

Immigration Past and Present

3 Practices for Teachers and Students

WE STRIVE TO CREATE CLASSROOM CONVERSATIONS that challenge stereotypes, foster inclusiveness by telling personal and family stories, and offer a new take on how we view immigration and migration both in the past and in the present. Here are three ways we believe kids can engage with what's going on with immigration past and present.

1. Challenge stereotypes of “Where are you from?”

TO ENCOURAGE KIDS to question their assumptions and monolithic perspectives about others, we invite them to examine stereotypes. We consider who is traditionally viewed as an immigrant and who is “American”. Learning about others’ personal experiences helps kids take a more critical stance and reflect on their own ideas and biases. When this happens, classroom discussions become more open and inclusive.

Recently, Stephanie took the time to talk with some friends about questions they are often asked:

Where are you from?
Have you been to your country?
Why don't you have an accent?
How long have you been here?

What do these questions reveal? Chimimanda Ngozi Adiche suggests that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding. In her famous 2009 TED talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, she says “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

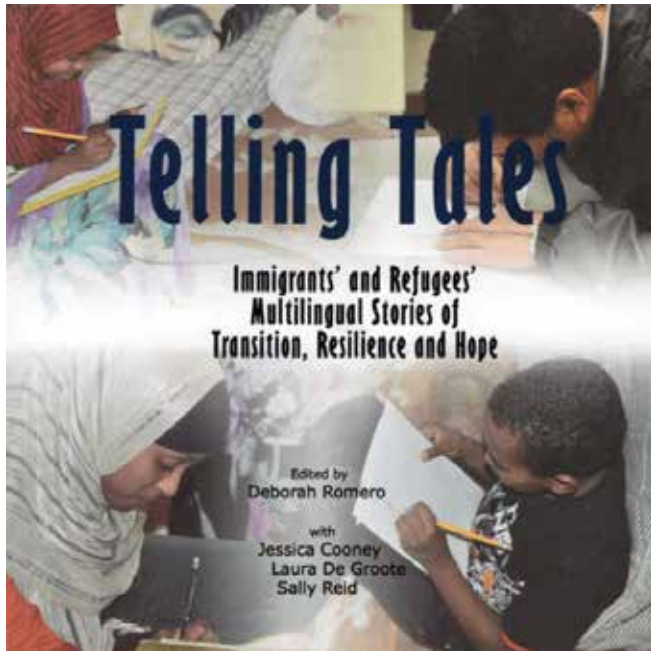
We include articles about the history and more recent events surrounding immigration and migration from many different perspectives. This helps to address monolithic ideas and assumptions about heritage and cultural traditions. We include articles that surface common themes of facing challenges and being resilient. Most importantly, these articles illustrate ways in which peoples’ personal experiences, cultural traditions, languages, and histories have enriched life in the U.S.



[Link to full article](#)

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2. Share and value personal and family stories.



THIS COLLABORATION between the University of Northern Colorado and the Weld County School District and the community grew out of Family Literacy events for English language learners, newcomers, immigrant students, and their families. This project captured stories in the students' own words, as they are learning English.

When students tell their own and their family stories, we foster connections and a deeper understanding of all that kids bring to our classrooms: their identities, experiences, languages, and cultures. Creating a classroom collection of student's personal stories honors the diverse voices that are an important part of our communities. We know many districts that have options for kids and teachers to publish their work; websites are another way to take kids' work public and share it with others.

Because some family stories are unknown, difficult, or even traumatic, we encourage teachers to suggest a wide range of ways for students to share something meaningful and of interest to them. Some possibilities include poetry, art projects, music, or cultural research. Encouraging them to do this in a safe, welcoming environment is essential, remembering that it's important to respect and be sensitive to experiences students may wish to keep private. This goes a long way towards ensuring that students and their stories are listened to, relished, and understood.

Tales

Yanet and Natali Gutiérrez

We are Yanet and Natali Gutiérrez and we are twin sisters. We were born in February the 23th of 1995 in Houston, Texas.

Our parents are: Pedro Rodríguez and María Concepción García, who when we were one year and nine months took us to their hometown: Arandas, Jalisco, México. It is a village full of traditions and above all characterized by the Tequila. We lived there for a long time and studied Primary and Secondary School. But studying Secondary School was not that easy because we lived in the edge of the village in a ranch and they had to take us to school every day so we kept studying.

Our father works in agriculture and we didn't have enough economic resources to buy all we needed for school or gas, and since we are five brothers it is more difficult to have money for all given that it is only Dad who works.

But my sister and I were always encouraged and always got good grades. After finishing our Secondary School we decided to come to our country, the U.S.A., thanks to the support of our aunt to keep studying since it would be impossible in Mexico because our father didn't have money and wouldn't keep helping us with our studies.

It hurt when we came because we had always been with our mum and we didn't have friends here. But we have always thought that if you want to be somebody in your life you have to suffer. We hope we learn English quickly. We are putting a lot of effort to study and (salir adelante) [get ahead] and not have to struggle in a hard job like our dad's. We miss so much our brothers Alberto and Alfredo, also twins, our sister Joyana and of course our parents, who unfortunately are in Mexico and don't



vida y memorias

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Telling

Life and memories

have the papers nor the resources needed to come. But fortunately, like we said before, my aunt and uncle offered us their house here in the States and are giving us the opportunity to keep studying. We are very thankful for that. We are currently in High School and are doing well in school. The teachers are good people, but some classmates keep bothering us, but anyway we are (echándole para adelante) [trying hard]. We hope our dreams come true and our family in better life conditions someday. Hoping that, the twins say goodbye to you. Natali and Yanet.

Nuestros nombres son Yanet y Natali Gutiérrez y somos gemelas. Nacimos el día 23 de febrero de 1995 en la ciudad de Houston, Texas.

Nuestros padres son: Pedro Gutiérrez Rodríguez y María Concepción García. García quienes a la edad de 1 año con 9 meses en el año 1996 nos llevamos a su ciudad natal Arandas, Jalisco, México, un pueblito lleno de tradiciones y lo caracteriza sobretodo el tequila. Ahí vivimos por mucho tiempo y estudiamos la escuela Primaria y secundaria. Pero estudiar la escuela Secundaria no fue tan fácil porque nosotro vivíamos a las orillas del pueblo en un rancho y todos los días nos tenían que llevar hasta el pueblo con tal de seguir nuestros estudios y además mi papá en apicalhar y no teníamos los recursos económicos suficientes para comprar todo lo necesaria para la escuela o para la terminar nuestra

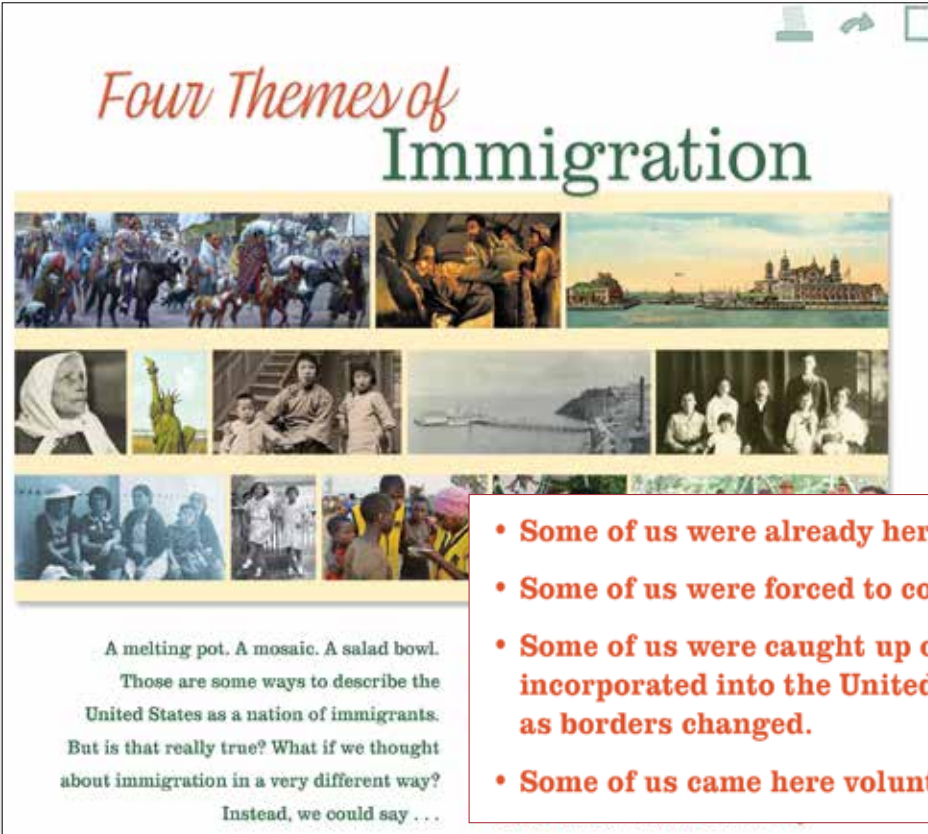
escuela Secundaria, decidimos venir a nuestra país E.U., aunque gracias al apoyo de nuestra tía para costear con nuestros estudios yo que en México. Sería imposible hacerlo porque nuestro papá no tenía dinero y no nos seguía apoyando más en eso.

A nosotros nos dolía mucho venirnos porque siempre estábamos al lado de mi mamá y aunque no teníamos amigos de todos modos es difícil venirte y dejar sola a tu familia sola pero yo siempre he dicho que si quieres ser alguien en la vida le tienes que sufrir mucho. Esperamos y ojalá aprendamos a hablar inglés rápido. Le estamos echando muchas ganas para estudiar y salir adelante y en un futuro no batallar en un trabajo difícil como el de nuestro papá.

Extrañamos mucho a nuestros hermanitos Alberto y Alfredo también gemelos, a nuestra hermana Joyana y por supuesto a nuestros papás que desafortunadamente se encuentran en México lejos de nosotros y no tienen papales ni los recursos suficientes para venir. Pero afortunadamente como ya antes dijimos, mi tía y mi tío nos abrieron las puertas de su casa aquí en Estados Unidos y nos están dando la oportunidad de seguir estudiando. Les agradecemos mucho por esto. Ahorita estudiamos la High School y nos va muy bien en la escuela. Las y los maestros son muy buenas personas, solo que algunas que otras compañeras no dejan de molestar, pero de todos modos estamos echándole para adelante. Esperamos algún día ver nuestros sueños realidad y nuestra familias mejores condiciones de vida. Esperando que esto suceda no despidan de ti las gemelas.

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3. Explore a new take on immigration—in the past and the present.



Four Themes of
Immigration

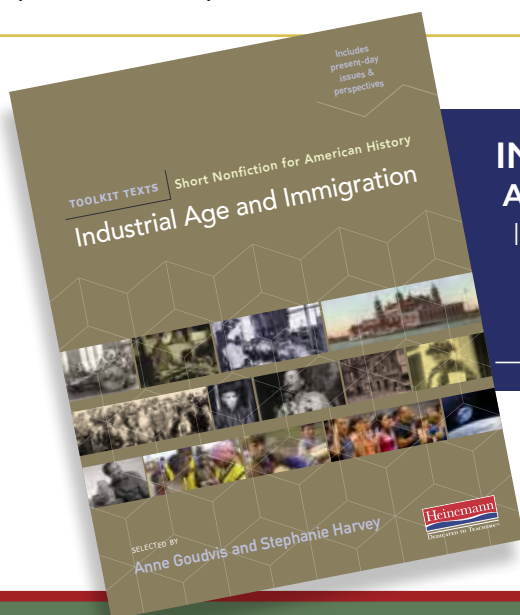
A melting pot. A mosaic. A salad bowl.
Those are some ways to describe the
United States as a nation of immigrants.
But is that really true? What if we thought
about immigration in a very different way?
Instead, we could say . . .

- **Some of us were already here.**
- **Some of us were forced to come here.**
- **Some of us were caught up or incorporated into the United States as borders changed.**
- **Some of us came here voluntarily.**

[Link to full article](#)

The article *Four Themes of Immigration* offers different perspectives on immigration and migration in our history, challenging a more “traditional” view of this topic. Here is a fresh look at the role of migration and immigration. Reading and discussing this article with your class provides a broader view of how the movements of people to, across, and within our nation’s boundaries shaped the history of our country.

To help teachers prepare for conversations, questions, or misconceptions that their students may have about immigration, we included the article [“Ten Myths About Immigration”](#) from Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) to expand our knowledge and understanding around migration and immigration issues.



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