

## **Identity and Immigration: An Upper Elementary Literacy Unit**

*Emma Connolly*  
*A.S. Jenks School*

Abstract: In this unit, fifth-grade students will explore how immigration and migration affects identity formation. During the unit, students will use a poem, a short story, and a podcast to investigate questions related to immigration and identity. At the end of the unit, they will create their own poem, short story, or podcast about themselves or a fictional character to share what they have learned about how immigration and migration affects who they are.

Keywords: upper elementary, fifth grade, literacy, poetry, fiction, podcasts, creative writing

### **Unit Content**

#### ***Classroom Context***

I am a fifth-grade general education teacher at A.S. Jenks Elementary School. Our school is located in South Philadelphia. It is a culturally diverse school as 31% of our students are Asian, 15% are Black, 11% are Hispanic, 36% are white, and 7% are multiracial. 20% of our students are English Language Learners.

In my classroom this year, I teach a wonderfully diverse group of 10- and 11-year-old students. Out of my 27 students, four students are first generation immigrants and fourteen students are second-generation immigrants. Their families come from Algeria, Indonesia, Mexico, Vietnam, Haiti, China, Saudi Arabia, and Albania. My students often discuss their cultural backgrounds during our class discussions as they are a curious, energetic, and passionate group. No matter what we are studying, whether it is outer space,

ocean pollution, or the American Revolution, they generate many questions and opinions on the topic and often relate it to their personal experiences.

As a classroom teacher, I teach English Language Arts (Reading and Writing), math, science, and social studies. In my fifth grade English Language Arts class, I seek to prepare students for middle school by providing opportunities for them to engage with demanding texts, discuss themes and big ideas in literature, conduct research projects, and write about what they are reading, discussing, and researching. In the writing portion of our class, we spend a great deal of time on text-dependent analysis essays. For these essays, students read a text and then answer a question about the text using quotes taken directly from the article or story. A great deal of my writing instruction is focused on developing students' ability to make strong, organized arguments about a text in this type of assignment.

While my focus on text-dependent analysis writing ensures that my students are prepared for standardized tests and future work in middle school, this type of writing asks students to focus solely on evidence from the text rather than their own experiences or opinions. As a result, my students have not had many opportunities to reflect about their own experiences or identities through writing. I have observed from our spirited class discussions that they love sharing about themselves and their identities, but my current curriculum does not offer many avenues for them to express themselves through writing. As part of my TIP unit, I wanted to provide opportunities for students to do different types of writing than our usual text-dependent analysis essays, so that they can develop their ability to tell their own story and communicate it through writing.

### *Children's Literature and the Immigrant Experience Seminar*

During our first session of the Children's Literature and the Immigrant Experience seminar, the TIP fellows and our instructors began getting to know each other. Our professor Dr. Campano shared work from a former student who was an immigrant from Thailand and a member of the Hmong community. He showed us an essay that she wrote at the beginning of the school year recounting her experience of immigration and her desire to be "both cultures" (American and Hmong). As a class, we discussed various methods for encouraging or instructing her to develop her writing further, from asking questions about various events she alluded to in her essay to providing mentor texts that would help her to see how to convey her story.

During this discussion, Dr. Campano introduced his and María Paula Ghiso's idea that students from immigrant background experience the world as "cosmopolitan intellectuals." Cosmopolitanism is the idea that while our memberships in particular cultural groups is important to our individual identities, we must also recognize our responsibility to humanity as a whole. While literature can help to develop this sense of "global citizenship" in all students by exposing them to others' experiences, Campano and Ghiso (2010) argue that students from immigrant experiences already navigate different cultures in their daily lives. They write that, "140). For students from immigrant experiences, however, cosmopolitanism is not just an imagined possibility, but often a perceptual and lived reality as well. By virtue of their diverse vantage points and transnational negotiations, they are uniquely positioned to educate their peers and teachers about the world," (p. 166).

This idea that our students are cosmopolitan intellectuals indicates that we must design curriculum to further nurture their sense of global citizenship. In addition, our class discussed how a curriculum that forces students to deny who they are to succeed academically is a form of symbolic violence. This session left me wondering how I could create more space in my curriculum for students to express themselves in a way that further facilitates their academic success. Campano and Ghiso (2010) wrote that, “Through their transactions with books, students may articulate buried histories, enlarge our aesthetic sensibilities, redraw boundaries, rethink what it means to be American, and cultivate human rights commitments that transcend national borders,” (p. 175). I knew I would be looking for ideas of how to do this kind of work with my students during the rest of the seminar.

During the subsequent session, we discussed the graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. The book is a wordless visual representation of a man’s immigration journey to a bizarre new country. While the landscape, wildlife, and objects in the protagonist’s new country are not familiar to the reader, our class discussed how we could interpret the puzzling images to conclude that the man’s journey includes feelings of excitement, dread, sadness, fear and anxiety. We discussed how while the imagery is fantastical, the man’s experience of missing his family he left behind, finding community in his new country, and working to create a better life for himself in his new home are realistic and relatable aspects of many immigrants’ experiences. We also discussed our own experiences with starting over in a new environment that was not necessarily a new country or city and how we adapted to that environment.

This session sparked my thinking about universal aspects of my own students' experiences as first or second-generation immigrants. While my students and their families come from many different countries, the experiences and emotions depicted in *The Arrival* may be relatable for all of my students. Even for my students who do not come from recent immigrant backgrounds, these experiences and emotions may be relatable to any time that they had to start over in a new environment or adapt to some sort of change in their life. These discussions made me think that my unit should include some reflection or discussion about what we all have in common relating to the experiences of immigration, migration, and adaptation. I also reflected on the fact that our seminar group had this rich discussion based on a book that was only images. I also wondered what role images could play in sparking discussions among my students about commonalities in their families' experiences.

During the next session, we discussed the middle grade novel *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang. As we discussed the novel, we focused on how the eleven-year-old protagonist, Mia, relates to her parents after the family immigrated from China to California. While her parents work to manage a motel, Mia dreams of becoming a writer and of owning their own motel one day. We discussed how her parents sometimes struggle to support and understand Mia's dream, as her mother tells Mia that her writing will never be able to compete with the writing of other students who have been speaking English since they were born. Since most of my students are second-generation Americans, this made me wonder about my students' thoughts about how they see and experience things differently from their parents who grew up in a completely different environment. This book shed

light on how important the parent-child relationship is for developing one's understanding of their own cultural identity and I knew that when I selected texts for my unit, stories that had rich description of the parent-child relationship (like *Front Desk*) would create opportunities for discussion and reflection.

As part of our seminar's analysis of *Front Desk*, we also discussed what makes good realistic fiction for our students. One key criterion was that while the characters may experience more extreme situations than actual people, they should still be relatable in order to be interesting and compelling. I further reflected that many of my students would relate to the experience of second-generation immigration and decided to seek out stories that included that experience.

As we were having these discussions in the TIP seminar, my students completed a poetry project related to Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming*, a memoir about Woodson's childhood. The book's opening poem, "February 12, 1963," discusses the relationships between Woodson's personal history of her birth in Ohio, her family's history of enslavement in South Carolina, and the country's history of the civil rights movement. The poem ends with the lines "I am born in Ohio/but the stories of South Carolina run live rivers through my veins."

My students wrote their own "birthdate" poems using Woodson's as a model (Appendix B). While students were very engaged with the project, they struggled to write about the family history component. When I asked them where their parents and grandparents grew up and what my students' thought their daily life might be like, they often responded, "I don't know." This project made me reflect on how my unit could

involve an interview component that asks students to dive into their family history of immigration or migration in order to better understand their own history and identity.

During the next session of the seminar, we discussed a historical fiction novel, *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani. One idea that we discussed was that continuum that exists between fiction and nonfiction texts and where historical fiction falls on that continuum. While the specific characters and events are fictional, the historical events are often well-researched and enlightening to the reader. This presents opportunities for classroom teachers, who may have students read historical fiction so that they can learn about a historical context in an engaging and exciting way. We also discussed the potential power of having students write historical fiction. During class, we planned potential historical fiction that we could write about a time period we may want to learn more about. For instance, I spent some time researching a potential narrative about someone growing up in the 1990s during the Algerian Civil War, an event my student had recently been telling me about.

When discussing assigning students to research a historical context related to their own family's history, another Fellow remarked how learning about one's own family history or challenges can be an opportunity to build empathy and a lens for other people's suffering throughout the world. As Shin (2019) writes about reading historical fiction in the classroom, "Learners find the self in the other and the other in the self. This situated process of building relations across time and space—inevitably guided by their own identities—leads learners toward a deeper understanding of the interconnection between

historical coordinates of events, their impacts on the present, and the ramifications of present-day decisions on the future,” (p. 3).

Overall, this session further emphasized to me how engaging it could be for students to do some research about their family’s history and historical events their family members may have experienced. In addition, this session caused me to think about the possibility of having students write historical fiction and how that could present opportunities for creating empathy and connectedness.

During our next session, one of our seminar leaders, Jackie Winsch, led us in an exploration of drama as a way to engage students in literacy. Not only can this include having students act out plays and stories, but also can involve having students use their bodies to build understanding of key concepts. For example, we practiced how to pair vocabulary words with a movement or action and have students do that movement every time they hear that vocabulary word in a story. In addition, teachers can use drama and improvisation activities as a way to build classroom community and make students more comfortable with expressing themselves in the classroom.

This session provoked me to think about the publication process for any writing I have my students do. Since drama is a way for students to share written words with others, I reflected on how often my students get the opportunity to actually share their writing aloud or in other ways. Often, we devote so much classroom time to the rest of the writing process (brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising), that I do not provide many opportunities for students to actually share or publish their writing. In this unit, I wanted to provide a way for students to act out or orally share their stories. Dr. Campano later



suggested that I provide students with an option to create a podcast. While I had not previously considered this, our seminar session focused on a drama as an education tool convinced me to include podcasting as an option for students' final project.

In a later session, Dr. Campano led us through a poetry workshop. We read mentor poems and then used their structures to write our own poetry. For example, we read William Carlos Williams' "This is just to say," and used it as a model to write about a transgression that we did not actually feel guilty about. I immediately dashed off a poem about how I had taught non-standardized testing related content during testing season. Overall, I was surprised at how quickly I was able to write poetry, which I do not consider a strength of mine. This session further encouraged me to use mentor poems that students could use as models in my curriculum unit. I knew that if I included poetry, I wanted to find poems that could serve as a template for students' own thoughts and feelings.

As I reflected on the seminar as a whole, I was drawn toward creating a unit that would expose my students to relatable stories about immigration. I hoped that these stories would serve as a springboard for discussions about immigration and identity that would both build empathy for others' experiences and allow students to explore their own identities. Finally, I wanted to create an opportunity for students to share these newfound understandings in creative, expressive ways such as writing stories or poems or creating podcasts.

***Content Objectives Related to the Children's Literature and the Immigrant Experience Seminar***

Throughout the seminar, we discussed different literary genres and criteria for successful children's literature in those genres. Whether we were discussing poetry, picture books, realistic fiction, or historical fiction, we continually returned to the idea that the work's protagonist or speaker should be relatable to readers in order to fully engage them with the story.

As a result of these discussions, I knew that I needed to select texts for my unit that would be relatable for my students. This would allow them to fully engage with texts in a way that would positively impact their literacy skills and develop their ideas about immigration and identity. However, I also wanted to expose my students to diverse cultures and experiences. By learning about cultures and experiences that differ from their own families' experiences with immigration or migration, students may build connections between themselves and others and discover universal themes that apply across culture. Overall, I wanted the text selections to serve as both "windows and mirrors" (Bishop 1990) by providing students with access to experiences that are different than theirs ("windows") and access to narratives that affirm their own identity and experiences ("mirrors"). As my classroom is very diverse, some students' "mirrors" might serve as other students' "windows" into their classmates' cultures and experiences.

Furthermore, while I entered the seminar with the intention of creating a curriculum unit with a more narrative focus on personal, narrative essays, the variety of texts that we read during the seminar encouraged me to expand the unit to include more genres, as podcasts, poems, and historical fiction stories also offer unique opportunities for exploring themes related to immigration.

As a result of these thought processes, I selected a short story, a poem, and a podcast for our class to analyze during the first portion of the unit. In the short story, “Yoli Calderon and Principal Hayes,” Angela Cervantes writes from the perspective of a Mexican-American girl who is sitting in the principal’s office for hitting another student who told her to “go back where she comes from.” In the story, the narrator delves into her family’s experience of immigration and uses the monarch butterfly as a metaphor for her feelings, since the monarch knows where it came from but also knows where it is going. The narrator states, “I’m a Mexican American. I don’t hyphenate it...By calling myself Mexican American, I choose to claim Mexico – not reject it. It was my parent’s country. It’s also mine. Same with the United States. It’s mine too. I don’t have to choose on or the other.” This engaging story presents one perspective on the second-generation American experience as the narrator navigates the world while fully embracing both her Mexican and American identity.

The poem I selected is “Self-Portrait with No Flag,” by Safia Elhillo. In this work, the Sudanese-American poet begins by writing “I pledge allegiance to my homies/to my mother’s small & cool palms/to the gap between my brother’s two front teeth.” She goes on to “pledge allegiance to more things she loves, from her friends’ group chat to a table at Waffle House before stating, “i come from two failed countries/& i give them back/ i pledge allegiance to no land/no border/cut by force to draw blood/i pledge allegiance to no government/ no collection of white men carving up the map with their pens.” While this poem provides another account of a young person navigating their experience as a second-

generation American, it presents a stark contrast to the short story as the speaker is actively rejecting both countries that her family has called home.

Finally, I selected a podcast episode for our class to listen to. On a podcast called, “The Longest Shortest Time,” the host Andrea Silenzi interviewed children’s author Grace Lin in Episode 99, titled, “When Grace Lin Realized She Was Chinese.” Since my class had read and loved Grace Lin’s novel *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* earlier in the year, my students were invested in her story. In the interview, Lin describes her childhood as the only Asian American student in a mostly white school and town. As a child and an emerging writer, Lin wanted to fit in and mostly wrote fairy tales about white characters. However, as a young adult, she realized that she knew very little about her parents’ immigration from Taiwan to the United States and that she wanted to learn more about her parents’ culture. She began studying Chinese art and eventually began writing stories based on Chinese folk art, including her book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. I wanted to include this third text to show that one’s identity related to immigration or migration is not static and may change over time. As my students are only beginning to think about their identities and how they fit into the world, I wanted them to think about how these are questions that they can explore over time.

While the authors in these three works come from different cultures and have different ways of approaching identity and immigration, they all discuss relatable, second-generation American experiences. Through reading and listening to these texts, my goal is that students will be able to read and analyze diverse accounts of immigration and

migration in order to analyze similarities and differences in their themes and relate those themes to their own experiences.

As discussed above, I discovered this year that many of my students do not know their family history related to immigration and migration. In this unit, I wanted to provide opportunities for students to learn more about their own family history so that they can better understand their own identity. I created an interview assignment for students to complete at home in which they ask a family member about when, how, and why they immigrated to the United States or migrated within the United States. However, I do recognize that some families' experiences of immigration may be traumatic and that they may have reasons for not sharing about their immigration journeys, I also included an option for students to use an online resource as their primary source for this assignment.

When I assigned the family interview this year, my students showed high engagement and interest in the assignment. They wrote detailed accounts of their family members' reasons for immigrating and their experience of adjusting to a new home. One student even brought in his great grandparent's papers from the early 1900s that documented their immigration from Italy to the United States. When students brought their interviews in, we were able to discuss common themes, such as immigrating for better economic opportunities and safety and the mix of emotions that comes with adjusting to a new life in a new country. Overall, this assignment helped me to solidify the second goal for this unit, which is that students will be able to learn more about their own identity and family history, particularly related to immigration and migration.

Not only did I want students to learn about reflect on others' immigration and migration stories, but I also wanted to create opportunities for them to record or create their own stories. As discussed above, my students have not had many open-ended, creative, or personal writing assignments this year. I hoped that reading and discussing engaging mentor texts would allow students to be creative and express themselves in their own writing projects. Overall, my goal was that students would be able to create new stories or tell their own stories about how immigration and migration has affected their identity.

In summary, my unit contains three content objectives directly related to the readings and discussions of the Children's Literature and the Immigrant Experience seminar:

1. Students will be able to read and analyze diverse accounts of immigration and migration in order to analyze similarities and differences in their themes and relate those themes to their own experiences.
2. Students will be able to learn more about their own identity and family history, particularly related to immigration and migration.
3. Students will be able to tell their own stories about how immigration and migration has affected their identity.

### **Teaching Strategies**

In this unit, I will use a variety of teaching strategies in order to accomplish the objectives related to the Children's Literature and the Immigrant Experience seminar and objectives related to fifth-grade standards for reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

### ***Explicit Vocabulary Instruction with Multiple Practice Opportunities***

Students benefit from direct vocabulary instruction about key terms that they will encounter in texts. Learning key vocabulary in advance can improve their reading comprehension as well as their speaking and listening skills. However, simply providing words and definitions is often ineffective in helping students to acquire new vocabulary. Students also need extensive opportunities to encounter new vocabulary in texts and use new vocabulary in their speaking and writing (Beck et al., 2013).

For this shorter unit, I selected three key terms (immigration, migration, and identity) for my vocabulary instruction. I included direct instruction on these three terms in the first lesson (Appendix C). During the subsequent lessons, students have opportunities to use their terms in discussion and in writing. This will allow them to truly understand new terms and will benefit them in their future reading and writing experiences.

### ***Anticipatory Discussion***

When students have higher levels of background knowledge, they are more likely to comprehend complex texts (Smith et al., 2021). While my students have immense background knowledge about the topics of immigration and migration, I wanted to include classroom activities that would intentionally activate this background knowledge before diving into the texts. Activating and building on prior knowledge can help to facilitate reading comprehension, particularly for students who are learning English (Deshpande, 2016).

In order to activate prior knowledge and foster student engagement, I created a discussion game (Appendix C). The game follows the “This or That” format, where students read statements have to move to the “agree” or “disagree” side of the room. They can also use their placement in the room to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree by standing more towards the middle of the room. Then, I call on students to share their opinions. I alternate between the “agree” and “disagree” sides of the room and encourage students to respond to each other’s statements. This activity helps students to access prior knowledge, practice new vocabulary terms, and engages them with the topics of the unit.

### ***Think-Write-Pair-Share***

Think-Write-Pair-Share is a cooperative learning technique in which students have opportunities to think and write about a question independently, then discuss it with one partner, and then discuss it with the whole class. This method engages students throughout collaborative discussions and creates “wait time” so that all students have opportunities to participate, particularly English Language Learners. This method can help to improve students’ writing, communication and collaboration skills (Naim et al., 2020) and I use it throughout the unit to scaffold students’ understanding and engage students with key questions.

### ***Collaborative Strategic Reading for Short Stories or Nonfiction Articles***

In middle school, students are expected to “read to learn” rather than “learn to read.” As a fifth-grade teacher, I must prepare my students for this shift by fostering their reading comprehension skills so they are prepared to read and comprehend a range of texts across subject areas. I use the Collaborative Strategic Reading framework (Cavendish & Hodnett,



2017) to develop students' reading comprehension. In Collaborative Strategic Reading, teachers explicitly model and teach pre-reading strategies (previewing), during reading strategies (summarizing and self-monitoring comprehension), and after reading strategies (questioning). Students also work together to use these strategies to understand difficult texts.

For the short story we are reading in this unit, I will use Collaborative Strategic Reading methods to foster students' comprehension. To preview, we will read the title and skim through the passage and ask ourselves what we already know about the topic and what we predict we will learn. During reading, I will stop periodically to ask students if they identified any "clunks" (comprehension breakdowns) and to work as a table to "get the gist" of the page (summarize). After reading, students will "wrap up" by generating a list of questions and present them to a partner to answer.

### ***Three Reads for Analyzing Poetry***

When reading poetry, I use a "three reads" strategy to foster students' thinking and comprehension. In the first read of the poem, I prompt students to "get the gist" of each stanza and try to find the literal meaning of the stanza. In the second read of the poem, I prompt students to notice figurative language, poetic devices, or powerful language in the stanza. We discuss why the poet may have made those choice and what the poet wants us to notice. Finally, after the third read, we discuss potential themes of the poem.

### ***Using Podcasts to Improve Listening Comprehension***

One new instructional technique that this unit prompted me to investigate is the effectiveness of podcasts in the classroom. Podcasts are an interesting, meaningful

avenue for improving students' listening comprehension and language skills for English language learners (Abdulrahman et al., 2018). In this unit, I used an interview podcast that focuses on an author my students were already interested in since we had read her novel. I treated our whole-class podcast listening like a shared read of a written text as I frequently paused to ensure students' comprehension and provide opportunities for discussion. My students were very engaged with the podcast and I am interested in further pursuing podcasts as a tool for listening comprehension in the future.

### ***Using Mentor Texts to Foster Students' Writing Skills***

Using mentor texts is a key part of effective writing instruction. In order for students to create high-quality writing, they need to read and analyze model writing. In order for students to effectively use mentor texts to improve their own writing, Gallagher (2014) writes, "If we want beginning writers to learn lessons from model texts, we need to teach them what to look for. For instance, if students are going to be writing poetry, we should begin by giving them lots of poems to read. But while students are immersed in the poems, we also need to teach them how to read like writers—to notice the techniques, moves, and choices that poets make. Students are used to being asked what is written, but asking them to recognize *how* a text is written is a shift for many of them."

In this unit, students read/listen to three mentor texts before embarking on their own writing project. While we analyze the short story, the poem, and the podcast, I will provide opportunities for students to notice how the writers or creators use different techniques to convey their ideas and themes. For example, Angela Cervantes writes from a first-person perspective to engage the reader with her character's experiences and views

as a Mexican American student. Safia Elhillo uses repetition and allusions to the Pledge of Allegiance to convey her lack of identification with the United States or Sudan. Finally, podcast host Andrea Silenzi uses probing questions to uncover how Grace Lin's outlook on her own culture and identity changed over time. Students can use these writers' choices as a model when creating their own final projects.

### ***The Writing Process with Flexible Participation Structures***

For major writing projects in my classroom, we follow the writing process of brainstorming/planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. One part of effective instruction during the writing process is creating a flexible structure for when and how students complete each of the steps (Mcquitty, 2014). When we are working on major writing projects, I establish a writing goal for the day with the students (finish your brainstorming, write your first two paragraphs, etc.). Students have flexibility about how to reach that goal. For instance, students may choose to come sit with me at my desk for guidance and feedback. They may speak quietly with a peer to discuss their ideas. If they achieve the writing goal for the day, they may continue writing or work as a "teacher's assistant" who helps other students. Using these flexible structures as students progress through the steps of the writing process helps students to stay engaged and motivated and allows for differentiation.

## Classroom Activities

### Lesson 1: Defining Terms and Anticipatory Discussion

**Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to define the terms *immigration*, *migration*, and *identity* to use them in classroom discussions. Students will be able to discuss issues related to immigration, migration, and identity to activate background knowledge.

**CCSS Standard:** RL.5.4, SL.5.1

**Instructional Activities:**

*See Appendix C for instructional materials related to this lesson.*

- 1. Think-Write-Pair-Share.** Show the students the image on Slide 1. Give them time to think about and write down what they notice and what they wonder. Then, prompt them to discuss what they notice and wonder with a partner. Finally, have several students share what they noticed or wondered with the class.
- 2. Introduce unit topic and vocabulary.** Share with the students that the image is of people immigrating from Europe to the United States in the early 1900s. Share with the students that this unit will focus on how immigration and migration affects our identity. Introduce the vocabulary words on Slide 2. Prompt the students to use the vocabulary words in a sentence or relate them to experiences in their own lives (“My parents immigrated from Algeria to Philadelphia,” “I migrated from New Jersey to Philadelphia,” “One part of my identity is that I am a Fortnite player,” etc.).
- 3. This or That Discussion Game.** Explain the rules of the game (Move to the left side of the room if you AGREE with the statement. Move to the right side of the room is your DISAGREE. You can place yourself in the room to show your level of agreement or disagreement). Show students the prompts on the slides and then call on students to share their opinions. Prompt students to use the “talk moves” on the slides and the new vocabulary words.

**Extension Homework Assignment:** Give students the Family Interview assignment (Appendix D) to complete at home.

### Lesson 2: Reading “Yoli Calderon and Principal Hayes”

**Objective:** Students will be able to use reading strategies in order to read and comprehend the short story. Students will be able to analyze the point of view of the story and the theme of the story.

**CCSS Standard:** RL.5.2, RL.5.6, RL.5.10, SL.5.2

**Instructional Activities:**

1. **“Preview” before reading.** Prompt students to read the title and skim through the text examining text features. Think-write-pair-share about what students already know about the topic and what they predict the story will be about.
2. **“Clicks and Clunks” and “Get the Gist”** during reading. Prompt students to share “clunks” (unknown words or comprehension breakdowns) and use strategies to fix comprehension breakdowns. Periodically ask students to work collaboratively to find the “gist” (summary) of the preceding section and write it on a whiteboard. Share “gists” with the class.
3. **“Wrap Up”** after reading. Have students write about or discuss the following questions:
  - What point of view did Angela Cervantes choose to tell the story from? How does this affect the story?
  - How did immigration affect Yoli’s identity?

**Exit Ticket/Demonstration of Learning:** Have students write a theme statement for the story.

**Lesson 3: Reading “Self-Portrait with No Flag”**

**Objective:** Students will be able to use a “three reads” method to read and comprehend a poem. Students will be able to analyze the point of view of the poem and the theme of the poem.

**CCSS Standard:** RL.5.2, RL.5.6, RL.5.10, SL.5.2

**Instructional Activities:**

1. **First read: basic comprehension.** Play [this YouTube video](#) for students to introduce them to the poet Safia Elhillo. [Play this video](#) to hear Elhillo read “Self-Portrait with No Flag.” Prompt student to work collaboratively to come up with a “gist” for each stanza.
2. **Second read: noticing language.** Read the poem again or have students read the poem aloud. Ask students if they notice any interesting or figurative language. Have students discuss the meaning of that language and how it contributes to the overall poem.
3. **Third read: identifying theme.** Read the poem again or have students read the poem again. Have students discuss the following in order to guide them toward identifying a theme of the poem:
  - Where does Elhillo use repetition? What does she want the reader to notice?

- Where does Elhillo use similes/metaphors? What does she want the reader to understand?
- How did immigration affect Elhillo's identity?
- What big ideas (love, fairness, family, etc.) does the poem discuss? What does Elhillo want the reader to understand about these big ideas?

**Exit Ticket/Demonstration of Learning:** Have students write a theme statement for the poem.

#### Lesson 4: Listening to interview with Grace Lin

**Objective:** Students will be able to listen to and discuss a podcast in order to understand information presented in diverse media formats.

**CCSS Standard:** SL.5.2

**Instructional Activities:**

1. Activate background knowledge: Have students Think-Write-Pair-Share about what they know about podcasts and about author Grace Lin.
2. Podcast: Stop periodically during the podcast to ask literal comprehension questions about Grace Lin's life.
3. Discussion: Have students discuss the following:
  - How did immigration affect Grace Lin's identity as a child?
  - How did immigration affect Grace Lin's identity as a young adult/emerging artist?
  - How did Grace Lin's thoughts and feelings about her identity change over time?

**Exit Ticket/Demonstration of Learning:** Have students write a statement about how Grace Lin's thoughts about her identity changed over time.

#### Lesson 5: Brainstorming for unit project

**Objective:** Students will be able to brainstorm ideas for their writing project.

**Standard:** W.5.3

**Instructional Activities:**

1. Introduce students to the prompt for the writing project.

*You will tell a story that is related to the following questions:*

- *How does immigration/migration affect who we are?*
- *How can we navigate living in two (or more!) cultures at once? How does this affect who we are?*
- *How do our aspects of our identity related to immigration/migration change over time?*

*Think about whether you want to tell YOUR story or a FICTIONAL story. For a fictional story, you may make up a character or try to tell the story of someone in your family.*

*Think about whether you want to tell your story as a poem, short story, or podcast*

2. **Model how to complete the brainstorming sheet** (Appendix E). Show students how I would think of ideas about how to tell my own story or a fictional character's story.
3. **Have students complete the brainstorming sheet.**

**Exit Ticket/Demonstration of Learning:** Brainstorming sheet

### **Lesson 6: Project Completion**

*Note: This lesson may take place over several days/class periods.*

**Learning Objective:** Students will be able to follow the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing) in order to create a short story, poem, or podcast.

**CCSS Standard:** W.5.3, W.5.4, W.5.5

**Instructional Activities:**

1. **Model how to use the planning sheets** (Appendix F). Students will use a different planning sheet depending on if they are writing a short story, poem, or podcast.
2. **Support students as they move through the writing process** (planning, drafting, revising, editing). Set a daily writing goal that is reasonable and support students in reaching and surpassing that goal. Continuously provide feedback and have students provide each other with feedback as needed. Have students type their final drafts or produce their final podcast using a website like Flipgrid or Anchor.

**Evaluative Tool:** Writing Project Rubric (Appendix G)

## Resources

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Common Core State Standards Aligned to this Unit

#### Reading: Literature

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9

Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

#### Reading: Foundational Skills

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.5.4

Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

#### Writing

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.5

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 5 [here](#).)

Speaking & Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 5 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2

Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Appendix B. Sample “Birthdate” Poem from one of my students  
July 8, 2013

I was born on Monday  
in Tirana, Albania - a place  
caught between  
pirates and boats

I was born not long from  
the time and not  
far from the place.  
Where my grandparents had  
to farm to make money,  
where they had  
to build their own house,  
where they had to take care  
of four children

I was born as a U.S president election was on the news,  
As the Cleveland kidnapping blares alarms,  
As the conflict of Ukraine shook them all

I was born on July 8, 2013  
But the stories of Albania  
fly like bats in a  
cave through my body.

Appendix C. Instructional Materials in Lesson 1

Slide 1.

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?



Slide 2.

Migration - the movement of people from one region to another.

Immigration - people entering a country to permanently settle there.

Identity - the unique set of characteristics that can be used to identify a person as themselves and no one else. Who you are!

Slide 3. This or That Game

Move to the left side of the room if you AGREE with the statement. Move to the right side of the room is your DISAGREE. You can place yourself in the room to show your level of agreement or disagreement.

Once you get to your positions, I will call on people to share their ideas.

Talk Moves: "I think that...because..." "I agree with \_\_\_\_\_ because..." "I respectfully disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ because," "In my experience, I have seen that..." "Another source has showed me that..."

Slide 4. Agree or Disagree?

Most people immigrate to the United States to find a better job and a better life.

Slide 5. Agree or Disagree?

It is easy to fit in to our American culture.

Slide 6. Agree or Disagree?

Moving is usually a negative experience.

Slide 7. Agree or Disagree?

It is possible to belong to two different cultures at once.

Slide 8. Agree or Disagree?

It is important to understand your family's culture in order to know who are you.

Appendix D. Family Interview Assignment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Interview Assignment

Choose a family member that moved within their country (migrating) or moved to another country (immigration). Interview your family member about the following questions and write down their responses.

1. When did you migrate/immigrate? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where did you migrate/immigrate from? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where did you migrate/immigrate to? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What were some of your reasons for migrating/immigrating? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What differences did you notice between your original home and your new home?

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## Appendix E. Brainstorming Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

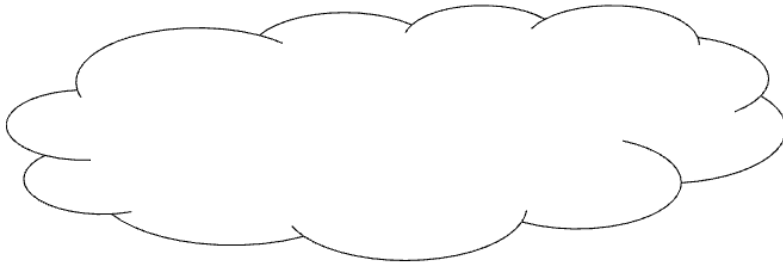
### **IMMIGRATION and IDENTITY Project**

You will tell a story that is related to the following questions:

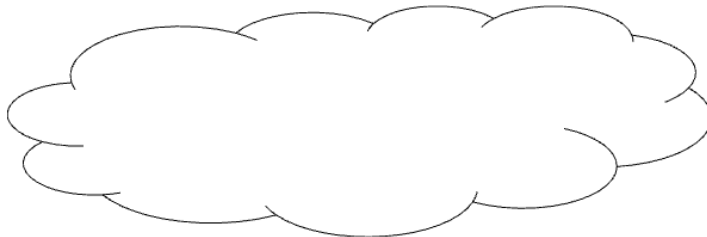
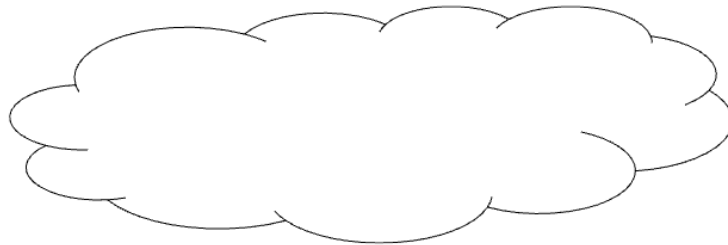
- How does immigration/migration affect who we are?
- How can we navigate living in two (or more!) cultures at once? How does this affect who we are?
- How do our aspects of our identity related to immigration/migration change over time?

Think about whether you want to tell YOUR story or a FICTIONAL story. For a fictional story, you may make up a character or try to tell the story of someone in your family.

Think about whether you want to tell your story as a poem or a short story.



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## Appendix F. Planning Sheets

### Poem Planning and Draft

Who is the speaker (yourself or someone else)? \_\_\_\_\_

You may use this template based on "Self Portrait with No Flag" or write your own poem.

*In the first two stanzas, write about aspects of your family history/culture(s) that you are loyal to, that you love, or that make you who you are. Use vivid imagery so that your reader can picture these things!*

i pledge allegiance to \_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

& to \_\_\_\_\_

i pledge allegiance to \_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

& to \_\_\_\_\_

*In the third stanza, write about where you come from and how you react to that. Then, write about things you are NOT loyal to or things that are opposed to who you are. Use vivid imagery so that your reader can picture these things!*

i come from \_\_\_\_\_

& i \_\_\_\_\_

I pledge alliance to no \_\_\_\_\_

I pledge alliance to no \_\_\_\_\_



I pledge alliance to no \_\_\_\_\_

*In the fourth stanza, write about things you CHOOSE from your culture(s). These could be things that make you happy, things that you love, or things that make you who you are. Use vivid imagery so that your reader can picture these things!*

i choose \_\_\_\_\_

I choose \_\_\_\_\_

I choose \_\_\_\_\_

& \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

& this is my \_\_\_\_\_

### Short Story Planning and Draft

Who is your main character (yourself or someone else)? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the setting? \_\_\_\_\_

What point of view will you use (first person/second person/third person)? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the main plot events?

1. First, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (exposition)

2. Next, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (rising action)

3. Then, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (climax - most exciting part!)

4. Last, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (resolution)

What will you or your character learn about their identity related to immigration/migration/culture? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Appendix G. Writing Project Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Final Project Rubric

	Exceeds Standards 4 points	Meets Standards 3 points	Almost Meets Standards 2 points	Does Not Meet Standards 1 point
Creativity/ Effort	Writing shows many creative ideas and student spent 100% of class time working on the assignment.	Writing shows some creative ideas and student spent most of the class time working on the assignment.	Project is simple and does not show student's creativity. Student spent some class time on off-task activities.	Student spent most of class time on off-task activities, resulting in a more basic project.
Spelling/ Grammar	Proper use of spelling and grammar is consistently used throughout the assignment.	The few spelling and grammar errors do not interfere with the overall quality.	Poor spelling and grammar distract from the writing.	Writing is difficult to understand due to many spelling and grammar errors.
Word Choice/Languag e	Uses above average vocabulary words and extensive figurative language.	Strong words and some figurative language to convey ideas.	Word choice is simple and direct.	Word choice is confusing and ineffective. Many misused words.
Description/ Imagery	<b>Four</b> or more examples of vivid imagery/detailed description.	<b>Three</b> examples of vivid imagery/detailed description.	<b>Two</b> examples of vivid imagery/detailed description.	<b>One</b> examples of vivid imagery/detailed description.
Revising/ Editing	Multiple drafts show 5 or more improvements	Multiple drafts show 3-4 improvements	Multiple drafts show 2 improvements	Multiple drafts show 1 improvement