



THE NEW AMERICANS



Immigration Debate

Subject: U.S. History

Overview: Americans offer varied positive and negative perspectives regarding immigrants. There are points of view, for example, regarding immigrants' impact on the U.S. labor force and issues around terrorism and immigration. Gathering information on pro and con arguments can be helpful if making conclusions regarding immigrants' roles in the United States is to occur.

Standards: This lesson addresses the following national content standards established by McREL at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>:

Objectives

Students will:

- Consider the validity of statements often cited regarding immigration and immigrants
- Research and debate the essence of these statements to support or negate presented perspectives
- Make informed decisions regarding the statements' accuracy

Materials Needed

- **Handout: Statements about Immigrants**
Give students a piece of paper with the ten statements below. (You may also choose to ask students to copy these off an overhead or off the board.)
- Chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers
- Four large sheets of poster board or chart paper
- Computers with Internet access
- Print and online immigration materials and resources
- **Optional:** Overhead projector and transparencies
- **Optional:** Debate Notes Organizer handout
- **Time Needed:** At least 6 class periods



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Procedure

Preparation: List the ten immigrant statements on the chalkboard or prepare overhead transparencies. Create four large signs each with one of the four terms (one different one per sign): strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, strongly disagree. Post them in four different corners of the room (one per term).

1. Explain to students that they will be involved in an activity that introduces them to varied negative and positive points of view regarding immigrants. Emphasize that the lesson is not meant to offend, but rather have students think critically about immigrant issues. Request that they be mindful of the lesson's purpose and aware of their peers' sensitivity and feelings, thus remaining non-judgmental and empathetic.
2. *Four Corners Activity:* Distribute the Statements about Immigrants handout. Instruct students to indicate on the list their stance on each statement: strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, strongly disagree.
3. Once they have completed the activity, have students stand up. Explain that as you read a statement, they are to go to the corner of the room that represents their stance. Read one statement to the group. Once students have arrived at their proper "corner," instruct them to share their perspective with other "corner" peers. Ask for volunteers from each group to share key discussion points. Repeat the "Four Corners" process for any or all of the remaining statements.
4. Point out to students that the National Immigration Forum reports that 30 percent of native-born Americans are strongly anti-immigrant. Another 40 percent characterize themselves as "on the fence," unsure whether immigrants constitute a positive or negative presence in America. Share these statistics with students and have them the connection between students' opinions and the real-world opinions of most Americans.
5. Divide the class into teams, comprised of four students each (two for affirmative, two for negative). Tell students they will select and research one statement, that they will then debate, thus they must note source citations to defend their arguments. Students can organize their using the Debate Notes Organizer or in a format they choose. After they have completed their research (allow several days, including class time), have each group debate before the class



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6. After the debates, ask students to revisit the statements and their original stances. Have they changed in any way? If yes, why? If no, why not? What information, either from the Four Corners activity, their research, and/or the debate influenced their opinions?

Assessment

- Assess the debates with the Debate Scoring Guide.
- Students can grade their peers' cooperative learning group participation on a scale from 1-5. For example, students worked well with teammates, contribute to team effort, and contributed equally to the workload.
- Students can self-assess, honestly answering the following questions:
 - o Did you do your best?
 - o Did you work hard, enjoy the project, and feel good about what you completed?
 - o Did you contribute to the group's project?
 - o Did you finish your work on time?
 - o If you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?

Extension

Students can:

- Conduct a community survey to see how residents respond to the ten statements regarding immigrants.
- Plan a public service campaign to educate others about the realities of immigration.
- Post their opinions and reflections on immigration on *The New Americans* Talkback page.
http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/talkback_submissions.html

Related Resources

The New Americans: Learn More | Immigration

http://www.pbs.org/itvs/independentlens/newamericans/learnmore_immigration.html

The New Americans: Immigration Myths & Realities Quiz

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/quiz.html>



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Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

United States History

17: Understands massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.

31: Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

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**Handout: Statements about Immigrants**

1. There are too many immigrants coming to the United States.
2. The U.S. government should put more Immigration and Naturalization Service border patrol agents on the border with Mexico.
3. Illegal immigrants take away jobs from U.S. citizens.
4. U.S. immigration policy has been fair to all groups entering the U.S.
5. If a country is having economic problems, the U.S. should allow its residents to come here for a better life.
6. Immigration has helped the United States.
7. Having a variety of cultures and languages in America benefits everyone.
8. Most immigrants come to the U.S. just to get on welfare.
9. Everyone who comes to the U.S. should be required to learn English.
10. If a country is having political problems, the U.S. should allow persecuted citizens from this country to seek asylum here.



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- o Speaker presents a respectful and appropriate appearance
- o Speaker demonstrates an excellent understanding of the subject matter
- o Speaker responds exceptionally well to opposing arguments
- o Speaker demonstrates mastery of speech components: volume, pacing, eye contact, posture, tone
- o Speaker adheres to time guidelines and is excellently prepared

4

- o Speaker presents a respectful and appropriate appearance
- o Speaker demonstrates an above average understanding of the subject matter
- o Speaker responds very well to opposing arguments
- o Speaker demonstrates above average understanding of speech components: volume, pacing, eye contact, posture, tone
- o Speaker adheres to time guidelines and is well prepared

3

- o Speaker presents a respectful appearance
- o Speaker demonstrates an average understanding of the subject matter
- o Speaker responds adequately to opposing arguments
- o Speaker demonstrates average understanding of speech components though may demonstrate a marked weakness in one or more areas
- o Speaker may adhere to time guidelines and is adequately prepared

2

- o Speaker may not present an appropriate appearance
- o Speaker demonstrates a below average understanding of the subject matter
- o Speaker may struggle in responding to opposing arguments
- o Speaker does not demonstrate understanding of speech components with weaknesses in several areas
- o Presentation indicates that time and preparation are minimal

1

- o Appearance is not adequate
- o Speaker demonstrates little to no understanding of the subject matter
- o Speaker responds ineffectively to opposing arguments
- o Speaker generally has poor speaking skills with little attention to components
- o Preparation is not apparent

**T H E N E W A M E R I C A N S****Student Handout A: Debate Notes Organizer**

My argument is that:

Evidence for my argument:

Evidence against my argument:

Rebuttal to evidence against my argument: