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**Images of Immigration**

**Writer:** Zoe Voigt, Humanities Teacher

**Grade Level:** 9–12

**Related Big Picture Concepts:** Change, Identity

**Subject Areas:** Visual Arts, Social Studies, United States History

**Duration:** 2–3 class periods

**Essential Question:** How is immigration depicted in American art during the 19th century?

**Abstract:** Students will learn about impressions of immigration through readings, fine art, and political cartoons. They will learn about and present opposing views of immigration issues in a debate forum.

**Focus Works of Art:**

[](http://68.169.57.134/sites/default/files/BLAUVELT,%20A%20German%20Immigrant%20Inquiring%20His%20Way,%2052_9_2.jpg)

Charles Felix Blauvelt (American, 1824-1900)

***A German Immigrant Inquiring His Way*, 1855**

Oil on canvas

36 1/8 x 29 in. (91.8 x 73.7 cm)

[www.artnc.org/node/290](http://www.artnc.org/node/290)

**North Carolina Standards Correlations:**

Visual Arts: I.V.1, I.CX.1, I.CX.2, I.CR.1, A.CR.1

United States History: USH.H.1, USH.H.2, USH.H.3, USH.H.4, USH.H.5, USH.H.8

**Student Learning Objectives:**

* Students will evaluate how 19th-century images of immigrants reflected political and social attitudes toward them in the United States.
* Students will interpret visual images in the context of historical and political developments.

**Activities:**

1. Assign students to read a textbook description of the immigrant experience in the United States from 1850 to 1880.
2. Hold a brief class discussion analyzing and evaluating the immigrant experience from 1850 to 1880 based on the following questions:  
   *Why did immigrants choose to leave their homelands and come to the United States in the second half of the 19th century?*

*Why were Americans upset with the pattern of immigration during this time?  
  
How did these immigrants fare in their new homeland?*

*How did the second and third generations of these immigrants fare? What factors might account for any of the differences in experience?*

1. Students will use the [Image Analysis Chart](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/artnc/content/lesson/sampleRubric/29.doc" \t "_blank) to analyze and examine *A German Immigrant Inquiring His Way*.
2. Students will use the [Image Analysis Chart](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/artnc/content/lesson/sampleRubric/29.doc" \t "_blank) to analyze and examine Thomas Nast's political cartoon [*Throwing Down the Ladder by Which They Rose (1870)*](http://immigrants.harpweek.com/ChineseAmericans/Illustrations/027ThrowingDownTheLadderMain.htm) from the *Harper's Weekly* Web site.
3. Hold a brief class discussion focused on the following questions:  
   *Which immigrant group(s) is the focus of these pictures?  
   What does the artist/cartoonist suggest about how these immigrants are viewed by Americans?  
   What does the image reveal about American attitudes and policies toward immigrants in the year in which it was created?*
4. Divide the class into groups of four students for a short debate on the following resolution: *It is necessary for the United States to restrict certain groups of immigrants from coming to the United States during certain times.* Pairs of students in each group should prepare to argue the affirmative or negative side of the resolution, using knowledge and research about the Timeline of U.S. Immigration Policy.

**Assessments:**

* The teacher will use class discussion and debate to evaluate the students' analysis of how the images of immigrants reflected political and social attitudes toward them in the United States.
* The Image Analysis Chart, class discussion, and debate may be used to assess the students' interpretation of visual images in the context of historical and political developments.

**Resources:**

Vocabulary:

context

debate

immigrant

immigration

Links:

Thomas Nast's political cartoon *Throwing Down the Ladder by Which They Rose* (1870) from the *Harper's Weekly* Web site.  
<http://immigrants.harpweek.com/ChineseAmericans/Illustrations/027ThrowingDownTheLadderMain.htm>

Additional Resources:

Image Analysis Chart

Dijkstra, Bram.*American Expressionism: Art and Social Change 1920–1950.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003.

Konzett, Delia Caparoso. *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzi Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation.* New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002.

Pozzetta, George E. *Nativism, Discrimination, and Images of Immigrants.* New York: Taylor and Francis, 1991.

**Image Analysis Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Painting**  **(*Title*, artist, date)** | **Composition** | **Setting** | **Description of Subject(s)** | **Action(s) Represented** | **Mood**  **(Happy, Sad, Other AND Why)** | **Predictions** |
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