



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Lessons

Tough Decisions

Overview/Description

Students will work in teams to plan, research, interpret, and then present new legislation affecting immigrants and whether they should be accepted or rejected entry to the country based on political, religious, or health reasons.

Grade Level

High School

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of Jan. 2010):
 - High School, U. S. Government, Standard 4, The Relationship of the United States to Other Nations in World Affairs (USG.4.9, USG.4.10); U. S. Government, Standard 5, Roles of Citizens in the United States (USG.5.12)
 - High School, U. S. History, Standard 3, Emergence of the Modern United States: 1897-1920 (USH.3.7); U. S. History, Standard 4, Modern United States Prosperity and Depression: 1920s–1939 (USH.4.3); U. S. History, Standard 6, Postwar United States: 1945–1960 (UHS.6.1); U. S. History, Standard 7: The United States in

Troubled Times: 1960–1980 (USH.7.4), U. S. History, Standard 8, The Contemporary United States: 1980 to the Present (USH.8.5), U. S. History, Standard 9, Historical Thinking (USH.9.2, USH.9.3, USH.9.4, USH.9.5, and USH.9.6)

- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies): I Culture; II Time, Continuity, and Change; III People, Places, and Environments; V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; VI Power, Authority, and Governance; IX Global Connections; and X Civic Ideals and Practices

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Immigration legislation and immigration rules and regulations

Learning/Instructional Objectives

This lesson will build skills for developing a hypothesis using a decision-making framework within a cooperative, team-oriented process. For another approach, refer to the “Put It In Print” lesson. Students groups will be presented with a complex question and be required to:

- Develop a plan for and implement research

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- Interpret research results
- Present a decision based on their work

Time Required

Four hours for research and discussion

Materials Required

- Pencil and paper
- Library and/or Internet resources for background research
- Student Handout: Immigration Legislation

Background/Historical Context

Refer to the “INTRODUCTION: Ethnic History in America and Indiana” essay by John Bodnar from *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996). The “Introduction” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site provides a free download of this essay in PDF format.

Teacher’s Instructional Plan

Introduction

As an introduction to this lesson on immigration, consider using a book talk to introduce student choice reading selections or read a selection as a class read aloud. Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage Web site for sample “Student Choice Reading Lists.” Check with your school or local library for other selection options.

ACTIVITY

Each team will propose new federal legislation that will potentially affect thousands of would-be citizens to the United States. Teams will select one of the questions below to research and follow the steps listed to develop a comprehensive answer. Each group will be prepared to reach a decision for class discussion.

Questions to consider

1. Should the United States grant or refuse refugee status and/or citizenship to people who have been identified as “political or religious dissidents” in their own homeland?
2. Should the United States grant or refuse immigration status or citizenship to people with potentially terminal illnesses or communicable diseases, such as cancer, tuberculosis, or AIDS?

Procedure

Divide the students into small groups. Provide each student with a copy of the student handout. Students will conduct research on the Internet or in the library to identify the process for a bill to become a law.

Step 1: Develop a Focus

- As a group, begin by formulating research questions about the two questions listed above.
- What are the different possibilities you have to consider?
- Sample focus questions for Question 1:
 - What is the definition of a political or religious dissident? Who decides this?
 - What is the difference between a political dissident and a political prisoner?
 - From what countries has the United States accepted political refugees in the past decade?
 - What has happened in the past century?
 - What is our trade relationship with those countries?
 - What does your congressman or senator have to say about these issues?

- Sample focus questions for Question 2:
 - What have been the changing health issues for immigrant populations during the past century?
 - What laws are now in place restricting immigration according to physical or mental health issues?
 - Have these changed during the past century? If so, why?
 - What do health professionals have to say about these issues?
- Ask students to make a list of the specific ideas to research.
- Ask students to find out where to look for answers. If needed, provide suggestions for getting started.

Step 2: Make Sense of the Research

- Ask students to interpret or analyze the information they have gathered.
- One way is to look for links or relationships among sets of ideas.
 - Is there a link between the positive or negative economic status of potential immigrants and their level of education?
 - Is there a link between economic growth in this country and reasons for accepting or rejecting applications for citizenship?
 - Is there a link between the country of origin and how a definition of “political prisoner” or “political dissident” is applied?

Step 3: Identify Options

- Ask students to create a framework for the team’s decision by identifying all the factors they need to consider.
- They might want to develop a chart, modeled on the “credit” system used by U. S. Department of Immigration officials, to determine eligibility. For example: Criteria for Citizenship Applications (Reasons to Accept or Reject Applications)
 - Health
 - Age
 - Country of origin
 - How is this person viewed by their country of origin? As a dissident? Rebel? Good citizen?
 - State-based references or sponsors
 - Religion
 - Job skills
 - Current economy of the state
 - Language
 - Mental competency

Step 4: Put the Plan into Action

- Based on the group’s research, ask them to write a proposed new law regarding the entry of new immigrants based on political, religious, and/or health reasons. Students should be prepared to defend the proposed legislation in front of the class.
- Each group should select a representative (the group’s best debater) to argue for the team’s point of view.

Step 5: Final Thoughts

Ask students to consider if their family members were evaluated according to their group’s criteria, would they be eligible for citizenship?

Evaluation and Assessment

Consider using a rubric or checklist for evaluating student work.

Additional Resources

Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site for lists of educator and student resources on immigration and ethnic history.

Student Handout: Immigration Legislation

Your team will be proposing new federal legislation that will potentially affect thousands of would-be United States citizens. Select one of the questions below to research and follow the steps listed to develop a comprehensive answer. Be prepared to reach a decision for class discussion.

Choose a Question

1. Should the United States grant or refuse refugee status and/or citizenship to people who have been identified as “political or religious dissidents” in own their homeland?
2. Should the United States grant or refuse immigration status or citizenship to people with potentially terminal illnesses or communicable diseases, such as cancer, tuberculosis, or AIDS?

Step 1: Develop a Focus

- As a group, begin by formulating your own questions about these issues. Use this as a way to focus your research.
- What are the different possibilities you have to consider?
- Sample focus questions for Question 1:
 - What’s the definition of a political or religious dissident? Who decides this?
 - What is the difference between a political dissident and a political prisoner?
 - From what countries has the United States accepted political refugees in the past decade?
 - What happened in the past century?
 - What is our trade relationship with those countries?
 - What does your congressman or senator have to say about these issues?
- Sample focus questions for Question 2:
 - What have been the changing health issues for immigrant populations during the past century?
 - What laws are now in place restricting immigration according to physical or mental health issues?
 - Have these changed during the past century? If so, why?
 - What do health professionals have to say about these issues?
- Make a list of the specific ideas to research.
- Find out where to look for answers.

Step 2: Make Sense of Your Research

- How do you interpret or analyze the information you've gathered?
 - One way is to look for links or relationships among sets of ideas.
 - Is there a link between the positive or negative economic status of potential immigrants and their level of education?
 - Is there a link between economic growth in this country and reasons for accepting or rejecting applications for citizenship?
 - Is there a link between the country of origin and how a definition of “political prisoner” or “political dissident” is applied?

Step 3: Identify Options

- Create a framework for your team's decision by identifying all the factors you need to consider.
- You might want to develop a chart, modeled on the “credit” system used by U. S. Department of Immigration officials, to determine eligibility. For example: Criteria for Citizenship Applications (Reasons to Accept or Reject Applications)
 - Health
 - Age
 - Country of origin
 - How is this person viewed by their country or origin? As a dissident? Rebel? Good citizen?
 - State-based references or sponsors
 - Religion
 - Job skills
 - Current economy in the state
 - Language
 - Mental competency

Step 4: Put the Plan into Action

- Based on the group's research, write a proposed new law regarding the entry of new immigrants based on political, religious, and/or health status. Be prepared to defend the proposed legislation in front of your class.
- Choose your group's best debater to argue for the team's point of view.

Step 5: Final Thoughts

If you and your family were evaluated according to your group's criteria, would you be eligible for citizenship?