

## **Immigration to the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> c.: The women who went, the women who stayed behind, and their impact.**

**Overview of Lesson Plan:** Students will explore the role of women in the immigrant experience of coming to the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s. Students will study different aspects of the immigrant experience, examining the push/pull factors and primary resources. Using their assumed perspective, students will write a series of imagined correspondences from the perspective of a woman who was affected by migration during that time frame. Students must choose a perspective for their imagined author and cite the time period, imagined attributes of self (race/age/etc.), and country of origin.

[To simplify the assignment, the teacher may choose to assign the student perspective(s)]

**Suggested Time Period:** 5 teaching days, plus potential field trip day and writing time

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

1. Explain the push/pull factors for migration.
2. Critically examine resources to distinguish between primary and secondary sources and to evaluate bias.
3. Understand how migration (positively and negatively) impacts both the immigrants themselves and those they leave behind.
4. Explain some of the different roles women had in the immigrant experience during this time.
5. Deeply explore one particular role and write from that perspective.

### **Resources/Materials:**

- Regular classroom materials
- “How the Other Half Lives” by Jacob Riis
- Emma Goldman Unit Plan – Primary Docs
- The Polish Letters
- Clips of Hasia Diner interview by Robbie Cohen
- Other immigrant photos (such as the LaFata Wedding)

### **Activities/Procedures:**

1. *Warm-up/Do-Now:* Would you move far way from your family all alone if you were guaranteed a job with a million dollar salary? Why or why not? Have students respond in their notebook and share. Use class responses to begin discussion and introduce the relationship between economics and migration. Have students use life experience to brainstorm the reasons people migrate. Show clip of Diner explaining push/pull factors.
2. *Riis’s book.* Photowalk of pgs. 4, 74, 97, 123, 220 w/ student jots around each image. Then provide background on Riis’s work and start guided reading of “The Working Girls of New York” (pgs. 183-189). Examine: a) Riis’s description of these girls. How does Riis explain their roles? b) Riis’s book as a source. Is there any bias? [Also consider incorporating “Waifs of City Slums” (pgs 145-151).]

- Share immigrant photos reflecting a happier experience, and ask how these primary documents relate to Riis (support, invalidate, reveal bias?)
3. *The Polish Letters*. Guided reading of excerpt. Focus on affect of those who stayed behind. Ask: a) How has the husband's departure to the United States affected the wife? List both positive and negative affects. b) The wife asks her husband to send for her, but do you really think she wants to go to America (or does she just miss her husband)? Why or why not? c) If the wife were your friend, how would you counsel her about her situation?
  4. *Emma Goldman*. "With Speech as my Weapon" Lessons 1 & 2, supplement or modify questions to ask how Emma compares with the other immigrant stories.
  5. *Field Trips*. Potential sites: Ellis Island and/or Tenement Museum.
  6. *Assignment*. Students work individually or in pairs to write letters.