Be part of the creative writing contest that rewards the exploration of America as a nation of immigrants.

Celebrate America inspires educators to bring U.S. Immigration history and lessons into their classrooms and gives fifth graders the opportunity to explore America as a nation of immigrants.

Past winners have documented the experience of immigrants who have left their homelands in search of a more promising future in America, spoken of their immigration experiences or reflected on their ancestors or parents.

Students enter their work in local contests which are sponsored by chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Each chapter forwards the local winning entry to the National Competition.

National Entries are Judged by a Distinguished Panel

Winning chapter entries are reviewed by a distinguished panel including U.S. Senators, award winning authors and noted journalists. Winning entries are also printed in the Congressional Record.

The National Winners and Guests Go Free to the Award Ceremony

The grand prize winner (and two guests) will receive an all expenses-paid trip to the Council's Annual Benefit Dinner where the winner will be recognized and will recite the winning piece.

Learn More and Get Started at www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org

Give your fifth graders an opportunity to explore, write and understand on a topic of perennial importance. Review the guidelines below and visit the contest website to read past winning entries and to learn more about the event and the American Immigration Council.

Celebrate America
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

How It Works

The Creative Writing Contest kicks off in the fall or early winter (depending on the local contest rules) as volunteer attorneys from local AILA chapters visit teachers and classrooms. The attorneys give classroom presentations on immigration to inform students and teachers about the important role immigration plays in our society. The attorneys also explain contest details and get students excited about participating.

In the winter and early spring, teachers submit student entries to local AILA chapters who then select and honor a winner(s) on the local level. In April, local AILA chapters send winning entries to the Council, which we forward to our panel of national celebrity judges. The top national winner is announced in early May.

Guidelines

Theme: "Why I Am Glad America is a Nation of Immigrants"
Entrants: 5th graders
Format: Any written entry (essay, poem, story, interview, etc.) that reflects the theme. Entry should be submitted to your contest coordinator (some local contests require electronic submissions, so please check with your coordinator).
Word Count: Up to 500 words
Judging Criteria: Theme, presentation, creativity and message

Entry Requirements

Cover page must include student's name, address, grade, age, school and telephone number and email
Proof of enrollment in the fifth grade—such as report cards, transcripts or letters from the school principal
A release form must be signed by contestant and parent or guardian.

About The American Immigration Council and The Community Education Center

The American Immigration Council (AIC) is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit educational, charitable organization. AIC's mission is to be a leader in strengthening America by honoring our immigrant history and by shaping how the public thinks and acts toward immigration now and in the future. The Community Education Center, which is part of AIC, strives to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing educational resources that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking. Dedicated to the American values of fairness, social justice and respect for all people, the Center is committed to making immigration an everybody issue. The Center also highlights the positive contributions immigrants have made and continue to make to American society through its programmatic work.

For additional information, lesson plans and classroom resources, please visit our website at www.communityeducationcenter.org.

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

Local Contest Coordinator _____ Email _____ Phone _____

American Immigration Council

Crossing Borders with Digital Storytelling

Using digital storytelling to capture immigration stories is a powerful way for teachers to create opportunities for "empathetic moments" among students and shape their classroom environments. Telling stories of family immigration history – no matter how distant or recent – allows for common threads and variations of the immigration experience to be seen, heard, and reflected upon. Digital storytelling offers the advantage of authentic engagement to reach all learning styles as well as to teach technological skills while exploring connections and understandings to an important issue.

In this Common-Core aligned unit plan, teachers are guided step-by-step through a process for launching a digital storytelling project on immigration in their own classrooms. Recommended writing prompts, easy to use digital platforms, as well as resources and collaborative planning tools are shared and explained.

Objectives

Teachers will be able to:

- understand what a digital story is, why it's valuable, and the steps to develop one
- create their own digital story immigration history project
- learn tools & resources that support continued learning and collaboration among students and among teachers

Essential Question

How can writing digital stories create empathy and understanding about immigration?

Grades

K-12 (adapt Digital Storytelling Elements and Common Core Narrative Writing Correlations for Grades 3, 7, 9-10)

Materials

- Computers and/or laptops with Internet connection
- "Crossing Borders with Storytelling" Prezi – This presentation covers how-to steps to creating your own digital story projects graphically as well as exemplars. Parts of this presentation you may choose to share with your students.
- Digital Storytelling Resources and Examples Padlet – Use this "virtual bulletin board" for a one-stop location to articles, tools, exemplars, and best practices for the classroom.
- Teacher Digital Storytelling Collaboration Padlet – Please add to what you learn and collaborate with other teachers by posting to this "virtual bulletin board." Share great ideas and best practices about immigration and digital storytelling with other teachers.
- Digital Storytelling Tool Comparison Chart – This chart addresses some of the considerations when selecting two tools (Little Bird Tales and WeVideo) for your classroom.
- 5Ws Prewriting Questions - Have student complete the questions from the perspective of a personal, familial, historical, or fictional immigration story.
- Storyboard Organizers Collection - Choose from among four different types of storyboard organizers to assist students as needed.

Crossing Borders with Digital Stories Exemplars

- "My Grandfather Ben" by Maya Young, Winner of the 2011 Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest (Little Bird Tales)
- "My Grandfather Ben" by Maya Young, Winner of the 2011 Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest (WeVideo)
- "The Immigrant: From Immigration to Integration" by Tim DaGraca, 2015 American Immigration Council Multimedia Contest Entry, The story of Valerie Bermudez's the emigration from Colombia to the United States and her integration into a new society.

What is a digital story? It's a multimedia movie that combines photographs, video, animation, sound, music, text, and often uses a narrative voice. - *Roland, C. (2006). Digital stories in the classroom. School Art,105(7), 26.*

Why is digital storytelling valuable for the classroom?

- Builds and strengthens reading and writing skills.
- Allows for exploration and creativity.
- Creates a space for listening, understanding, and empathy as students connect with each other and the stories.
- Allows for a multifaceted approach to understanding a complex issue.
- Develops presentation skills.
- Engages students and fosters an inclusive classroom environment.

For a comprehensive overview and digital storytelling resources, see our "Crossing Borders with Storytelling" Prezi and Digital Storytelling Resources and Examples Padlet.

How to Create an Immigration History Digital Storytelling Project

1. Write the story

This is the most important part of creating an engaging digital story. Engage your students in the idea generating process of writing by using one or all of the following methods.

a. Pre-Write: Ask questions. Peak Curiosity. Try writing with your students:

Webbing, Journaling, Diagramming, Drawing, Listing, Family Trees, Turn and Talks, etc.

Family Heritage & Immigration Probing Questions (some adapted from NPR's StoryCorp Great Questions list)

- What is your ethnic background?
- Where are your various family members from? Has anyone ever visited there?
- What traditions have been passed down and still exist? What traditions have been lost through the years?
- Who are/were your favorite relatives when you were a child or adolescent?

- Do you remember any favorite family stories that a specific family member loved telling?
- What is "American" about you?
- What does it mean to be an American? (see our Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest for companion lessons on this question)

For an organizer with reflective questions for student s to complete, please our 5Ws Prewriting Questions.

b. Modeling: Write alongside students and/or show them exemplars of good writing that showcase the immigrant and family experience.

Recommended Models:

- "Flashcards" - Rita Dove
- "Dusting" - Julia Alvarez
- "Eating Together" – Li-Young Lee
- "Those Winter Sundays" - Robert Hayden
- "In Colorado My Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes" – Eduardo C. Corral
- Winners from our previous Celebrate America contest open to 5th graders

c. *Drafting:* As with any story, engage students in the revision process either one-on-one with you, in pairs, or as a class. This is also a good time to target a specific writing trait that students need to develop. See our focus questions in the Digital Storytelling Elements and Common Core Narrative Writing Correlations (for Grades 3, 7, 9-10) for revision and student writing development as correlated to Common Core Writing Standards.

2. Find Media

Amplify the stories with images and sound.

a. For image searches, we recommend:

- Photos for Class (G Rated, Creative Commons, Automatic Attribution)
- Library of Congress Prints & Photographs

Tips:

- *Image searching takes a lot of time and some platforms even allow for digital drawing so you may want to limit slides for students you think will take a lot of time searching if it all is to be done during class time.*
- *Students might also benefit from saving their images with a phrase from their story so they remember what image connects with which line when it comes to build their story digitally.*

b. For audio, we suggest using digital storytelling platforms such as the ones featured in this plan with built-in audio, so you do not have to be concerned with curating audio clips. Check to ensure your student computers have a microphone and voice-over recording capability.

c. Option to create storyboards

Though not integral, some students may find it easier to create a storyboard to help them visualize their story. You could create a template or simply have them sketch images on index cards with captions from their story.

For organizers with multiple variations to meet student abilities, please see our collection of storyboard organizers.

For a digital organizer, see StoryboardThat.com

3. Choose a tool to tell your story

No tool will be perfect. Every tool will take some trial and error. Your students can also learn from the experience of exploring new technology.

We have found the following two tools: Little Bird Tales, WeVideo to be the most student-friendly digital storytelling platforms. Please use our comparison chart to help make a decision right for your classroom.

Some considerations when choosing a digital storytelling tool may include:

- How easy is it to use?
- What is the cost?
- How would it tell my student's story?
- Is it appropriate for my students?
- Can the stories be easily shared and/or published for further collaboration and learning?

4. Share your stories

Once your students have completed their stories, create a space for them to share and reflect upon them.

Some opportunities to share include:

- *Gallery-walk and listening tour* – have students circulate and view the digital stories on headphones and debrief on what they learned.
- *Student presentations* – allow the student audience to listen and then ask follow-up questions of the student-writer.
- *Website publication* – post to a class page or school website (as long as you have obtained parental/guardian permission).
- *"Oscar-like" awards ceremony* – host a friendly competition and allow students to pick categories for the "best" digital stories.
- *Community Viewing Event* – Invite parents, guardians, fellow teachers, administrators and community members for a digital story movie event with popcorn and soft drinks.

Ask reflective questions:

- What are some similar images that emerged after watching these videos?
- Which story did you find the most memorable? Why?
- What are some feelings that were expressed in the videos? How do you know?
- How did you connect with any of the videos you watched?
- How has your understanding of immigrants changed after watching these stories?
- What did learn about writing about your family's immigration experience? What did you learn from listening to other immigration experiences?

5. Continue learning

a) Upload your own immigration story and share your learning and best practices with other teachers. If you find other great tips, tools, and resources about teaching immigration in the digital storytelling format, please post them on our Teacher Digital Storytelling Collaboration Padlet, a virtual bulletin board. Also, feel free to email us at teacher@immcouncil.org

b) Find out what your students are left wondering and thinking about immigration. Search our website for content-driven lessons as well as book reviews to continue learning.

Common Core Standards

Digital Storytelling Elements and Common Core Narrative Writing Correlations (for Grades 3, 7, 9-10)

About Us

The American Immigration Council is a non-profit, non-partisan, organization based in Washington D.C. Our legal, education, policy and exchange programs work to strengthen America by honoring our immigrant history and shaping how Americans think and act towards immigration now and in the future. We strive to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing free educational resources that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking.

Tell Us How You Use This Lesson in Your Classroom

We'd love to know how you have adapted this lesson or any feedback you want to share with us. Please send us a message at teacher@immcouncil.org

Please note that as a teacher, you are eligible for community grants, books for your classroom, free professional development, leadership opportunities, and more! Visit our website: www.communityeducationcenter.org

We welcome contributing book reviews and guest blog posts from educators. Stay connected by following our blog, Immigration In and Out of the Classroom, and our twitter @ThnkImmigration

American Immigration Council

Telling the Family Story

Overview

Telling family immigration stories is a powerful way to build community within and outside of the classroom. Whether the story comes from a student, parent, or a school professional, giving voice and an audience to the story opens channels for empathy and understanding on what can be a divisive topic.

The finished product of this lesson is an illustrated book and an opportunity to read the story aloud to others. Although this project could be done digitally, the physical book makes an important gift. This public reading should focus on celebrating, acknowledging, and supporting the immigrant author's triumphs, struggles, and continued efforts to build a new life in the U.S.

This lesson plan was created and implemented by the winner of our 2015-2016 Community Grant, English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher Angeline Sturgis from Eldridge Park School in Lawrence, NJ, with the intention for the plan to be replicated and adapted as appropriate to the individual student and/or family member.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Write or recount a narrative of an immigration story including a short sequence of events and supporting details in order to produce an immigration storybook.
- Create drawings and/or visual displays in order to convey an immigration story to a wide audience

Essential Questions

- What motivates people to leave their countries of origin and begin again in a new country?
- What similarities exist among various immigration stories?

Grades

- K-5 (adapt as necessary)

Lesson Procedure

Adapt this procedure as necessary to meet your students' needs. Some students may be able to write the story with less assistance from the teacher.

1. Announce to the community that you are looking for volunteers who would like to tell their immigration story and have it made into a book.

2. Emphasize that they may use their name as the author or submit the story anonymously using a pseudonym.

3. After listening informally to volunteers' stories, choose candidates for your project.

4. Arrange for a time to meet and set up your preferred recording tools. Before beginning, remind the author that people will want to know about motivating factors, details and feelings. Encourage a frank conversation. *The individual telling the story should feel safe and confident that their experiences will be told in their own words to an appreciative audience.*

5. From time to time, during recording, read the transcript back to the author, checking that you have recorded it properly if writing, and that they have told it to their own satisfaction.

6. Guide the story along, but be mindful of things the author wants to tell. Ask "is this something you want in the book?" If it is, by all means, include it.

7. When the story has been told, choose the illustrator. A parent's own child is a likely candidate, or if it is a child author, they may want to illustrate it themselves or have a sibling do the art work.

8. Guide the artwork by reading the story to the illustrator, asking them to describe the various parts of the story they think would make good illustrations, and what those illustrations might be. If necessary, look at children's literature to study the relationship between pictures and text.

9. Take a photograph of each of the illustrations and upload them in your computer.

10. Using an online tool (eg Shutterfly, Blurb, Costco, Target) make a book out of the story. Directions are clear on each website and no previous experience is necessary.

11. Order at least two copies of each book. One is for the author, and one is for the community to share.

12. If possible, hold a reception for the authors, with a public reading of the story in both English and the author's native language. Invite families, and other community members who might benefit from hearing first-person accounts of immigration. If the speaker feels more comfortable, audio or video recording devices can be used or the story can be typed as well and shared with the audience.

13. Display the original art work at the reception with captions under each picture summarizing the purpose of the illustration.

Common Core Standards

This lesson plan was designed for a second grade classroom. Corresponding strands in other grade levels can be used to adapt the lesson as needed.

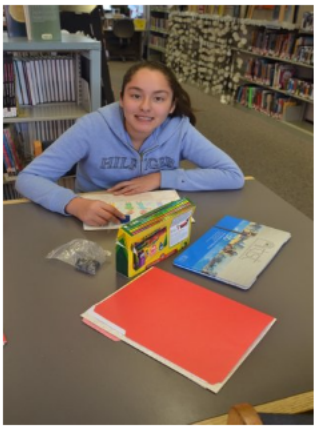
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3
  Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.5
  Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Photos

Please use these photos as inspiration for your own Telling the Family Story project.

Students illustrate a family story.

A student illustrates his story.



A student uses a picture book to help illustrate.

Final products.

Teacher Angeline Sturgis records Eldridge Park School staff member William Perez's immigration story from Cuba.

Students engaged by the display panel of the book's narrative and illustrations.

Books wrapped for presentation on the night of the event.

Students and their families gather for an event of sharing immigration stories.

A student reads one of the stories to the audience.

Illustrations are presented on a large screen as the audience listens and watches.

About Us

The American Immigration Council is a non-profit, non-partisan, organization based in Washington D.C. Our legal, education, policy and exchange programs work to strengthen America by honoring our immigrant history and shaping how Americans think and act towards immigration now and in the future. We strive to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing free educational resources that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking.

Tell Us How You Use This Lesson in Your Classroom

We'd love to know how you have adapted this lesson or any feedback you want to share with us. Please send us a message at teacher@immcouncil.org

Please note that as a teacher, you are eligible for community grants, books for your classroom, free professional development, leadership opportunities, and more! Visit our website: www.communityeducationcenter.org

We welcome contributing book reviews and guest blog posts from educators. Stay connected by following our blog, Immigration In and Out of the Classroom, and our twitter @ThnkImmigration

American Immigration Council

Creating Inclusive Classroom Culture

Enlist your students in creating a classroom culture that welcomes and celebrates diverse talents and skills. Students first read a short story "Draw One for Me" written by Susan K. Coti. Then they participate in multimodal activities and discussion to reflect on classroom social dynamics and welcoming newcomer students.

Extensions and adaptations provided for learners at multiple levels.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text and compare it to their point of view in order to create an inclusive classroom culture.

Essential Question

How do we show we value everyone in the classroom?

Grades

3-6

Texts & Materials

"Draw One for Me" by Susan K. Coti, a deck of cards, drawing supplies

Lesson Procedure

Read the story, "Draw One for Me," aloud as a class and/or have students read individually or in pairs, as appropriate to ability. Then use the following questions and activities to process the story and reflect on the consequences of how we treat others.

The following questions may be used to help students think about how they or others might feel in a new or awkward situation. Where warranted, have students give evidence from the text to support their answer.

1. Think of a time when you were new to a situation. How did it feel?
2. What are some positive aspects of being the "new" person?
3. What are some negative aspects of being the "new" person?
4. Do you think Ms. Randolph was right in choosing Charles to draw the centerpiece for the tabletop mosaic? If so, why? If not, why?
5. What do effective problem-solvers do when they get stuck? What did Charles do?
6. How did the story have a positive outcome? What other outcomes can you think of?
7. Why, at the end of the story, did the students feel badly about calling Charles the teacher's pet?
8. What are some qualities that make Charles a caring person? Would you want to have a friend like Charles?
9. Ms. Randolph noticed the students whispering and giggling during recess. What were they whispering and giggling about?
10. What are some things you could do to make a newcomer to the classroom feel more comfortable, especially if he or she doesn't speak English or speak it well?
11. How can a sense of humor help someone who's feeling sorry for himself?
12. What could you do to help someone who feels lonely or picked on?

Activities

1. *Draw a Picture*

   Draw a picture of the teacher's pet as you imagined Charles drew it. Write a paragraph to accompany the picture. Explain why Charles drew the picture and how it helped him get out of a sticky situation. Can do as partners.

2. Play the Tower of Power (Social Hierarchy) Game

   This exercise allows students to experience what it feels like to be in a certain social position. Once this exercise is completed, it is important to reflect on how the students felt and how their behavior can positively or negatively affect others.

Setup

Get a deck of cards and pull out one ace, one king, one queen, four Jacks, three fours and three twos. (Adjust according to the size of your class.)

Tell the class that you are going to divide them up and put cards on their backs. They won't be able to see who they are. Half will be the players and half the audience and then they'll switch. Display the following game rules and discuss them with the class:

Ace = The Sun. The one with the greatest power and the one who is worshipped by all.

King = The highest person on the Power Tower

Queen = The highest person on the Power Tower

Jack = The person who has some power but answers to the Ace, the King and the Queen.

Four = a person who is low on the Power Tower and does not have a lot of social power.

Two= a person who is lowest on the Power Tower and has the least social power.

Thirteen "players" play the first round with the rest acting as the audience (The number depends on the size of your class. Adjust accordingly).

Tape the cards onto the students' backs.

Tell them they will circulate around the "stage" for one minute to see who is who has the most power according to the Tower of Power rules. They do this in silence and do not give away anyone's role – poker faces!

Students treat one another according to the attribute of the card taped on the student's back (his or her rank). When the student recognizes what role she's playing, she should act accordingly.

You don't need to tell them how to act. They will figure it out for themselves.

The audience also has an active role as they watch how the players react and figure out how they "rank."

Students circulate and act in silence.

After a couple of minutes, stop the game. Ask the players to reveal their roles as they understand them. Players and audience reverse roles. Play the game again.

Debrief

How did it feel to be treated the way you were treated? How did it feel to treat others who were "lower" than you? Those who were "higher" than you? Does everyone have the right to be treated well and fairly? How do our roles in society affect the way others treat us? Is it right to treat people differently according to their jobs? Their looks? How do we show we value everyone in society?

"This is a fairly sophisticated game, but I've played it with 4th -6th graders, and they loved it. The debriefing brings up a lot of interesting discussion about how people treat one another and how important it is to treat everyone with the respect they deserve." – Susan K. Koti

Variation: Have students speak as they play their roles.

3. Write a "Secret" Message

   Tell students to write a message in their own "secret" language and make a key. Partner students and have them give each other their "secret" language messages without the key. Tell the students to decode the messages. After they sit there looking puzzled, allow them to give their partners the key to unlock the messages.

4. Debrief

   How would you feel if you were to step into a new school in a new country with a language you didn't know and were asked to read? How does this exercise help you to feel empathy toward others?

Common Core Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1
  Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
  Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
  Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1
  Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

About Us

The American Immigration Council is a non-profit, non-partisan, organization based in Washington D.C. Our legal, education, policy and exchange programs work to strengthen America by honoring our immigrant history and shaping how Americans think and act towards immigration now and in the future. We strive to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing free educational resources that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking.

Tell Us How You Use This Lesson in Your Classroom

We'd love to know how you have adapted this lesson or any feedback you want to share with us. Please send us a message at teacher@immcouncil.org

Please note that as a teacher, you are eligible for community grants, books for your classroom, free professional development, leadership opportunities, and more!

We welcome contributing book reviews and guest blog posts from educators. Stay connected by following our blog, Immigration In and Out of the Classroom, and our twitter @ThnkImmigration.

Draw One for Me

by Susan K. Coti

Charles was an artist, and his fourth grade teacher asked him to draw the centerpiece of the table-top mosaic the class would make as a class project for the school auction. Everyone agreed that the project had to highlight the Monarch Butterfly since they had raised them at the beginning of the school year, tagged them and sent them off on their flight to Mexico. It was such an exciting project, and Charles' teacher, Ms. Randolph, knew she picked the right student for this important job. When she asked Charles, he gave her a wide smile and said he'd get on it that evening.

The next day, Charles arrived at school without a drawing. Ms. Randolph asked him why. "I forgot," Charles told her, "but I'll do it tonight." Charles was a student in the English as a Second Language program. He arrived from the Philippines the previous year. His English was very good. He was conscious of how he sometimes mispronounced a word, and how his classmates would laugh at him, usually in a good-natured manner. Mostly, he was asked to make drawings. Ms. Randolph didn't think there was a language problem. She had told him how important the task was. She had asked him because she knew he loved to draw and thought he would enjoy the work.

Charles came into class the next day and again told his teacher he forgot the drawing. Did he have to [color it too, he asked? No. Just the outline. A big Monarch butterfly. It needed to be done by the next day because another student's mother was coming in to help start work on the mosaic.

That evening, after Charles had finished his homework and eaten dinner, his mother asked him to quiz his 8-year-old sister on her multiplication facts. Charles sighed and sat down with his sister. He thought about the butterfly drawing, but quickly put it out of his mind. He thought about what some of his classmates had called him recently: teacher's pet. The picture in his mind of himself as that pet made him feel sad and angry. He decided he wouldn't do the butterfly picture at all and on top of that, he stood up from the table and told his mother he didn't want to help his sister either. Charles went to his room and closed the door.

Charles' mother knocked on his bedroom door. She opened it when she got no answer from Charles. He sat on his bed looking at a book. She stepped into the room and sat at the edge of the bed. "Charles. Why the brooding? Tell me what's wrong." Charles shifted his position but said nothing, still focused on the unturned page. They sat this way for several minutes until Charles put down the book and looked his mother in the eyes.

"I'm tired of being so perfect," he said, as he raised his fingers into quotation marks, speaking in Tagalog, his native language. "My life is one big school nightmare, even here at home. My teacher wants me to draw a picture, and it's due tomorrow. I don't even want to do it."

"Why, Charles? It's a great honor to be asked by your teacher to draw. She knows you're good, so why would that be a problem? You love to draw!" Charles shrugged his shoulders and picked up his book. "Can I just read for a little bit, Mom?" As soon as his mother left the room, Charles took out his drawing tablet.

The next day Charles came to school and presented Ms. Randolph with a detailed pencil drawing of a Monarch butterfly. He drew small flowers with cascading leaves around them. He smiled as he handed it to her, remembering how much he enjoyed drawing it.

At lunch, Ms. Randolph who was on duty that day, noticed students whispering among themselves, cupping hands around ears and giggling.

Ms. Randolph called a meeting that afternoon. "I'm calling us together because we have a project to do for the auction. I asked Charles to draw the butterfly that would be the centerpiece of the mosaic because Charles really likes to draw and does a good job when he does. I know most of you like to draw and you're good at it too. I thought we'd use the strengths of everyone to make this the best project ever!

She held up the drawing. "Now, let's have a look at this drawing of a Monarch butterfly." Everyone came together in one collective OOOHH. "Charles has done the outline, and many of you will use this drawing as a template to build the mosaic and others will make background things out of tiles like flowers or bees or what else do you think?" Several hands shot up.

"We are all capable of contributing to a great project. That's the way a great team works. We want to sell our table with the butterfly mosaic to the highest bidder at the auction, so it has to be the best possible project we can build together. Mina's mom is coming this afternoon to help us get started, and I look forward to all of us putting in our personal best. Is everyone ready?"

"YES!" came the wholehearted response. Jalen got up from the circle and curled his arm around Charles' shoulder. "Sorry bro. I didn't mean to treat you the way I did." Other kids murmured their own apologies. Charles looked down at his hands that held the drawing of the teacher's pet he drew the night before, the one that got the whole class in an uproar that morning. Then he looked up and smiled. "Let's get to work. We have a table to make!"

About the Author

Susan K. Coti started as a storyteller in the classroom where she taught grades 1-6 over a 20-year career in private schools and DC Public Schools. She has been a professional storyteller for the past 15 years and specializes in folk and literary tales. She believes storytelling is one of the most powerful unifiers and teaches this art form in schools and other organizations in the Washington, DC area. She also performs regionally and has a special program for adults. You can find out more at www.ihearvoices.biz.

edutopia

LITERACY

Teaching Poetry of the Immigrant Experience

APRIL 6, 2016

By Sara Burnett, Non-profit Education Associate

Engraved on an interior wall plaque of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal, immigrants to the United States have found these words from "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Bearing witness to the immigration experience through poetry can be empowering *and* powerful for students. Throughout history, new arrivals have penned their hopes and fears in poems about coming to America. They come for a variety of reasons -- to work, to reunite with family, to get an education, or sometimes in search of safety and freedom. Poems of an individual experience lend themselves to a discussion of some universal immigration themes. What motivates a person to leave his or her home country? How welcomed do they feel when they arrive? What are their challenges and celebrations?

Bringing poems about the immigration experience into the classroom engenders cultural understanding and empathy. It highlights the human aspect of immigration often occluded by political rhetoric, and it engages youth voice. What follows are six ways to teach poetry of the immigrant experience in the classroom.

1. Write "I'm From" Poems With Students

"I'm From" poems traditionally convey information about the speaker's background. As a writing activity, these poems build understanding about multiculturalism and immigration. When I wrote "I'm From" poems with my students, I wrote my own as a model in addition to reading a poem by George Ella Lyon (http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html) with students. I then asked them to begin writing their own poems that would include details about their family and culture. If they got stuck, they could write from the

sentence starter "I'm From" again. After finalizing their poems, students selected their favorite lines to make a communal class poem. We played with the order and the look on the page, and we made strategic choices as to line placement, syntax, and imagery. Everyone had a voice on the page and a piece of America's immigration past to share.

2. Use Multicultural Poetry Picture Books

Students learn to write well by imitation and frequent modeling, and poetry is no different. They also expand their sense of a topic like immigration by listening to different experiences. Using multicultural poetry picture books is a great way to engage younger learners.

> *Mexico, says my grandma, means: from the bellybutton of the moon, don't forget your origin my son.*

This excerpt from Francisco Alarcón's "Bellybutton of the Moon/Del Ombligo de la Luna (https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2789) " encourages readers to reflect on their heritage. Multicultural poetry books embolden readers to reflect on their own family heritage, traditions, and culture. Additional immigration-themed poetry picture books can be found on the website of children's book publisher Lee & Low (https://www.leeandlow.com/) .

3. Host Community-Building "Read-Alouds"

Invite students to read aloud poems about the immigrant experience or poems that they've written. Use these tips from former Poet Laureate Billy Collins (https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/p180-howtoread.html) to teach students how to read poems aloud. Not only does this activity improve speaking and listening skills, but you can also guide students in a discussion on cultures and immigration experiences.

4. Hold an Immigration-Themed Poetry Competition

For 19 years, the American Immigration Council (http://www.communityeducationcenter.org/) has run the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest (http://www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org/) where fifth-grade students write to the theme "Why I'm Glad America is a Nation of Immigrants." Of the 4,500 entries received annually nationwide, many of them are poems. Students are motivated to find out about their own families' immigration experiences and those of others around them. Seek inspiration from these fifth-grade students to build a competition, and consider joining the contest (https://docs.google.com/a/edutopia.org/forms/d/1jVVXZehYwgbKvS-S3ZPIFsnV65Pr-dLh4EfXCReNLxI/viewform) next year.

5. Reflect on Intersections of History, Immigration, and Poetry

Emma Lazarus' words aren't the only poem inscribed on a national monument related to immigration. For immigrants detained at the U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, poetry was a critical outlet, and we can still see their thoughts and feelings written on the walls that blocked them from entering the United States. This anonymous poem carved into a barrack wall represents the vehicle of expression that detainees used to combat isolation, alienation, and silence:

The insects chirp outside the four walls.
The inmates often sigh.
Thinking of affairs back home,
Unconscious tears wet my lapel.

The Immigration Station was built to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (http://teachimmigration.blogspot.com/2015/01/how-angel-island-105-years-later-is.html) , the first major piece of legislation targeting a nationality. The poems left on these walls document a grave moment in U.S. history, detailing with clarity – in a way that textbooks cannot – how access was denied to certain immigrant groups. Visit the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (http://www.aiisf.org/index.php) for more poems and lesson plans.

6. Do a Poet Study

There are numerous poets who write about immigration experiences, either their own or their families', including Li-Young Lee (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/1744) , Richard Blanco (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/245318) , Naomi Shihab Nye (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178326) , and Rafael Campo (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/241382) . The current Poet Laureate, Juan Felipe Herrera (http://www.loc.gov/poetry/laureate.html) , has a wide range of books for readers of all ages. These links provide a sample poet study for younger students (http://blog.leeandlow.com/2015/06/15/using-picture-books-to-teach-and-discuss-poet-laureate-juan-felipe-herrera-with-students/) and a review of some of his poems geared for an older audience (http://www.communityeducationcenter.org/book-reviews/there-are-least-187-reasons-read-poet-laureate-juan-felipe-herrera) .

What other ideas do you have for teaching poetry of the immigrant experience? Please share.

Source: www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-poetry-of-immigrant-experience-sara-burnett

Reprint Policy: www.edutopia.org/terms-of-use

Privacy Policy: www.edutopia.org/privacy-policy

EDUTOPIA (http://www.edutopia.org/) • WHAT WORKS IN EDUCATION • © 2016 George Lucas Educational

Foundation • All rights reserved.

Edutopia®, Schools That Work™, Lucas Learning™, and Lucas Education Research™
are trademarks or registered trademarks of the George Lucas Educational Foundation in the U.S. and other countries.