



The Rights of Migrants in the United States

Lesson Plan: Traveling Suitcases

Grade Level: 3-5



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Lesson Plan: Traveling Suitcases

Goal: To help students understand the connection between their personal and family history and immigration in general.

Objectives:

- Students will learn what it means to be a migrant
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of migration issues by examining their own individual experiences and their classmates'
- Students will compare their origin stories to those of others in the class

Essential Question: How is my family's history of migration similar to the experience of others?

Materials and Resources:

- Paper, cardstock or cardboard, markers, pens, flip-chart or whiteboard
- Notebook or journal to use throughout the lesson
- World maps, atlases, or internet access

Time Frame: 2-3 class periods

Grade Level: 3-5

Appropriate Subject Areas: Interdisciplinary

Teacher Background: Remind students to be sensitive as some issues being covered in this lesson are personal and students should not be forced to share their stories if they choose not to. For more educational resources see "*This Is My Home*" lessons on migration at www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome/resources/MN_HR_Ed_3-5.pdf.

Procedure:

Activity 1: Traveling Suitcases

1. **Research.** As homework, ask students to talk to their families, or someone they know, about how they came to live in **Our Town**. Where did their ancestors come from? How did they get here? Why did they come and when? Have them gather as much information as they can and ask them to choose their two favorite stories to create suitcases.
2. **Create.** Create suitcases by cutting rectangular shapes out of sturdy cardstock or recycled cardboard. Add a handle at the top, made out of pipe cleaners, wire, fabric, or other material. Attach a tag for the student's name.
3. **Decorate.** Have students decorate two suitcases with information about the places and stories they chose whether it is their own experience with moving or the stories of their ancestors, or others. Students should make sure to include a flag of the country or place where their ancestors came from on the outside of their suitcases.
4. **Display.** On a large sheet of paper, write **Our Town** in the center. Add six lines for roads leading to the town and label these "Africa," "Asia," "Europe," "South America," "Central America," and "North America." (If a lot of students made suitcases for North America, this road can be enlarged.) Have each student paste their suitcase on the corresponding road. Display the map for others in school to see and include a description of the project.





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Activity 2: Sharing Stories

- 1. Write.** Ask students to write a one-page story about moving. It may be their own, or a story about one of their family members or another significant person in their lives. Have them record the first draft in a journal or notebook.
- 2. Rewrite.** Have students share their story with a partner. Ask each pair to combine their ideas into a new, fictional story based on the experiences in their original creations. Information they might want to include:
 - What were some of the reasons for moving?
 - How did the people in the story feel before the move (excited, fearful, hopeful, anxious, concerned, happy, uncertain)?
 - How much did they know about the place to which they were going?
 - How did they feel after the move?
 - How were they treated in the new place?
 - What were some of the surprises in the move?
 - What about the new place is interesting and different from where they lived before?
 - What would they do differently if they were to move again?
- 3. Share.** Ask each pair to share their new, fictional story. Ask the class to think about the states and countries people have moved from to come to **Our Town**.
- 4. Reflect and Discuss.** For discussion and reflection have students answer some or all of these questions. The teacher may want to begin with a journal entry then move to a class discussion. Teachers could also choose to give these questions to their students before they share their stories
 - What were some of the reasons for moving, (for example, to join family, to seek employment, or to escape from persecution)?
 - How were people treated in the places they came from? After they arrived in their new home?
 - What might make it harder to start over in a new place? What might make it easier? What can people do to help newcomers to their community?

TAKE ACTION!

Optional Extension: What have you learned about the experience of moving or migration? What can you do to make sure that people feel welcomed in your town? In your school? Share your ideas! For example, start a club, create a welcoming committee for new students and new neighbors, post signs in multiple languages, have a multi-cultural potluck or fashion show, display photos in your school that are representative of the many origins of your student body, or display maps with lines connecting origins to where we live now.

Source: This lesson is adapted from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Resources Center "This Is My Home" Lessons on Migration for grades 3-5 http://www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome/resources/MN_HR_Ed_3-5.pdf.