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American Studies 11H
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The Immigration Experience in America: Understanding our Past through Research, Writing and Performance

Introduction:

What understanding do my students have of America and how it came to be? How would they describe and define America today? How do students see themselves and their roles in American society in relation to others? What understanding do they have of their histories, their family's immigration and migration that brought them to where they are today? What conceptualizations of national, racial and ethnic subjectivity will be challenged in the process of their moving toward the acquisition of political, social, economic and gender identities in America?

These are the questions that students need to address in order to understand immigration with respect to the formation of America, and the impact that immigration has had on urbanization, socialization, the environment, and industrialization in shaping a definitive American culture. More importantly, students need to see themselves as a product of these migration movements, and to understand that these effects are ongoing—that the past informs the present. Therefore this unit will proceed from looking at history's role in shaping the future to writing and performing history. This eight week unit will then move through a study of 19th to early 20th century immigration emphasizing its impact on urbanization and industrialization, and culminates in an oral presentation and a written social commentary, which integrate and draw conclusions about the immigration experience of the past with the present. Parts I through V represent the entire unit of study. While Parts I and IV have been written and revised as a result of the institute, to limit the number of pages, only Part I will be submitted for online sharing; however an outline of the remaining parts will be provided in-brief at the end of Part I.

The unit is titled: ***The Immigration Experience in America***. It is divided into five parts:

- I. Understanding Our Past through Research, Writing and Performance
- II. Urbanization and Socialization: The Genesis of the Tenement ("Maggie: A girl of the Streets" by Stephen Crane; "A Traveler in New York 1842" by Charles Dickens; *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis; "Tenement House Morality" by James O.S. Huntington (1887); "Life in New York Tenement Houses" by William T. Elsing (1892), and other selected writings.)
- III. Industrialization: Labor and Migration (Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, and *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser in addition to selected non-fiction essays)
- IV. The Immigration Experience in the 21st Century through Literature and Performance
(T.C. Boyle's *Tortilla Curtain* and Francesco Jimenez's *The Circuit*, Kelly Hernandez's *Migra!*, and "Migrant Hunters" by Karla Zabudovsky, *Newsweek*, May 8, 2014)
- V. From Action Research to Composition: Writing the Social Commentary: Immigration and the American Promise

Fall 2014: Unit I: The Immigration Experience in America
Part I: Understanding Our Past through Research, Writing and Performance

Lesson I: The Past, the Present and History

Essential Questions:

- What is truth?
- What is History?
- Are past events subject to perspective? If so, whose perspective dictates the history in which we believe?
- What effect does the past have on the present?
- Are we molded by past events, or a perception of past events?

Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Deconstruct, analyze, synthesize and draw critical conclusions from writing;
- Integrate multiple ideas into one coherent idea;
- Offer evidence to support and argue that idea;
- Disseminate information, raise questions, debate and argue orally and in writing.

Readings:

Lapham, Lewis. "The Ignorance of Things Past: Who Wins and Who Loses When We Forget American History." Harper's Magazine. May, 2012, pp. 26-33.

Assignment:

Over the summer students were required to read and annotate "The Ignorance of Things Past" by Lewis H. Lapham. Today students will engage in a debate over the role of control with respect to history, perspective, and the present by responding to the following prompt:

In "The Ignorance of the Past," Lewis H. Lapham speaks of an evolving America, and emphasizes the need to question and struggle in a democracy. He takes no sides. He straddles the middle and points out the flaws that politicians and the news media have, regardless of allegiances.

He attacks Romney for his allegiances as he does Obama. He moves down the middle. His intent is not to take political sides, but to reveal and make the point that democracy is a battle that will and must be continuously fought. In the end, he might point to man as the culprit warning that "a global consumer economy will\must devour the earth." While democracy depends on equality, capitalism does not.

In the end, the answer is in the past. The past is a "phoenix in the attic," waiting to rise before us, but when it does, will it be too late?

Orwell’s dictum, as Lapham reminds us, states: “who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” Do you believe this to be true in light of this essay, history, and your own experience?

Write your response in your journals. Work your response into an argument, a statement, and then go back into the essay and extract evidence to support your point.

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. Students will read carefully and respond to the stated prompt. (15 minutes)
2. Students will write their argument in bold letters on large self-adhesive paper.
3. Papers will be collected displayed, and sorted according to arguments.

From the posted statements debate teams will be formed. Four teams will be selected. There will be two debates. Each team will select two team members to argue its position. Teams will then meet to prepare. Each team will be given 20 minutes to clarify argument and order evidence. The debate format will be as follows:

- Affirmative Constructive Argument and Support:-3 minutes
- Negative cross-examination-2 minutes
- Negative Constructive Argument and Support-3 minutes
- Affirmative Cross Examination- 2 minutes
- Summative statements-2 minutes

Day 2: Debate Round 2, Voting and Debriefing

Vote (Students will be evaluated according to a rubric that evaluates students on their abilities to speak clearly and precisely, support their arguments with evidence from the article or other articles, to pose precise and thought provoking questions, and to integrate ideas into one conclusion. The maximum score each team can receive is 12. Everyone votes; scores are averaged. (See appendix marked “A.”)

There will be two rounds of debates, which will end in concluding statements and discussion.

Assignment for Day 3-Lesson II: Bring in an object of familial historical significance. It should be an object that you can speak to with respect to your family’s story of migration.

Lesson II: Bringing the Past to the Stage through Documentary Theatre: From Interview to Script to Performance (Day 3)

Essential Questions:

- Who are you?

- How did you come to be?
- How do you see yourself and your role in American society in relation to others?
- What understanding do you have of your family's history, your family's immigration and migration that brought you to where you are today?

Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Distinguish between oral and written narratives;
- Understand narrative as a primary source from which history is recorded and transmitted;
- Generate a list of specific interview questions that will enable students to learn about each other's past and heritage;
- Generate a list of specific interview questions that have purpose and meaning;
- Conduct interviews;
- Research;
- Learn through the interview process about your family's immigration and migration experiences;
- Deconstruct, analyze and synthesize a narrative from the interviews;
- Script a first person narration spoken in the voice of the selected ancestor;
- Work collaboratively with others to create a uniformed piece of four to five spoken voices;
- Block and orchestrate a theatrical thematic performance on the immigration/migration experience in America.
- Understand how history influences culture.

Materials:

- Heritage objects
- Interview packets
- *You Tube* films of Ping Chong's *Undesirable Elements*

Readings:

Stephen Crane's "Maggie: A Girl of the Streets." (1883)

Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*. (2012)

Ping Chong. "Tales from the Salt City." (2008)

Procedure:

The Heritage Objects

Write on the board the following excerpt taken from *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which students were required to read over the summer:

"They did what humans have done for centuries when life became untenable-what the Pilgrims did under the tyranny of British rule...what the Irish did when there was nothing to eat, what the

European Jews did under the spread of Nazism.....They did what human beings looking for freedom, throughout history, have often done. They fled.”

And they came-from wherever-throughout the 19th-20th and now 21st century.

What is the difference between immigration and migration?

- Students will write their responses in their journals, and then share and discuss the question in light of the objects they are about to present.
- Students will then be instructed to share their heritage objects and the stories behind them.
- During the oral presentations, students will take notes and write questions-what they have learned and what they would like to know.
- De-Brief: Notes and Questions: What pieces are missing from the stories? What do you need to know? What would you like to know? Write down questions to address these.

Day 4: From Interview to Documentary Theatre I

- Distribute the interview and resultant script from Ping Chong’s “Tales from the Salt City.”
- Select students to read aloud the interview.
- Ask students to write down one or two questions, similar to those used in “Tales” that they would ask Maggie from Crane’s novella.
- Place students in 4 groups.
- Instruct students to share their questions, order them into a list; write appropriate responses to them based on the text.
- Instruct students to turn to Ping Chong’s script – the theatricalized text of the interviews- of “Tales from the Salt City.”
- Select students to read aloud.
- Ask: In what person does the narrative speak and why?
What determines from what person your narrative will be told?
- Instruct students to now turn to the “Maggie” responses they collected in their groups. Tell them they will now script those responses as follows:
- Instruct one group to write the responses as a single first person narrative;
- Instruct another group to write the responses as a single third person narrative;
- Have the remaining two groups script from multiple voices, first and third-first would be from Maggie’s point of view, while third can be from any other selected character.
- Students will have 15 minutes to prepare. Each group will perform their tale.

Review process and distribute examples of scripting methods and techniques.

Day 5: From Interview to Documentary Theatre II: The Practice Interviews

Procedure:

- Place students in pairs.
- Distribute interview packets. (Ping Chong Modified).
- Ask students to interview each other. (15 minutes)
- Have students script interviews as they did the day before with Crane’s novella. (10 minutes)
- Have students perform their tales. (20 minutes)
- Discuss interview questions: what worked and what didn’t? Which questions would be effective in interviewing your family members about your family history?
- Revise questions as needed.
- Instruct students to use the revised set of interview questions for their family interviews.

Assignment:

Students are to interview their family members using the prepared questions regarding family history, their histories of immigration/migration, and their family struggles in assimilating or adapting to America that speak to the immigration experience.

Day 6: Documentary Theatre III: Writing and Performing History

- Put students in groups of 4 or 5
- View Ping Chong’s “Undesirable Elements” on You-Tube
- Discuss how the performances are thematically unified.
- Distribute a list of adaptation strategies and methods.
- Have students share their family interviews with their group members.
- Instruct them to look for common themes.
- Ask them to consider how they would present their interviews-how would they script them into one script?
- Instruct them to work collaboratively in unifying their immigration stories to speak to a theme.
- Students will have the remaining 30 minutes to work on their scripts.

Assignment:

- **Revise and edit scripts using google docs.**
- **Scripts are to confine themselves to a performance time of 12 minutes.**

Day 7: Documentary Theatre IV: Performing History

Students will revise scripts; block, time and rehearse.

Day 8: Documentary Theatre V: The Performances

Students will perform their immigration/migration histories. Each script, each performance, must have a title and be introduced.

De-Brief: Feedback

Assignment:

Have students respond to the following questions on the AmStud blog:

You have been shaped by your ancestors' experiences. How did your performances validate this?

America has been shaped by the immigrants who struggled and settled there. What does this tell you about America? What does this tell you about the American experience? How would you qualify it?

Pictures of performances and responses to key questions will be posted on the AmStud 2014 Blog.

Lesson III: Writing the Past to Understand the Present : How History is Written (Day 9)

Essential Questions:

- What is culture?
- What attitudes, philosophies and practices have come to create who you are today?
- How did your past, your ancestral past, shape your present?
- What conceptualizations of national, racial and ethnic subjectivity will be challenged in the process of your moving toward the acquisition of political, social, economic and gender identities in America?

The You in Context: The Immigration Memoir

Frank McCort. *Angela's Ashes*

Procedure:

- Distribute excerpts from *Angela's Ashes*
- Instruct students to read the excerpts.
- Distribute dialogic charts.
- Instruct students to list in the first column images the text evokes and the literary devices used to convey them.
- Instruct students to write in the third column those phrases that bring them into the text;
- Have students pass their charts to the persons on their right. Tell them to comment on the selections; Have them add to the lists and pass them back.

Discuss craft, technique and literary devices used. What does the memoir reveal? What assumptions are made about its veracity? What do you accept as true; what do you question? How is history documented here? What do you learn from the text about place, time and culture? Do you believe the narrator?

Where does truth exist?

Discuss craft, particularly the use of imagery and description.

Distribute assignment on writing your family memoir. (Students will use their interviews to write their own family memoirs as a first person narration that places them within the historical framework as legatees. Memoirs/narratives will be due one week from the day of assignment. Students will be able to revise. Final submissions will be anthologized online.)

Day 10: Understanding the Past through Fiction and Non-Fiction

Introduction:

This lesson functions as a bridge to studying immigration and its effect on the modernization of America, specifically its effect on urbanization and industrialization. Through Stephen Crane’s “Maggie: A Girl of the Streets,” and an assortment of articles from *Harper’s Weekly* and the *Herald Tribune*, students will map out images that identify and speak to the immigration experience: poverty, rampant alcoholism, crime, high mortality rate, labor exploitation, graft, lack of sanitation, over-crowded tenements and homelessness, which will allow them to draw conclusions about the late 19th to early 20th centuries. During the first two weeks, students wrote their narrative histories and performed them through the voices of their ancestors and brought the past to life.

Literature reveals the past, moments that history forgets. On this eleventh day, students will begin to explore fiction and non-fiction through the images they evoke that bear testimonies to the times in which they were written to study the social, political and economic movements of the early 20th century.

Toward the end of Part II on urbanization, students will adapt slum fiction to the stage using “Spangler’s” Six Strategies for Adaptation.

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Unit of Study: The Immigration Experience in America

In brief:

II: Urbanization and Socialization: The Genesis of the Tenement

Day 12: Immigration Trip to New York City: The Tenement House Museum; Ellis Island; Chinatown and Little Italy

Day 13: Tenements as a function of need-early sweatshops

Students will review what they will observe and conclude from their tours that will focus on urbanization, change and labor. Emphasis will be on the function of the tenements in an industrialized economy and its use as home and factory.

Day 14: The Genesis of a City and The Gangs of New York-1860

Gangs ruled New York from the mid-19th century to the turn of the century. They were New York’s fire department; infiltrated law enforcement; played a role in New York politics. From the

Dead Rabbits to the Bowery Boys the gangs emerged from a need to find support, solidarity and structure in a city that could not meet the demands and needs of a rapidly growing population.

Day 15: The Genesis of the Tenement

Students will study how the tenement evolved over time to meet the growing demands for affordable housing, and the housing reforms that followed.

Day 16: Tenement House Morality

Students review articles on family life, alcoholism, destitution, prostitution particularly in light of Crane's "Maggie: A Girl of the Streets," which will be discussed as an example of Naturalism, a literary movement that gave way to progressivism.

Day 17: The Working Girls of New York and Gender Discrimination

Prostitution reached epidemic proportions as work was limited for the working women many of whom were left alone to provide for their families. Using Jacob Riis's "Working Girls" students will explore the difficulties of obtaining work, labor discrimination and what survival meant. A choral reading of this piece will be done. ("The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" and Unionization)(An article's poetic form written and published in the Cleveland Press following the fire makes for a wonderful heartfelt choral reading.)

Day 18: "Maggie: A Girl of the Streets" from research to composition

Students will look at Crane's research methods, his life and dedication to reform, his emphasis on the need for solidarity and socialism, and his style of writing that defined Naturalism and the movement that followed.

Day 19: Part III: Industrialization, Labor and Migration

The Muckrakers: From Crane to Upton Sinclair

This is an introduction to Muckraking and Upton Sinclair and his call for socialism in the likes of unionization.

Days 20 to 22: Identifying the relationships between labor and industry, government and industry, labor and government, and society and immigrants through *The Jungle*

Students will work collaboratively to speak to various relationships identified in *The Jungle* and present their findings in a power point. Students were required to read *The Jungle* over the summer and to initiate this exercise by extracting quotes in response to the above.

Day 23-25: Introduction to comparing 20th century migration movements and an immigrant labor force to today's movements

Students will read a myriad of articles that focus on labor reform in the 20th century, and compare the meat packing industry and government regulation of the 20th century to today. Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* will direct students' attention to today's industry in the mid-west that uses an immigrant labor force to reduce overhead and increase profits.

Days 26 to 28: Part IV: The Immigration Experience in the 21st Century through Literature and Performance (T.C. Boyle's *Tortilla Curtain* and Francesco Jimenez's *The Circuit*, Kelly Hernandez's *Migra!*, Karla Zabudovsky, "Migrant Hunters." *Newsweek*. May 8, 2014, pp 24-32)

Students will script selected scenes to enable them to empathize more easily with the current immigration experience. This will lead into a research project which requires that they compare the immigration experience of the early 20th century with that of today with respect to opportunities, quality of life and future expectations.

VI. Days 29 to 33: From Action Research to Composition: Writing the Social Commentary: Immigration and the American Promise

In this research project, students become the immigrants. Students work in collaborative groups. Groups are distinguished by the family units, if any, they have. Groups are defined as: single man, single woman, single woman who is the mother of two children under 10 years of age, single man who is the father of two children under the age of 10, a family of five in which there are three children, ages: 12, 8 and 5. Students are required to get real jobs, find actual housing, obtain school information, if needed, consider public transportation to and from work and school, consider expenses that include furniture, household items, clothing, food and other essential items, and itemize them as monthly expenses.

Primary source documents will provide the necessary information for the immigrant families at the turn of the century; newspapers and a myriad of internet sites including the U.S. Bureau of Immigration, Labor and Statistics, provide students with much needed information. Results are presented orally and in a written social commentary.

The Debate: Days 1 and 2

Resolve: Those who control the past control the present; those who control the present control the past.

Debate Rubric--All students will vote on each team member's individual performance as follows:

Affirmative Constructive Speech (3 min.)	Speaker must: Define the terms of the resolve; Argue that a problem exists; support assertion with evidence; speaker summarizes the team's position (4)	Speaker states clearly the resolve, argues that a problem exists, but fails to support the assertion with evidence (3)	Speaker states clearly the resolve, but fails to argue that a problem exists; no evidence is given as support (2)
Negative Cross Examination (2 min)	Either team member may cross examine the speaker on the Affirmative side; questions must be precise and target a specific issue; the team member is not argumentative, but seeks answers (4)	Team members ask only one or two questions, and fail to go beyond the questions (3)	Team members are argumentative and fail to allow the affirmative team to respond (2)
Negative Constructive Speech (3 min.)	The first negative speaker must attempt to refute all or part of the first affirmative argument; the speaker must refute the evidence the affirmative speaker presented or assert there was insufficient evidence; the negative constructive speech must offer evidence (4)	The speaker does an adequate job of refuting the argument but does not question the evidence or offer sufficient opposing evidence to support the negative position (3)	The speaker fails to refute the affirmative argument or offer counter evidence to support a negative position (2)
Affirmative Cross-Examination (2.0)	Either team member can cross the team member who offered the constructive speech; questions must be precise; time must be allowed for the opposing team to answer; team member's questions must be purposeful (4)	Team members ask only one or two questions, and fail to go beyond the questions (3)	Team members are argumentative and fail to allow the affirmative team to respond (2)
Summations: Affirmative (2.0 minutes)	Team member restates constructive position, counters the opposing position by questioning supporting evidence and offers evidence to support its own position (4)	Team member restates position, attacks specific points in opposing argument but doesn't raise into question opposing evidence or offer evidence to support its own argument (3)	Team members only restate their positions- no evidence is offered in support thereof (2)

Summations: Negative (2.0 minutes)	Team member restates constructive position, counters the opposing position by questioning supporting evidence and offers evidence to support its own position (4)	Team member restates position, attacks specific points in opposing argument but doesn't raise into question opposing evidence or offer evidence to support its own argument (3)	Team members only restate their positions- no evidence is offered in support thereof (2)
Total Scores: (12)	Affirmative:	Negative:	

