TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU

Lesson Plan: Immigration: A Case Study on Multiple Perspectives and Diverse Formats

Grade: 8th and High School
Subjects: Social Studies and English/Language Arts
Time required: 1 class period
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OVERVIEW
When using primary sources, it is important to consider multiple perspectives and diverse formats to enrich students’ learning experience. This lesson plan uses diverse sources and multiple perspectives to discuss immigration in the United States during the first part of the 20th century. By analyzing these sources, students will learn varying perspectives on immigration in the United States from the time period.

OBJECTIVES
- Students will analyze and synthesize different types of sources to answer research questions.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS
How do these diverse sources represent the various perspectives on immigration at the turn of the century? Why were some people in support of or against immigration at the time?

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
- Multiple Perspectives: Immigration (Graphic Organizer)
- Primary Sources
  - Ellis Island on History.com
  - Don’t bite the hand that’s feeding you [1915]
  - Don’t bite the hand that’s feeding you [1915, recording]
  - Life on the lower East Side, cor. Pitt and Rivington Streets, North, N.Y. [1915]
  - A Spanish Stonecutter’s Widow [ca.1936-39]

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

8th Grade
- 8.RI.CS.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
- 8.RI.IKI.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums to present a particular topic or idea.

High School
- 11-12.RI.IKI.7 Evaluate the topic or subject in multiple diverse formats and media.
- 9-10.RI.IKI.7 Evaluate the topic or subject in two diverse formats or media.
- 9-10.RI.CS.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- US.7 Describe the differences between “old” and “new” immigrants, analyze the assimilation process for “new” immigrants, and determine the impacts of increased migration on American society, including: Angel Island, Ellis Island, Push and pull factors, Ethnic clusters, Jane Addams, Competition for jobs, Rise of nativism, Jacob Riis, Chinese Exclusion Act and Gentleman’s Agreement
**PROCEDURE**

| Step 1 | Begin by asking your students the following questions: What are primary sources and how many different types can you list? What are multiple perspectives and how do they help understand a historical topic? |
| Step 2 | Discuss immigration in the United States in the early 20th century, using [Ellis Island on History.com](https://www.history.com). What do students think it would be like to be an immigrant in the United States at the turn of the 20th century? |
| Step 3 | Distribute the [Multiple Perspectives: Immigration](https://www.history.com) worksheet to your students and explain that they will be considering both the perspectives of those in support of immigration and those against immigration using the sources discussed in class. After introducing each new source, allow students time to fill in their thoughts for each of the four sources. |
| Step 4 | Distribute copies of the sheet music to the 1915 song “Don’t Bite the Hand That’s Feeding You.” Instruct students to read along with the lyrics while listening to the recording. What is this song about? What is the tone and message of the song? What do you think an immigrant’s reaction to this song might be? |
| Step 5 | Distribute copies of excerpts from the [New-York tribune., December 16, 1907, Page 3, Image 3](https://www.history.com). What is this article about? What is the message and what have you learned from reading the text? |
| Step 6 | Next, distribute excerpts from [A Spanish Stonecutter’s Widow](https://www.history.com). Read these excerpts aloud or choose a student to read. Allow students then to read through the excerpt again quietly on their own. What was life like for the immigrant after she moved to the United States? How does this interview fit in with what we have learned from the two previous sources? |
| Step 7 | Distribute the image [Life on the lower East Side, cor. Pitt and Rivington Streets, North, N.Y.](https://www.history.com). What do you notice about these image? How would you describe the living conditions on this street? What is the perspective of the photographer or viewer? How does this source fit with the previous ones? |
| Step 8 | Read the final two questions on the worksheet. How do these different types of sources work together to help you understand what life was like for immigrants during the time period? What other types of sources would you want to look at to further your understanding of immigration in the early part of the 20th century? Allow students time to write down their answer and then discuss as a class. |
| Step 9 | Either as a discussion or writing assignment, have students answer the investigative question. How do these diverse sources represent the various perspectives on immigration during the 1910s? Why were some people in support of or against immigration in the 1910s? Students must cite evidence from the sources and their notes on the worksheet to support their answers. |

*Steerage children at play on FREIDRICH DER GROSSE [1910]*
EVALUATION
1) 50%: Class participation
2) 50%: Multiple Perspectives Worksheet

EXTENSION

- Distribute Immigration figures for 1903 to your class. Point out the statistics about literacy and immigrants. Why is this important, or is it not? Project the political cartoon The Americanese wall – as Congressman [John Lawson] Burnett would build it on the screen and allow students time to reflect on how these two sources might be used together.

- Divide your students into three groups (participants, observers, and supporters) and prompt your students to think of a time when they were confronted with prejudice from the perspective of their group name. For example, the observers will consider a time when they saw an act of prejudice. After the students have recorded their stories, each student should share his or her story within the group. One member from each group should present their findings to the rest of the class. How do their findings differ? Why is it important to consider situations from multiple perspectives?
IMMIGRATION REPORT.

1907 A BANNER YEAR.

Influx of 1906 Exceeded by 184,614.

—Japanese Pour In.

Washington, Dec. 15.—Immigration to America during the year ended June 30, 1907, was vastly greater than in any previous year of the history of the United States. This fact, with all its interesting and important details, is placed in strong light in the annual report of Frank P. Sargent, Commissioner General of Immigration, which was made public today. Of this great flood of immigrants, Commissioner Sargent says:

An army of 1,288,412 souls, they have come, drawn hither by the free institutions and the marvelous prosperity of our country—the chance here afforded every honest toiler to gain a livelihood by the sweat of his brow or the exercise of his intelligence—surpassing in numbers the record of all preceding years.

The report contains in tabulated form many places of information bearing on the question of immigration, and in submitting this carefully compiled data, Mr. Sargent says:

The immigration for the year 1907 exceeded that for 1906 by 184,614, and that for the year 1905 by 288,650, or an increase over the year 1905 of more than 27 per cent. The number of those who sought admission in 1907, viz., 1,288,412, exceeds the number who applied in 1906, viz., 1,113,167, by 185,246.

Commissioner Sargent says it is of particular significance that many immigrants landed at ports in the South during the last year, and he refers especially to a party of 475 Belgians—excellent types of immigrants—received at Charleston, S. C., having been induced to go there by the state authorities. The increase of immigration to the commissioner says, "is directly connected with the growing desire of the Southern states to draw within their boundaries a number of the better class of immigrants, it being considered by practically all of the leading men of that section that the future development and welfare of the South depend on its ability to receive and absorb a reliable laboring and farming element. Striking increases are also shown at New Orleans, Galveston and Honolulu."

Of peculiar significance is the table which shows the number of immigrants from each foreign country, together with the increases or decreases as compared with the previous year. Twenty-seven countries showed increases and eleven decreases. The tide of immigration from some of the countries is indicated by the following figures: Austria-Hungary, 333,492; increase, 75,314; Bulgaria, Servia and Montenegro, 11,839; increase, 8,698; France, 9,791; increase, 365; German Empire, 37,897; increase, 249; Greece, 26,590; increase, 17,991; Italy, including Sicily and Sardinia, 283,712; increase, 17,241; Russian Empire and Finland, 258,908; increase, 43,787; Turkey, 29,705; increase, 11,257; England, 53,657; increase, 7,746; Ireland, 31,590; decrease, 465; Scotland, 18,749; increase, 3,874; China, 961; decrease, 403; Japan, 30,293; increase, 16,192; British North America, 10,975; increase, 14,865; West Indies, 16,689; increase, 3,003.

Interest naturally attaches to the proportionate large immigration from Japan. While the exclusion laws have rendered practically nil the immigration from China, the immigration from Japan, although relatively not great, has trebled in the last year. This increase is significant, too, because it comes in the face of regulations adopted by the American government, with the assent of Japan, which, it was supposed, would curtail the immigration of Japanese to this country very materially.

Commissioner Sargent presents excerpts from official reports made to his bureau by inspectors sent to Mexico and Canada to study the situation with special reference to the coming of Japanese to America through those countries. The reports show that thousands of Japanese landed in Mexico during the last year and ultimately gained admission surreptitiously into this country. Once in the United States, it was impossible to find them, except in the rarest instances. While the regulations concerning Japanese Immigration have tended to reduce the number of regularly admitted immigrants, hundreds if not thousands of Japanese still are coming into the country by stealth.

Referring to the immigration figures from the various countries, Commissioner Sargent says the table furnishes a striking illustration of the fact that the time has arrived when if people are dissatisfied with existing political, economic and social conditions in one country, they will find the means by which to desert their former homes and settle where a fair chance is afforded them. Its chief interest to the people of the United States consists in the question that must arise in the mind of any person examining the figures as to whether our ability as a race to absorb foreign elements is not on the verge, at least, of being overtaxed.

The financial condition of admitted aliens is always an interesting subject. Of those admitted $73,892 had less than $50 in their possession, while 107,682 were able to show amounts in excess of $500. The total amount of money brought into the country by arriving aliens was $25,590,836, or an average of almost $430 a person.

Of the 12,064 who were returned during the year, 6,184 were contract laborers, but the number of contract laborers deported during the last year was 35 per cent less than in the preceding year.

A table showing the outward passenger movement during the last year develops the fact that that movement was greater than in any preceding year for which statistics are available. The total number of cabin passengers was 224,699 and other than cabin 504,556. The aggregate amount of outward bound passengers was 72,115 larger than in 1898.

In a discussion of the new immigration act Commissioner Sargent strongly urges that advantage be taken of a provision it contains for calling an international conference on immigration and emigration. In his opinion, now is the time to act. He says:

There never has been a period when all the principal countries of the world were more relatively interested in the subject of immigration than at the present time. Several of the leading European countries have recently either passed or introduced in their legislatures laws of which have been modelled practically after our own. Some of the governments are taking notice with the idea of adopting measures to discourage the immigration of their citizens or to induce their return; others are soliciting lest their subjects forget their allegiance; and altogether there should be no difficulty in appealing to this enlightened general interest with the object of accomplishing some international arrangement and understanding that will work for the general good.
"Me, I have been in America 27 years the August. Me an' my husband, we were both born in [Biesca?], Spain. It is on the [?] River.

"We lived jus' a three hours' carriage ride from Saragossa. That in where my husband learn' the granite cutting. We were married sixteen months when we decided to come to America. There was another stonecutter an' his wife from our town who come with us. We took the train to Bilao, an' from there the boat. No, no, I did not like that boat an' I did not like the trip. I was use' to ride only in a wagon or carriage, an' that boat it make me sick all the time. I was carry' my first baby then. She was born four months after we got to Barre. All that trip I was sick enough to die. I want' to be alone, but even that I could not have. The stonecutter an' his wife from our town share' our room, an' besides them there are two other couples. I never again want to travel that way.

"I was too sick to bother to look at New York. My husband use' to say it was a lot like Saragossa. But, well, he was so busy to take care of me that he didn't see much himself. Besides, he was always say' that when you look quick an' short at big cities they all look the same. We found a room with a Spanish family. We stayed there three weeks. For two weeks I was abed all the time. Afterwards we picked out these rooms. I've lived here ever since.

"No, he did not die from stonecutters' T. B. He died from pneumonia at the time of the influenza. But the doctor said that if his lungs were not already touch' with dust, maybe he would have got well. It was hard for me to get along after he died. But I have already tol' you about the woman on the Hill who bought my crocheted worked. She help' me to get a lot of customers. I do dressmaking an' plain sewing, too. 5 "I learned to crochet in the old country. There was a convent of white nuns just outside of [Biesca?]. Every Saturday they would give lessons free to anybody who wanted to go. Sewing, crocheting, linen work. The work they did was the best I have ever seen. The linens were sent to the cathedrals in the big cities. Altar linens they were. I always say it is very lucky for me that I learn' to do this work. How else then could I support myself an' three children, except that I scrub floors an' do hard work all the time?

"Yes, I have people left in Spain. I think I have. I have not heard now for two, three years. The people of my husband, they stop' from writing jus' as soon as he died, so them I do not count. My own father an' mother are a lone time dead. There is only a brother over there, an' I do not know if he is dead or alive. I do not hear from the letters I wrote, I do not get them back, I do not know what to think. He had two children, grown up now. I do not hear from them either. I think that country has gone very crazy with war an' power. I am glad to be safe right here.

"No, I do not want to go back ever. An' why should I? There is nothing there for me. As long as I have my eyes an' my hands I can earn enough money here to pay my rent an' live pretty good —"
### Multiple Perspectives & Diverse Formats: Immigration

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**Issue or Question:**

How do these sources represent the various perspectives of immigration from the time period?

How do these different types of sources work together to help you understand what life was like for immigrants during the time period?

What other types of sources would you want to look at to further your understanding of immigration in the early part of the 20th century?