



## THE NEW AMERICANS



## Contributions of Immigrants

**Subjects:** Social Studies, Language Arts

**Overview:** The United States is the nation that it is because of immigrant contributions. The country was founded by foreign-born immigrants, and it continues to benefit economically, politically, and socially from immigration. Recognizing what immigrants give to this country is one step closer to accepting diversity.

**Standards:** This lesson addresses the following national content standards established at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>

### Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the myriad contributions immigrants have made to the nation
- Reflect on the value of these contributions
- Assess how knowledge of immigrant contributions influences personal perspectives

### Materials

- Lists of notable immigrants with contributions to a broad base of fields and interests
- Print and online materials regarding immigrant contributions to the United States
- Print and online short biographies on famous foreign-born Americans
- Samples of dramatic monologues
- Computers with Internet access



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES

## Procedure

*Preparation:* Create a “did you know” fact sheet that highlights notable immigrant contributions. The listings should be diverse in the period of, field to which contributions were made, ethnicity of notable immigrants and age. For example, the list might reflect scientific and educational contributions. A sample list includes:

Frank McCourt, Author (Ireland)  
Edwidge Danticat, Author (Haiti)  
Jaime Escalante, Educator (Bolivia)  
I.M. Pei, Architect (China)  
Edward Teller, Scientist (Hungary)  
Isabel Allende, Author (Chile)  
Isaac Stern, Concert Violinist (Russia)  
Zubin Mehta, Conductor (India)  
Enrico Fermi, Scientist (Italy)  
Itzhak Perlman, Violinist (Israel)  
Max Frankel, Editor, *The New York Times* (Germany)  
Kahlil Gibron, Poet/Philosopher (Lebanon)  
Farouk El-Baz, Geologist (Egypt)

(Additional celebrity immigrant names are available from the American Immigrant Law Foundation <http://www.aifl.org/notable/famous.htm>)

**Source:** Immigrant Contributions to America  
<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2317/>

Also, be sure to have in the classroom a variety of print and downloaded online materials on immigrant contributions with which students can spearhead their research.

1. Distribute the “did you know” contribution fact sheet to the students. Ask them to review and react to it, and if possible, add information. What surprised them about the fact sheet? What was new to them? What is the significance of this fact sheet when thinking about immigrants coming to the United States?
2. Tell students they will have an opportunity to expand their knowledge about immigrant contributions to the United States. Distribute lists of notable immigrants to the students. Invite students to review these and other materials in the classroom to select one individual on which they would like to focus. **Challenge:** Students might focus on notable immigrants that live locally, so they can use local archives and historical societies for their research.



# T H E N E W A M E R I C A N S





## THE NEW AMERICANS

*(Note: If possible, facilitate balance among student selections. Make sure, for example, that each student has a different person, that there is no overlap, that there is gender and age balance, and that there is representation across fields of expertise. Additionally, select a time period on which students can focus, perhaps beginning in the early 19th century to the present.)*

3. Have students generate a list of interview questions that will guide their research. The following is a sampling of questions:

- When and where was this person born?
- When did the person come to the United States? Why? What were his or her hopes and dreams when first coming to the U.S.?
- How was he or she treated upon arrival to the U.S.?
- What interesting facts did you learn about his or her family?
- What was/is the person's profession?
- Where does he or she live in the U.S.?
- What contribution did he or she make to the U.S.?
- What other relevant facts about this person or the process of immigration did you discover that you think would be useful in better understanding this person or the topic of immigration, in general?

4. Tell the students that they will apply their research to a dramatic monologue in the voice of the individual they researched. The monologue should reflect any or all experiences that led to the individual's contribution. Allow students time to write and revise their monologues and then present them to the class. Students ask the "notable immigrant" questions to learn more about him or her.

5. At the end of each presentation, the monologue writers should reflect on the person they researched. What did they learn that stood out for them? What did they learn about the immigrant experience overall? What did they learn about immigrants coming to the United States? How does this new information change any previously held ideas? What more would they like to know about the individual and/or immigration? Overall, after listening to all the monologues, what important themes emerged?



## THE NEW AMERICANS

WELCOME  
TO THE UNITED STATES

## Assessment

- Students can be assessed on their presentations. The following is an example of what can be measured:
  1. Report
    - Text demonstrates the student has an abundant knowledge of the immigrant and understands the life of immigrants in the United States.
    - Text exemplifies—concretely and with specific details—the contributions of the immigrant to the United States.
    - Text focuses on topic; doesn't ramble.
    - Writing is flawless; no typos, spelling, mechanical, grammar errors.
    - Text demonstrates extensive research (e.g. provides detailed information about the immigrant).
    - A bibliography listing several resources is included.
    - Resources are properly cited throughout the text.
  2. Oral Presentation
    - Speaker demonstrates an excellent understanding of his or her subject.
    - Speaker delivers presentation in a clear, precise and interesting manner.
  3. Slide presentation
    - Text is concise, effective, original and appropriate.
    - Student shows an understanding of the computer program; manipulates its functions well.
    - Student uses at least four interactive features of the computer program.
- Students can grade their peers' cooperative learning group participation on a scale from 1-5. For example, students worked well with teammates, contribute to team effort, and contributed equally to the workload.
- Students can self-assess, honestly answering the following questions:
  - Did you do your best?
  - Did you work hard, enjoy the project, and feel good about what you completed?
  - Did you contribute to the group's project?
  - Did you finish your work on time?
  - If you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?



## THE NEW AMERICANS



## Extensions

Students can:

- Create a quilt honoring individual immigrant contributions.
- Establish a "Hall of Fame" honoring the individuals they researched.

## Related Resources

### **American Experience: America 1900**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/amex/1900/tguide/index.html>

### **American Immigration Law Foundation Presents Celebrity Immigrants**

<http://www.aifl.org/notable/famous.htm>

### **About.com: Famous and Notable Immigrants**

<http://immigration.about.com/msubfamous.htm?once=true&>

### **TIME Magazine: People Profiles**

<http://www.time.com/time/time100/index.html>

### **Viva Baseball! Latin American Players and Their Special Hunger**

<http://www.hispanicmagazine.com/1999/apr/Cultura/#Top>