



Pilgrims, Newcomers, and the First Amendment!

Purpose:

The importance of the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of religious expression and speech can be illustrated through an overview of the various waves of immigration to the United States, beginning with the pilgrims of Plymouth Colony. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the "push" and "pull" factors of human migration, as well as the significance political and cultural freedoms play in such migrations. This lesson offers a different approach to traditional Thanksgiving studies, but can be used anytime during the school year.

Procedure:

1. Ask students if their families have ever moved, from house to house, city to city, state to state, or even nation to nation. Brainstorm a class list of the reasons why their family moved. Most will come to a conclusion that modern families in the United States often move for economic reasons (finding a better job, moving into less or more expensive homes, etc.)
2. Discuss the idea that people migrate because of either or both "push" and "pull" factors. Offer a brief definition of "push factors" – events that drive people away from their homelands. What kinds of events might be so unsatisfactory that it would cause people to leave their homes behind? Students should be able to list events such as war, famine, natural disasters such as hurricanes. Students might also be able to list examples of such "push factors" they may have heard about in recent national or world news. Next, offer a brief discussion of "pull factors"- events that draw or encourage people to move to a new homeland. These would be positive situations they would be able to experience if they made a move. Students should be able to see that many of their families moved because of "pull factors" (i.e. their parents found a better job, their brothers or sisters were given a college scholarship, they were able to share a house with a relative, etc.)
3. Ask students to define what they believe the term "pilgrim" means. Where have they heard this term before? What do they recall about the "pilgrims" of Plymouth Colony?
4. Using any short picture book from the school or community library, read aloud a story about the Plymouth pilgrims. Ask students to raise their hands during the reading every time they hear a reference regarding why the pilgrims moved to the New World. Following the story, ask students to summarize what were the major reasons these pilgrims came to America. (Conclusions should include the primary motive which was to practice religious beliefs freely.) Discuss with students whether the pilgrims migrated because of a "push" or "pull" factor? Conclusions should be drawn that the Plymouth pilgrims migrated because of BOTH factors- they were persecuted by government in their homelands because of their religious beliefs AND the New World would be open to settlements where no laws would hamper the pilgrim's religious practices.
5. Use the powerpoint presentation "Newcomers to America" to introduce students to the idea that America continued to be a "pull" factor to pilgrims from many nations,

seeking protections of the First Amendment, including religious freedom, freedom of speech, assembly, and petition. Stop, as needed during the powerpoint to discuss answers to the questions posed in the presentation.

6. Optional: If available, read together the children's book, *Molly's Pilgrim* (listed below) which tells a very meaningful tale of a young Jewish Russian immigrant who comes to America and learns of the history behind Thanksgiving, helping her fellow students understand that "pilgrims" come from many places over time, yet for many of the same reasons.
7. Ask students if they have heard about or seen pictures of the Statue of Liberty. What and where is it? What does it symbolize to Americans and to newcomers to our country? Inform students that they will be studying a passage from a poem, written by Emma Lazarus, whose Jewish Portuguese ancestors came to the United States during the colonial times before the American Revolutionary War. She wrote many poems, but her most famous, *The Colossus*, can now be found on the base of the Statue of Liberty.
8. Give student pairs the handout, "Understanding Vocabulary Helps Understand the Message." Read aloud the passage from Lazarus' poem. Ask students to use classroom dictionaries to define the vocabulary words listed below the poem. Conduct a classroom discussion of their findings. How does their understanding of new vocabulary terms help them understand the message of the poem? Ask students to draw conclusions regarding what situations might be "push factors" and "pull factors" mentioned in the poem. Where in the poem does Lazarus mention the role of the First Amendment in drawing pilgrims to the United States? Ask student pairs to rewrite this passage of the poem in their own words, requiring all re-writes to include the phrase "First Amendment." Allow time for volunteers to read their re-written poems aloud.
9. For extension, encourage students to interview their parents and grandparents about motivations for any migrations made in their childhood. Ask students to report their findings over the next few days by charting on large world, USA, and state maps major migrations students' relatives made. Allow students time to contemplate whether such movements were caused by "push" or "pull" factors; which migrations might have involved the desire for liberties, such as those found in the First Amendment.

Additional Recommended Children's Literature:

The First Thanksgiving (ages 4-8)

Written by Linda Hayward; illustrated by James Watling

New York: Random House Children's Books, c1990

This book uses the simplest text to tell the story of the first Thanksgiving, from the time the Mayflower set sail, until they gave thanks alongside the Indians who helped save their lives.

The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving (ages 4-8)

Written by Ann McGovern; illustrated by Elroy Freem

New York: Scholastic, c2005

Children's history writer recaptures the first Thanksgiving, where the Pilgrims and Indians spent three days together giving thanks. She also introduces the struggles the Pilgrims faced during their first year, as well as the events leading up to the holiday we know today.

How Many Days to America? A Thanksgiving Story (ages 4-8)

Written by Eve Bunting; illustrated by Beth Peck

Des Plaines, IL: The Trumpet Club, c1992

Politics force a Caribbean family to flee to America for safety. After weeks at sea, their fishing boat lands safely on U.S. shores. Only then do the illegal refugees discover that they've reached freedom on Thanksgiving Day.

Molly's Pilgrim (ages 6-10)

Written by Barbara Cohen; illustrated by Daniel M. Duffy

New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, c1998

A recent immigrant to the United States, young Molly is embarrassed when her mother makes a pilgrim doll to help her with a school project, but dresses it in Russian clothes. Soon, however, Molly learns that Thanksgiving is a special day for pilgrims from all backgrounds.

Off to Plymouth Rock (ages 5-8)

Written by Dandi Daley Mackall; illustrated by Gene Barretta

Nashville: Tommy Nelson, c2003

This book tells, through rhyming verse, the story of the first Thanksgiving from the pilgrims' perspective. The book details a dangerous trip and finally arriving; building their dreams and struggling to survive the winter.

Understanding Vocabulary Helps Understand the Message:

***The New Colossus* poem, by Emma Lazarus. Found at the base of the Statue of Liberty**



Read the passage below from the poem. Define key words in the poem. Discuss what the poem is saying. What are the reasons the author gives for why so many immigrants have come to the United States?



...cries she with silent lips.

**"Give me your tired,
your poor,
your huddled masses
yearning to breathe free,**

**The wretched refuse
of your teeming shore.**

**Send these,
the homeless,
tempest-tost to me,**

**I lift my lamp
beside the golden door!"**

Vocabulary to Define:

1. masses
2. yearning
3. wretched
4. refuse
5. teeming
6. tempest
7. lamp