school district's informational writing requirement for the unit in which they read the book. Possible anchor questions for the writing assignment could be:

- What is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)? Would this legislation have affected any characters in *Refugee*? Do you know anyone who is directly affected by DACA? What was one thing you learned from Ms. Ocampo about what it is like for her to be a DREAMer?
- How have today's immigration laws impacted you and your family and friends? Do you know anyone whose immigrant status is uncertain, or who fears deportation to their native country (you do not have to state names)?
- Do you think we can change the moral narrative that is centered around refugees and immigrants in the United States? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about Presidential Proclamation 9645? Do you think it is helping keep terrorists out of the United States? Ms. Alkrekshi described the impact on her family of this ruling; what is one thing that you will remember from her class visit?

Students will use their classroom Chromebooks to log on to Schoology, the Learning Management System (LMS) that Colonial School District extensively uses for its students. I will post initial warm-up questions in our class's English section, and respond individually to students' posts. After they are familiar with some of the issues and legislation, they will get to choose from several writing prompts and will conference with me on their choice before beginning to write. Students will write their informational essays in Google Docs; they will share their files with me from the beginning so that I can make suggestions to them throughout their writing process.

Seventh grade Writing standards will be taken from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)<sup>12</sup> and the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards for Speaking and Writing and Listening and Reading;<sup>13</sup> The Colonial School District's English Language Arts standards also require that *through reading a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature as well as challenging informational texts in a range of subjects, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective.*<sup>14</sup> I will also incorporate the district's writing standards of *research - both short, focused projects and in depth*

research - is emphasized.<sup>15</sup>

Thoughtful and respectful class discussions are an integral part of seventh grade ELA classes, as students prepare to increasingly work on group projects and have partners in eighth grade and high school. They are expected to learn how to conduct discourse in a civil, considerate manner, even when they may disagree with a classmate. Students will be discussing and exchanging views about refugee and immigrant policies during the entire process, and will need to learn to do so thoughtfully and politely.

## Content

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Students will be reading Alan Gratz's *Refugee*, as well as excerpts from *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds*<sup>16</sup> by Jorge Argueta, *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees*<sup>17</sup> by Mary Beth Leatherdale, the Council on Foreign Relations' *U.S. Immigration Policy*,<sup>18</sup> and *An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy*<sup>19</sup> by the American Immigration Council. Additionally, we will look at the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which was signed into law by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson as he stood at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

As noted above, *Refugee* is historical fiction and a novel the entire seventh grade read for the first time this past academic year and will continue reading every year in Colonial School District. It was reported by teachers across the district's three middle schools that students were extremely engaged and invested in reading the novel, and learned an extensive amount about the plight of the world's refugees across different historical time frames, as well as increased their geographical and political knowledge. I can speak from personal experience with my ELs that they were captivated by the novel from the first chapter and looked forward to coming to class and reading the novel—something that does not often happen with mandatory reading assignments and middle school students!

Because *Refugee* is historical fiction, I would also like to use real stories of actual people who have encountered the same situations the fictional characters did in *Refugee*. *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds* is a bilingual Spanish/English book that blends poetry, prose, and beautiful paintings and illustrations to tell the story of why thousands of people are walking from Central America and through Mexico to get to the United States, where they hope to be granted asylum. While not all my ELs are from this area of the world or understand Spanish, I think this book will help my students understand why people would make this choice, and also the situation that is currently happening along the United States' southern border.

Leatherdale's *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees* is directly connected to *Refugee* as it relates the stories of actual people who traveled some of the same water routes as the characters in the novel: on the S.S. *St. Louis*; from Cuba to Florida; and in the Middle East. It will help my students comprehend that while the *Refugee* characters did not exist, there are people that took and continue to take the same risks of traveling on the open seas to escape war and find a welcoming environment. The book also includes historical timelines and a background of what was happening in each country that will further clarify the situations for my students.

Students need to understand today's refugee policies to write their informational essays, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 continues to shape today's immigrant attitudes and policies, because it utterly

changed the immigration landscape in the United States.<sup>20</sup> Then, in order for students to understand the laws and numbers concerning refugees, we will investigate The American Immigration Council’s website—which, without stating any political biases or opinions—breaks down the basics of the United States’ refugee and resettlement rules, and refugee demographics and numbers.

I believe it is also relevant for students to consider some fixes to the United States’ immigration policies and why it is so difficult for them to change, or to get lawmakers invested in changing them. The Independent Task Force report by the Council on Foreign Relations—while written ten years ago—is still a good starting point for these inquiries, as is some other information on the Council’s website.

## Strategies

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Most of my students are intermediate- to high-level ELs, but they still need reading strategies that will help them comprehend and access unfamiliar vocabulary words, context, and background knowledge. While we will not have enough time to read more than a couple of excerpts from all the books except *Refugee*, presenting texts in partial “chunks” is a research-proven way to increase comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Students need to have reading materials separated into smaller segments in order to increase their comprehension, particularly those who are continuously learning language and vocabulary.<sup>21</sup> For the selections from the texts and website information that we will be reading, I will have students make connections between themselves and the protagonists; build background knowledge so they can understand the excerpts; discuss and highlight new vocabulary words, and have them use the new words in class. These words and associations will help them later in the unit when they are writing.

Students at George Read have ample exposure to technology through various online learning programs and learning management systems, and are accustomed to taking assessments online. However, they still need exposure to visual and audio supports in order to grasp academic content, which they have an increased chance of doing with their own school-assigned Chromebooks. In designing this unit, I wanted to find a way to capitalize on using technology, as it increases English proficiency and leads to increased motivation and confidence.<sup>22</sup> Students will be researching their topics online and will be integrating text and photos into their essays and writing projects, which they will be creating in Google Docs.

I may also give students the option of using audio commentary in their projects, as they do not like speaking assignments and are not taught speaking skills in school. Additionally, I am hoping that recording themselves and embedding an audio file into their projects will help them practice for the Speaking portion of the annual WIDA ACCESS test, which requires students to wear a headset with a microphone and verbally respond to a series of questions and prompts.<sup>23</sup> Students’ answers are recorded and digitally evaluated by national WIDA test experts. My students detest this aspect of the ACCESS test, and are understandably concerned about speaking into a headset. Vocaroo<sup>24</sup> is a simple voice recorder that is an excellent resource for students on which to practice recording and listening to themselves, and I think this could be useful for them in preparation for their ACCESS test.

Separate from the testing environment is the fact that students do not practice speaking skills because of smartphone use and the popularity of social media and texting, and are becoming more verbally and socially

isolated. They are starting to lack the ability to detect social cues because they are not spending enough time on actual verbal communication.<sup>25</sup> Students need to practice good speaking skills, and need implicit instruction to speak effectively.<sup>26</sup> This is particularly true for ELs, who may have struggled to learn and speak English for several years.

## Classroom Activities

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(designed for a daily 60-minute ELA class)

### Day One

Introduction to DACA, Presidential Proclamation 9645, and Writing Assignment (this should occur immediately after finishing the novel *Refugee*, ideally the following day)

#### *Warm-Up*

Students will use their classroom Chromebooks to log on to Schoology, the Learning Management System (LMS) that Colonial School District extensively uses for its students. They will go to our class section and access the following websites and answer these questions in a series of Schoology posts:

#### *Schoology Information*

1. At the end of the novel, each of you will complete a research-based writing piece about our current immigrant and refugee policies in the United States. To get you thinking about these issues, you will visit the below websites and answer the Discussion posts. In the United States, there are thousands of undocumented immigrants (they do not have papers that say they can legally live in the United States) called “DREAMers” who were brought here as children. After watching the videos;<sup>2728</sup> and reading about DREAMers and DACA,;<sup>2930</sup> post your thoughts to these questions in the discussion post below:

A. Who are the DREAMers, and why are they called that?

B. What do you think should happen to the young people affected by DACA: Should they be allowed to stay in the United States and become citizens? Why or why not?

C. Have you ever known anyone who is a DREAMer (if so, you don't have to type their name below; you can just say “yes” or “no”).

2. President Trump issued travel restrictions for people from seven countries as part of Presidential Proclamation 9645.<sup>31</sup> Last year, the Supreme Court upheld his Proclamation, saying that presidents have substantial power to regulate immigration.<sup>32</sup>

A. Do you think Presidential Proclamation 9645 is based on anti-religious feelings against Muslims? Why or why not?

B. Do you agree with the travel ban? Why or why not?



C. Which of the three characters from *Refugee*—Mahmoud, Isabel, or Josef—would be impacted by this ruling?

### *Assignment Explanation*

I will tell the students that this unit requires an informational writing piece, and that they will be researching and gathering information about several aspects of immigration and refugee policies before they choose their writing topic. I will also announce that tomorrow we will have class visitors: Ms. Ocampo, a teacher in Colonial School District who is a DREAMer; and Ms. Alkrekshi, an immigrant and ESL teacher whose Libyan family members cannot visit her in the United States.

## **Day Two: Guest Speakers**

### *Introductions*

I will welcome our two guest speakers, DREAMer Ms. Ocampo and native Libyan Ms. Alkrekshi, into our classroom and introduce them to the students. The two women are there to talk about their experiences as an undocumented immigrant and status under DACA (Ms. Ocampo), and how Presidential Proclamation 9645 has affected their family (Ms. Alkrekshi). Students will ask the women questions at the end of the discussions; if they are a quieter group or are having trouble thinking of questions, the following could be used as a guideline:

- Are you afraid to leave the United States because you might not be able to re-enter? If so, how does this affect your daily life?
- What will you do if the Supreme Court rules that DACA protection will end?
- How do these policies make you feel? Have you, or would you, do anything to try and change these laws (for example, have you visited lawmakers or protested)?
- How do you stay connected with family members that can no longer travel here to visit you, or because you cannot leave?

## **Day Three**

### *Warm-Up*

Students will log on to Schoology and answer the following warm-up questions about the previous day's class visitors: *What was one thing you learned from Ms. Ocampo about what it is like for her to be a DREAMer? Ms. Alkrekshi described the impact on her family of Presidential Proclamation 9645; what is something that you will remember from her class visit? If your family was no longer welcome to visit or live in the United States, would you try to do anything about these policies?*

### *Class Activities*

After students have finished typing their thoughts on Schoology, they will “turn and talk” with their shoulder partners about their ideas. Then, students will share out some of their answers for the class.

I will then give students the below graphic organizer, which will help them develop their ideas on DREAMers and those affected by Presidential Proclamation 9645. (I often incorporate sentence starters in graphic organizers, due to students' varying levels of English proficiency.)

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Directions:** Answer the questions below in complete sentences (for example, you cannot answer them with one-word answers like “no” or “yes”).

1. What do you want to do when you graduate from high school? For example, will you start working, go to college, or join the military? Why?

When I graduate from high school, I want to.....

2. When you are an adult, do you want to stay in Delaware, or move somewhere else? Why?

I would like to live ..... because.....

3. What kind of job would you like to have when you are 25 years old? Why?

4. Do you think you would like to have children? Why or why not?

5. How would you feel if someone told you that you could not have any of these things? Or do what you wanted with your life? Or that your family could not visit you?

*Schoology Exit Ticket*

Students will log on to Schoology and answer the following “exit ticket” questions: *What have you learned about DREAMers and the people affected by Presidential Proclamation 9645? Have your opinions changed? What are your ideas on what can be done about DACA and Presidential Proclamation 9645? What do you think it means to be an “American?”*

**Day Four: Reading, Vocabulary, and Comprehension***Reading*

Students will read excerpts with their partner of some of the poems in *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds*, which describe the journeys that thousands of children take from Mexico and Central America in search of a safer life in the United States.

In particular, we will focus on the poems *El Palabrero/The Talker*, *Las Chinamas*, *El desierto/The Desert*, *Caballa de Carrera/Racehorse*, and *Nos presentamos a la patrulla/We Introduce Ourselves to Border Patrol*.

*Schoology: Comprehension*

After we read the poems and talk about them and the book’s illustrations, students will log on to Schoology and watch the following videos about migrant children:

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/18/opinion/migrant-children-detention-border.html><sup>33</sup>
2. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/i-am-trash-migrant-children-reveal-stories-detention-separation-n-895006><sup>34</sup>

After they have watched the videos, they will respond to the following questions on Schoology: *What are some reasons the children have left their countries? Do you agree with the policy on separating children from their*

parents at the border? Why or why not? How does what is happening right now mirror what happened to the characters in *Refugee*?

As students read from this book and our other selections, they will use a vocabulary graphic organizer like the one below to define words with which they are unfamiliar and use those words in a sentence. Students can use a classroom dictionary, or a good online source, such as Merriam-Webster's Learners Dictionary.<sup>35</sup>

**Name:**

**Date:**

### Vocabulary Journal

Word	Where I found it:	Dictionary Definition
patrol	Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds	To walk or go around or through (an area, building, etc.) to make sure that it's safe.

### Sentences

- The security company was on **patrol** in the mall's parking lot.

### Day Five: Reading, Vocabulary, and Comprehension

Students will read excerpts with their partner from *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees*; we will concentrate on the first chapter, "Turned Away," and the third chapter, "Stormy Seas." The first chapter recounts the story of Ruth, a Jewish teenager who was on the *S.S. St. Louis* and survived the war, and the third one is about José, who leaves Cuba on an overcrowded boat with his family for the United States. While they read, students will continue to fill out their Vocabulary Journal and will then go on Schoology to discuss the following questions: *How were Ruth's and José's journeys different from Josef's and Isabel's? What new details did you learn about the S.S. St. Louis that you didn't know before? What did Ruth and José do with their lives after surviving their trips and immigrating to new countries?*

### Day Six: Immigration and Refugee Information/Policies

So that the students are well-informed about today's refugee and immigrant policies and have more material to use in their informational essay, as a class we will look at information on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, as well as the United States' refugee rules, which are defined on the website for The American Immigration Council (I mentioned both websites in the Content section above). I will display the websites on the Smartboard, and as we talk about the information, students will fill out the below graphic organizer (they may work with partners).

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Directions:** Answer the below questions after looking at the information on some of the United States' immigration laws and policies.

1. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

A. Why weren't there many immigrants from Asia, Africa, or Latin America before this Act was passed?

There weren't many immigrants from these places because ...

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B. After the Act was passed, what were some of the immediate effects? (Hint: Where were higher numbers of immigrants now coming from?)

The United States saw a rise in ...

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C. If this Act were not passed, do you think some of your family members would have had to stay in their native countries and not come to the U.S.? Why or why not?

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## 2. U.S. Immigration Council

A. Why has the United States stopped accepting as many refugees as it did in previous years? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

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B. In 2018, which area of the world made up the largest number of refugees to the United States? The lowest? Why do you think this happened?

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C. Why do you think so many refugees and immigrants want to come to the United States?

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### **Day Seven: Suggestions and Considerations on Fixing Immigration Policies**

We will be looking at some of the opinions and recommendations made in August 2009 by the Council on Foreign Relations in its Independent Task Force Report; this is a comprehensive report of over 115 pages, and we will not have time to look at it deeply or in its entirety. I will focus on the first six pages of the Introduction, which briefly describes some historical factors and crises facing immigration, and some factors in the U.S.'s failure to devise comprehensive solutions to immigration. Then, we will explore another of the Council's webpages,<sup>36</sup> which gives statistics on immigrant numbers, how Americans feel about the issue, and what recent presidents have tried to do to improve or restructure immigration policies. While they read, students will continue to fill out their Vocabulary Journal, and will fill out the below graphic organizer:

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Directions:** Answer the below questions after looking at the information from the Task Force.

1. What does the poll say about how most Americans feel about immigration? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

The poll says ...

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I agree/disagree because ...

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2. Why do you think the United States has not been able to pass any major laws on immigration in the past 20 years?

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3. Do you think the United States should continue letting people immigrate here because it is the ethical (fair, right) thing to do? In other words, do you think the country has a responsibility to do so? Why do you feel this way?

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### **Day Eight: Topic Choice/Voice Recording**

Students will choose which topic they would like to write about for their informational writing piece; the below graphic organizer will help them organize their thoughts.

When students have finished the graphic organizer, they will go to Vocaroo<sup>37</sup> to make a voice recording of their choice and their reasons for wanting to write on this topic. As stated above in the Content section, I think it will be useful for students to increase their familiarity and comfortability with recording and listening to themselves, as well as help them prepare for the ACCESS test. There are many options for saving and sharing the Vocaroo audio files: email, embedding a code, or getting a QR code. For my purposes at George Read, I will have students embed the URL code of their recording in their writing piece.

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Directions:** Now that you know more about immigrants and refugees, it is time to start your writing project! You may pick from the below options; circle your choice.

1. DACA and DREAMers: What is DACA, and who are the DREAMers? What are the current laws in the U.S. about this group of people? What does the future hold for DACA/DREAMers?
2. What is Presidential Proclamation 9645? Whom does it affect, and how has it changed immigration/refugees coming to the U.S.?
3. How did the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 change immigration to the U.S.? For example, in the number of immigrants, and where they came from?
4. What are the U.S.'s current policies on refugees and immigrants? What do you think can be done to improve the system?

I have decided to write about ..... because

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Some websites/resources I have found:

Title/Link Why I Chose it:

My Vocaroo audio file can be found here (you will copy and paste the “Embed code”):

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### **Day Nine: Individual Student Conferences and Starting to Write**

I will meet with individual students and review the above graphic organizer with them to ensure they are on the right track and understand their writing projects. While I am meeting with them, the other students will continue to work on their projects, which they will create and share with me in Google Docs. The goal for today is that they write their introduction paragraphs. As I will have access to their shared documents, it will be easy for me to monitor them.

### **Days Ten, Eleven, and Twelve: Writing**

Students will continue writing their pieces in Google Docs.

### **Day Thirteen: Last Day to Work on Projects**

This is the last day students will have to work on their projects. I have scheduled five days, because my ELs usually need more time to work on writing pieces, though the number of days may be shortened depending on teachers’ classes and students. During the last ten minutes of class, Students will log on to Schoology and answer the following discussion questions: *In what ways has this writing project helped you learn more about the U.S.’s immigration and refugee troubles? How do you think you can help draw more attention to these issues?*

## **Resources**

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## Appendix on Implementing Standards

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In this unit, I will be using a mix of my district’s ELA standards, Common Core State Standards, and WIDA’s English Language Development Standards. The Colonial School District’s ELA standards that I will be utilizing are *through reading ... challenging informational texts in a range of subjects, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective*. By analyzing all the news stories about immigration and refugees, as well as researching the history of immigration laws in the United States, students will undoubtedly increase their knowledge about these topics and be able to write and converse about them more fully.

I will be utilizing several Common Core State Standards, including:

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1.B*: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrates an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.<sup>38</sup>

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2*: Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.<sup>39</sup>

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.7*: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.<sup>40</sup>

*CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A*: Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe, and reflect on ideas under discussion.<sup>41</sup>

As students complete their classroom activities, they must meet the above standards in order to participate fully in our discussions and work on their writing projects. In addition to stating opinions and claims that they can support with credible sources, they must be able to transfer that knowledge to their research project/informational writing piece.

Finally, during the writing process, students will be expected to show understanding of the WIDA English Language Development Standards<sup>42</sup> of using *compound, complex grammatical constructions (e.g., multiple phrases and clauses); a broad range of sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas; rich descriptive discourse with complex sentences; and organized, cohesive and coherent expression of ideas*.

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