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Exploring Immigrant Roots

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Abolitionists Among the Founding Generation

KEVIN T. BRADY

In recent years, framers of the American republic, especially George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, have taken a public opinion thrashing for allowing the institution of slavery to persist during and after the American Revolution. Their defenders respond that these men are being judged unfairly by twenty-first century standards; that they should be remembered for the giant steps they took toward the goal of “freedom for all.” However, other members of the founding generation did work, during their own lifetimes, to unlock the manacles holding Africans in slavery. Efforts by Aaron Burr, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton led to the end of slavery in New York State, which at the time of the Revolution maintained a slave system more extensive than that in some of the southern states.¹

Slavery in the Colony of New York

The Dutch, who settled the Hudson River Valley during the mid-seventeenth century, populated the region with farmsteads, worked by indentured European servants and slaves transported from western Africa. When the English took New Netherlands from the Dutch, it allowed settlers to keep most of their property and traditions, including slavery. By the early eighteenth-century, Dutchess County, New York, (which included Manhattan) had 3,400 white families and 1,360 enslaved Africans. Forty-three percent of white families

in New York City owned slaves. During the American Revolution, New York State had a higher proportion of slaves than North Carolina. After independence, its leaders included powerful Jeffersonian Republicans like the Clinton family and the Livingston family, who had working relationships with Southern slave interests. In addition, the Livingstons owned many slaves. The strength of slavery in New York demonstrates that the institution could have survived in the mid-Atlantic, as it did in the South, if not for the efforts of members of the founding generation who worked to eradicate it.

Unfazed, he worked diligently on this goal for fourteen years, despite opposition from slave-owning landlords and farmers as well as artisans who feared competition from freed blacks.

Allies and Opponents

Burr's efforts led to alliances with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, both of whom were leading Federalists. When Jay ran for governor in 1792, Burr refused to run against him. Burr, as a state legislator, was a major ally of Governor Jay when New York finally began gradual emancipation in 1799 (which was sixty-six years before abolition in the nation as a whole). For his efforts, Burr drew fire from powerful state Republicans and earned the distrust of Jefferson and his southern supporters. Later, during Jefferson's presidency, Burr used his position as vice president to frustrate the president's policy toward Haiti (see sidebar). Fearing a free black republic in the Caribbean, Jefferson issued an embargo against trade with the Haitian rebels. When the embargo came before the Senate, Burr organized Republican opposition that temporarily blocked it.

An active opponent of slavery for fifty years, John Jay proposed abolition in 1775. In 1785, he organized the New York Manumission Society.³ In 1819, during Congressional debate over the Missouri Compromise, Jay insisted that the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution

in this issue

- 2 Lookout Point: Abolitionists Among the Founding Fathers
KEVIN BRADY
- 4 Runaway Slave Advertisements: Teaching from Primary Documents
TOM COSTA AND BROOKS DOYLE
- 10 Teaching About Immigration, Past and Present
SUSAN PASS
- 16 Facts about Our Immigrants

On the Cover

Gabriel Pator, a student in Dearborn, Michigan, interviews his mother, Marioara, about her life in Romania.
Photograph by Joan Mandell.

Middle Level Learning

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Created Equal

Historians often malign Aaron Burr because of later developments in his political career. However, Burr, a leading Jeffersonian Republican in New York, was a stalwart opponent of slavery who argued that whites and blacks were created equal and that women and men should have the same political rights. Burr's abolitionism was rooted in his religious beliefs. His father had served as the president of Princeton University. His grandfather was Jonathan Edwards, one of the igniting sparks of the Great Awakening.² His political opponents, especially among the Jeffersonian Republicans, often complained that Burr entertained blacks in his home as guests. In 1785, Burr unsuccessfully introduced a bill in the state legislature to immediately end slavery in New York.

gave Congress the authority to regulate the slave trade in the territories.

Alexander Hamilton often worked with Jay and Burr to challenge slavery. As part of the New York Manumission Society, Burr, Jay, and Hamilton won 34 of 36 cases of unlawful enslavement defending the freedom of black New Yorkers threatened with kidnapping and being sent to the south as slaves. They also organized boycotts of merchants and newspapers that supported slavery and helped organize schools to educate black children. In the 1790s, Jay, Burr, and Hamilton, vehemently objected to admitting Kentucky and Tennessee to the union as slave states.

Emancipation without War

Through the efforts of John Jay, the much-maligned Alexander Hamilton, and the often-vilified Aaron Burr, New York abandoned a labor system based on human bondage through debate and legislation, not through war. This may be one reason why New York was able to grow into a prosperous commercial giant, while slavery-dependent Virginia's importance and wealth diminished throughout the antebellum nineteenth century.⁴

Notes

1. R. Kennedy, *Burr, Hamilton, and Jefferson: A Study in Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. The "Great Awakening" was a wave of religious revivals that swept over the American colonies from the late 1730s to the 1760s. It set a precedent for what became a tradition in American religious society: revivalism.
3. The word "manumit" is from the Latin *manus* (hand) + *mittere* (to let go), and means "to release from slavery" (Webster's 3d).
4. A version of this essay appeared in *Social Science Docket* 1, no. 2 (Summer/Fall, 2001): 23, a theme issue, "Slavery and the Northern States." The *Docket* is a joint publication of the New York and New Jersey Councils for the Social Studies). Information at catajs@hofstra.edu.

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Jefferson and the Haitian Revolution

All of the American newspapers covered events in Saint Domingue, in a great deal of detail. All Americans understood what was happening there. It wasn't that the revolution in Saint Domingue taught mainland slaves to be rebellious or to resist their bondage. They had always done so, typically as individuals who stole themselves and ran away, sometimes in small groups who tried to get to the frontier and build maroon colonies and rebuild African societies.

But the revolutionaries in Saint Domingue, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, were not trying to pull down the power of their absentee masters, but join those masters on an equal footing in the Atlantic world. And the revolt in Haiti reminded American slaves, who were still enthusiastic about the promise of 1776, that not only could liberty be theirs if they were brave enough to try for it, but that equality with the master class might be theirs if they were brave enough to try. For black Americans, this was a terribly exciting moment, a moment of great inspiration. And for the southern planter class, it was a moment of enormous terror. ...

Jefferson was terrified of what was happening in Saint Domingue. He referred to Toussaint's army as cannibals. His fear was that black Americans ... would be inspired by what they saw taking place just off the shore of America. And he spent virtually his entire career trying to shut down any contact, and therefore any movement of information, between the American mainland and the Caribbean island.

He called upon Congress to abolish trade between the United States and what after 1804 was the independent country of Haiti. He argued that France believed it still owned the island. In short, he denied that Haitian revolutionaries had the same right to independence and autonomy that he claimed for American patriots. And consequently, in 1805 and finally in 1806, trade was formally shut down between the United States and Haiti, which decimated the already very weak Haitian economy. And of course, Jefferson then argued this was an example of what happens when Africans are allowed to govern themselves: economic devastation, caused in large part by his own economic policies.



Toussaint L'Ouverture fought, at various times, against British (above), French, and Spanish armies. (Image from a Haitian postcard ca. 1821.)

Library of Congress

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Source: Excerpted from "Africans in America," WGBH PBS Online, www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/.

Runaway Slave Advertisements: Teaching from Primary Documents

TOM COSTA AND BROOKE DOYLE

RAN AWAY ON THE 30TH OF SEPTEMBER LAST, FROM THE SUBSCRIBER, LIVING IN HANOVER COUNTY, TWO NEGROES, VIZ., A NEGRO MAN, NAM'D ROGER, BORN AT ANGOLA, A PRETTY TALL, WELL SET FELLOW, ABOUT 30 YEARS OLD: HE HAD ON, WHEN HE WENT AWAY, A NEW OZNABRIG SHIRT, AND AN OLD COTTON WASTECOAT, A PAIR OF VIRGINIA CLOTH BREECHES, STRIP'D BLACK AND WHITE, AND A PAIR OF COUNTRY-MADE SHOES. ... MOLL, ABOUT 18 YEARS OLD, VIRGINIA BORN; IS WIFE TO THE ABOVE-NAM'D ROGER, AND IS VERY BIG WITH CHILD. SHE HAD ON, AN OLD OZNABRIG SHIRT, AND AN OLD COTTON WASTECOAT AND PETTICOAT. THEY BOTH SPEAK TOLERABLE GOOD ENGLISH. WHOEVER WILL BRING THE SAID NEGROES TO ME, AT MY HOUSE, IN HANOVER COUNTY, SHALL HAVE A PISTOLE REWARD FOR EACH OF THEM, BESIDES WHAT THE LAW ALLOWS. JOHN SHELTON.

— *Virginia Gazette* (Parks), November 2, 1739.¹

THE ADVERTISEMENTS for runaway slaves that masters placed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspapers are among the documentary sources available to us for studying the lives of African-American slaves. Consider the details provided in the ad above. Such advertisements often describe a number of characteristics: clothing, personal appearance, and bodily adornment; special trades or skills, linguistic, and ethnic or cultural origins of African-Americans. Scars from disease or punishment are mentioned.²

When students look at a set of these advertisements, they can detect differences in how African-Americans lived in various states and regions of the country. They might even begin to infer the thoughts and attitudes of both slave and master from these texts.

Compilations of ads from different regions have been published in books.³ An Internet database of runaway advertisements is now available. It begins with examples from colonial Virginia. The “Geography of Slavery in Virginia” project (www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/) is a web-based resource for teachers, students, and scholars. It can be a valuable tool in helping students understand

the lives of enslaved African Americans and the enterprise of slavery.⁴ Thousands of advertisements can be read, each one appearing on a webpage as transcribed type (which is easy to photocopy). Images of the ads as they originally appeared in the eighteenth-century newspapers are also available for many of the ads. (Such an image can be read on screen, but it is not of high enough resolution to print out well or photocopy.) The source of the ad is listed at the bottom of the page. Each advertisement is a primary source that offers a glimpse of the personal experience of human beings, white and black, during the opening chapters of our nation’s history. The work of locating, scanning, and transcribing these ads is ongoing, so the collection is growing.

Case Studies:

The Details of Slave Life

A typical ad reveals the range of information. The ad above for Roger and Moll shows several notable things. First of all, there are usually no surnames, each slave having only one name, because masters defined their property without reference to slaves’ previous lives as Africans. Thus African

names, such as Cuffee or Quash, while they do appear occasionally, are relatively rare in the ads. In addition, Roger and Moll are husband and wife. Although slave marriage was illegal throughout most slave societies, masters allowed their slaves to form relationships they called marriages in order to help keep order on the plantation. Interestingly, Roger was an African, born in Angola. His wife, however, some years younger, was born in Virginia. The eighteenth century in Virginia saw a slow decrease in slave imports from Africa and a corresponding increase of Virginia-born African-Americans.

The ads also contain physical descriptions of the runaways. Because owners were primarily interested in the capture and return of their slaves, we can assume that their descriptions were as accurate as possible. Interesting aspects of slaves’ lives can be discerned by careful reading of the physical descriptions. Scars, for example, might be caused by one of several injuries: There were scars from smallpox (or other diseases), work (cuts and burns received in the workplace), or punishment (“marks of the whip” indicated when an owner had punished a slave frequently). Men and women who had grown up in Africa before being captured as slaves might bear scars from a rite-of-passage ceremony, as celebrated in their culture of origin.

One of the most important bits of information provided in an ad might be the vocational skill of the runaways. Our understanding of slavery has been shaped by books and movies such as *Gone With the Wind* that depicted slaves as only agricultural or domestic laborers (field or house slaves). The ads show that slaves (especially in Virginia and more northern states) practiced a variety of occupations, including carpentry and woodworking, barrel and shoemaking, blacksmithing, and, important in

Virginia, sailing. African Americans sailed and piloted many of the vessels that plied the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers and tributaries that flowed into it. Runaway slaves who could practice a trade could earn a living and might be able to remain undetected for years at a time without even leaving their colony or state.

A student of these primary sources will also come across, in ads from the colonial period, advertisements for white runaways—indentured or convict servants. Indentured servants were poor people, primarily from the British Isles, who paid for their passage to America with four to seven years of unpaid labor. Convicts were felons whose punishment had been commuted to transportation to the colonies and service for as long as fourteen years. Servants of both types often suffered living and working conditions no better than those of black slaves. After completing their servitude, with no savings to show for their work, they often became part of the landless poor. To an indentured or convict servant, running away from his master to “start life over” in a different town or colony might seem like a logical thing to do.

Moses

Give your students the following short advertisement from 1782 and ask them to start analyzing it by

- referring to dictionaries for definitions of any unfamiliar words, such as “swarthy,” “insinuating,” “tolerable,” and “circumscribed;”
- figuring out (roughly) how many months Moses had been missing when the ad was written;
- discussing why the owner “presumes” that Moses can “pass for a free man.”

RAN AWAY LAST SUMMER TO THE BRITISH PIRATES WHILST IN POTOMACK RIVER, A SWARTHY NEGRO MAN NAMED MOSES, ABOUT 50 YEARS OLD, NEARLY 6 FEET HIGH, SLIM AND STRAIT MADE, IS BALD IN A SLIP FROM HIS FOREHEAD PAST THE CROWN OF HIS HEAD; HAS A SMILING, EASY, INSINUATING WAY OF SPEAKING; IS A VERY GOOD BLACKSMITH, AND A TOLERABLE SHOEMAKER, AND PLAYS ON THE VIOLIN. HE WAS SEEN IN YORK AFTER CORNWALLIS’S SURRENDER VERY

WELL, I THEREFORE PRESUME THAT HE PASSES IN SOME OF THE LOWER COUNTIES FOR A FREE MAN, AND WORKS AT ONE OR BOTH OF HIS TRADES IN A CIRCUMSCRIBED WAY. WHOEVER DELIVERS THE SAID FELLOW TO ME SHALL RECEIVE TWENTY POUNDS SPECIE, OR ON INFORMATION WHERE I MAY GET HIM, SHALL HAVE A HANDSOME REWARD FROM WILLIAM FITZHUGH

—Virginia Gazette (*Hayes*),
March 23, 1782.

These ads present contextual clues that help students place an ad in a historical setting. For example, the ad references Cornwallis’ surrender to George Washington, which students can look up, in a history text, as having occurred in October 1781. Additionally, the example of Moses shows that runaway slaves joined up with the British against Americans during the Revolutionary War. Encourage students to query why the author of the ad called the British “pirates” Some sleuthing might reveal that Americans referred to British and Loyalists who raided farms up and down Virginia’s rivers (an example of irregular action during the Revolution) as pirates.

Deadfoot

One of the most skilled of the runaways was Peter Deadfoot, whom his master described in one ad as “a tall, slim, clean limbed, active, genteel, handsome fellow, with broad shoulders.”

STAFFORD COUNTY, AUGUST 20, 1768. RAN AWAY LAST APRIL, FROM ONE OF THE SUBSCRIBER’S QUARTERS IN LOUDOUN, (WHERE HE HAD BEEN A SHORT TIME SAWING) A MULATTO SLAVE BELONGING TO SAMUEL SELDEN, JUN. NAMED PETER DEADFOOT, THOUGH IT IS SUPPOSED HE HAS CHANGED HIS NAME, AS HE THE DAY BEFORE ATTEMPTED TO PASS FOR A FREEMAN, AND HAD GOT AS FAR AS NOLAND’S FERRY, ON HIS WAY TO PHILADELPHIA, BY A FORGED PASS, IN WHICH HE WAS CALLED WILLIAM SWANN . . . AN INDIFFERENT SHOEMAKER, A GOOD BUTCHER, PLOUGHMAN, AND CARTER; AND EXCELLENT SAWYER, AND WATERMAN, UNDERSTANDS BREAK-

ING OXEN WELL, AND IS ONE OF THE BEST SCYTHEMEN, EITHER WITH OR WITHOUT A CRADLE, IN AMERICA; IN SHORT, HE IS SO INGENIOUS A FELLOW, THAT HE CAN TURN HIS HAND TO ANYTHING . . . HE HAS A GREAT SHARE OF PRIDE, THOUGH HE IS VERY OBLIGING, IS EXTREMELY FOND OF DRESS; AND THOUGH HIS HOLIDAY CLOTHES WERE TAKEN FROM HIM, WHEN HE FIRST ATTEMPTED TO GET OFF, YET, AS HE HAS PROBABLY PASSED FOR A FREEMAN, I MAKE NO DOUBT HE HAS SUPPLIED HIMSELF WITH OTHERS, AS SUCH A FELLOW WOULD READILY GET EMPLOYMENT; IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT HE WAS SEEN ON BOARD A VESSEL IN YORK RIVER, NEAR YORK TOWN; BUT FOR MY OWN PART, I SUSPECT THAT HE IS EITHER IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, CHARLES COUNTY IN MARYLAND (IN BOTH WHICH PLACES HE HAS RELATIONS) OR IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF WINCHESTER.

— Virginia Gazette (*Rind*),
September 22, 1768.

Deadfoot was the kind of runaway masters feared would never be detected: a person so accomplished that he could easily pass for a freeman. As Deadfoot’s example shows, skilled slaves were often hired out to other whites. These skilled African Americans were sometimes less closely supervised than if they worked for their owners, and thus had greater opportunities to escape.

Deadfoot’s example also illustrates the importance of literacy to runaways. Slaves who could read and write could forge a pass, which was a letter explaining that the person carrying it had permission and a purpose to be traveling. A black man, feigning illiteracy while showing the pass to suspicious whites, could sometimes evade captors. Runaway slaves who could communicate clearly—“sensible,” in the words of their owners—might also convince others of their free status.

A Woman Runaway Slave

The majority of the runaways were solitary males, but as the example of Roger and Moll shows, slave husbands and wives sometimes ran away together. Less frequent than ads for solitary male fugitives, are ads for single female runaways. Because female slaves were

not worth as much as male slaves, owners did not advertise for women as often as they advertised for men. Women also ran away less often than men. But there are several instructive instances of female runaways in the records, indicating that women occasionally became quite persistent and inventive in their efforts to elude detection.

For example, consider the following:

RUN AWAY FROM THE SUBSCRIBER, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY LAST, A VIRGINIA BORN MULATTO WOMAN SLAVE NAMED AGNES, OR AGIE, ABOUT 5 FEET 9 INCHES HIGH, HAS A SMALL SCAR OVER ONE OF HER EYES, SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH, SNIVELS THROUGH HER NOSE, IS A FAIR STRAIGHT MADE LUSTY MULATTO, . . . HAD ON WHEN SHE WENT AWAY A STRIPED RED, WHITE AND YELLOW CALIMANCO GOWN, A SHORT WHITE LINEN SACK, PETTICOAT OF THE SAME, A PAIR OF STAYS WITH FRINGED BLUE RIBAND, A LARGE PAIR OF SILVER BUCKLES, AND WORE A PAIR OF SILVER BOBS. I HEREBY FOREWARN ALL PERSONS FROM ENTERTAINING OR HARBOURING HER, AND ALL MASTERS OF VESSELS OR OTHERS, FROM CARRYING HER OUT OF THE COLONY. WHOEVER TAKES UP, SECURES, OR CONVEYS SAID RUNAWAY TO ME, SHALL HAVE 5 L. REWARD, IF TAKEN IN THIS COLONY, AND IF OUT THEREOF 10 L.

PAUL HERITER

— Virginia Gazette (*Purdie & Co.*),
April 18, 1766.

Agnes was probably a domestic, or household slave. The Borough of Norfolk was the major seaport of colonial Virginia and contained more merchants than planters among its population. The clothing and jewelry that Angie wore on her flight also indicates that she was a household slave. Women who ran off were often domestic slaves: they were sometimes more trusted and less closely watched, and they had access to clothing and other items that they could sell to aid their getaway. Agie was persistent in her desire for freedom. In this case, she was captured but ran away two years later. She again carried several items of clothing with her, and her master believed she would try to get a pass and escape permanently from Virginia.⁵

Searching for Patterns and Changes

With all of this information in a single location on the Internet, students can ask their own research questions and search for answers across advertisements (and other classes of documents) in ways that would previously have been impossible. You can now search the advertisements at the Geography of Slavery in Virginia website by category, such as gender, age, skill, and intent. These searches allow students to explore questions such as what skills runaway slaves were most likely to possess, and whether any patterns appear over time in flights of black slaves or white servants. Students could trace the progress through time of particular individuals, illuminating aspects of the institution of slavery that may be less than obvious. For example, one might be able to trace, roughly, the decline of the system of indentured servitude and the simultaneous growth in the system of slavery by studying ads for white servant and black slave runaways, respectively, from 1690 to 1740. (One plan under development at the Geography of Slavery in Virginia website would allow visitors to search historical information and use the data to create a map showing the paths of flight and capture across Virginia or the whole east coast.)

Challenges for Teachers and Students

The rich and personal nature of runaway slave advertisements and what they can teach us about the colonial period compels us to use this material with middle school students. Doing so, however, is not as easy for the teacher, or the students, as reading aloud from a textbook. The challenges of using these ads in a classroom, listed below, mirror some of the challenges that confront professional historians as they do their work. These obstacles present teachable moments. Encourage students to see themselves as doing the work of historians by discussing these challenges. How might students temper their conclusions in light of these challenges? When working as historians, students should always keep their minds open. They should be prepared to consider new sources, new information, and alternative interpretations of the data.

1. **Selecting which ads to study:** The sheer number of ads, more than 2,000, presents a problem for a teacher: How do you select the best ones for class discussion? One option is to carefully select a few ads that are particularly illustrative (this article provides a sampling). For example, teachers can pick a handful of ads that illustrate the range of skills and motives among runaways, then have students do a variation on a think-pair-share activity.⁶ Each pair can discuss an ad and then

Figure 1: Slave Narrative

WHAT UNJUST POWER DID TO SOPHIA AULD

I was probably between seven and eight years old when I left Colonel Lloyd's plantation. I left it with joy. . . . My new mistress [was] of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver . . . and had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. . . .

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. . . . Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. . . .

Alas, [Mrs. Auld's] kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

*"Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed.,
The Classic Slave Narratives (New York: Mentor, 1992), 274.*

Figure 2: Student writing sample/Think Aloud

INTERPRETING A RUNAWAY AD

This paragraph is about a runaway slave named Dick. He ran away from Joshua Poythress who owned a part of Flowerdew Hundred, a plantation in Charles City, Virginia. Flowerdew Hundred is on the James River. It was a major tobacco production site established in 1619.

Joshua Poythress was born in 1720 on Flowerdew Hundred. He has a great line of ancestors; one of them seems to have been the famous Pocohantas. We found out about this by researching his family roots online. He was married to Mary Hardyman . . .

Dick was slender made, which probably means he was skinny. He had a yellow complexion, which may mean he was a mulatto. A mulatto is someone with white and black parents. The ad tells us that he was addicted to liquor (an alcoholic). He ran away in a blue broadcloth coat. Broadcloth is a twilled napped woolen or worsted fabric with a smooth and lustrous face and dense texture. He was also wearing a red jacket and blue breeches. It may have been cold that October when he ran away. Breeches are short pants covering the hips and thighs and fitting snugly at the lower edges at the knees. He carried red shoes with him and two oznabrig shirts. Oznabrig is coarse linen named for Oznabruck, a town in Germany. It is said that these shirts were common slaves clothing.

He has relatives in North Carolina and South Carolina, which is probably the reason why he ran away. Large rewards were offered for his return to Flowerdew Hundred.

Paul North

*6th Grade, Social Studies Lab, Teacher: Chris Wyckoff
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join with another pair to discuss their ad as well. This results in each foursome discussing two unique ads and then reporting to the class on what they learned. The whole class would then be compiling a broader picture (than would one study group) of the slaves described in these ads. Alternatively, if time and computer access allow, teachers might have students search the archive in trying to answer specific questions, such as,

- What skills did runaway slaves possess?
- Were rich plantation owners the only people who owned slaves?
- Why were these slaves running away?
- Why did slave owners pay to have slaves returned?
- Why are there different reward amounts in different ads?

Be aware that if you choose to let students browse the archive, you should be prepared for juvenile reactions to entries such as the one that describes a black woman as “thick and squat.” Gauge your students’ maturity level and consider discussing what such blunt language reveals about the ads’ writers.

The approach of having students browse the ads allows you to illustrate how difficult it is to draw conclusions from a

limited source of historical records. Some questions are more difficult to answer than others. For example, the third question, “Why were these slaves running away?” is difficult to answer just by looking at these advertisements. Motives for running away varied widely and are only hinted at. For example, a description of scars from whipping might indicate that the punishment may have prompted flight. Masters’ warnings to ship captains in many of the ads may indicate that a runaway planned to board a vessel to escape the colony. Teachers might wish to supplement the runaway ads with more direct testimony (Figure 1), such as slave narratives,⁷ contemporary literary accounts of slave life,⁸ or the WPA interviews with former slaves conducted in the 1930s, although the latter deal with a later generation of slaves.⁹ Students might also explore the question of how the institution of slavery varied from state to state, or region to region.¹⁰

2. Understanding Antiquated Language: Students will need guidance in how to read the 200-year-old advertisements. Masters described runaways using a variety of terms, and often an archaic usage will show up: “lusty” meant healthy; “likely”

meant physically fit; and a “sensible” runaway indicated someone who could speak sensibly so as to be understood. You might wish to use a think aloud exercise, along with a dictionary, to help students understand the ads. (Websters Third often notes antiquated meanings of words that apply to these ads.) Read one of these ads aloud, pausing to verbalize your thoughts, look up a word, or ask a question. As you employ previous knowledge and contextual clues, students will begin to understand how skilled readers navigate trouble spots. They can then use the same strategy when reading by themselves or with a partner.¹¹

Another simple comprehension strategy to use with the ads is paraphrasing. Rather than providing a sentence-by-sentence “translation,” have students try to find the essential meaning in the ad by listening while they take notes, and then putting the message into language they can easily understand and present to their peers. This type of paraphrasing uses many modes of communication—reading, writing, speaking—and helps the lesson stay lively. Incorporating comprehension strategies into this social studies activity is a great way to seamlessly integrate learning across the disciplines. The example in Figure 2 demonstrates the result of a student applying a think-aloud strategy, consulting a historical dictionary, and using a paraphrasing technique to make meaning of a historical document. He has integrated his skills into a well-articulated final product.

3. Working with incomplete information: For a few of the runaways, the digital archive contains additional information in the form of “captured” ads that county jailers and other officials placed; however, the vast majority of the ads present only a snapshot of a runaways’ story. Rarely do we find out what happened after they ran off: Did they escape permanently? Were they recaptured or killed? While it is tempting (and can be instructive) for students to invent plausible conclusions, we must be careful to maintain a historical understanding that probably most runaways did not remain at large for very long. For example, Aaron Griffin ran off six or seven times from 1769 through 1772 and even sued in court for his freedom, basing his case on descent from a white ancestor.¹²

Figure 3: A Modern Apology

STUDENTS UNCOVER AN OLD WRONG

From its founding in 1764 well into the 19th century, the *Courant* ran many ads for the sale and capture of human beings. ... In effect, *Courant* publishers [in Hartford, Connecticut], including founder Thomas Green, acted as slave brokers.

It was accepted practice. Slavery was so woven into the nation's economy and social fabric that such ads were probably less controversial than gun or tobacco marketing would be today. ... Scholars have long known about the prevalence of such ads, but Hartford students researching the city's African-American heritage were astounded.

"I will never, ever forget the looks of dismay on their faces as they were scrolling through all the microfilm and finding these ads and for-sale notices," said former Hartford teacher Billie Anthony, who helped middle school students with the research several years ago.

One of those young black students, Andriena Baldwin, said she remembered in particular an ad listing a young boy along with pigs, butter and other commodities for trade.

"We just stood there for, like, five minutes," said Baldwin, who will be a senior this fall at Westminster School in Simsbury. "We were just shocked that they would put a person in the same category as food."

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS

Blacks had been enslaved in the state since 1640. They were used primarily as domestic servants and farmhands. Many of the state's prominent families—Wadsworths, Seymours and Wyllyses—owned slaves. In 1774, Connecticut had the most black residents among the New England colonies—about 6,500 people, representing about 3 percent of the population. The black slaves in this region, for the most part, did not face the dawn-to-dusk, stooping labor and intense abuse suffered by their counterparts in the mid-Atlantic and Southern states.

"The treatment of slaves was different at the North from the South; at the North they were admitted to be a species of the human family," James Mars, a former slave who lived in the northwest corner of the state and the Hartford area, wrote in his autobiography.

Still, African Americans in Colonial Connecticut could not vote, had to carry passes outside the towns where they lived and could be whipped for minor transgressions, including any threat to a white person. They could be sold away from their families at any time.

In his 1798 autobiography, former Connecticut slave Venture Smith told of being separated from his wife and young daughter for 18 months. He also wrote about a run-in with his owner's wife and the beating he suffered when the master returned.

"I received a most violent stroke on the crown of my head with a club two feet long and as large around as a chair post," Smith wrote. "This blow very badly wounded my head, and the scar of it remains to this day."

A PRIMARY SOURCE

Some of this abuse surfaced in the newspaper ads for runaways, generally the only forum in which slave owners had to be completely honest about the condition of their property. The ads, which described scars, brandings and amputations, bolstered abolitionists' arguments that slavery was evil. The detailed descriptions, right down to the pewter buttons on one runaway's coat, also proved a treasure for historians researching slavery.

"Those ads have become extremely useful to scholars because they are one of the few places that describe slaves physically, their appearance, what type of clothes they wore, whether they were literate, what type of talents they had," said Richard Newman, research officer at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University. "While slaves are treated impersonally as a group, when one runs away, then we get a personal description." ...

Billie Anthony, the former Hartford teacher who now teaches in Bloomfield, says she and her students were, in the end, grateful that history had been preserved in *The Courant's* slave ads. "The nation's oldest continuously published newspaper is a treasure for historians," she said. "The complicity of the Connecticut *Courant* in the slave trade is evident, and we may not always like what we find, but the truth is valuable."

Excerpted from Jesse Leavenworth and Kevin Canfield, "A Courant Complicity, An Old Wrong," The Hartford Courant, July 4, 2000.

And although we do not know his ultimate fate, the final advertisement in the historical record describes him as an outlaw, with a greater reward offered for his head than for his return alive.

Cautioning against inventing stories to fill the historical gaps could spark a beneficial classroom conversation. Historians struggle with similar dilemmas. At what point does a student's embellishment change a bit of history into historical fiction? When

can we presume that an experience or emotion felt by one slave was felt in common by them all?

4. Working with morally repugnant material: When teaching about a topic that involves racism, an educator faces risks—such as offending or in some way hurting a student or a parent, catering to a desire for "sensational" or grotesque material (rape and torture are part of many slave narratives), depicting an ethnic group as one-

dimensional in their character or experience, or trivializing human suffering. A teacher can delimit these problems somewhat by carefully selecting specific documents that match "the intent of the course and the age and sophistication of students" (as discussed in Challenge 1, pp. 6-7).¹³

Preparation of materials, however, may not be enough. A photocopied handout of an advertisement for a runaway slave is unlike the usual, everyday worksheet. An ad that

depicts a human being as a piece of property is, to us, morally repugnant. Addressing this concern briefly and frankly with the students at some point in the lesson is necessary. How can we summarize a terrible human event without trivializing it? A teacher can make this moral dilemma part of the lesson. For example, right after distributing a handout, one might describe the gravity of the matter and then pause to allow students to reflect. Toward the end of the class, one could ask students to imagine that a slave from 1700, silent and invisible at the front of the room, has been witnessing the lesson. What would such a human being think about the activity that has just concluded?

While, from our modern vantage point, it is offensive to think about human beings being treated as property, it is also part of our responsibility as educators to set the historical context for students. Many people in the 18th and early 19th centuries accepted slavery and did not find it offensive, although there was a growing campaign to end the practice. It is important and challenging to balance a message of modern morality with an accurate historical context.¹⁴

Digging Into History

Each of the four challenges discussed above presents an opportunity to stretch students' understanding of history—what it is and how it is done. Rather than being reasons to avoid the complexities of using primary sources, these are reasons why students will find such work interesting (Figure 3). History is not a predigested paragraph in a textbook. Show your students some primary sources. They can practice the work of historians while constructing for themselves a richer and more complete picture of life in the 18th century. 📖

Notes

1. *Virginia Gazette* (Parks), 1739. The name in parentheses indicates the newspaper's publisher. Colonial Virginia had several newspapers, all named *Virginia Gazette*, some of which were published simultaneously. Thus, researchers list the name of the publisher when citing from these newspapers.
2. Matthew Mason and Rita Koman, "Complicating Slavery: Teaching with Runaway Slave Advertisements," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 3 (April 2003); For detailed background, see John Hope Franklin and Leon Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999).
3. Compilations of runaway slave advertisements include Graham Russell Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds.,

Library of Congress



A sheet music cover (ca. 1845) depicting Frederick Douglass as a runaway slave.

- "Pretends to Be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*, (New York: Garland, 1994); Daniel Meaders, ed. *Advertisements for Runaway Slaves in Virginia, 1801-1820*. (Studies in African American History and Culture, New York: Garland, 1997); Freddie L. Parker, ed., *Stealing a Little Freedom: Advertisements for Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1791-1840*. (New York: Garland, 1994); Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, eds., *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Lathan A. Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790*. 4 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).
4. The Geography of Slavery project website makes available all known runaway and captured ads for slaves and servants placed in Virginia newspapers from 1736 to 1790, and is in the process of compiling advertisements well into the nineteenth century. The project offers other documents including court records, other types of newspaper notice, slaveholder correspondence, and assorted literature about slavery and indentured servitude.
 5. *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), December 22, 1768.
 6. Think-pair-share is common cooperative learning strategy which begins by asking students to think about a topic, having them pair with a partner to discuss it, and then opening up the question for class discussion. This strategy helps students formulate their thoughts individually, test their ideas with a peer, refine their thinking, and then with confidence share their thoughts in the larger group.
 7. Henry Lewis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: New American Library, 1987); Cheryl Mason Bolick and Megan McGlinn, "Harriet Jacobs: Using Online Slave Narratives in the Classroom," *Social Education* 68, no. 3 (April 2004): 198-202.
 8. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contents, Criticism*, Elizabeth Ammons, Ed. (New York: Norton, 2001).
 9. Paul Horton, "The WPA Slave Narratives: Teaching with Oral Histories," *Middle Level Learning* 13 (January/February 2002) 3-8.
 10. "Slavery and the Northern States" theme issue, *Social Science Docket* 1, no. 2 (summer-fall 2001). The Docket is a publication of the New York and New Jersey Councils for the Social Studies. See also a two-day lesson plan by Bruce Fehn, available on the web at "Using Primary Sources to Understand the Past: Slavery and Runaway Slaves in Colonial America (1769)," www.uiowa.edu/~socialled/lessons/slavery.htm.
 11. One can listen to (or read a transcription of) a teacher using a think-aloud strategy to analyze a runaway slave advertisement at teacherlink.org/content/social/instructional/runlit/procedures.html
 12. Ads for Aaron Griffin ran in the *Virginia Gazette* over four years: December 17, 1767 (Purdie & Dixon); April 28, 1768 (Rind); December 22, 1768 (Purdie & Dixon); November 2, 1769 (Purdie & Dixon); January 3, 1771 (Purdie & Dixon); January 10, 1771 (Rind).
 13. NCSS Position Statement: "Ethics for the Social Studies Profession." Prepared by Professional Ethics Committee Approved by NCSS Board of Directors, 1990, 2003. Available on the NCSS website, www.socialstudies.org/positions.
 14. Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg, "Teaching About the Holocaust: Issues of Rationale, Content, Methodology, and Resources," *Social Education* 59, no. 6 (October 1995).

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Teaching About Immigration, Past and Present

SUSAN PASS

WHENEVER I RETURN to this country after traveling overseas, I am so grateful that I want to kiss the ground. I can understand why people try so hard to immigrate to the United States: the opportunities are often much greater than they are in other nations; there is a real chance for social mobility here; and the right of the individual to think, worship, and speak as he or she pleases is a living legacy. But the decision to come America is rarely an easy one. For many people, getting started in a new country is hard, and if the experience includes learning a new language, it is even harder. Often, family members and friends are left behind. And there are beautiful aspects of every homeland and culture that cannot be packed into a suitcase and unfolded on the new continent.

Today's social studies classroom is likely to include first or second generation immigrants to the United States. As I advanced in teaching experience, I learned how important it was to get to know these students. I discovered how to make learning more meaningful to them, and how valuable their contributions could be to everyone's insight and understanding. The topics of immigration and assimilation are more than just historical issues. "Coming to America" is a personal experience, or is part of the history of immediate family members, of many students today.¹

America's Changing Demography

Twenty years ago, I taught middle school in rural, downstate Illinois. The town was ethnically homogeneous, and there were no immigrants in my classes. Many of my students' families had lived in the area for generations. Then I moved to Houston, Texas, and worked for sixteen years in inner-city schools. Many of my students were from foreign countries. When I moved to upstate

South Carolina, many first-generation immigrants from Latin America were working in the mills, laboring on farms, and setting up stores. The church I attended started offering a service in the Spanish language, and the schools built up their programs in English as a Second Language.

My experience reflected changes in our nation as a whole. American demographics are evolving.² "Nearly 1 in 10 families with children are of mixed citizenship status."³ Census 2000 figures show that undocumented immigration has risen from that reported in the census of 1980, and that children of these immigrants are integrating into American society, just as previous immigrant groups have done. In 1965, President Johnson signed an immigration act that eliminated restrictions based on racial considerations. Between 1976 and 1995, the majority of immigrants were from Asia.⁴ Now, the majority of immigrants to the United States are from Spanish-speaking countries. These changes are reflected in the faces of the students sitting in our classrooms, even in rural, middle America.

Building from Primary Documents

I started building a unit of study on immigration by inviting students to examine primary documents.⁵ Using primary documents increases student motivation. They seem to prefer this approach to the usual lesson format lecture and book reading.⁶

The greatest wave of immigration occurred during the Gilded Age, so we began by studying documents from that era. *The Gilded Age: A History in Documents* is a good book for read-aloud material.⁷ On the Internet, there are good resources available free. Students can download photographs of people waiting in line from the website of the Ellis Island National Museum.⁸

Compilations of individual immigrants' experiences are available for sale from the National Archives, which also has some free online resources, including a Teaching with Documents set.⁹ Students read several of these autobiographical passages, such as "Eating for 13 Cents a Day" and "The Life of a Working Girl." Then I asked students to select one passage and to write brief fictional diary entries for the next four days in the life of that immigrant, using what they had just read as a source of ideas.

From these expressions by individuals, we turned to the study of broader themes of the Gilded Age such as the labor movement, city life and social reform, the rights of women and children, nativist reactions to immigration, and the influence of the press. Within each of these themes, students learned many specific facts and concepts. For example, "Eating for 13 Cents a Day" should be discussed in the context of inflation (goods cost less in 1880) and also in light of the fact that government support services (the "social safety net") that most industrial societies now have for people who are unemployed, injured, sick, or very young did not then exist.

Modeling an Interview

The immigrant grandparents of some of the students volunteered to talk with the class.¹⁰ I modeled good interviewing technique by asking questions about their countries of origin, what it was like to make a new start in America, and what their lives were like now. I asked students to work as reporters and write up the experience for possible newspaper articles in the school newspaper. Students' grades were based 50/50 on correct writing and accurate content. Students were invited to read aloud their newspaper articles to the class, and many did. All of the

Suggested Resources on the Internet

In addition to the resources listed above in the notes, you might want to check out some of these sites that discuss current immigration trends and issues.

AMERICAN MEMORY at the Library of Congress provides year-long interdisciplinary project plan designed for middle school. Students interview immigrants in their own communities and compare their stories with those found in American Memory online collections. The plan includes instructions for practicing oral history techniques by interviewing teachers and family members, including a lesson on composing good questions. Parts of the plan can be used for shorter units of study. Learning About Immigration Through Oral History is at memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/oh1/ammem.html.

PBS hosts at least two interesting websites, those created to accompany the “The New Americans” series (www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans) and an episode from the series “In the Mix” (www.pbs.inthemix/shows/). Scroll down in the “Choose a Show Topic” window to “Teen Immigrants.” Both sites provide useful materials, such as lesson plans (although these are geared for higher grades) as well as links to other informative organizations, such as Issues2000.org, which details American politician’s stances on immigration issues. The PBS Teacher Source (www.pbs.org/teachersource) lists related print, online, and video resources if you enter “immigration” in the search box.

PUBLIC AGENDA (www.publicagenda.org) and the National Immigration Forum (www.immigrationforum.org/pubs/facts.htm) also have great resources, like fact sheets, and links to other reliable sources of information about immigration as a current issue.

ELLIS ISLAND has a timeline worth exploring (www.ellisland.org) that can be found under the Immigrant Experience link. More than just a line with labels, the page incorporates charts, graphs, text, and photos that tell the story of major events and shifts in emigration to America up to the present.

articles were posted in my room and other teachers and students came to look at them.

Among my early experiences at this type of project was interviewing a very elderly woman. A group of six volunteers, fifth grade students, went with me to interview her in a residence for elders. We recorded her remarks with a small, hand-held tape recorder. As a little immigrant girl, Ms. Karbowski had lived in Chicago in a cold-water tenement with an outhouse. Her days as a child were different from those of children today. We played the tape for the whole class when we came back. The children discussed how elderly people are difficult to hear sometimes or to understand, but they can often remember routine activities from their childhood fairly accurately. Some of the students who had accompanied me on the interview made short presentations on what they had learned.

A Student Interview

The students then asked if they could interview people and write up the results for extra credit. I agreed, but stated that they would be graded on good English as well as thorough content. Each student could interview a person, a youth or adult, who had immigrated to America, then write a brief report, summarizing the interview. We discussed interview procedures and what questions could be asked, and I distributed an outline to help guide the interview.

I ask students to be sure to cover these five topics (at least) when interviewing a classmate, family member, or neighbor who is an immigrant.

1. Tell about your country of origin and what life was like for you and your family.
2. Why did you come to America? Tell about the experience of coming over.
3. What do you like about life in the community where you live now?
4. What do you miss about the old country?
5. How have you changed since coming to the United States?

Personal Discoveries

What happened the first time I gave this assignment was one of the most valuable experiences of my teaching career. What

the students wrote in response really brought home to me how valuable my American citizenship is. A tear slipped out as I read of some of these reports, because several of my students and their families experience much hardship to get here.

Some interviewers, it turned out, were also the interviewees (see p. 14). I allowed this variation on the assignment, and made autobiographical passages a permanent option in the lesson plan. Some of these students recounted old hurts, allowing emotional scars to heal. I planned to post all of the students’ reports after reading them, but the authors of the real heart-tugging stories did not want to have them posted. Likewise, when I invited students to read their interviews to the class, many did, but a few did not. I suspected that the others did not want their classmates to know what they or their close family members had really gone through.

All of the interviews gave me insight not only into the challenges of the immigration experience generally, but into the students whom I was teaching. One student wrote “A True Story of Tan Vo: A Man Came From the Death.” Even though Tan was only twelve years old, he considered himself a man because of the experiences he’d had trying to emigrate from Cambodia. After reading his report, I agreed with him.

Occasionally I would come across a passage in a report that might have been fictitious, but I reasoned that, in this special assignment, it was not my role to judge the truthfulness of the content. For example, one very polite student asked me not to publish her story and to return it to her at the end of the unit of study. I figured that this was because, when read between the lines, one paragraph seemed to describe cannibalism practiced by people stranded at sea. If it was fiction, writing it down did not seem to cause any harm. If it was true, what a horrible experience it must have been, and what courage it took to write about it! That young woman grew up to be a teacher.

Variations on the Assignment

Usually, students’ autobiographies, or the oral histories that students record, will follow a more predictable pattern. But a teacher never knows when such stories will be “both

Who Belongs Here?

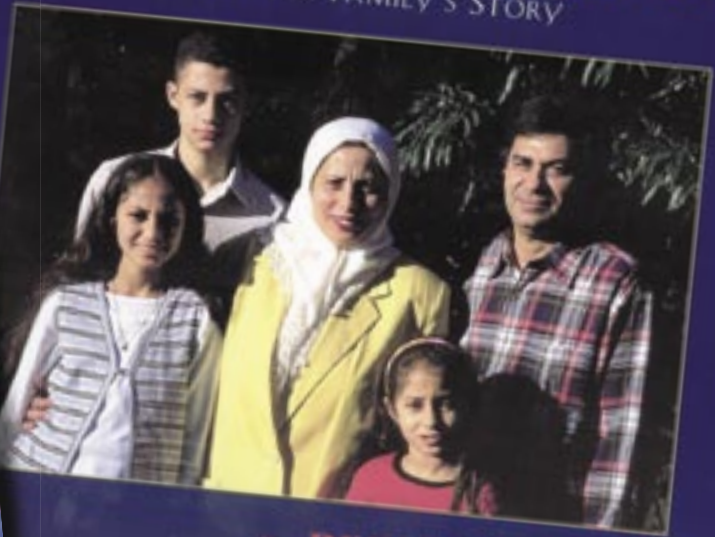
Teacher's Guide

Margy Burns Knight
Thomas V. Chan



COMING TO AMERICA

A MUSLIM FAMILY'S STORY



BY BERNARD WOLF

powerful and painful for family members (including the students with whom you are working).¹¹ So it is important to be flexible and offer several options for completing the assignment. As suggested above, let students know that they can share their work with the class, or ask that the teacher keep it confidential. Students can interview a family member, classmate, or neighbor—or write an autobiographical passage. If such activities are very challenging for some students (say, language skills are poor, and taking notes during a conversation would be extremely difficult), they might study a journal entry in a book or short story about a young immigrant—it might surprise them how their experiences are reflected in those of an immigrant from another culture, or from another time.¹²

Finally, there is a risk any time a teacher discusses personal or cultural attributes and a minority of students in the room suddenly become a focus of attention. “Some students who are immigrants are teased, shunned, or bullied for a time after they have arrived, especially if they attend a school in which they are an obvious minority. Highlighting immigration as an issue may generate more of that kind of behavior. It should serve to eliminate prejudice in the long run (with knowledge and understanding gained

through study), but there may be some tension along the way.”¹³

One thing that can help ameliorate misunderstandings is a teacher’s open letter to parents. Before giving the assignment, draft a “Dear Parents” letter that explains the assignment and gives some reasons why you are giving it (see sidebar). Show the draft to your department head (or principal) and accept changes before writing the final letter. Ask one student to read it aloud in class, allowing for discussion afterwards, before everyone takes a copy of it home. Announce that you will be available after school or during recess on specific days if any student has questions of feedback for you about the assignment. What you hear, and what you read, may encourage you to keep on teaching. That was true for me. ☺

Notes

1. Alan Goodwin, “Teacher Preparation and the Education of Immigrant Children,” *Education and Urban Society* 34, no. 2 (February, 2002): 156-172.
2. Edward Taylor, Martin Philip and Michael Fix, *Poverty Amid Prosperity: Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural California* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 1997).
3. Michael Fix and Wendy Zimmerman, “All Under One Roof: Mixed-Status Families in an Era of Reform,” *International Migration Review* 35, no. 2 (2001): 397-419.
4. Jeffrey Passel and Michael Fix, “U.S. Immigration at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims Hearing,” US

House of Representatives: Committee on the Judiciary (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2001).

5. Bruce Mantrone, “Teaching Immigration through Primary Source Material,” *The Social Studies* 78, no. 5 (September - October 1987): 235-237.
6. Lee Ann Potter and Wynell Schamel, “Declaration of Intention and Petition for Naturalization,” *Social Education* 62 no.7 (November/December 1998): 469-474. The theme of this issue is “Social Studies and the New Immigration,” and it contains sixteen articles on that topic. (September/October, 1987): 469-474.
7. Janet Greenwood Thomas, *The Gilded Age: A History in Documents* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).
8. cmp1.ucr.edu/exhibitions/immigration_id.html.
9. National Archives and Records Administration. Teachers can call (202) 501-6729 or e-mail education@arch1.nara.gov. See items at Teaching with Documents such as the “Lesson Plan: Affidavit and Flyers from the Chinese Boycott Case” at www.archives.gov/digital_classroom.
10. Barry Lanman, “Oral History as an Educational Tool for Teaching Immigration and Black History in American High Schools,” *International Journal of Oral History* 8, no. 2 (June, 1987): 122-135; Kathryn Walbert, “Elementary How To Do It: Oral History Projects,” *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 16, no. 4 (March/April 2004), P1-8.
11. Tarry Lindquist and Douglas Selwyn, *Social Studies at the Center: Integrating Kids, Content, and Literacy* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000): 84.
12. Margy Burns Knight (Ann Sibley O'Brien, illus), *Who Belongs Here?* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 1993. See also the Teacher's Guide); Bernard Wolf, *Coming to America: A Muslim Family's Story* (New York: Lee & Low Books, 2003); “Notable Social Studies Books for Young People,” published annually by NCSS, www.socialstudies.org/resources/notable/.
13. Lindquist and Selwyn, *ibid*.

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Our Immigrants: Interview Questions

Directions: Arrange an interview with a recent immigrant—a relative, family friend, fellow student, school staff member, or neighbor. This person must have lived in his or her native country long enough to have definite memories and views about that land and its people.

1. What is your name? In what town or city were you born? What country? How old were you when you first arrived in the United States? What year was that?
2. Describe your homeland. What language did you speak there? How did your community differ from where you live today? What foods did you eat? Did people dress differently there? What do you miss about your homeland?
3. Why did you or your family leave your native country? Describe your trip to the United States. What difficulties did you have to overcome?
4. What did you think life in the United States would be like? How did you think your life would be different in the United States as compared to life in your homeland?
5. Once you arrived in the United States, what did you experience? Was it different than what you had expected? Please explain.
6. What kinds of challenges did you experience while adjusting to life and culture in the United States? Did you have to learn English? Did you change your eating habits? Did you change the way you dress? Did you change the way you related to your family and friends? Did you change the way you learn? Did you change your leisure activities? Did you make any other changes?
7. Do your parents speak English? What language will your children speak? Do you think it is possible to forget one's native language?
8. Have you experienced any type of discrimination in the United States? If yes, had you ever had a similar problem in your homeland? How did the experience(s) in this country make you feel? What can you do to overcome prejudice? What advice would you give to recent immigrants from your country about this problem?
9. What do you believe it means to "be an American?" Do you believe a person can change his or her culture to fit into a country like the United States? Do you believe a person can be an American and still retain his or her native culture? Please explain.
10. What laws do you think the United States should have towards immigration and immigrants? Do you think the United States should allow for increased or decreased immigration into the United States?

(Sample)

Immigrant (Interviewee) Permission Form

I, _____
interviewee

give my permission for

_____ *student interviewer*

to use this interview as part of a social studies assignment under the direction of the teacher,

_____ *teacher*

at _____
school

_____ *signature*

_____ *(date)*

_____ *parent signature*

_____ *(date)*

if interviewee is under 21 years old.

Source

Based on Rick Keller-Coffee, "Interview with an Immigrant" (Lesson Plan, Poughkeepsie High School, Pennsylvania, 2001). Rick's students wrote a 60-page booklet, *Poughkeepsie's Pride: The Stories of Our Immigrants*, which they published in 2002.



In The MLP/PLS

Student Work: Narratives and Interviews

Choosing a Future

America has always been the land of dreams & opportunities to me & my family. In my home country, Lebanon, every one wanted to travel to America, especially the young. . . . Everybody dreamed, but those who succeeded were few. We were from those few.

During the last four months of 1999, my brother, my mom, & me were very busy. We were filling out the papers that my uncle (on my mother's side) sent to us in order to apply for the Migration Visa. It may seem easy to fill out papers—but not when your whole future depends on those papers. . . .

We received the visa in February, but we didn't travel to America until the 7th of July, 2000. Since the trip was long (18 hours), we were very exhausted when we arrived at Houston's Airport. . . .

My uncle's house was too crowded because he had his wife's family. . . . We stayed in his home about three months &, then, we moved to another home. After two month's, we received the Permanent Resident Card, However, my mom's card & mine contained wrong information concerning our date of birth. And, we had to go to the INS center in order to correct them.

Now, we have been in America about four months. My brother found a part time job in a Pantry' store & he is going to attend college next semester. My mom is learning English.

The whole educational system is different for me but. It is easy. The teachers are really nice to me. & so are the students. However, none of us feels comfortable. We thought it's going to be easier to get accustomed to the life here in America. It's really hard to stay in a land where you have nobody for you when you need him. It's hard to leave your friends whom you were raised with and whom you had the happiest & the most sad moments in your life. It's hard to live in a world of strangers. But, its absolutely harder to go back to your country & be sorry for letting such emotions prevent you from achieving the American Dream. Everything has a price, & I really hope that all my tears won't go for nothing. Those tears are the price which will make me have a chance/or a good future.

Tangled Threads (New York: Clarion Books, 2003) is a novel about a thirteen-year-old Laotian girl. After her parents are killed in war, she survives a decade in a Thai camp for Hmong refugees with her grandmother. When they emigrate to Providence, Rhode Island, challenges—old and new—await. Students who are immigrants may write short narratives (above) about their own experiences of coming to America.

My Journey

The problems that I had when I came to the United States were a few. Since the first time that my father told me we were coming to this country I felt bad because I didn't want to leave my friends and my family. I felt bad because I didn't know the language, the customs, and because everything was going to be different from what I already knew.

The period of time since my father told me that and the day we came to the United States was long because we wanted to come legally, and so we did. When the day of the trip finally came, we were excited because of the adventure (but not for the change of country). I remember how my family and my friends were wishing us good luck and telling us "bye." I almost cried but I didn't. The trip took twelve hours because we came by car from Nicaragua.

When we got in the apartment, my new family was waiting for us. They were really nice. That made life a bit easier because they had almost 6 years living here and they could help us. They taught us to count the bills and the coins, how to take the Metro and they also helped us to get into the school. During my first days of school I didn't understand anything and I felt confused in that moment. The people who helped me were the Hispanics because I could understand them and they were friendly to me. I guess because they had also been immigrants.

But the hard times passed, and I started to like it here. I made new friends, but I still remember the old ones. Now that time has passed we are very comfortable. We just want to go back someday and visit the town we left some years ago.

Susan Pass provided these samples of student writing.



Ericka O'Rourke/Clarion Books

Facts about Our Immigrants

Answer to Question 1: B

DISCUSSION: About 1,300,000 immigrants entered the United States in 2002. This seems like a lot of people, but keep in mind that about 4,000,000 children were born in the U.S. over the same period.

Source: “Annual Estimates of Components of Population Change for the United States and States: July 1, 2002 to July 1, 2003” (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2003), www.census.gov/popest/data/states/tables/NST-EST2003-05php.

Answer to Question 2: A

DISCUSSION: Even though the United States has one of the world’s most generous refugee resettlement programs, less than 1 percent of the world’s refugee population found its way to the United States in 2000.

Source: “Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide,” 2002 (U.S. Committee for Refugees); “2000 Statistical Yearbook” (Immigration and Naturalization Service); both available at “Immigration: Factfiles” at www.publicagenda.org/.

Answer to Question 3: C

DISCUSSION: Many textbooks state that the top decade was 1901-1910, when more than 8.7 million immigrants arrived. But the Census of 2000 confirmed that the decade of 1991-2000 now holds the record, with more than 13 million new arrivals. The nation may be headed for yet another record-breaking decade in 2001-2010 if the current rate of arrival, about 1 million immigrants per year, holds steady.

Source: Randy Capps and Jeffrey S. Passel, *The New Neighbors: A User’s guide to Data on Immigrants in U.S. Communities* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2002), 4. (These U.S. Census data include both legal and undocumented immigrants.)

Answer to Question 4: B

DISCUSSION: Foreign-born residents make up about 11 percent of the U.S. population. “By 2000, the foreign-born population, as measured by the Census, exceeded 31 million....”

Source: “The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2002” (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2003), page 1, www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign/cps2002.html.

Answer to Question 5: C

DISCUSSION: More than 60,000 immigrants serve on active duty today. Half a million immigrants served in the Union Army (nearly a quarter of total troops) during the Civil War.

Source: American Immigration Law Foundation Policy Report, *U.S. Soldiers from Around the World: Immigrants Fight for an Adopted Homeland* (AILF, Washington, DC, 2003), www.aifl.org/pubed/tc_index.asp.

Visit the population clocks on the home page of the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov) to see an estimate of the nation’s and the

world’s human populations at this instant. At 1:39PM EST April 19, 2004, the clock read: U.S. population: 293,056,605, almost three hundred million; world population: 6,361,255,049, more than six billion.

Population Clocks

U.S. 293,056,605
World 6,361,255,049
13:39 EDT Apr 19, 2004



Facts about Our Immigrants

Take this informal quiz about immigrants in America. Circle the letter of the correct answer. It's okay to answer each question with a casual guess. This quiz will not be graded. You will receive more information on this topic in preparation for a class discussion.

1. The number of immigrants who entered the United States in 2002 was about _____.

- A) 100,000 (one hundred thousand)
- B) 1,300,000 (one million, three hundred thousand)
- C) 5,500,000 (five million, five hundred thousand)

2. The percentage of the world's refugee population that finds its way to the United States is _____.

- A) less than 1 percent
- B) about 10 percent
- C) more than 25 percent

3. The decade that saw the largest number of immigrants enter the United States was _____.

- A) 1901-1910
- B) 1951-1960
- C) 1991-2000

4. U.S. residents who were born in other nations make up about _____ percent of the population.

- A) 1
- B) 11
- C) 21

5. More than _____ immigrants serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces today.

- A) 600
- B) 6,000
- C) 60,000



Answers on page M-15