

## **Lesson Plan: U.S. Immigrants and the “land of opportunity”**

*This lesson was developed by Maine Historical Society in partnership with a Teaching with Primary Sources grant from the Library of Congress.*

### **Objectives:**

- Students will be able to use primary sources to describe the ways in which the United States has historically been and has not been a “land of opportunity” for immigrants.
- Students will practice the skills involved in analyzing primary sources.
- Students will learn how to and practice using evidence from primary sources to support a point view.

**Essential Questions:** *To what extent was (Maine and) the United States a “land of opportunity” for immigrants?*

### **Materials:**

primary source documents and questions – 1 set per student (see below)

primary source analysis tools (see links below)

computers with internet access for student use – will need to access Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/>) and Maine Memory Network ([www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net)).

writing paper

pen/pencil

timer (for debate)

### **Timeframe:**

Will vary depending on length of class period, class size, etc.; 5-7 days/class periods recommended.

## Procedure:

### *Part 1 – Initial Analysis*

1. Ask students to consider the following questions and to brainstorm some answers; this can be done by students working as individuals, working with partners/small groups, or as a class.
  - a. *What have been/might be some of the “push-pull” factors for immigrants/emigrants coming to the United States?*
  - b. *Is life always better for immigrants upon arrival to the U.S.? Explain.*
2. Ask students to share their answers; record and discuss their ideas as a class.
3. Explain that today students are going to take a closer look at some primary sources to try and answer the question, ***To what extent was (Maine and) the United States a “land of opportunity” for immigrants?***
4. Distribute Documents 1-7 and primary analysis tools to students. You can use the primary source analysis tools or graphic organizers from the Maine Memory Network lesson plan [Using Primary Source Documents in the Classroom](#) or the Library of Congress’ [Primary Source Analysis Tools](#).
5. Students can work to analyze the documents in a number of ways;
  - a. Analyze all documents individually.
  - b. Analyze all documents working with a partner or small group.
  - c. Randomly assign students to each analyze one of the documents and then instruct students to form jigsaw groups and share information on their assigned documents.  
\*Regardless of how you assign the documents, make sure that each student has a copy of *all* the documents.\*
6. If students do not complete their analysis before the completion of the class period, assign completion of the assignment for homework.

### *Part 2 – Digging Deeper*

1. Begin by reviewing with students the questions and their answers from the start of the previous lesson
2. Ask students to share their findings/ideas from their analysis of Documents 1-7. This can be done in jigsaw groups and/or as a class.
3. Once students have reviewed their primary findings and analysis, students should work to answer the questions for each individual document.
4. Review students' answers to the document questions. This can be done in small groups and/or as a class.
5. Ask students to consider how these primary sources help answer the questions

### *Part 3 – Debate Preparation*

1. Instruct students that their next step in this unit will be to prepare and engage in a formal debate using primary sources. Students will work in teams; one team arguing the “pro” side of an issue/statement, the other team arguing the “con” side. Each student on each team will be responsible for a different part of the debate. See debate instructions below.
2. Students will be expected to cite/use at least two of Documents 1-7 as evidence in their debate. They will also need to locate at least one *third* primary source on the Library of Congress or Maine Memory Network to use as evidence.
3. Assign students to debate teams and distribute debate instructions/assignment. Within each team, pairs or small groups of students should be assigned to the different aspects of the debate: opening statement, evidence, rebuttal, closing statement (see debate instructions below). Whether you assign these pairs/groups or students do it themselves, make sure you have a record of who is responsible for each aspect of the debate for assessment purposes.
4. Allow students as much class time and time outside of class to research, prepare, and practice their debate as appropriate (at least two class periods and three days outside of class is recommended as a minimum). Factoring in this time, set a date for the debate and ensure that students understand they must be prepared to participate in the debate and turn in their written portion of the assignment.

Debate tips:

- You may want to assign certain topics, ideas, or documents for students to stick to in order to better ensure they debate the same points.
- Encourage the teams to talk to each other, especially those working on “evidence” and “rebuttal”. While they students won’t necessarily want to give away strategy, remind them that the debate will be smoother for everybody if each team knows the talking points or evidence that the other team is using, not unlike how lawyers must disclose evidence and supply lists of witnesses to each other before going to trial. Everyone should be working with the same information.
- Remind students that their assessment will not be based on who “wins”, but rather on connecting arguments to evidence.
- Rebuttal is typically the aspect of debate that students struggle with the most; preparing rebuttal means trying to predict the arguments the other side with use *and* how to poke holes in those arguments. Make sure the students assigned to rebuttal have the tools and support they need.
- For students working in pairs/small groups, make sure they determine before the actual debate who will do the speaking for their portion during the debate.
- Encourage (or even require) students to practice the debate; like any presentation, it will go smoother if you practice for an audience (even just one person) first.
- Students will understandably want to know who “won” the debate after it’s over; consider bringing in a guest audience or judges panel of other students or teachers to listen to the debate and determine a winner. Be sure that students understand that determining a “winner” is not the same as an assessment of the assignment.

*Part 4 - Debate*

1. On the day of the debate, remind students of debate rules:
  - a. The debate will be presented in the following format:
    - i. Pro Opening Statement, Con Opening Statement
    - ii. Pro Evidence, Con Evidence(quick break)
    - iii. Pro Rebuttal, Con Rebuttal
    - iv. Pro Closing Statement, Con Closing Statement

- b. Each side is given a limited amount of time to speak (see assignment below).
  - c. The audience is to be respectful and quiet during the presentation. If you have a guest audience judging the debate, they should be taking notes.
  - d. After delivering his/her portion of the debate, each student must turn in a written/typed copy of his/her contribution.
2. After the debate, engage students in a whole class discussion on their personal feelings on the statement/idea that was being debated. What do they think the primary source evidence supports?

Alternatives/Extensions:

1. Instead of having students working in teams on the debate, assign them to work with a partner. In this format, a student is responsible for all aspects of one side in the debate (opening statement, evidence, etc.) as opposed to just one piece of one side. This may be easier to students to take on after having done one or two debates in teams.
2. The debate exercise can be easily modified into a persuasive essay format. Instead of having students debate, have them take a stand on the statement/idea and compose a persuasive essay using the debate format.
3. Use the documents and instruct students to answer the essential questions as Document Based Questions (DBQs).
4. Ask students to imagine themselves as immigrants to the U.S. and write a letter to a family member who is also considering immigrating encouraging or discouraging them.

## Document 1: Letter from the Committee of Bangor

*This letter, dated July 3, 1832, was from the Committee of Bangor to the Select-men of Houlton expressing their fear that Irish immigrants traveling up the Saint John River and passing through Houlton on their way to Bangor may be carrying disease, perhaps cholera, and that these Irish immigrants should be stopped by force if necessary.*

(Maine Memory Network link: <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/11316>)

To the Select-men of Houlton.

Gentlemen,

the inhabitants of Bangor have become considerably alarmed in consequence of the imports that have reached them of large numbers of Irish emigrants, which are said to be making their way up the river Saint John with the intention of coming through to our village. We deem it the duty of every town and village at the present alarming crisis when the pestilence that has committed such fearful ravages in Europe is about visiting our shores, to use the utmost vigilance and mutually advise (sic) each other in guarding against its introduction among us. With these views we have thought proper to address you upon the subject with a request that you will send us such intelligence as you may have in your possession as to the number of emigrants in the province that will be likely to come this way, the state of their health and whether sickness prevails at Fredrickton or St. John. And should you find them crossing the lines in this direction in such a condition as will be likely to spread contagion among our citizens we would recommend their expulsion by force! Should such an event occur, you may rely upon the assistance (sic) of Bangor to cut off the communication between the state and Province.

James B. Fisher Committee of John Hodgdon Bangor

P.S. Please inform us what intelligence you have upon the subject by return mail –

Vocabulary:

pestilence: a fatal epidemic disease

contagion: the spread of disease



## **Document 1: Letter from the Committee of Bangor Questions**

1.) Why do the citizens of Bangor say they are worried about Irish emigrants coming to their village?

2.) What does the committee in Bangor ask of the Houlton selectmen? What do they say they will do if their requests are not met?

**Document 2: "You're going to a different country, different style of life. . . it's a challenge." (audio recording)**

*Rocco Ditaranto was born in Italy and immigrated to the United States. He owned Ditaranto's Market on 21st Avenue in Patterson, New Jersey. In 1994, Ditaranto was interviewed about his experiences as an Italian immigrant.*

*Listen to this segment of his interview on what he faced to coming to the United States.*

You can access the audio recording at the following web address:  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwp003906/>

(Library of Congress link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwp003906/>)





**Document 3: "I started work only three days after I got to this country."  
(audio recording)**

*Rocco Ditaranto was born in Italy and immigrated to the United States. He owned Ditaranto's Market on 21st Avenue in Patterson, New Jersey. In 1994, Ditaranto was interviewed about his experiences as an Italian immigrant.*

*Listen to this segment of his interview on what he did soon after arriving in the United States.*

You can access the audio recording at the following web address:  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwip003905/>

(Library of Congress link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwip003905/>)





## Document 4: Toy Len Goon, Portland, 1952

*Toy Len Goon, widow of Dogan Goon, at her hand-operated presser in her laundry at 615 Forest Ave., Portland, after she was named Maine Mother of the Year in April 1952. her daughter, Doris, is in the background. Mrs. Goon was 57 when she won the honor.*

*Her husband died in 1940 and she raised five sons and three daughters, the eldest of whom was 17, by herself. She was later named American Mother of the Year.*

*She was born August 14, 1891 in China and died May 27, 1993.*

(Maine Memory Network link: <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/10368>)



## Document 5: Wolf Lipsky, Bangor, ca. 1900

*Wolf Lipsky immigrated from Russia in 1889, when he was about 17. He is listed in the 1900 census as a "notion peddler" in Bangor.*

*As with other immigrants, peddling was a transitional occupation. Within two to five years most peddlers either moved to a different area or to a different occupation.*

*Setting up a storefront was a natural evolution for peddlers like Wolf Lipsky, who had bought and sold clothes in Bangor's surrounding area before founding a clothing shop in Bangor.*

(Maine Memory Network link: <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/56722>)



**Document 6: Aurelie Danis, Biddeford, ca. 1912**

*Aurelie Danis, née Bolduc, was a spinner at the Pepperell Mill in Biddeford around 1912. Danis was one of many Canadians who immigrated to Maine in the 1880s to work in the textile mills.*

(Maine Memory Network link: <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/31825>)



## **Documents 4, 5, and 6: Photographs Questions**

1. Do these photographs and what we know about their subjects in any way reflect the United States as a land of opportunity for immigrants? Are there ways in which they reflect the opposite? Explain.

**Document 7: "He came by himself first, then he sent for us." (audio recording)**

*Ralph Soria and his family were from Puerto Rico. He owned a real estate business in Paterson, New Jersey. In 1994 he was interviewed about his family's immigration experience.*

*Listen to this segment of his interview on his father's work.*

You can access the audio recording at the following web address:  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwip003983/>

(Library of Congress link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/afcwip003983/>)



**Document 7: "He came by himself first, then he sent for us." Questions**

- 1.) What opportunities did Soria's father and his family experienced in the United States? Were these opportunities easy to come by; why or why not?



# Immigration Debate

**Objective:** Describe the extent to which the United States has historically been a “land of opportunity” for immigrants.

**Essential Questions:** To what extent was Maine and the United States a “land of opportunity” for immigrants?

## Assignment:

Work with a partner/team to prepare a debate that addresses the statement “**Maine/The United States was indeed a ‘land of opportunity’ for immigrants.**” You and your partner or the opposing team will each take on a role in this debate; one will argue the **pro** position (Yes, Maine/The United States was indeed a ‘land of opportunity’ for immigrants), the other will argue the con position (No, Maine/The United States was not a ‘land of opportunity’ for immigrants.). Your debate must follow the outlined format. Your debate script must be typed and turned in after your debate is presented to the class.

**Timeline:** You will have \_\_\_\_ class periods to work both with your partner and independently to prepare your debate. You must also use your own time outside of class to prepare.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Debate format

Question:

To answer the question, you must address **two** of the following main ideas:

### Round 1

1. Opening Statement
  - a. Explain background, why is topic important, think “big picture”, appeal to passion (1 paragraph)
2. Evidence
  - a. Present data, case studies, evidence for each argument, think “specific”, appeal to intellect (2 paragraphs)

### Round 2

1. Rebuttal
  - a. Attack opposing side’s arguments, reiterate your side’s arguments, appeal to passion and intellect
  - b. May ask questions of opponent (1 paragraph)
2. Closing statement
  - a. Summarize your position and evidence, take the moral high ground (1 paragraph)

Suggested Assessment Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Understanding of Topic</b>	The student clearly understood the topic in-depth and presented their information forcefully and convincingly.	The student clearly understood the topic in-depth and presented their information with ease.	The student seemed to understand the main points of the topic and presented those with ease.	The team did not show an adequate understanding of the topic.
<b>Information</b>	All information presented in the debate was clear, accurate and thorough.	Most information presented in the debate was clear, accurate and thorough.	Most information presented in the debate was clear and accurate, but was not usually thorough.	Information had several inaccuracies OR was usually not clear.
<b>Use of Facts/Statistics and Primary Sources</b>	Every major point was well supported with several relevant facts, statistics and/or examples. Student used ample amount of primary source evidence.	Every major point was adequately supported with relevant facts, statistics and/or examples. Student used adequate amount of primary source evidence.	Every major point was supported with facts, statistics and/or examples, but the relevance of some was questionable. Student did not use adequate amount of primary source evidence.	Every point was not supported. There was little to no use of primary source evidence.
<b>Debate Format</b>	Debate format was followed consistently throughout the debate.	Debate format was mostly followed.	The debate format was only partly followed.	The debate format was rarely or not followed.
<b>Script Format</b>	Script format was followed; typed, double spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font.	Script format was mostly followed.	Script format was partially followed.	Script format was not followed.
<b>Mechanics and Grammar</b>	Few to no errors in mechanics and grammar.	Few errors in mechanics and grammar.	Several errors in mechanics and grammar.	Many errors in mechanics and grammar.

**Maine Learning Results:**

Grade Level: PreK-2; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A3, E1a, E1b, E1e, E2a, E2b)

Grade Level: 3-5; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1c, A1d, A1e, A3, E1a, E1b, E1c, E2a, E2b)

Grade Level: 6-8; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A1f, A1g, A1h, A1k, A1l, A3, E1a, E1b, E1d, E2a, E2b, E2c)

Grade Level: 9-Diploma; Content Area: Social Studies: HISTORY (A1a, A1b, A1c, A1d, A1e, A1i, A1j, A3, E1a, E1b, E1d, E2a, E2b)

**Common Core State Standards:**

Anchor Standards: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7](#)); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8](#)); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5](#)); COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2](#))

Kindergarten: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.K.7](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.2](#))

Grade 1: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.8](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.2](#))

Grade 2: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.7](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.3](#))

Grade 3: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2.a](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.3](#))

Grade 4: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.a](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.b](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3](#))

Grade 5: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.a](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.b](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3](#))

Grade 6: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.3](#))

Grade 7: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.3](#))

Grade 8: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3](#))

Grade 6-8: HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9](#))

Grade 9-10: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.a](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.b](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.c](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.d](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.e](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2.f](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9](#)); HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3](#))

Grade 11-12: WRITING ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.a](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.b](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.c](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.d](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.e](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.f](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9](#)); HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10](#)); LANGUAGE ([CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3](#))