

IMMIGRATION: A matter of survival
Exploring some of the factors in European Migration to NYC in the early 1900's
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Grade(s): 11th

Overview of Unit Plan: Students who have recently completed study on westward expansion and how rail transportation connected the eastern U.S. to all parts west & south will move into the building of the modern American Metropolis. New York City, continuing in its role as the commerce capital of the country, established a section of Manhattan where much of the country's clothing was designed & manufactured. The "Garment District" and "Schmatta" or "Rag" Business grew so rapidly that supply had trouble keeping up with demand. This created employment opportunities for Europeans looking to escape economic hardships and persecution, especially those who were skilled in making clothes, to come to America with the virtual assurance of employment. Many however, found this "pull factor" did not live up to their expectations.

Suggested Time Allowance: 3 lesson periods, 1 film screening, 1 debate period

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Understand why many Italians and Jews migrated to NYC starting in the 1890's
2. Understand how to determine the difference between facts and opinions in arguing a case in the affirmative or the negative (Jacob Riis vs Hasia Diner).
3. Understand the plight of those left behind in the "Old Country" (The Polish Letters)
4. Define "sweatshop" in studying the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.
5. Write a persuasive essay in the affirmative or negative on the following resolution:
Immigration was then, and is today, a good idea for both immigrants and America.

Resources / Materials:

- Regular classroom tools (2 notebooks, 2 pens, textbook, pocket folder)
- Classroom board
- "How The Other Half Lives" By Jacob Riis
- The Polish Letters
- Video Clip: Interview of Hasia Diner By Robbie Cohen.
- Viewing of the movie "**Schmatta: From Rags to Riches to Rags.**"

Activities / Procedures:

1. WARM-UP/DO NOW (Day 1): Students respond to the following prompt (available on the course blog prior to class): "Is saving the most money possible on the clothes we buy always a good thing? Why or why not? (Thoroughly explain your answer.) After giving students a few minutes to respond, have some students share their answers with the class.

2. Guided reading of selected sections of Riis' book (pages 96-107) to address the affirmative and the negative of the resolution:
 - a. Were these people better off in America?
 - b. Why were so many who were seeking a better life living in such squalor ? Explain your answer.
 - c. Whose fault is it that these immigrants are so destitute?

3. Students will be shown clips from the Hasia Diner interview to shown the "doom & gloom" Riis puts forth is not the entire immigrant story of the early 1900's. They will be asked:

- a. How did early immigrants seek out the American Dream after their arrival?
- b. How did these early immigrants shape New York City construction and infrastructure?
- c. Why did immigrants keep coming to the U.S. after early arrivals experienced such hardships as those documented by Riis?

4. *Students will watch the film “Schmatta: From Rags to Riches to Rags” as an enrichment via media activity. After the screening, students will sit for a Q & A luncheon (accountable talk) were they will explore the concepts and ideas addressed in the film and compare & contrast them with similar ideas addressed in class. Certain clips will be made available on the course blog for future reference.*

5. Students will then explore the ideas examined in class in preparation for a formal debate. Students will be encouraged to analyze the controversial or divisive nature of the resolution. Are there deeper ethical, legal or constitutional questions underlying this issue? We will create a list on the board of suggested topics, along with some key points about each. Divide class into groups of three, assigning each group a topic from the brainstorm. Instruct groups to research their topics, using the following questions as guidelines:

- What are the major positions in this debate?
- What facts or evidence does each side use to support its position?
- What famous or influential people have expressed opinions in this debate? How have their opinions affected the debate?
- What have been some of the proposed or implemented solutions to the problems posed in this debate? How do/did people feel about these solutions?

After researching and analyzing responses to the above questions, form two teams to argue the resolution in the affirmative and the negative. The debate will be moderated by the teacher with the class as audience and judge.

4. WRAP-UP/HOMEWORK: At home, students will select one side of the addressed resolution and write a persuasive essay arguing the side of their choosing. Students should make sure to use the information from the lessons and the debate presentation, as well as any other information they can find, to support their position.

Evaluation / Assessment:

Students will be evaluated on participation in class discussions, participation in the debate, the luncheon Q&A, and completion of the persuasive essay.

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