

**LESSON 4:****LEAVING HOME FOREVER: WHAT WOULD YOU PUT IN YOUR SUITCASE?****Focus Question**

What do immigrants leave behind and what do they bring with them to start a new life?

**Objectives**

- Identify objects and values important to immigrants' lives.
- Explain why certain objects are important to them as potential immigrants.
- Demonstrate their understanding of the needs and values an immigrant brings to a new country, and the role these play in the immigration experience.

**Key Theme**

Immigration is a hard experience for everyone. It involves many risks, including the choices a person has to make about the values and material needs that might be put aside and those that must be maintained.

**Grades**

3 -5, adaptable to 8.

**Time**

Two 45-80 minute periods, with 1-3 days for homework between them.  
(The longer time allows for an optional activity.)

**Materials**

- Student folders for primary documents and class materials.
- Interactive journal for notes and writing.
- Select from the list of texts and provide a copies of the primary texts for each student:
  - Hoobler, Dorothy & Thomas. *The Chinese American Family Album*. London: Oxford University Press, 1994. This resource, accessible for upper-elementary/middle school students, has historical information on Chinese immigration as well as specifically the experience of Chinese on Angel Island; pages 12, 18-19, and 29
  - Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim, Judy Yung. *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*. San Francisco: HOC DOI (History of Chinese Detained on Island), 1980. Choose three or four poems or statements.
  - Latitudes, *Dragonwings*, Logan Iowa, Perfection Learning Corporation, 1995. historical background on Chinese immigration, pages 20-21.  
(Note: These texts are not included in this resource guide.)
- *Optional Homework*: Pillowcase, brown paper shopping bag, box of comparable size, Found objects, decorative media if wanted, found objects provided by the student.
- *Optional materials for in-class lesson*: Photo of immigrants arriving at Angel Island.

**Standards**

California History-Social Science Content Standards, Language Arts Content Standards.

**Procedure****Day One**

Assign students to read and discuss one of the primary source statements by immigrants, as follows:

1. Have students work in small groups or pairs. Assign one reading to each group. Use the teacher-directed reading strategy Everyone Read To ....

*The teacher instructs students to read silently and figure out why immigrants might want to leave China. As each student figures out a reason, she/he makes a key word note of it in the margin and then raises a finger. Two reasons, two fingers, etc.*

2. When everyone has a finger raised, the group then makes a short list.
3. As a class, confirm and discuss reasons why immigrants might want to leave. List points from each group on the board. Students copy these into their journal.
4. Homework: Ask students "If you were immigrating far away and were allowed to take just one small suitcase with you, what would you pack in it? What would you leave behind? You would need things for regular use, but you would probably want a few precious things too, that you could never replace in your new country." Ask students to make a list of four to five precious objects they would bring.
5. Optional homework activity: Put together a small "suitcase." Students identify three small precious objects of their own choice and bring them to class. Tell students the objects must be small enough to leave room for articles for daily needs (clothes, etc.). Tell students that their suitcase is about 12 x 18 x 6 inches. Suggestions for "suitcases" include a pillow case, a brown paper shopping bag, or a box of similar dimensions. These can be decorated. Also, students can draw their items into a template of a suitcase, especially if they don't want to bring objects to class.

**Day Two: Making Choices**

1. Students bring their list to class. (See below for the step with real objects in a "suitcase.")
2. Ask students to choose from their list the three precious objects that they really could not leave behind, and list them in their journal. This may be a tough choice and may prompt agonized group discussions! Set some limits. Students might wrap one thing in a baby blanket or baseball cap and call it one object. They should not choose things that are replaceable in their new country (e.g. a particular CD is OK, but not a CD player). Students should be specific; for example they must name a book, and not just say "books." Objects have to be something students already possess.

3. Then have students share the reasons for their choices with a partner. Don't skip this step. It may seem like chatter, but students need to articulate their feelings.
4. Optional homework: Using Real Objects in a "Suitcase". Each student present his/her suitcase to a small group and gives reasons for each choice.
5. Discussion and categorization: Have each group come up with three to four categories for the objects in their "suitcases," and list them accordingly. They give each category a title. Encourage students to think about categories not just as the names of the objects, but the purpose or function of the objects in it (i.e. not "Books and CDs", but "Entertainment;" not "Diaries and photos" but "Family History." (*The most common categories usually are Comfort, Happiness, Memories, Family History, Activities, Entertainment, Skills and Talents, or variations thereof.*).
6. Have each group report back and share their categories. List the categories and examples of objects in each one on the board. Some objects may belong in more than one category.
7. Point out that many of their objects are irreplaceable memory items, or indicate special talents and interests. Emphasize the importance of these things in our lives and other value-laden issues.
8. Have students list the categories in journals, starting with the categories for their own objects. Lastly have them list in journals the other three to four important objects that were left behind.
9. Writing: Have students write a paragraph about each of their own objects, explaining why it is so important that it must be included in the suitcase. Give at least two detailed reasons for each one. The category/ies must be part of the explanation. Have them write in the journal on the opposite page. Name the object first.
10. Optional homework: Choose one object that was hard to leave behind, and write a sentence explaining why you wanted to bring it, but why you had to leave it behind.

### **Adaptations or Extensions**

- *Accelerated learners:* Write a story incorporating arrival, unpacking the suitcase and explaining its contents. (This could be on Angel Island, or telling the story of the objects later in life to grandchildren.)
- *Lower performing students, ESL:* Do student writing in class (not for homework) after the presentations, and model sentences first. Create categories together as a class. Again, model and build paragraphs together.

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