

LET'S GET PACKING!

A Lesson on Immigration

Grades 5–8

Standards covered in this lesson:

Gr. 5-12/National Standards Social Sciences

NSS-USH.5-12.6

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

Gr. 5/SASD Standard E.8.7

- Benchmark: Recognize the effects of immigration on culture and conflict in the United States

Gr. 6/SASD Standard D.8.2

- Benchmark: Articulate the movement of people based on labor and wages.

Gr. 5-12/National Standards Fine Arts

NA-VA.5-8.3 Choosing And Evaluating A Range Of Subject Matter, Symbols, And Ideas

NA-VA.5-8.4 Understanding The Visual Arts In Relation To History And Cultures

NA-VA.5-8.6 Making Connections Between Visual Arts And Other Disciplines

Gr. 5-8/SASD Standard B1 Art

- Benchmark: Students will associate a culture or an artist with his or her artwork.

Introduction

Several artists in this exhibition immigrated to the United States, bringing with them memories and traditions from their homelands. An **immigrant** is *a person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another.*¹ The immigrant artists in this exhibition make reference in their work to their home countries as well as to their new homes in America. A fusion of old and new can be seen in their works of art.

Artist Carl Peterson (provide full page images)

Having immigrated to the United States as a teenager, Carl Peterson drew on the shapes and colors of his early life in the hamlet of Slomarps, Sweden. He aspired to make his American yard a beautiful formal garden like those he remembered in Europe, while still incorporating American symbols such as the eagle and U.S. flag. Although some neighbors found his yard eccentric, his artistry was nevertheless valued and respected, and for the many Swedes settled in the area, the pillars, spires, and spheres embodied a familiar and cherished visual culture.² Display the images of Peterson's sculptures, and then discuss the following questions as a class.

Discussion Questions:

- Do Peterson's fantasy buildings remind you of any buildings in your own community? How are they similar? How are they different?
- What materials did Peterson use in the construction of his sculptures? What other natural materials could you find and incorporate?

Art Activity

What design elements do you like best in Peterson's sculptures? Design and draw a building, including as many of these different architectural styles as you like, or draw a picture of your own home enhancing it with pillars, spires, spheres, etc.

¹ Definition derived from: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/immigrant>

² Umberger, Leslie. *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. (See chapter on Peterson)

Student Connection: Let's Get Packing!

Peterson designed his yard to resemble the familiar European gardens and architecture of his native home. When people relocate to a new place, they often bring with them traditions, styles, and things that will remind them of the places and people they left behind. Many of the immigrants from Carl Peterson's era (late 1800s) brought trunks full of their most precious belongings aboard the ships that would take them to America. In the nineteenth century, passengers brought very little with them because the shipping lines charged them for every parcel brought on board. Guidebooks offered suggestions for necessities, and immigrants used them to determine which items to bring³.



Discussion Questions⁵

- Imagine that you are immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s. You are given space in a shared trunk to pack five special items with which you will begin your new life in the States. Make a list describing which items you will choose and why. Have each student share his or her list with the class.
- Research and compare the items that nineteenth-century immigrants brought with your lists. How are the items on these lists similar? How are they different? What do these differences and similarities tell us about our culture and mindset today? <http://www.frontiernet.net/~dforrest/Leaving.htm>
- Ask parents or older relatives if your family has any items that are very old, special, or from another country. What is the family history behind these objects? ⁶

Artist Nick Engelbert (provide full page images)

Nick Engelbert was born in Austria, but traveled extensively throughout Europe and the Norwegian and South American coasts before settling in Hollandale, Wisconsin. His birth name was Koletnik Engelbert, but at some point he shortened it to Nick, embracing his new country by Americanizing his name like many other immigrants did. His paintings and sculptures share memories of his homeland and the adventures of his travels as a young man. They also celebrate the mixed cultural heritage of his American neighbors.

His first sculpture was an Austro-Hungarian double eagle. He then made a matching American eagle, bearing the Wisconsin state seal, and set the pair—representing his native and adopted homelands—across the framework flanking the entryway to the house. Engelbert then began making tribute sculptures to the immigrant populations of the surrounding area. Perhaps the first of these was a red deer with real antlers accompanied by a hiker in Viennese dress, representing the Austrian Carinthian Forest. He made a Blarney Castle for the Irish, a Viking in a ship for the Norwegians, statues depicting the three founding fathers of the Swiss Confederation, and a memorial archway for all area pioneers. A second eagle stood proudly in the yard, holding the American flag in its beak with a sign reading, “Going on a Migration to all Nations with Old Glory representing Liberty, Freedom, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”⁷ Display images of Engelbert's sculptures, and then discuss the following questions as a class.

³ Activity and questions derived from <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/lessonplans/search.asp?id=94>

⁴ Image derived from: http://www.civilization.ca/tresors/treasure/images/276_1b.jpg

⁵ Questions derived from: <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/lessonplans/search.asp?id=94>

⁶ Activity derived from <http://csumc.wisc.edu/wtlc/familytreasures/index.htm>

⁷ Umberger, Leslie. *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. (See chapter on Engelbert)

Discussion Questions:⁸

- After looking at the images of Engelbert's works, and reading the account above, what symbols did Engelbert incorporate within his sculptures to represent both old and new countries? What clues do these symbols give you about his life and travels?
- What other symbols could he have used? If you were to update Engelbert's artwork today, what objects would be important to include?

Art Activity

Together as a class brainstorm examples of symbolism in our culture. Make a collage that reflects American culture today. You may cut out magazine pictures, use personal photographs, and/or draw your own pictures. Write a statement describing and explaining your choices.

Student Connection: Lady Liberty

Over 33 million immigrants arrived at the Port of Ellis Island, New York from 1892–1949⁹. The United States has been called a “tossed salad” because it is home to people of every nationality. Engelbert's own community represented this diversity—a blend of cultures, all seeking a place of freedom in the United States.

The Statue of Liberty was, for many, the first sight welcoming them to their newfound freedom and home. On the interior of the Statue of Liberty is a bronze plaque inscribed with the poem “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus. You might recognize the end of this famous inscription:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*



Lead a discussion with your students about the nature of this verse, or the poem as shown in its entirety on the next page¹¹.

⁸ Lesson derived from: “Then and Now”. Weisman Art Museum Artful Writing Classroom Resource Kit.

⁹ <http://www.mygenealogist.com/ellis-island.htm>

¹⁰ Image from <http://www.destination360.com/north-america/us/new-york/statue-liberty.php>

¹¹ Derived from: <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/destinationamerica/>

"The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"¹²*

Discussion Questions¹³:

- What do the words mean?
- Do they reflect the current immigration policies of the United States?
- Do they reflect your students' own ideas about what our national immigration policies *should* be?

After the discussion, ask your students to imagine that they have been commissioned to write a new poetic inscription for the Statue of Liberty.

- What ideas would their poems contain?
- What images and phrases would they use?

When their poems are complete, ask for volunteers to share their work with the class. Then discuss the poems' ideas and images.

Artist Sam Rodia (provide full page images)

Sam Rodia emigrated from Serino, Italy. He told one interviewer that his parents had sent him to America when he was fourteen; and it is likely that they encouraged their sons to leave home in order to avoid the military draft, which became mandatory in 1865, four years after Italy achieved statehood. Economics may have been another reason for breaking up the family¹⁴. His construction of the Watts Towers in California was largely influenced by architecture and local festival traditions from his homeland in southern Italy. Contrast images of Rodia's towers with images of the Italian structures and events that inspired him. Discuss the following questions as a class.

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways are the Watt's Towers similar to the design of those constructed for Festa del Giglio in Nola, Italy? How are the towers similar to the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa?
- How are Watt's towers uniquely different from these Italian structures?
- What materials do you think Rodia used to create his towers? Contrast the various perspectives as seen in the photographs. How does what you see change when viewed from a distance, and then viewed from inside? What details do you notice from each angle?

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Liberty#Inscription

¹³ Activity and discussion questions derived from: <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/destinationamerica/>

¹⁴ Umberger, Leslie. *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. (See chapter on Rodia)

Student Connection: Sharing Our Stories

The reasons why people immigrate to new countries are numerous. During the era in which Rodia immigrated, it was common for many European countries to force young men into military service. Financially times were hard for many people also, and America offered a fresh start and inexpensive land.

Immigration is still an important issue today in our country. Research the reasons that people are presently immigrating to the United States, and compare these reasons to immigration over a hundred years ago. What new issues have arisen? What issues are still the same? Click on this link to read three accounts of students who have recently immigrated to the United States. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/recent/index.htm>

Working with other teachers, put together a panel discussion of new and old immigrants to your school. If you do not have an immigrant population in your school, reach out to the larger community, inviting both newcomers and long-time residents to visit your school. Prep all panelists so that they will each talk for a few minutes on the experience of immigrating to the United States—the positives and the negatives. Allow panelists to question one another. Conclude the session by reading the panelists questions that you have previously collected from students and screened¹⁵.

Encourage students to learn more about their own family history and migration patterns. Interview older relatives to gain valuable oral history accounts, and to construct a family tree. Refer to old family photos. You can learn a lot about people of the past by looking at their clothing styles, hairstyles, backdrops, and the objects they are holding. The following links will help students research more about the culture, dress, music, food, and languages of their ancestors: <http://www.ancestry.com/learn/facts/default.aspx>, http://genealogy.about.com/od/lesson_plans/ and www.freetranslation.com



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Additional Teacher Resources:

<http://www.besthistorysites.net/USHistory/Immigration.shtml>
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/stli/prod02.htm#Statue%20of>
http://www.teachingforchange.org/in_the_classroom/teaching_about_inmigration.html
http://free.ed.gov/subjects.cfm?subject_id=121&res_feature_request=1
http://lessonplancentral.com/lessons/Social_Studies/US_History/Immigration/
<http://www.proteacher.com/090154.shtml>
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/port/teacher.html>
<http://www.aifl.org/teach/lessonplans/lessonplans.shtml>
<http://csumc.wisc.edu/wtlc/>
<http://www.42explore2.com/migration.htm>
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/teachers/lessons/secondary/emigrant_handbook.asp

Student Book List:

Coan Morton, Peter. Ellis Island Interviews. New York: Facts on File, 1997.
Durbin, William. The Journal of Otto Peltonen. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2000.
Greenberg, Judith E. Newcomers To America. New York: A Division of Grolier Publishing, 1996.
Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas We Are Americans. New York: Scholastic Nonfiction, 2003.
Lasky, Kathryn. Hope In My Heart. New York: Scholastic inc., 2003.
Sandler, Martin W. Island of Hope. New York: Scholastic Nonfiction, 2004.
Sandler, Martin W. Immigrants. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995.

¹⁵ Activity derived from: <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/destinationamerica/>

¹⁶ Image derived from: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed311/kafai/Team%204/USA/Eireland2.jpg>