



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 7, WEBISODE 8

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview



Let's Discuss

In her autobiography *The Promised Land*, Mary Antin speaks of the hopes, hardships, and dreams shared by many immigrants in the late 1800s. The Antin family, like most newly arrived immigrants, settled in a large city. There they could find jobs and lived near fellow immigrants. By the turn of the century, immigrant populations concentrated in four of America's largest cities—New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Chicago.

Mary Antin's family, like many Jewish families, had fled oppression and persecution. They found that cities afforded them the opportunity to create a small society of their own that emphasized religion, community, and most important to Mary, education.

Teacher Directions

1. Tell the students that a Russian immigrant wrote her autobiography in 1912. She wrote about coming to America in the late 1800s. She called her book *The Promised Land*.
2. Ask the students to speculate:
 - What is a "Promised Land"?
 - Where does the term Promised Land originate?
 - What is the specific Promised Land in the title of Mary Antin's book?
 - Why do you think immigrants called America the Promised Land?
3. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

The term Promised Land originates in the Bible. Moses led the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt to a fertile land that they believed had been promised to them by God. Mary Antin, whose Jewish family suffered oppression and discrimination in Russia, referred to America as the Promised Land. Immigrants longed for a land where they could create a good life for themselves and their families, and where they could enjoy religious, political, and economic freedom.



History Sleuth

Teacher Directions

1. Write the following questions on the chalkboard, chart paper or a transparency.
 - Do young immigrants today have American Dreams?
 - What do you think their dreams are?
 - Do young immigrants today leave their home countries and come to America for the same reasons as in the past?
 - What are those reasons?
 - Do young immigrants today face prejudice, racism, or antagonism from established Americans?
 - What do you think are some of those experiences?
2. Students, working in small teams, answer the questions about today's teenage immigrants.
3. Distribute one copy of the Student Sheets: *New Kids In Town* to each team. Each team member reads one of the first person accounts of present-day immigrant teens.
4. Teammates share the stories of their teens with each other. Then the team decides
 - Why did the teens or their families leave their home countries?
 - What difficulties do these new immigrants face in the United States today?
 - Do these immigrants have their own American Dreams? What are they?
5. Visit each team to help students read and discuss the primary sources.
6. With the students, summarize the immigrant experiences of today's teens as depicted in the first person accounts and connect them with Mary Antin's experiences.

Teacher Directions

Show a transparency of the Student Sheet: "*The New Colossus*." Ask the students.

- How might Mary Antin react to these lines?
- How might each of the immigrant teens today react to these lines?
- Do you agree or disagree that America was the Promised Land for immigrants in the 1880s? Support your opinion with evidence.
- Do you agree or disagree that America is the Promised Land for immigrants today? Support your opinion with evidence.

What do you
Think?



Moving Toward Freedom



Connections

Teacher Directions

1. Share with students the Brief Bio about Mary Antin. Tell students that Antin remembered her parents' decision to go to America in the following way:

So at last I was going to America! The boundaries burst. The arch of heaven soared. A million suns shone out for every star. The winds rushed in from outer space, roaring in my ears, "America! America!"

2. Ask students
 - Did the American dream come true for Mary Antin?
 - What did she do to make the dream come true?
 - What did she do to help other immigrants realize the American dream?
 - How did Mary Antin move the country toward freedom?
3. Students design a poster illustrating something that immigrants dream will happen when they come to America.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Expressive Arts/Library — Students read *New Kids in Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode and create a dramatic presentation highlighting the stories of other immigrant teens.

Music — Students explore the ethnic music and folk dances of various immigrant groups that have settled in the United States.

Expressive Arts — Students plan and sponsor a cultural heritage fair and invite the community to showcase food, customs, music, and dance of immigrant groups in the local neighborhood.

Math/Library — Students research contemporary immigration statistics and create charts and graphs to display that information.

Abdul

Age 17

Emigrated from Afghanistan to Brooklyn, New York

I was fourteen then. Within a month of arriving, I enrolled in a big public high school. I remember I was happy that I was coming to school again to learn something, to become someone. But I was scared, too. The school counselor just looked at me and said, "If you're fourteen, you're in the eighth grade." Getting used to studying after six years was hard. I had to learn English because my family didn't speak it and we couldn't talk to anyone.

One period a day they put me in ESL, English as a Second Language. The words began to become a little familiar to my ears. But the American kids gave me a hard time. They made fun of me. And the curse words! All day. Every day. If the teacher asked me a question and I knew the answer, when I said it, because I couldn't pronounce it well and I had the wrong accent, they laughed at me. I felt very bad.

I couldn't do anything about it. Even if I had wanted to get physical, fight with them, it wasn't good. I'm not an animal. I'm a human being. I have a brain, I can talk. Why fight? Being peaceful, I think, is the best way. Some teachers knew what was going on, but they didn't care. I was a problem they didn't need.

I wanted to go back to Afghanistan. I hated this place. I didn't have any friends. I didn't have anyone to talk to. I still don't have a lot of friends, good friends, like best friends. My sisters and brothers went to a different school. I was lonely, but I had to deal with it. I went through it. I went to school. I came home. And I had to study hard to learn English. Like in social studies I had to read, then I'd find a word where I didn't know the meaning and I had to look it up in the dictionary. It would take me a long time to do just one page.

Now I'm seventeen and the American kids don't always know that I'm a foreigner. They tease less. I found out that if you act the way they do, say the things they say, do the things they do, they will be calm. So I try not to act strange to them. I wear T-shirts and stone-washed jeans and aviator glasses. My hair looks like their hair....After school I watch TV... to help me know what's going on in American families, what they do.

Ten years from now I hope to be married, have a career, a house, and children. I will raise them to be good Muslims. They are my face of the future.

Adapted from *New Kids In Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode, Scholastic Press

Xiaojun, “Debbie”

Age 13

Emigrated from China to Chinatown, New York City

It was real different in New York. It looked almost nothing like China. No foreigners ever came to my village. I had never seen a black person before. I'd never seen any Americans. My mother told me, “People kidnap and kill each other. You have to watch the window and the door all the time to make sure nobody comes in.” I could hardly sleep.

The first night my parents prayed for good luck. They took strings and put matches to them. And they prayed that I go to school and do well. I was very scared to go. The teacher said, “What’s her name?” and my mom told him Xiaojun, my Chinese name. He said, “Does she have an English name? No? Well, what about Debbie?” “Okay,” said my mother and that’s how I got my name.

Coming to American has changed my life. Now my parents work too much and too hard and I never see them. But we do have a TV, a radio, a microwave, and a washing machine. I still have things to do, like sweep and mop the floor, do the dishes, mop the table, clean the mirrors, wash the fans when they’re dirty, wash the clothes in the washing machine, and take care of my brother. For this I get five dollars a week allowance.

...I have to go straight home every day after class. I can’t go out at night...Once I’m home I study for four hours. [My father says], “Work hard so when you grow up it will be easier to get a good job and make money. If you don’t get a good education and a scholarship, you might have to beg for money. You don’t want that.”

...“Marry a Chinese guy,” my mom says. “All Chinese think the same.” I don’t agree, but I don’t tell her. I think Americans must be the same as us inside.

I’m a good Chinese daughter. I help my parents by looking up telephone numbers for them. Sometimes I have to call the electric company, read the advertisements for different things, take care of apartment bills. I do what they want.

I cry at night sometimes. My father says, “What are you doing?” I say, “Nothing. Nothing.” I get real confused. In China my father went with me to the school to watch movies on television. We had time together. I used to tell him my problems. Now there is no time. Here I can watch TV any time and I don’t have to get the water or take care of the pigs. I guess I like it better in America.

Adapted from *New Kids In Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode, Scholastic Press

Anna

Age 17

Emigrated from Greece to America

I'm becoming an American and my parents are afraid of that. I try to reassure them. I tell them, "Look, it's me. You may not always know me, but I'm still me." When I was a little kid, I thought my parents were high and mighty, smart and strong. But now, even though I love them both, at times I see them as two children.

Take how they deal with things, how they solve their problems. Learning to be an American is very complex. And sometimes, many times, when I've a crisis, my parents don't really know how to handle it. They don't know that I am learning. The result? I often feel I'm here by myself. In the beginning, I went through a lot of things at school. The other students used to hurt me a lot. My parents didn't know how to come to me and say, "Let's talk about it. Don't worry. We understand it is hard to adjust to a new culture." They didn't know what to do, because their parents didn't have to do it for them.

Once I understood English, once I started to see a whole American world out there that I never knew existed, a world that you don't see in Greece, I felt a little distant from them. The distance grew. They would be proud of me, but they also began to feel threatened. My new knowledge had no meaning for them. This has been hard and sad for all of us.

Things are falling into place for my family, now....

My father is a chef and the boss asks his advice. My mother's moved up, too. She makes beautiful wedding dresses for \$5.99 an hour. My whole life plan is that I'll go to college. I will become an accountant. I will work, save a lot of money, and then go back to school to take psychology, just to learn about it. I've always been interested in why people act the way they do....

...In America you ...have jobs, first of all. If you are willing to work very hard, there's always a place in the Greek community where they could make a job for you. Here, the way I see it, you have life. In Thiros [Greece], you have just a small part of it, the dream.

Adapted from *New Kids In Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode, Scholastic Press

Tito

Age 14

Emigrated from Mexico to America

"Be proud that you're Mexican," my mother says. I know many people have a bad impression of Mexicans and Mexico. They think that all our money goes for beer and drugs. They think that's why Mexico has always been poor. They look at the United States and say, "This is a rich and great country." They forget that it's made up of people from many countries and cultures who emigrated here. The United States has prospered because of its immigrants.

I don't understand kids who are angry at their parents and at their culture. You are what you are. You can't do anything about it. If somebody says, "Oh, Mexicans can't do this," I want to prove them wrong. Mexicans have gone through much hardship. I wish this country realized more what we give back.

My parents say, "You come from a different background, so to get ahead you have to do twice if not three times better than the American-born person. You have to learn the American culture." I listen to them, but then I think about an ideal society where there's a little bit of every culture and it goes together just right....Different ideas would come together and make everything a whole lot better.

I'm in the ninth grade now. The school is seventh through ninth. Last year I switched schools because the one I was attending was mostly American students. The teachers paid more attention to them. Where I go now, I think it's a good school, even though it has a bad reputation. What I like is that the teachers don't care what our culture is. They help us all.

If other Mexican immigrants read this, I would tell them, work hard and remember who we are. Don't get into that easy-money stuff. Instead, think of all the good, not all the problems, that lie ahead. We can't climb the whole staircase at once, just one step at a time. And we should try even harder to help make our ethnic group have a greater voice in the future of America.

Adapted from *New Kids In Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode, Scholastic Press

Amitabh

Age 15

Emigrated from India to Washington, D.C.

It is really bad for us in the beginning. We were five in a two-room apartment. Every day my parents would get up and go out to look for jobs. They knew they had to start all the way at the bottom, that people here didn't count any experience from India. But my father had been a biologist. My mother was a chemistry professor at a university. In India they were both making good money.

After the first few months my parents found jobs, but the work was very tough on them. My father worked as a messenger, more a job for a boy than a man. He delivered letters and carried packages all over the city. Again, he would get lost the way he had when he was looking for work...he found another job, and another job. All small jobs. Then he met an Indian man who owned a laboratory who hired him. Now he's sort of back in the area of biology, where he used to work.

My mother started working in a store. She had to fold clothes, mostly. Then she got a better job watching patients at a senior citizens' home. Eventually she became the dietitian there. And now it's okay for me, too. Kids don't look at me strangely the way they did in the beginning. I had my first hamburger and said, "Forget it!" I threw it out. Eventually, though, I got used to it. Now I eat everything. I eat hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken, and french fries. I love pizza....

Now we live in the suburbs in a big house with four bedrooms. I have my own bedroom with military posters all over the place. My middle brother and I have a computer. We have more than six hundred games for it. He wants to work in computers. My older brother is in college, the University of Maryland. He wants to be a surgeon.

I'm in the tenth grade. ROTC is my favorite class. I'm planning to go into the military right after I finish high school. It should help me out a lot because ROTC trains us for the military. Since when I was in India, my ambition was to make the military a career....

I'm more Americanized than my parents. I still speak Gujarati at home, but now there's English mixed in a lot. I'm trying to get out of my accent as much as possible. And now I have what I guess you could call an American mouth: I have braces. I'd never seen braces in India. I hate wearing them. Just like American kids.

Adapted from *New Kids In Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens* by Janet Bode, Scholastic Press



The New Colossus

by Emma Lazarus

The Statue of Liberty was a gift from France to the United States. American writers and artist worked together to raise money to build the pedestal for the statue. Emma Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" in 1883 as part of this fundraising effort. The title refers to the Greek statue, the Colossus of Rhodes, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes
command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”