

Early Mexican Immigration

Overview:

Latinos have come to be part of the United States through many different avenues: immigrants seeking a better life, refugees driven by war and those who did not move at all, but who found themselves on the other side of redefined borders as the United States expanded. In this activity, students will trace first hand, the varied stories of becoming Latino in the United States- and dispel common generalizations. In addition, they will compare and contrast these stories with the arrival experiences of their own families.

Lesson Summary:

In this lesson students will utilize oral histories that have been recorded and transcribed to understand Mexican immigration and cultural narratives. This lesson can be a stand alone lesson or used with the rest of the immigration unit. The primary goal of this activity is to give students an understanding of Mexican immigration through oral histories in order to appreciate the process of historiography and the importance of understanding cultural heritage and narrative through primary sources.

Grade Level:

Elementary & Secondary

Standards:

- Standard 1B: The student understands the rapid growth of cities and how urban life changed.
- Standard 1C: The student understands how agriculture, mining, and ranching were transformed.
- Standard 2A: The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants.
- Standard 2B: The student understands "scientific racism", race relations, and the struggle for equal rights.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.7

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-12.9

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to:
- Analyze diverse stories of becoming part of the United States.
- Explore the narratives of Latinos from various nations of origin.
- Contextualize personal stories with broader historical events, including U.S. expansion and political and economic change in the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico. Assign human faces and experiences of geopolitical change.
- Problematize the question of “Who is American?” by challenging stereotypical notions of Latino arrival to the United States and comparing and contrasting personal experiences with those of historical characters.

Materials:**Primary Sources:**

Haro Oral History
Ramirez Oral History
Lopez Oral History

Secondary Sources:

Teacher Resources

Introductory Activity:

- Ask students to write down topics they think of when they hear the word "history."
- Poll the class to see how many students wrote down topics such as presidents, wars, explorers, government activities, famous people, or famous inventions. Find out how many students suggested topics such as family life, recreation, work, clothing, and school.
- Point out that different kinds of historians look at different topics within history. While many history textbooks deal with political and military history, historians also study the lives and activities of everyday people. Everyday lives and activities are the subject matter of

social history, which students will explore in this lesson. Here are examples of questions social historians might research:

- What kind of food does this family usually eat? How do they get their food?
- What kinds of natural resources are available where this family lives? How do these resources influence the types of food, shelter, and clothing available?
- Does every child in the family attend school? Why or why not?
- Can every member of the family read and write? Why or why not? What kinds of books are available to the family?
- How important is religion to the family's life?
- What work does each member of the family do?
- Does the family own property? Why or why not?
- Which family members can vote? Which family members do vote?
- What transportation does the family use to get around?
- What games do children play? What do adults do for relaxation?
- What family activities might be considered an art or craft today?

Learning Activity:

- Divide students into three groups, the Haro group, Garcia group, and Tirado group.
- Give each group copies of their oral history & summary and/or the audio recording of the oral history interview. Instruct the groups that they are going to read through and/or listen to their assigned oral history. Each group should designate a note taker.
- Discuss with students potential questions they should be thinking about as they read and discuss their assigned oral history. You can write them on the board as well.
 - What was the purpose of this oral history?
 - What do you think was happening when it was recorded?
 - What can you tell about the person telling the story, and about that person's point of view?
 - What is the significance of this oral history?
 - Is it more personal or historical?

- How does encountering this story firsthand change its emotional impact?
- What can you learn from this oral history?
- Tell students the note taker should record the answers to these questions and any other questions or interesting things the group determines.
- Encourage discussion with the whole class about what they discovered while reading and discussing their oral histories. The following questions can be used:
 - What can we learn from oral histories?
 - What is the importance of oral histories? Why do you think it is important to have oral histories recorded?
- Homework assignment: Students will write a reflection to answer the following question:
 What do you think the person telling the story, and the person recording it, expected it to accomplish? Do you think it succeeded? Explain why you think so.

Key Questions:

- What is the significance of this oral history?
- Is it more personal or historical?
- How does encountering this story firsthand change its emotional impact?
- What can you learn from this oral history?
- What can we learn from oral histories?
- What is the importance of oral histories? Why do you think it is important to have oral histories recorded?
- What can we learn about Mexican culture and immigration from these oral histories?

Extension Activity:

Have students talk with a family member (not an immediate member) about a particularly memorable Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, or special

event. Encourage students to get some details about the holiday or event such as:

- How old was the person?
- Where was the person living?
- What actually happened?
- What were the person's feelings about the event at the time?
- What are the person's feelings about the event now?

Students should write a 1 to 2 page reflection about the interview with as much detail as possible, it should also include a paragraph sharing the student's thoughts about how they felt getting this story or information or just talking with the family member.

Assessment:

Assessment can be based on student participation, discussion, and engagement in the group activity. The reflection can be assessed through accuracy of answering the question.