

What's Your Story? Writing Your Part of American History

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching students at Lee High School for the past three and a half years has expanded my mind. The school, located in southwest Houston, serves one of the most culturally diverse populations in the city. If you drive through the neighborhoods and shopping areas that are just north and south of Southwest Freeway between Hillcroft and Gessner, you will see evidence of many cultures including Indian, Central American, Persian, and Chinese. My students live in these neighborhoods. Meeting them has helped me to learn more about the world around me. My definition of “loud” was redefined when I began to observe my Cuban students. My understanding of “poor” changed drastically when I talked to my Guatemalan students about their lifestyle in their home country. My idea of “devastation” transformed when I listened to my Congolese students talk about the reasons why they left their homeland. I have learned a great deal from all of them, personally and professionally.

However, I have noticed one unfortunate detail about my students. Although they have expanded my mind with regards to culture, they still have a very limited perspective of the world around them. They know *their* culture, and a little about American culture as a result of the information they get from television, but that is it. More specifically, they know that they are immigrants, but they do not relate to, or know about, any other immigrant experiences apart from their own. They often talk about racism, but they seem to have no notion of how racism affects those outside of their race, or that people outside of their race experience racism. They mention that the United States government is unfair to them, but they cannot identify any specific reason why they feel that way.

OBJECTIVES

English Language Development/English 1: TEKS Objectives

1a). Write in a variety of forms using appropriate structure, and sentence forms, especially to report and describe vocabulary and grammar in a unit. Students will focus on how sentence and paragraph structure affect the writing of their narrative. They will focus on the use and correct placement of adjectives.

22e). Use learning strategies such as synonyms, non-verbal cues, and request for assistance from native speakers when speaking English. Throughout the process, the students will be getting all their direction from the teacher. During this process, they will focus on enhancing their English proficiency with regard to listening to directions.

22g). Use accessible language and learn new and essential language in the process. Throughout the lessons, students will be using the adjectives they know, and they will use and employ new adjectives.

26b). Use graphic organizers as prewriting activities, to demonstrate prior knowledge, and to add new information. Students will be given a few graphic organizers that they can use to organize

their thoughts before they begin writing. Additionally, once they begin writing, they will use graphic organizers to organize their actual essay.

26d). Edit writing toward standard grammar and usage, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, and appropriate verb tenses in final drafts. This objective will be focused on when students peer edit one another's papers for proper adjective placement and usage.

1c). Organize ideas in writing. Students will experience creating a well-organized piece. They can use this as an example for organizing future writing pieces.

RATIONALE

The unit has three main objectives. First, this unit will give students who lack English proficiency the descriptive language they need to be able to communicate their experiences as new immigrants to the country. These students possess rich experiences, but they lack the language to be able to communicate their story. This unit will specifically focus on adjectives. Students who are just learning English often are clueless about the correct placement of adjectives in writing. The unit will stress correct placement of adjectives and expose students to new adjectives.

Secondly, students will analyze the immigrant's experience in the United States. They will look at four specific groups of immigrants who have come to the Americas over the past four hundred years. They will compare and contrast their own experiences with the ones of those they study. By analyzing other immigrant experiences, students will begin to see how their experience is unique. Seeing this uniqueness will help students to find a focal point for writing their personal narrative.

Third, students will gain writing skills. They will practice organizing a writing piece, adding adjectives to enhance their piece, and ultimately writing a personal narrative. Personal narratives are essential for students to be able to write because they allow students to practice meta-cognitive skills. Students practice thinking about their own experiences and evaluating the ones that add to their personal narrative and those that do not. Additionally, students are required to write a personal narrative for the tenth and eleventh grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills exam, or the TAKS. This assignment will give them the opportunity to practice the narrative style of writing.

UNIT BACKGROUND

African Immigration in the 18th Century

The first African immigrants stepped onto American soil in the early 17th century as indentured servants. These Africans were required to serve their masters for a specified amount of time after which they would be set free. These immigrants were some of the select black Americans who experienced indentured servitude in early America. By the middle of the 17th century, more and more European countries were enslaving Africans for labor. Portugal and Spain procured many slaves early on, and Britain and Holland joined shortly thereafter.

European countries soon found that they had little need for large numbers of African slaves, because they already had solid infrastructures. Portugal, Spain, Britain, and Holland were all developing countries, but they did not need to absorb large numbers of free labor. However, the colonies of these European countries needed a labor force that could essentially build a country. The labor force needed to be strong, enduring, and able to perform hard labor in high temperatures. West Africans seemed to be the best and closest candidates (Liston 26). Additionally, slave traders viewed Africans as heathens and could justify their capture by saying that they would benefit from being in a Christian environment.

It is estimated that over 2.7 million Africans were forced to immigrate to North America between 1680 and 1786 (Birnbaum 13). These Africans farmed products such as tobacco and

sugar cane. Conditions for the Africans were harsh from beginning to end. African slaves were first captured in their home country by slave traders. Sometimes the slave traders were European, but they were more often African leaders who were allied with the Europeans. The African slave capturers knew Africa in a way that Europeans did not. They knew the locations of specific populations and ethnic groups. They knew the language of the people, and they knew the habits of the Africans, which would give them knowledge of when individuals would be alone or with small groups and easier to capture.

After Africans were captured, they were marched to the West African coast where they would be chained and/or caged as they awaited transport to their final destination. Throughout this process, the Africans were surrounded by cultures they had never seen and languages they could not understand. Additionally, they were ignorant of what was going to happen to them. Furthermore, during this detainment, African women were sexually abused by their captors. This abuse continued throughout their passage to, and life in, America.

Following their detainment, Africans were packed onto boats like cargo. Hundreds of Africans would be sandwiched and chained into the bellies of large ships and taken on the voyage from the West Indies and America. Robert Liston describes their journey:

The voyage even earned a special name, the dreaded “middle passage” of six to ten weeks to the western hemisphere...During the voyage, the death rate was at least 50 percent. At the time of the slave trade, epidemics such as communicable diseases were common even in the best of circumstances...Any illness became an instant epidemic, for the slaves were jammed below the decks into the airless holds. They lay in their own excrement and vomit, and the stench was unbearable. Simple suffocation was not an uncommon cause of death. (34-35)

The slaves who did reach America and the West Indies were taken off the ships still wearing their chains. By this time, they were weak, ill, and exhausted. They would be cleaned so as to look good for purchase, and then were sold through auctions, trades, or basic transactions.

Once the Africans were taken to their new homes and enslaved, they were not welcomed as part of the family, or even, as a human asset to the family or master. The slaves were property and were treated very similarly to livestock. Many were beaten, women were raped so as to reproduce more slaves, and they lived in shacks that were similar to stables: dirt floors and beds of hay. Slaves' living conditions ranged from bad to worse, usually depending of the where the slave lived. Slaves who lived in the West Indies had a significantly lower life expectancy due to the harshness of their everyday life. Mary Prince, who was a born a slave in Bermuda, wrote the following:

Mr. D—had a slave called old Daniel, whom he used to treat in the most cruel manner. Poor Daniel was lame in the hip and could not keep up with the rest of the slaves; and our master would order him to be stripped and laid down on the ground, and have beaten him with a rod of rough briar till his skin was quite red and raw. He then would call for a bucket of salt, and fling upon the raw flesh... This poor man's wounds were never healed, and I have often seen them full of maggots. (Gates 199-200)

Although conditions for slaves in America were thought to be somewhat better than those in the West Indies and South America, they were still inhumane. Frederick Douglass was a popular abolitionist and former slave. In his autobiography, he describes the treatment of his aunt by his slave owner:

He was a cruel man hardened by a life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of the day by

the most heart-rending shrieks of an old aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. (Gates 258)

Politics and the lives of the African immigrants who had been enslaved were deeply entwined. Slavery was not nearly as popular in the northern part of America as it was in the south. The south's agriculture-centered economy depended heavily on the importation of free laborers from Africa. So, when the leaders of the country met to draft the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution in 1776, the southern representatives were unwilling to give up slavery. Furthermore, the population of white people in the south was smaller than that of the north. The south wanted equal representation in the Congress. However, to increase the number of their representatives, southern delegates insisted that each slave be regarded as sixty percent of a person in the final document of the Constitution. This categorization solidified the idea that the south depended heavily on African immigrants, but it also refused to regard them as equal or even human (Liston 57).

Amistad

This film tells the story of forty-four Africans who are purchased by Spanish slave traders aboard the ship *La Amistad*. The Africans overtake the ship and are eventually captured by American naval officers. Once the Africans arrive on American soil, several parties fight in court to gain ownership of the Africans.

Chinese Immigration in the 19th Century

A large group of people immigrated to the America from China in the mid-19th century. Unlike the Africans, the Chinese were not forced to immigrate, but did so by choice. China was in a major transition: poverty and violence happened regularly in some parts of the country, men needed new avenues of providing for their families, and others wanted a fresh start. Labor opportunities arose in America, and many Chinese men left home with the intention of gaining money and then moving back to China to be with their wives and children.

China was in financial ruin after the Opium Wars. These wars were fought with Britain primarily (France allied with Britain in the Second Opium War). The Chinese wanted to legalize opium in China, while Britain had profited a great deal from importing opium into China from India. China ultimately lost both of the Opium wars which led to many types of devastation (Ownby). There were violent conflicts within the country, high taxes, and anger toward the British (who now occupied many parts of the country). Many Chinese people wanted to escape. Chinese families were looking for new sources of income as well as a new beginning.

Gold was first found in California in 1848 (Perl 7). The word soon spread to China that one could make a fortune by simply digging. Chinese men, primarily from the southeastern part of China, started coming to California in large numbers to find gold. They came to America with the intention of gaining wealth and then returning and caring for their families with their newly acquired money. Chinese immigrants referred to California as the "Golden Mountain" and they made up about one-third of the mining population in 1850 (Lingen 25).

Initially, the Chinese were treated cordially by Americans. Maria Lingen describes their warm welcome:

California citizens made a big deal out of welcoming the new Chinese arrivals in the first few years. Chinese delegations were invited to march in parades, and there were ceremonies to meet the first ships of Chinese people. There was even a Chinese delegation in the festivities celebrating California's statehood in 1850. (18)

However, this warm reception did not last long. The Chinese began to experience success in finding gold, and the other miners grew jealous. Chinese also were very independent people.

Many of them were skilled in some trade, so they were able to maintain a decent lifestyle independent of help from others.

American people and American leaders alike began to think negatively of the Chinese. Andrew Gyory discusses some of the insulting and racist comments that leaders in American businesses and politics made about Chinese immigrants:

Speaking before the American Social Science Association in 1869, Charles Francis Adams Jr. described the Chinese as 'semi-civilized, ignorant,' and unable to 'change or assimilate.' Better to 'organize an emigration from Sodom' than from China said this descendent of two presidents, fearing that 'contact with such a race will brutalize the inhabitants of the Pacific United States more than contact with the harmless African ever brutalized the South.' Even Wendell Phillips, the former abolitionist who would defend unrestricted Chinese immigration to his dying day, called the Chinese 'barbarous,' of an 'alien blood,' and capable of 'dragging down the American home to the level of the houseless herds of China.' And liberal-thinking John Stuart Mill worried that Chinese immigration could result in 'a permanent harm' to the 'more civilized and improved portion of mankind.' (18)

The Chinese continued to look for gold in California, despite the racism they suffered. Those who chose not to look for gold took up other professions such as laundry, food service, food sales, and banking. These services aided Americans as well as other Chinese immigrants.

When the Gold Rush ended, many Chinese sojourners decided to work on the transcontinental railroad:

Soon the founders of the Central Pacific Railroad, the most westerly link in the final chain of the train tracks, were calling for Chinese workers. They were hardworking and reliable. They were exacting in grading the land, nimble in placing dynamite charges to blast tunnels through the mountains, and ready to plow through the deep winter snows of California's forbidding Sierra Nevada range. (Perl 9)

Chinese were still discriminated against by the people around them, and initially some railroad managers did not want to hire them. But they were excellent workers and eventually proved themselves invaluable. The Chinese workers were initially paid less than white workers, but as time progressed and they proved to be strong employees, they received equal pay.

On the railroad, people worked in gangs. Chinese workers worked in gangs of fifteen to twenty people. They ate differently from the other workers, dining on rice, vegetables, and seafood rather than beef, beans, and bread. Each Chinese gang was equipped with a tea carrier. They drank the water that had been boiled for tea rather than water from streams, so they rarely missed days of work like their co-workers who got dysentery (Perl 49-50).

Once the railroad was completed in 1869, Chinese workers began looking for other sources of income. It became clear that Chinese immigration was not temporary; by this time, some workers seem to have set down some permanent roots in the United States. Furthermore, the Burlingame Treaty that was signed in 1869 by China and the United States made it legal for Chinese people to immigrate to the United States (Perl 81-83).

In spite of this treaty, abuse against the Chinese continued. San Francisco passed a Sidewalk Ordinance in 1870. Many Chinese carried their loads with poles. The ordinance banned them from walking on the sidewalk while carrying their possessions on poles. The city passed another ordinance in 1871 that required a minimum of five hundred cubic feet of living space for every adult. This law specifically targeted the Chinese in San Francisco, who were poor and could not afford to rent or buy that much space. Several other ordinances, including ones that enforced the

removal of the queue (the long ponytail that Chinese men kept) and ones that heavily taxed laundries, were put into place to discourage Chinese immigrants and immigration. Chinese were also abused in the Eastern United States. Chinese who arrived in Massachusetts were met with insults and stones and were used as strikebreakers in Massachusetts and New Jersey (Perl 83-88).

The most significant form of racism against the Chinese by the United States came in 1882: the Chinese Exclusion Act. The bill that called for the barring of Chinese immigrants for a period of twenty years was placed on a bill submitted to President Chester Arthur in March of 1882. At the time he was unsure whether he would sign it or veto it. President Arthur listened to many people who argued both for and against the bill including, the Chinese minister Cheng Tsao-ju and former president Ulysses Grant. On April 4th, Arthur decided to veto the bill. "In rejecting the bill, Arthur stressed that his main criticism was length of exclusion, not exclusion itself" (Gyory 243-244).

The revised bill returned to Congress and the Senate in the spring. The biggest change was that the amount of time of exclusion was reduced to ten years. It was signed by the president on May 6th. Of the Act, Andrew Gyory says:

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first ever law passed by the United States barring any group of people from American shores purely because of race or nationality. As many had foreseen, it provides a precedent for future restrictive legislation.

'Hereafter,' the *Chicago Times* noted, 'we are to keep our hand on the door –knob, and admit only those whose presence we desire.' (250-254)

Chinese immigrants responded to the Act by finding ways around it. They were able to come into and out of the United States by way of sympathetic white people, networks of people, and lawyers. "In the end, many managed to find the means to immigrate within the confines of the laws and the rigid and restrictive ways in which they were enforced" (Lee 111-112).

American Experience: Transcontinental Railroad

This documentary tells the story of America's first railroad that stretched from the west to the east of the United States. The section of this documentary that is particularly helpful is the part about Chinese immigrants and their contribution to the railroad.

Irish Immigration in the 19th Century

The Irish began immigrating to the United States in the sixteenth century. By the year 1845, about one million people had emigrated from Ireland to America. After the Potato Famine, an additional 2.5 million people left Ireland in the twenty-five years following the famine (Greene 3). Like the Africans and the Chinese, the Irish were met with prejudice from nativists when they arrived. In contrast to the Africans and Chinese, the prejudice was connected to their faith and culture, rather than appearance.

Life in Ireland during the decade prior to the Great Famine was in a downward spiral. Tim Pat Coogan describes it:

By the 1830s, more than two million people lived on the edge of starvation for two-thirds of the year, receiving enough to eat only in the four months after harvest. Countless thousands of people had become dependent on a piece of land just about big enough to hold a hovel and a garden of potatoes. Those lucky enough to have a job from a landowner were probably given no pay, save what they could grow or perhaps rear in the form of a pig.

A commission on 'The state of the poor in Ireland' recorded the number of reasons for the disastrous state of the huge Irish underclass: religious differences; political extremism, absentee landlords, lack of investment, the prevalence of alcoholism...(116)

So, when the Potato Famine of 1846 happened, it was the apex to years of trouble; including the conflicts between Irish Catholics and English Protestants that had been occurring for years.

The Potato Famine was the result of a few years of diseased potato crops. The potato was a staple in the Irish diet and, therefore, the Irish farmer. A fungus destroyed the crop country's crop in 1845. In 1846, the fungus affected the crop once more, but not as severely. However, severe weather took its toll on the potatoes. 1847 brought no fungus; however, many farmers were impoverished by that time due to the failed potato crops in the two preceding years. The disease returned in 1848 and 1849. These years resulted in the widespread hunger, disease, and death. About 1.5 million people died during these years and the morale of the country was low. Consequently, about a million people emigrated to England and the United States (McCaffrey 56-57).

The million Irish emigrants who came to America during the mid-19th century went through challenges to come to their new home. Most of the people were young, single men and women (McCaffrey 66). These men and women first made the difficult voyage across the Atlantic by boat. After reaching America, those who could not afford better housing, moved into ghettos and shanty towns. The young immigrants procured jobs as domestics and manual laborers. Like the Mexican immigrants after them, the young Irish laborers were known to send a portion of their income to their families in Ireland. Some of their money was used by Irish families to help the siblings of the immigrants emigrate to the United States. They settled mostly in eastern states like Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois (McCaffrey 66-67).

While some Irish immigrants were wealthy or middle class, the Catholics made up the majority of the lower class, due to that fact that most of them came from rural Ireland and were not well educated. In the new world, the Irish Catholics were not particularly fortunate, their living conditions were abominable and the jobs were low-paying, but the Irish, as they had throughout history, made the best out of a bad situation. McCaffrey writes about how the immigrants adapted to American society:

Life in American cities was cold, competitive, and hostile. Anglo Protestants controlling business, commerce and industry despised Irish Catholics as barbarian interlopers; members of the Anglo Protestant working class hated and feared them as employment competitors. In such an unfriendly atmosphere, Irish neighborhoods, focused around the Catholic parish, served as psychological havens, preserving faith, tradition, and values, perpetuating a sense of community that could have disintegrated in an oppressive situation. (71)

The Irish also dealt with a great deal of prejudice in the United States, particularly at the hands of nativists like the Know-Nothing party. This political party existed from 1849-1860 and was very secretive. The secrecy surrounding the party was the source of its name. When a member was asked questions about the party, their response would be "I know nothing." The party was against immigration and Catholicism. Consequently, Irish Catholic immigrants were targets of their discrimination ("Know Nothing"). Tim Pat Coogan talks about the roots of conflict between nativists (like the Know-Nothings) and the Irish immigrants, "Nativist hostility towards the Irish was a complex thing: a combination of politics, the slavery issue, traditional Protestant and Anglo-Saxon prejudice against Catholics, particularly Irish Catholics, and severely practical economic considerations" (280).

There were heavy connections between the political atmosphere of the Irish and the faith of the Irish. According to McCaffrey, "The consolidation of a self-conscious Irish-American community around a strong Catholic identity provided a focal point for politics as well as

ethnicity. And the gregariousness of the Irish personality enhanced their political skills” (119). McCaffrey also writes:

When Irish Catholics settled in Urban America, Democratic politicians, seeking their support at the polls, saw to it that they were quickly naturalized, employed, and registered to vote. They returned the favor by casting Democratic ballots—often more than once—and by forming street gangs to protect party candidates and intimidate their rivals...but surely they gained control of their own neighborhoods, building mini-machines within the general party structure, and began to move up the leadership ladder from block captains to district or precinct leaders and aldermen. (120)

The political effects that the Irish had were as varied as the places where they decided to settle. In New York, Tammany Hall was connected to corruption. Tammany Hall was supposed to be a charitable society but ended up becoming a club used to promote the desires of the different individuals who were given power within it. Boston was not very inviting to Irish immigrants. The Anglo-Protestants and anti-Catholics opposed the social changes that the Irish brought to the city. Unfortunately, the Irish discriminated against the black Americans and Jews who suffered the same persecution they did in the city. However, Boston got its first Irish mayor, Hugh O’Brien, in 1884. Chicago saw some success with putting Irish into leadership roles. In 1890, about one-third of the aldermen in the city were Irish. However, some of these officials fell into the same corruption related to drinking, gambling, and prostitution (121-126).

Gangs of New York

This film tells the story of Amsterdam Vallon. Vallon is of Irish heritage and lives in the Five Points area of downtown New York City. After witnessing his father’s death at the hands of a nativist gang leader, Amsterdam decides to avenge his father’s death.

Mexicans Immigration in the 20th Century

Millions of Mexicans have immigrated to the United States over the past one hundred years. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, Mexicans crossed the border into the United States freely; they did not need documentation to come to the United States. However, as the United States and Mexico changed during the 20th century, as the United States became more successful, Mexico more impoverished, and laws more rigid, perceptions of Mexican immigration changed.

There have been several conflicts between the United States and Mexico throughout history. One of the most significant was the Mexican American War in 1846. The war was fought over territory: Mexico wanted to maintain the land that is presently contained in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico while President James Polk wanted to fulfill his plan of Manifest Destiny, that is for the United States to have territory stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. After less than two years, Mexico lost the war and sold the desired land to the United States for \$15 million dollars (Wade 18-20). The Mexicans who were living in the United States’ newly acquired territory were given the option of returning to Mexican territory or staying in the United States. The overwhelming majority of them, 80 percent, decided to stay in the United States and became legal citizens (Catalano 80).

As time passed, Mexico had some success, but began to experience a number of economic set-backs during the 20th century. Mexico found a large amount of oil during the 1970s. The country began to export oil to the United States and borrow money from American and European banks to develop its infrastructure. However, the price of oil fell in the 1980s, and Mexico could not repay the money, sending the country into financial hardship (Gelletly 30). Furthermore, many citizens believe that the Mexican government is corrupt. For example, there is a practice that many Mexican talk about that is referred to as “cinco pesos.” Allegedly, when Mexicans are stopped by police officers for breaking driving laws, the person who has been stopped can give

the officer money, and they will not be ticketed and fined. In 1994, the value of the peso fell so much that foreign investors pulled their money out of Mexico. Inflation rates increased significantly and by 1996, a study showed that 80 percent of the population lived in poverty (Gelletly 33-34). In 1965, the Mexican government began to construct maquiladoras. Maquiladoras are factories that were expected to move the country away from agriculture and toward modernity. The maquiladoras grew quickly. There were 200 factories with 19,000 employees in 1970. By 1990, there were 2,000 factories with half a million employees. The factories created a need for housing in the newly established industrial areas, but the country did not have the resources to develop infrastructure for the workers. Additionally, the factories provided harsh work conditions and low pay: \$3 to \$9 a day (Gelletly 28-29). These conditions encouraged Mexicans to look to the North for better employment and pay. Currently, many Mexicans come to the United States because of the extreme poverty that they face. In 2002, the World Bank estimated that forty percent of the people in the country earn less than \$2 each day (Gelletly 27).

Financial set backs have been the main impetus for Mexicans coming to the United States. Husbands and brothers will leave their mothers, sisters, wives, and children to come to the United States and make money that can be sent home to their families. A Mexican immigrant, Don Maclovio Medina, talks about his experience sending money to his family while illegally working coming to the United States to work in 1946:

Well, it wasn't much I did with the money I made, because I had to spend there [United States], as well as send money here [Mexico], so much family I had to support here. I had to spend twice. I was happy there, but I don't think it was a good business deal. You can't do it. Chuey [his wife] was here, she wanted to save money, but I told her, 'No spend it, eat whatever you want...Buy the children whatever they need.' (Davis 31)

The process of working in the United States was not easy for many immigrants who, in addition to being away from their families, they have to deal with making low wages on their jobs. For many, the journey to the United States is extremely difficult and can sometimes even be deadly. Hundreds, if not thousands, of illegal Mexican immigrants travel through the mountains and desert to get to the United States in order to avoid the border patrol. They travel with the bags of food and water in an attempt to attain the American dream, but many perish in the wilderness. The United States Border Patrol reported that 464 undocumented individuals died in the desert in 2004 (Payan 59).

However, not all Mexicans walk through the desert to America. It must be noted that many Mexicans attain documentation and immigrate to the United States legally.

The politics involving Mexicans who either come to or want to come to the United States, have changed a great deal over the past 150 years. From 1848 to 1929, Mexicans could cross the border without documentation. However, the 1929 Immigration Act was passed and made it illegal for Mexicans to come to America without papers. Mexican immigration increased sharply during World War II with the introduction of the Bracero Program. The United States needed laborers during this period, and between 1943 and 1964, 4 million Mexicans filled the positions formerly held by American employees (Payan 55). When the program ended in 1964, many Mexicans, rather than returning home, decided to stay in the border towns on the United States. Furthermore, although the program was over, there were still many Mexicans who needed employment and could not find it in Mexico. So, emigration from Mexico to the United States continued even though it was now illegal (Payan 55). The United States responded to the problem by passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. This program gave amnesty to about 3 million Mexican immigrants residing in the United States at the time. In addition to the

amnesty, the law also increased the number of officers working for the United States border patrol and developed penalties for employers of undocumented workers (Payan 56).

My Family/Mi Familia

This film tells the story of two generations of the Sanchez family. The patriarch is José who travels from Mexico to California on foot at the age of eighteen during the 1920s. After arriving to California he meets and marries Maria. The film tells the story of this family throughout the 20th century.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1: Adjectives, Immigration, and Immigrants

Objectives: 22e and 22g

Materials:

- Handout of 15 short English phrases including nouns and adjectives
- 2 pieces of blank 8x11 ½ inch paper for each student
- 2 large pieces of butcher paper
- 1 marker

Time: 2 90-minute classes

Procedures:

Day 1

- Tell students that, as immigrants, they play a large role in American history and culture. Over the next several classes, you will be celebrating their immigrant experience and giving them the opportunity to share information about that experience.
- Write the words *adjective*, *immigrant*, and *immigration* on the board and ask the students to share with the class what they know about each word. If you have translation dictionaries available, allow students to look up the words in the dictionaries. Explain to the students that you will be talking about these three vocabulary words a lot for the next eight or nine days.
- Explain to the students that the class will focus on adjectives today. Ask students to define nouns for you out loud. Once they have given the correct definition, write the following five phrases on the board: good boy, big dog, red school, tall girl, and beautiful country. Ask students to tell you the noun in each phrase. Underline the nouns as they say them, and tell the students that the words that are not underlined are adjectives. Tell them the definition of adjectives and stress to them that adjectives always come before the verb in English (stress this because many languages place the adjective after the noun and this is a common mistake that ESL students make in their writing and speaking).
- Give the students a prepared list of 15 two-word phrases that contain adjectives and nouns. Tell the students to work in pairs and underline the noun and circle the adjective in each phrase. Possible phrases are: happy woman, fun day, yellow pencil, small shoe, and old computer. After the pairs finish, go over the answers.
- Put students into different pairs or keep them in the same pairs. Tell each student to write four sentences that describe themselves and four sentences that describe their partner. If necessary, write the following sentence starter on the board.

_____ is a _____ .
(name) (adjective) (noun)

Assessment:

When students have finished their sentences, have them come to the front of the class room in pairs and present their sentences for the class.

Day 2

- Give students a 15-20 minute warm-up that will allow them to practice adjectives.
- Write the sentences “What is immigration?” and “What is an immigrant?” on the board and ask students to respond verbally to the questions. You do not need to force students to respond to the sentences, only those who have comments can respond.
- Take two large pieces of butcher paper. Write *immigration* in the middle of one and *immigrant* in the middle of the other. Ask students to give you words that are related to or describe immigration and write the words on the butcher paper with marker (or you can ask one of the students to write the word. The idea is to make the words on the poster very visible for everyone in the class). If students do not know words you can give them examples such as journey, new life, and new language. Repeat this same process with the word immigrant. If students need starter words for immigrant, you can suggest culture, country, and unique music. Some of the words might overlap.

Assessment:

- Leave the two pieces of butcher paper up so everyone in class can see them. Put students into pairs or have them work individually. Ask each pair or individual to fold one piece of paper in half. Instruct the students to use the words on the butcher paper and words they know to write a definition for immigration on one half of the paper. Ask them to use the same resources to write the definition for immigrant on the other half of the paper.
- Have students share their definitions and decide on a class definition for each term. Post the class definitions in the class room.

Lesson 2: African Immigration in the 18th century

Objectives: 22e and 22g

Materials:

- 18th century pictures of African immigrants
- Film “Amistad”
- Cloze notes about African immigration in the 18th century
- 1 piece of butcher paper

Time: 90 minutes

Procedures:

- Give students a 15-20 minute warm-up that will allow them to practice adjectives.
- Show students the pictures of African immigrants. Ask them to think of words and phrases that describe the people in the pictures. Once they have had time to think, ask them to share out the words. Have one student write “African Immigrants in the 18th Century” at the top of the butcher paper and record the words that the class says.
- Give students short ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ page) cloze-style notes about African immigrants in the 18th century. Cloze notes are pre-printed notes that contain blanks. While the teacher is giving information about the topic, students listen and fill in the blanks with the correct information. For example, one sentence of the notes might read:

The first _____ who came to America and the West Indies were _____ servants.
--

The students will listen to the information you are giving, and write:

The first Africans who came to America and the West Indies were indentured servants.

It is a good idea for you to fill out the notes with the students on the overhead or with a document camera. Still, you want to make sure that you are saying the notes as you are writing them, so students can practice listening comprehension as they are writing.

- Show the students the following clips from the film *Amistad*:
 - Cinque is trying to escape from his chains below the deck on *La Amistad*
 - The Africans are being taken off the ship in America and put into jail in chains
 - The Africans are in the court room and several parties claim ownership of them
 - Cinque tells the story of being taken from West Africa, to the ship Tecora, to Cuba, to *La Amistad*
- As the students are watching the film clips, have them write and answer the following questions on a piece of paper:
 1. When did the Africans immigrate to America?
 2. Why did the Africans immigrate to America?
 3. How were the Africans treated by Americans when they arrived?
 4. How were the Africans treated by the American government when they arrived?Give the students time after each clip to work on answering the questions.

Assessment:

Ask random students to tell you one thing they learned and African immigrants.

Enrichment/Homework:

Have students do a Venn diagram for themselves and African immigrants.

Lesson 3: Chinese Immigration in the 19th Century

Objectives: 22e and 22g

Materials:

- 19th century pictures of Chinese immigrants
- Film *American Experience: Transcontinental Railroad*
- Cloze notes about Chinese immigration in the 19th century
- 1 piece of butcher paper

Time: 90 minutes

***The Procedure, Assessment, and Enrichment/Homework for this lesson are the same as the Procedure, Assessment, and Enrichment/Homework for Lesson 2. The only difference is the content.**

Show the students the following clips from the film *American Experience: Transcontinental Railroad* – Chinese laborers

Lesson 4: Irish Immigration in the 19th Century

Objectives: 22e and 22g

Materials:

- 19th century pictures of Irish immigrants
- Film *Gangs of New York*
- Cloze notes about Irish immigration in the 19th century

- 1 piece of butcher paper

Time: 90 minutes

***The Procedure, Assessment, and Enrichment/Homework for this lesson are the same as the Procedure, Assessment and Enrichment/Homework for Lesson 2. The only difference is the content.**

Show the students the following clips from the film *Gangs of New York*:

- Bill Challenges Priest Vallon to a fight (the purpose of this clip is to show the students that nativists did not like the Irish)
- Amsterdam Vallon gets off the boat while the nativists are persecuting the Irish immigrants
- The police officer is giving the rich family a tour around Five Points (this clip shows the students the living conditions of the immigrants)
- Amsterdam agrees to get Tweed voters. The gangs then go out to the streets a physically take voters to the voting stations

Lesson 5: Mexican Immigration in the 20th Century

Objectives: 22e and 22g

Materials:

- 20th century pictures of Mexican immigrants
- Film *My Family/Mi Familia*
- Cloze notes about Mexican immigration in the 20th century
- 1 piece of butcher paper

Time: 90 minutes

***The Procedure, Assessment, and Enrichment/Homework for this lesson are the same as the Procedure, Assessment and Enrichment/Homework for Lesson 2. The only difference is the content.**

Show the students the following clips from the film *My Family/Mi Familia*:

- Jose travels from Mexico to California
- Jose travels across the bridge to work. He does yard work and he sees Maria who does child-care
- Maria is deported. After being deported, she travels from Mexico back to California

Lesson 6: What is your story? What do you bring?

Objectives: 1a, 1c, 26b, 26d

Materials:

- Butcher paper word lists that are hanging around the room
- Word webs/spider diagrams for each student (optional since students can make these themselves)

Time: Three 90-minute class periods

Procedure:

Day 1

- Give students a 15-20 minute warm-up that will allow them to practice adjectives
- Give the students a word web. Tell to write “The day I came to the United States” in the middle of the word web. They are to spend some time writing words and phrases about that day onto the graphic organizer. If students do not know how to complete a word web,

you will need to model it for them. While you are modeling, stress to students that adjectives must always come before the noun in English.

- Model for the students how to change the word web into paragraphs and ultimately a story. Give the students time to write their stories

Assessment:

Go around the room at the end of the day and check the progress of each student's story.

Day 2

- Give students a 15-20 minute warm-up that will allow them to practice adjectives
- Give students any time they need to finish their drafts
- When students finish, have them read through their rough drafts and highlight or circle all of the adjectives. Once they have finished, have the students number the lines in their story. Finally, tell them to staple a blank piece of paper to the front of their draft.
- Have students exchange papers with one another. Each student will go through another student's essay and check for any adjectives that are not in the correct place i.e. adjectives that come after the noun. If they see an adjective in the wrong place, they need to write the line and the incorrect adjective on the blank piece of paper in front. Additionally, if they see that the student did not highlight or circle one of the adjectives, they will call their attention to the adjective. Entries on the front page would look like:

line 14, check <u>big</u> line 8, check <u>happy</u> line 2, check <u>red</u>

- Students will give the papers back to the owners and the owners will check them and decide if they need to make any changes.

Assessment:

Throughout the class period, check students' stories as you walk around the room and note their progress. If you see any glaring problems or needs for details, bring the student's attention to them. It will be easier for you to correct/check the papers during the class period, than to take them up at the end of the class and check them.

Day 3

- Give students a 15-20 minute warm-up that will allow them to practice adjectives
- Take students to a computer lab and allow them to type the final copies of their stories. Students who finish typing early can help other students who are not fast typists.

Assessment:

When grading the stories, pay close attention to adjectives.

Day 4 (optional)

Allow students to read their stories for the class and bring an artifact from their country. Some things they can bring are songs, foods, dances, magazines, movies, and clothes.

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