

# National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute

“The Immigrant Experience in California through Literature & Theatre”

San José State University - Summer 2022

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Topic/Theme	Immigration in the 1900s in San Francisco/Literature Circle
Institute Text Inspiration	Outrun the Moon by Stacey Lee
Student Grade Level	6th

## Lit Group Materials: Outrun the Moon by Stacey Lee

### Rationale

The book would be taught as part of a literature circle linked to the history students will study, particularly immigration history in the United States. Students will be asked to conduct research and to examine the following questions of each immigrant group studied::

\*Why would this group come to the U.S.?

\*How was this group treated when they came to the U.S.? (Were there any restrictions on their immigration to the U.S. by the government? Why or why not?)

\*What tensions arose (if any) with groups already here?

\*Was there more than one wave of immigrants from this region? If so, why? How did they differ?

\*What status/jobs did this group have access to? Why?

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## Pre-Reading Activity: Setting the Context

Before reading the books, students work on some historical context for Chinese immigration, as well as establishing common definitions for the students.

Material covered:

An Introduction to Chinese Immigration:

Definitions:

Immigrant

Migrant

Refugee

Citizen

Interactive Immigration Timeline:

<https://insightfulinteraction.com/immigration200years.html>

Reasons to Come:

Opium Wars

Gold Rush

Mining

Railroad

## US reactions:

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Exclusion-Act>

<https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/chinese-exclusion-act-1882>

Geary Act of 1892:

<https://immigrationhistory.org/item/geary-act/>

Political Cartoons:

<https://thomasnastcartoons.com/the-chinese-cartoons/timeline-of-chinese-cartoons/>

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## **Chinatown in San Francisco (pre-earthquake):**

What did Chinatown look like in the 1900s?:

Photos by Arnold Gente

<https://www.inside-guide-to-san-francisco-tourism.com/chinatown-history.html>

Map of Chinatown:

<https://www.inside-guide-to-san-francisco-tourism.com/image-files/san-francisco-chinatown-map-1885-1247.jpg>

The key is hard to read:

Brown: General Chinese Occupancy

Pink: Chinese Gambling Houses

Green: Chinese Prostitution

Yellow: Chinese Opium Resorts

Red: Chinese Joss Houses

Blue: White Prostitution

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## **BOOK GUIDE: Discussion Questions:**

### **Chapter One**

1. What is a chuen pooi bulb?
2. Why would a school prohibit using non-English languages, like Mercy's Cantonese?
3. Mercy doesn't like "fours." Do you have a lucky or unlucky number? Why?
4. Three belief systems are mentioned: Catholicism, Buddhism and Taoism. What does each believe?

Bonus: Have you ever been in a hot air balloon? How does it work?

Look it up here if you don't know:

<https://www.cabq.gov/artsculture/balloonmuseum/documents/HowaHotAirBalloonWorksandItsMajorParts.pdf>

Try to explain the steps in your own words.

### **Chapter Two**

1. What is joss paper? Why would a funeral peddler sell it?
2. Who are the "white ghosts"?
3. Why doesn't Mercy's dad want Jack to wear a queue?
4. There is a tense exchange between some Italian men and Mercy and Jack? Why?
5. Why is the encounter at the chocolate shop so awkward?
6. How does the agreement between Mercy and Madame Du Lac reflect a lack of trust?

### **Chapter Three**

1. What is feng shui?
2. Calculate how many hours a week Ba works at the laundry.
3. Why would laws rule that laundries can't work after 6pm? How is that "an absurd law enacted to make life as difficult as possible for Chinese"?
4. Why is Ba not optimistic about Mercy getting into the school?
5. Is Mercy's lifeplan typical for the time period?
6. Do you think you can outrun your destiny or is it set, like Ma believes? Why or why not?

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## Chapter Four

1. Why was the rowboat rental place a bad memory?
2. What was *Tape v Hurley*, 1885? How can it be viewed as connected to desegregation?
3. Do you think Mercy negotiated a good deal with Monsieur Du Lac? Why or why not?

Bonus: Ba refers to Ma as a "cricket"? Why? How does a cricket hear?

## Chapter Five

1. Do you think Mercy's fake identity at the school is a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Why did banning daam tiu (poles balanced in shoulders) aimed at Chinese?
3. Why do both Tom and Mercy feel weighed down by the expectations of their fathers?

Bonus: There was mention of whale carcasses at Embarcadero. What was the whaling industry like in CA?

## Chapter Six

1. Was the "prosperity cake" a genuine gift? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think the peacock was chosen as a symbol of the school? What other symbolism/connections does the peacock have?
3. How would you describe the current relationship between Elodie and Mercy? Do you think having them as roommates is a good idea? Why or why not?

## Chapter Seven

1. What lesson was Ba trying to teach Mercy when they panned for gold?
2. Why does Mercy think that St. Clare's isn't on par with Men's Wilkes College?
3. How does Harry almost catch Mercy in her lie?

## Chapter Eight

1. Why does Mercy say "even whites have their pecking order" when she sees Francesca alone?
2. Mercy breaks etiquette rules by using a spoon with her egg. Look at a silverware chart. Would you be able to identify the "right" utensil for different foods/courses?  
<https://emilypost.com/advice/formal-place-setting>  
Do you think this setting makes sense for a modern meal?

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## Chapter Nine

1. Mercy references rosemary for remembrance. Look up the symbolism/meaning of a favorite flower. Bring it in to share with the group.
2. Watch an actual tea ceremony:  
<https://youtu.be/47HMPESDsp0>  
What does Mercy do incorrectly?

## Chapter Ten

1. When Mercy talks to Ruby about travel, the limitations of what women can do, such as travel alone, come up in conversation. What roles were women expected to fulfill in the early 1900s? (You might have to do some research on this one.)
2. What is the practice of making offerings to ancestors that Mercy references? Can you find other cultures that make offerings to ancestors? What does that practice look like?

## Chapter Eleven

1. Mercy is to meet with the Benevolent Association. Is this realistic for this time period?
2. How does Mercy call Elodie's bluff about being second in command?
3. Who are the Six? Why are they important?
4. If you were the Benevolent Association, would you meet with the two girls? Why or why not?

## Chapter Twelve

1. Pick one of the Six. Draw a portrait using details from the books.
2. Why does the mention of wives and babies come up? Why is it a sore spot for the Six?
3. Do you think Mercy and Elodie's negotiations are realistic? Why or why not?

## Chapter Thirteen

1. When Mercy sees her mom and brother, she wonders if Ma is quiet because she's thinking about her own death. What impact does that line have on you, the reader?
2. Why does Mercy regret seeing her family after the victory? Would you have wanted to see your family? Why or why not?
3. Why does the idea of Tom working for the Du Lacs make Mercy's "tongue peel"?

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## Chapter Fourteen

1. Why does Father Goodwin's sermon make Mercy rethink her plans?
2. Mercy has a quote in mind for her headstone. What words would you want someone to remember you?
3. Why does Mercy say "Even the dead, it seems, have their prejudices"?
4. Why does Tom not want Mercy to get attached to him?
5. What wound does Tom create with his words?
6. Do you believe in hungry ghosts? What do you think is making the noise above them?

## Chapter Fifteen

1. Why does Mercy whisper the Cantonese word for goodbye?
2. Mrs. Mitchell refers to her gran telling fortunes from cracked eggs after Mercy reads the girls' palms. What other ways of telling fortunes can you find in other cultures?
3. What does "keep your tatties in the oven" mean? Can you think of any other sayings with the same sentiment?
4. Were you surprised by the use of corporal punishment (beating with the ruler) as a punishment? If you were the Headmistress, how would you have handled punishing Mercy for sneaking out?
5. Why do you think Mercy confessed when the Headmistress was going to punish Katie?

## Chapter Sixteen

1. Why is Father Goodwin's orders to weed a metaphor for Mercy and her life?
2. Have you ever grown herbs for cooking? (Ideally, the teacher would bring in some to sniff and guess at uses/recipes for.)
3. How does Francesca make offers of friendship?

Bonus: Grow an herb for an herb garden and make or cook something with it, for example, rosemary soap or rolls with herbs.

## Chapter Seventeen

1. Why does Mercy feel rested after the attic punishment?
2. Who do you suspect of playing a "prank" on Mercy? Why?

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## Chapter Eighteen

1. Why do the girls consider doing the laundry an epic punishment?
2. Based on the description of how to do the laundry, do you think you could do yours?

Check out these photos for equipment:

<https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/early-20th-century-laundry-room.html>

3. How would you describe Mercy's style of doing laundry? How would you describe Elodie's?

## Chapter Nineteen

1. Were you surprised that Elodie revealed Mercy's true identity? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Mercy should be punished for her alter ego?
3. What do you think is happening with the animals?

## Chapter Twenty

1. What causes an earthquake?

(Feel free to look here:

[https://www.funkidslive.com/learn/top-10-facts/top-10-facts-about-earthquakes/#:~:text=Earthquakes%20occur%20when%20the%20plates,This%20causes%20an%20earthquake!\)](https://www.funkidslive.com/learn/top-10-facts/top-10-facts-about-earthquakes/#:~:text=Earthquakes%20occur%20when%20the%20plates,This%20causes%20an%20earthquake!)

2. How does Mercy feel? Find some language evidence to support your description.
3. Who do we know is ok? Who do we not know is ok/who is missing?

## Chapter Twenty One

1. Why does Mercy flash to think about her mother?
2. Who doesn't make it? Who does that impact?
3. Why would Golden Gate Park be used as an emergency meeting place?
4. What is your impression of the earthquake? (Look at images/firsthand accounts: [https://artsandculture.google.com/story/earthquake-the-chinatown-story-chinese-historical-society-of-america/bgWhgn\\_sGgcA8A?hl=en](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/earthquake-the-chinatown-story-chinese-historical-society-of-america/bgWhgn_sGgcA8A?hl=en))

## Chapter Twenty Two

1. Mercy notices some strange things people have saved in the quake. What would you save?

2. Why was fire such a threat?

(Optional Source:

<https://www.nps.gov/prsf/learn/historyculture/1906-earthquake-fire-fighting.htm>)

3. Who does Mercy lose to the earthquake and the fire?



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## Chapter Twenty Three

1. What does Mercy mean when she says, "The sea is empty for me"?
2. How does Mercy end up at the park?
3. How does the author convey that Mercy's grief comes in waves? (Look for language evidence in the text.)

## Chapter Twenty Four

1. Mercy isn't sure where she belongs? Who do you think she should stay with? Why?
2. In this situation, is there such a thing as "men's work"?
3. What kind of items were in the crate? If you were packing supplies, what would you have included? Why?

## Chapter Twenty Five

1. Why is the girls' use of daam tiu ironic?
2. How are the neighborhoods being recreated? How are things separated?
3. Why does Mercy put Madame Du Lac into the book?
4. What are the girls doing to survive? Do you think they are making good choices? Why or why not?

## Chapter Twenty Six

1. What is the man with the rope trying to do?
2. Why do the men beat him?
3. Why does Mercy think that she hopes the man comes back "for all of us"?

## Chapter Twenty Seven

1. What evidence can you find of the girls' resourcefulness? What evidence can you find of the resourcefulness of others?
2. What is the impact of the Mayor declaring martial law?
3. How does Mercy's plan honor her mother?
4. Why does she choose 44?

## Chapter Twenty Eight

1. Do you agree with Mercy that disasters have a way of equalizing power? Why or why not?
2. Mercy says, "When a law isn't just, I believe it's okay to disobey it. In fact, I believe we are morally obligated to disobey it." Do you agree with her? Under what

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circumstances should you stand up to a law? Can you think of any examples from history where unjust laws faced people disobeying them?

## Chapter Twenty Nine

1. Ah-Suk uses his own method of diagnosis to conclude Headmistress has high blood pressure. Why is that a dangerous condition?
2. Why do they dose her with sleeping tea?
3. Do you think it's right that they treat Headmistress Crouch without her permission?

## Chapter Thirty

1. What would you make with the items the two girls "borrow"?
2. Why does the dog fixate on Mercy?

## Chapter Thirty One

1. Why is it dangerous for the girls to be spotted by the soldiers?
2. Why might Mercy "need" Elodie?

## Chapter Thirty Two

1. Who do you agree with, Mercy or Elodie, on her philosophy of taking of others versus taking care of self? Why?
2. Who do you think gets the better deal out of the exchange with the butcher?

## Chapter Thirty Three

1. Have you ever experienced that laughter/tears combination? Did Stacey Lee catch it well?
2. What would you have named their beefy friend?

## Chapter Thirty Four

1. What did you learn about Elodie's parents?
2. What unlikely interactions do you see in this chapter?

## Chapter Thirty Five

1. Why is the orphan baby's name significant in meaning?
- 2.. What immigrant groups do you spot in this chapter? Do they all seem to get along?

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## Chapter Thirty Six

Activity: Play Two Frogs on a Stick. Mercy's rules.

1. Why is Mercy on guard after she's asked if she's from Chinatown?
2. Why does Mercy feel like a shard has been replaced in her heart at this chapter's end?

## Chapter Thirty Seven

1. What was your impression of Marcus, Francesca's future husband?
2. What do you think would have happened had not Headmistress Crouch intervened?

## Chapter Thirty Eight

1. Do you think Minnie Mae's theory makes sense? Do you think she's ok? Why?
2. Have you heard of any ghost stories like the "White Lady"?

## Chapter Thirty Nine

1. Do you think "grief is like a prison"? Why or why not?
2. Why does Mercy take what Katie's gran is to be a sign from the universe?

## Chapter Forty

1. With what half truth does the Headmistress confront Mercy? (What didn't she know?)
2. Are you surprised by the Headmistress's offer? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Ba is still alive? Why or why not?

## Chapter Forty One

1. Why do the girls want to keep the kitchen going?
2. What news does Mr. Cruz bring?

## Chapter Forty Two

1. What do you think Mercy means when she tells Francesca "What I think is that you know many ways to cook a noodle"?
2. Why is Mercy devastated when she sees the hotel?

## Chapter Forty Three

1. What is the significance of playing taps?
2. Why is the encounter with the soldiers so dramatic/high stakes?
3. Would you have done what Francesca did?
4. Do you think Mercy will see her again?

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## Chapter Forty Four

1. What is the pain of surviving that Mercy thinks of?
2. Why does the balloon revitalize Mercy?
3. What signs did nature give that the earthquake was coming?
4. What was Mercy's mother's "last gift"?

## Chapter Forty Five

1. What do you think Ah-Suk and Tom are thinking that they don't say out loud?  
Bonus: Write an internal monologue for each.
2. What was the outcome of Francesca and Marcus's match? Do you approve?

## Chapter Forty Six

1. Why do you think Mercy gives Minnie Mae Jack's penny?
2. How is the balloon ride a "bookend" or framing moment?
3. Why do you think the author chooses the last two words of the book?
4. Did your opinion of Mercy change from the beginning of the book? Why or why not?
5. How do you think she's changed as a character?

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## Immigration Museum Project

### Intro:

You will be creating a virtual Museum on Immigration as part of our Lit group.

Although we will be looking at the groups that lived in San Francisco at the time of the Earthquake in 1906, you may collect material that predates that period or continues later into the 20th century.

### Groups:

Chinese

Mexican/Sonoran

Italian

Swedish

Irish

Russian/Southern Slavs

German

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## Directions for Stage One:

You will work on your museum project with your groupmates during Stage 2.

You've been assigned a specific group of immigrants to the U.S.

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In Stage One, you need to collect information on your own. That means you'll be reading and taking your own notes! (Students are divided ahead of time into groups and assigned an immigrant group.)

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You should use the following resources as your starting points:

\*the attached graph lets you see which groups came around which years (you should know which were big years for your group)

<https://insightfulinteraction.com/immigration200years.html>

\*Immigration Stats for CA in 1900

<https://stacker.com/california/what-californias-immigrant-population-looked-1900>

\*a curated group of resources, mostly websites.

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## Immigration Museum: Curated Internet Resources

### Chinese Immigration/Chinese Americans

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/searching-for-the-gold-mountain/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/struggling-for-work/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/intolerance/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/legislative-harassment/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/exclusion/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/building-communities/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/taking-care-of-our-own/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/growth-and-inclusion/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/a-new-community/>

<https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/Asian-Americans/272976#196795.toc>

### Mexican Immigration/Mexican Americans

<https://explore-sonora.com/about-sonora/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/becoming-part-of-the-united-states/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/land-loss-in-trying-times/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/a-growing-community/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/perceptions-and-misconceptions/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/depression-and-the-struggle-for-survival/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/moving-to-the-cities/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/expansion-and-expulsion/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/mexican/shaping-a-new-century/>

<https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/Hispanic-Americans/274892>

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## **Italian Immigration/Italian Americans**

<https://museoitaloamericano.org/wp-content/uploads/immigration-booklet-FINAL.pdf>

[https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The\\_Immigrants](https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Immigrants)

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/early-arrivals/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/the-great-arrival/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/lisola-dell-lagrima/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/a-city-of-villages/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/tenements-and-toil/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/working-across-the-country/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/under-attack/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/italian/a-century-in-in-the-spotlight/>

## **Swedish Immigration/Swedish Americans**

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/scandinavian/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/scandinavian/the-swedes/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/scandinavian/scandinavian-america/>

[/](#)

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/scandinavian/scandinavians-today/>

## **Irish Immigration/Irish Americans**

[https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The\\_Immigrants](https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Immigrants)

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/irish-catholic-immigration-to-america/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/adaptation-and-assimilation/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/joining-the-workforce/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/religious-conflict-and-discrimination/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/racial-tensions/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/irish-identity-influence-and-opportunity/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/irish-contributions-to-the-american-culture/>



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## **Polish/Russian Immigration/ Polish and Russian Americans**

[https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The\\_Immigrants](https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Immigrants)

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/russian-beginnings/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/soviet-exiles/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/the-nation-of-polonia/>

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<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/a-people-at-risk/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/the-lower-east-side/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/polish-russian/a-cultural-renaissance/>

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## **German Immigration/German Americans**

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/call-of-tolerance/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/building-a-new-nation/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/new-surge-of-growth/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/filling-the-nations-breadbasket/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/urban-germans/>

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/building-institutions-shaping-tastes/>

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<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/german/shadows-of-war/>

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## Stage Two: EXHIBIT TIME

Now that you have notes, it's time to work with your group! Your task is to put yourself into the role of creators of a museum exhibit.

WITH YOUR GROUP, YOU NEED TO CHOOSE 6-8 ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN THE EXHIBIT. Each item needs a museum label and a caption to explain its significance to your viewer.

(Each team member needs to contribute 2 items on their own. The remaining items can be made collaboratively. If you are in a trio, you'll need at least 8 items total. If you are in a pair, you'll need at least 6 total.)

Consider how you would like to display the items. That may influence your choices. (For example: Do you want an interactive "wall" or something that could travel, like a trunk belonging to a descendant from your studied group?)

YOU MUST INCLUDE A DIAGRAM AS A GROUP FOR HOW THE ITEMS WILL BE DISPLAYED/A DIAGRAM OF THE EXHIBIT LAYOUT. This will be put up as a separate assignment.

Possible choices (this is just a starter list....feel free to ask about any other ideas you have):

\*Create a "historical" film clip.

\*A fragment of a journal

\*A recreation of a photograph (you could stage it or draw it)

\*personal belongings that reflect that person's job

\*a "newspaper" clipping

\*clothing (can be doll sized) that reflects the heritage you studied

\*artifacts from the journey here (or from life back in the home country)

\*maps

\*models of houses/a typical living space

\*posters from a specific time period that have a significant meaning to your immigrant group

\*a keepsake box with an important item in it

\*items from a holiday that has significance

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To make the exhibit clearer to your viewer, your group needs to go back to your notes! Together, draft a 3 paragraph (AT LEAST!) label giving some of the historical context for the museum goers. Do not assume the museum goers have the same background knowledge as you do. Your task is to make sure they walk away with the important information about your immigrant group.

**Culminating Activity:** Students turn the classroom into a museum. The "exhibits" can be shared with other elementary classrooms and parents with the students acting as docents/tour guides.