

Pre-Reading: *Tortilla Curtain: What Does It Mean to Be an American?*
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Objective/Overview

Given that I teach at a middle/high school in Los Angeles, questions of xenophobia, human rights, and empathy are particularly relevant with regard to immigration and the border. My primary objective is to get my students to think about the assumptions and stereotypes they bring with them into their everyday lives regarding immigration and exclusion and to hopefully begin encouraging them to challenge any prejudices they may have. My classes are unique because they are one-on-one, so I have planned the lesson for this setting rather than a full classroom.

Journal

1. What does it mean to be an American? What words and descriptions do you associate with the word “American”?
2. What does it mean to be an immigrant? What words and descriptions do you associate with the word “immigrant”? Do you think there’s any difference between the words “immigrant” and “migrant”? Explain.

In Class

1. Discussion of journal response.
2. PowerPoint of photographs of Los Angeles residents from different neighborhoods/classes/ethnicities/etc. and discussion of the assumptions we make about these people based on their clothing, surroundings, etc. Discuss what assumptions may be justified and which may not be justified.
3. Write a paragraph discussing what assumptions people have made about you in the past and how these assumptions have impacted you.
4. Read aloud the article “How to Cross 5 International Borders in 1 Minute without Sweating”:
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2014/08/05/337795842/how-to-cross-five-international-borders-in-one-minute-without-sweating>.

Homework:

1. Written Response: Why do you think we create borders? Use at least two examples from history, literature, your own life, etc. to discuss both the types of borders that we can create and the reasons why we may create such borders.
2. Read Chapter 1 of *Tortilla Curtain*.
3. Bring in a current event article from a reliable news source discussing the current “immigration crisis.” Be prepared to discuss why the terminology “immigration crisis” may be problematic.