

Lesson: The Immigration Experience

Subject: 8th Grade American History

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NEW YORK LEARNING STANDARDS:

PI 3.1 Students will complete well-documented and historically accurate case studies about individuals and groups who represent different ethnic, national, and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in New York State and the United States at different times and in different locations.

NEW YORK CORE CURRICULUM:

7.II.A.1 The immigration experience: Two distinct waves occurred, from the 1840s to the 1890s, and from the 1890s to the early 1920s; migration streams over time; 7.II.A.2 The immigration experience: Differences were based on national origins, cultural patterns, and religion; 7.II.A.3 The immigration experience: Similarities included motivations for coming and patterns of community settlement; 7.II.A.4 The immigration experience: Initial clashes ended in varying degrees of acculturation; 7.II.A.5 The immigration experience: Occupational and political experiences varied; 7.II.B.1 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: A comparison of European immigrants and the black slave experience—human migration’s effects on the character of different places and regions; 7.II.B.2 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: Immigrants as rural settlers in the Midwest; 7.II.B.3 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: The Chinese experience in the Far West; 7.II.B.4 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: Mexicans in the Southwest; 7.II.B.5 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: New York City’s ethnic neighborhoods; 7.II.B.6 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: French-Canadian settlement in northern New York State; 7.II.B.7 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: Immigration patterns and experiences throughout New York State; 7.II.B.9 Case studies of the immigrant experience in the United States and New York State—population characteristics: Immigrants in the local community.

Aim: Was America the land of milk and honey for most immigrants?

Learning Objective and Assignment

The aim of this exercise is to encourage students to gain a window into past and deepen their understanding of the complexity of the immigrant experience by reading, analyzing, and comparing several photographs and personal correspondences that represent multiple points of view. In analyzing the primary sources and using their content knowledge, the students will construct a broader picture and get a better sense of immigrant life in America.

Skill: Identifying Bias and Point of View

**Lesson assumes that the students had prior instruction in analyzing primary sources*

Documents and Materials:

Document A - Correspondence between husbands and wives: Borkowski Series (May 12, 1899)

Document B - Correspondence between husbands and wives: Borkowski Series (September 2, 1909)

How the Other Half Lives by Jacob A. Riis (photographs)

- **Document C** - Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement --- “five cents a spot” p.59
- **Document D** - “Ancient Lodger, Eldridge Street Police Station, about 1890” p. 200
- **Document E** - Room in a tenement, 1910 p. 5
- **Document F** - Twelve-year old boy pulling threads in a sweat shop, about 1889 p.98

Document G - Polling Place for Strike Vote, c. 1915/International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (photograph)

Document H - 54. A La Fata Wedding (photograph)

Analyzing Primary Sources Skill Sheets (adapted from the www.loc.gov skill sheets)

Preparation/Motivation

Generate a class discussion:

- Do you believe everything you hear? Read? See?
- What do the terms “slanted” or “biased” mean?
- When you hear, read, or see something how can you tell whether it’s reliable source? What techniques do you use to evaluate whether it’s the truth or a lie?

Procedures

Whole Group Discussion:

- Display photograph (Document D), **“Ancient Lodger, Eldridge Street Police Station, about 1890”** from Jacob Riis *How the other half Lives* by Jacob Riis, on screen
- Ask the following questions:
- *Observe*
 - Describe what you see.
 - What do you notice first?
 - What people and objects are shown?
 - How are they arranged?
 - What is the physical setting?
 - What, if any, words do you see?
 - What other details can you see?
- *Reflect*
 - When do you think it was made?
 - What’s happening in the image?
 - What is the photographer’s purpose?
 - Who do you think was the audience for this image?
 - Are generalizations or exaggerations used? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are any opinions stated as facts? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are emotionally “loaded” images used? Give evidence.
 - What’s missing from this image?
 - What’s the photographer’s viewpoint?
 - Is the photographer bias?
 - Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this text?

- What can you learn about immigrant experience in America from examining this image?
- If someone took the same photograph today, what would be different?
- What would be the same?
- Explain to the students that photographs often have little context and don't provide a complete picture of immigrant life in America; therefore, it is important for them to use multiple primary sources and to connect them to the context in which they were created as well as their prior knowledge.
- Display on screen "Correspondence between husbands and wives: Borkowski Series" (May 12, 1899) – Document A
- Ask the following questions:
 - Observe*
 - Describe what you see.
 - What do you notice first?
 - What does it say?
 - Reflect*
 - What was the purpose of this letter?
 - Who created it?
 - Who do you think was its audience?
 - Can you tell anything about what was important at the time it was made?
 - Are generalizations or exaggerations used? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are any opinions stated as facts? Give evidence from the source.
 - What is the larger story or context within which this was printed?
 - What can you learn from examining this letter?
 - Are emotionally "loaded" words used? Give evidence.
 - What's missing from this letter?
 - What's the author's viewpoint?
 - Is the author bias?

- Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this text?
- What can you learn about immigrant experience in America from examining this letter?
- If someone wrote this letter today, what would be different?

Examine and compare the photograph to the letter.

- *Think about what you already know about this period in history.*
- *How does the text/photograph support or contradict your current understanding of this period?*

Assessment:

- Group Practice - Pair up students
 - Distribute the analyzing photograph and text skill sheets for students to complete.
 - Give each pair of student a set of primary sources to analyze using the photograph skill sheets
- **Set I – Document B and C**
 - ✚ How the Other Half Lives by Jacob A. Riis (photographs) Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement --- “five cents a spot” - Document C
 - ✚ Correspondence between husbands and wives: Borkowski Series (September 2, 1909) – Document B
 - **Set II – Document F and G**
 - ✚ Twelve-year old boy pulling threads in a sweat shop, about 1889 p.98
 - ✚ Polling Place for Strike Vote, c. 1915/International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (photograph)
 - **Set III – Documents E and H**
 - ✚ Room in a tenement, 1910 p. 5
 - ✚ 54. A La Fata Wedding (photograph)

Whole Class Discussion

- Ask student to discuss their analysis and share with the class
- After sharing summarize the class discussion by describing the immigrant experience in America

Photography/Image Analysis Skill Sheet

Guiding Questions:

- *Observe*
 - Describe what you see.
 - What do you notice first?
 - What people and objects are shown?
 - How are they arranged?
 - What is the physical setting?
 - What, if any, words do you see?
 - What other details can you see?

- *Reflect*
 - When do you think it was made?
 - What's happening in the image?
 - What is the photographer's purpose?
 - Who do you think was the audience for this image?
 - Are generalizations or exaggerations used? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are any opinions stated as facts? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are emotionally "loaded" images used? Give evidence.
 - What's missing from this image?
 - What's the photographer's viewpoint?
 - Is the photographer biased?
 - Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this text?
 - What can you learn about immigrant experience in America from examining this image?
 - If someone took the same photograph today, what would be different?
 - What would be the same?

Text/Letter Analysis Skill Sheet

Guiding Questions:

- *Observe*
 - Describe what you see.
 - What do you notice first?
 - What does it say?
- *Reflect*
 - What was the purpose of this letter?
 - Who created it?
 - Who do you think was its audience?
 - Can you tell anything about what was important at the time it was made?
 - Are generalizations or exaggerations used? Give evidence from the source.
 - Are any opinions stated as facts? Give evidence from the source.
 - What is the larger story or context within which this was printed?
 - What can you learn from examining this letter?
 - Are emotionally “loaded” words used? Give evidence.
 - What’s missing from this letter?
 - What’s the author’s viewpoint?
 - Is the author bias?
 - Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this text?
 - What can you learn about immigrant experience in America from examining this letter?
 - If someone wrote this letter today, what would be different?

Summary:

Examine and compare the photograph to the letter.

- *Think about what you already know about this period in history.*
- *How does the photograph support or contradict your current understanding of this period?*
- *How does the letter support or contradict your current understanding of this period?*