



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2020 Volume I: American History through American Lives

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## **American History Through American Lives Celebrating Our Family History Through Immigration Stories**

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### **Introduction**

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I had the pleasure to attend the Yale National Initiative. The seminar I participated in was American History Through American Lives. In this seminar we discussed and analyzed how people and events affected American History and American lives as a whole. We have discussed slavery, slave narratives, the civil rights movement, and autobiographies and biographies. These discussions and resources have opened my eyes immensely to topics that are not discussed in first grade. We had the opportunity to explore all sides of history, not just the Caucasian and heterosexual viewpoints. Delving into the hidden figures of activists and everyday people while hearing their influence on history has opened my eyes to the real history and how racist our curriculum really is. By opening my eyes, I can help my students of color or other minorities to tell their families immigration story and how their culture has impacted that story.

### **Rationale**

My first grade students are expected to come with the ability to write full and complete sentences. This is not always what we receive at the beginning of first grade. By the end of first grade, they are expected to write a full paragraph (3-5 sentences). These students are expected to write an informational piece about something they have researched. Usually, we have them research and write about an animal. This seems like an easy writing experience, however most on grade level students struggle to form a complete sentence, let alone write an organized paragraph on an experience that they have had. Along with the writing expectations, students are expected to be able to read by the middle to the end of first grade.

My students are often still learning basic math and phonics skills when they come into first grade. Many cannot write a sentence or read independently. They are familiar with the SmartBoard, small and whole group activities, and hands on activities. They enjoy working together any chance that they can get. My goal for this unit is to have my students improve upon their knowledge and ability to write multiple complete sentences in order to write a informational text about what they have learned about how immigrants played a role in American History, and a narrative on their own or their families immigration story or a tradition that their family does. This unit will help my students not only practice their writing skills, while connecting what they have learned across the curriculum, but help them build their identity, one that they can be proud of. Today's students are exposed to various cultures through various media forms. This includes digital activities on the

SmartBoard, short texts or stories in small or whole group, and across various areas of curriculum. It is important for them to understand it is okay to be an immigrant and how they can still have an impact on America. My students will be expected to apply the reading skills they have learned, to connect to their writing, while applying the history and cultural understanding of these famous immigrants and their families story.

## Demographics

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Early Childhood Education has been the majority of my teaching career. I have always been drawn to the younger learners. They have a way of looking at everything in life through a different lens. For the last four school years, I have taught first grade at William A Oberle Jr., Elementary school. I am the special education teacher for the first grade team. Not only do I teach special education students, I also teach general education students in my co-teaching classroom. Teaching in first grade is filled with diverse and unique needs, but is often more challenging when students are identified as Special Education or English Language Learners. It can be extremely difficult when students are identified as both Special Education and English Language Learners. This brings many challenges in addressing their various needs. My students are also learning to become more comfortable with whom they are. They are not shy kindergarteners like they once were.

The students in my school come from very diverse backgrounds. There is approximately 750 or more kindergarten through fifth grade students in my school. Our school services student's from low socioeconomic background and receive free breakfast and lunch. As a first-grade special education teacher, I have about 14 students on my caseload (spread throughout the first grade team, and my classroom) and about 12 general education students in the classroom I co-teach in. More than 60% of my class is ELL students. I often have students who speak one of these languages (sometimes two) English, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese. Learning to write or read in their native language can be challenging, let alone learning a second language, while being expected to write and read competently in their second language. First graders are ages 6 and 7 years old (sometimes 8). Many of these students in our school are either immigrants, or come from families who are immigrants.

## Content Objectives

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My unit will be a cross-curricular unit that will encompass Social Studies, English Language Arts, and Writing. In this unit my students will be learning about Julia Alvarez, Edwidge Danticat, Trevor Noah, Yiochiro Nambu, Mario Jose Molina-Pasquel Henriquez and Maame Biney, while exploring the impacts they have had on American History. This unit will have student's exploring their own family's immigration story, their own immigration story, or a tradition that their family has based off of who they are based around their family. They will need to be able to apply the skills taught during reading to complete activities based off of the unit, while incorporating their knowledge to complete the activities and writing assignments. My students will listen to stories about the listed immigrants above and other fictional and non-fictional immigration stories during reading and social studies, as well as listening to their peer's family immigration stories. During social studies

they will complete hands on activities to connect with the readings about these immigrants. My students will also be able to share their story or their family's immigration story through writing a narrative. Students, who do not have background knowledge or access to their family's immigration story, will complete an activity about who they are based off of their family and the traditions they have. They will then be able to write an informational text, applying all of the information they have learned and gathered about the listed immigrants. At the end of the unit, they will present what they have learned about their own or their family's immigration story.

## Essential Questions

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In our district we have essential questions that are provided on our curriculum maps to help guide our lessons. These questions can be used to check for understanding throughout the lessons. Students are expected by the end of the lesson or the unit to be able to answer the essential questions. For my unit my essential questions will focus on immigrants and the roles they have play in the history of America. My students will be able to show understanding by being able to answer those questions.

These are the following questions:

What does it mean to be an immigrant?

What roles have immigrants played in the history of America?

How has immigration impacted the United States?

How has your family's immigration story impacted your family?

## Content

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Immigrants and immigration have always played an important role in American history. It starts back to the first Native American person that landed on North America through today with current immigrants and immigration policy. This country has a deep background of people from cultures from various countries. This is what makes America unique. Immigration will continue to grow, as it is also the future of America.

### Definition of Immigrant and Immigration

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines immigrant as "a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence."<sup>1</sup> Immigration is defined as "an act of instance of immigrating."<sup>2</sup> These definitions are important for children to understand and know the difference, in order to understand this unit. They will be exposed to these words throughout various forms of media. They should be able to use those words while understanding what they mean.

## History of Immigration

Traditional theories of citizenship often link membership and rights, with one defining the other.<sup>3</sup> When “becoming a citizen entitles the new member of society to certain sets of rights---civic, political, and social, that are generally unavailable to noncitizens.”<sup>4</sup> However, in America that hasn’t always been the case for many citizens. This can be seen with how the United States handled freeing African Americans who were enslaved and the creation of Jim Crow Laws. “For African-Americans, obtaining the rights enjoyed by white Americans is the “marker of citizen- ship.” Citizenship rights are not bestowed by the simple act of birth but must be fought for and achieved. Citizenship is an active process of claiming rights rather than the passive acquisition of an arbitrary and limited set of right.”<sup>5</sup>

New citizens often yearn to be with other people from their cultural background. They will often create neighborhoods based on their culture due to chain immigration, discrimination, and housing together to cut down on costs. For example of these neighborhoods are Little Italy and Chinatown. These neighborhoods go back when immigration was booming in the 1880’s. William V. Flores stated, ““city dwellers” need, more than ever, to reconstruct a social universe, a local turf, a space of freedom, a community.” Flores felt this was “especially true for Latinos, who often organize on a neighborhood or citywide basis to secure space for cultural identity constructions, group survival, and community organization.”<sup>6</sup>

America has always been a nation of immigrants. This started with the original inhabitants, who crossed the land bridge that connected Asia and North America tens of thousands of years ago.<sup>7</sup> The French and Spanish Europeans had started creating settlements in the 1500’s in areas that would become known as the United States of America. Then in 1607 the English at Jamestown in the Virginia Colony founded the first permanent settlement. The pilgrims of 1620 came to Massachusetts in America to practice religious freedom. They were able to escape from religious persecution by coming to America.

In the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and from the 1880’s-1920, the United States had experienced major influxes of immigration. Many of these immigrants came to America seeking a better life. Some of these reasons include religious freedom, better job opportunities, food security, and safety. Between the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is estimated over several hundreds of thousands of African slaves came to America against their will.<sup>8</sup>

A larger group of immigrants came to America seeking better economic opportunities for themselves and their families. “However, because the price of passage was steep, an estimated one-half or more of the white Europeans who made the voyage did so by becoming indentured servants.”<sup>9</sup> This was not always a positive way to gain passage. Even though some people voluntarily indentured themselves; many were often kidnapped from European cities and then forced into servitude in America. English convicts were also shipped to the United States as indentured servants.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, the practice of indentured slaves faded, as Black slaves became more popular.

Black slaves from West Africa were brought over against their will to America during the colonial era. The editors of History.com has noted on the timeline of American Immigration that some of the earliest records of slavery in America include a group of approximately 20 Africans who were forced into indentured servitude in Jamestown, Virginia, during the year 1619.<sup>11</sup> Then on the timeline of 1680, that there were estimates of 7,000 African slaves in the American colonies. That number then increased to 700,000 by 1790, which showed a huge jump in the estimates.<sup>12</sup> Even though Congress had outlawed the importation of slaves to the United

States in 1808, the practice of owning slaves still continued.<sup>13</sup> “The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) resulted in the emancipation of approximately 4 million slaves.”<sup>14</sup>

The next major round of immigration happened around 1815 to 1865. Most of these immigrants came from Northern and Western parts of Europe. About one-third of immigrants came from Ireland because of the famine they experience in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Editors at History.com as stated that typically impoverished, these Irish immigrants settled near their point of arrival in cities along the East Coast.<sup>15</sup> Between 1820 and 1930, there were about 4.5 million Irish who migrated to the United States. The United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had about 5 million German immigrants. They settled in the Midwest. Many were farmers or created German Communities.<sup>16</sup> During the mid-1800s, a significant number of Asian immigrants settled in the United States. They were lured by news of the California gold rush. There were about 25,000 Chinese had migrated to California by the early 1850s.

With the massive ways of immigrants coming to the United States of America, many of America’s native-born white Americans were not happy to have immigrants here. They felt that immigrants created competition for jobs. On the timeline on History.com is showed that in the 1850s, the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic American Party (also called the Know-Nothings) tried to severely curb immigration, and even ran a candidate, former U.S. president Millard Fillmore (1800-1874), in the presidential election of 1856.<sup>17</sup>

For the most part, immigration policy was left to the states instead of the federal government. However, that was changed in the 1880’s. The United States created their first immigration law in 1882. This “first significant federal legislation restricting immigration was the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.”<sup>18</sup> Prior to the opening of Ellis Island in 1890 as the country’s first federal immigration station, the states regulated immigration. Between 1892 and 1954, Ellis Island had more than 12 million immigrants come through the station, however more than 20 million immigrants came to America between 1880 and 1920. In 1907 the United States and Japan sign the Gentlemen’s agreement to only send certain groups of business professional men, to help cut down on Japanese immigrants. According to the timeline, President Theodore Roosevelt urged San Francisco to end the segregation of Japanese students from white students in San Francisco schools.<sup>19</sup> In 1917, “the Immigration Act of 1917 establishes a literacy requirement for immigrants entering the country and halts immigration from most Asian countries.”<sup>20</sup> Xenophobia starts to become a problem right before the start of World War I.

In May of 1924, The Immigration Act of 1924 was signed. This law had put limits on the number of immigrants allowed into the United States yearly based on nationality quotas. Under this new quota system, the United States only issued immigration visas to 2 percent of the total number of people of each nationality into the United States according to the 1890 census. This new law favored immigration from Northern and Western European countries. “Just three countries, Great Britain, Ireland and Germany account for 70 percent of all available visas. Immigration from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe was limited. The Act completely excludes immigrants from Asia, aside from the Philippines, then an American colony.”<sup>21</sup>

Illegal immigration increased in 1924 due to a new immigration law. This caused the U.S. Border Patrol to be created in order to stop illegal immigrants from entering the country illegally from Canada and Mexico. Many of these illegal immigrants were Asian immigrants who would use Canada and Mexico to enter the country. In 1942, there were labor shortages during World War II in the United States. This prompted the United States and Mexico to form the Bracero Program. This allowed Mexican agricultural workers to enter the United States temporarily, the program lasted until 1964.<sup>22</sup> Then in 1948, the United States passed the nation’s first refugee

and resettlement law. This was created to help deal with the arrival of Europeans who were seeking permanent residence after World War II in the United States.

Then in 1952, the McCarran-Walter Act was passed. It officially ended the exclusion of immigrants from Asia to enter the United States. Between 1960-1962 an anti-Communism secret program called Operation Peter Pan moved about 14,000 children, from Cuba to the United States. There had been rumors that the Dictator, Fidel Castro was going to eliminate parental rights, and move to centers to become brainwashed into communism training from an early age.

The new laws in 1965 were signed to end the quota system that favored European immigrants. Which has impacted the majority of the country's immigrants today, who hail from Asia and Latin America.<sup>23</sup> This new law was called Immigration and Nationality Act and it allowed for relatives of Americans to be sponsored. The old quota system was exchanged with a seven-category preference system. This new system emphasized the family reunification process and skilled immigrants. "Upon signing the new bill, President Lyndon B. Johnson, called the old immigration system "un-American," and said the new bill would correct a "cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American Nation.""<sup>24</sup>

Amnesty for illegal immigrants became a popular topic in the mid 1980's. In 1986, the then President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Simpson-Mazzoli Act. This new act granted amnesty to about 3 million illegal immigrants. During 2001, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) proposed the first Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. This act would provide a pathway to legal status for Dreamers (children who were brought here illegally), however it did not pass. Then in 2012, President Barack Obama signed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This law temporarily helps keep some Dreamers from deportation. Sadly, it did not provide a way for them to gain citizenship.

## **Current Immigration**

The United States has a long history of immigration. "The United States has the largest number in the world, with about 45 million of all U.S residents are foreign born,"<sup>25</sup> according to the 2015 Pew Research Center information listed. There has been an uptick of children being born from parents of immigrants since 1970 with 6%, and by 2000 it had jumped to 20%, with the projection of 33% of children by 2050.<sup>26</sup> The United States has immigrants coming from many cultures around the world. The majority are from Asian countries then Latin American countries.

Immigration brings people from all around the world to America. "Over 80% originate in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Oceania, or the Caribbean--the rest originate in Europe or North America. This migratory flow is a significant factor in the U.S., becoming the first high-income country in the world with a majority-minority child population."<sup>27</sup> This can be seen in classrooms across America.

## **State and Federal Education Policies**

It is important to understand the state and federal policies and how they impact the education of your students who are either immigrants or are from families who immigrated here. "Immigrant-origin youth are over-represented in highly segregated and impoverished urban settings."<sup>28</sup> Often these children have little contact with middle-class Americans due to school feeder patterns and are effectively isolated by ethnicity, poverty, and language."<sup>29</sup> This trifecta is called "triple segregation." Triple segregation has long-term negative impacts for these students. It "is associated with a variety of negative educational experiences and

outcomes, including overcrowding, low expectations, low academic standards, low achievement, school violence, and high dropout rates.”<sup>30</sup> These children are served in Title 1 schools, and receive special federal and state funding, as well fall under certain policies that need to be followed. It is important remember this when planning curriculum or teaching. Many of these students will not leave their neighborhood, let alone go out of state to visit a zoo, or have experiences middle class children will have.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has specific sections to help English Language Learners (ELLs). No Child Left Behind law requires an annual exam for English Language Learners to check each student’s English Language proficiency. English Language Learners had accommodations of having their content assessments in their native language. “An impossible benchmark was set that would penalize schools with high numbers of ELLs, placing them at risk of losing standing and funding under No Child Left Behind.”<sup>31</sup>

These state and federal laws impact students who are either immigrants or come from families that are immigrants, in more than one way. This often sets them up for failure. However, showing students, how immigrants overcame diversity, and became successful in America, will help set them up for success.

### **Immigrants Who Have Impacted America**

The following immigrants were carefully picked due to their background, and the impact that their immigration story has had on America and its history. Many of these immigrants grew up with major diversity that has impacted their story and success. The information provided can be used in the detective boxes activity. This will help students use clues to learn about the person in a fun, inquiry based way. I provided this information to give fellow teachers an opportunity to pick and choose what they want to use for that activity and many readings. Of course, teachers can choose to pick their own people or supplement with different immigrants based off their students.

#### **Julia Alvarez**

Julia Alvarez is a Dominican-American writer and poet who was born March 27, 1950 in New York, New York.<sup>32</sup> Shortly after she was born her family moved back to the Dominican Republic. Around the age of ten, Alvarez’s family returned to America, after it was discovered that her father was in on a plot to overthrow the dictator, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. Once coming back to America, she felt that she didn’t fit in.

Julia Alvarez earned her undergraduate degree in 1971 at Middlebury College in Vermont. Then in 1975 she earned her masters degree in creative writing from Syracuse University. She went on to become an English professor after receiving her master’s degree in 1984. Alvarez then started working on her collections of poetry while teaching at Middlebury College. She gained attention after she published *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* in 1991. In several interviews Alvarez mentioned how it is based off of her and her sisters. She has continued to write many stories and poems.

In 1994, her second book *In the Times of Butterflies* was published. Then in 1995 *The Other Side/El Otro Lado, Yo!*, in 1997, *Something to Declare* in 1998. Then in 2000 she published *In the Name of Salome*. In 1997, Alvarez quit her teaching position to focus on her writing.

#### **Edwidge Danticat**

Edwidge Danticat is a known author, educator, and lecturer. She was born on January 19, 1969 in Port-au-Prince in Haiti. At the age of nine, she began to write. “Her motivations were simple—“I loved stories and

loved to read,” she says—and writing came easily for her at this early.<sup>33</sup> Danticat immigrated to the United States in 1981 when she was 12 years old. Her family made sure to keep their Haitian roots. Danticat was encouraged to become a nurse because “for Haitian writers, these insecurities often involve threats to their lives, and because they had heard of many Haitian writers who had been killed or exiled.<sup>34</sup> This was a common belief and experience within the Haitian community.

Danticat received her bachelor’s degree at Barnard College in 1990, and her masters at Brown University in 1993. She was also a part of production and research assistant from 1993-1994 at Clinica Estetico. Danticat began teaching at New York University from 1996-1997. Then she was a visiting professor teaching creative writing in the spring of 2000 at the University of Miami.

Danticat overcame the bias and concerns about becoming a writer. She followed her heart and passion for writing. Danticat has proved that coming from another you can be successful. Danticat has earned the following awards: “Named one of 20 Best of American Novelists by *Granta*, 1996; Pushcart Prize for short fiction; American Book Award, Before Columbus Foundation, for *The Farming of Bones*; fiction awards from periodicals, including *Caribbean Writer*, *Seventeen*, and *Essence*; Lannan Foundation Fellowship, 2004; Story Prize for outstanding collection of short fiction, for *The Dew Breaker*, 2005.”<sup>35</sup> These awards show that no matter where you come from, you can be successful when you immigrate.

## **Trevor Noah**

Trevor Noah is a comedian, author, political commentator and television host. He is currently the host of *The Daily Show*. He was born in South Africa on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1989. His mother is a black Xhosa and his father a white Swiss-German, which was illegal due to the apartheid system there. South Africa supported racial oppression and apartheid. His parents tried to keep their relationship secret, however his mother was often arrested for short periods of time. Noah had to be hidden often from the authorities.

He grew up in deep poverty.

Noah started his career in entertainment in his late teens in a soap opera. In his 20’s, Noah’s friends dared him to do stand up comedy. Noah created his own show, *The Daywalker*, in 2009, as well hosting *The South African Music Awards*. In 2010, he had his own talk show called *Tonight With Trevor Noah*.<sup>36</sup> TNoah immigrated to the United States in 2011. In 2012, he starred on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. He was the first South African on the show. In 2015 he became the *Daily Show* host, where he often talks about current events in America and make jokes about South Africa’s apartheid history. Noah is a great example of growing up with racism and poverty against him, but coming out on top and having a successful career, while advocating against many injustices.

Yiochiro Nambu won The Nobel Prize in Physics in 2008. He was born January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1921 in Tokyo Japan. In 1970, Nambu became a United States Citizen. He studied physics at the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1940 to 1942, from which he received his Masters in Science. Nambu was drafted during World War II as an army radar laboratory. He did not let the war stop him from continuing his education. In 1946 he returned to the University of Tokyo as a research assistant. He became a professor at a new university called Osaka City University in 1950. Nambu then received his doctorate in 1952.

Nambu worked very hard to gain experience in his field. He was a member of the Institutes for Advanced Study in Princeton from 1952 to 1954, a research associated from 1954 to 1956 at the University of Chicago



then professor in 1958. He was a chairman of the department of physics from 1973-1976. Nambu became the Henry Judson Distinguished Professor in 1976, and then he retired in 1991. He has received many honorary degrees in the United States and Japan. Nambu has earned many awards from many countries around the world for his work. Some of these awards are Order of Culture (Government of Japan, 1978), Max Planck Medal (German Physical Society, 1985), Wolf Prize (Government of Israel 1995), and Pomeranchuk Prize, Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics (Moscow 2007).<sup>37</sup> These awards show the great work Yiochiro has accomplished, and the impact his research has had in many countries around the world. All of these awards he earned while he worked in the United States, which shows that immigrating to a new country does not always have to hold you back. You can be successful, and not only make a difference in your new country, but around the world. Nambu's research plays an important part in physics. He developed the theory of spontaneous symmetry breaking in particle physics. Nambu's work created the foundation for particle physics. This is extremely important for the future study of spontaneous symmetry breaking in particle physics.

Mario Jose Molina-Pasquel Henrriquea was born in Mexico City, Mexcio on Marchh 19<sup>th</sup> , 1943. He is an Environmental chemist. Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea obtained a BSc degree Chemical Engineering program, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. He then came to America after 1965 to earn his PhD, at the University of California, Berkeley in 1972. Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea and Sherwood Rowland developed the "CFC-ozone depletion theory" in Irvine California.<sup>38</sup> This theory discusses how Chlorofluorocarbons affect the ozone layer and depletes it. He continued his work there from 1973 to 1989 as a postdoctoral fellowship (1973-1975), and as an Assistant Professor (1975-1982). His work has helped create more studies about the ozone layer and continues to play an important part current research.

Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea was a faculty member at the Institute of Technology in Pasadena. He worked in the Molecular Physics and Chemistry for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Then from 1989 to 2004 he became a faculty member at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the middle of his time at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea was "Awarded Nobel Prize in Chemistry with Sherwood Rowland and Paul Crutzen, for their work in atmospheric chemistry, particularly concerning the formation and decomposition of ozone."<sup>39</sup> Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea is currently a faculty member at the University of California in San Diego. In 2013, he was awarded the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom. Molino-Pasquel Henrriquea is another great example of how an immigrant from another country, can have success in America, and play huge impact on American history and world history.

Maame Biney is the first African-American woman to qualify for the U.S. Olympic speed skating team, which she did at the age of 18. She immigrated to America from Ghana at the age of 5 with her father. Biney had tried figure skating, but she was told she was too fast and should try speed skating. Biney exudes confidence and is the perfect example of a positive role model for younger children, especially children who have immigrated to America. She often calls herself "fierce and strong."<sup>40</sup> She acknowledges and appreciates her huge achievement. Maame was quoted on the topic of being a role model by saying: "that means I get to inspire other kids in the United States, maybe all over the world," she says, "to just go out there and do what you love, because you never know! You just might accomplish your goal."<sup>41</sup>

## Classroom Resources

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### Informational Writing

Informational writing is a nonfiction-writing piece that contains factual information about a topic. There are 4 types of informative (informational) writing: literary nonfiction, argumentative, persuasive, and procedural. Some examples include almanacs, newspapers, and reference books. The purpose of this type of text is to educate the reader about a specific topic.

Informational writing has common text features depending on where the writing piece is being presented. Some of these text features are table of contents, captions, pictures, bold and italic print, and a glossary. These characteristics guide the readers to find information within the text. Some text structures that are shown in informational pieces can include description, sequence, cause and effect, compare and contrast, and problem and solution.

First graders are taught how to write an informational piece during the school year. Some of the topics they write about are an informational piece about an animal. Another piece that they write is a procedural piece. Many students write about making a sandwich or how to play a game. In this unit, my students will write about an immigrant they have researched who has made an impact in America.

### Narrative Writing

Narrative writing often tells or retells a story. Narrative writing has characters, conflict and solution, plot, setting, main idea or theme, and many other essential parts of a story. This all depends on the type of narrative writing you are reading or writing. Some examples include poems, books, and essays.

### Autobiography, Biography, and Memoir

Autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs are types of writing and literature that are taught starting in elementary school through high school. These types of writing pieces and texts are used across the curriculum to educate students. Then if student chose a degree pathway that incorporates these modes of writing, you will be exposed and will practice writing and analyzing these types of texts. There are key differences with these forms of writing and literature.

Autobiographies are used in first grade to teach students about a person who is still living. They make great companion pieces for teaching students how to research and write informational pieces. According to Shyam autobiographies are "an account of a person's life given by himself or herself, especially one published in book form. Also: the process of writing such an account; these are considered as a literary genre."<sup>42</sup> An autobiography can be written in book form, essay form, or even as a narrative. They often discuss the most memorable or important events in their life. During the primary education years, students will write at least one autobiography as an activity for class. They will read many autobiographies as well. An autobiography is considered a primary source since the person who the autobiography is about is being interviewed.

Biographies are another great resource and educational tool to use for close and informational reading as well supplemental texts. Students often struggle with knowing the difference between biographies and autobiographies. Biographies can be defined as "the process of recording the events and circumstances of another person's life, esp. for publication (latterly in any of various written, recorded, or visual media); the

documenting of individual life histories (and, later, other forms of thematic historical narrative), considered as a genre of writing or social history.”<sup>43</sup> Students will also be required to read about and read many biographies through their primary education experience. They are also often asked to write one based off of research. Biographies are considered a secondary source since it is an account of a person’s life written by someone else.

Memoirs are another great resource to use in the classroom. They make great companion texts to autobiographies and biographies. Memoirs can be defined as “autobiographical observations; reminiscences.”<sup>44</sup> Autobiographies and memoirs are very similar and easily interchanged or confusing to students. Autobiographies go in sequential order of an individual’s life, while memoirs focus on emotions, feelings, attitudes about random portions in a person’s life.

## Teaching Strategies

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### Culturally Responsive Teaching

In today’s public school classrooms, you will have students from many diverse cultural backgrounds. “Culturally responsive teaching aims to link content with students’ contemporary and ancestral cultures.”<sup>45</sup> This unit is designed to embrace their family’s unique and diverse cultural backgrounds. The students will have activities, readings, visitors, and presentations on immigrants from different countries and cultures.

There are other options that educators can use to make their classroom and activities more culturally responsive. This may look like using word problems with different cultural names or references. Also using multimedia to present different cultures in your lessons. In this unit, we will have families involved with telling their immigration story. Along with students sharing what their family does to celebrate their culture or family traditions if they cannot trace their families immigration story.

### Inquiry Based Learning

Inquiry based learning is technique that helps guide students to ask questions about a topic, then be able to answer these questions through various forms of research and activities. For one of my interactive, hands on activities, we will be using structured inquiry to explore important immigrants and the roll that they have had in America. This way they can have some scaffolding to this skill since it’s an activity they have never completed before. “Teachers are responsible for guiding students through their questions—past curiosity and into critical thinking and understanding.”<sup>46</sup> Students are more likely to retain information from the activity or curriculum if they use one of the four types of inquiry-based learning. The four types of inquiry-based learning are: confirmation, structured, guided, and open. For confirmation inquiry “students are given a question along with a way to answer it.”<sup>47</sup> In structured based inquiry “students are given open question and investigation method.”<sup>48</sup> In guided inquiry “students work from an open question to design investigation methods.”<sup>49</sup> Then for open inquiry “students develop original questions that they answer through their own methods.”<sup>50</sup>

### Student Presentations

Another strategy for this unit is having students present their work. This allows students to take pride in their

work and to build courage and confidence. By allowing students to present their activity, research or writing, you are allowing students to educate their peers in a positive manner. “Presentations are a great way to have students practice all language systems areas (vocabulary, grammar, discourse and phonology) and skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening).”<sup>51</sup> Students will present multiple times in this unit. These presentations will be using their narrative and informational writing pieces. They will also be used after the detective boxes activity. They will share what information they have learned to their peers.

### **Peer Teaching**

Peer teaching is when students help or teach their peers about an activity or topic. “Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers. They develop skills in organizing and planning learning activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning.”<sup>52</sup> In this unit, students will work together to learn about important immigrants in America and how immigration has affected this country. They will teach their peers what they have learned about certain immigrants by presenting information to their peers after they have done their detective boxes.

### **Guest Speakers**

Guest speakers are another great strategy that is often not included into our lesson plans. We are often trying to follow our curriculum maps and often do not deviate from them. This makes it hard to have classroom visitors. However, having visitors come present, read, or discuss with your students is extremely beneficial to the students. “Use the speaker to enhance the material you are covering. A guest speaker conveys current, realistic information and a perspective on a subject that is not available from textbooks.”<sup>53</sup> This is a great primary source on a given topic. In this unit, there will be guest speakers. These classroom visitors will be sharing their immigration story. They will either be the parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or other family member that wants to share their immigration story.

### **Interdisciplinary Teaching**

Interdisciplinary Teaching strategies help “to encourage student to develop creative and critical skills—and to draw information from a number of different academic disciplines.”<sup>54</sup> This technique allows for students to learn about immigration in different areas of the curriculum, while making connections to the topic. For this unit it will look like immigration stories in ELA, narrative and informational writing in writing, and activities in social studies to learn about different cultures and immigration stories.

## **Activities**

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### **Detective Boxes**

Detective boxes are a great activity for your students to incorporate many teaching strategies peer teaching, student presentations, inquiry based learning, and culturally responsive teaching. For this activity you will need 6 plastic bins or cardboard boxes to store the pieces in the activity. These bins or boxes will vary on size depending on the materials you decide to put in. In my bins, I plan on putting in a name card of the person,

baby of some sort with their birthdate on it, tombstone with death date if required, a flag of their home country, an item or image which represents their career, and an item or of an award or honor they have earned. Some examples could be a picture of the person, ice skates, a medal, a book, etc. Since your students will be pretending to be detectives give them a magnifying glass, and paper that they can fill the information as they work. Some items you might want to add on the paper are images with the corresponding words. For example: a baby with birthday next to it, or a tombstone with the word death. This will help students who cannot read yet, or do not speak the language. It makes it more inclusive for them in the activity. This activity will be done during social studies.

For this activity, students will be grouped together to explore and work together to figure out who their person is. They will pretend they are detectives, and go through the boxes to discover clues. They will write down the information with the corresponding image. Once the class is done, they will give a presentation at the end to the class about their person using the props they have in their box. Students will keep this paper for their next activity during writing.

### **Informational Writing**

Once the detective boxes activity is done. Students will hold onto their paper to write an informational essay. Students should be encouraged to do more research on the person that they had. This may be student books on the person, story print outs, multimedia approaches (internet, presentations, books and articles). Students will need an example of how to take their research and write an informational piece. This can be done as class, step by step, or in small groups to help students form their ideas. This is great to help push your high students to add more or challenge them. It can also be done to guide your on level groups, English language learners, and below level groups. This will allow you to help with sentence structure, formatting, and basic writing and phonic skills needed. To finish this activity up, students will draw a picture of what they learned about the person or of the person. Make sure you hang up their work to showcase what they have learned.

### **Narrative Writing**

For the narrative writing activity, start by reading various stories (fiction and non-fiction) about immigrants and their story. There are many books, articles, and videos on immigrants coming to America. These stories should be read during writing or reading, or social studies to open up the activities. Students will be more involved if it is about other children and their families. The next step for this activity depends on whether your students have access to their family immigration stories. For some students they immigrated here or their parents or grandparents have. While other students cannot trace their roots, provide them an opportunity to write about family traditions that they do (based on their culture or not) or a cultural meal they eat based on family roots.

Provide your students with access to questions they can ask their families. For families that have their immigration story some of these questions could be: What country and year did you immigrate from? Why did you leave? How was your journey? What was your first impression of America? What was hard about immigrating to America? What is your favorite memory about your journey? Some questions you may have your students who cannot trace their families immigration story are: What is something your family does to celebrate their culture? What family traditions has your family created or passed down? Explain these traditions and how they may you feel. Once students have completed this portion of the activity, they can begin their narrative writing or the poem activity. Provide several examples of what narratives are.

For students who do not know their ethnic culture or family's immigration story, read the poem *Where I'm*

From By George Ella Lyon to them. Then help them fill in the template. Based on student's ability they just fill in the template, rewrite the template with the information they inputted, or type up the information and print it out. Then work in small groups with students on how to organize and write their narrative or work on their poem, while focusing on the basic writing skills. Modifications will be needed for students who are below grade level, special education, or are English language learners. Students will then present their work to educate about their family's culture and immigration story, as well as their immediate family culture and traditions. These activities when finished being presented, would look great in frames either hanging in the classroom or outside of the classroom to show of their work.

### **Online Interactive Activities**

Another great activity can be found on the Scholastic website. It is a teacher's activity guide called Young Immigrants. It is very interactive. There are 5 children you can click on to learn about where they came from and their experiences. There are three other tabs to click on. There is an Explore Ellis Island, Immigration Data, and a Virtual Field Trip to Ellis Island. They are all-interactive or are videos and help tell the stories of immigrants from the past and the trends for immigration for over the years. There are even suggestions for activities you can do to continue the lesson.

### **Guest Speaker**

Another great resource and activity for your students is having guest speakers come in. These can be siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, or someone from the community to share their immigration story with their students. This gives students a primary resource to learn from and a chance to ask questions. Make sure to screen the guest speaker, and get the proper background checks. Write some points for them to cover, or ask them to share some food or a game from their country. This activity is a great way to build a community and connect home to school.

### **Resources**

#### **Teacher resources for activities**

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young\\_immigrants/](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young_immigrants/) This is the link to the online interactive activities from scholastic.

<https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/immigration-collection> This link takes you to a website that allows you to explore fiction and non-fiction stories of immigrants.

<https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/3043/I%20Am%20From%20Poem.pdf> This link contains the poem and the format for the poem used in an activity in this unit.

Stories: When This World Was New by D.H. Figueredo, Coming to America: A Muslim Family's Story by Bernard Wolf, Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom, etc.

## Appendix: Implementing District Standards

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For Christina School District we follow the state of Delaware Standards, which are the Common Core State Standards for reading or writing, or the Delaware Social Studies Standards. For the writing and literacy standard we will be using is CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.2: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure. This will be seen after the Detective Boxes during the informational writing piece.

For Social Studies Standards the students will be working to meet these standards through the activities. There is a standard and a substandard that will need to be met. These standards are K-3a: Students will understand that historical accounts are constructed by drawing logical inferences from artifacts and documents K-3b: Students will develop an awareness of major events and people in United States and Delaware history. Who lives here and how did they get here? (Immigrants, demographics, ethnic and religious groups), important people in our past, different kinds of communities in Delaware and the United States. These standards will work intertwined together throughout the day. My students will meet these standards by using the online interactive activities from scholastic, guest speakers, detective boxes, and stories.

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