

**Classroom Activities and Reading Lists to Accompany  
Immigrants and the Cathedral of Saint Paul:  
*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.***

*“The Cathedral will be a home for all whatever the language they speak,  
whatever the country from which they come.”* John Ireland, 1905.

In 1905, two years before the ground was broken for the new Cathedral of Saint Paul, Archbishop John Ireland wrote to *The Catholics, Clergy and Laity of the Diocese*, outlining what he called a “characteristic feature” of the Cathedral: “From whatever land one’s ancestors may have come, one will find that land pictured in the Cathedral; one will find there a shrine to the sainted hero who first preached to its inhabitants Christianity and civilization. . . . And the Cathedral, too, will be the home of all, whatever the language they speak, whatever the country from which they come.”

**How to use this outline.** This outline is designed to help teachers use *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit as a learning experience for students in elementary and secondary school. The teacher can select elements of this plan to meet the needs of students at diverse learning levels. For students in the early elementary grades, the teacher will be more directive, leading discussion and directing participation. Older students can be directed to take more responsibility for learning activities—leading discussion, planning activities, and assuming independent study projects.

**Objectives for Students.**

- \* Develop an understanding of the immigrant and refugee experience as visualized in the *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit.
- \* Develop an understanding of the lives and struggles of immigrants and refugees—past and present.
- \* Develop research, interviewing, note-taking, writing skills.
- \* Use technology to access immigration history.

**Setting the Stage: Student preparation.** Before visiting the *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit, talk about the following topics:

- \* Define/discuss: immigrant, emigrant, refugee, alien. What do these people have in common; how are they different?

- \* Define/discuss: home, house, dwelling. Give examples of these different places? How are they alike? How are they different?
- \* History of U.S. immigration: Research Ellis Island and Angel Island as entry places for immigrants.
- \* What do people say about immigrants? Good things? Bad things? What do you think about immigrants?
- \* Discuss immigrants and citizenship in the United States and other countries:
- \* What are visas and green cards?
- \* What other cards and paperwork have immigrants been required to present?
- \* What is a census? Discuss the upcoming US Census and how the government uses the information.

### ACTIVITIES

The activities listed below are arranged for early elementary, later elementary and secondary school. The introduction of technology in teaching procedures has expanded and even erased some of the traditional boundaries for grade level performance.

**Activities for Early Elementary Grades.** Teachers may select from each of these groups the activities that meet and challenge the maturity levels of individual classes and students.

- 1. Just Because.** Make a list of reasons why people emigrate.
- 2. On the Way to USA.** List reasons why America is a popular destination for immigrants.
- 3. The Geography of Immigration.** On a map of the world identify the countries represented in the *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit.
- 4. Let Me Introduce.** Choose an immigrant from your culture. Pretend you are that person and tell his or her story to the class. Write or record your story and share it with your family.
- 5. Pieces of People.** Create a photo mosaic using photos of immigrants represented in *Immigrants and the Cathedral*.
- 6. Food for Thought and Thoughts on Food.** People who come to the U.S. bring their national foods with them. Research and report on the culture of food in the immigrant populations represented.
- 7. Dressing the Part.** Prepare a style show with students wearing the national dress of immigrants represented in the *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit.

**8. Dear Friend.** Write a letter to an immigrant. Tell him/her what you think about immigration. If you've changed your ideas, write about that.

**9. Walk in My Shoes.** Using research on immigration, take on the role of an immigrant and tell your story.

**10. Let's Celebrate.** With photos and demonstrations, show how people of other cultures celebrate national holidays and important local and family events.

**11. Something to Cherish.** Read Patricia Polacco's children's book, *The Giving Bowl*. It's about a family treasure brought from Russia and passed down from one generation to the next. Do you have a family treasure? Tell the story of that treasure to the class.

**12. Games and Play.** Research the games immigrant children play. Are any of these games like the games American children play? Choose a game that seems like fun to you. Learn to play and teach the game to your friends.

**13. How Do You Say Hello?** Learn to speak a few words in the languages of the immigrants represented in *Immigrants and the Cathedral*. Ask your friends to prepare a list in the languages they speak. Learn to say: *Hi, how are you? What's your name? Where do you live? Where do you go to school? Thank you. You're Welcome. Goodbye.*

**14. Hello, Again.** At the end of this unit, write a letter to an immigrant, talk about what you have learned—facts, attitudes and feelings.

**15. Welcome.** Research the Hmong community in Saint Paul—their origins in Laos and early communities in the United States.

**Activities for Middle and High School Grades.** Teachers can select from each of these groups the activities that meet and challenge the maturity levels of individual classes and students. Teachers may want to select from the list of activities for early elementary grades to meet individual student needs and abilities.

**1. Just Because.** Make a list of why people emigrate.

**2. Then and Now.** Make a chart listing, comparing and contrasting periods of immigration:

- \* 19<sup>th</sup> Century immigration vs. 20<sup>th</sup> Century immigration
- \* United States immigration policies.
- \* Growth of immigration in the United States—1900 to 2017
- \* Immigration Statistics—1900 to 2017

**3. On the Way to USA.** List reasons why America is a popular destination for immigrants.

**4. The Geography of Immigration.** On a map of the world identify the countries represented in *Immigrants and the Cathedral*.

**5. The History of Immigration in My Family.** Research family history. Talk to family members about immigration: grandparents, parents, relatives. What experiences do they remember?

**6. Meetings and Introductions I.** Identify friends and neighbors who are immigrants or come from immigrant families. Prepare a report: written, PowerPoint, poster board, oral presentation, drawings, sketches, photography.

**7. Meeting and Introductions II.** Invite recent immigrants—family members, friends or neighbors to your class. Ask them to share their immigrant stories.

**8. Read All About It.** Research library holdings on the immigration. Look for biographies of famous immigrants. Check on story books and fiction based on immigrants and the immigrant experience

**9. The Real Thing.** Research virtual reality. Spend a day in a boat with immigrants crossing seas and oceans to reach the United States.

**10. The Immigrant Hall of Fame I.** Create a photo montage of immigrants who have made important contributions in the United States.

**11. The Immigrant Hall of Fame II.** Create a Hall of Fame of people from your country/culture: literature, music, art, science, public service, professional sports.

**12. Art in My World.** Sketch, draw, paint your impressions of the immigrant experience: immigrant families, immigrants at work, immigrants' feelings and attitudes.

**13. A World of Art.** Research art and artists from immigrant populations. Introduce artists and their principal works to the class.

**14. Pieces of People.** Create a photo mosaic using photos of immigrants represented in *Immigrants and the Cathedral*.

**15. Long May It Wave.** Research the flags of the countries in the *The Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit. Create a photo montage or a mosaic of the flags.

- 16. Move with Music.** Research dance forms of different immigrant groups. Invite students to demonstrate their national dance forms and teach it to the class.
- 17. Encore!** Research musical compositions and styles from different immigrant groups. Record the music for the class. Recruit student performers to share the music with the class.
- 18. The Art of World Cooking.** Create a menu or a book of recipes from the populations represented; include photos of prepared recipes.
- 19. Taste the World.** Share recipes. Prepare and share food from immigrant families.
- 20. How Do You Say Hello?** Learn to speak a few words in the languages of the immigrants represented in *Immigrants and the Cathedral* exhibit. Ask your friends to prepare a list in the languages they speak for you. Learn to say: Hello. How are you? What's your name? Where do you live? Where do you go to school? Goodbye.
- 21. Who We Are.** Interview class members. Create a graph or chart showing the class's immigrant origins and history.
- 22. Work and Workers.** Research the impact of immigrants on the US labor force. Check with the United States Department of Labor.
- 23. May I Present?** Research the life of an immigrant you know. Tell the story of the person's life—before and after immigration to the United States.
- 24. Debate.** Pros and Cons of Immigration. Use interviews and research to present evidence for each position.
- 25. Outsiders and Insiders.** Interview immigrants about their feelings of inclusiveness or exclusivity.
- 26. If I were the Mayor...** What would you do to help immigrants in your community if you had the authority to do so? Write a letter to the Mayor expressing those thoughts.
- 27. Reluctant Immigrants.** Define and discuss the issue of refugees. How does the refugee differ from the immigrant?
- 28. Tell Your Story.** Prepare a panel of student immigrants who will tell the story of their journey from their homeland to the United States. Panel members use photos and recordings to enrich their presentations.

## SUGGESTED READING

### Early Grades—K - 4

“How My Family Lives in America,” by Susan Kuklin. A glimpse at how three families impart a sense of tradition and ethnic identity to their children.

“I Hate English,” by Ellen Levine and Steve Bjorkman. Mei Mei, a bright and articulate immigrant from Hong Kong, overcomes her difficulty adjusting to the new language and culture at school in New York City.

“The Keeping Quilt,” by Patricia Polacco. A Jewish immigrant family passes on their story from their Russian homeland through a quilt made from their family’s clothing.

“Watch the Stars Come Out,” by Riki Levinson and Diane Goode. Grandma tells her granddaughter of her own Mama’s voyage “on a big boat to America.

“When Jessie Came Across the Sea,” by Amy Hest and Patrick James Lynch. Jessie journeys from a poor village in Eastern Europe to New York City at the turn of the Century.

### Middle Grades – 5-8

“Day of the Pelican,” by Katherine Paterson. Meli flees from Serbian soldiers sweeping through Kosovo, killing Albanians, burning homes. After more than a year in a refugee camp in Macedonia, Meli’s family is granted asylum in Vermont. Things are difficult, but in the end, Meli and her family accept and are accepted in their new home by their new neighbors.

“Inside Out and Back Again,” by Thanhha Lai. Ten-year-old Hà flees Vietnam with her family. After a long, difficult trip, the family ends up in 1970s Alabama. With humor and heart, Hà tells her story of sadness, and, eventually, acceptance of her new life in America.

“Sylvia & Aki,” by Winifred Conkling. This story of a Mexican American girl who is not allowed to attend the “white” school near her home in southern California, and Aki Munemitsu, a Japanese American girl who lives in a Japanese internment camp in Arizona during World War II.

“Call Me Maria,” by Judith Ortiz Cofer. Maria, born in Puerto Rico, now lived in New York with her father. She tries to lose her island accent to fit it, but learns to appreciate her language and finally, finds the poet within herself.

“Shooting Kabul,” by N.H. Senzai. Fadi’s family flees from the Taliban in Afghanistan, but his 6-year-old sister, is accidentally left behind. As the family adjust to life in San Francisco, Mariam is

never far from their thoughts. But after the events of 9/11, Fadi's Pashtun family is fearful that they'll never be able to get Mariam out of Afghanistan.

### **Upper Grades – 9-12**

“Newcomers to America” by Judith Greenberg. This book is an engrossing collection of interviews and conversations that introduce over a dozen immigrants. Explains historical and political views of immigration.

“Targeted: Homeland Security and the Business of Immigration” by Deepa Fernandes deconstructs the political machinery that creates immigration policies. It is a great addition to any high school classroom.

“American Victory: Wrestling, Dreams, and a Journey Toward Home” by Henry Cejudo. This is the life of Henry Cejudo, the son of a Mexican immigrant growing up in poverty and eventually going on to win the gold medal for freestyle wrestling in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

“Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America” by Firoozeh Dumas. A highly readable book for young adults which showcases the role of humor in the process of accommodation between immigrants and their country of destination.

“Brother, I’m Dying” by Edwidge Danticat. This memoir has much to say to readers of any age about age, home and family. It offers opportunities for classroom discussion and exploration of current US immigration policies.

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