

## Lesson Plan: Exploring the American Dream

### Overview:

In this lesson, students will discuss the concept of “The American Dream” and develop their own definitions of this concept. The students will then examine two poems that explore this concept and highlight groups of people who historically have not had access to “The American Dream.” They will discuss the possible reasons for and price of this historical disillusionment. Finally, students will create a visual illustration of their “American Dream” to share with the class.

### Essential Question(s):

- What are the social, educational, economic, political and religious freedoms associated with “The American Dream?”
- Historically (and currently), what groups of people have had limited access to “The American Dream?”
- What are some of the obstacles to achieving “The American Dream?”
- Despite these obstacles, what makes “The American Dream” appealing?
- What is your dream for the future?
- How is the American Dream important to our democracy?

**Length of Activity:** This lesson can take one class period or two 90 minute blocks - depending on the discussion. To allow for a full exploration of the connections between democracy and the American Dream, a minimum of 90 minutes is suggested.

### Materials Needed:

What is the American Dream? Copy of questions for each student

Pre-cut American Dream quotes (depending on the size of the class you may want to make 2 copies or add more quotes)

American Dream Bumper Sticker template

Access to [Mobility, Equity, and Pursuit of the American Dream](#) video from the UVA Democracy Biennial, 2021 (17:30 - 33:20)

### Teacher Actions:

1. Pre-activity bell ringer: Write the term “American Dream” on the board & ask students to brainstorm what comes to mind when they hear the term.
2. Ask students to share their descriptors and write them on the board.
3. Once answers have waned, ask the students to categorize the descriptors: which aspects are social, educational, economic, political, or religious?
4. Next, break students up into pairs and ask them to complete questions #1-5 on the “What is the American Dream?” questionnaire together. If you have students from other countries in your class, allow them to share their stories if they choose. (Ask them privately if they would be willing.)

5. Next, divide students into small groups of 3-4 and provide them with one of the attached quotes regarding the “American Dream” to further the discussion. Write or project the following questions for the groups to discuss regarding their quote:
  - What does your quote say about the American Dream?
  - Do you agree or disagree with the author and why?
  - What values are implicit in the concept of an “American Dream” according to this author?
6. Once students have discussed, have them read their quotes to the class and share their thoughts. Following the discussion, have each student return to the worksheet and write his/her own definition of “The American Dream” for question #6. They should save this definition for use in the final activity.

### **Analysis:**

Is the American Dream being realized? Is it a reality for many people?

1. During the discussions, the students will talk about making things “better” for themselves or family – discuss the idea of social mobility and how it is part of the American Dream.
2. Show Clip of Rashad Robinson from UVA Democracy Biennial Mobility, equity, and the American dream (17:30 - 33:30)
  - a) How does Mr. Robinson tie social mobility to the American Dream?
  - b) How does that tie in with a successful democracy?

Do we need the American Dream? If so, how can we make it more attainable for more people? How is a healthy democracy and the American Dream connected?

### **Final Activity:**

Have students create their own “American Dream” bumper stickers based on what the idea means to them. They can use the template at the end of this lesson or design one online. Canva offers a [free bumper sticker maker](#). Students should use this as an opportunity to promote the American Dream as an achievable goal for everyone - something all Americans can aspire to. Ask them how can having an American Dream promote change for our nation and hope for our democracy? How can they promote the American Dream in such a way as to get people excited about being an American?

### **Extensions:**

- In one-to-one schools (schools where students have their own or access to computers) have students take the American Dream Quiz - <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/your-american-dream-score/>

This can further the discussion about barriers to achieving the dream and how those barriers may be different for different people.

**What is the American Dream?**

**Name:**

- 1. What comes to mind when you think of the American Dream?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. How has the idea of the American Dream been important to the growth of America?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Is the American Dream achievable by all groups of people?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What are some of the obstacles to achieving the American Dream?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Given those obstacles, why is the American Dream so appealing to so many?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6. What does the American Dream mean to you?**

## American Dream Quotes

There are those who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American Dream.

~Archibald MacLeish

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I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions. This will be the day when we bring into full realization the American dream -- a dream yet unfulfilled. A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality."

~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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We believe that what matters most is not narrow appeals masquerading as values, but the shared values that show the true face of America; not narrow values that divide us, but the shared values that unite us: family, faith, hard work, opportunity and responsibility for all, so that every child, every adult, every parent, every worker in America has an equal shot at living up to their God-given potential. That is the American dream and the American value.

~Senator John Kerry

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America is the sum of our dreams. And what binds us together, what makes us one American family, is that we stand up and fight for each other's dreams, that we reaffirm that fundamental belief - I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper - through our politics, our policies, and in our daily lives.

~President Barack Obama

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Our workforce and our entire economy are strongest when we embrace diversity to its fullest, and that means opening doors of opportunity to everyone and recognizing that the American Dream excludes no one.

~ Tom Perez

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The United States is no longer first in the world in upward mobility. We can reverse that trend by giving our young children an equal start in life as they begin their journey to fulfill the American Dream.

~Madeline M. Kunin

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The American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

~James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, 1931.

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The essence of America – that which really unites us – is not ethnicity, or nationality, or religion – it is an idea – and what an idea it is: That you can come from humble circumstances and do great things.

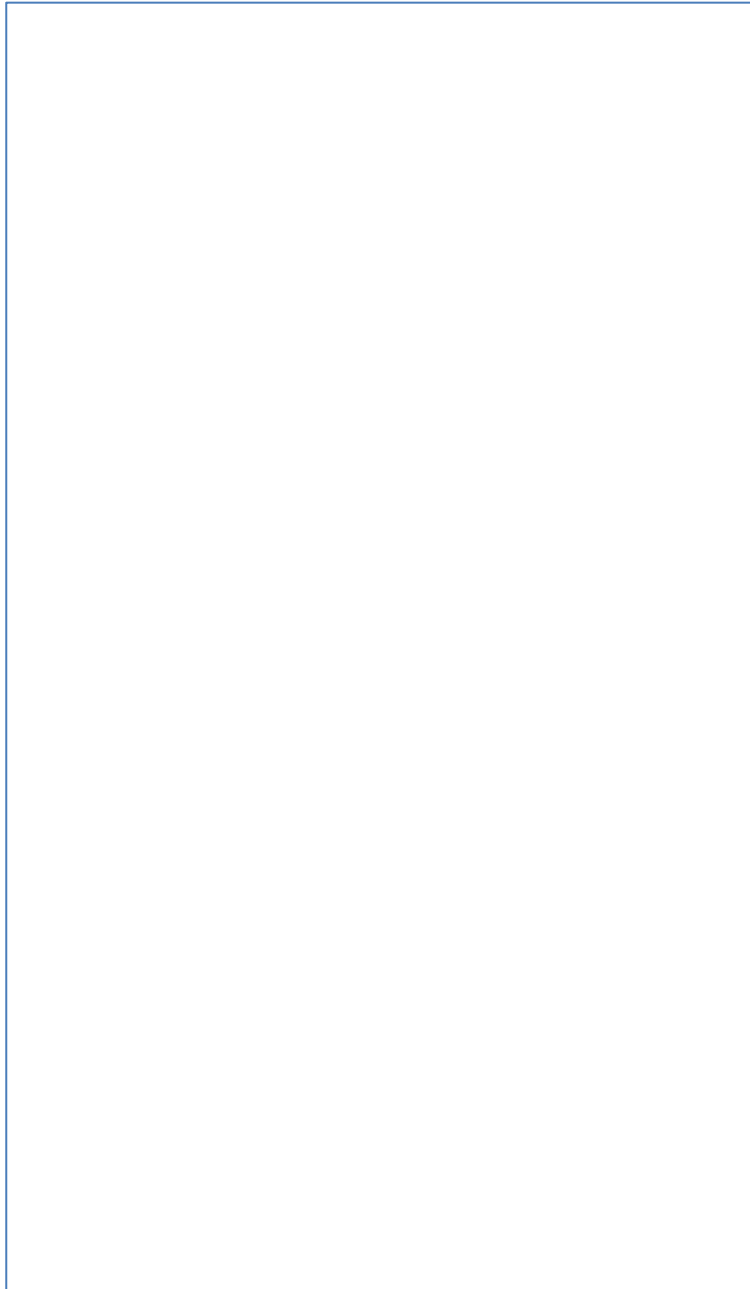
~ Condoleezza Rice

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**My “American Dream”**

**Name:**

**Directions:** Using the definition of “The American Dream” you created earlier in class and your thoughts on how you see yourself as an adult, fill the space below with a BUMPER STICKER that promotes your ideas of the American Dream. You can draw inspiration from our class discussion and the quotes we shared. You may use words or images or both. Feel free to include images representing obstacles that you might encounter and images that represent overcoming those obstacles, too. We will post everyone’s bumper stickers in the room.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for students to draw their bumper sticker. It occupies the lower half of the page.

## Lesson Plan: What Does It Mean to Be an American?

### Overview:

The [Democracy Fund](#) has posited that there are 6 key elements to a healthy democracy: Civic Participation, News & Media, Rule of Law & Civil Rights, Elections, Governing Institutions, and Civil Society. This lesson will focus on Civil Society. Students of history know that while division among the American people is not new it has never posed a greater threat to our republic. In this lesson, students will explore the idea of American Identity – who are we as a nation, as a people and how do we define ourselves and our country?

### Essential Questions(s):

- How do we define ourselves? Do we define ourselves as American?
- What does it mean to be American?
- Can we create an American identity that celebrates our diversity while fostering inclusivity?

**Length of Activity:** 90-minute block

### Materials Needed:

- [Identity Chart](#) from Facing History – one for each student (or use the digital version) then another for the American Identity.
- 7 pieces of chart paper (or a digital version), posted around the room with the following categories on each page: Appearance, Likes/Dislikes, Abilities, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Family, Religion
- [Clip from American Creed](#), In this film clip, historian David Kennedy discusses the complexity of American identity.
- A hand for each student – these can be printed on multi-colored paper or cardstock or purchased on Amazon.

### Teacher Actions:

1. Pre-activity bell ringer: Give each student an identity chart and have them begin putting words/terms on the chart they believe are key to understanding their identity. They can record terms they use to describe themselves at the top half and record how others see them on the bottom half.
2. Tell students that they will introduce themselves with a wave – use a blank hand. On their hand they should write the 4 terms they believe best describe them and, on the thumb, put the word they hear the most from others. (See my sample below.) In the center put their picture or an image that best represents them. These can be put on the class bulletin board with the title of “Who am I?”.
3. Then, have students categorize (using the terms above) their chosen identity terms. This could be done in a shared Google Doc, a bulletin board app, or using chart paper displayed around the room. This allows the students to share their information while maintaining some anonymity. Emphasize that students should record all of their identity descriptors – even if the word is already on the sheet.
4. Discuss categories on the sheets. Which category has the most terms? Why do you think this is so? Which has the fewest?

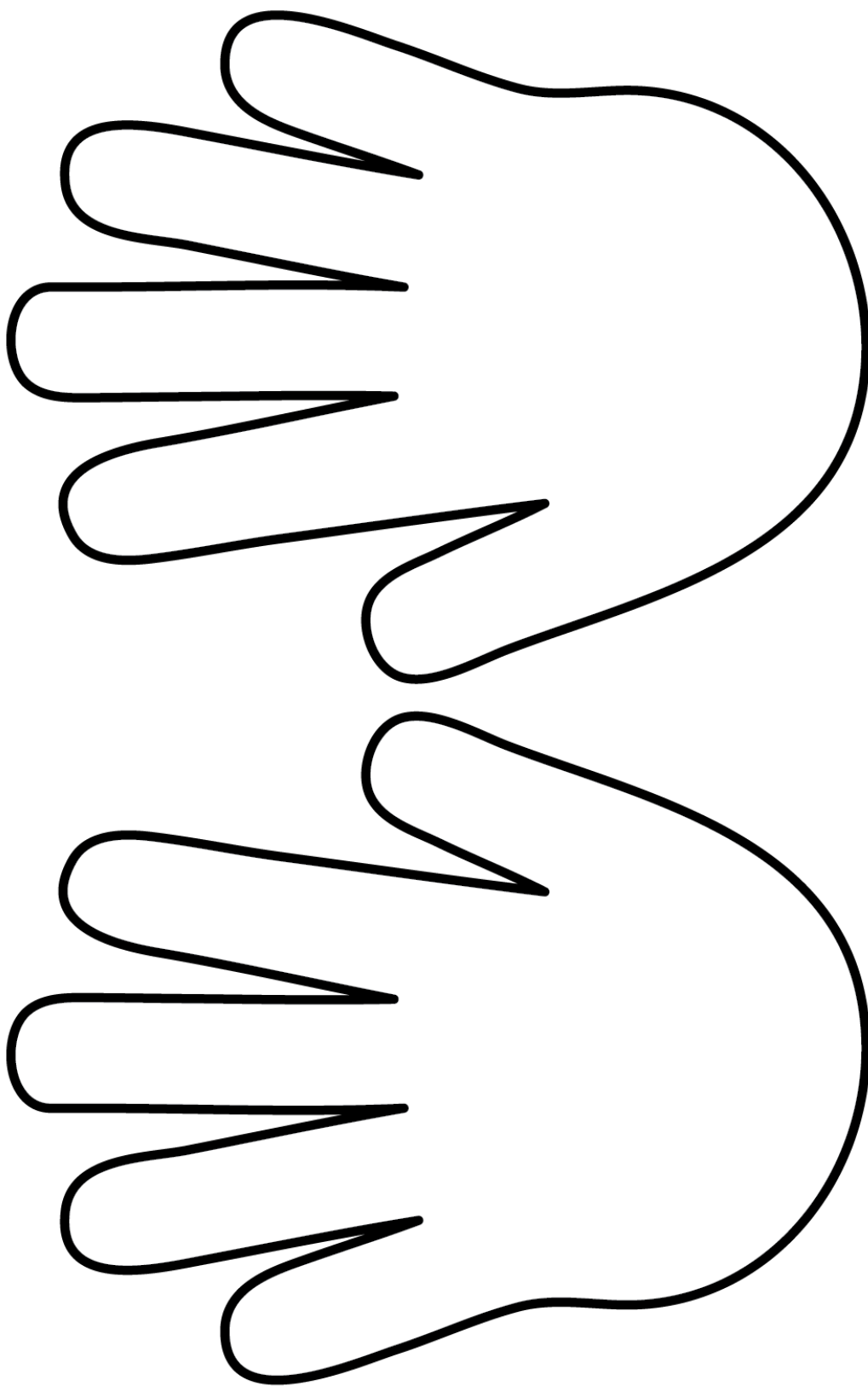
5. Now look at the specific terms. Where do you find commonalities? Differences? Are we more similar or dissimilar? With the terms removed from specific people and their backgrounds, would you say we, in this classroom, are more alike or more different?
6. Can we make a single statement about who we are as a class? What makes this challenging? If it is difficult to do with a group of 30 (or so) people, how can we do it for the more than 300 million people in the United States?
7. Next, display this quote from historian Gordon Wood,  
“Precisely because we are not a people held together by blood, no one knows who an American is except by what they believe. It's important that we do know our history, because our history is the source of our Americanness.”  
In pairs or small groups, have the students discuss the following:
  - What does he mean by “not a people held together by blood”? Are there examples of people who are?
  - Wood states that we can only know an American by “what they believe” – does this mean all Americans have the same beliefs? Where do these beliefs come from? How would an American belief be different from a Chinese belief? Or a German belief? Or a Sudanese belief?
  - Wood believes that our history is the “source of our Americanness” – how do YOU define our history? Whose story do we tell? What people are represented by the stories you have heard so far?
8. Show the clip of historian David Kennedy discussing American identity as a “twoness” and then continue the discussion.
9. Give the small groups one more copy of the Identity Chart (one per group) and have them complete the chart for America – what is the American Identity. Have the groups report back to the class the key terms of their American Identity charts and record them on the board. Make sure to record items that are reported back more than once (place a tic next to them for example). Have the students vote on which traits they believe are most important – these will be the definition of what it means to be American for this class.

### Final Activity:

Have students make posters promoting their class definition of American Identity. These can be placed around the classroom or around the school. Have students vote on their favorite posters.







World of Printables 

5" hand template V2

## Lesson Plan: Immigration & Social Tolerance

### Overview:

While most of us have heard America referred to as a “nation of immigrants” we have also heard “native” Americans balk at the numbers of immigrants entering the country at any given time. Students will begin by examining the Emma Lazarus poem inscribed in the base of the Statue of Liberty - *The New Colossus*. From there they will explore immigration data throughout history - who came and where did they settle? And from there go on to discuss whether the US is truly a nation of immigrants and if so, how important is that?

### Background Information:

[Democracy - and - Immigration in America](#)

[American Panorama: Foreign-Born Population 1850 - 2020](#)

[ADL H.E.A.T. Map™](#) a first-of-its-kind interactive and customizable map detailing specific incidents of hate, extremism, antisemitism and terrorism by state and nationwide.

[The Economist, Democracy Index 2020](#)

[The Miller Center's Way Forward on Immigration Reform](#)

### Essential Question(s):

Is America a nation of immigrants?

Is immigration essential to the growth of our democracy?

How can acceptance of immigrants and other marginalized people protect and promote our democracy?

**Length of Activity:** Activities may be done separately to support the standard curriculum (20 minutes to an hour) or taught as a standalone mini-unit (2 - 90 minute classes)

### Materials Needed:

[Immigration & Social Tolerance Google Slides](#) (with links)

[Lazarus Poem handout](#)

[Is America a Nation of Immigrants](#) questions

[Immigration Cost-Benefit Analysis](#) activity

### Teacher Actions:

1. Pre-activity bell ringer/Lesson introduction: [project the slide of Emma Lazarus' poem](#). Have students read it and note/write down any words or phrases they don't understand.
2. Pass out the poem annotation sheet and, in pairs, have students reread the poem and take notes on the right-hand side of what they believe the poem means - have them place special emphasis on the bolded words. Background information about the poem can be found at the [Poetry Foundation](#).
3. Once the students have had an opportunity to explore the poem, discuss it as a class. What do they take away from it? What does it say about America in the 1880s? Do they believe the poem stands up today? Why or why not? Finally, have the students theorize - are we really a nation of immigrants?

4. Hand out a copy of the [Is America a Nation of Immigrants](#) questions. These questions will guide their exploration of the data found at America Panorama about foreign-born immigrants to the US.
5. Once they have decided - they will complete a cost-benefit analysis of immigration to the US. While in groups or with their partners, they will be given 2 articles on immigration. As they read, they should note on their sheet the benefits and detriments of immigration. When they have completed their charts - they should discuss what they found with their groups and answer the last 2 questions - (1) Benefit - yes or no? and (2) Is it essential to our democracy?

**Five potential SOURCES to share with your students for this activity:**

<https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2016/1/27/the-effects-of-immigration-on-the-united-states-economy>

<https://www.bushcenter.org/catalyst/north-american-century/benefits-of-immigration-outweigh-costs>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

<https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheet/eight-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration-english-and-espanol>

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-dozen-facts-about-immigration/>

6. Discuss as a class

**Analysis/Closure:**

Have students create PSAs (commercials, posters, mini-podcasts) to promote the importance of tolerance (toward any marginalized group) to the health and growth of American democracy.

**Do the Benefits of Immigration Outweigh the Costs? YOU DECIDE!**  
Using sources shared with you, do a cost-benefit analysis of immigration to the United States.

| COSTS | BENEFITS |
|-------|----------|
|       |          |

What have you decided? Do the benefits of immigration outweigh the costs? What were the deciding factors from the notes you made above?

Do immigrants benefit or detract from our democracy? How?

**Foreign-Born Population (1850-2010) (from New American History)**

Are We a Nation of Immigrants?

**How can maps help tell a story about the population/settlement patterns of the United States?**

Start HERE: Read the introduction and click *NEXT*

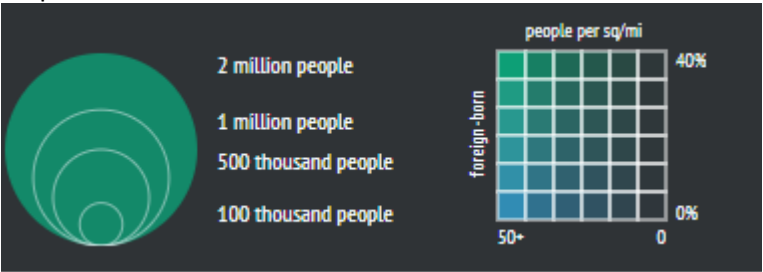
Read “How to Use This Map” and click *ENTER*

Take 5 minutes to explore the map and its tools with your partner.

1. What do you notice?

| 3 things you notice | 2 things you wonder about | 1 thing you have learned about the map so far |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|
|                     |                           |   |

NOW: Click in the information icon and learn how to use the map:



The green circles indicate how many people in the US were born in that country in a given year.

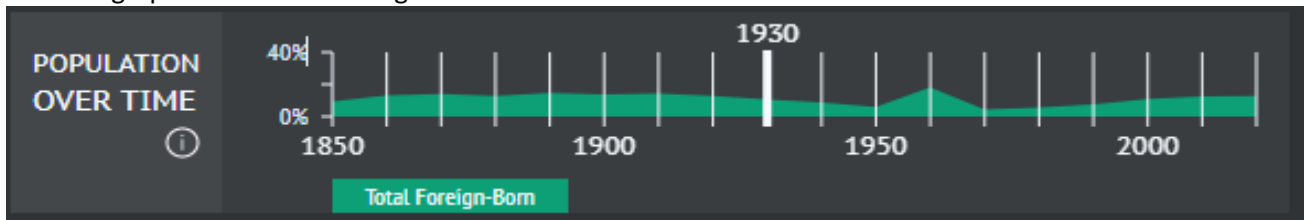
2. How many people are represented by the smallest of the green circles?

3. The largest?

4. Use the graph on the right to describe in a sentence how the colors are used to relate information about population density (the number of people per sq. mile). (Record your sentence in the box to the left.)

Next page, please

Explore how the foreign-born population density of the US has changed over time by using the population timeline graphic in the bottom right corner.



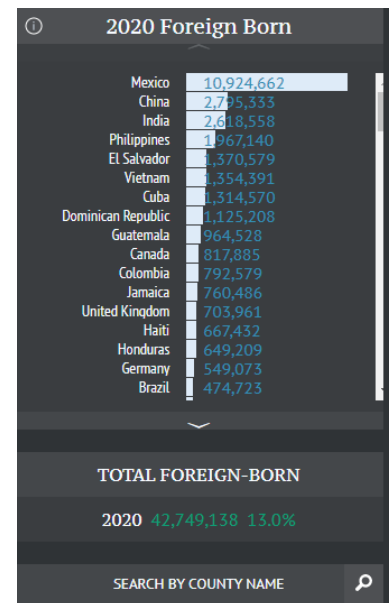
In the image above, the white slider is sitting at 1930 – move it to 1850. Then move it to 2010 (far right)

5. How does the map above change when you use the slider? Compare 1850 to 2010/

- Did the foreign-born population in the US increase, decrease, or stay the same?
- What factors might explain these changes?
- What changes do you notice in other parts of the world?

### What has happened in YOUR part of the world?

To the right of the map, you will see a graph of the national origins of the foreign-born population of the US. At the bottom you can search by county or city name. Type it in and record your observations below.



Did you see the white lines? What do you think they represent?

Finally, clear the county search box (look for your county name in the top right and click the X). THEN slide the white bar to 1910 and record the Top 10 nations of origin for foreign-born population of America. Then record the TOTAL population of foreign-born for that year. Slide the bar to 2010 (all the way to the right) and do the same.

| Top 10 nations of origin in 1910 | Top 10 nations of origin in 2010 |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                  |                                  |
| TOTAL FOREIGN BORN               | TOTAL FOREIGN BORN               |

What are the biggest differences? Why do you think it changed?

Now, can you answer the original question? Are we a nation of immigrants? Why or why not?

**The New Colossus** by Emma Lazarus (1883)

This poem was written as part of a fundraiser for the installation of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi’s statue, *Liberty Enlightening the World* (commonly known as the Statue of Liberty). The mere existence of this poem speaks to American diversity. The sonnet is an Italian form of poetry. It is written by a Jewish-American woman to honor a neo-classical (ancient Greco-Roman) sculpture built in France.

As you read the poem, pay attention to the bolded words. How does the poet want us to view Lady Liberty? What is her attitude to immigration and the immigrants who have flooded America’s shores during her time? Record your responses in the right column.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Not like</b> the brazen giant of Greek fame,</p> <p>With conquering limbs astride from land to land;</p> <p>Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand</p> <p><b>A mighty woman with a torch</b>, whose flame</p> <p>Is the imprisoned lightning, and <b>her name</b></p> <p><b>Mother of Exiles</b>. From her beacon-hand</p> <p>Glow <b>world-wide welcome</b>; her mild eyes command</p> <p>The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.</p> <p>“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she</p> <p>With silent lips. “<b>Give me your tired, your poor,</b></p> <p><b>Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,</b></p> <p><b>The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.</b></p> <p><b>Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,</b></p> <p><b>I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”</b></p> |  |
|---|--|

If you were greeted by the poem as you entered a new country, how would it make you feel?



## Lesson Plan: Poverty and Economic Mobility

### Overview:

People need to have opportunities to improve their situations to maintain a healthy democracy. Where we live, what we do, who our friends are, where we went to school and for how long all have an impact on how we get along in life. In this lesson students will examine data - largely gathered from the Bureau of Statistics and the Census Bureau - to determine if America truly is a land of opportunity. And if they decide it isn't - how can they make it one?

### Background Information:

[Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations](#)

[Miller Center: Mobility, Equity, and the Pursuit of the American Dream](#) - video discussion

[Census Bureau Opportunity Atlas Data Tool](#)

[The Stanford Center for Economic Equality - Mobility](#)

[Crash Course: Is the American Dream Real?](#)

### Investigative Question (s):

- Is America the "land of opportunity"?
- How can fewer opportunities lead to less engagement in democratic government?
- What can WE do to create more equitable access to American opportunities?

**Length of Activity:** The Atlas activity can be done in a 60 to 90 minute class -- depending on the discussion time involved. Adding the City Planner activity will extend at least one more class, potentially longer.

### Materials Needed:

[Poverty & Economic Mobility](#) Google Slides

[Exploring the Opportunity Atlas](#) activity

[Opportunity Atlas Teacher Guide](#)

[Economic Mobility and the American Dream](#) video from the PEW Charitable Trust

If your school does not have 1 to 1 computer access, you will need to book the computer lab.

### Teacher Actions:

1. Pre-activity bell ringer: Ask the students to define the following - poverty and economic mobility - without a dictionary - what do they think they mean.
2. Ask the students what they came up with - discuss the terms as a class and then begin the presentation that begins with the definitions. As you proceed through the presentation, explain that they will be looking at visualized data in the form of graphs, charts, and maps. Ask them to keep notes on what trends they see as they move through the slides.
3. Discuss the chart of Economic Mobility barriers and ask them if they can think of other potential barriers to mobility.
4. The 5th slide has the PEW video explaining mobility - if it doesn't work a link to the video can be found above.
5. Explain that people have been concerned with "moving up in the world" for a long time. Do the students think the barriers have changed? Or have they remained the same?

6. The data slides begin here - give the students time to really think about what they are seeing and allow for time for discussion.
7. Once the class has examined the visual data - it will be their turn to examine some data themselves. Hand out the Exploring the Opportunity Atlas activity sheet - students can work alone or with a partner for this activity. Students will collect data for 3 areas (cities, counties, towns) the one where they live and 2 others they may wish to move to, they will then compare their data and decide where they will live - based on how much opportunity will be afforded them.
8. Have the students discuss what they discovered. What did they learn about “equal opportunity” from their research?
9. Share the quote from Rashaad Robinson - one of the speakers at the 2022 Democracy Biennial. How can we make economic justice more of a reality for more Americans?

**Analysis:**

10. Last slide - they have been chosen to serve on a team of city planners - their job is to turn their city around so that more people have access to the American Dream & American Democracy.
  - their schools are failing and students are dropping out
  - the unemployment is the 3rd highest in the nation
  - 68% of the population live below the poverty line
  - there is no green space for children to play or to provide relief from hot days
  - young people have nowhere to go and nothing to do when not in school or asleep - giving them ample opportunities to get into trouble.

This would be best accomplished in groups of 5, where each student has a role. This can be a fast brainstorm activity with the class voting on what they believed to be the best options. Or an after SOL project where they create maps, promotional posters, hold town meetings, and hold a vote on which team has the best solutions.

# The Opportunity Atlas

**Topic(s):**

Social mobility, geography

**Grade Level:**

9-12

**Approx. Time Required:**

45 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Analyze, compare, and interpret key demographic data in a specific U.S. ZIP code to determine social outcomes for adults in the corresponding census tract.
- Identify what factors impact social mobility in specific neighborhoods and regions.
- Evaluate data to support a position.
- Explore and understand how to use data access tools—such as The Opportunity Atlas—to gather information.

## Introduction

The 2020 Census Statistics in Schools (SIS) program is designed to educate students about the decennial census and to teach them educational concepts and skills, such as data literacy, through use of census data in the classroom. Responding to the census helps your community get its fair share of funding. Census data guides how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year. These funds support vital community programs that help children, such as schools, hospitals, housing, and food assistance. By educating students about the 2020 Census, you can help encourage a complete count.

The 2020 Census SIS program can be used with educational standards across the United States. You can use the topics and learning objectives above to determine which subject and unit plan or theme this activity will best fit into.

## About the 2020 Census

In addition to the information that is built into instructions for this activity, the following points provide an easy, grade-appropriate way to explain the decennial census to your students.

- The decennial census is a count of every person living in the United States that occurs every 10 years.
- It is important that every person be counted so that the government can properly distribute \$675 billion to communities.
- The population of every state as counted in the census also determines how many representatives each state is given in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- You can do your part by making sure an adult in your home counts you—and every person living in your home—in the 2020 Census.





## Materials Required

- Printed student worksheets
- The board at the front of the room
- Internet and computer access for all students to view [The Opportunity Atlas](https://www.opportunityatlas.org/) (https://www.opportunityatlas.org/)
  - If technology is unavailable to students, you may do this activity as a class with a projector or computer or an interactive whiteboard, selecting specific cities that apply to your students.
  - Teachers could also print out the relevant maps, tables, and graphs for students to view in class.

## Worksheet Description

How does your ZIP code affect social mobility? This activity guides students through a demographic analysis of factors that affect social mobility, including race, median income, and sex. Students will use “The Opportunity Atlas” to explore a data set of important statistics. Data sets will be compared by neighborhood and region.

## Before the Activity—10 Minutes

1. Write the definitions for the following words on the board or project the information on the screen.

**Median household income:** The middle income when the income distribution of households is divided into two equal parts: one-half below and one-half above.

**Social mobility:** The movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social hierarchy or stratification.

**Census tract:** A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting data. These subdivisions—ideally containing 4,000 people and 1,600 housing units—nest within counties, and their boundaries normally follow visible geographic features.

2. Let students know that today they will explore a tool called The Opportunity Atlas. Ask students, “How do you think these two terms (median household income and social mobility) are related to the idea of opportunities?” Then ask students what factors they think cause the median income for a place to increase or decrease. Prompt them to talk through things such as educational attainment, job opportunities, and resources. The goal is to get students to understand that demographics, population, and other factors play a role in educational attainment and total household income. How else might opportunity be determined?



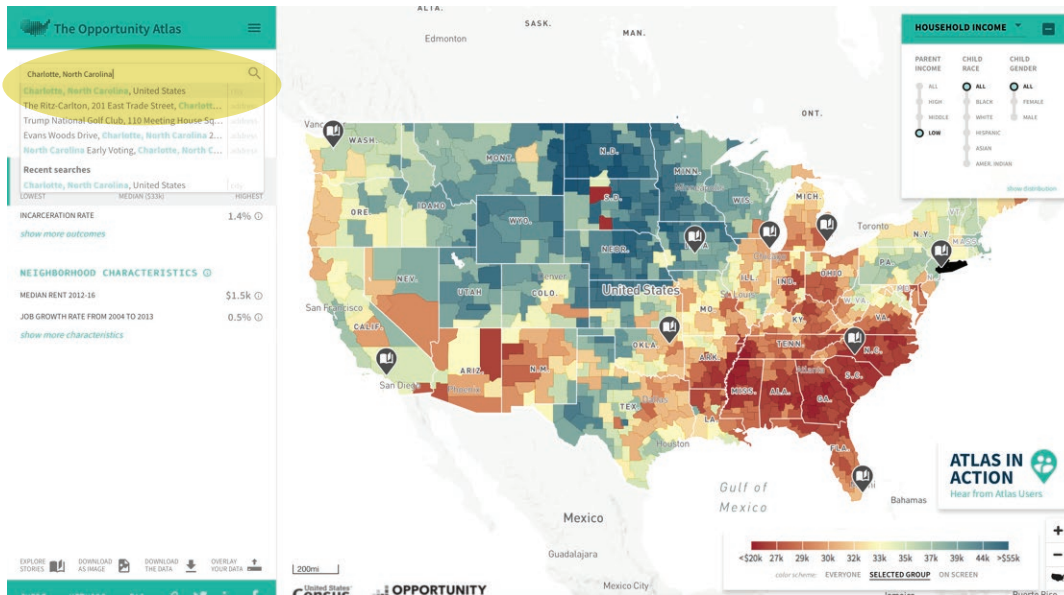
## During the Activity—30 Minutes

1. Ask students how or where they would look for information to answer the previous question. Share that today the class will explore data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Every 10 years, the Census Bureau conducts the largest count of all people in the United States. Not only does this population information help us better understand our communities and opportunities, but it also affects the allocation of more than \$675 billion in federal funding for community programs like roads, schools, and health care.
2. Hand out the student worksheets and guide students to opening [The Opportunity Atlas](https://www.opportunityatlas.org/) (<https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>) to conduct the following research. This webpage works best when using Chrome, Firefox, or Microsoft Edge.
3. Select two cities that are relevant to your students. City 1 should be your city or a city nearby, and City 2 should be from a different part of the country. Tell students, “Imagine you are moving to the United States from another country and are unsure where to live. In this activity, you will use data from The Opportunity Atlas to determine whether City 1: \_\_\_\_\_ or City 2: \_\_\_\_\_ is a better place for social mobility.”
4. Read the following instructions out loud to the class. Students can also follow along on their student worksheet. Use the images to help guide students on where they should click. Charlotte, North Carolina, is used as an example.

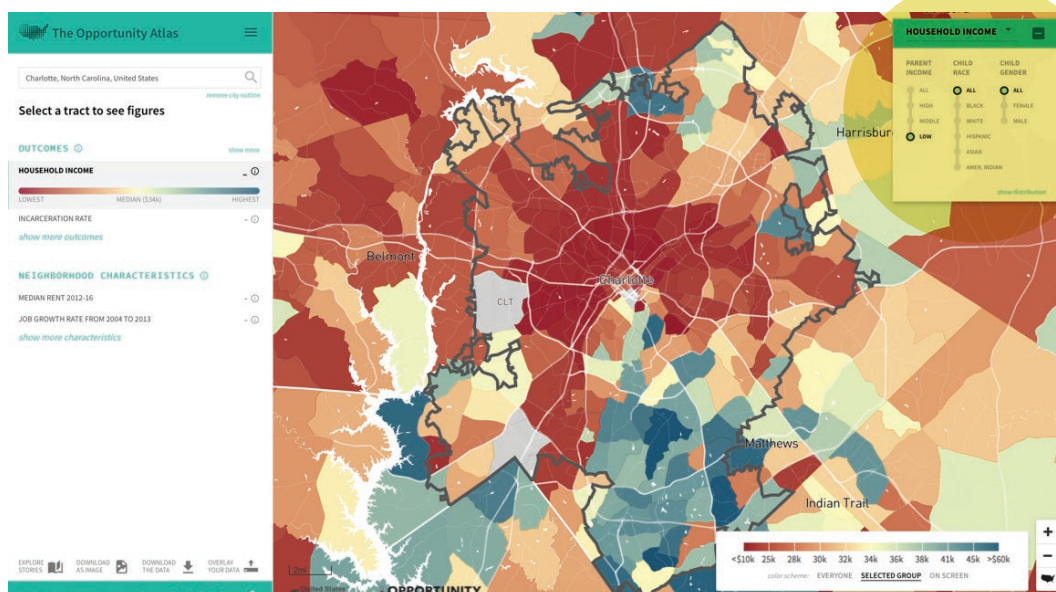


## Exploration of City 1:

**Step 1:** Navigate to the online tool, click the button to “Begin Exploring,” then in the “search for address or place” box in the top left, type in the first city and state.



**Step 2:** Next, have students look at the box in the upper right hand corner of the screen and begin toggling the green dots between settings. Have them observe how opportunities change based on race and sex in City 1.





**Step 3:** In the upper right hand corner, make sure household income (*average annual household income in 2014-15*) is selected from the top drop-down menu, then have students select their own sex and race in their search. Tell students to scroll over the different neighborhoods they are seeing on the screen in their selected city. Have students zoom in to one tract within City 1 and click on a tract they want to focus on. (Be sure to zoom in far enough so the data is shown by tract.) Have them record the name of that tract and record the data for household income on their student worksheet.

**Step 4:** Next, select employment rate from the drop-down menu with their own sex and race selected. Have students record the data for the same tract they chose within City 1 on their student worksheet, so they are looking at two different data points for the same tract.



Tell students to select City 2 on the map and then guide students through the same steps listed above. Students should select a specific tract within City 2 to focus on.



5. Give students one minute to analyze their table and determine whether the tract they chose in City 1 or the tract they chose in City 2 would be the best place to move. Take a poll of the class, asking whether City 1 or City 2 (in their specific tract chosen) offered the most opportunity if they were moving from another country. Have students answer Question #2 on their student worksheet.

## After the Activity—5 Minutes

Lead a discussion about opportunity in your own neighborhood: What are some different ways we measure opportunity, and how might the use of different measures change our conclusions? What could be possible solutions for closing any opportunity gaps?

## Home Extension

Teachers, please read the instructions for the students' homework assignment out loud to the class:

*Take your student worksheet home and share your findings from class with an adult in your home. Ask them if they ever considered living in a different part of the state or country and how they decided to live in your neighborhood. Remind them that the 2020 Census is coming in March of 2020 and ask who will be completing the census for your household.*



## Exploring the [Opportunity Atlas](#) - How does your ZIP code affect your social mobility?

Your family is moving and has asked for your input – where should you move? As a young person, you are interested in what opportunities you will have access to in your new home. Will you be able to get a good education? Will you be able to make good money when you graduate? What place will give you the greatest opportunity for socio-economic advancement?

You will **select 3 places** – the first is where you live now. The other two are any areas of your choice – where would you like to move?

| Categories                      | Home | Place 1 | Place 2 |
|---------------------------------|------|---------|---------|
| Household Income at age 35      |      |         |         |
| Employment Rate at age 35       |      |         |         |
| High School Graduation Rate     |      |         |         |
| College Graduation Rate         |      |         |         |
| Hourly Wage                     |      |         |         |
| Household Income for Immigrants |      |         |         |
| Number of Children              |      |         |         |
| Median Rent                     |      |         |         |
| Median Household Income         |      |         |         |
| Poverty Rate                    |      |         |         |

What did you learn from this data collection? Are you happy with your choices? Why or why not?