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*THE WAY WE SAW IT*

# THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

IN ILLUSTRATION AND ART

A Teacher's  
Resource Booklet  
with Lesson Plans and Reproducible  
Student Activity Assignments



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The well-crafted lessons in MindSparks materials use editorial cartoons, photos, and other visuals to generate spirited yet carefully ordered classroom interactions. The materials are primarily booklets with the ImageXaminer included on CD-ROM. These curriculum supplements cover all major areas of the social studies, with some literature-based materials of interest to language arts teachers. MindSparks products are content-rich materials using visual primary source documents to promote classroom discussion, small-group interaction, and individual student research projects.

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# Introduction

## The Immigrant Experience in U.S. History

The subject of immigration to the United States is vast. Since the 1600s, America has been created by wave after wave of uprooted people hoping to start over in a new land. In a way, the history of immigration *is* the history of the country itself. To encompass it completely with just twelve illustrations and a few lessons would be impossible.

We might have based the lessons on the key immigrant groups that have come to America since its founding. Inevitably, however, we would have left out many such groups. Yet while each group's encounter with America varied in its details, certain experiences were common to all. At least that is the assumption behind the way this booklet is organized. The pattern of experiences shared by nearly all immigrants is the focus of four lessons, each of which uses three illustrations to explore one broad theme in the overall story of immigration. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **Departure for the New World**

Some immigrants came simply to improve their lives. Millions of others felt forced to leave to escape intolerable economic or political circumstances at home. But except for enslaved Africans, nearly all immigrants came willingly, one individual, family, or small group at a time. For each of them, whether crossing an ocean or a border, the trip has almost always been dangerous and traumatic, an experience of confusion, fear, and hope.

### **First Contacts in America**

The trip and the first encounters with America were a kind of initiation ritual in which the immigrant passed from one culture to another, one lifetime to another. The illustrations in this section capture the disorienting nature of these encounters and the initial efforts immigrants made to help themselves and others of their background cope and begin to adjust.

### **The Immigrant as Seen by Others**

No account of immigration would be complete without some attention to the way the newcomers were seen by Americans already here. As the illustrations in this lesson show, that reaction has been a mixed one. Confidence about the immigrants and about America's ability to welcome them in has coexisted with fears about the threat alien cultures might pose to widely shared American norms and traditions.

### **Adapting to a New Life**

Also mixed have been immigrant reactions to the idea of adjusting to and living in American society. A desire to hold to old ways has to one degree or another been felt by just about every immigrant, even those anxious also to learn how to be Americans. Perhaps this mix of feelings is itself a part of what it means to be an American — a respect for older traditions along with a readiness to risk all for a different future.

## Using Photos, Cartoons and Other Visuals to Teach History

Most textbooks today are full of colorful visuals. But all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. But only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use this Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**CD-ROM WITH IMAGES** The ImageXaminer allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions. The CD-ROM also includes a folder containing all of the discussion questions and follow-up questions in pdf format. All of the images are also in pdf format, should you wish to create overhead transparencies.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS FOR EACH ILLUSTRATION**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the images in the ImageXaminer. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small group or all-class activities.

*The Immigrant Experience*

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will consider some of the factors that might lead people to uproot themselves and become immigrants.
  2. Students will better appreciate the difficulties immigrants face in just getting to America.
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# Departure for the New World

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

Throughout the history of the United States, millions of people in other parts of the world have made the decision to uproot themselves and begin a new life in America. The general causes for immigration varied from country to country, and from one historical time period to another. This scene shows immigrants leaving Ireland in the mid-1800s. Famine, religious strife and political persecution all drove people out of Ireland in those years. Whatever the general causes for immigration, the decision to leave was almost always made individually, family by family. It was a traumatic and risky leap into the unknown. This scene captures the dramatic moment when last farewells separated immigrants from friends, loved ones, and all they had known of the world until that day.

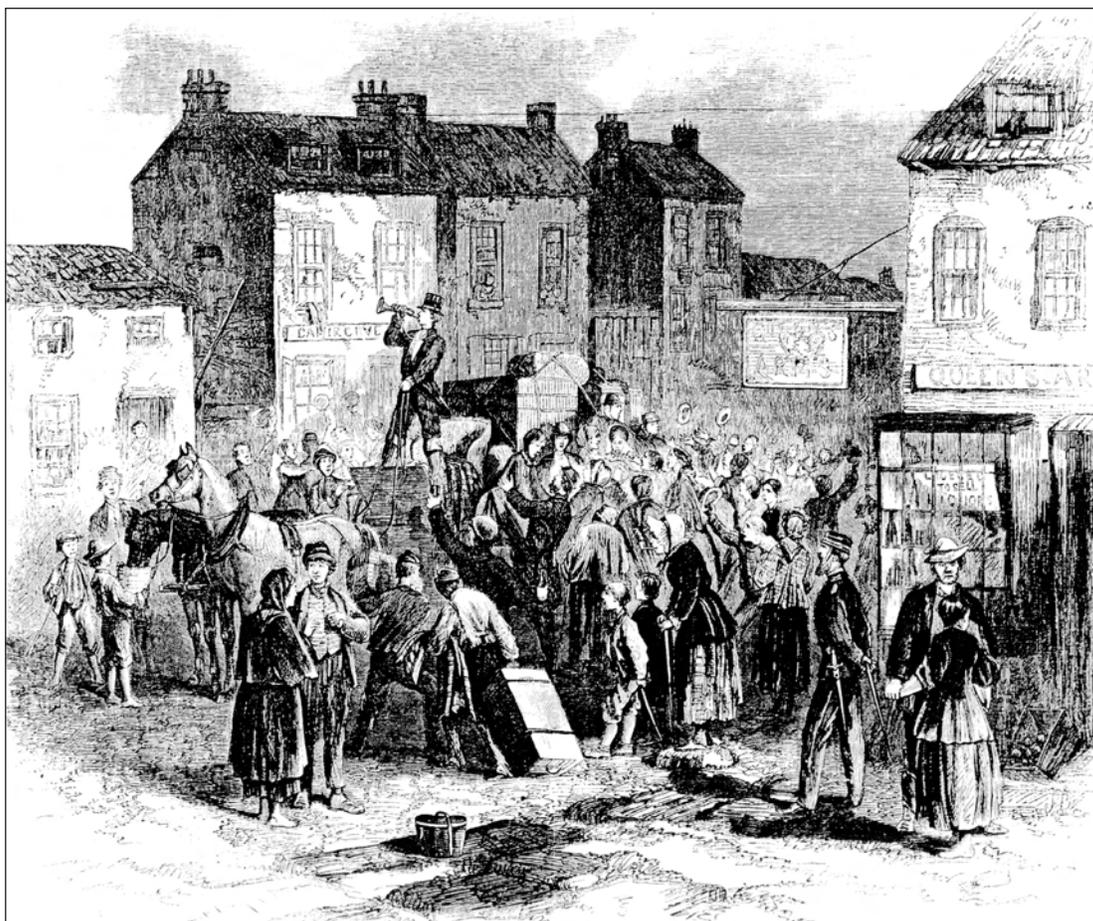
**Illustration 2**

At first, the journey to America took months. In the 1700s and early 1800s, it could involve several separate trips through different nations, with tolls, border fees, and other expenses along the way — to say nothing of many other kinds of dangers. Then the trip across the Atlantic might take six weeks or more. Death and disease were common on board. Even in the late 1800s, steam ships still took up to two weeks to cross, with poorer immigrants confined for nearly the entire trip below deck in cramped, unhealthy steerage quarters. The sight of the Statue of Liberty must have thrilled these immigrants — even though many of them might not have heard of the Statue itself.

**Illustration 3**

The immigrant experience has always been full of difficulties and worries even when it was undertaken legally. But millions of people have broken the law to get into this country. Many of them come across the U.S.-Mexican border without asking anyone's permission, as this man did long ago in 1912. How much of a problem do such immigrants cause for the nation? That's a question many Americans argue about today. Photos like this can't supply an answer. But they do tell us something about the determination of such immigrants — and millions of others who have set out with little or nothing to start their lives over again in the United States.

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Discussing the Illustration

1. The immigrant's journey to America began in many different ways. Here, a group is starting out from a village in county Kerry, Ireland, in the mid-1800s. What problems would poor immigrants to America then have been likely to face just in getting here?
2. What can you learn about Irish immigrants in the 1800s just from this drawing? For example, what can you know about how they decided to leave? About what they took with them? About what they might have been expecting or hoping for?
4. What do you suppose the people leaving in this scene are thinking and feeling? What about the people saying goodbye to them?
3. Between about 1820 and 1880, about 3.5 million people from Ireland came to the U.S. But about 2 million of them arrived in the 1840s alone. From your knowledge of history, can you explain what some of the causes were that led so many to leave Ireland in the 1840s?

## Follow-up Activities

1. Suppose you were moving to go live in another country for good today. Make a list of all the things you would have to decide and do in the weeks just before you left. Now make an additional list of the kinds of decisions the people in the above drawing probably had to make. As a class, share and discuss the lists you have come up with.
2. Millions of Irish immigrants came to this country in the 1840s. Why? Here is a list of possible causes.

Crop failures  
Famine  
Landlord evictions of tenants  
Religious conflict  
Great Britain's rule over Ireland

Read more about the troubles in Ireland in the 1840s. Based on what you read, rank the above list of causes in order, from most important to least important. In a brief report to the class, explain your ranking of these causes.

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. The immigrants on this boat are getting their first view of America. What famous statue are they passing? It seems fitting that an immigrant's first view of America would include this statue? Why?
2. These immigrants are arriving in the year 1887. Few of them would have understood what the Statue of Liberty meant. From what you know about the Statue and the immigrants of the late 1800s, can you explain why that would probably have been so?
3. The boat carrying the immigrants in this drawing was powered both by sails and by a steam engine. It took about ten days to two weeks to get across the Atlantic Ocean. The immigrants on deck were "steerage passengers." What does this mean? What would the trip across the Atlantic have been like for them? What problems would it have caused them?
4. What do you suppose these immigrants thought would happen to them when they landed? What big surprises do you think awaited them?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Find some library books describing the trip across the Atlantic Ocean taken by immigrants in the 1800s. Try to find books with first-hand accounts of the trip by the immigrants themselves. Based on your reading, pick out two or three people in the above drawing and create an imaginary discussion among them. Identify the particular people in the drawing you have chosen. Then write down their imaginary discussion as if they are having it at the very point in their voyage shown here. Select the most interesting of these discussions and group them around this picture in a bulletin board display.
- 2 Small Group Activity: Interview your relatives and relatives of other students in your class. Find out which family members were immigrants, and when they first came to America. Record any stories each family still has about this trip. Discuss these stories with the class, and talk about why so many families keep alive these memories of their ancestors' first journey to and arrival in America.

## Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. Not all immigrants come into this country openly and with permission. This photo shows one immigrant simply crossing into the U.S. by driving his wagon across the border. What nation do you think this man is leaving?
2. This photo is from 1912, but what it illustrates only really became a big problem in recent decades. Can you explain why?
3. What do you suppose people who enter the U.S. without permission hope to do in the United States once they get into the country? In what ways would their journey here be like those of the immigrants in the first two illustrations in this lesson? In what ways would this journey be different?
4. Some see illegal immigration as a very big problem facing our nation. Others actually see it as a hopeful view of what could be a big opportunity for our nation. Explain these two points of view. With which view do you agree more? Why?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. **Small Group Activity:** First, collect several newspaper and magazine articles on illegal immigration. Read and discuss the articles in your group. As you do this, talk about what you think each of the following types of people might say about this photograph:

The immigrant in this photo  
An illegal immigrant today  
An Immigration Service official  
A legal Vietnamese refugee  
A wealthy Texas farmer  
An El Paso resident

As a group, role-play a discussion in which each of you take the part of one of the above types of people. Keep in mind that not everyone in any group thinks alike. For example, not all El Paso residents would think in exactly the same way. But their similar experiences might affect their ideas about this issue. Use your imagination. After doing this role-playing activity in your group, perform it and discuss it in front of the entire class.

*The Immigrant Experience*

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better appreciate the psychological shock and confusion many immigrants experienced in their initial encounter with America.
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# First Contacts in America

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

During the 1800s, immigrants to the U.S. entered the nation through receiving stations in Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco and several other ports of entry. But far and away the most frequent destination of immigrants was New York City. Before 1892, immigrants arriving in New York mainly entered through a receiving station called Castle Gardens. When the flow of immigrants grew too large, a new station was opened on Ellis Island in New York Bay. From 1892 to 1954, about 20 million immigrants were officially processed at Ellis Island. They were given medical examinations and a chance to clean up, questioned, given some preliminary advice, and quickly admitted into America.

**Illustration 2**

This photo shows an Italian immigrant family arriving at Ellis Island. It seems to capture the full range of emotions that must have been common to immigrants on first arriving — relief, confusion, anxiety, eagerness. This Italian family was typical of the second great wave of immigration into the United States. The first consisted of immigrants from England, Ireland, Germany, the Scandinavian countries and other Western European nations. In the late 1800s, the so-called “New Immigration” began, from southern and eastern Europe — from Poland, Rumania, parts of the Austrian empire, Russia, Italy, etc. These immigrants were mainly peasants from backward, rural parts of Europe. They disembarked into the teeming cities of a modern industrial nation. In this sense, they faced an even greater change in their lives than most earlier groups of immigrants had.

**Illustration 3**

Immigrants rarely had much help in starting over. They usually had to rely on others of their own group who were already here. Illustration 3A shows immigrants entering the Barge Office, which was used when Ellis Island was not available. In Illustration 3B, a new Italian immigrant sells bananas in an open-air market in an Italian neighborhood in New York City. Immigrants had to rely mainly on the rich cultural world their group built for itself in the city, or in rural areas as well. That immigrant community's churches, newspapers, taverns, shops and other institutions aided, when they could, the new arrivals initial adjustment.

## Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. From 1892 to 1954, a huge share of immigrants to the U.S. passed through a famous receiving station on an island near New York City. This photo was taken at that station. Can you name the island where this famous immigrant receiving station was located?
2. The official you see here is giving immigrants an eye examination. Why might U.S. officials have wanted to give eye exams and other medical tests to each new immigrant?
3. In the early 1900s, several thousand immigrants often passed through Ellis Island in a single day. What else do you suppose officials there tried to find out about these immigrants? Why?
4. What kinds of reactions do you think immigrants in the early 1900s had to the officials at Ellis Island? Why? Did any members of your family, past or present, go through Ellis Island when they arrived in this country? If so, what do you know about what happened to them there?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small Group Activity: Ellis Island opened in 1892. Before then, immigrants arriving in the U.S. at New York mainly entered through a receiving station called Castle Gardens. Look in your library for books on immigration with drawings or photos of Castle Gardens and Ellis Island. Also, learn more about how both receiving stations operated. In what ways did each station help the immigrants? In what ways did each station cause problems for the immigrants? Use your answers to these questions and some of the illustrations you have found to create a bulletin board display called “Passing Through to America.”
2. Read more about what happened to immigrants at Ellis Island. Pretend you are one of the immigrants in the photo shown above. Write a long letter back to a cousin or other relative describing what happened to you at Ellis Island. In your letter, give your relative some advice about how to deal with this last stage of the journey before entering the United States.

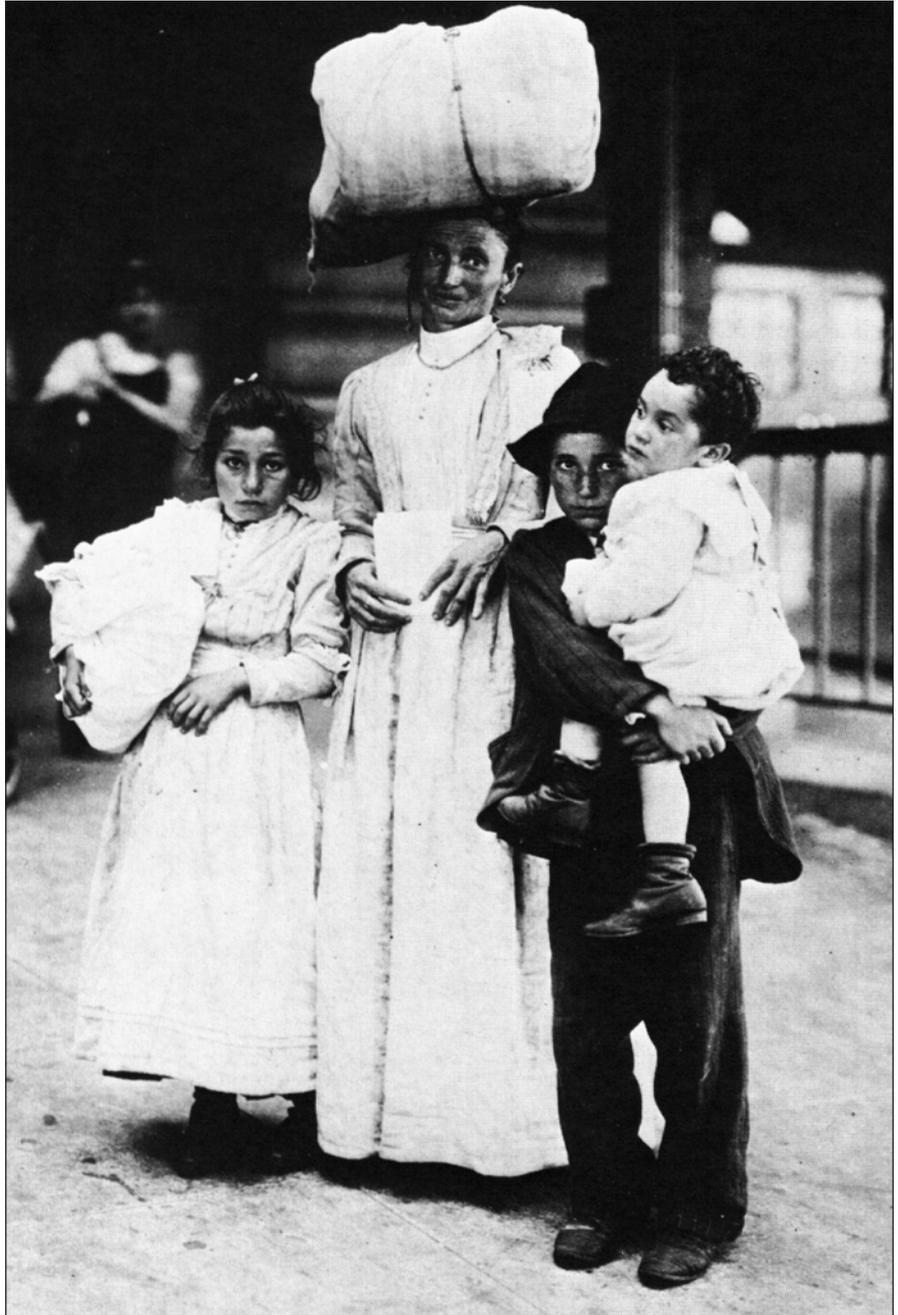
## Illustration 2

### *Discussing the Illustration*

1. In the late 1800s, millions of immigrants came to America from many places. Most of them came from southern and eastern Europe. Name some of the nations these immigrants left. In what ways were these immigrants like or not like immigrants today?
2. The family you see here came from Italy. What features of the photo help you to identify these people as immigrants in the late 1800s? What features help you understand better what it was like to be an immigrant then?
3. Which person in this photo do you think might have had the hardest time during his or her first years in America? Which one would have had the easiest time? Explain your answers.

### *Follow-up Activities*

1. Pretend you are one of the people in this photo. Make up a series of diary entries this person might have written during his or her first month in America. Write at least five such entries. In them, mention such things as your efforts to find a place to live, how to deal with language problems, finding work, dealing with officials, store clerks, neighbors, other relatives, etc.
2. Pretend you are writing a U.S. history textbook. You have decided to use this photo in the book. Create your own caption or paragraph about the photo to include in the book. Come up with one activity for students to do using the photo.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## Lesson 2 — First Contacts in America

# Illustration 3A & 3B

3A



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

3B



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. Newcomers were often completely on their own as soon as they got off the boat. Illustration 3A shows immigrants entering the Barge Office, which was used when Ellis Island was not available. What thoughts and concerns do you suppose these people were having at this point?
2. Immigrants already here often did help others who were just arriving. What kinds of help do you suppose they might have given to the newly arrived Italian immigrant selling bananas, shown in Illustration 3B?
3. Newcomers sometimes had friends or relatives already here who could help them. But suppose they did not. What kinds of decisions might they need to make right away? And what difficulties or dangers might have made it hard for them?
4. Should the government have done more to aid these newcomers? Or was it better to let each immigrant group come up with its own ways to help its newly arrived members? Explain your answer.

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Huge numbers of Irish immigrants came to America in the 1840s. Read more about the Irish in America in the 1840s and 1850s. Find out where most of the immigrants from Ireland settled and what kinds of work they were likely to do here. Find out in what ways their social, economic, cultural and religious traditions made them different from other groups in America. And find out how in general the Irish were treated by other Americans. Based on your findings, prepare a list of the kinds of advice you would give to newly arrived immigrants if you were working for a community group set up to aid new immigrants.
2. If you had to move, what other country would you choose to live in? Look through a travel guide on that country. Based on your reading, make a list of the questions you would ask if you were just visiting that country for a while? Now add other questions you would ask if you planned to live in that country for good. Share your lists in a class discussion.

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will analyze some commonly held positive and negative views of immigrants.
  2. Students will debate the pros and cons of immigration and efforts to restrict immigration into this country.
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# The Immigrant as Seen by Others

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

This U.S. cartoon from 1843 portrays Irish political leader Daniel O’Connell on the left calling out to an Irish immigrant family in America to come home and help fight for freedom in Ireland. The prosperous Irish family on the right is obviously not that interested in problems back in the old country. They say they are doing well in America. They see unlimited possibilities open to them there, and they express complete loyalty to their adopted nation. To be sure, this cartoon presents an idealized view of what life was like for Irish immigrants in America. But it does also express real optimism about immigrants. It shows them improving their lives by their own efforts and smoothly adapting to the larger society. In this sense, it is an example of a positive view of immigrants that was and still is widely held in this country.

**Illustration 2**

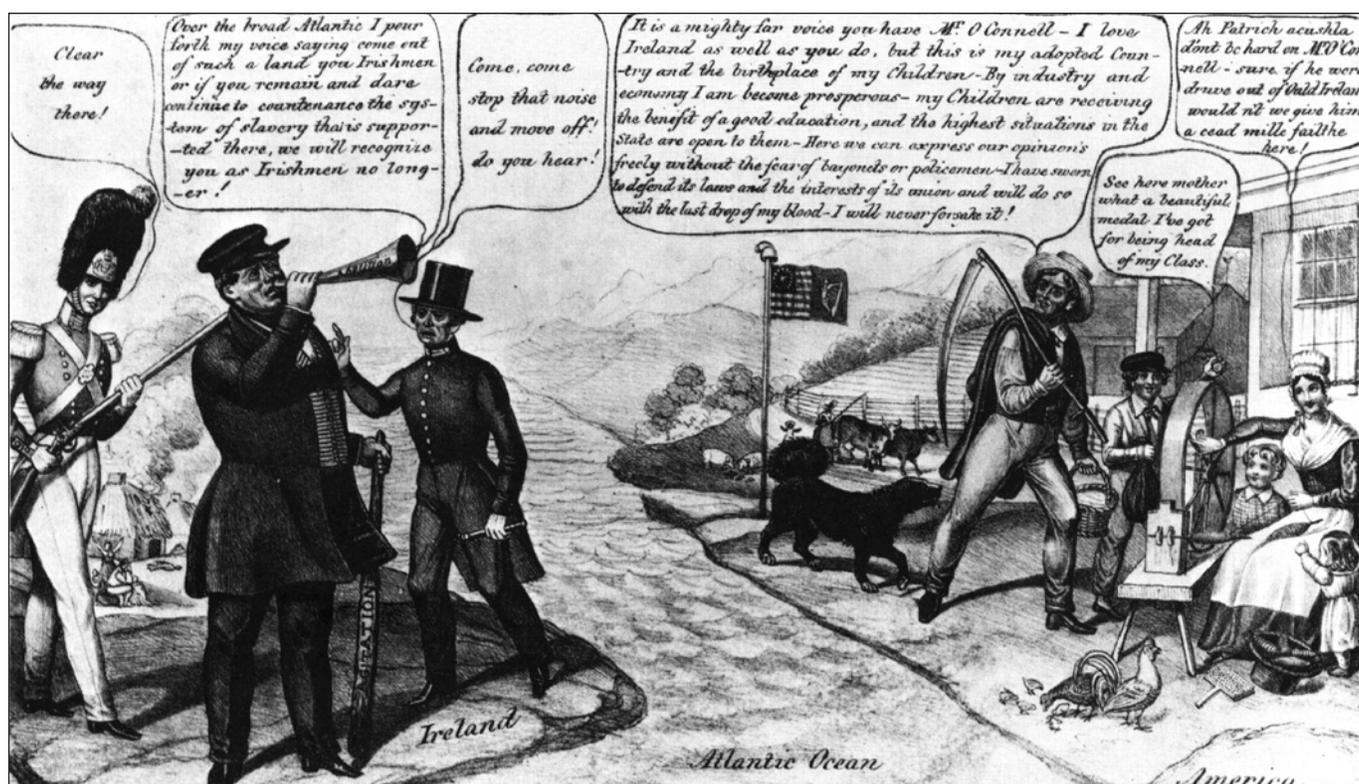
This view of immigration is *not* optimistic, confident, or positive. The cartoon is from the late 1800s, and it reflects the fears growing then about the so-called “New Immigration” from eastern and southern Europe. The cartoon stereotypes both the native “Yankees” and the immigrants. The exaggeration and distortion of the physical features and behavior of the immigrant figures in the cartoon reveal the racist underpinning of anti-immigrant feelings during this period. The cartoon expresses the fear that alien cultures were threatening a supposedly pure form of American civilization and character.

**Illustration 3**

Fears about immigration gained strength in the late 1800s and soon led to calls for immigration restriction. The first laws were directed at Chinese immigrants. Many restrictions were backed by labor leaders seeking to protect the jobs of native workers. But broader concerns about immigration and its threat to American culture spread in the early 1900s. This cartoon comments critically on a plan to use literacy tests to exclude immigrants. This idea was enacted into law in 1917. But the really effective restrictions came in the 1920s, when quotas were set up for each nationality. They were designed to place the strictest limits on the “New Immigration.” For the most part, this system remained in place until 1965.

## Lesson 3 — The Immigrant as Seen by Others

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This 1843 cartoon shows an Irish leader named Daniel O'Connell on the left calling out to an Irish immigrant family in America to come home and help fight for freedom in Ireland. From what you know about Ireland then, can you guess who or what the soldier pushing O'Connell is supposed to stand for?
2. The immigrant tells O'Connell, "I love Ireland as much as you do, but this is my adopted country. ... By industry and economy I am become prosperous." He goes on to say, "Here we can express our opinions freely, without fear of bayonets and policeman." The young boy is showing his mother a medal he got for being first in his class. What points about immigrants and about America do these features help the cartoon to make?
3. Look closely at the figures and the scene in the cartoon. In general, what view of Irish immigrants does the cartoon present? Do you think the cartoon is typical of the way most Americans have viewed immigrants? Why or why not?

### Follow-up Activities

1. In the cartoon, O'Connell warns the immigrants that "if you remain and dare continue to countenance the system of slavery that is supported there, we will recognize you as Irishmen no longer." The word "countenance" means to put up with something or tolerate it. What is O'Connell talking about here? And what point does he seem to be making? Pretend you are one of the Irish immigrants on the right in the cartoon. Write a letter to O'Connell responding to this part of his comment. Then pretend you are O'Connell and write another letter back in answer to the first letter.
2. Was this cartoon drawn by an Irish immigrant to the United States? Or was it drawn by a non-Irish American-born citizen of the United States? What do you think? Make up your mind about this and write a brief essay defending your opinion. How does your answer in this essay affect your view of the cartoon and its meaning.

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

UNRESTRICTED IMMIGRATION AND ITS RESULTS - A POSSIBLE CURIOSITY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.  
THE LAST YANKEE

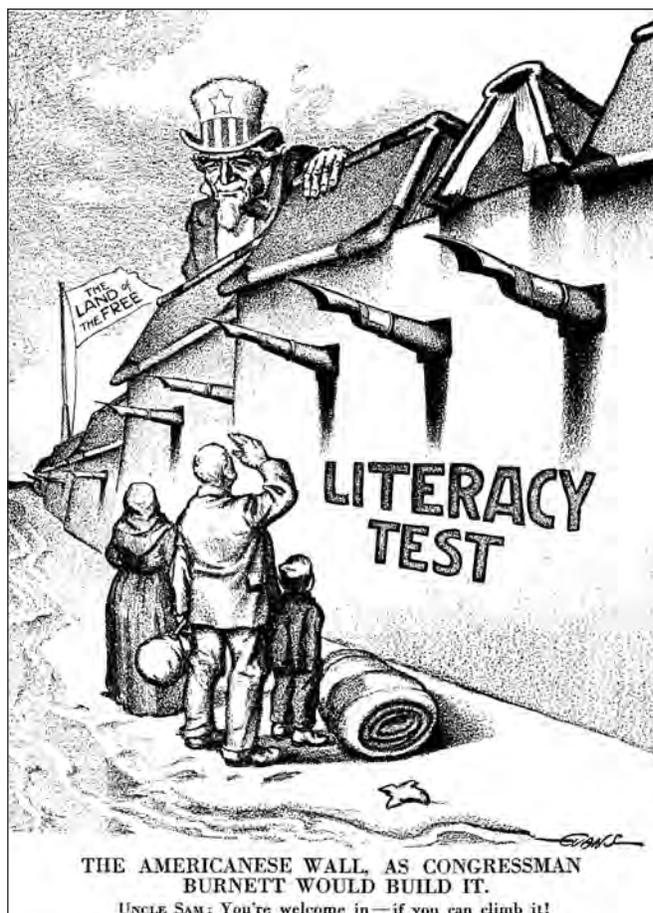
### Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon is from the late 1800s. Its view of immigration is not at all favorable. One figure in this cartoon is shown favorably, but he is *not* an immigrant. He is the man in the middle. The caption calls him the “last Yankee.” What details in the drawing help to show him in a favorable way?
2. All the other figures in the cartoon are immigrants. How do their clothes differ from those of the last Yankee? How do their facial expressions add to the differences between them and the last Yankee? What other details make them appear different? In what ways is this view of immigrants an insulting one?
3. The caption reads: “Unrestricted immigration and its results — a possible curiosity of the twentieth century, the last Yankee.” Taking this caption and the drawing together, what do you think the artist is really worried about? Were there any good reasons at all for these worries? Did the caption’s prediction about the “twentieth century” come true? Explain your answers.

### Follow-up Activities

1. A stereotype is an over-simplified and too broad view of an entire group of people. Often stereotypes can be insulting. Most people would say this drawing contains insulting stereotypes of various immigrant groups. Editorial cartoons often use stereotypes. This is not always done to be insulting, but is sometimes just an easy way to picture a group in order to make a point about it. Find several editorial cartoons that use stereotypes to portray entire groups (the rich, the poor, minorities, politicians, women, etc.). Bring the cartoons to class and discuss the stereotypes in them. In each case, decide whether the stereotype is meant to be insulting, or whether it is simply used to help the cartoon make a point.
2. Many people predict that by the mid-21st century, “whites,” or caucasians, will no longer make up a majority of our nation. Are their views in any way like those expressed in this cartoon? Discuss this question in class.

## Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This editorial cartoon from 1916 shows a huge figure leaning over a wall. Who is this figure, and what does he stand for in most editorial cartoons?
2. The cartoon caption calls this wall “The Americanese Wall.” What famous wall is that supposed to remind you of? What was the purpose of that wall?
3. The Wall of China was built to keep out invaders from the north. The “wall” in this cartoon is meant to keep out people too. What groups is it meant to keep out of America?
4. This “Americanese Wall” is not a real wall. From the words on it, and the strange “weapons” jutting out of it, can you guess what this wall really is and how it would be likely keep immigrants out of America?
5. The cartoon comments on one lawmaker’s plan to limit the number of immigrants entering our country. What is the cartoon’s opinion about this plan? Do you agree with its view? Why or why not?

### Follow-up Activities

1. By the early 1900s, many Americans had come to favor stricter limits on immigration. This attitude was partly a response to a new wave of immigration that began around 1880. Before then, most immigrants came from western European nations such as Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. The “new immigration” was made up mainly of Italians, Russians, Hungarians, Poles and others from southern or eastern Europe. Read more about this “new immigration” and American reactions to it. In a brief essay, explain how both this illustration and the last one (on page 14) are different responses to what was unusual in this new wave of immigration in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
2. Read more about the efforts to limit immigration in the 1920s. Based on your reading, redo this cartoon to better reflect the way the government finally did limit the number of immigrants entering the country.

*The Immigrant Experience*

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better understand the complex nature of the way immigrants adapt to America.
  2. Students will debate the concepts of “melting pot” or “mosaic” as descriptions of this process of adaptation.
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# Adapting to a New Life

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

In adapting to life in America, each immigrant group brings a different mix of goals, work skills, cultural values, and ties to one another and to people back in the old country. For example, many Chinese immigrants on the West Coast in the late 1800s came in large groups to work in mines and on the transcontinental railroad. Often they planned only to earn some money and then return to China. In the meantime, they stayed in their own section of San Francisco, where they tried to live much as they had at home. Some set up their own businesses, such as laundries like the one in this drawing. The Chinese were more exclusive than other immigrant groups, but most of the others also tended to seek out neighborhoods of their own, with cultural and social institutions of their own, such as businesses, schools, churches, newspapers, etc.

**Illustration 2**

Most immigrants want to keep their own languages, beliefs, and customs, at least to some extent. At the same time, many also have a strong desire to learn English and the ways of life common in their new homeland. In other words, they are often in some conflict within themselves about becoming Americans. At the same time, many non-immigrants feel a similar conflict. They often want immigrants to give up old ways completely, while also doubting that this is possible — or even desirable. In a way, this drawing captures all of these mixed feelings. It shows Chinese immigrants learning English, while holding on to old customs. And it shows an American teaching them eagerly, yet with a certain air of superiority. The caption certainly conveys this combination of goodwill and prejudice toward the immigrants.

**Illustration 3**

Immigrants often adapt only partially to life in the United States. They learn to deal with the ways of life around them enough to get by. Yet they often also remain somewhat apart. Their children, however, are almost always much more strongly attracted to American ways of life. The Chinese youngsters in this photo were all attending a special school to learn more about China’s language and heritage. It’s clear, however, that they have also mastered American styles of dress, pop culture and probably many other aspects of life in the United States.

## Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. This drawing shows how one group of immigrants began to adjust to life in America. Can you guess what group of immigrants is shown here, and what work they are doing?
2. Many Chinese immigrants came to California in the late 1800s to work in mines and help build railroads. But others set up laundries and other businesses in a special section of San Francisco called “Chinatown.” Why might a Chinese immigrant running such a business wish to hire only other Chinese to work in it?
3. In the late 1800s in California, many people said that the Chinese were taking jobs away from Americans who were already here. But others said they were actually just doing menial jobs that no other American wanted. With which of these views do you agree more? What do you suppose the people in this drawing might have said about this argument?

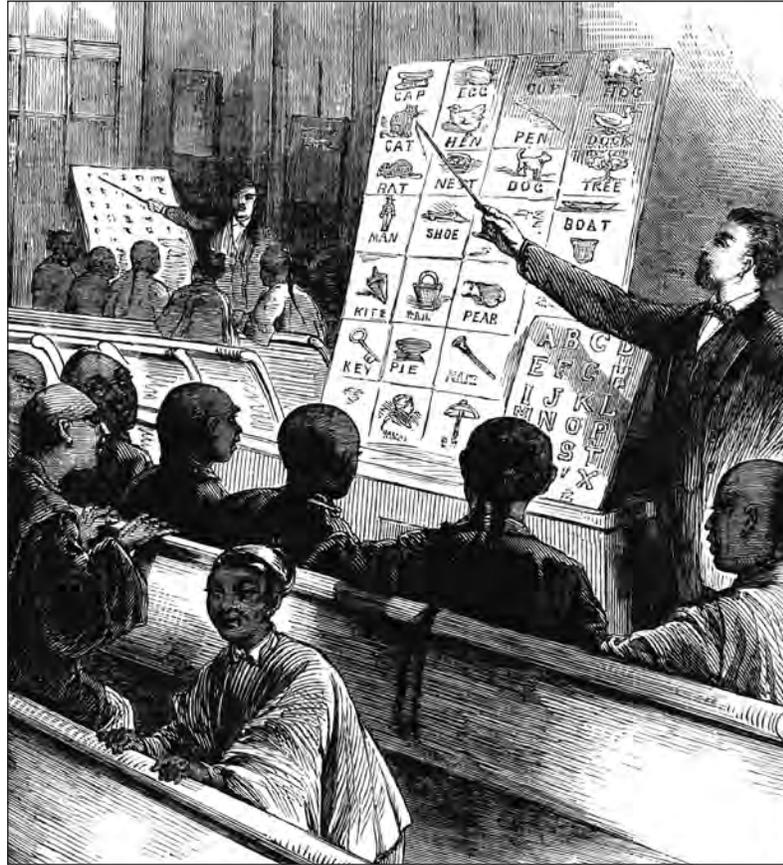
### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Each immigrant group has seemed to favor certain places in the U.S. to live and certain kinds of work. Why? To find out, do some reading about one of the following groups:

Irish  
Italians  
Chinese  
Russian and eastern European Jews  
Norwegians  
Haitians  
Mexicans

Now prepare a brief report to class. In your report, answer these questions about the group you have picked: In what parts of the nation did the group mainly settle? What were the main kinds of work people in this group did? What in the group’s background led its members to settle and work as they did? What conditions in the U.S. at the time led these people to settle and work as they did?

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

OUR HOME HEATHEN — TEACHING THE ‘HEATHEN CHINEE’

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows another part of the way some Chinese immigrants in the late 1800s adapted to America. What are these immigrants doing?
2. Many Chinese immigrants were hired in China and came to work here for a few years. They hoped to save money and then go back to China. While here, they lived almost entirely with other Chinese. Would such Chinese immigrants have wanted to take a class like this anyway? Why or why not?
3. Do you think it would be hard or easy to learn the language of a nation while adjusting to it as an immigrant? Why or why not? Does this class look like a good setting for these Chinese immigrants to learn English? Why or why not?
4. Beneath this drawing, a caption reads: “Our Home Heathen — Teaching the ‘Heathen Chinee’.” What does this caption suggest about the attitude of the artist who drew this picture? Do you think the picture portrays the Chinese favorably or unfavorably? Why?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Many immigrants chose to live mainly with others of their own group. This was especially true of the Chinese — in part, because many of them wanted to keep their old ways of life and return to China. This fact seems to have added to suspicions toward them in California. In 1876, for example, a report by the California legislature said of the Chinese:

*“They have never adapted themselves to our habits, mode of dress, or our educational system, have never learned the sanctity of an oath, never desired to become citizens ... never discovered the difference between right and wrong, never ceased the worship of their idol gods, or advanced a step beyond the traditions of their native hive.”*

What do you think of this statement? Why do you think so many Californians felt this way in the late 1800s? How do you think the artist who drew the above illustration would have felt about this statement? Why?

## Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. This 1966 photo shows a group of Chinese students in New York City. They may not all be immigrants themselves, but their parents or grandparents probably were. In what ways does this photo show that these young people have adjusted to life in the United States.
2. These students were attending something called the New York “Chinese Public School.” The school met from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. daily. At this special school, the students learn Chinese language and history. Why do you suppose their parents sent them to this school in addition to regular public school?
3. What differences in outlook do you suppose these students have from their immigrant parents or grandparents? What problems do you think they might have with the Chinese adults in their families and community? What might they be able to learn from these Chinese adults? What might those adults be able to learn from them?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small Group Activity: Many people use the phrase “the melting pot” for the way immigrants in America give up their old ways of life, old beliefs, and their languages, and in time come to act and think like most other Americans. But other people say this change is never complete. They say the melting pot never quite melts. Instead, some of them see America more as a “mosaic” — that is, a collection of ethnic, national and religious groups that hold on to many of their differences. As a group, debate these two different ideas about America. Then write brief essays about these ideas using the three illustrations in this lesson (pages 17-19) to support your point of view. Arrange the illustrations (and any others you find) along with your essays in a bulletin board display entitled: “America: Melting Pot or Mosaic?” Discuss the display and your essays with the rest of the class.

# Answers to Factual Questions

(Answers provided only to questions  
requiring a single correct answer)

## Lesson 1

**Illustration 1** (no fact questions)

**Illustration 2** Question 1: The Statue of Liberty

Question 3: Steerage passengers traveled in the cramped area below deck in the back of the ship.

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Mexico

Question 2: The problem of illegal immigration, especially across the U.S.-Mexico border has become a very big one since the 1960s.

## Lesson 2

**Illustration 1** Question 1: Ellis Island

**Illustration 2** Question 1: Italy, Poland, Russia, Austria, Rumania, etc.

**Illustration 3** (no fact questions)

## Lesson 3

**Illustration 1** Question 1: Great Britain

**Illustration 2** (no fact questions)

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Uncle Sam; he stands for the United States

Question 2: The Great Wall of China (or “Chinese Wall”); it was supposed to keep out invaders from the north.

Question 3: Immigrants

## Lesson 4

**Illustration 1** Question 1: These are Chinese immigrants working in a laundry.

**Illustration 2** Question 1: Learning English

**Illustration 3** (no fact questions)

