

THE INQUISITION OF CAMILO SANZ

A FILM BY JOHN MARCO LOPEZ



MEDIA LITERACY STUDY GUIDE

FOR SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

FILM-BASED DISCUSSION PROMPTS
THE CHARACTERIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTATION
PART A: LEARN ABOUT IMMIGRATION POLICY
PART B: RESPOND CREATIVELY
PART C: ADVOCATE THROUGH ACTION

SUMMARY OF FILM

After living nearly his entire life in New York City with false documents, burgeoning Finance professional Camilo Sanz receives a notice of deportation. Desperate for a solution at any cost, he obtains funding from a nefarious neighborhood loan shark, and dives head first into a fraudulent marriage with a relative stranger named Hailey. On her own personal search for meaning, Hailey must control her demons long enough to save Camilo by convincing an INS judge of the legitimacy of their marriage.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Where Is Home?



Characteristic of many immigrants who were displaced from their birth country as young children, Camilo's character holds a dual identity. Connected to Colombia through both his mother and community influence, Camilo also identifies with Americans through shared lived experience. Fighting against deportation to a country he has no memory of, Camilo is faced with the question, where is home. In what ways can home be a cultural concept, as well as a physical location? Is the government just in viewing home solely through the lens of citizenship? How might the concept of home change as our world becomes an increasingly global society?

2. Survival & Crime



In his desperation to remain in America, straight-laced Camilo quickly sinks into escalating criminal acts. Crime in media is often sensationalized, diminishing an audience's critical ability to decipher the root cause of criminal behavior — statistically linked overwhelmingly to poverty and/or survival. Watching Camilo's descent, how does his character both call for and reject an audience's empathy? Is staying in America a form of survival for Camilo, or a desire? What were the impact of his choices? What were other choices he might have made? What do the filmmakers want us to believe about Camilo?

3. City As Character



Jackson Heights, Queens was an intentional location for the filmmakers due to its melting-pot demographic. Known as the most ethnically diverse cross-section in the world, Queens is home to generations of immigrant families. The film capitalizes on Jackson Heights' own dual identity: in the daytime, colorful scenes show a family-friendly community of working class immigrants. By nightfall, the neighborhood's neon lights turn on, offering entry points into a myriad of shadowy vices. Stylistically, what role does the city play in the film — as both a cultural backdrop and a symbolic mirror? Why is it's inclusion important?

POST-SCREENING LESSON

Age Groups: High School and University

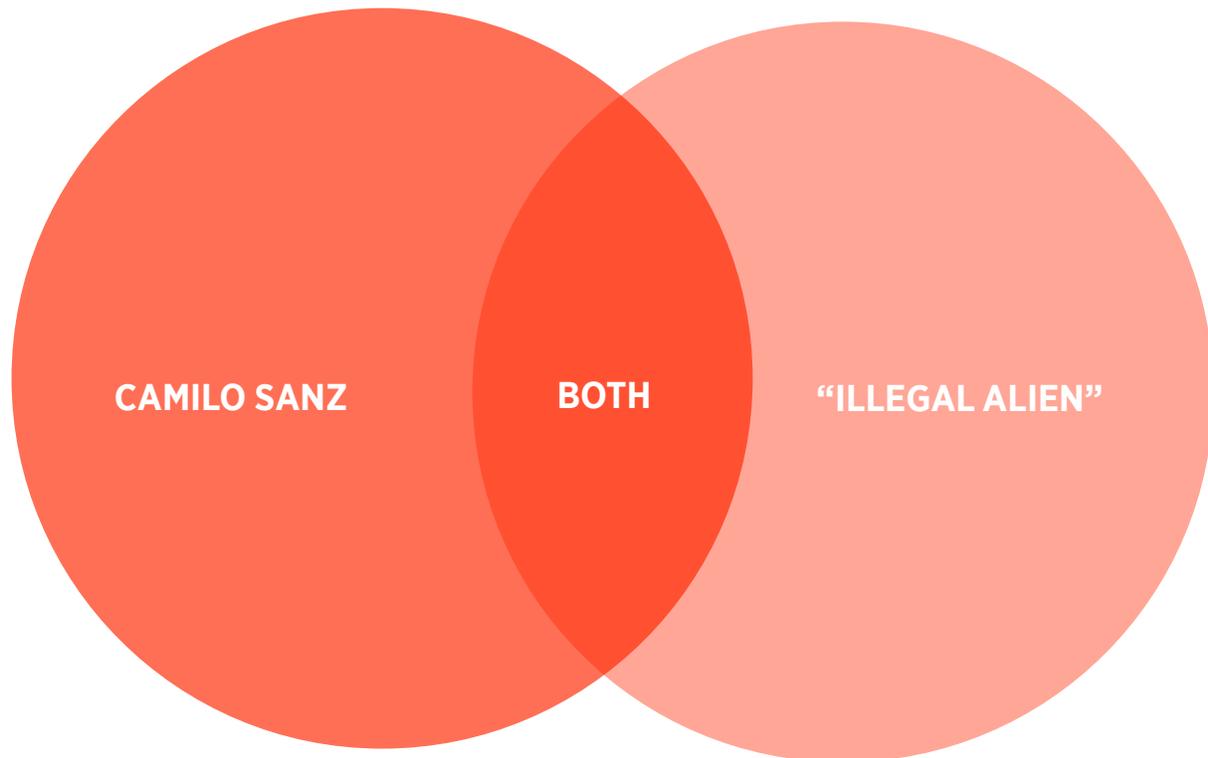
Time: One-two class sessions

Tools: Board or chart paper, markers, paper, writing utensils, Emma Lazarus poem

WARM UP: THE CHARACTERIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTATION

Characteristic of many immigrants who were displaced from their birth country as young children, fluidly living between two polarized worlds, the duality of Camilo Sanz holds the film's compelling center. However, at surface level, Camilo's character dares to phenotypically resist the profile of stereotypical "illegal immigrant." Take a few moments to warm up the classroom, engaging and challenging media representations of the undocumented community.

1. **CREATE** a large venn diagram on the board. Label the left side "Camilo Sanz" and the right side "Stereotypical Illegal Alien." In the center, leave enough room for the words and phrases that apply to both characters.



2. **INVITE** students to offer the representations they've witnessed of "illegal aliens" in the news, on television and in other forms of media. Where the stereotype could be applied to Camilo as well, enter it into the center.

3. PROMPT students to offer words, phrases and roles that Camilo fulfills.

Where the stereotype could be applied to the stereotype of “illegal alien” as well, enter it into the center.

4. CONSIDER discussing the following:

- In what ways does Camilo both break and uphold stereotypes? What nuances are employed in the film to help create a dynamic character that lives beyond the flattened image of “illegal alien”.
- What are some of the reasons people emigrate? You might prompt students to consider softer angles including work and hobby opportunities — as well as more extreme circumstances including family reunification and escaping severe poverty, war, conflict, political turmoil, natural disaster or other life-threatening reasons.
- What are the underlying motivations for media’s representation of undocumented people, considering the term could be applied across a spectrum of ethnicities, genders, professions and other variant identities?
- In recent years, many media outlets have pledged to reduce or ban the term “illegal” when describing immigrants. What is the significance of this lingual shift from the term “illegal alien” to undocumented? What does the word illegal imply?
- Spend a few minutes discussing the opening montage of the film — the neighborhood’s diverse cast offers a series of individuals whose status cannot be deciphered from visual clues alone. What might the filmmaker’s intentions have been for this sequence of portraiture?
- Prompt students to privately reflect on their own internal imagery that “pops up” when the term “illegal immigrant” or “undocumented” is used. What is the impact of the media — or the views of friends and family on our own psyches?

PART A LEARN ABOUT POLICY



1. UNDOCUMENTED CONTEXT

In the film, Camilo Sanz manages to evade his undocumented status — and the law — through illegal use of a fraudulent social security number. While this practice can offer undocumented immigrants broader options in school, career and life choices, it also creates its own vulnerability. Using a false social security number can impact an undocumented individual in a number of ways, including limiting individuals from applying for legitimate citizenship and a fear that various rites of passage (school, driver’s license, travel) might raise red flags.

Perhaps more pronounced is the emotional impact, which can include an inability to trust even close friends, guilt derived from engaging in an “unlawful” act, a feeling of rejection or not truly belonging, and living with the constant anxiety of being reported and deported— as Camilo was by his ex-girlfriend in the film. An excellent article to share with students about the experience of obtaining and living with falsified paperwork is New York Times undocumented journalist Jose Antonio Vargas’ My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant.

Without falsified paperwork, undocumented individuals are forced to live more deeply below the radar. Factors including inability to travel outside the United States, and difficulty securing safe housing or working an above-board job, lend to an increased outcome of poverty. A hot-button issue in the United States, DREAM Act advocates are calling for policy change that can help eradicate these extreme positions by opening future possibilities, specifically for undocumented children and young adults.

2. WHAT IS THE DREAM ACT?

A bipartisan legislation first introduced in Congress in 2001, The DREAM Act was formally known as Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors. The bill proposes a process that would allow undocumented children who grew up in the United States to forge a pathway to citizenship. Though many states have passed their own immigration legislation also named DREAM Acts — each of which hold different policies, the federal version has not passed.

To learn more, visit the National Immigration Law Center’s DREAM Act summary:
<https://nilc.org/dreamsummary.html>

3. WHAT IS DACA?

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) is a policy President Obama created in 2012, granting deferred deportation to people under age 31 who came to the U.S. under age 16 and meet other criteria. After applying and qualifying, DACA allows undocumented young people to be in the U.S. legally, apply for employment authorization and receive a Social Security number. However, DACA provides legal presence up to two years — and can be renewed if qualifications continue to be met —but it is not legal status, and does not provide a path to citizenship.

To learn more, visit National Immigration Law Center’s DACA FAQ:
<http://www.nilc.org/FAQdeferredactionyouth.html>



PART B RESPOND CREATIVELY



1. CONTEXT

The Inquisition of Camilo Sanz first opens with a prelude of white text on black background:

*“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!”*

This stanza was pulled from The New Colossus, an important poem written by American poet Emma Lazarus in 1883. The quote also appears engraved on a bronze plaque mounted inside the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1903. Paying homage to a nation created by immigrants, Lazarus’ welcoming words serve as a beacon of hope for newcomers. However, as Camilo’s story illustrates, the poem can feel profoundly incongruous with the attitudes and immigration policies of today’s America.

2. READ AND DISCUSS

Hand out The New Colossus poem, located on the following page, and read aloud. Invite students to deconstruct the poem’s meaning and its application to both the film, and current events.

3. CREATE

Task students with creating their own updated version of Lazarus’s poem, either choosing the words they wish represented America’s attitude towards immigrants, or a satirical poem representing the realities of America’s immigration policy. If students feel uncomfortable free-writing, the following page’s template can be used to help spark and guide their writing. Later, the prompts can remain or be removed.

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Emma Lararuz

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” 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!”

CREATE YOUR OWN POEM USING THESE PROMPTS

[America is not like] _____

[instead it acts like] _____

[here at our location of] _____

[which appears as] _____

[there stands a figure/symbol, which is] _____

[and the symbol is holding] _____

[and the symbol's name is] _____

[and from it's hand glows...] _____

[it's eyes command...] _____

[It cries out the following message:] _____



PART C ADVOCATE THROUGH ACTION

> GIVE CONGRESS A PIECE OF YOUR LITERARY MIND

Make your voice heard! Send your re-written poem based on *The New Colossus*, along with a letter of advocacy to Congress. What do you want to see change? What are you in support of? State clear evidence for your opinions in the letter, stick to respectful language and leave the emotion to the poem.

- For further tips, instructions on process and how to locate local representatives, visit **How To Write Letters To Congress:** usgovinfo.about.com/od/uscongress/a/letterscongress.htm

> FURTHER RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANT ADVOCACY

- Use the Immigration Legal Resources DREAM Act Advocacy Toolkit: http://www.ilrc.org/files/dream_act_advocacy_toolkit.pdf
- Learn about recent deportation cases and sign associated petitions: <http://unitedwedream.org/action/stop-deportations/open-cases/>
- Find a local DREAM Act advocacy organization: <https://dreamact.info/advocacy/organizations>
- A how-to for calling Congress: <http://dreamact.info/faq/3>

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

John Marco Lopez



John's passion for the motion picture has led to co-founding a production company, a feature length film, a web series, and most importantly his screen-writing. The latter marks his far journey into a wonderful career in storytelling, with projects on board to develop original content for digital platforms and cable networks. In the Advertising world, he has been a Film Producer for Grey NY – producing various nationally televised commercials for blue chip companies, as well as expanding digital production services for online viewers. He continues to explore ambitious ideas and themes that will hopefully entertain, delight, and provoke thought.

Kevin A. Lopez



Kevin is a filmmaker, educator, and social activist who has attained not only an award winning portfolio, but a truly global palette as well. His hip hop music videos, documentaries and film pieces (both short and long) all tell graphic societal stories, create inspiring characters and elicit fascination, at times with the aspects of culture we see everyday. Kevin has been the co-director of the Film Studio at venerable Frank Sinatra High School of the Arts in Astoria, the New York City Department of Education's Coordinator for the Moving Image, as well as the Director of Outreach for Filmmakers Without Borders. Through LPZ Media's educational programs, Kevin has brought film education to some of the most high needs communities throughout New York City.

ABOUT THE CURRICULUM WRITER

Caits Meissner



Caits Meissner is an award-winning poet, transformational educator and vibrant creative force working at the intersection of art, community and justice. For over ten years Caitis has extensively facilitated multimedia expression in schools, prisons and community organizations, and has worked long-term instituting innovative arts education programming at cultural hubs such as Tribeca Film Institute, Urban Arts Partnership, The Facing History School and the Lower Eastside Girls Club. Currently, Caitis serves as Writer-In-Residence at The Bronx Academy of Letters, teaches rehabilitative creative writing in multiple prisons and adjuncts at The New School University. Learn more about her work at caitsmeissner.com.