

Lights, Camera, Action: Video Production in the Classroom —An Immigration Study

2000–2001 Master Teachers Loret Peterson and Jessica Friedman

TIME ALLOTMENT 50-minute lessons, one to two weeks.

OVERVIEW This lesson is designed to introduce students to the role immigration has played in building our country—from the first Native Americans to cross the Bering Strait, to the Spanish padres building missions in California, to the massive waves of immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Through literature, primary sources and hands-on activities, students will explore and come to understand the difficulties that have confronted newcomers to the United States. Using their background knowledge about immigration as a springboard, students will construct an interview with a character from a story, then videotape the presentation. This information will prepare the students for Part 2, Flying Solo With My Digital Camera, which involves interviewing a family member, taking digital photos and placing the text over the photos using Photoshop.

SUBJECT MATTER Social Studies, Language Arts (both integrating technology)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Students will be able to

- create a video production of an interview.
- analyze poetry, by Emma Lazarus, through discussion and illustration.
- differentiate between secondary sources and primary sources.
- write an articulate letter.
- analyze poetry, written by Chinese immigrants on Angel Island, to learn about struggles and feelings.

STANDARDS

The U.S. History Standards for fifth grade state that students will be able to

- differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
- pose relevant questions about events encountered in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, maps, art and architecture.
- distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources of historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

MEDIA COMPONENTS

Video: *La Ciudad*

MATERIALS

- TV/VCR with remote control, if possible
- One video camera
- One tripod
- Chart paper
- Two videotapes (check what kind your camera needs)
- Marker pens, colored pencils (enough for all students)
- Lined paper (several sheets per student)
- Copies of the Angel Island Poem (attached)
- Copies of *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus (available from <http://www.si-web.com/Statue.html>).
- For the classroom library:

How Many Days to America? Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Bunting, Eve. 1988.

Molly's Pilgrim. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, Cohen, Barbara. 1983.

I was Dreaming to Come to America. New York: Viking, Lawlor, Veronica, ed. 1995.

Jar of Dreams. New York: Harper and Row, Lord, Bette Bao. 1984.

Tales From the Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World. New York: Macmillan, Yee, Paul. 1989.

PREP FOR TEACHERS

- **Cue** videotape, *La Ciudad*, to the beginning.
- Copy poems (see **Materials**).
- Get a video camera and blank tape for recording the culminating activity.
- Prepare a large KWLQ chart to hang on the wall.
- **Cue** the video to the scene with the sign titled, "Fotos, Lotería, de Visa and Aplicaciones." This scene is immediately at the beginning of the video.
- Visit the following Web sites to get more background information and bookmark:

<http://ih.k12.oh.us/es/media/socstud/IMMIGRAN.HTM>

This Web site is an excellent resource for students and teachers. One section gives the reader a description of the Statue of Liberty and information about its history. Another section provides the students with short descriptions of what liberty means to different people in different parts of the world. Use this to launch a unit on immigration.

<http://www.proteacher.com/090154.shtml>

This site offers the teacher a multitude of online resources from which to teach a unit on immigration and many activities for students as well. One resource guides students through a virtual tour of Ellis Island. The students can learn about the history of this famous location through both text and photos. There is also an online pie chart about America's demographics that students can manipulate and construct.

<http://bvsd.k12.co.us/~newellm/Immigration/resources.html>

This is a comprehensive Web site on immigration available to educators and students. It leads to many other wonderful sites, including those described here.

<http://www.si-web.com/Statue.html>

This Web site offers information about the Statue of Liberty as well as a copy of "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus. It has a link to the National Park Service Web site, which provides more information about Ellis Island.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: SETTING THE STAGE**1. *The New Colossus***

The Statue of Liberty has become a symbol for liberty and freedom throughout the world. Reading this poem will help

students recognize the statue's importance and

**INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY:
SETTING THE STAGE
(CONTINUED)** the history surrounding it. Have the students read the poem *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus. A copy of this poem can be found on the Web site: <http://www.si-web.com/Statue.html>.

Discuss the meaning of the poem with the entire class. Ask the students to explain their interpretation of the poem. Have the students choose three lines from the poem to illustrate using markers or crayons. For homework, have the students memorize the last six lines of the poem. Bind each student's three illustrated lines into a class book.

2. Vocabulary

Have students define these words to increase their understanding of the terms used with this lesson.

America	experience	liberty
citizenship	freedom	nation
culture	heritage	passenger
Ellis Island	immigrant	pledge
encounter	justice	United States

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Introduction

In this lesson students will become familiar with the many reasons people have immigrated to the United States. This study will provide the students with background knowledge needed to begin to study why and how their own ancestors came to America.

Activity 1

The movie, *La Ciudad*, recounts the stories of recent immigrants to New York City. There are five vignettes showing different aspects of the hardships immigrants often have to endure. For the purpose of this lesson, the first vignette, about 10 minutes, will be viewed.

Before viewing the video, have the students brainstorm reasons people might come to America, such as better job opportunities, religious persecution, forced slavery, military rule, wars and hunger, to name a few. Record these thoughts on the board. Read *Coming to America*, by Eve Bunting, to the class. This story tells about a family forced from their homeland by events beyond their control and their difficult journey to America. Once the family arrives on the shores of America they celebrate their first Thanksgiving. Ask your students what the first Thanksgiving celebrated. Discuss the idea of coming to a new country. What would that feel like? What emotions might one have? Ask the students to imagine themselves as one of

the characters in *Coming to America*, then have them write a letter to their parents' or grandparents' country of origin describing their new surroundings and daily life in the United States. They may write to a fictitious person.

Focus for Media Interaction

Before beginning the video ask the students to think about what the three people in the first scene of the video have in common. Ask them to think about what the people are doing.

Cue the video to the scene with the sign titled, "Fotos, Lotería, de Visa and Aplicaciones." This scene is immediately at the beginning of the video.

Pause the video at the scene where the men are jumping up and down and speaking rapidly.

Discuss the prior scene. Ask the students: Why did these people have their photograph taken? Who do you think these people are? What do they have in common? What is a passport? What is a visa? Why might these documents be important to an immigrant?

Part 2:

Tell the students that for the next three minutes they are going to watch several scenes about immigration. Ask them to turn to a partner and share what they already know about immigration. Take five minutes to share with partners. Ask the students to share their learning with the entire class. Use a large K-W-L-Q board (what you **k**now, what you **w**ant to know, what you **l**earned, any **q**uestions you still have) upon which to record the students' ideas. Return to this chart throughout the lesson.

Focus for Media Interaction

Before viewing the next segment, ask students to focus on the letter the man is reading, watching his expressions and reading along. Tell them they will be asked to use five adjectives in complete sentences describing the man's immigration experience. They will need to write the adjectives in complete sentences.

Resume the video.

Pause at the scene where the man is rolling his cart inside the store.

Discuss the students' responses to the letter and have the students share the adjectives they wrote. Have the students write five sentences using the adjectives.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY**Understanding Primary Sources**

Use the telephone game to explain to students how the retelling of stories over time can change the original message and therefore our understanding of history. Students study about immigration using secondary sources (textbooks, stories and supplemental materials). Whenever possible, they will discover through primary source (interviews and photographs) how and why their ancestors came to the United States. This game will help students distinguish between the two types of sources.

- Students sit on the floor in a circle.
- The teacher whispers a message into the ear of a student.
- The student passes the message on to the next student by whispering in his or her ear.
- This continues until the message has been heard and passed on by everyone in the group.
- When the message reaches the last student, it is recited aloud for the entire group to hear.
- The new message is compared with the original message. The students note any differences.
- The first message can be viewed as a primary source and the final message as a secondary source.
- Ask the students to explain why a primary source might be more reliable.

Character Interviews

As the culminating activity, students will adopt roles of the characters in the book *I Was Dreaming to Come to America* and videotape the characters in the form of an interview. This book contains some of the 1,400 interviews that have been recorded as part of the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Reading the personal accounts of children who came to the United States in the early 1900s is compelling and informative. The stories provide the students with a starting point from which to begin their own journeys into their personal histories. The Oral History Library is a great resource. For more information, contact the Ellis Island Oral History Project, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York, New York 10004.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY
(CONTINUED)**

- Teacher will read aloud the book *I Was Dreaming to Come to America*. An example of a passage from the book follows.

Excerpt from *I Was Dreaming to Come to America*

“Most dear to me are the shoes my mother wore when she first set foot on the soil of America ... She landed in America in those shoes and somehow or other she felt that she was going to hang on to them. They are brown high-top shoes that had been soled and resoled and stitched and mended in Sweden to hold them together ‘til she could get to America. We just kept them. And then...as I grew up and everything, I said, “Don’t ever throw them away.”

*Brigitta Hedman Fischter
Sweden
Arrived in 1924, Age 6*

- Have the students discuss the content of the book in table groups, eventually sharing their thoughts aloud with the entire class. Prompt their discussion with the question “What do you think it would be like to leave everything you know to move to a new country?” Many students have firsthand experience with this.
 - Put the students into groups of four. Each group will have an actor, a director, an interviewer and a camera person. The students decide who will take on each role. The actor will portray at least one of the children from the book, *I Was Dreaming to Come to America*. The interviewer will ask the actor questions about his or her journey to the United States and what life has been like for them since they arrived. The director will organize the filming and assist the actor and interviewer with their lines. The cameraperson will film the production using a video camera. The cameraperson should learn various techniques for filming and in-camera editing prior to the production day.
 - Assign different parts of the book to the students so that each group will share different stories about the children. Each group is responsible for presenting two different stories (characters).
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**CULMINATING ACTIVITY
(CONTINUED)**

- The teacher will brainstorm interview questions with the entire class. These ideas should be scripted on chart paper and later typed out for each group. These questions will help the interviewer design the conversation with the actor. The interviewer must also become familiar with the characters the actor will portray so as to choose the most appropriate questions to ask during the interview.
- The students practice their parts and become familiar with their roles. The cameraperson learns how to start and stop the filming, how to zoom in and out, and how to in-camera edit (basically starting and stopping the filming so that students can change props, characters can change, and sound effects can be added or taken away).
- Have a dress rehearsal with all the students and prepare for the production day.
- On production day, film all scenarios, one after another. If using a High 8 tape, the teacher should rewind tape and transfer it to a VHS tape to be viewed in class.

**CROSS-CURRICULAR
EXTENSIONS****Math/Social Studies: Country of Origin Pie Chart
Comparison**

- Using stickers or pushpins the students should mark on a world map where their ancestors, or themselves in some cases, originally lived before emigrating to the United States.
- Using the information gathered on the world map, the students can construct a pie chart depicting where the largest populations came from.
- This information can be used as an entry point for generating discussion as to when and why people came from various countries to the United States.
- Using the chart and information found at: http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration/waves_of_immigration.html, have the students learn about the four major waves of immigration that occurred in the United States from the 1800s to the present.
- Ask the students to think about why these waves of immigration occurred.
- Ask the students how being an immigrant in the United States today might be different from a hundred years ago.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

- Compare the census chart to the classroom-generated pie
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EXTENSIONS (CONTINUED)

chart and wall map. Are there any similarities? Are there any trends that indicate that their ancestors may have been part of a particular migration?

- As the students begin to interview their own families (part 2 of this lesson, Flying Solo With My Digital Camera), many of these questions will be answered.
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**COMMUNITY
CONNECTIONS**

Angel Island Immigration Station in California: Field Trip/Poetry

- Although most students in California have heard of Angel Island before, many do not know the history of the Immigration Station. Between 1910 and 1940, 175,000 Chinese immigrants were detained and processed at the Angel Island Immigration Station. Students should be encouraged to discover who was held there and for how long and what the conditions were like. To research this information, the students may go to the library (school or public) and/or explore the following Web site:

<http://www.sandiego-online.com/forums/chinese/htmls/angel.htm>

This site includes pictures of Angel Island, the Immigration Station and the poetry. It also has a historical account of the years 1910 through 1940.

Have the students read the poem written by a Chinese immigrant held on Angel Island. Ask them to think about the words. How does the author of this poem sound? How does this writer describe the other poems written on the walls? How does the poet describe Angel Island?

- Travel to Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay. To arrange a trip to the island contact

Angel Island State Park
P.O. Box 866
Tiburon, CA 94920
Telephone (415) 435-3522
Fax (415) 435-0850

**COMMUNITY
CONNECTIONS
(CONTINUED)**

Becoming a Citizen

- Create a ceremony for students to become citizens of your classroom. Work together to brainstorm a list of what rights and responsibilities would be involved in this process. Discuss the eligibility requirements for citizenship and how the process works. Ask the students who is eligible to become a citizen. Why would someone want to become a citizen? Are there advantages and disadvantages of citizenship?
 - Visit a courthouse on a day when immigrants are participating in a swearing-in ceremony. Students could take notes on what they see and what they understand about the situation. Upon returning to class have a discussion about the field trip.
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Poem From Angel Island

There are tens of thousands of poems
on these walls

They are all cries of suffering
and sadness

The day I am rid of this prison and
become successful

I must remember that this chapter
once existed

I must be frugal in my daily
needs

Needless extravagance usually
leads to ruin

All my compatriots should
remember China

Once you have made some small gains,
you should return
home early

Written by one from Huengshan

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