

## My Family's Immigrant History

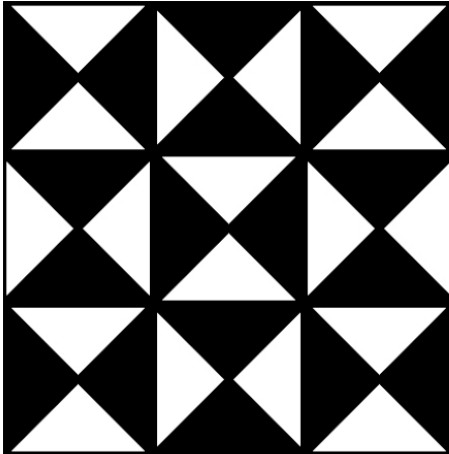
Introduction	Students trace their own roots to find out about their family's immigrant history. They create a patchwork-design mural sharing their own family's stories. This lesson is a suggested follow-up to the Tsongas Industrial History Center's Exploring the Immigrant Experience workshop.
Time	1 class period and 1 homework assignment to interview parents or other family members about their family history and heritage.
Lesson Preparation	Large chart paper to list questions to interview parents Colorful cardstock cut into triangles (8 ½ inch x 8 ½ inch squares, cut in half) Markers, crayons or colored pencils, tape
Background Information	See "Immigration to America" essay and "Immigration in Lowell" essay.
Vocabulary	<p><b>Ancestor:</b> Somebody from whom you are directly descended, especially someone more distant than a grandparent.</p> <p><b>Culture:</b> The beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people.</p> <p><b>Ethnic Group:</b> A group of people, usually from the same country, who are united by common customs, traditions and language.</p> <p><b>Homeland:</b> The country where someone was born or grew up; native country.</p>
Anticipated Student Preconceptions/ Misconceptions	Some students may think that most immigrants came to America from the same country. Students may have stereotypes about certain immigrant groups. Students may believe their ancestors have always lived in America.
Frameworks	<p><b>Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks</b></p> <p><b>Grade 4</b>  <b>Regions of the US: 4.16:</b> Identify major immigrant groups that live in Massachusetts and where they now live in large numbers (e.g., English, Irish, French Canadians, Armenians, Greeks, Portuguese, Haitians, and Vietnamese).</p> <p><b>History/Geography: 4.1:</b> Use map and globe skills to determine absolute location of places.</p> <p><b>New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks</b></p> <p><b>Geography: SS:GE:4:4.2:</b> Describe the types of historical patterns of human migration, e.g., chain migration or slave migration. Themes— C: People, Places, and Environment, I: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction).</p>

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	<p><b>SS: GE:4:4.3:</b> Evaluate the effects of migration on the characteristics of place, e.g., cultural awareness of food choices. (Themes: E: Cultural Development, Interaction, and Change).</p> <p><b>Common Core</b>  <b>Speaking and Listening Standards</b>  <b>Grade 4: 1:</b> Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and text, building on others' ideas and expressing own clearly. (C: Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others, D: Review key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion)</p>
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Guiding Question	What countries did Lowell's immigrant residents come from and why did they leave their homeland? What traditions have they preserved in their families?
Objectives	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write and speak about their family history using their research about their ancestors.</li> </ul>
Activity	<p>Part 1: Finding your roots!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss with students how to research their family's heritage. Discuss how to conduct an oral interview for collecting family history. As a class, brainstorm a list of questions to use during the interview. Questions might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Who in my family first came to the United States?</i></li> <li><i>Where were they born?</i></li> <li><i>Why did they decide to immigrate?</i></li> <li><i>What is my relationship to this person?</i></li> <li><i>What did this person do for work?</i></li> <li><i>What traditions/ customs did they pass down to my family?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>Brainstorm who they might interview in their family? <i>Parents, grandparents, other family members?</i></li> <li>Assure students that they might not be able to find answers to every question.</li> <li>As homework, have students interview a family member to discover where they, or their immediate ancestors, came from and when they came to the United States. Have students ask family members about photographs, special holiday traditions, favorite family recipes, songs and family artifacts from their homeland.</li> </ul> <p>Part 2: Sharing your stories!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In school, ask students to tell a family story, make an ethnic recipe to share, present a holiday custom, or share family photographs.</li> <li>Using words or images, each student is asked to represent their family story</li> </ul>

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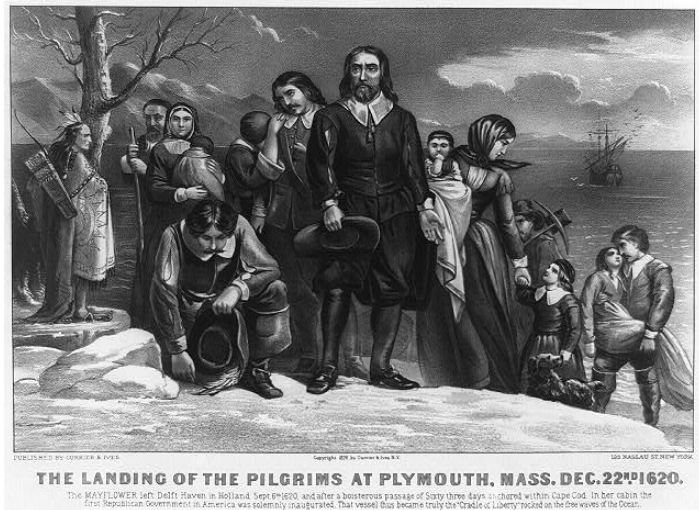
	<p>on the triangle. Students can use visual and written clues to depict their family history. They should write their name, the name of the native country and when their ancestor immigrated to America. As often as possible, use pictures to give the information (e.g. draw a flag to represent the native country). Students should understand that they might not be able to find out all the specifics such as exact dates, but might only find out general information. (For example they might only know that their family immigrated in the early 1900's).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some students may request more than one triangle to depict different immigration stories from different sides of their family.</li><li>• Combine the triangles to form a patchwork design and tape them together.</li><li>• Lead a class discussion about the “quilt.” Questions might include: where the ancestors of your class have come from, when they came and their reasons for immigrating. You can discuss why they settled where they did and some of the traditions they still celebrate today.</li></ul> 
Assessment	Students write the names of some of the countries where people in New England (their class) have immigrated from and name at least one custom that has been handed down.
Differentiated Suggestions	Students can use tape recorders to collect family histories. If a student doesn't have a known immigrant ancestor, allow them to share information on an ancestor or grandparent, their relationship, and customs.
Adapting the Activity for Other Grades	Students can use other ways to share their family stories such as poster, display boards, research papers, power point, videos or other digital media. Interviews with family members can be more formal oral histories, recorded and transcribed.
Bibliography	Forrant, Robert and Strobel, Christoph. <i>The Big Move: Immigrant Voices from a Mill City</i> . Lowell, Massachusetts, Loom Press, 2011. The book features nine oral histories of men and women in Lowell, Mass., whose stories capture the essence of the immigrant and refugee experience not only among people in the United States but also those who have made 'the big move' anywhere in the world. Grades 6 – 12 (short passages can be adapted for younger grades).

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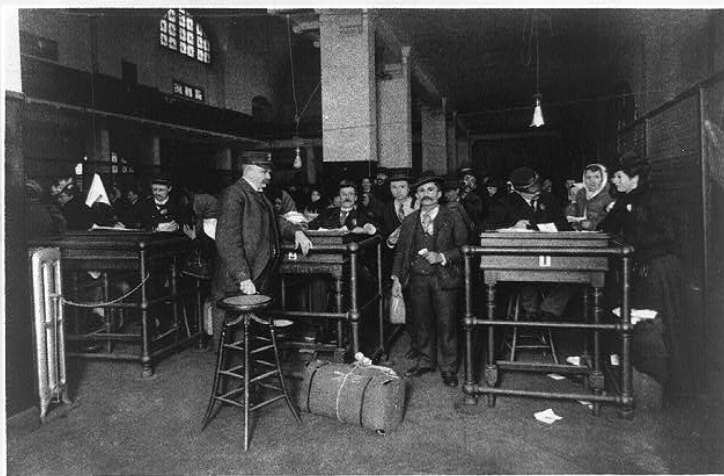
	<p>Leavitt, Caroline. <i>The Kids Family Tree Book</i>. New York: Sterling Publishing, 2007. Research ideas and creative projects that help young would-be genealogists understand their roots. Describes how to interview family members, dig up information from libraries and the Internet, and check the National Archives for passenger lists of newly-arrived immigrants. It helps students uncover clues in old photos or birth, marriage, and death records. Includes ideas to preserve the knowledge they gather. Grades 2-6</p>
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### Immigration to America

From its beginnings, America has been a nation of immigrants. Europeans, led by the Spanish and French, began establishing settlements in the 1500's on land that would become the United States. In 1607, the English started the first permanent settlement in America at Jamestown, Virginia. In 1620, English pilgrims fled religious persecution and established a colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts. A larger group seeking religious freedom, the Puritans, who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony, followed them.



While some immigrants came to America in search of religious freedom, others arrived during the 19<sup>th</sup> century seeking economic opportunities. Many of these immigrants came from northern and western Europe, with large numbers coming from Ireland where they were experiencing a famine. By the 1840's almost half of America's immigrants were from Ireland. Usually these impoverished Irish immigrants settled near their point of arrival in cities along the east coast where jobs were available. Between 1820 and 1930, 4.5 million Irish migrated to the United States.



By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of arrivals were from central, eastern and southern Europe. In the 1890s, 600,000 Italians migrated to America, and by 1920, more than four million had entered the United States. Jews from Eastern Europe fleeing religious persecution also arrived in large numbers. In 1907, the peak year for admission of new immigrants, approximately 1.3 million people entered the United States.

However, in the following century, immigration patterns shifted due to laws, war, and economic factors. With the outbreak of World War I, immigration to the US declined. By 1917, the government passed laws requiring immigrants over age 16 to pass a literacy test. In the 1920s immigration quotas, the number of people allowed in, were established. Again, immigration decreased during the age of the Great Depression of the 1930s and during World War II.

In 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act, which removed quotas. This act and subsequent legislation resulted in the nation experiencing a shift in immigration patterns. Today, the majority of U.S. immigrants come from Asia and Latin America rather than Europe.

Excerpted from: <http://www.history.com/topics/u-s-immigration-before-1965>

Photos from: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

General Immigration Timelines:

<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/files/documents/immigration.pdf>

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/alt/timeline.html>

### Immigration in Lowell

In the 1820s and 1830s, Irish people moved to Lowell to help build mills and dig canals. They typically did not work in the mills and lived in a neighborhood called the Acre. The situation changed in the 1840s. Mill owners needed workers, and the Irish were ready to work. More were arriving daily, fleeing the potato famine in Ireland. By 1860, about 1/4 of the 37,000 people in Lowell were Irish. Lowell continued to grow during the 1800s, as more and more workers were needed.



Beginning in the 1860s, thousands of French-Canadians moved south from Quebec. Later, thousands of immigrants moved to Lowell from Greece, Portugal, Poland, and other European countries. All of these immigrants were looking for a better life in the United States.



They came to Lowell because they had heard that there were jobs in the mills. There were jobs, but it was not pleasant work. The day was long: 10-12 hours per day, six days a week. The conditions were dangerous: injuries and serious illness were very common. The pay was low and whole families often had to work in the mills to make ends meet.

Immigrants kept coming, though, because life was even worse in their home country.

Outside the mills, immigrants formed strong ethnic communities. Churches, coffee houses,

marketplaces, and social clubs helped ease the change to a new culture. Life was hard, but many immigrants told fond stories of Lowell's close communities they lived in.

Immigration is still part of the story of Lowell. Today, people emigrate from places like Brazil and Cambodia, and refugees arrive from Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, Ghana and many other countries. Their experiences of hope and hardship are very similar to those of earlier immigrants.



Images: *Lowell National Historical Park*  
See also: *Lowell Immigration Time Line*