**CHAPTER 10**

**New Americans, Immigration, Assimilation, and Old Challenges**

# **Classroom Activities and Suggestions for Discussion**

1. View and discuss “The New Americans” documentary available from PBS.org. What surprises students the most about this documentary? Take time to investigate similarities shared between your students and the immigrants featured in the video. For example, you could discuss Ventura Flores’ home altar and religious beliefs.
2. Ask your students to interview someone who is a new immigrant to this country. He/she should ask: Why did you come to the U.S.? Was it difficult making that decision and why? Did you know anyone when you came here? Why did you come to this part of the country? Do you miss where you came from and why? Do you believe in assimilation (explain)? What challenges do immigrants to the U.S. face? What suggestions would they give to the government officials to make the transition of immigrants smoother?
3. Get literature from the refugee relief agencies in your area. Have students design a service project (or participate in one that already exists).

* A visit to an English as a Second Language class (either at a school or community center)
* A visit to a place of worship that has a large immigrant population within the congregation
* A visit to a United Way or other local agency that assists immigrants in their resettlement

Possible activities include:

* Interviews
* Combination of observations and integrated participation
* Tutoring
* Volunteering services
* Seminar/discussion with immigrants and/or staff at a particular agency or center
* Follow-up activities, such as letters, photo displays at school, or presentations to students who did not participate in the program

Ask students to keep a weekly journal of their experiences.

1. Have students examine the rhetoric about immigrants in a variety of new sources. How do the sources differ? How are they the same? How does that language shape students’ perception of reality regarding immigrants and immigration issues?
2. Have students pretend to be in charge of U.S. immigration. Have them work in small groups to draft sample immigration policies. Ask students to explain their policies, discussing both costs and benefits to U.S. society.
3. Set up a classroom debate regarding immigration issues. Ask students to consider the following questions: “To what degree, if any, do you think that the United States should limit the number of immigrants allowed to enter the country? To what degree, if any, do you think that the government should restrict the number of refugees who can set up residence in America?” Ask students to defend their answers, being specific about the distinction between types of immigrants and refugees (e.g., high skill, political).
4. Have students find and then interview refugees or immigrants that came to the U.S. before the1960s. Have students ask about the resources available to immigrants as new arrivals: i.e., host families, access to free or subsidized education for them and their children/parents. Now have the students compare these findings to what is available to contemporary immigrants.
5. Have students research language retention by immigrants of the last century and contemporary immigrants. Have them discuss what they found.
6. Research deportations in American history. What groups have been deported? Provide examples.
7. Discuss contemporary immigration. Then have students discuss the rhetoric surrounding contemporary immigration. Have them conduct an online search to find, for example, blogs or websites that pertain to or speak about contemporary immigration. Create a content analysis of the terms, labels, and arguments made as found within your sources. What are the most common or recurring terms, labels, and arguments?