



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1996 Volume IV: Remaking America: Contemporary U.S. Immigration

Contemporary Mexican & Puerto Rican Immigration

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.04.01
by Trudy Anderson

Even though the USA considers itself a nation of immigrants, it has had an ambivalent relationship with immigrants dating back to the formation of the country. Immigrants were welcomed particularly when there was a need for cheap labor, but at other times especially during economic down turns, many have wanted to close the borders.

This unit specifically deals with contemporary Mexican and Puerto Rican immigration. It is designed to be taught in middle school Spanish or Social Studies classes. The students will explore some of the reasons why people from these two countries move to the USA. They will see the role the USA has played in the history and economies of both countries and also the impact immigrants have made on this country.

This unit discusses two controversial issues relating to immigration, bilingual education and undocumented immigration. Undocumented immigration has been at the forefront of national debate lately. Immigrants are seen as being a big contributor to the loss of economic well-being for the native born.

The students will be discussing the merits of bilingual education, and they will learn the reasons why the program was first implemented. The call for the termination of the program will be examined in light of the claim that the program does not work and is too costly.

It is my hope that after teaching this unit, students will have a better appreciation of Mexican and Puerto Rican cultures and a clearer understanding of the impact of immigration on both the immigrants and their new country.

(Recommended for Social Studies and Spanish-Level 1, grades 7-8)

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