

# What Do Immigrants Look Like?

**GRADE LEVEL:** 4-8

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although traditionally construed as a land of opportunity for new arrivals, the United States has always had an ambivalent attitude toward new immigrants. As the Jewish-American poet Emma Lazarus indicated in “The New Colossus,” a poem written in 1883 and engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1903, new immigrants were simultaneously “tired,” “poor,” and “huddled masses yearning to breathe free” and also “wretched refuse,” “homeless,” and “tempest-tost.”

In this activity, students study a wide array of primary sources – including songs, photographs, and political cartoons – that illustrate the discomfort many native-born Americans felt toward newcomers at the turn of the last century. Through analyzing such works, students learn about the positive and negative images of immigrants at the time. They also consider how stereotypes are created, perpetuated, and resisted, and how they can be harmful.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Resistance toward immigrants was exacerbated by their rise in numbers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. More than 9 million people arrived in the U.S. between 1865 and 1890; another 16 million came between 1890 and 1915. Rather than hailing from Ireland, England, Germany, and Scandinavia, as had the first major wave of immigrants in the early nineteenth century, this second wave of immigrants came primarily from southern and eastern Europe, especially Italy, Russia, and Austro-Hungary. Although such immigrants stimulated the country’s economy and increased the ranks of the working class, they also threatened the employment opportunities of native-born members of the working class and introduced new political and religious ideologies to public discourse.

Nativism – particularly anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment – was a central theme of U.S. history throughout the nineteenth century, but this new wave of migration heightened anti-immigrant sentiment. By the late nineteenth century, Congress responded to such sentiment by barring various types of immigrants, including prostitutes, convicted felons, the mentally retarded, those with contagious diseases, and all immigrants from China. White ethnic immigrants, however, faced few restrictions until 1921, when a temporary measure lowered migration from Europe from roughly 1 million immigrants per year prior to World War I to 357,000 in 1922. In 1924, Congress permanently limited European immigration to 150,000 per year with further restrictions based on national quotas that dramatically decreased the number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe in particular. While the law established no limits on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere – to appease large farmers in California who relied on season Mexican labor – it barred the entire population of Asia, even though Japan had fought on the American side in World War I. The ban on Chinese immigration was not repealed until 1943. The national origins quotas established during the 1920s stayed in place until 1965, when

the Hart Cellar Act encouraged a third wave of migration, primarily from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, which the U.S. is currently still experiencing today.

Musicians, political cartoonists, and photographers have historically debated how new immigrants should be treated in the U.S. This exercise asks students to examine a popular song, political cartoons, and photographs created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to understand a range of responses to the new migration.

**THEMES:** immigration, stereotypes, citizenship, visual and oral sources

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students, following this activity, will be able to do the following:

1. Understand how stereotypes are created, perpetuated, and resisted, and why they are harmful.
2. Analyze visual and oral primary sources.
3. Compare and contrast representations of immigrants in diverse sources, including music, political cartoons, and photographs.
4. Compare stereotypes toward diverse immigrants at the turn of the last century to those confronting today's immigrants.

## **NEW JERSEY STANDARDS**

**STANDARD 6.4 (United States History)** All students will demonstrate knowledge of United States and New Jersey history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and future.

**STANDARD 6.A.5 (Social Studies)** All students will examine current issues, events, or themes and relate them to past events.

**STANDARD 6.A.8 (Social Studies)** All students will compare and contrast competing interpretations of current and historical events.

## **MATERIALS:**

- Appendices A-L
- Photocopies of Appendix A for distribution to all students
- PowerPoint using materials in Appendix A
- 6 photocopies of Appendix C for group exercises (1 copy per group)
- Photocopies of Appendix H for all students
- Photocopies of Appendices I-K for group work.

## **DETAILS OF ACTIVITY**

### **Part 1: Attitudes toward New Immigrants: “The Mortar of Assimilation” (7 min.):**

Show a PowerPoint slide of C.J Taylor’s “The Mortar of Assimilation” (1889) to the class (create a PowerPoint slide show using Appendix A. Use the first and second slides for this part). Ask the students to do the following:

- Scan the image for important details. How does the image represent immigrants? Add the biographical information to the slide and ask how (or if) it changes the way the students understand the slide.
- Identify any conflicts or tensions in the image.
- Guess the creator’s intent or the central message of the image
- And hear the voices (imagine what the bloodthirsty Irishman would say to Lady Liberty if he could speak. How would she answer him, and how would the other immigrants respond.)

Explain that one way to understand attitudes toward immigrants at the turn of the last century is to study representations of them. This class will examine cartoons and photographs of immigrants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to understand how native-born Americans perceived them.

### **Part II: Background on Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Migration and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment (8 min.)**

Give a brief introduction to migration trends in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and explain why non-immigrants typically drew on stereotypes to describe the new immigrants. Highlight some of the things that older Americans feared regarding the new immigrants and why.

### **Part 3: Attitudes toward New Immigrants: The Visual Evidence (10 min.):**

Divide the class into 6 groups. Give each group the S.I.G.H.T. worksheet (Appendix C) and images in Appendix A. If possible, laminate each image or put it in a plastic sleeve first. Explain that the class has just used the S.I.G.H.T. method of analysis in describing “The Mortar of Assimilation.” Each group will now use it to describe a new cartoon or photograph. Teachers might want to refer to the annotated images (Appendices D-I) to help student groups to analyze them. Students analyzing the cartoons should rely on the images and captions alone as printed in Appendix A. Those examining photographs (Appendix H and I), should also read the additional paragraph explaining the photographers’ background and motivations for documenting immigrants.

### **Part 4: Reporting Out (30 minutes):**

Ask a representative from each group to come to the front of the room and report their findings using a PowerPoint slide of the image their group discussed to explain their analysis. Use the PowerPoint developed using Appendix A.

**Part 5: Conclusion (5 minutes):**

Based on this lesson, have students consider how and why stereotypes are created, perpetuated, and resisted.

**Follow-Up Activity: What do immigrants look like today (1 class period and a homework assignment):**

Ask students what they know about immigration today and attitudes toward immigrants. Explain that we are in the midst of a third wave of immigration (1965 to the present) and that anti-immigrant sentiment remains salient today.

Show students a current anti-immigrant political cartoon. See Appendix J for an example. Ask students to analyze the image using the S.I.G.H.T. method (Appendix C).

Divide the class up into groups of three or six and assign each group the profile of a recent young immigrant (see Appendices K-M). There are three profiles in these appendices. You might give the same profile to two groups. Have the students read their assigned profile and think about how their recent immigrant might have responded to the political cartoon. Each group should report the results of their discussion to the group by pretending to be the new immigrant and describing their personal response to the cartoon. As a homework assignment, students could write a letter to the editor of the newspaper that printed the political cartoon responding to its imagery and message.

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**REFERENCES and WEBSITES:**

To see the entire selection of Lewis W. Hines's Ellis Island photographs, go to the George Eastman House Still Photograph Archive at [http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc/ellis-island\\_sld00001.html](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc/ellis-island_sld00001.html)

For more information about turn-of-the-century immigration and migration consult the following:

Frederick Binder and David M. Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

Oscar Handlin, *The Epic Story of the Great Migration that Made the American People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

John Higman, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (NY: Charles Scribner's Son, 1880).

#### ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

For the Music and Sheet Music for a song that also captures anti-immigrant sentiment, see "Don't Bite the Hand That's Feeding You" (1915) at

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.100007833/pageturner.html> and

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(edrs+50357r\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER+@band(edrs+50357r))) .

# Appendix A: Slides for PowerPoint Presentation

PDF to be cut and pasted into PowerPoint

## Appendix B: “The Mortar of Assimilation”



C.J. Taylor, "The Mortar of Assimilation--And the One Element that Won't Mix" *The Puck* (June 26, 1889), Michigan State University Museum.

The editorial that accompanies this image in *Puck* magazine asks "What is an American?" It argues that Americans are the product of diverse immigrants assimilating into the U.S. However, C.J. Taylor's illustration suggests that there is "one element that [just] won't mix:" the bloodthirsty Irish.

This cartoon is accessible at <http://museum.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature/7572-126.html>

## Appendix C: The S.I.G.H.T. Method

**S** scan for important details \_\_\_\_\_

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**I** identify the conflict or tension \_\_\_\_\_

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**G** guess the creator's intent or message \_\_\_\_\_

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**H** hear the voices \_\_\_\_\_

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**T** talk or write about your observations \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D:



J. Keppler, "Welcome to All," *The Puck* (April 28, 1880).

This cartoon casts Uncle Sam as a modern-day Noah welcoming peoples from all nations in to the United States, an ark of refuge. The caption above Uncle Sam reads "U.S. Ark or Refuge." The caption on the small sign reads: "Free education, free land, free speech, free ballot, free lunch." *Puck*, a weekly magazine at the turn of the last century, was founded by Joseph Keppler, a Viennese immigrant to the U.S.

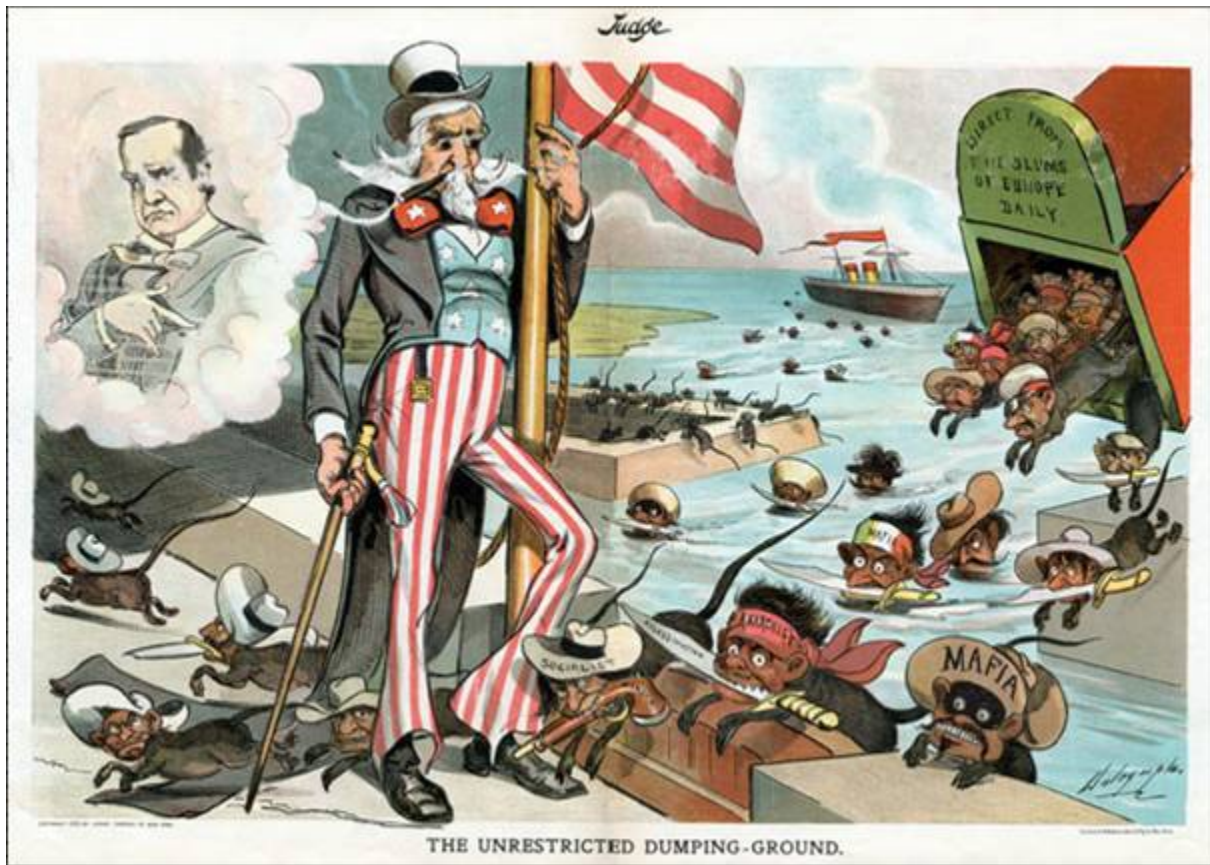
## Appendix E: What Shall We Do With Our Boys



George Frederick Keller, “What Shall We Do with Our Boys?” *The Wasp* (March 3, 1882)

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, a proposal to outlaw most Chinese immigration, was under intense debate when this political cartoon appears as part of an effort by several California publications, including *The Wasp*, to influence Congress to support Chinese exclusion. This image plays on one of the commonly cited objections to Chinese immigration: that Asians were willing to do manual labor for low wages, often holding many positions simultaneously, and, thus, took jobs away from U.S. citizens. The Chinese worker at the center of the image appears as an employee “octopus” with eight arms, while white workers lounge unemployed in the background and one young boy is led away by police, presumably for mischief because of idle hands.

## Appendix F: The Unrestricted Dumping Ground



“The Unrestricted Dumping Ground,” *Judge Magazine* (1903).

An anti-Italian cartoon published by *Judge Magazine* in 1903, this image plays to fears of socialism, anarchism, and the Mafia imported “direct from the slums of Europe daily.” The background figure is that of the late President William McKinley, who was assassinated by the son of an immigrant two years earlier. *Judge* was a leading Republican magazine of the time, and was forever fretting about the effects of polluting the native racial strain – especially since most of the immigrants, once they won the vote, tended to vote for Democrats.

## Appendix G: Our Self-Made Cook



Frederick Burr Opper, “Our Self-made ‘Cooks’ – From Paupers to Potentates,” *Puck*, January 30, 1881.

This cartoon caricatures an Irish woman’s change in stature from poverty in Ireland to bossy arrogance in the United States. The second image illustrates an Irish cook ordering around her employer.

The captions in the images read as follows: “They are Evicted in the Old Country,” “But in America They Do All the Evicting Themselves.”

This cartoon is accessible at

<http://museum.msu.edu/Exhibitions/Virtual/ImmigrationandCaricature/7572-129.html>

Appendix H: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1880)



“Lodgers in a crowded Bay Street Tenement (an immigrant shelter in New York City)”



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“Greek Children in Gotham Court”

Jacob Riis, the photographer who recorded these images, was an immigrant himself. He was born in Denmark in 1849 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1870 at the age of 21. He worked a number of jobs, but had a difficult time acclimating to life in the U.S. In 1877, the *New York Tribune* hired him as a police reporter. It was in that capacity that he began to report on the social conditions of immigrants and write about how such conditions shaped their lives. Riis went on to combine flash photographs with stories in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), a book that exposed the middle and upper classes to the difficulties that working class immigrants faced at the time. He used his book to argue for social legislation to improve their living conditions, arguing that if their lives didn't improve soon, they would turn to crime and radicalism.

Appendix I: Lewis Hine Photographs of Ellis Island, 1905



“Ellis Island Madonna”



“Ellis Island (Children on Playground)”

Lewis Hine, the sociologist and photographer who recorded these images, was born in Wisconsin in 1874. While teaching at the Ethical Culture School in Manhattan, Hine began documenting immigrants at Ellis Island in 1904 and, in 1908, published *Charities and Commons*, a collection of photographs of immigrants' lives in the Lower East Side of Manhattan living in tenements and working in sweatshops. Like Jacob Riis, Hine used his camera to bring the work and living conditions of working-class Americans – especially children -- to the attention of reformers and public officials and to advocate for legislation that would improve their plight.



## Appendix J: A Recent Anti-Immigrant Political Cartoon



Michael Ramirez, "The Immigration Problem," *Investors' Business Daily* (California)

This cartoon and other recent political cartoons on immigration are accessible at [http://politicalhumor.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=politicalhumor&cdn=entertainment&tm=8&gps=161\\_204\\_952\\_684&f=10&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&st=32&zu=http%3A//cagle.com/news/Immigration06/main.asp](http://politicalhumor.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=politicalhumor&cdn=entertainment&tm=8&gps=161_204_952_684&f=10&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&st=32&zu=http%3A//cagle.com/news/Immigration06/main.asp)

## Appendix K: Profile of Kuathar Hassan

Hi, I am Kauthar Hassan and I moved from Kenya, by way of Somalia, to the United States in 2000. It was exciting to travel from there to here as we didn't travel much before and suddenly we were on a very big trip. We came to the United States because my parents wanted better things for all of our family, so they brought us to this country.

When we arrived in Georgia, the change could not have been more different. Yes, there were big cities in Kenya, but there was nothing to compare with the atmosphere of the Atlanta area where I now live. In Kenya, we had a large variety of animals and wildlife. The plains of Kenya were, seemingly, very close to the city. The joy and wonder that went with them, whether it was going on a safari or watching a beautiful sunset, seemed to be easy to find and enjoy. Here the city seems to go on and on. Even when we travel away from the city the wide-open spaces like I knew in Kenya seem to be hard to find.



One of the things I miss most about Kenya is the early morning when I would wake up and smell the aroma of pancakes and mandozi (a Kenyan pastry). I also loved the sunsets in Kenya as the sun slid over the horizon.

Although I miss those parts of my life, I do like it here. Everyone is friendly. When I first arrived everyone would ask me about where I had come from and they wanted to know all about me. Their friendliness made me feel good. There are lots of things to do here that I couldn't do at home. There are different foods and different cultures all waiting to be explored. I have found something I like as much as the plains of Kenya and that is vacationing along the coast of Florida and enjoying the shore there.

There are some funny things that happened to me when I arrived here, things that American children take for granted. A couple of great examples are in the changes I found in kitchen. I did not know what a microwave oven was. Can you imagine? I had never seen a dishwasher as we had always washed our dishes by hand. Here there was this machine to do such as task. I liked that!

While I do miss my home, I know that was the right place for our family to come to. We have opportunities here that we would not have had in Kenya or Somalia.

This document is accessible at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/recent/kauthar.htm>

## Appendix L: Profile of Virpal

My name is Virpal, I am 13 years old and from Punjab, India. My mom was granted a visa to move here five years ago, after my father passed away, but my sister and I just recently moved here three months ago. So, it had been five years since my sister and I last saw our mother. Up until three months ago, we were living in India with family. Not a day went by that I wouldn't dream about the reuniting with my mother again.

Finally, after five years, the United States granted my sister and me permission to come live with our mother again. The day started off wonderfully, as we boarded an airplane from Delhi, India to Holland. We landed in Holland and had to board another airplane, but we didn't realize our airplane had been delayed for four hours. We were hungry and thirsty and we didn't have any money. It was pretty obvious that my sister and I were foreigners and while waiting in Holland, I was pulled to the side so that the airport workers could investigate a box that I was carrying. Luckily, while living in India, I took English classes, and this came in handy because the airport worker understood very little English, and I was able to tell him that the box was filled with sweets for my mother.



Four hours later, my sister and I finally boarded the plane that was to take us to the United States of America. While on the plane, my sister and I were crying because we were so tired, hungry and thirsty. Finally, we landed and I was so happy. As soon as we got off of the airplane, we were told to get in the I.N.S. line, this is the line where newly arrived immigrants check in. This felt like the longest wait ever, even longer than the 13 hour trip from India. My sister and I began to worry that our mother might think we didn't make it after all and leave. We both began to cry with worry. Just then, an officer that worked at the airport came over and helped us find our mother.

When I saw my mother, I ran over and hugged her. I cried so hard it was the happiest day of my life. As soon as I walked out of the airport, I noticed many differences between India and America, but I was mainly surprised by how beautiful America is. I am now a 7th grade student in Fresno, California. I am in Mrs. Tracy's class and she is helping me learn how to read and write in English. I love my new school and my new country.

This document is accessible at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/recent/virpal.htm>

## Appendix M: Profile of Quynh

Hi, my name is Quynh, and I am 11 years old. When I was younger my parents decided that our family would have a better way of life if we moved to this country. My parents and I moved to the United States from Vietnam with my younger brother and sister in 2001.

My parents were both photographers in Vietnam and I was doing well in school, but they still felt opportunities were here for us that were not in my home country. Although we have always lived in the southern part of the United States we have not always lived in the Atlanta area.



My first thoughts were this was a very crowded area. Now, however, we live in a part that I think is quiet and peaceful and I enjoy that. I also think it is colorful here. The trees, flowers, people, and the city itself all have lots of color. I have relatives here and they have helped us adjust to the way of life here. But I must admit that I miss my grandparents and friends who I left behind.

Life is better here for our family. There are many things we have here that we could have never enjoyed at home. For instance, I think school here is the best. Even though I won a contest in second grade and third grade as the top student in my school, school here is better. We do study hard, but I think I enjoy it more. We write and I can express myself. I learn art and music as well as reading and writing. I have a teacher who makes all the learning something I want to do. It seems she makes the hard work less hard.

I am glad we came here. There are new things every day for me. I do not know what the future holds for me but I welcome everyday to see what it brings.

This document is accessible at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/recent/quynh.htm>